



# **Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy October 2024**

## Management information

Policy Reference	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity Policy
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Owner	Director of Services/Head of Quality and Evaluation
Approval	CEO/ Deputy CEO

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## Version control

Date amended	Amended by	Summary of amends
September 2021	Natalie Oliver & Claire Robinson-Learoyd	Additional detail throughout policy. Removal of out-of-date information.
January 2023	Jenny Sexton, Salome Williams, Claire Robinson-Learoyd	Redraft. Reference to Dignity and respect at work policy Cross referenced with National Mind policy framework
June 2023	Jenny Sexton, Salome Williams	Finalised following consultation with inclusion group. This version to be added to website
July - October 2024	Susu Stinton (Trustee), Andrea McCubbin (CEO) and Lesley Michaelis (Chair)	Incorporating additional Protected Characteristics to ensure all covered, alignment to organization values and minor revisions e.g. Mind in Berkshire, names changed to EDIE (Policy validated by insurers for legal compliance and risk assessed which was deemed low.

Sept 2025	Stephen Robinson/Salome Williams	Policy owner changed to DoS/HoQ Changed SMT to SLT
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# Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Policy

## Introduction

At Buckinghamshire Mind we are committed to achieving equal opportunities in employment and in the services that we provide. We aspire to having a diverse team at all levels that is representative of the community that we serve. This policy also applies to those services delivered in East Berkshire under the operating name Mind in Berkshire.

We want all our colleagues and the people we support to feel included and able to access all the opportunities that we provide.

We are also committed to extending our Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (EDIE) journey out into our community, building relationships to better understand the communities we live alongside and finding ways to break down barriers that may be limiting access to our services.

## Purpose

This policy will provide guidance on how we will provide equality, fairness and respect for all and will set out to remove discrimination and to promote inclusion and diversity.

Buckinghamshire Mind will comply with and adhere to the Equality Act 2010 which provides a single framework to tackle disadvantage and discrimination of people with protected characteristics. Where possible, Buckinghamshire Mind will tackle disadvantage and discrimination of all people, even if their characteristic is not a 'protected one' under the Equality Act. We will consult with best practice and continually review how we can improve our equality and inclusion, treating this area as one for constant tending and discussion as the world evolves.

## Links to relevant legislation and guidance

[Equality Act 2010](#);  
[Public sector equality duty 2011](#)

## Background

The policy was redrafted by the HR Manager and Head of Quality in conjunction with a member of the board of trustees. The draft was then reviewed by the Bucks Mind inclusion group members. The policy will be required reading for all staff and volunteers and will be available for people we support on our website, welcoming comments on where we could potentially improve.

## Definitions

### Understanding Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Equity

- **Equality** is not about 'treating everyone the same' but recognising that everyone is different, and that people's needs are met in different ways. Equality is essentially being about fairness and ensuring that we all have the best possible chance to succeed in life whatever our background or identity.
- This is closely related to **Equity** which is about ensuring that we provide resources

to enable all people to be equal based on their need. Equity tries to address the different opportunities needed for people to be equal.

- **Diversity** is about understanding that everyone is unique, recognising, respecting and celebrating the added value that differences bring.
- **Inclusion** is where difference is seen as a benefit and where perspectives and differences are shared, leading to better decisions.
- An **inclusive** working environment is one in which everyone feels valued, that their contribution matters, and they can perform to their full potential, regardless of background, identity or circumstances. An inclusive workplace enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

### Understanding Protected Characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010 we must not unlawfully discriminate because of the following 9 protected characteristics

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

As an organisation we will work towards true inclusivity and a policy of non-discrimination for any reason.

### Understanding Key Terms

- **Direct discrimination** - treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others
- **Indirect discrimination** - putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage
- **Harassment** - unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them
- **Victimisation** - treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment
- **Positive action** - taking specific steps to improve equality in your workplace.

### Roles and Responsibilities

- The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.
- The Senior Leadership Team work together to ensure the policy is adhered to operationally across Buckinghamshire Mind.
- The Director of Services oversees this area and works with the Head of HR and Head of Quality & Evaluation to ensure compliance.
- The staff inclusion group, which meets regularly, will be consulted with for any revisions to this policy.
- There will be a culture of open dialogue and feedback with everyone involved with Bucks

Mind to ensure the policy remains accurate and relevant.

Whilst overall responsibility sits with the Board of Trustees and Senior Leadership Team, every person associated with Buckinghamshire Mind has a personal responsibility for implementing and promoting these principles in their day-to-day dealings with everyone including people we support, staff, volunteers trustees and partners.

Reference to this policy will be included in contract documents with outside agencies.

