

BucksVision Equality and Diversity policy

Contents

1. Introduction	2
1.1 Scope	2
1.2 Our commitments	3
1.3 What does this policy apply to?	3
1.4 Exceptions to this policy	3
1.5 Definitions	4
2. Statements of the Policy	5
2.1 Disability Equality	5
2.2 Volunteering	5
2.3 Complaints and Feedback	5
2.4 Equal Opportunities Monitoring	6
2.4.1 Collecting Information	6
2.4.2 Categorisation of data	6
2.4.3 Sex and Marital Status	6
2.4.4 Ethnic Origin	6
2.4.5 Disability	6
2.4.6 Age	7
2.4.7 Sexual Orientation	7
2.4.8 Data Storage and Access	7
2.4.9 Analysis of Equal Opportunities Monitoring Data	7
2.5 Service Delivery	7
2.6 Practical Considerations	7
2.7 Roles and Responsibilities	8
2.8 Implementation	9
3. Further Information	10
4. Policy Review and Version Control	11

1. Introduction

As an organisation we value diversity and are proud to be an [equal opportunities employer](#). We recognise the benefits that using people's different skills, talents and perspectives can bring.

This in turn helps us to achieve our organisational mission, which is to make a positive difference to the lives of local people with sight loss and to provide support so that they reach their full potential and lead independent lives.

We believe diversity comes from the visible and invisible differences that exist between people. All of these differences contribute to different experiences of life, values, attitudes, ways of thinking, and communicating.

For this reason, it is vital for us to have an inclusive environment where people from diverse backgrounds can contribute and achieve.

BucksVision understands and welcomes the differences that a diverse culture brings. We are fully committed to treating people equally – irrespective, for example, of disability, race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, marital/partnership status or responsibility for dependants.

Equality is about treating people fairly and with respect, giving regard to others' rights and wishes. Diversity is about accepting and embracing people's differences and creating an environment where people feel valued and their talents are fully utilised.

We ensure that our recruitment, training and development procedures are all fair and comply with best practice (see below). Where we have groups that are under-represented within our workforce, we take positive action to try to address this.

Our policy applies to anyone who may use any of our services, contributes to BucksVision's work or represents the organisation in any way. For our policy to be successful, it is essential that everyone is committed to and works to it.

1.1 Scope

This policy applies to; employees, volunteers (including Trustees), service users/clients, funding bodies, partner organisations, sub-contractors, suppliers and visitors. It also applies to all applicants throughout the recruitment process for paid employment opportunities or for volunteer roles.

Contractors, and organisations that we work in partnership with BucksVision, are also expected to abide by this policy.

1.2 Our commitments

We are committed to:

- Becoming an organisation, which is inclusive, and values difference, by seeking to ensure that its services are relevant and accessible.
- Attracting, recruiting, retaining and developing the very best talented people from all sections of the community to contribute at every level of our organisation.
- Recognising that people from different backgrounds, cultures, skills and experiences can bring new ideas and perceptions that will help to increase organisational efficiency and improve our services.
- Creating an environment that upholds the right of everyone to be treated with respect and dignity, creating an open culture that allows everyone to work in an environment, where people's potential is realised.
- Committed to tackle discrimination and to celebrate diversity by working hard to secure a truly inclusive environment, creating better working relationships in an atmosphere of inclusion by all, for all.
- Ensuring that no-one involved in our work will receive less favourable treatment, due to their age, gender, ethnic origin, race, colour, nationality, religion or belief, family circumstance, disability, sexual orientation, or social background.
- Embracing difference, listening to and meeting the changing needs of our users, staff, volunteers, partners and stakeholders.
- Maintaining an ongoing commitment to equality and diversity. To ensure that it is integrated into all policies and practices, training and service delivery.

1.3 What does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to BucksVision's governance, service delivery, employment and volunteering practices. Equality is linked to our values. As such, it forms part of the framework within which other policies, procedures and practices within BucksVision, are to be developed and implemented.

1.4 Exceptions to this policy

There are no exceptions to this policy. Everyone involved with BucksVision, as set out in "Scope" above, is required to fully support this policy.

1.5 Definitions

BucksVision defines equal opportunities as:

The removal of direct discrimination

Ensuring that people are not treated less favourably because of their disability, ethnicity, national origin, colour and race, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, political opinion, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, age or trade union membership/non-membership.

The removal of indirect discrimination

Ensuring requirements or conditions do not unfairly or unjustifiably limit access to services, jobs, or volunteering opportunities.

The removal of associative discrimination

Ensuring that people are not directly discriminated against or harassed because of their association with another person who has a protected characteristic. such as disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, sex or gender reassignment.

The removal of discrimination by perception

Ensuring that people are not directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that they have a particular protected characteristic, when they do not. such as disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, sex or gender reassignment.

Equal rights

The achievement and respect of equal civil rights for all.

