

BRIDGING THE GAP ISLINGTON/ BRIDGING THE GAP MENTORING

Equal Opportunities Policy

1. Equal Opportunities Policy Statement

Bridging the Gap Mentoring is committed to achieving equal opportunities in employment and the services it provides. No user of Bridging the Gap Mentoring's services, volunteer or employee, should receive less favourable treatment because of:- age, disability, gender re-assignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment or any other criterion not relevant to the point at issue.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers and service users of Bridging the Gap Mentoring.

3. Responsibilities

The trustees of Bridging the Gap Mentoring have overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy. However, all employees, volunteers and service users have a duty as part of their involvement with Bridging the Gap Mentoring to do everything they can to ensure that the policy works in practice.

It is the responsibility of all employees, volunteers and service users to ensure that no other service user, volunteer or employee receives less favourable treatment than any other on the grounds stated in the introduction of this policy.

Bridging the Gap Mentoring recognises that some service users may, because of their past or present distress say or do things which would otherwise be unacceptable and incompatible with this Equal Opportunities Policy. Bridging the Gap Mentoring will do all it can to challenge such behaviour. In cases where intervention is possible a gentle approach will be adopted which aims to alter attitudes and behaviour while maintaining support for the service user.

4. Training and Recruitment

Bridging the Gap Mentoring will bring to the attention of all employees, volunteers and service users the existence of this policy, and will provide such training as is necessary to ensure that the policy is effective and that everyone is aware of it. Those responsible for recruiting volunteers to work in Bridging the Gap Mentoring projects are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the equal opportunities policy and adhere to it.

- Bridging the Gap Mentoring will ensure that job descriptions, person specifications and application forms reflect only the requirements of the job and meet the organisations Equal Opportunities Policy statement.
- All advertisements will state that Bridging the Gap Mentoring is seeking to be an effective equal opportunities employer. A copy of Bridging the gap Mentoring's Equal Opportunities Statement will form part of all application packs.
- The interview and selection process for mentors and staff will reflect only the requirements of the job, will give full consideration to life experience and will reflect this Equal Opportunities policy.

5. Positive Action

Bridging the Gap Mentoring believes that passive support for equal opportunities is not enough and that positive steps shall be taken. Bridging the Gap Mentoring is committed to:

- Recognising and developing potential which has not been used before because of past discrimination and disadvantage.
- Encouraging access and applications from under-represented groups.
- Providing training for disadvantaged groups.
- Staff and volunteers will be asked to confirm that they have read and will follow this Equal Opportunities policy

Every effort will be made to ensure that the services offered by Bridging the Gap Mentoring reflect the composition of the community it serves.

6. Collecting information

In order to develop and inform this policy, we will collect information about the ethnicity, gender, sexual preferences, age and disability of our staff, volunteers and service users. This will record the answers that people choose to give and will be anonymous and confidential. People will not be required to give any of this information. See appendix A

7. Dealing with complaints

If any service user, volunteer or employee feels that they have been, or are being discriminated against, in any way, they are entitled to pursue the matter with either:

- i) supervisory volunteers or employees of Bridging the Gap Mentoring
- ii) the trustees of Bridging the Gap Mentoring as outlined in our complaints policy.

All instances or complaints of discriminatory behaviour will be treated seriously.

8. Access for people with disabilities

Bridging the Gap Mentoring will endeavour to ensure, as far as is practicable, that all its Services are provided in premises which have access for people with disabilities.

9. Use of language

Staff, volunteers and service users will avoid and challenge the use of language which, in any way, belittles;

- i) disabled groups and/or individuals with special needs
- ii) any ethnicity, culture or religion
- iii) a person's sexual orientation
- iv) women and/or men.

Where the language used has a personal impact on others, and it has been made clear to the person concerned that their use of such language is unwelcome and/or offensive, disciplinary action may be taken if they persist with it.

All materials used or developed by Bridging the Gap Mentoring will be judged in the light of the promotion of equal opportunities, and those considered to be discriminatory will not be used.

10. Sexual Harrassment

No member of staff, volunteer or service user should be subject to sexual harassment.

This is interpreted as unwanted behaviour of a sexual nature including:

- i) verbal sexual abuse
- ii) physical contact
- iii) repeated remarks which an individual finds offensive

If it has been made clear to the person concerned that their behaviour is unwelcome and they persist with it, then the service user, volunteer or employee who is the recipient of the behaviour will be entitled to make a formal complaint which may result in disciplinary action.