### **Scope**

This policy applies to:

- Employees (temporary, part-time or full-time)
- Job candidates
- People we support
- Volunteers
- Partners and stakeholders
- Funders and commissioners
- Trustees
- Members of the community that we work with

Everyone will be given access to a copy of this policy and reminded of our expectations around equality, diversity and inclusion at Buckinghamshire Mind.

### **Associated policies**

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity are woven through everything we do. However, there is particular crossover with the following policies.

- Dignity and respect at work policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Flexible Working Policy
- Compliments, comments, and complaints
- Confidentiality
- Data Protection
- Influence and Participation
- Safeguarding (Adults at risk and CYP)
- Staff code of conduct
- Trustee recruitment and induction
- Volunteering
- Wellbeing at work
- EDI targets and strategy

### **Policy implementation**

This policy will be made available for all stakeholders either via email, sharepoint or our HR system. It will be given to all new colleagues and volunteers as part of their induction process and made available for people we support via the website and as hard copy on request.

## Expectations

We expect all our people will use appropriately inclusive language and behave in a way that will uphold the dignity of colleagues, people who use our services, volunteers, trustees, partners and stakeholders. Our goal is to ensure that these commitments, reinforced by our values, are embedded in our day-to-day working practices.

## Our Commitment

We will demonstrate our commitment in the following areas:

### 1. Communities

As well as promoting good practice within Bucks Mind, our EDIE aims extend out into the community we work in in the following ways:

- promoting equality of opportunity and diversity within the communities in which we work and with all our partners and workforce.
- aiming to build a workforce which reflects our service user base within the diverse communities in which we work, with the aim of having parity of representation across the workforce.
- actively seeking connections with marginalised groups within Bucks to understand more about their position and potential barriers to engagement with our/any Mental Health services.
- seeking to break down barriers through partnerships
- inviting discussion and visibility between us and community groups to facilitate mutual understanding and co-production of support that is relevant and inclusive.

### 2. People We Support and Partners

Bucks Mind ensures equality and promotes diversity through service delivery by:

- treating the people we support, our colleagues and stakeholders fairly and with respect.
- promoting an environment free from discrimination, bullying and harassment, and tackling behaviour which breaches this.
- building in legislative requirements and best practice to all our service delivery and employee policies and procedures, and supporting these with appropriate training and guidance.
- encouraging access and applications from under-represented groups.
- responding swiftly to allegations of discrimination.
- actively engaging with under-represented communities
- purposefully engage with those with Lived Experience of Mental Health issues to inform our work.

### 3. Volunteers

Bucks Mind will ensure equality and promote diversity in all volunteer engagement

- Recruitment – e.g. anonymised shortlisting, reasonable adjustments, encouraging applications from specific groups, clear skills-based selection criteria.
- Regular training – e.g. for all volunteers, volunteer coordinators, recruitment-specific training.
- In role – e.g. code of conduct (zero tolerance for discrimination), response to



- discrimination/microaggressions,
- The recruitment of a diverse trustee board that is representative of the communities we support.

#### **4. Recruitment and selection**

Bucks Mind will ensure equality and promote diversity through its recruitment and employment practices by:

- advertising job vacancies internally to encourage service users and volunteers to apply.
- ensuring that recruitment, selection and promotion will be transparent, merit-based and fair.
- making reasonable adjustments wherever possible to enable participation in the process.
- encouraging recruitment from groups currently under represented within Buckinghamshire Mind.
- ensuring that job descriptions, person specifications and application forms reflect only the requirements of the job and do not imply any stereotyping.
- stating in adverts that we are seeking to be an effective equal opportunities employer, including lived experience of mental health.
- considering a variety of advertising mediums to provide us with a wide pool of candidates.
- carrying out appropriate demographic monitoring during the recruitment process. All such information will be treated as confidential and will be clearly separated from all processes concerned with the selection of staff or volunteers.
- the EDI strategy will be reviewed annually by trustees and will establish key targets to ensure our workforce is diverse and representative of the communities we support.

#### **5. Colleagues**

- recognising and valuing the differences and individual contribution that people make
- providing support and encouragement to staff to develop their careers and increase their contributions to the organisation through the enhancement of their skills and abilities
- recognising and developing potential which has not been used before because of past discrimination and disadvantage.
- being a healthy place to work with a strong culture of inclusivity and support. Some examples of this include:
  - communicating and living out our Dignity and respect at work policy.
  - providing mandatory training on Equal Opportunities.
  - Being a MINDFUL EMPLOYER®. The MINDFUL EMPLOYER® initiative is aimed at increasing awareness of mental health at work and providing support for businesses in recruiting and retaining staff. Buckinghamshire Mind has signed its Charter for Employers who are Positive About Mental Health.
  - Our inclusion group which seeks input and ideas on how to make our organisation more inclusive
  - Giving the opportunity to give feedback on how to make the organisation more inclusive via surveys

## 6. Leadership

Ensuring that the leadership of Buckinghamshire Mind at Board level and within the Senior Leadership Team is diverse and representative of the community we serve. and has undergone Equality & Diversity training.

