

## **BPA Equality and Diversity Policy**

Individuals with different cultures, perspectives and experiences are at the heart of the way BPA works.

- We work with children, young people and young adults regardless of their background, culture, ethnicity and ability, aiming to make best use of their talents. At BPA we are guided by our values in everything we do, and recognise that being a diverse and inclusive organisation helps us fulfil our responsibility to make a difference for our clients.
- We seek to develop a day-to-day environment where we treat everyone as individuals, fairly and in a consistent way. We work within the spirit and the practice of the Equality Act 2010 by promoting a culture of respect and dignity and actively challenging discrimination, should it ever arise.
- We aim to remove unnecessary barriers for our clients seeking opportunities through training, independent living skills, personal development, volunteering and work opportunities.
- We continue to support our staff, managers, clients and their families to demonstrate the principles of diversity and inclusion in their everyday activities, roles and functions.

The importance of equal opportunity is therefore acknowledged throughout the organisation. Our equal opportunities policy is closely monitored to try to ensure that everyone has access to the services they need, and training is provided for all members of staff.

Every aspect of the work of BPA is informed, and enhanced by the issue of equality of opportunity. All staff, trainees and volunteers are enabled and supported in challenging behaviour which goes against our policy, and the spirit of it. All our staff, services, resources and activities try to reflect the wide breadth and diversity of cultures within the local community, and meet the variety of local needs. The Children Act 1989 states: Children from a very young age learn about different races and cultures, and will be capable of assigning different values to them. The same applies to gender, and making distinctions between male and female roles. It is important that people working with children and young people are aware of this so that their practice enables clients to develop positive attitudes for differences of race, culture, language, and gender. Children Act standards require all staff to provide care with equal concern, and in doing so, acknowledge and respect their specific

needs with regard to their religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background, as well as gender or disability. We recognise that in our society certain groups and individuals are discriminated against for many reasons including their ethnic origin, gender, disability, age, social class, religious or political belief, sexuality, or state of health. Accordingly, we are strongly committed to work towards eliminating any such discrimination in all aspects of our work.

In addition to the human values underlying the need to avoid unfair discrimination, there is also further legislation which covers other particular areas:

**The Chronically sick and disabled Act 1970, and amendments of 1976** impose obligations on employers to provide facilities for people with disabilities regarding means of access to and within the building, and appropriate parking and sanitary arrangements.

**Equal Pay Act 1970 and amendments of 1983** provide that women should be treated equally as far as pay, fringe benefits etc., and are concerned with men who are employed on work of equal value, and that women should be given equal treatment.

**Sex discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986** make it unlawful to discriminate against any person, directly or indirectly, in fields such as recruitment, promotions, training, and conditions of employment, or dismissal on the grounds of gender or marital status.

**Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974** enables some criminal convictions to become “spent” (or forgotten) after a “rehabilitation period”. This applies to sentences of less than 30 months. There are several exceptions including people applying to work with people under 18. They are expected to declare their convictions, even if spent.

**Race Relations Act 1976** which deals with discrimination on racial grounds (i.e. on grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins). It makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person directly, or indirectly, in the field of employment. (See the Commission for racial equality’s code of practice for the elimination of racial discrimination for more details) Employment Act 1990 makes it unlawful for an employer to refuse a person employment because he /she is not a trade union member, or because a person refuses to accept a requirement to become, or resign as, a trade union member. (For further information on the above legislation, see Croner’s reference book for employers, and Croner’s management of voluntary organisations. Notwithstanding the additional thrust given to the issue of equal opportunities given by the Children Act, the legislation does not

adequately cover all sections of the community which are unfairly discriminated against, so our policy is wider than legislators have allowed.

It is our policy to ensure that our services are available to all residents, within the specified age range, where numbers permit, and that no young person or adult be excluded or disadvantaged on any of the above grounds.

**Our objectives are as follows:**

- To ensure the composition of staff teams reflects that of users.
- To examine premises and equipment and make any necessary adaptations, to ensure access is available to all potential users.
- To increase awareness within our organisation of the needs of minority groups. To ensure that racism in all its forms is challenged, and that food, festivals, images, games and other activities and opportunities reflect the diversity of the setting.
- To enable all our clients to have equal status, and rights to appropriate access, with each client being included, and given encouragement to fulfil their individual potential.
- To ensure that no staff / users / parents/ members of committees suffers unfair discrimination, and to act decisively on any such incidents in accordance with employment procedures / rules on behaviour etc.
- To advocate effective equal opportunities policies throughout the voluntary sector.

**The implementation of Equal Opportunities Service Provision:**

In implementing our Equal Opportunity Policy, we have regard to the following:

- Ensuring that we actively develop links with ethnic minority groups that are discriminated against, and inform them of the work

- Ensuring that all potential users have access to information, and that all leaflets, and publicity materials are easy to read, and understandable.
- Ensuring that our representatives meet regularly with users to evaluate the Service, and look at ways of enhancing it.
- Ensuring that we have information about the local community with which to compare its monitoring records.

### **Racism:**

Thought is therefore given, and action taken, to ensure that games, activities, toys, events, puzzles, books and other materials contribute to an anti-racist approach, and that themes and art / craft - work reflect the ethnicity of the community. Staff should also take care to give positive responses to other languages. Our food policy ensures that our meals / snacks prepared for clients include food from different cultures and countries. Celebrating and learning about different festivals are essential because the more we know about each other's culture and race, the less we will be divided by racism.

