



Biblical Counselling UK

# *Equality & Diversity Policy*

## UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

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As an organisation, we are committed to the principles of equal opportunity, and to treating all members of our community with fairness, dignity and respect in a manner consistent with the organisation's Christian ethos and mission. As well as being a matter of biblical principle, this is a legal obligation. We therefore require all employed and contracted staff, Executive Committee members, Trustees, Certificate Course Tutors and RIs, mentors and Interns to respect and act in accordance with this Policy.

In addition to this, Biblical Counselling UK (BCUK) believes that diversity brings benefits: we all have different experiences, gifts and skills. We seek to be united in celebrating and learning from our differences as we fulfil our mission purpose.

## APPLICATION

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This policy relates to all aspects of employment (including advertisements, recruitment, pay, terms and conditions of service, training, benefits, promotions, grievance and disciplinary procedures), and the activities of the organisation.

People who are not employed by BCUK but who are involved in the organisation's activities, such as, guest speakers, Tutors and RIs., are expected to operate within the terms of the general policy.

The policy applies to the treatment of existing employees, contractors, Interns and Certificate Course students, in addition to those applying to study with BCUK or be accepted as an Intern and those attending conferences or other training.

## DISCRIMINATION

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It is important to us that our ministry is free from discrimination. We expect all staff and contractors, Executive Committee members, Trustees, Certificate Course Tutors, RIs, Mentors and Interns to have respect for everyone with whom they come into contact. This means that we treat all people with courtesy and respect, involve and listen to others and show consideration and empathy for their well-being. We value others for their contribution irrespective of personal differences and seek to foster a positive learning environment for our Certificate Course students and those who attend our conferences.

We seek to foster a positive learning environment for our Certificate Course students and those who attend our conferences, and expect students and conference delegates to contribute to and uphold our ethos in the way they speak and act towards others.

Any reference to 'discrimination' or similar in this policy means unlawful discrimination relating to a protected characteristic.

BCUK recognises there may be circumstances which justify differential treatment, but only when lawful and appropriate (for example: to appoint a Christian to a position where there is a genuine occupational requirement for the post-holder to be a Christian; to comply with a matter of doctrine; or to make an adjustment in order to accommodate a person with a disability).

**Direct Discrimination:** Direct discrimination occurs where one person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. An example would be if someone were not appointed to a position on the Executive Committee or staff team at BCUK, or offered a place on the Certificate Course, because of their race.

**Indirect Discrimination:** Indirect discrimination occurs when a requirement or condition is applied generally, but has a detrimental impact upon a group that share a protected characteristic.

**Disability – Reasonable Adjustments:** The Equality Act 2010 sets out an additional obligation upon employers to make "reasonable adjustments" so that a disabled employee or student (or applicant) is not substantially disadvantaged. We will accordingly make reasonable adjustments to ensure equal opportunities are available to all people with disabilities.

**Disability-Related Discrimination:** The Equality Act 2010 also prohibits disability-related discrimination, that is treating someone less favourably because of something relating to a disability. An example would be dismissing an employee or penalising a student in an assessment context where reasonable adjustments for a known disability had not been made.

**Objectively justified:** There are special circumstances where it is appropriate to discriminate if the requirement can be objectively justified.

## HARASSMENT

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We are committed to providing an environment free from harassment.

Harassment is, in general terms, unwanted conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for another, whether intended or unintended.

Harassment may be unlawful, particularly where the harassment occurs because of a protected characteristic.

## CHRISTIAN ETHOS

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As a Christian organisation, the nature and context of some employment positions may mean that personal characteristics, such as religious beliefs, will lawfully and properly inform decisions. However, this does not detract from the principle that we are an Equal Opportunity employer and recognise the benefit of employing a diverse workforce. All applicants who can fulfil the role and meet any occupational requirement are welcomed. They will be assessed against the job description and any person specification.

## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

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Where there are breaches of this Policy, we will take appropriate action. For employees, this may include taking steps through the disciplinary procedure; serious incidents may be treated as gross misconduct. As a reflection of the seriousness with which we view discrimination, if an allegation of discrimination is made in bad faith, that will also be viewed seriously.

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

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Everyone has an essential role in ensuring the success of this policy, with their own duties and responsibilities.

Line Managers and those with responsibilities for students have a particular responsibility to ensure that everyone is respected and that workplace decisions are made for right and justifiable reasons.

We expect everyone to:

- Co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity
- Report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices witnessed or experienced
- Not induce or attempt to induce others to practise discrimination
- Not treat anyone less favourably as a result of them having reported or provided evidence of discrimination (“Victimisation”)
- Not subject others to harassment

If you are concerned about any breaches of this Policy, employees can raise concerns through the Grievance procedure; students can raise concerns through the Senior Administrator; and Interns by raising concerns directly to the Executive Director.

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