Bristol Parent Carer Forum
Shaping the Future Together

ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Version num	Comments	Autho	Approved Date	Approved by	Review Date
Draft	Standalone policy created	HH HM			

1 Purpose

Bristol Parent Carers is committed to creating an inclusive, accessible and supportive working environment for all staff, volunteers and trustees. This policy sets out how Bristol Parent Carers will remove barriers to participation and ensure that all staff are treated fairly, with dignity and respect. This policy applies to all employees, workers, volunteers, contractors, trustees and job applicants.

1.1 Policy Statement

Bristol Parent Carers recognises that people may require different support, adjustments or ways of working in order to carry out their role effectively. We are committed to:

- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Preventing discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Making reasonable adjustments where needed.
- Supporting staff with disabilities, long-term health conditions, neurodivergence, caring responsibilities and menopause-related symptoms.
- Providing flexible and accessible ways of working.
- Reviewing working arrangements regularly to ensure they remain appropriate.

2 Legal Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Equality Act 2010.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Employment Rights Act 1996.
- Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023.
- Flexible Working Regulations 2014.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

Under the Equality Act 2010, Bristol Parent Carers has a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled staff and applicants where a workplace provision, physical feature or lack of support places them at a substantial disadvantage.
A disability may include physical disabilities, sensory impairments, long-term health conditions, mental health conditions and some neurodivergent conditions such as autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia or Tourette syndrome, where they have a substantial and long-term effect on day-to-day activities. Menopause symptoms may also amount to a disability in some cases if they have a substantial and long-term impact.

3 Principles

Bristol Parent Carers will:

- Treat all requests for support seriously and sensitively.

- Respect confidentiality.
- Work collaboratively with staff to identify appropriate adjustments.
- Avoid assumptions about what support a person may need.
- Ensure no member of staff is disadvantaged because of a disability, health condition, menopause, caring responsibility or neurodivergence.
- Review adjustments regularly.
- Encourage an open and supportive culture.

4 Recruitment and Selection

Bristol Parent Carers will make recruitment and selection processes accessible and inclusive.

This may include:

- Providing application forms in alternative formats.
- Offering interview questions in advance where appropriate.
- Allowing additional time for tests or interviews.
- Offering remote interviews.
- Providing accessible venues.
- Making adjustments for communication needs.
- Ensuring that job descriptions focus on essential requirements only.

Applicants will be encouraged to tell us about any adjustments they may need during recruitment.

5 Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes that help remove barriers at work.
Adjustments may be temporary or long term and may include, but are not limited to:

- Flexible start and finish times.
- Staff setting their own working hours between 9am and 3pm.
- Changes to duties or workload.
- Additional supervision or wellbeing check-ins.
- Home or hybrid working arrangements.
- Additional rest breaks.
- Time off for appointments, treatment or assessments.
- Equipment provided both in office and at home.
- Adapted equipment or software.
- Changes to lighting, seating, noise levels or workspace layout.
- Alternative communication methods.
- Adjustments to performance management processes.

- Recording disability-related absence separately from other sickness absence where appropriate.

Any adjustments are noted on individual staff files in Staffology.

5.1 Other Reasonable Adjustments

- Allowing a support person, mentor or workplace buddy.
- Providing meeting agendas, papers and questions in advance.
- Allowing extra processing time before responses are expected in meetings.
- Recording meetings or allowing note-taking software.
- Using captions or transcripts for online meetings and videos.
- Providing British Sign Language interpreters where needed.
- Providing documents in large print, coloured paper, easy read or accessible digital formats.
- Providing low lighting or desk lamps rather than overhead lighting.
- Permitting sensory aids such as fidget tools, weighted blankets or ear defenders.
- Avoiding strong smells in shared spaces where possible.
- Allowing additional training time or refresher sessions.
- Adjusting targets, deadlines or performance measures where appropriate.
- Providing regular breaks during long meetings or training sessions.
- Allowing staff to attend appointments linked to disability, menopause, fertility treatment or mental health support.
- Allowing leave or flexibility for caring responsibilities.
- Ensuring fire alarms and emergency procedures are accessible to disabled staff.
- Allowing alternative dress code arrangements; for example, lighter clothing for menopause symptoms or sensory sensitivities.
- Providing lockers or private spaces for medication, mobility aids or medical equipment.
- Offering phased returns after maternity leave, sickness absence or burnout.
- Allowing staff to communicate by email or instant message, rather than telephone where preferred.
- Reducing travel requirements or allowing virtual attendance at events and meetings.
- Ensuring that office social events and team activities are accessible and inclusive.

All requests for adjustments will be considered on an individual basis; the list above is not exhaustive.

5.2 Disability and Long-Term Health Conditions

Staff with disabilities or long-term health conditions may require adjustments to enable them to carry out their role.

