

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Introduction:

Bath Mind is committed to a policy of equal opportunities. It aims to ensure that in its recruitment, in the membership of its governing body and in project developments, no employee, volunteer, client or member of the public will be treated less favourably than another regardless of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, ethnic origin, marital or part-time status, status, disability, age, responsibilities for dependants or offending background that does not create a risk to vulnerable adults.

The main reasons for adopting an equal opportunities policy are:

- a) Such a policy and programme enables the organisation to develop good employment practices and proper interfaces in respect of all employees, and volunteers.
- b) To enable the organisation to ensure that as far as possible there is no unlawful direct or indirect discrimination.
- c) Through effective monitoring, to enable the organisation to identify groups who are under-represented.

Bath Mind also recognises its social responsibilities within a wider community context. It will, therefore, positively contribute to and support both local and national initiatives in the furtherance of achieving equal opportunities with regard to those groups and individuals who have been traditionally discriminated against in our society.

In practical terms we will strive to translate these good intentions into reality by the identification and removal of any direct or indirect barriers, which may be preventing certain groups from achieving maximum benefit from our services. We will also monitor staff recruitment, promotion and training to ensure our Equal Opportunities Policy applies in practice.

Bath Mind aspires to excellence in all areas of its operation. To this end we will treat present and prospective users of services, staff and volunteers according to their personal abilities without discriminatory references to sex, age, race, colour, nationality, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, creed or religion.

Legal Framework:

Bath Mind recognises its responsibilities under the following statutory framework:

- **Race Relations Act 1976**

In particular we recognise the duty imposed on local authorities by section 71 of the above Act – to promote equality of opportunity – and would strive to mirror this policy where applicable. Section 71 states “Without prejudice to their obligation to comply with any other provision of this Act, it shall be the duty of every local authority to

make appropriate arrangements with a view of securing that their various functions are carried out with due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups”.

- **Sex Discrimination Act 1975-1985**
- **Equal Pay Act 1970**
- **Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944**
- **Disabled Persons Act 1981**
- **Disability Discrimination Act 1995**
We intend to meet our legal duties recognising that it is unlawful to treat a disabled person less favourably than others in employment and the provision of services. In respect of these areas we are required to make “reasonable adjustments” to accommodate the needs of disabled employees, volunteers and clients.
- **Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulation (2003)**
- **Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulation (2003)**
- **Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006**

Recruitment:

The Management Committee, the General Manager and Service Managers of Bath Mind have prime responsibility in setting the standards defined by this Equal Opportunities Policy.

The selection process is of crucial importance in this policy and, therefore, must be carried out according to objective, job related criteria and deal only with the applicant’s suitability for the job and ability to fulfil the job requirements.

In order to comply with the aims of this policy, the recruitment and selection procedure will require that:

- A person specification, job specification is prepared for each vacancy. These should include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the performance of the job. Requirements that are convenient, rather than necessary, may be discriminatory.
- The salary scale will relate to the job specification and be determined before the vacancy is advertised.
- A statement expressing Bath Mind’s willingness to consider ex-offenders will be included with all job information sent to applicants. The statement should read as follows: *“As Bath Mind meets the requirements in respect of exempted questions under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, all applicants who are offered employment will be subject to a criminal record check from the Criminal Records Bureau before the appointment is confirmed. This will include details of cautions, reprimands or final warnings, as well as convictions”.*

- Bath Mind has a written policy on the recruitment of ex-offenders, which is made available to all CRB Disclosure applicants at the outset of the recruitment process.
- Where a CRB Disclosure is to form part of the recruitment process, we encourage all applicants called for interview to provide details of their criminal record at an early stage in the application process. We request that this information is sent under separate, confidential cover, to a designated person within Bath Mind and we guarantee that this information is only seen by those who need to see it as part of the recruitment process.
- We ensure that all those in Bath Mind who are involved in the recruitment process have been suitably trained to identify and assess the relevance and circumstances of offences.
- We make every subject of a CRB Disclosure aware of the existence of the CRB Code of Practice and make a copy available on request.
- We undertake to discuss any matter revealed in a CRB Disclosure with the person seeking the position before withdrawing a conditional offer of employment.
- Line Managers are to determine whether a post could be filled on a “job-share” basis or by any other flexible working arrangements, e.g. variable starting/finishing times, term-time working etc. Where this is not appropriate the reason should be justifiable.
- All advertisements are to include the words “Bath Mind is an Equal Opportunities employer”.
- Where vacancies are not filled by advert or by agreed procedures, “word of mouth” recruitment and the use of “waiting lists” must not be used.
- All posts to be filled externally should be advertised on all internal notices boards, on the web site, at the Job Centre and in appropriate media. The organisation should also consider placement of advertisements in ethnic minority press and local journals specific to people with difficulties subject to cost.
- Standardised application forms are to be used for all vacancies and completed details to be compared with the person specification when short-listing for interview.
- Line Managers will use the Recruitment Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form to record the reason why an applicant was not short-listed for interview.
- The organisation must provide a sensitive framework for conducting interviews, and will ensure that all interviews are conducted in a manner that any cross-cultural misunderstandings are eliminated and that the chances of incorrectly assessing a candidate’ capabilities are reduced.
- Line Managers will record on the Recruitment Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form the reasons why a candidate unsuccessful at interview was not appointed to the post.

Training and Promotion:

Bath Mind will not discriminate in the way in which it provides training, promotes or rewards. It is the Line Managers responsibility to ensure that:

- All employees and volunteers receive equal encouragement and access to training and career development opportunities to equip them for future promotion.
- All new employees and volunteers receive equal opportunities awareness training as part of their induction programme.
- In addition to the priorities of standard induction and job training, encouragement may be given to individuals with special training needs to undertake further training.
- Staff dealing with the public will receive appropriate training in order to prevent any discriminatory practices.

As an organisation concerned with disability, Bath Mind will strive to retain any employee who becomes disabled or has a serious illness.

Any member of staff who feels he/she has been discriminated against or has experienced prejudice has recourse to make a complaint through the Complaints Procedure.

Users of Services:

The services of the organisation will be published and advertised in such a way as to eliminate as far as possible any direct discrimination, and will be available in a range of media.

Although the Bath Mind premises are inaccessible to individuals with mobility difficulties, whenever possible arrangements will be made to allow individuals access to services as and when required.

Monitoring:

Monitoring of the policy is the responsibility of the organisation and is necessary to ensure that the parameters laid down are adequately met. Monitoring depends on appropriate statistical information and effective analysis.

Statistics should be collected and collated regarding the diversity of users of services. As far as employees and volunteers are concerned, selection decisions for recruitment and training should be kept and the reasons for deciding documented.

The organisation will ensure that information concerning an individual's ethnic origin is collected for the purpose of monitoring equality of opportunity alone and is protected from misuse, and any service feedback questionnaires treated in strictest confidence.

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