## 7. Continual learning

We will create a culture of openness, curiosity and non-judgment to help us learn and grow as an organisation. We will develop and refine our EDI action plan to ensure we stay current and relevant.

Learning opportunities will include:

- Mandatory training on Equality & Diversity – either face to face or via the Learning Management System.
- Mandatory reading and understanding of this policy
- Access to the Inclusion Library and active encouragement to everyone to dip in and inform themselves
- Invited speakers to talk at All Staff Meetings

## Specific Types of Support

### 1. Age

Bucks Mind will not discriminate due to age, when hiring, in the workplace or on pay. Training is provided regarding inclusivity based on age. Bucks Mind has a flexible working policy which explores how we can support colleagues.

### 2. Disability

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial long term adverse effect on someone's ability to carry out normal daily activities. This may include physical disabilities, mental disabilities and neurodiversity. Bucks Mind recognises that many disabilities are 'invisible'.

#### **Paid time off for medical appointments**

We will provide a reasonable amount of paid time off work for a disabled person to attend rehabilitation, assessment or treatment in relation to their disability. Employees should discuss details with their line manager and/or HR as early as practicable to agree and manage appropriate time off work.

#### **Medical Advice**

It may be useful to seek medical advice from GP's, Occupational Health advisers or other specialists. If this is the case, we will discuss this with the individual and obtain appropriate written authorisation before proceeding.

#### **Access to Work Scheme**

If appropriate, we would also consider using the Government's "Access to Work" Scheme which can provide further advice and support. Individuals can also seek advice from this scheme.

#### **Employee Assistance Programme**

Employees have access to an Employee Assistance Programme. This includes a variety of confidential services and tools for employees such as:

- Information service (consumer, legal, finance, housing, benefits etc)
- Counselling
- Health management portal
- Wellbeing portal

### **Accessible Buildings**

We will endeavour to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all premises are fully accessible.

### **Ways of working**

Flexibility can be given as to how a person might want to work to be their best self – e.g. being able to walk around during meetings or being given additional information before a meeting.

Whilst not a legally protected characteristic, Bucks Mind has a flexible working policy which fully explores how we will support those with caring responsibilities.

## **3. Gender Reassignment**

Bucks Mind will support anyone going through the process of gender reassignment and ensure that they are not discriminated against and are treated inclusively. Training is provided regarding gender reassignment and individuals will be treated with sensitivity. There are regular opportunities for people to recommend ways we can be more inclusive (a quarterly survey) and we review these suggestions and implement them if we are able.

### **Facilities**

Where possible we will provide a unisex toilet and/or changing facilities in addition to single sex facilities. If the need arises in our premises, we will work together to find a solution that allows all colleagues and people we support to feel comfortable and respected.

## **4. Marriage/Civil Partnership**

No roles are dependent on being married or being in a civil partnership and all benefits and opportunities are equally open to all regardless of relationship status. We will only enquire as to relationship status if this is essential for pension or tax purposes or a similar reason.

## **5. Pregnancy and maternity**

We recognise that pregnant employees may need changes to their work conditions and will consider any requests for such changes. A pregnant employee will not be treated unfavourably because of their pregnancy, or because of illness suffered by them as a result of it.

### **Antenatal Care**

Time off with pay will be given to both full and part-time pregnant employees to attend antenatal classes, including medical checks and relaxation/childbirth classes. Similar provision will be made for partners sharing responsibility for childcare to attend antenatal classes where necessary. Requests for leave should be discussed with line managers/HR to agree reasonable and appropriate time off.

We will aim to provide a private, hygienic and safe environment where milk can be

expressed and stored. Employees should discuss requirements and preferences with their line manager or HR for suitable arrangements to be made.

## **6. Race**

We will continually monitor our demographics around race and set targets to reflect that of the communities we work in. Bucks Mind will use fair recruitment practices to ensure there is no discrimination in selection and promote a culture of learning to enable all staff, volunteers and people we support to inform themselves in a confident way about races and religions in our community.

## **7. Religion and Belief**

Bucks Mind will protect freedom of expression and freedom of speech for religion and philosophical beliefs which are serious, important and worthy of respect. Bucks Mind will use fair recruitment practices to ensure there is no discrimination in selection and promote a culture of learning to enable all staff, volunteers and people we support to inform themselves in a confident way about religions and philosophical beliefs in our community.

