

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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Who is covered by this policy?

All staff, trustees and volunteers, job applicants, beneficiaries, subcontractors and anyone else who engages with Break the Silence.

What is covered in this policy?

This policy sets out Break the Silence's commitment to ensuring that anyone who engages with it is treated with the same warmth, dignity and respect, irrespective of who they are and any protected characteristics they may have.

This policy also outlines the proactive work Break the Silence does to ensure it is an anti-racist and anti-discriminatory organisation and to promote a positive working culture for everyone.

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all individuals who engage with Break the Silence in any way are treated fairly and equally and that Break the Silence provides a space free from all forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination.

Break the Silence will ensure that it is aware of situations where the organisation and individuals may exhibit bias and prejudice – both conscious and unconscious – and take steps to prevent and mitigate against this.

Trustees and staff will be engaged in the development and implementation of this policy to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are promoted through Break the Silence's work internally and externally.

Key success criteria

This policy aims to ensure:

- There is a positive culture throughout Break the Silence, where diversity, inclusion, compassion and respect are core values and at the centre of all its activities.
- Break the Silence eliminates all forms of conscious and unconscious discrimination or bias in its practices and behaviours.
- Break the Silence actively encourages positive action to overcome disadvantage and discrimination.
- Break the Silence achieves the highest possible standards in the delivery of its services to beneficiaries and in its employment practices.
- Break the Silence ensures EDI are promoted through its work, both internally and externally.
- Everyone feels valued and is given space to work to their full potential.

The policy

What staff must do:

- Break the Silence asks all its employees to demonstrate their compliance with this policy.
- Break the Silence expects every employee, volunteer and trustee to assist Break the Silence in meeting its commitments to provide equality of opportunity and a culture free from discrimination.
- Every employee should treat others equally and with dignity and respect.
- Each employee should know Break the Silence's standards of behaviour, actively implement its values and be an exemplar of equality and fairness in everything Break the Silence does.
- Break the Silence encourages staff to communicate to others within the organisation the terminology they consider best describes them, and others should respect and use that terminology (e.g. by using preferred pronouns – she/her, he/him, they/them and so on).
- Employees and trustees should uphold these values of fairness, compassion and equality when representing Break the Silence, for example at external events and on social media accounts.
- Any breaches of this policy (including but not limited to acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation) will be regarded as misconduct and will be subject to Break the Silence's Disciplinary and Dismissal Procedure.

What Break the Silence will do

Break the Silence will provide training to all staff and trustees about this policy and Break the Silence's commitment to being an inclusive, non-discriminatory organisation. Attendance at training sessions is expected by those who are notified that they should attend.

Ongoing training and suggested reading will be included as part of the induction process for new employees and new trustees. All staff will be expected to engage with articles, research, and learning materials shared across the organisation, with time allocated within the working day to support this.

Break the Silence will take proactive steps to ensure that learning reflects the needs of the people we support. This includes identifying emerging needs within our client group and responding through targeted training. For example, recognising neurodiversity within our client community has led to organisation-wide neurodiversity training, alongside specialist autism training.

We will continue to invest in specialist learning to strengthen inclusive practice, including training in areas such as gender identity and expression, delivered in partnership with expert organisations.

Break the Silence is a Disability Confident employer and demonstrates this commitment throughout our recruitment processes. We will clearly communicate our inclusive values, display Disability Confident accreditation, and actively invite applicants to request reasonable adjustments during the recruitment process.

We will embed trauma-informed and inclusive approaches across all areas of our work by:

- Creating safe, respectful, and accessible environments for staff, volunteers, and service users
- Encouraging reflective practice and open discussion to support continuous learning
- Reviewing policies, procedures, and communications to ensure they remain inclusive and responsive
- Valuing lived experience and incorporating this insight into service development and delivery

Through these actions, Break the Silence will ensure that inclusion is not only a stated value but a lived and evolving practice across the organisation.

Diversity monitoring

- In usual circumstances, Break the Silence will keep up-to-date records of diversity within the organisation relating to protected characteristics.
- This information will, of course, be collected with the permission of staff and the information will be held confidentially in accordance with GDPR.
- The information provided will help inform how many employees and trustees have a particular protected characteristic, so that Break the Silence can take steps to ensure that they are not discriminated against nor is disciplinary action disproportionately taken against them and understand if there is a higher turnover of staff/trustees with protected characteristics or if there are barriers to progression of such staff.

