



Birmingham Parent Carer Forum CIC

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Birmingham Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) recognises that all parents and carers of a child or young person with Special Educational Needs or a Disability (SEND) living in or receiving services in Birmingham area has an equal right of access to become a member of the forum.

BPCF will adhere to the legislative framework complying with the Equality Act 2010 (See Annex 1.1 and 1.2), the Human Rights Act 1998 and Equality and Human Rights Commission Codes of Practice (See Annex 1.3); we will ensure our practices adhere to the principles of all relevant equality legislation and pay due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty actively working to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different groups of people and the communities we work with

The way we work is not only governed by the legislation that outlaws discrimination and promotes equality, but also wholly encompasses the core values of the organisation. BPCF works in a way that recognises the importance of inclusion, bringing opportunities and access to all individuals.

We are committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity, ensuring accessibility, and respecting human rights. Our mission is: to influence social change to create a fairer and safer society.

BPCF will:

1. Take pro-active steps to address discrimination, harassment, bullying, and victimisation in all its forms in membership management, volunteer management, employment practices and in all areas of our work.
2. Ensure that everyone directly associated with our organisation – members, volunteers, staff, contractors, local strategic partners, associates, and visitors are aware of our commitment in these areas and how this policy affects them.
3. Identify, and take positive and practical steps, to remove any barriers to the participation of people who are currently underrepresented as members, volunteers, staff, local service users or associates.
4. Seek to develop and maintain a (voluntary and or paid) workforce that reflects the community within which we serve.

5. Ensure that there are clear procedures to ensure compliance with relevant legal requirements (e.g., recruitment) and that members, volunteers, staff, and associates are offered training to put these procedures into practice.
6. Ensure that the accessibility of our buildings (if applicable), events and information is routinely reviewed and improved, where possible.
7. Ensure that volunteers and staff receive appropriate support, training, and advice to assist them to deal sensitively with challenging equalities issues.
8. Develop internal working arrangements and structures that will assist in the promotion of anti-discriminatory practices, and the sharing of effective practice to this end.
9. Enable volunteers, staff, associates, and parent carer members to have equal access to relevant training and opportunities for development and ensure that terms, conditions, volunteer, and employment practices do not discriminate against any group.
10. Ensure that forum leaders (committee/officers/directors establish and maintain suitable systems to ensure that BPCF can effectively monitor and evaluate compliance and progress in relation to promoting equality of opportunity.

Equal Opportunities and Discrimination

BPCF is committed to equal opportunities. We recognise and embrace our responsibility to promote equality of opportunity for staff, service users and others associated with the organisation. This means that the BPCF Committee will ensure that none of our members, volunteers, paid employees, contractors, strategic partners or organisations with whom we work is unfairly discriminated against on the grounds of their 'protected characteristic' including: age, disability (including: mental health and those with hidden disabilities), gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race (including: colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin), religion or belief (including: political belief and those with no religion or belief), sex and sexual orientation. In addition, we will not discriminate on the grounds of social standing, status, responsibility for dependents, social class, employment status, or unrelated criminal convictions.

BPCF is an anti-discriminatory organisation committed to influencing social change, the promotion of equal opportunity and the elimination all forms of discrimination and harassment covered by the Equality Act 2010 (See Annex 1.1 and 1.2) including:

- Direct Discrimination
- Indirect Discrimination
- Discrimination by Perception
- Discrimination by Association
- Victimisation
- Harassment

We recognise the various types of discrimination related to protected characteristics and what prevents individuals and groups gaining equal access to society's resources and services. We are committed to taking practical steps to address inequality and discrimination by complying with relevant legislation and developing best practice.

It is our policy to redress the balance, as far as is lawful, in favour of all under-represented and disadvantaged groups, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We recognise that "positive action," to meet the needs of specific groups facing discrimination, can make a practical contribution to addressing discrimination and inequalities.

We define "positive action" within the context of the Equality Act 2010: Positive action enables an employer, or an organisation, to increase participation from a wider section of society through opportunities such as training and mentoring schemes. Examples of positive action could include training and mentoring schemes for under-represented groups.

BPCF commits itself to taking positive action to ensure that its activities and provision of services, its recruitment procedures for volunteers, staff and its recruitment of committee members are within the spirit and letter of current legislation and our Equalities Policy.

ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION IN SERVICES

BPCF recognises the need to ensure that all parent carers* with a child or young person aged 0 to 25 with SEND in Birmingham can be members and contribute to the development of the forum. BPCF primarily aims to increase its membership and extend its reach amongst underrepresented and disadvantaged groups who face discrimination and inequalities to ensure a representative voice in the Birmingham area.

