



## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Policy**

### **Statement of Intent**

BCPC recognises that in society certain groups and individuals are oppressed and disadvantaged by institutional and individual discrimination and prejudice.

BCPC is positively committed to opposing discrimination against people on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation, colour, ethnicity or national origin,.

We welcome the enrichment and cultural diversity that would follow as a natural result of this policy.

BCPC recognises that passive policies will not in themselves provide equality of opportunity, and specific and positive programs of action are needed.

BCPC acknowledges that we have a duty, both moral and legal, to ensure that we do not discriminate unfairly in our employment and management practices, in the work we undertake and in the services and training we provide.

### **Definitions**

*'Equality'* means that everybody has the same opportunities and is treated with the same respect. Equal Opportunity is not about treating everyone the same but ensuring that people have the same opportunities in life as others, including the right to be treated without discrimination.

*'Diversity'* literally means difference. It recognises that though people have things in common with each other, they are also different and unique in many ways. Diversity is about accepting, respecting & valuing those differences and is strongly linked with promoting human rights and freedoms, based on principles such as dignity and respect.

*'Intersectionality'* refers to the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.

*'Inclusion'* means ensuring that everybody has a voice and a means to participate, which may involve making reasonable adjustments to our usual processes. The goal of inclusion is to help everyone feel accepted and able to share their opinions and thoughts without hesitation or fear of discrimination.

## **Legal duties**

### *The Equality Act 2010*

The Equality Act 2010 is legislation that applies in England, Wales and Scotland. It protects people from discrimination, harassment or victimisation. It does this by specifying a number of 'protected characteristics'.

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- age.
- disability.
- gender reassignment.
- marriage and civil partnership.
- pregnancy and maternity.
- race.
- religion or belief.
- sex; and
- sexual orientation.

*More detail on each characteristic is included in the EDI resources below.*

'While the Equality Act has been an imperative in enhancing awareness of EDI its structure around certain protected characteristics does risk facilitating the development of a 'silo approach' where the characteristics are viewed and addressed in isolation. This approach can result in a presumed need and detract from relating to the person holistically. In addition, focusing solely on the protected characteristics can result in other barriers to inclusion and equanimity such as disparity in wealth or the availability of support services going unseen. Therefore, it is important to understand that there is an overlap of the different characteristics and any one individual can fall into multiple oppressed identities' (BACP, 2016, p. 5).

## **Understanding and Avoiding Discrimination**

BCPC recognises that in society certain groups and individuals are oppressed and disadvantaged by institutional and individual discrimination and prejudice.

### *Types of Discrimination:*

*Direct discrimination* - where a person is treated less favourably than others because of a protected characteristic

*Indirect discrimination* - where a rule or arrangement which cannot be justified is applied to everyone but puts those with a protected characteristic at an unfair disadvantage

*Discrimination by association* - where a person is treated less favourably because they associate or are connected with someone who possesses a protected characteristic

*Harassment* - unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them.

*Unconscious bias* – making judgments or decisions on the basis of prior experience, personal deep-seated thought patterns, assumptions or interpretations often outside of awareness. Importantly, people can hold both a positive bias and a negative bias towards individuals and groups.

*Micro-aggressions* - verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

As counsellors / psychotherapists a crucial part of our role is to raise awareness of how unconscious biases support both individual and systemic oppression and marginalisation. If counselling/psychotherapy have hope of being inclusive they need to own individual prejudices and unconscious biases that they may hold. *Power* operates in a complex systemic dynamic in our society that confers rank and privilege based on unconscious bias towards a white/male/cis gendered/middle class environment, and as a profession we are part of that system.

*Key challenges that can arise:*

- Unintentional Discrimination
- Privileged position–White, male, middle class
- Lack of awareness of unconscious bias
- Lack of tolerance– ‘other’
- Over-identification
- Over-simplification
- Complexities-differences within vs in-between
- Language
- Disowning own culture

**How can I start to be more inclusive?**

BACP (2016, p7) have set out the 4 As

*Awareness:* Be aware that we all have differences, but some of those differences can lead to barriers and oppression. Make sure that you are educated about the social and cultural aspects of different characteristics, including the discrimination and oppression that people are likely to have experienced. Do not wait for your client to educate you about their characteristic or difference. Inform yourself through CPD and individual learning, at the same time as being aware that each client's experience and perspective are unique.