Equal access

Increasing access to services and employment and volunteering opportunities by having policies and practices which take account of diverse needs.

Positive action

Action which targets groups which are under-represented, within our customers, workforce or volunteers. The aim is to increase under-represented groups' access to BucksVision.

The prevention of harassment

Harassment occurs when, for a reason which relates to a person's age, race, sex, disability, religion or belief, gender reassignment or sexual orientation, another person engages in unwanted conduct which may violate the person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

2. Statements of the Policy

2.1 Disability Equality

BucksVision is a disability organisation and recognises the exclusion and disadvantages that disabled people experience as a result of social, economic, and material barriers, created by the world in which they live. BucksVision also recognises that disabled people may be enabled by learning additional skills.

BucksVision is working to ensure that disabled people receive the maximum possible benefit that can accrue to them through the Equality Act. As an employer, BucksVision will, at the very least, takes steps to ensure that it meets its obligations under the law and, where possible, exceed it. This includes making reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled job applicants and employees - see **Workplace Adjustments Policy**.

BucksVision extends this principle to committee members, trustees and volunteers in line with best practice.

BucksVision is further committed to positive action in terms of our employment of blind and partially sighted people. Where two candidates equally meet selection criteria at interview, where one of the candidates is blind or partially sighted, then s/he should be offered the post. The law allows charities, which promote the interests of a particular group of disabled people, to treat people from that group more favourably than others where this is connected with their charitable purposes.

2.2 Volunteering

BucksVision is committed to:

- Monitoring our volunteer base and developing the diversity of BucksVision's volunteering population.
- Reviewing ways to develop the involvement of blind and partially sighted people in volunteering.
- Targeting volunteering as a route to work for blind and partially sighted job applicants.

2.3 Comments, Compliments, Complaints and Feedback

All complaints should be made to the Chief Executive (or Operations Manager in his/her absence). Volunteers should raise their complaint with their line manager, who will then investigate and escalate to the Operations Manager and/or Chief Executive as needed.

Complaints will normally be addressed in line with the **Grievance Policy**, **Whistleblowing Policy** or **Customer Feedback Policy**.

Employees who do not comply with these policies may be subject to disciplinary action – see the **Disciplinary Policy**.

2.4 Equal Opportunities Monitoring

Statistical monitoring is an essential part of any equal opportunities programme. By comparing patterns of different groups in employment, recruitment, volunteering and service delivery, BucksVision will identify any significant differences, in order to assess how far we are achieving equality of opportunity. Monitoring will provide a sound basis for further action.

2.4.1 Collecting Information

Requests for equal opportunities data must explain why it is being requested. Provision of monitoring data is voluntary, and individuals must not be penalised for non-completion.

Applicants for employment and volunteering opportunities are sent BucksVision's equal opportunities monitoring form. Monitoring forms must be separated from application forms before shortlisting and not shared with hiring managers to prevent intentional or unintentional discrimination.

For job applicants, the monitoring form is retained in accordance with our **Data Protection Policy**.

We store our stakeholder's data, with their consent, on our CRM database. See **Data Protection Policy** for further details.

2.4.2 Categorisation of data

The following categories are the minimum data that we will seek to collect for applicants for employment and volunteering opportunities. Where an individual does not supply any information, they are recorded as a non-responder.

2.4.3 Gender and Marital Status

In line with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) [Code of Practice](#), responders are asked to provide their gender and specify if they are single, married have a partner or other.

2.4.4 Ethnic Origin

The collection of this information is in line with the EHRC [Code of Practice](#).

2.4.5 Disability

For employment purposes, a person with a disability is defined as someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Responders are asked to classify themselves as disabled in line with this definition which is that used by the Equality Act 2010. Responders will also be asked to classify their disability as Sight Loss or other disability.

2.4.6 Age

Applicants are asked for their date of birth and age.

2.4.7 Sexual Orientation

In line with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) Code of Practice, responders are asked to indicate their sexual orientation.

2.4.8 Data Storage and Access

All equal opportunities data is stored in accordance with our **Data Protection Policy**.

2.4.9 Analysis of Equal Opportunities Monitoring Data

The Chief Executive and Trustees periodically evaluate progress on equalities issues and identify positive action interventions needed to improve their approach to diversity.

2.5 Service Delivery

All BucksVision's services will be provided in line with this policy.

BucksVision will consult with service users and set priorities according to the needs of different customer groups.

All information must be provided in preferred formats in line with the requirements of the Equality Act for Blind and Partially Sighted, Deafblind and other disabled customers. For those who use English as a second language, BucksVision will endeavour to arrange interpreters and offer advice in the enquirer's preferred language, including British Sign Language (BSL).

Where a customer needs a service to be provided by someone from a particular group, BucksVision will make every attempt to meet this need. If a customer is not willing to accept services from a particular employee or volunteer and this is found to be due to unfair discrimination by the customer, BucksVision reserves the right to withdraw the service - however, this would be the very final resort after discussions with the service user.