Examples of support may include, but are not limited to:

- Specialist equipment.
- Ergonomic furniture.
- Speech-to-text or screen-reading software.
- Accessible parking arrangements.
- Changes to working hours.
- Temporary reduction in duties during periods of ill health.
- Phased return to work after sickness absence.
- Home working.
- Occupational health referrals where appropriate.

Bristol Parent Carers recognises that some conditions may fluctuate over time, and support needs may change.

5.3 Neurodiversity

Bristol Parent Carers values neurodiversity and recognises that neurodivergent staff may bring different strengths, skills and perspectives.
Neurodivergent staff may include people with autism, ADHD, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, Tourette syndrome or other cognitive differences.
Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Clear written instructions.
- Advance notice of meetings and changes.
- Flexible communication methods.
- Quiet workspaces.
- Reduced sensory distractions.
- Use of noise-cancelling headphones.
- Assistive technology.
- Flexible deadlines where possible.
- Regular wellbeing check-ins or supervision meetings.
- Adjusted interview or probation processes.
- Access to training in preferred formats.
- Breaking larger tasks into smaller steps.
- Allowing cameras to be turned off during online meetings where appropriate.
- Providing agendas and notes in advance.

A formal diagnosis is not always required before support is considered.

5.4 Menopause and Menstrual Health (including endometriosis)

Bristol Parent Carers recognises that menopause, perimenopause and menstrual health, such as endometriosis, can have a significant impact on wellbeing and work.
Symptoms may include hot flushes, fatigue, poor concentration, anxiety, sleep disturbance, headaches, joint pain and memory difficulties.
Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Flexible working hours.
- Home working where practical.
- Access to fans or improved ventilation.
- Easy access to drinking water and toilet facilities.
- Additional breaks.
- Temporary adjustment of duties.
- Time off for medical appointments.
- Quiet spaces for rest.
- Recording menopause-related absence separately from other sickness absence where appropriate.
- Supportive conversations with managers.

Managers should discuss support needs sensitively and confidentially.

5.5 Recovery from Surgery, Injury or Serious Illness

Bristol Parent Carers recognises that recovery from surgery, injury, serious illness, Long COVID or other fluctuating conditions, can affect a person's ability to work in the short or long term.
Support should be flexible and regularly reviewed, as symptoms and recovery needs may change over time. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Phased return to work.
- Temporary reduction in duties or workload.
- Flexible or reduced hours.
- Home or hybrid working.
- Additional rest breaks.
- Adjustments to absence monitoring.
- Time off for appointments, treatment or rehabilitation.
- Changes to physical workspace or equipment.

5.6 Domestic Abuse or Sexual Violence

Bristol Parent Carers recognises that staff affected by domestic abuse or sexual violence may require additional support, flexibility and confidentiality. The organisation will respond sensitively and ensure that staff are not disadvantaged because of their circumstances. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Flexible working arrangements.

- Time off for legal, medical or support appointments.
- Changes to working location or contact details.
- Additional wellbeing support or supervision.
- Safety planning in the workplace.
- Temporary changes to duties or hours.
- Strict confidentiality around personal information.

5.7 Bereavement

Bereavement can affect people in different ways and may have a significant impact on wellbeing, concentration and attendance. Bristol Parent Carers will respond compassionately and recognise that support may be needed both immediately after a bereavement and over a longer period. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Compassionate leave.
- Flexible or reduced hours.
- Temporary home working.
- Reduced workload or deadlines.
- Additional supervision or wellbeing check-ins.
- Time off around anniversaries, funerals or related responsibilities.

5.8 Religious Observance or Faith Requirements

Bristol Parent Carers is committed to respecting and accommodating staff members' religious beliefs, observance and faith requirements wherever possible. Managers should work with staff to identify practical arrangements that support both the individual and the organisation. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Flexible working hours for prayer or worship.
- Time off for religious festivals or observance.
- Suitable space for prayer or reflection.
- Adjustments to uniforms or dress codes.
- Consideration of dietary requirements at meetings and events.
- Flexibility during fasting periods.

5.9 Gender Transition or Gender Reassignment

Bristol Parent Carers is committed to creating a respectful and inclusive workplace for staff who are transitioning, or who identify as transgender or non-binary. Support should be tailored to the individual and provided in a confidential and sensitive way. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Time off for medical appointments or treatment.
- Flexibility around absence and recovery time.
- Support with changes to name, pronouns and records.

- Access to appropriate facilities.
- Home or hybrid working if helpful.
- Clear communication with colleagues where agreed by the individual.
- Protection from discrimination, harassment or bullying.