To achieve this:

- BPCF will seek to develop and implement anti-discriminatory strategies and positive action programmes as part of its work and promote these throughout all the spheres of influence available.
- BPCF will take appropriate steps to ensure it represents a broad and balanced range of views which consider the varying needs of different individuals and groups. We will also take action to identify the needs of people who are underrepresented in our work and will strive to represent their views to the service providers who meet those needs.
- All members, volunteers, staff, contractors, associates, committee/officers/directors must be aware of our commitment to equal opportunities and should be familiar with the contents of this policy document.

- Support will be provided for disabled groups and individuals through the provision of 'reasonable adjustments' (See Annex 1.4). We aim to ensure that our services are accessible to people with disabilities by proactively ensuring accessible venues for our events, ensuring that our training events are adjusted where necessary to meet the needs of disabled participants.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

BPCF aims to ensure that all people will receive a positive welcome from their first point of contact with the forum.

We aim to create and sustain a working environment free from oppressive attitudes and surroundings in which people working with us, members, volunteers, staff, contractors, associates, and local strategic partners feel comfortable and are not exposed to any form of harassment (including racial or sexual harassment) or to stereotyped attitudes and beliefs.

BREACHES OF POLICY

All members, volunteers, staff, associates, and partners have a right to make a complaint if they consider this policy has been breached. Complaints should be made under the procedures set out in the Complaints Policy. Any breach of this policy will be taken seriously, investigated, and addressed through the established code of conduct, disciplinary and grievance, and complaints policies and procedures.

Members, volunteers, staff, contractors, associates, local strategic partners, and parent carers have the right to make a complaint if they consider that this policy has been breached.

Disciplinary action will be taken, as appropriate, where allegations of discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation are founded.

PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC LIAISON

BPCF will provide information and resource materials which are free from images, language or attitudes which are: ageist, disablist, heterosexist, racist, sexist, or Transphobic.

All external communications, including publicity materials, press releases and advertisements will reflect a commitment to equal opportunities and will promote equality of access to the forum's membership.

MANAGEMENT OF THE PARENT CARER FORUM

The composition of the committee/officers should reflect the diversity and needs of the people who are members of Birmingham, and who experience discrimination and inequalities.

To achieve this:

- BPCF will conduct a regular analysis of the composition of the committee/steering group/officers/trustees to identify which communities are under-represented.
- The committee/steering group/officers/trustees/directors will endeavour to take appropriate action to recruit new members to ensure equal representation in the group's decision-making processes.

Recruitment, Employment, Promotion and Development

BPCF will ensure all its recruitment and selection practices are in accordance with principles of fairness and equality of opportunity, and fully in compliance with all relevant legislation.

We aim to recruit volunteers and staff via a process consistent with our Equalities Policy. By setting targets, and monitoring of the recruitment process and the workforce, we will seek to remedy any significant underrepresentation and to eliminate direct and indirect discrimination.

Decisions taken throughout the recruitment process will be recorded in a standard format and this information will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the process in ensuring equality of opportunity. Where appropriate, we will also utilise positive action to encourage diversity and to seek to address any significant underrepresentation.

We will ensure that training, promotion, and development opportunities are offered on a basis that can be shown to be non-discriminatory.

We appreciate the skills and value that volunteers and staff with caring responsibilities and dependents bring to the forum, and we are committed to enabling those volunteers and staff to work within the forum. Where this is possible, and consistent with the provision of a high-quality organisation, we will take a flexible and sympathetic approach to the issues faced by these volunteers and staff.

Serious consideration will be given to staff who wish to take Annual Leave on specific days for religious or cultural reasons or who need to make adjustments to their working week for similar reasons. Reasonable adjustments or leave will not be unreasonably refused.

BPCF may choose to make a special effort to encourage volunteers or workers from underrepresented groups to take up roles or posts or at certain levels within the forum.

This may include offering customised training and select development opportunities to staff from these groups.

We will collate and monitor statistical information about our volunteer and paid workforce to allow consideration of the profile of the workforce in terms of protected characteristics with the purposes of ensuring that marginalised groups are represented, and the workforce properly reflects the makeup of the wider community within which we operate. This information will be reported regularly to the committee/steering group/officers/trustees/directors.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The committee/officers/directors will have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy and for the development of any further equal opportunities initiatives.

This will involve the collection and analysis of statistical information concerning volunteers, job applicants, committee/officers/director composition and members, to inform future planning.

We will seek to obtain equality and diversity information from volunteer and paid staff, and candidates for the purpose of monitoring and reporting purposes. This will be requested on a voluntary basis, via an employment data monitoring form, and will be used to assess how diverse the forum is and to ensure we are meeting our equality and diversity responsibilities as set out in this policy and in our constitutional objectives.

We will take corrective action where any issues are identified. Equality and diversity information gathered may also be used to support the process of tendering for new business/funding.

Progress against the priorities detailed in the Equality Development Plan will also be used as a measure of how well this policy is being delivered.