*Assumptions:* It is only by recognising that we all carry assumptions and prejudices that we can start to challenge them and be really inclusive. Whether or not we have protected characteristics ourselves, we are likely to have spent most of our lives in environments which foster prejudice towards anyone perceived as 'different'. In each of the following sections we will have a look at some damaging assumptions we might make without realising.

*Allyship:* Taking on the role of an ally does not always mean actively campaigning on behalf of a group of people. It can just mean creating a safe and accepting space where they know they can be themselves and be heard and understood. For those who do not identify as having a particular characteristic, being an ally for an individual or community is a vital part of fostering inclusivity.

*Ask:* Each person is a unique individual whose needs might be different from someone else who identifies as belonging to the same group. Even if you share the same characteristic, your experience of it might be quite different. While knowledge of their community is helpful, it is important to find out about their individual experience and needs.

## **Working with differences**

- Develop Self awareness
- Accept your own judgements, prejudices, potential to judge others
- Keep informed – research, discussions, experiential learning
- Reflect on the absence and presence of differences
- Discuss in your supervision and personal therapy
- Be congruent
- Tolerate role ambiguity
- Acknowledge the differences – individual, family, community, culture

## **BCPC Code of Practice**

1. BCPC is committed to actively oppose oppression and discrimination in all areas of our work, and in relation to trainees, staff, committee members, outside trainers/facilitators and other organisations with whom we work.
2. We will take seriously our duty to avoid discrimination against anyone on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation, colour, ethnicity or national origin.
3. All policies and practice associated with BCPC's role as an employer and provider of training must be applied with strict observance of (2) above.

4. BCPC's criteria and procedures for selection of trainees, trainers and staff will be monitored and reviewed at least annually. In offering training or employment or in its general dealings, BCPC will ensure that all individuals are treated with fairness and in line with equal opportunities policy and practice.
5. We will seek to ensure that any outside trainer/facilitator used by BCPC works within equal opportunities guidelines and we will take seriously any accusation of discrimination by them towards trainees.
6. Discriminatory acts or breaches of the equal opportunities policy by staff will be taken seriously and may lead to disciplinary action.
7. Trainees, applicants, members and staff who feel they have been discriminated against should use the complaints procedure, using the organisation's complaints process and grievance procedures.

### **The Student Experience**

We believe this richness of diversity enhances the experience of every BCPC student, enabling us to explore new perspectives and experiences, learning more than we ever could alone.

*BCPC is committed to:*

Ensuring and promoting equality through teaching and learning, and also in the selection, enrolment, assessment and progression of students.

Providing appropriate student support and guidance which reflects the diversity of students' needs both pre-entry and on-course.

Providing an accessible environment for all to study and work. Applications from groups currently under-represented will be positively encouraged.

### **Implementation Monitoring and Annual Review**

BCPC recognises that passive policies will not in themselves provide equality of opportunity, and specific and positive programs of action are needed.

The 'Diversity Standards and Ethics Committee' provides a forum for ongoing consideration of diversity and inclusion in the BCPC training and Community, while also addressing any issues if and when they arise.

Responsibility for the implementation of the equal opportunities policy lies with the Executive management and finally with the Trustees. The Director/s of BCPC will monitor and review BCPC's policy and practice on equal opportunities annually. They will report annually to the Trustees and relevant sub-committees and make suggestions for changes as necessary to continue promotion of equal opportunities in all areas of BCPC's work.

BCPC's criteria and procedures for selection of trainees, trainers and staff will also be monitored and reviewed at least annually.

## **Resources**

HIPC –

BACP, 2016 - <https://www.bacp.co.uk/media/5550/bacp-equality-diversity-inclusion-within-counselling-professions-caq-gpia062-feb19.pdf>

The Equality Act, 2010- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Sue, D.W. (2010). Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation - [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259710224\\_Derald\\_Wing\\_Sue\\_Microaggressions\\_in\\_Everyday\\_Life\\_Race\\_Gender\\_and\\_Sexual\\_Orientation](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/259710224_Derald_Wing_Sue_Microaggressions_in_Everyday_Life_Race_Gender_and_Sexual_Orientation)

UKCP - <https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/UKCP-Ethical-Principles-and-Code-of-Professional-Conduct.pdf>

**Date of Policy: Dec 2020, updated from 2016**

**Date of Review: Dec 2021**