



Equal Opportunities, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy

Our Values

Support. We are supportive.

We are well informed and share our expertise, knowledge and insight. We value learning and consider different perspectives, reflecting our members' experiences and needs. We listen and understand.

Collaborate. We are collaborative.

We connect with people. We care and are approachable. We are respectful to each other, our members and other organisations. We are effective and efficient.

Lead. We are sector-leading.

We are resourceful, adaptable and innovative. We lead a valuable network which gathers, amplifies and represents the voice of befriending at all levels.

Policy Statement

Commitment of Befriending Networks

Befriending Networks is committed to inclusion and strives to deliver services which reflect the diversity of our membership community, the society in which we operate, and which enables individuals to participate equally.

All employees will, in their daily actions, decisions, and behaviour endeavour to promote inclusion, to comply with all relevant legislation and to ensure that they do not discriminate against colleagues, or any other person they are in contact with in relation to their employment with Befriending Networks.

Befriending Networks will not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination against any person on grounds of age, disability, gender / gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. This is set out in the Equality Act 2010.



Equality

Equality is ensuring that everybody is treated fairly and gets the same opportunities regardless of any protected characteristics relating to things such as their background, where they were born, what they believe. This can mean making reasonable adjustments to accommodate an individual's needs.

Diversity

When we talk about diversity, we mean that we are recognising and celebrating differences. It is the differences that make someone unique. Recognising and respecting diversity will enrich the way in which we work with each other and help us communicate and learn from each other. Having a diverse workforce enables us to benefit from a range of different perspectives.

Inclusion

When we discuss inclusion, we are talking about valuing and enabling everyone to thrive in environments where everyone feels that they belong. People should feel that their contributions matter and they are able to perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity, or circumstances.

Equal opportunities and non-discrimination

It is the policy of Befriending Networks to provide equal opportunities and ensure that no individual (by which we mean employees and volunteers of our member group, volunteers, training or event delegates, partner/stakeholder employees and volunteer) hereafter known as '**service users**' are unlawfully directly or indirectly discriminated against on the basis of their age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation (lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.

Befriending Networks is committed to identifying and eliminating unlawful discriminatory policies, practices, procedures, and behaviours. We expect everyone in our community (service users and employees) to support this commitment and to assist in its realisation in all possible ways.



Discrimination and Harassment

Befriending Networks believes that the working environment should always be supportive, and all individuals treated with dignity and respect. If a complaint of harassment is brought to our attention it will be investigated promptly, and appropriate action will be taken.

Harassment can be defined as conduct that is unwanted and offensive and affects the dignity of an individual or group of individuals, including, but not limited to creating or tolerating an environment that feels intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive.

Sexual harassment is defined as “unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, or other conduct based on sex, affecting the dignity of women and men at work”. This can include unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct.

People can be subject to harassment on a wide variety of grounds including:

- Race, ethnic origin, nationality, or skin colour
- Sex or sexual orientation
- Religious or political convictions
- Willingness to challenge harassment, leading to victimisation
- Disabilities, sensory impairments or learning difficulties, neurodiversity
- Status as ex-offenders
- Age
- Real or suspected infection with a blood borne virus (eg AIDS/HIV)
- Membership of a trade union or activities associated with membership.

Harassment can come in variety of forms and may include:

- Physical contact ranging from touching to serious assault
- Verbal and written harassment through jokes, offensive language, gossip and slander, sectarian songs, letters and so on
- Visual display of posters, graffiti, obscene gestures, flags and emblems
- Isolation or non-cooperation at work, exclusion from social activities
- Coercion, including pressure for sexual favours or pressure to participate in political/religious groups
- Intrusion by pestering, spying, following someone
- Bullying.



If any service user feels they have been discriminated against by Befriending Networks as a whole or by a member of staff, they should raise this with the CEO as a complaint using the **Complaints and Suggestion Policy**. The complaint will be investigated, listening to all persons affected. If the complaint is against the CEO, then it should be raised with the Chair of the Board of Befriending Networks.

Befriending Networks will support people who feel they have been discriminated against and will not victimise or treat them less well because they have raised this. If we believe a criminal offence may have been committed, it will be reported to the police. We record all incidents of discrimination ensuring confidentiality where needed and data protection.

Policy Implementation and Review

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board of trustees of Befriending Networks. This policy is due for review every 2 years, or earlier if change is required.

Reviewed (Company Details Updated): 21 May 2024

Approved: March 2023

Next Review Date: 31 March 2025