BPCF will ensure that its members. Volunteers, staff committee/officers/directors are committed to ensuring that the Equalities Policy is implemented.

Responsibility and Communication

The BPCF expects that all members, staff (employees, volunteers, associates, contractors, and temporary workers), and parent carers, play an active part in promoting this policy. The Chair is responsible, on behalf of the committee/steering group/officers/trustees[/directors], for communicating and promoting the policy. Each volunteer or member of staff, with support from their supervisor/manager, has responsibility for implementing this policy within their area.

The committee/steering group/officers/trustees/directors are responsible for monitoring compliance with this Equalities Policy and the associated procedures. The committee/steering group/officers/trustees/directors are responsible for challenging any areas where underperformance has been identified.

Procedural responsibilities under the Equalities Policy are as follows:

The committee/steering group/officers/trustees/directors:

- Are responsible for ensuring that BPCF meets its responsibilities and legal obligations in relation to equality legislation.
- With assistance from the Chair/Director will ensure equality commitments identified in the policy are delivered through the development of an Equality Development Plan (EDP) / Action Plan.
- Will monitor and scrutinise performance, taking responsibility to set improvement targets where a need has been identified.
- Will identify and secure sufficient resources to implement this policy.

Individual committee members/officers/directors or volunteer supervisors:

- Are responsible for working with the full committee/steering group/officers/trustees/directors to ensure that the EDP / Action Plans are developed and the activities in the Action Plans are implemented.
- Will provide a high-profile lead on activities contained in the Action Plans.
- Will be the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion lead with the authority to act on behalf of the organisation
- When aware of harassment, bullying or discrimination will take appropriate action, regardless of whether the alleged victim has raised an official complaint.
- Are responsible for promoting equality of opportunity within their day-to-day practices.
- Must ensure every aspect of service delivery embraces and promotes equality of opportunity.
- Are responsible for making staff and volunteers aware of the contents of the Equalities Policy and discuss equality and diversity issues at team and / or other relevant meetings.

Individual volunteers, staff, or contractors at all levels:

- Are responsible for familiarising themselves with the Equalities Policy.
- Must behave in a way that is supportive of the Equalities Policy.
- Must inform their line manager/supervisor if they suspect that discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation has taken place.

Communication:

- Volunteers or staff joining BPCF will receive this policy as part of the documents contained within their induction pack.
- Current volunteers and staff will be informed of the development of this policy by their supervisor/line manager.
- Contractors will be made aware of this policy by those procuring their services.
- Key stakeholders and partners will be made aware of this policy by those responsible for maintaining partnership links.

Annex 1.1 – The Equality Act 2010, Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 brought together all existing equality legislation and offers protection from discrimination to people with “protected characteristics”. The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Annex 1.2 – Discrimination

To understand current equality legislation, the following is an explanation of the types of unfair treatment that can occur:

Direct discrimination - occurs when someone treats another person less favourably because of a protected characteristic, or an assumption about one of the above, e.g., a Black candidate being refused a job, even though they are the best candidate, purely because of the perception that they may not fit in with the rest of the team.

Discrimination by association – discrimination against someone because they are associated with a person who has a protected characteristic. For example, an employee who is unfairly treated because they have a disabled child - can claim discrimination.

Discrimination by perception – is discrimination against an individual because other people think they possess a protected characteristic, e.g., a heterosexual employee being unfairly treated on the basis that others think they are gay can claim discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Indirect discrimination – is when a condition, rule, policy, or practice disadvantages people who have a protected characteristic, e.g., a manager asking that employees work on Friday evenings to meet the demands of high workload may discriminate against Jewish people who wish to commence the Sabbath at sunset. However, indirect discrimination can be objectively justified, e.g., if there is an absolute organisational necessity for staff to be available to work at a certain time.

Harassment - is unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristic which is intended to violate another’s dignity or to create an offensive hostile, humiliating or degrading environment for that individual. E.g., an employee being continually teased

by colleagues about their gender reassignment. This is a subjective test, which means that it is not what you consider to be offensive; but what the person to whom you say or do something considers offensive. If you feel that you are being harassed, you should raise the issue via the Bullying and Harassment Policy.

Victimisation - it is a discriminatory act to treat anyone less favourably if they have made (or are suspected of having made) a complaint, or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, about discrimination during either present or previous employment, or they intend to make a complaint, or they have assisted someone else's complaint by giving evidence or corroborating a story.

Annex 1.3 Equality and Human Rights Commission

For more information on the Equality and Human Rights Commission - Equality Act Code of Practice please visit their website

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-act-codes-practice>

Annex 1.4 'Reasonable Adjustments'

A reasonable adjustment is defined by the UK Government here:

<https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers>

For more information on reasonable adjustments please visit the EHRC website:

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/what-are-reasonable-adjustments>