5.10 Substance Misuse Recovery

Bristol Parent Carers recognises that staff who are in recovery from substance misuse may need additional support to maintain their wellbeing and employment. Support will be provided sensitively and in a non-judgemental way. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Time off for treatment, counselling or support groups.
- Flexible working arrangements.
- Temporary adjustments to workload or responsibilities.
- Additional wellbeing support.
- Phased return to work after treatment.
- Confidentiality around personal information.

5.11 Financial Hardship

Bristol Parent Carers recognises that financial hardship can affect a person's wellbeing, attendance and ability to carry out their role. Where possible, the organisation will seek to reduce barriers and provide practical support. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Flexible payment of expenses.
- Home working to reduce travel costs.
- Flexible hours around childcare needs.
- Access to equipment needed for work.
- Temporary changes to location or duties.
- Signposting to external support services.

5.12 Trauma-Related Needs

Staff who have experienced trauma may require adjustments to help them feel safe and supported at work. Bristol Parent Carers will seek to avoid re-traumatisation and provide support in a sensitive and flexible way. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Flexible working arrangements.
- Home or hybrid working.
- Quiet workspaces.
- Additional breaks.
- Changes to duties where necessary.
- Clear communication and advance notice of meetings or changes.
- Access to wellbeing support.

5.13 Language or Communication Barriers

Bristol Parent Carers recognises that some staff may need additional support with language, literacy or communication. Support should aim to ensure that everyone can participate fully in work and workplace discussions. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Use of plain English.
- Written follow-up after meetings.
- Translation or interpretation support where appropriate.
- Additional time to read or complete documents.
- Visual aids or accessible formats.
- Flexible communication methods.

5.14 Phobias or Anxiety Related to Travel, Crowds or Public Spaces

Some staff may experience anxiety or phobias that affect their ability to travel, attend crowded spaces or work in busy environments. Bristol Parent Carers will consider practical ways to reduce distress and support the individual to work effectively. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Home or hybrid working.
- Flexible start and finish times to avoid busy travel periods.
- Alternative meeting formats, including online meetings.
- Quiet workspaces.
- Reduced travel requirements.
- Gradual return to certain environments where appropriate.

5.15 Caring Responsibilities

Bristol Parent Carers recognises that staff may have caring responsibilities for children, disabled family members or older relatives. Flexible and supportive arrangements can help staff balance work with their caring role. Support may include, but is not limited to:

- Flexible start and finish times.
- Home or hybrid working.
- Emergency leave for caring responsibilities.
- Temporary reduction in hours or duties.
- Time off for appointments or emergencies.
- Term-time or part-time working arrangements.
- Flexibility around school holidays or care arrangements.

6 Home and Hybrid Working

Bristol Parent Carers recognises home or hybrid working may be an important adjustment for some staff and will consider home working as a reasonable adjustment where appropriate.
Requests for home working will be considered fairly and in line with business needs.
When staff work from home, Bristol Parent Carers will:

- Ensure staff have suitable equipment.
- Carry out workstation assessments where required.
- Support safe home working arrangements.
- Maintain regular communication.
- Ensure home workers are included in meetings, training and decision-making.

Home working arrangements may be temporary, permanent or part of a hybrid arrangement.

7 Flexible Working

Staff have the right to request flexible working arrangements.
Flexible working may include:

- Part-time hours.
- Compressed hours.
- Job sharing.
- Home working.
- Flexible start and finish times.
- Term-time working.
- Temporary changes to hours.

Bristol Parent Carers will consider all requests fairly, discuss options with the employee and respond within the timescales set out in legislation.

8 Confidentiality

Information about a person's disability, health condition, neurodivergence or menopause status will be treated confidentially.
Information will only be shared where necessary and with the individual's knowledge wherever possible.
Records will be stored in line with data protection requirements.

9 Responsibilities

9.1 Managers

Managers are responsible for:

- Creating an inclusive working environment.
- Responding promptly to requests for support.

- Having supportive and confidential conversations.
- Implementing agreed adjustments.
- Reviewing adjustments regularly.
- Seeking advice where needed.
- Challenging discrimination or inappropriate behaviour.

9.2 Staff

Staff are encouraged to:

- Tell their manager if they need support or adjustments.
- Work with managers to identify practical solutions.
- Respect the needs of colleagues.
- Raise concerns if they experience discrimination or barriers.

9.3 Bristol Parent Carers

Bristol Parent Carers is responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of adjustments.
- Providing training and guidance to managers.
- Reviewing this policy regularly.

10 Raising Concerns

Any member of staff who feels they have been treated unfairly, discriminated against or denied reasonable adjustments, should raise the issue with their line manager in the first instance.
If this is not appropriate, concerns can be raised through the grievance procedure.
No member of staff will be treated unfavourably for requesting support or adjustments.

11 Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if there are changes in legislation or organisational practice.
Bristol Parent Carers will monitor requests for adjustments and flexible working to ensure the policy is effective and equitable.