2.6 Practical Considerations

As an organisation, our priorities are that we will:

- Work with all staff to develop and implement action plans with clear measurable objectives and targets that are in-line with our strategic plans and operational objectives.

- Monitor, review, amend and update our key policies and day to day working practises within the organisation to ensure they reflect our commitment to equality and diversity. This includes recruitment, selection, promotion, training, discipline and grievance.

We will:

- Deliver services throughout BucksVision to people who need them, without discriminating against, stigmatising or patronising people. Every individual will be treated with dignity and respect.
- Set challenging but realistic equality objectives and targets in relation to service delivery and the carrying out of those functions.
- Continually improve access to our services, our buildings and the information that we provide.
- Take appropriate steps to monitor, consult on and evaluate equality issues and take action, if necessary.
- Ensure our services are meeting the needs of our diverse community by involving the community and our service users in planning our services and listening to their views through effective engagement and consultation.
- Communicate with all those who we provide services to in an honest, open and effective way by:
 - Providing information in plain English and use methods other than written documents to present information, as appropriate.
 - Offering information in accessible formats (e.g. using an interpreter) and providing translation and audio description services as appropriate.
- Make sure our employees are trained and supported to deliver the highest possible levels of customer service in line with this policy.
- Make sure that the organisations we buy our services from or provide funding to operate similar policies and practises on equality of opportunity.

2.7 Roles and Responsibilities

BucksVision's Chief Executive has overall responsibility for this policy.

However, we believe that everyone within our organisation has a responsibility to be proactive in promoting diversity and equality and in tackling unlawful discrimination, listed below is how we see our commitments turned into action.

The Chief Executive and Trustees are responsible for ensuring:

- We meet our obligations in respect of legislation.

- This policy and its related action plans, procedures and strategies are implemented.
- The policies and strategies are continually reviewed and that across the organisation all staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities and accountabilities under the policy and that appropriate training is provided.
- Keeping everyone in the organisation informed of developments in equality and diversity.

Managers have a responsibility to provide a consistent and high-profile lead on equality and diversity by:

- Implementing the policy and its related procedures and strategies.
- Encouraging and supporting diversity within their teams.
- Treating staff, members and volunteers with dignity and respect, recognising and valuing individuals' skills and contributions.
- Creating an environment in which staff and volunteers are able to identify and share good practice, celebrate success and encourage positive attitudes towards diversity.
- Demonstrating through words and actions that diversity is an integral part of delivering services to meet the needs of our diverse customer groups, both inside the organisation and externally.

Staff and volunteers have a responsibility to:

- Operate within this policy.
- Promote an environment where the ethos of this policy is regarded as integral to their work.
- Co-operate and support staff, volunteers and the organisation in general in the elimination of discrimination of any kind.

2.8 Implementation

For our policy to be successful, it is essential that everyone is committed to and involved in its delivery. Our goal is to work towards a just society, free from discrimination, harassment and prejudice. Equality and diversity are central to our work.

We aim to embed this in all our policies, procedures, day-to-day practices and external relationships by:

- Treating all people with dignity and respect.

- Promoting equality of opportunity and diversity, actively promoting a working environment and culture that recognises and values differences.
- Meeting all of our responsibilities under relevant legislation, codes of practice.
- Working towards eliminating all forms of discrimination in service delivery, volunteering, employment, and with our external partners and stakeholders.
- Tackling social exclusion, inequality, discrimination and disadvantage including on the grounds of race, gender, caring responsibilities, disability, age, social class, sexual orientation or religion.
- Taking positive action, where necessary, to create a more diverse workforce and client group.

We view these responsibilities seriously, and any complaint will be taken seriously and dealt with in a timely and sensitive manner in accordance with the appropriate procedures, for example the grievance and disciplinary procedures.

3. Further Information

Employment Law

The legislation relating to discrimination law in England, Scotland and Wales is complex, but the principal legislation now is the [Equality Act 2010](#).

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

www.equalityhumanrights.com

Established under the Equality Act 2006 the EHRC oversees the operation of legislation governing race, gender, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and age discrimination as well as fulfilling the role of a human rights commission. EHRC replaced the previous Equal Opportunities Commission, Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission. They produce Codes of Practice and other guidance.

4. Policy Review and Version Control

The policy will be reviewed every two years by the Chief Executive and approved by the Trustee Board. It will also be reviewed in response to changes in relevant legislation, contractual arrangements, good practice or in response to an identified failing in its effectiveness.

Review Date: May 2024

Version	Date	Author	Changes
1.4	April 2023	Steve Naylor	Added hyperlinks
1.3	May 2022	Steve Naylor	Minor edits
1.2	May 2021	Steve Naylor	Added “definitions” and updated several sections
1.1	May 2019	Steve Naylor	Minor edits
1.0	May 2017	Steve Naylor	New policy created

End of document