# Equality and Diversity Policy

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## Overview

Best Practice Network will ensure equal treatment of all employees and students, specifically those with the following ‘protected characteristics’ as detailed in the Equality Act 2010:

* Disability
* Gender reassignment
* Marriage or civil partnership
* Pregnancy and maternity
* Race
* Religion or belief
* Sexual orientation
* Sex (gender)
* Age

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance on legislation and good practice in managing equal opportunities throughout the business. This policy sets out Best Practice Network’s commitment towards the development of inclusive and supportive learning and working environments for all students and staff where all individuals have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and gain a feeling of self- esteem and respect for and from all others.

Best Practice Network is fully committed to promoting, maintaining and supporting equality and diversity in all aspects of its work. Best Practice Network expresses its opposition to all forms of inequality and discrimination.

## Scope

This policy applies to staff, students [[1]](#footnote-1) (including students based in the workplace), customers and suppliers. It applies to anyone working with Best Practice Network at any point in time. Everyone should expect to be treated equally according to need, with dignity and respect and without being subjected to discrimination or harassment.

Best Practice Network works positively and progressively to ensure that no policy, practice, procedure or action puts any group of people at an unfair advantage or supports discrimination.

Best Practice Network will endeavour to ensure that no-one with a protected characteristic is directly or indirectly subjected to unfavourable treatment. In addition to **direct** and **indirect** discrimination, the legislation covers an additional five broad areas.

**Associative**

Where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic

**Perceptive**

Where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic when he/she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic

**Harassment**

This is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person’s dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct

**Third Party**

Where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed by a third party – not employed by Best Practice Network e.g. a learner or student

**Victimisation**

Where an individual is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because they made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he or she is suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if he or she acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint

## Responsibilities

All staff have responsibilities under this policy. Managers are expected to promote equal opportunities in their areas of work. The Human Resources Department will ensure its policies, procedures and working practices are compliant with legislation and good practice.

All staff have a responsibility to work co-operatively with others at all times. Individual members of staff can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, Best Practice Network for any act of unlawful discrimination. Staff who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence. Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against others are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under Best Practice Network’s disciplinary policy. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or harassment may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

* **The Senior Management Team** will ensure that the business meets the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010. The Senior Management Team will lead by example, demonstrating the principles of equality and diversity and seek good practice from managers
* **Managers** will establish good working relationships with all staff within their teams and respond to any issues that arise in terms of staff or student concerns. Managers will manage staff in an equal, fair and appropriate way to ensure no form of favouritism, discrimination or unfair advantage is permitted
* **Human Resources** will ensure that procedures for the recruitment and promotion of staff encompass best practice at all times within equal opportunities legislative requirements, monitor and act on employee protected characteristics data, and provide equality and diversity training for staff
* **Teaching and training staff** will demonstrate the principles of equality & diversity and how we are fair and supportive to all people, irrespective of who they are. Teaching and training staff will deliver materials to students which avoid stereotyping or discrimination and embed equality & diversity into their lessons
* **Staff** will work harmoniously with all other staff, students, customers and other people and uphold the high standards expected of equality & diversity. Staff will report any concerns about equality issues so that management can take action to rectify and provide a supportive environment for staff, students and other people
* **Students** of Best Practice Network are expected to adhere to the policy, which seeks mutual respect for all and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs, and offers students’ equality of opportunity regardless of protected characteristics

## Employment practices

All employees have a personal responsibility to adhere to the principles of equal opportunity and maintaining harmony in the workplace. Best Practice Network will actively promote equal opportunities in the business to ensure that all employees receive treatment that is fair and equitable and consistent with their relevant aptitudes, potential skills and abilities. Employees will be recruited and selected, promoted and trained on the basis of objective criteria.

Any form of discrimination or harassment will not be tolerated. Best Practice Network will treat unfair discriminatory conduct or harassment by any employee as a potential disciplinary offence which could lead to dismissal.

## Grievance and discipline procedures

Best Practice Network will take seriously any instances of non-adherence to the Equality and Diversity Policy by students, staff or visitors.

If an employee or student feels that they have been treated unfairly or subjected to direct or indirect unfair discrimination they can raise the matter through the grievance procedure. Every effort will be made to secure a satisfactory resolution. If an employee or student makes a complaint of unfair discrimination they will be protected from any victimisation in any form.

Students who believe there has been a breach of this policy may complain through the Best Practice Network’s Complaints Procedure.