## **8. Sex**

Bucks Mind regularly review our data on sex to ensure there is no discrimination based on sex when hiring, in the workplace and on pay. If there is a genuine occupational requirement, say for a particular same sex only service, an exception could be made.

### **Facilities**

We will provide single sex toilets and/or changing facilities. If it is not possible to have two separate facilities, then a unisex single cubicle facility will be provided.

## **9. Sexual Orientation**

We regularly review our EDI statistics and data to ensure that there is no discrimination against anyone whatever their sexual orientation. There are regular opportunities for people to recommend ways we can be more inclusive (a quarterly survey) and we review these suggestions and implement them if we are able. Training is provided on inclusivity regarding sexual orientation and what sexual orientation means.

## **10. Gender Identity**

### **Communications**

We are careful to remove bias by keeping communications gender neutral as far as possible. No assumption or stereotypes are made as to who may do which role within Bucks Mind or as to who may access what types of support.

### **Pronouns**

Pronouns are optional in email signatures and in any surveys or questionnaires that we produce

## **11. Caring responsibilities**

Whilst this is not a legally protected characteristic, Buckinghamshire Mind will not discriminate against anyone with caring responsibilities. Bucks Mind has a flexible working policy which fully explores how we will support those with caring responsibilities.

## 12. Menopause

Whilst not a protected characteristic in its own right, people going through menopause and perimenopause experience a range of symptoms that may affect them in the workplace. Bucks Mind commits to open dialogue with colleagues and volunteers around the impact of perimenopause and menopause and to providing adaptations to enable people to carry out their roles to the best of their ability. We are also developing a separate menopause policy.

### General types of support and inclusivity

#### Use of Language

Colleagues, volunteers and people we support will avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, belittles any protected characteristic.

Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, disciplinary action may be taken if they persist with it. We will promote a culture of curiosity and openness whereby colleagues and volunteers feel confident to ask if they aren't sure and have access to up to date information and resources in the Inclusion Library.

#### Allyship

Allyship (active support for the rights of a minority or marginalised group without being a member of it) is promoted through learning opportunities and internal communications.

#### Communications and Content

All materials used or developed will be judged in the light of the promotion of equal opportunities, and those considered to be discriminatory or non-inclusive will not be used.

#### Job design

Consideration will be given to job design to enable each person to carry out any particular role.

#### Use of IT

Consideration will be given to IT software or adjustments to enable someone to use the IT. For example, adjusting the colour or font, or enabling voice recognition.

#### Adjustments to equipment or space

Reasonable adjustments may be made to equipment – e.g. desk height, blue tooth equipment, use of braille, lighting, noise reduction etc.

#### Medical issues

Reasonable adjustments will be made to enable a colleague or a user of a service to manage a medical issue. This might mean having a private space at work, access to particular facilities, frequent breaks to administer medication etc.

#### Work patterns

Work patterns may be adjusted if possible –

#### Training

The format of training will be flexible and varied to allow people to access the training.

### **Use of online**

Online meetings will be an option to enable Colleagues to work remotely when needed or users of services to access our services.

### **Digital and print**

Information and services will be available in both digital format and print wherever possible.

### **Translating**

Where possible, translation will be made into other languages.

### **Cultural understanding**

Research will be carried out and learning shared to enable understanding of other cultures and to ensure that all have access to services without barriers.

### **Celebration of difference**

Special days celebrating difference will be communicated and celebrated where possible, e.g. international women's day, LGBT and Black history month, Mental Health awareness day and carers week.

### **Religion and beliefs**

Where possible consideration will be given to supporting a colleague or user of a service's religion or belief – e.g. providing a prayer space, allowing annual leave to celebrate religious festivals, non-judgmentalism, tolerance and the right to freedom of religion and belief.

### **Breaches of policy**

#### **Dealing with Complaints or incidents**

If any service user, volunteer or employee feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter. The following policies should be referred to, as appropriate:

- Dignity and Respect at work Policy
- Complaints policy
- Grievance policy
- Disciplinary policy

All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously.

Complaints or allegations of an unfounded or malicious nature will also be treated as seriously, and may involve use of the above policies.

Details of the organisation's policies and procedures can be found on the colleague hub, in the shared drive policy folder, or from HR.

### **Individual Rights**

Bucks Mind will aim to create the required balance between people's freedom of speech and anti-discrimination of all groups.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The effective of our EDI practices will be monitored by:

- Reviewing (and addressing where necessary) the diversity of the workforce, applicants, and people who use services

- Reviewing complaints
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Equality Action Plan
- Exit interviews
- Annual EDI surveys
- Feedback from Inclusion group