



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Registered Charity Number: 1170952

This policy and guidance will be reviewed in line with any legislative changes in relations to equality, diversity and inclusion or when incidents dictate. This will ensure that this document is current and fit for purpose.

This policy is supported in achieving its aims, and should be read in conjunction, with the following Bridging the Gap (BTG) policies and procedures:-

- **Emergency & Dependents Leave**
- **Discipline & Grievance Policy & Procedure**
- **Flexible Working Policy & Procedure**
- **Maternity Leave & Pay Policy & Procedure**
- **Parental Bereavement Leave & Pay Policy & Procedure**
- **Paternity Leave & Pay Policy & Procedure**
- **Shared Parental Leave & Pay Policy & Procedure**
- **Menopause Support in the Workplace Policy**
- **Mental Health First Aid Policy & Procedure**
- **Reasonable Adjustments for Disabilities in the Workplace**

Date reviewed: 28th October 2022

Updates added: 28th February 2023 in respect of menopause support

Updates added: 18th August 2023 in respect of mental health first aid

Updates added: 13th November 2023 in respect of reasonable adjustments for disabilities in the workplace

Reviewed by: Lynda Mason & Michelle McHale

Next review due: 28th January 2024

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1. Our Statement

Bridging the Gap (Manchester) is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among its workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for its workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and its customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

The organisation - in providing goods and/or services and/or facilities - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of customers or the public.

There is no one complete set of agreed definitions for terms like equality, diversity and inclusion. For the purposes of this policy the terms should be understood as follows:-

Equality

Equality means ensuring every individual has equal opportunities. By being conscious of, and actively challenging, bias or prejudice we make sure no-one is treated less favourably because of who they are or what makes them different from other people. BtG understands that this requires a proactive approach to make reasonable adjustments that address the visible and invisible barriers people face.

Diversity

Diversity means having differences within an organisation or setting and recognising that we are all different in many ways. People with differing identities, backgrounds and experiences should all have equitable access to resources and decision-making.

Inclusion

Inclusion means being proactive to make sure people of different backgrounds, experiences and identities feel welcomed, respected and fully able to participate.

2. Our Policy's Purpose

This policy's purpose is to: -

- a) provide equality, fairness and respect for all in BTG's employment, whether temporary, part-time or full-time, as well as applying to work for BTG.
- b) not unlawfully discriminate against anyone in respect of any of the nine protected characteristics identified under the Equality Act 2010. These are:-
 - age
 - disability

- gender reassignment
- marriage or civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

c) ensure that no one is unlawfully discriminated against because they are undergoing peri-menopause or the menopause and who, as a result, are experiencing associated mental and physical health symptoms.

Whilst the menopause is not a specific protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, if an employee or worker is put at a disadvantage and treated less favourably because of their menopause symptoms, this could be discrimination if related to a protected characteristic.

d) ensure mental and physical health are treated as equally important.

e) oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This can happen in many ways and can happen when someone:

- is an employee of an organisation
- accesses an organisation's services
- applies to work for an organisation
- is a member of an organisation

3. Our Commitments

The organisation commits to:-

a) Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace since this is good practice and makes business sense. This includes in the areas of:-

- pay and benefits
- terms and conditions of employment
- dealing with grievances and discipline
- dismissal

- redundancy
- leave for parents
- requests for flexible working
- selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities
- menopause support
- disability

b) Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.

This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.

c) Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities.

Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.

Furthermore, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the 'Protection from Harassment Act 1997' – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offense.

- d) Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- e) Make decisions concerning staff based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- f) Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- g) Encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion by monitoring the make-up of the workforce regarding attributes such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief and disability. This will assist BTG in meeting its aims and commitments set out in this policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing the statistics annually, and considering and taking action to address any issues.

4. Agreement to follow this policy

The equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by the Board of Trustees.

5. Our Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

Details of BTG's grievance and disciplinary policies and procedures can be requested from Project Managers or the Chair of Trustees at any time. This includes details of whom an employee should raise a grievance with (usually their line manager).

Use of BTG's grievance or disciplinary procedures does not affect an employee's right to make a claim to an employment tribunal within three months of the alleged discrimination.