- Racism must be recognised, challenged and eliminated.
- Each person's motivation must be encouraged by ensuring they feel fully included, personally, racially, and culturally.

### **Children, Young People and Adults with Special Needs:**

We believe that segregation of children and young people with special needs is a devaluation of those clients, just as exclusion on the basis of gender, class or race. All our clients have equal status and equal rights to appropriate support and to access our care and our facilities. If an increasingly wide range of children, young people, and young adults become used to being together in integrated groups, then there will be less ignorance and fear that would otherwise prevent the acceptance of people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. It is therefore, vital that our staff, volunteers and older clients expect, and look forward to working with children with disabilities, and have the necessary training and support to do so including: sign language, physical care, help with behavioural difficulties, and First Aid.

**General Issues:** It is essential that positive images should be provided.

For examples, pictures, posters, photos etc. should reflect positive images of minority groups living happy and successful lives. Men should be seen in caring roles and women in career situations. Care should be taken to make sure that people with disabilities are included, and so on. Questions about physical / cultural differences must be answered honestly, not ignored or side-stepped. Staff should be aware of what clients perceive and understand. Discussions regarding bullying should be investigated by staff in a "safe situation", where adults and clients are enabled to be honest, thus facilitating clients developing skills to combat and deal with prejudice and the abuse of power.

### **Selection Procedures**

In order to avoid indirect / direct discrimination, selection criteria should be regularly examined to ensure that they are related to fair person specifications. The person specification is based upon the following six-point grading system drawn from guidelines from the Commission for Racial Equality:

1. **Impact on Others:** Appropriate appearance, communication skills, manner, ability to work within a team.
2. **Attainments:** education, qualifications, vocational training, work / voluntary experience.
3. **Innate Abilities:** ability to carry out physical tasks as required in the setting, quickness of comprehension, aptitude for learning.
4. **Special Aptitudes:** abilities with children and young people, patience, understanding, manual dexterity, abilities regarding use of words, and figures, practical, constructional, creative.
5. **Disposition:** dependability, self-reliance, enthusiasm, motivation, initiative, emotional stability, ability to withstand stress ability to relate to children, young people, and adults
6. **Interests:** practical, constructional, physical activities, intellectual, artistic, dramatic, musical, social.

Candidates are sent a person specification with their application form, and job description. A selection panel involving two members of the management team read all application forms, mark them according to the selection criteria, and those applicants with the highest marks are invited to an interview. All unsuccessful candidates receive a letter indicating that they did not meet sufficient requirements. Interviews are conducted over a one- or two-day period, depending upon the number of candidates. All candidates are received warmly, and every effort is made to establish a rapport. All candidates are required to complete DBS checks at interview stage if they have not already done so. The selection process and interview procedure are explained to each candidate, and that the candidate's success in meeting all the required criteria will result in their details being logged onto our Staff Register. Each candidate is informed that although inclusion on the Register does not guarantee them a job, as most posts are seasonal, part-time, during school holidays etc. If they are successful, they will be informed when a suitable vacancy arises.

Each candidate is asked if they accept that their details will be kept on the Staff Register, and contacted if and when a post requiring their particular abilities and skills becomes available. The same questions are asked of each candidate, and marks apportioned to their responses. Where possible open questions are used to maximise the candidate's scope for answering. Records of all interviews are signed dated and kept on the Staff Register. Each member of the selection panel totals their marks for each candidate, and shares their figures with the other. Each is then able to challenge one another in a non-judgemental way, about any discrepancies in the marking, and any adjustments made accordingly. Decisions are made in relation to the job requirements and person specification already set, and not comparison with other candidates. All successful candidates are notified in writing within two weeks of the final interview.

### **Monitoring and Reviewing Equal Opportunities**

The Equality and Diversity policy is monitored annually to ensure that it's aims and objectives are being achieved, and / or to address any problems in achieving those aims and objectives.

#### **Areas of monitoring are:**

***Recruitment:*** In terms of: gender, race, ethnicity, disability, age, religious cultural needs

***Retention:*** As above, with length of / periods of service, rate of pay

***Training and Development:*** As above, with qualifications, training, etc.

***Discrimination and harassment:*** Through staff appraisal, disciplinary, grievance and complaints procedures. We recognise and encourage the involvement of employees in the wider community. We also aim to reach all sections of the local community, in terms of users. Staff employed reflect the diversity of our community. We hold regular meetings of staff to ensure consultation, feedback, ideas, and suggestions for Service improvement, and staff development. We also encourage staff to conduct similar exercises in consultation with children, young people, young adults replace with clients and parents who use the provision.

This Equality and Diversity policy therefore recognises in full, the need for anti-discriminatory practice covering culture, race, gender, disability, sexual orientation and social background. We consider diversity to mean celebrating difference and valuing everyone. Each person is an individual with visible and non-visible differences, and by respecting this everyone can feel valued for their contributions which is beneficial not only for the individual but for the organisation, BPA too. We acknowledge that equality and diversity are not inter-changeable but inter-dependent. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not valued and harnessed.