Equal Opportunities Statement

Next review: July 2028

1. General Statement of policy

Autism Berkshire believes that equal opportunities are very important for our charity. We need to make sure that we are being equal wherever possible. This means making sure it happens, not just writing policies. There are always new ideas on discrimination to be explored. There are going to be new forms of oppression to be challenged. To meet these challenges, we aim to develop a learning organisation. All people need to feel free to talk about issues of equality. We will have good training and be learning from each other. We will monitor what happens carefully. People will have freedom to admit mistakes and to celebrate successes.

There are lots of sorts of unfair discrimination. It may be direct and based on prejudice. It may be based on lack of awareness and understanding. It may be something that is seen as 'normal' in some organisations.

We are opposed to all these types of discrimination. We will seek to ensure that in all our activities, we do not take discriminate unfairly against individuals or groups for any of the following reasons:

- gender*
- age*
- social and economic class
- employment status
- HIV status
- physical or mental disability*
- political belief
- religion or belief*
- gender reassignment*
- race*, colour, nationality or national origin
- marriage, civil partnership or parental status*
- sexual orientation*
- unrelated criminal conviction
- position as a carer*
- status as a refugee/asylum seeker
- pregnancy and maternity*

Some of this list are Equality Act 2010 characteristics or Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023 characteristics. They are marked with an *. These are 'protected characteristics'.

People must also not be discriminated against because of someone they know who has a protected characteristic. Nor because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic. For example, someone who is treated unfairly because they have a gay child, or because someone thinks the person is autistic (even if they are not).

We do not allow political beliefs in our charity which promote prejudice and discrimination.

If someone has 'unspent criminal convictions', the Trustees can decide whether this is relevant to our work.

All personnel must work to stop unfair discrimination in our charity. We want to create a welcoming, positive and safe working environment for everyone.

Users of the charity's services must respect the values in this statement. Some people may not know much about equal opportunities. They may need chances to learn. Any behaviour that is discriminatory is a serious breach of this policy, and will need something done to solve it.

Autism Berkshire will take positive action to help stop discrimination. We will promote diversity. We will allow everyone the chance to use their skills for our work.

2. Delivery of service to users

The 'service users' of Autism Berkshire include all members of the public who use our services. It also includes people working with us from the voluntary and the public sector, and our volunteers and trustees. We will:

(i) treat everyone who has contact with the organisation for whatever reason with dignity and courtesy.

(ii) plan the services in a way that is fair for people with any protected characteristic. In particular we will plan what disabled people with a range of impairments might reasonably need. We will then make reasonable adjustments, taking into account risk assessments in relation to the public health emergency caused by Covid-19

(iii) find out what services are required by different sections of the community.

(iv) seek to give good information and support to individuals, groups and organisations in communities which experience greater discrimination and social exclusion

(v) not permit discriminatory advertisements or news items to appear on our publications.

(vi) make sure that these are accessible to a wide range of individuals and communities: Meetings, literature, website, publicity, training events and all other forms of communication.

(vii) publicise our Complaints Procedure. This is available for use by any service user who may have experienced discrimination from our charity in some way.

3. The use of buildings and venues

Autism Berkshire will ensure that all visitors to our offices and events are not discriminated against when using our premises or venues. We will make reasonable adjustments for disabled people.

Venues: We will consider the following and make reasonable adjustments:

- how people enter
- how they find their way around
- signage
- the suitability of lighting and other environmental factors
- how information is provided
- how tables and counters are laid out and designed
- accessible toilet facilities.

4. Recruitment & selection of personnel

(i) The trustees will seek to ensure that the Trustee Board, its sub-committees, staff and volunteers, reflects that of the local community where possible.

(ii) Autism Berkshire has a Recruitment & Selection Procedure for hiring paid staff. It is to ensure an effective but fair recruitment process using equal opportunities principles.

(iii) Applicants for employment and voluntary work by Autism Berkshire will be given a copy of the Equal Opportunities Statement.

(iv) All new staff, volunteers and committee members will be helped to assess their equal opportunities training needs. People will be offered appropriate training at the organisation's expense.

5. Protection for employees, volunteers and partners

(i) Autism Berkshire will not tolerate its staff, volunteers or partners being harassed by anyone whilst doing their work. We will monitor policy and staff feedback to minimise the risk. We will take action should an incident occur.

(ii) Any member of staff who feels they have been subjected to harassment should tell us. They can do so informally with a senior member of staff, or through the grievance process.

(iii) Employees will not be badly treated because of making a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010. For example being denied a training opportunity or a promotion. This applies to situations where people just suspect someone has made a complaint, too.

(iv) Autism Berkshire considers harassment to be a disciplinary offence.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

(i) The Board of Trustees has responsibility for reviewing how effective the charity is promoting equal opportunities. The Board of Trustees also sets up procedures for what happens when there is a complaint or grievance.

7. Changes to version

This policy is to be reviewed biannually by the CEO and the named Safeguarding Trustee. The policy will then be endorsed by the board and this action will be minuted.

Date	Major or Minor	Reason for change	Change
25/5/17 4.0	Minor	Recommendation from Safe and Sound assessment	Under General Statement, added civil partnership
	Major	Consistency	Put onto Policy template
15/4/18 4.1	Minor	Review for Slough Quality Protects	Up issued and endorsed by the board. Added wording that the CEO is responsible for review and the board will endorse.
31/05/20 4.2	Minor	Response to Covid-19 pandemic	Clarify that in determining whether adjustments to service delivery are reasonable regard should be given to Covid-19 risks
14/06/2022 4.2	Minor	Biannual Review	Reviewed
31/07/2024 4.3	Minor	Biannual review	Reviewed. Carers added to list of protected characteristics, as a result of the Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023.
July 26	Minor	Biannual review	Reviewed