## Recruitment

The recruitment process will be conducted in such a way as to result in the selection of the most suitable person for the job in terms of relevant experience, abilities and qualifications. Best Practice Network is committed to applying equal opportunities at all stages of recruitment and selection.

Advertisements will encourage applications from all suitably qualified and experienced people. When advertising job vacancies, in order to attract applications from all sections of the community, Best Practice Network will, as far as reasonably practicable:

* Ensure advertisements are not confined to those publications which would exclude or disproportionately reduce the numbers of applicants of a particular group
* Avoid prescribing any unnecessary requirements which would exclude a higher proportion of a particular group
* Ensure that the experience levels as a criterion of any specific job is justifiable

The selection process will be carried out consistently for all jobs at all levels. All applications will be processed in the same way. The staff responsible for short-listing, interviewing and selecting candidates will be clearly informed of the selection criteria and of the need for their consistent application.

Best Practice Network do not routinely monitor equal opportunities during recruitment and selection, however, they are committed to ensuring equality in all their recruitment and selection processes.

Best Practice Network will have regard to its duty to make reasonable adjustments to work provisions, criteria and practices or to work premises in order to ensure that the disabled person is not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled.

## Training and Development

Best Practice Network will train managers on its policy on equality and diversity and will help them identify discriminatory acts or practices or acts of harassment or bullying. Line managers will be responsible for ensuring they actively promote equal opportunity within the departments for which they are responsible.

Best Practice Network will provide a range of CPD (continuing professional development) activities to staff and managers both at induction and during employment to ensure equality and diversity is central to their understanding of workplace activities and people management.

Access to training, development or promotion will not be discriminatory and all staff will have equal opportunity.

## Terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services

All terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services will be reviewed from time to time, in order to ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, marital or civil partnership status or disability. Where a concern is reported, Best Practice Network will take all reasonable steps to make adjustments.

Where increased pay and/or enhanced benefits are offered to employees on the basis of length of service, these are intended to reward loyalty, maintain motivation and reflect higher levels of relevant experience.

## Equal opportunities and retirement

The abolition of the Default Retirement Age (DRA) means that older workers can voluntarily retire at a time they choose. Therefore, Best Practice Network has no set retirement age.

However, for the purpose of pension contributions, the pension schemes have age limits and eligibility criteria. Employees should refer to the scheme booklets or see a member of the HR team if they need guidance.

Best Practice Network will ensure that all employees are aware of any recent legislative changes and their impact on Best Practice Network’s own pension scheme.

## Disability and reasonable adjustments

Employees who are disabled or become disabled in the course of their employment should inform the Human Resources department. For employment purposes, disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an employee’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. It covers physical disability, some medical conditions and mental illness.

The Human Resources department will then arrange to discuss with the employee what “reasonable adjustments” to their job or working conditions or environment might assist them in performing their duties. The employee will also be encouraged to suggest any adjustments that they believe would be helpful to them. Careful consideration will be given to any proposals and where reasonable and reasonably practicable, such adjustments will be made.

There may, however, be circumstances where it will not be reasonable or reasonably practicable for the organisation to accommodate proposals put forward by the employee. In this case consultation about suitable alternative arrangements would take place. Disability will also relate to serious illnesses and these will be managed through the Absence Policy.

We arrange appropriate learning support for our students who have learning difficulties and/ or disabilities and who ned tailored support in order to succeed in their studies.

## Equality in teaching and learning

We recognise that facilitators, instructors, mentors and assessors have an important role to play in embedding equality and diversity into the learning experience. We provide training and support to enable them to fulfil this function to the best of their abilities. For example, facilitators, instructors and mentors are encouraged to deal with issues as they arise in the learning experience and to tackle prejudice, stereotyping, banter and negative behaviours.

We arrange appropriate learning support for our students who have learning difficulties and disabilities and who need tailored additional support in order to succeed in their studies.

## Equal pay

Best Practice Network is committed to equal pay in employment. It believes its male and female employees should receive equal pay for like work, work rated as equivalent or work of equal value. In order to achieve this, Best Practice Network will endeavour to maintain a pay system that is transparent, free from bias and based on objective criteria. Best Practice Network is not required to comply with Gender Pay Reporting legislation that came in force during 2017, due to the size of the organisation.

## Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed as new legislation comes into force and formally every year. The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis through analysis of the profile of employees and their positions.

The Human Resource Manager is responsible for reviewing the policy which is sent to the Audit and Quality Committee of the Board to review on behalf of the Board.

1. The term student applies to all learners; candidates, apprentices and trainees on all BPN programmes [↑](#footnote-ref-1)