EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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1 Introduction

Bristol Parent Carers (BPC) is committed to encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our members, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The organisation, in providing goods and/or services and/or facilities, is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

2 Our policy's purpose

This policy's purpose is to:

A. Provide equality, fairness, and respect for all in our employment, whether temporary, part-time, or full-time
B. Ensure that we do not discriminate against others based on the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of:
    - age
    - disability
    - gender reassignment
    - marriage or civil partnership
    - pregnancy and maternity
    - race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
    - religion or belief
    - sex
    - sexual orientation
C. Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in:
    - pay and benefits
    - terms and conditions of employment
    - dealing with grievances and discipline
    - dismissal
    - redundancy
    - leave for parents
    - Leave for carers?
    - requests for flexible working
    - selection for employment, promotion, training, or other developmental opportunities

3 Collaborative Leadership and Recognising Gaps

We recognise our team does not hold all the lived experience or specialist knowledge needed to lead every strand of equality, diversity and inclusion work. To ensure our actions are meaningful, inclusive and shaped by those with direct knowledge, we will:

- Identify where additional expertise or insight is needed to ensure inclusive practice (e.g. when designing work that involves underrepresented groups).
- Partner with trusted community organisations, advocacy groups or individuals with relevant lived experience to co-lead or guide elements of our work.
- Offer remuneration or mutual value for time and expertise where appropriate, recognising that inclusive leadership takes labour and commitment.
- Create mechanisms for regular reflective practice so our team can recognise when we need to step back and make space for others to lead.
- Remain open to challenge and learning, embedding humility and flexibility in how we lead and develop services.

4 Bristol Parent Carers is committed to:

4.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in all areas of our work. We believe embracing difference is not only good practice but also essential to building a fair, respectful, and thriving organisation.

We recognise a diverse team brings a wide range of perspectives, skills, and experiences, which strengthens our decision-making, creativity, and ability to respond effectively to the communities we serve. By fostering an inclusive culture, we ensure that everyone feels valued, respected, and able to contribute fully to our shared goals.

Our approach to EDI is based on the principle it is both a moral responsibility and a practical necessity. It helps us to:

- Reflect the diverse communities we support.
- Attract and retain talented staff, trustees, and volunteers.

- Create a workplace where individuals can thrive without fear of discrimination or exclusion.
- Strengthen our reputation as a trusted and fair organisation.
- We are committed to challenging inequality wherever it arises, ensuring our policies and practices actively support fairness and inclusion, and continuously reviewing our progress to create lasting change.

4.2 Working Environment

We are committed to creating a working environment that is free from bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination. We promote dignity and respect for all, recognising and valuing individual differences and the unique contributions of every member of our team.

As part of this commitment, we provide training for managers and staff to ensure everyone understands their rights and responsibilities under our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy. Each of us has a responsibility to act in a way that upholds equal opportunities in employment and prevents bullying, harassment, victimisation, or unlawful discrimination.

We also recognise that both the organisation and individual staff members can be held accountable for such behaviour. This means that all of us must take responsibility for ensuring our conduct reflects our shared values, not only towards colleagues, but also towards the families we support, as well as our partners, suppliers, and the wider public.

4.3 Taking complaints seriously

We take all complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination seriously. This includes concerns raised about the behaviour of employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public, or anyone else connected with our work.

We will address such behaviour through our grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will always be taken. In the most serious cases, complaints could amount to gross misconduct, which may result in dismissal without notice.

We also recognise sexual harassment is not only an employment rights issue but may also be a criminal matter, for example in cases of sexual assault. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, even where it is not linked to a protected characteristic, is a criminal offence, and we will respond to such incidents with the seriousness they deserve.

4.4 Staff Development

We make opportunities for training, development, and progression available to all staff. We are committed to helping and encouraging everyone to reach their full potential, so that their talents and skills are fully recognised and utilised, while strengthening the impact and effectiveness of our organisation.

All decisions relating to staff are made fairly and based on merit, except where limited exemptions or exceptions are permitted under the Equality Act.

By supporting our staff in this way, we not only create a fair and inclusive workplace but also ensure we are better equipped to serve SEND families and communities with empathy, expertise, and integrity.

4.5 Practices and Procedure review

We will review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.

4.6 Protected Characteristics monitoring

We will regularly assess how our EDI policy and any supporting action plans are working in practice. This includes reviewing them on an annual basis and identifying any gaps or barriers that may exist. Where issues are identified, we will take proactive steps to address them, ensuring that our policies are not just words on paper but are lived out in the day-to-day experience of our staff and volunteers.

By doing so, we strengthen our organisation, create a fair and inclusive working environment, and ensure we are best placed to represent and support the diverse communities of SEND families we serve.

5 Our disciplinary and grievance procedures

Details of the organisation's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be found at within our Code of Conduct policy. This includes with whom an employee should raise a grievance, which will usually be their line manager.

Use of the organisation's grievance or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.

6 Agreement to follow this policy

This policy is fully supported by the Board of Trustees and has been agreed upon with all BPC Team members and has been read and agreed upon during the induction process.

7 Review

This Policy will be reviewed on a biennial basis as a minimum by the Trustee Board, or sooner if required.

8 Definitions

BPC Team – Any person, involved in any work for or on behalf of Bristol Parent Carers whether it is paid of unpaid