- As a minimum, Break the Silence will monitor diversity and take any appropriate action to address issues that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.
- Under usual circumstances, Break the Silence will undertake a staff survey about general working principles and well-being to seek to assess how those working within the organisation feel Break the Silence is performing in relation to EDI at least every three years.
- Break the Silence's board of trustees will review the information collected through the survey and other means (such as statistics in recruitment) to ensure that Break the Silence is meeting its obligation to promote equal opportunity and inclusion in its employment practice and services.

Policies and procedures

- Break the Silence reviews all its policies and procedures on a rolling basis, with special attention being given to issues affecting EDI.
- Policies at Break the Silence are not static and can and will be amended as required to reflect changing situations. Under regular circumstances, Break the Silence will seek feedback from staff on significant amendments to existing policies and/or on newly drafted policies where a gap is identified.

Recruitment

- Break the Silence will not discriminate in the selection of staff for recruitment or promotion. See Recruitment and Selection Policy.
- Break the Silence may use suitable lawful methods (including, where appropriate, positive action) to attract candidates of any identified under-represented group in particular types and levels of vacancy.
- Break the Silence will identify potential institutional barriers to the attraction, retention and progression of candidates with certain protected characteristics before advertising any roles externally. Having done so, Break the Silence will engage with specified individuals within the organisation with a view to ensuring that in job descriptions, person specifications, adverts etc Break the Silence is not being unconsciously discriminatory.

Policy monitoring and updates

- An internal working group will continue to strategically review this policy in relation to all other work at Break the Silence.
- The Leadership Team will discuss progress against the policy regularly and take action if needed.
- Under usual circumstances, Break the Silence will undertake a gender pay gap and diversity pay gap analysis every 3 years.

Definitions

This policy refers to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). A definition of each of these words can be found below to help staff understand what Break the Silence means by these terms.

- **Equality** in the workplace means equal job opportunities and fairness for employees and job applicants. This means equal opportunities to join project groups, access to training, development, involvement in consultations, opportunities to act in absence and so on.
- **Diversity** is the range of people at Break the Silence. For example, this might mean people of different ages, religions and ethnicities, people with disabilities and people of specific gender or with no gender identity. It also means valuing those differences such as people's background, education, where they are from, what languages they speak, their accent and their personal experiences.
- **Inclusion** in the workplace means everyone feels valued at work. It lets all employees feel safe to come up with different ideas, raise issues and express their views. Break the Silence encourages staff to do things in different ways. Break the Silence will take into account your personal circumstances, beliefs and values along with any conditions that need to be accounted for to make you feel included and welcome.

What is meant by 'protected characteristics'?

The term 'protected characteristics' used in this policy refers to those outlined in the Equality Act 2010, namely: race, sex, marital or civil partnership status, maternity and

pregnancy, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and religion or belief. Although not within the Equality Act 2010, Break the Silence also considers socio-economic status and health conditions that are not currently captured by the Act to hold the same considerations within this policy.

Break the Silence is committed to going beyond the legal minimum regarding EDI and strives to be an example of best practice.

Current equality legislation and associated codes of practice have been taken into account within this policy.

What type of bias are we talking about?

Break the Silence wants to ensure that it is overcoming the normative nature of its worldview (which means a view that is widely held and rarely questioned) by avoiding being an organisation that is unconsciously and unintentionally ethnocentric (evaluating other cultures according to the standards and customs of one's own culture), androcentric (focusing on men and centred around their needs above others), heteronormative (where the outlook is based on heterosexuality as the preferred sexuality) and ableist (taking a position or action that fails to take into account the needs of the disabled, or favouring able-bodied individuals)).

Break the Silence seeks to avoid taking any action that may negatively impact people of particular ethnicity, those with disabilities, individuals of a certain gender or sexuality, those from a specific socio-economic or educational background, those for whom English is their second language, or where they hold any other protected characteristic. Break the Silence will ensure that it actively seeks to employ people from a range of backgrounds and experiences, that working groups and project teams are a mix of departments and people and that it is as diverse and representative of the people it serves as it can possibly be.