



Befriending Networks

Equality, Equity, 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.

5-7 Montgomery Street Lane, Edinburgh, EH7 5JT
0131 261 8799 | info@befriending.co.uk
www.befriending.co.uk

Befriending Networks Ltd is a Charitable
Company Limited by Guarantee,
registered in Scotland No. 195896.
Charity No. SC023610 regulated by OSCR.



Policy Summary

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: What It Means for You

At Befriending Networks, we are committed to making sure everyone feels welcome, respected and included, whether you're a volunteer, member, training participant, or partner.

What We Stand For

- **Equality:** Everyone should be treated fairly and have the same chances, no matter their background or identity.
- **Equity:** We recognise that people have different needs and may need different support to thrive.
- **Diversity:** We celebrate differences and believe they make our community stronger.
- **Inclusion:** We want everyone to feel they belong and can take part fully in our services.

Your Rights under the Equality Act 2010

We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment based on:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender identity
- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sex or sexual orientation
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Marriage or civil partnership

We also understand that people may face discrimination in more than one way at the same time—this is called **intersectionality**.

What You Can Expect

- Services and resources that reflect diverse identities and experiences.
- Accessible formats and tools to help everyone engage with our work.
- A safe and respectful environment, free from bullying or harassment.

If Something Goes Wrong

If you feel you've been treated unfairly or discriminated against, you can raise a complaint using our **Compliments, Complaints and Suggestions Policy**. We will listen, investigate, and take action. If the complaint involves the CEO, it will be handled by the Chair of our Board. We will never treat you unfairly for speaking up.



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 enable individuals to participate equally.

As an employer, we are committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

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 during their employment with Befriending Networks. Our staff will receive regular training on Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

We will not condone any form of bullying, harassment, or unlawful discrimination, whether engaged in by employees or by outside third parties who do business with us, such as clients, customers, contractors and suppliers.

Befriending Networks will not tolerate direct or indirect discrimination against any employee, trustee or service users (volunteer, event or training delegate, partner or other stakeholder) 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.

Befriending Networks recognises intersectionality, and the multiple aspects of an individual's identity can combine to create a unique experience of discrimination.

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

Where appropriate, Befriending Networks may take positive action to support individuals from underrepresented groups, under the Equality Act 2010.



Definition of Key Terms

Equality and Equity

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, or what they believe. This can mean making reasonable adjustments to accommodate an individual's needs.

Equity recognises that not everyone is the same and provides the appropriate resource, adjustment or opportunities to address the inequality.

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 can perform to their full potential, no matter their background, identity, or circumstances.

In the provision of services and resources, we will ensure that our service users feel represented, respected and that we reflect diverse identities, experiences and needs. We aim for everyone to see themselves reflected in our service provision and find resources and services both relevant and useful.

Accessibility

This refers to how easily our service users can find, understand, and use the resources and services that we provide—regardless of your role, location, abilities, or access to technology. We aim wherever possible to offer resources in alternative formats and for digital tools to design with accessibility in mind, including for the use of screen readers and other assistive technology.



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 is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment.

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.
- People with experience of the criminal justice system.
- Membership of a trade union or activities associated with membership.
- Age.

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.



Raising Concerns

If any service user feels Befriending Networks have discriminated against them as a whole or by a member of staff, they should raise this with the CEO as a complaint using the **Compliments, 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 3 years, or earlier if a change is required.

Befriending Networks will seek the views of our members on the inclusivity and accessibility of our services and resources through our membership survey, and by inviting feedback on our services at regular intervals.

Our employee handbook includes the following related organisational policies:

- Equal Opportunities Statement
- Bullying and Harassment
- Monitoring equal opportunities and dignity at work
- Recruitment and Selection Policy

Reviewed: 20 August 2025

Approved: 8 September 2025

Next Review Date: September 2028