



Title of policy:	Equality & Diversity
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Related policies:

Safer Recruitment
Bullying & Harassment
Lone Working
Environmental
Confidentiality
Data Protection

This is a discretionary policy, which does not form part of a contract of employment. The Board of Trustees of Carers in Bedfordshire may vary or amend the policy as it deems necessary.

The term staff is used in this document as a generic statement to refer to any person working for Carers in Bedfordshire in any capacity and includes volunteers, part time staff, Board members, sessional/ temporary workers and work placement students working with younger children. This policy is applicable to all Carers in Bedfordshire staff.

Policy statement

Carers in Bedfordshire has an absolute commitment to equality and diversity - recognising and valuing difference as well as recognising and seeking to redress inequality and disadvantage. Our commitment is firmly founded on our belief that to offer services that are personal, committed and creative, we need a diverse staff team who can respond to carers as individuals. To attract, keep and motivate the most talented staff, we need to reach out to all sections of the community and provide a working environment in which everyone feels valued, respected and able to contribute.

Both as a service provider and an employer, we aim to be empowering, supportive and to offer

as much flexibility as possible in order to help each individual realise their full potential as carers or employees of Carers in Bedfordshire.

However, we recognise that true diversity in service delivery provision and within the staff group also involves a willingness to take action, where necessary, aimed at combating the effects of existing barriers to fair and equal treatment. Within society certain groups are unfairly discriminated against and disadvantaged in terms of their access to services and employment because of a 'protected characteristic' (Equality Act 2010) - e.g. race, religion or belief, sex, disability, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership status.

We also recognise that individuals who are perceived to have a protected characteristic, or associated with someone who has a protected characteristic may suffer discrimination and have a legal right to protection. We will, where appropriate, take positive action to help redress the effects of discrimination. Any positive action initiatives will be legally compliant and consistent with our approach of making all carers and staff feel valued and respected.

Aim & Scope

The aims of the policy are to ensure:

- Compliance with legislation on discrimination and equality including the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation
- Equality of access to and provision of Carers in Bedfordshire services
- Full consideration of diversity and equality issues in the design of new projects, services and other initiatives.
- An environment in which carers, staff, Board members and volunteers feel valued and respected and are:
 - Treated fairly
 - Recognised and supported on ability and merit for their contributions
 - Given equal access to opportunities for growth and advancement
- Protection of carers, staff and Board members against harassment, discrimination and intolerance.
- Fair and transparent recruitment and selection procedures, which ensure that all job and Board appointments are made on individual merit alone.
- The provision of training and development opportunities on an equitable basis for all our staff, supporting every single person to maximise their individual potential.
- The application of consistent employment practices, which treat people fairly on the basis of their individual merits and abilities.
- Adoption of appropriate positive action initiatives to promote equality of access for members from certain groups where these groups are under-represented either among our client group or at any level within our workforce.
- The principles of non-discrimination and equality of opportunity also apply to the way in which staff treat visitors, clients, customers, suppliers and former staff members.

Staff, volunteers and Board members are expected to actively uphold and promote this policy.

Implementation

In order to make our commitment a reality, we will develop and regularly review strategies, which include:

- Clear and consistently applied policies and procedures within recruitment and selection, training and development and other areas of employment and people management.
- Training for managers and staff to achieve competence in valuing diversity where a need is identified.
- Consideration of how services, activities and communications respond to the diversity of the local community, including whether information should be provided in community languages, EasyRead, etc.
- Identification of needs arising from barriers to access for service users
- Monitoring equality and diversity information on an on-going basis, and evaluating the effectiveness of the outcomes of any specific diversity initiatives.
- Promoting our commitment to this policy as widely as possible

Responsibilities

The Carers in Bedfordshire Board of Trustees is ultimately accountable for the implementation of our policy, strategy and plans and for monitoring their effectiveness.

Day to day responsibility for implementation and monitoring lies with the Chief Executive and the Senior Management Team.

All staff have an obligation to ensure the positive application of this policy in all aspects of their own work. Wilful breaches of the Policy will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability

The Senior Management Team will make regular reports to the Board of Trustees on the diversity of beneficiaries and staff members or make this data freely available for the Board of Trustees to review.

In addition, we will measure staff and client perceptions of our effectiveness in promoting diversity through qualitative monitoring tools such as:

- Exit interviews
- Staff and client surveys