



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

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BEACON Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Purpose and objective

BEACON is an explicitly ecumenical Christian charity, but it seeks to recruit staff, trustees and volunteers from all sectors of the community who are in sympathy with its vision and objectives.

This policy sets out the process for ensuring equality of opportunity and respect for diversity, and preventing unlawful discrimination in our relationship with our service users and others. The requirements apply in relation to age, disability, gender and/or gender reassignment, marital status and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

Everyone must contribute to compliance with these requirements, for example by treating each other fairly and with respect, by embedding BEACON's values into their work, and by challenging inappropriate behaviour and processes. This policy has been produced in accordance with general law set out in legislation, including the Equality Act 2010.

BEACON is committed to eliminating discrimination, and to promoting equality and diversity in its own policies, practices and behaviours and in those areas in which it has influence. This applies to all aspects of BEACON's dealings with members of staff, volunteers, service users and third parties. BEACON is fully committed to a policy of treating everyone equally.

2. Policy Statements:

2.1 BEACON will treat everyone fairly and equally and with the same attention, courtesy and respect and will not discriminate without lawful cause against any person, nor victimise or harass anyone on the grounds of their race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), gender and/or gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status or civil partnership, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or disability.

2.2 BEACON will take such steps and make such reasonable adjustments as are necessary in all circumstances in order to prevent any staff, volunteers, service users and third parties from being placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with those who are not disabled.

2.3 BEACON will take all reasonable steps to employ, and train people on the basis of their experience, abilities and qualifications without regard to race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), gender and/or gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status or civil partnership, religion or belief, age, pregnancy or disability. In this policy, these are known as the "protected characteristics".

2.4 BEACON will also take all reasonable steps to provide an environment in which everybody is treated with respect and dignity and that is free from harassment and bullying based upon the protected characteristics. Everyone is responsible for conducting themselves in accordance with this policy.

2.5 BEACON will not condone or tolerate any form of harassment, whether engaged in by employees, volunteers, service users or by outside third parties who work with BEACON, such as clients, contractors and suppliers or partner agencies.

2.6 Everybody has a duty to co-operate with BEACON to make sure that this policy is effective in ensuring equal opportunities and in preventing discrimination, harassment or bullying. Disciplinary action will be taken against anyone who is found to have committed an act of improper or unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying or intimidation. Serious breaches of this equality and diversity policy will be treated as potential gross misconduct and could render an employee liable to summary dismissal, or a volunteer unable to be involved in future activities of BEACON.

2.7 BEACON will also take appropriate action against any third parties who are found to have committed an act of improper or unlawful harassment against any staff, volunteers or service users of BEACON.

3. Regulation and legislation

In developing and implementing its equality and diversity policy, BEACON will comply with the Equality Act 2010 and with any future anti-discrimination legislation and associated codes of practice.

The Act defines the various kinds of discrimination with reference to the characteristics which are protected under the Act. In summary the law requires that everybody has a right to be treated fairly. It also prohibits discrimination based on one of a number of protected characteristics.

Protected characteristics are:

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

4. Direct discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others without that characteristic are treated or would be treated, because of a protected characteristic. There is no need for a comparator, i.e. comparing this treatment to the treatment of someone without the protected characteristic.

Example:

Dismissing a 70-year-old worker because of their age

Direct discrimination also occurs:

- when someone is treated unfavourably because they are *associated* with someone with a protected characteristic, for example being married to someone with a protected characteristic. This is discrimination by *association*.
- if someone thinks that you have a protected characteristic and treats you less favourably, whether true or not. This is direct discrimination by *perception*.

Examples with reference to disability:

- when treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability when this cannot be justified. This is known as discrimination *arising from a disability*.
- when failing to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person.

BEACON will take all reasonable steps to eliminate direct discrimination in all aspects of its professional dealings.

5. Indirect discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs where a seemingly neutral Provision, Criterion or Practice (PCP) or general rule has a disproportionate affect on one particular group with a protected characteristic, such as females or individuals of a specific race. An example of this would be requiring all promoted post holders to be 6 feet tall or more (the PCP) is indirectly discriminatory against women (given women are less likely to be able to comply with the PCP).

Equality legislation states that unlawful indirect discrimination exists where A (e.g. an employer) applies a PCP to B (e.g. an employee) if:

- a) A applies or would apply the PCP to employees who do not have the same protected characteristic as B;
- b) the PCP puts or would put employees with the protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage when compared with persons who do not have that characteristic;
- c) the PCP puts or would put B at that disadvantage; *and*
- d) A cannot show that the PCP is objectively justified.

BEACON will take all reasonable steps to eliminate indirect discrimination in all aspects of its professional dealings.

6. Recruitment, advertising and selection

The recruitment process for staff, trustees and volunteers will be conducted in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the role in terms of relevant experience, abilities and qualifications. BEACON is committed to applying its equal opportunities policy statement at all stages of recruitment and selection.

Advertisements will aim to positively encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, BEACON will, as far as reasonably practicable:

- Ensure advertisements are not confined to those areas or publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants with a particular protected characteristic
- Avoid setting any unnecessary provisions or criteria which would exclude a higher proportion of applicants with a particular protected characteristic.

7. Terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services

All terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that there is no unlawful direct or indirect discrimination because of one or more of the protected characteristics.

BEACON trustees will have regard to its duty to make *reasonable* adjustments to work provisions and practices and where feasible to physical features of work premises or to provide auxiliary aids or services in order to ensure that service users, employees, volunteers or partners with a disability are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who do not have a disability. No costs of any such adjustments will be passed on.

8. Bullying and harassment

Bullying is offensive or intimidating behaviour or an abuse or misuse of power which undermines or humiliates a person. BEACON will not tolerate this in the workplace or in any work-related setting outside the workplace, for example, at work-related social events.

An employee/volunteer/service user harasses another employee/volunteer/service user if they engage in unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic, and the conduct has the purpose or effect of violating the other person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that other person.

An employee/volunteer/service user also harasses another employee/volunteer/service user if they engage in unwanted conduct of a sexual nature or that is related to gender or gender reassignment, and the conduct has the purpose or effect of violating the other person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that other person.

The unwanted conduct will still amount to harassment if it is based on the protected characteristic of a third party with whom the person is associated and not on the person's own protected characteristic, or if it was directed at someone other than the person, or even at nobody in particular, but it was witnessed. In addition, harassment can include cases where the unwanted conduct occurs because it is perceived that a person has a particular protected characteristic, when in fact they do not.

Conduct may be harassment whether or not the person intended to offend. Something intended as a "joke" or as "banter" may offend another person. Behaviour which a reasonable person would realise would be likely to offend will always constitute harassment without the need for someone having to make it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable, for example, touching someone in a sexual way. With other forms of behaviour, it may not always be clear in advance that it will offend a particular person, for example, office banter and jokes. In these cases, the behaviour will constitute harassment if the conduct continues after the person has

made it clear, by words or conduct, that such behaviour is unacceptable to him or her. A single incident can amount to harassment if it is sufficiently serious.

9. Reporting allegations

All allegations of discrimination, bullying or harassment will be dealt with seriously, confidentially and speedily. BEACON will not ignore or treat lightly grievances or complaints of discrimination or harassment from employees, volunteers or service users.

If you wish to make a complaint of discrimination, bullying or harassment, you should use BEACON's Grievance Procedure if you are an employee and BEACON's Complaints policy if you are a volunteer, service user or third party.

Any individual who is found to have discriminated against or harassed another person in violation of this policy will be asked to account for their actions and will be subject to disciplinary action. Such behaviour from employees may be treated as gross misconduct. A violation of this policy could mean that the relationship between BEACON and the individual is severed.

10. Promoting equality of opportunity and respect for diversity

Anyone who is involved in the activities of BEACON will be informed of this equality and diversity policy and will be expected to pay due regard to it when conducting any activities on BEACON's behalf and to promote the principles of equality and diversity. BEACON will make every effort to reflect its commitment to equality and diversity in all its marketing and communication activities.