



A COUNSELLING SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE  
Broadway House O 4-8 The Broadway O Newbury O Berkshire O RG14 1BA  
Tel: 01635 760331 O [www.t2twb.org](http://www.t2twb.org)  
E-mail: [office@t2twb.org](mailto:office@t2twb.org)

**Policy Name**  
Equality and Diversity

**Date reviewed by Policy Action Committee:**

May 2023

**Date approved by Trustees:**

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**Version Number: 1**

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If any changes are made to these policies, the Board of Trustees will be notified that the policy has been amended.

## EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY

### Why We Have an Equality and Diversity Policy?

Time to Talk WB (T2TWB) promotes the wellbeing of young people and works to make life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience, ensuring that mental health needs are acknowledged and met. It recognises that every person is an individual with different needs, preferences and abilities. It aims to reflect this diversity in everything it does, including making its services inclusive and accessible to young people from all sections of the community, and attracting and retaining a diverse workforce. T2TWB believes that harnessing different life experiences, attributes and contributions from staff, volunteers and service users will make T2TWB a more effective and inclusive organisation and a better place to work.

This policy sets out our approach to equal opportunities and the avoidance of discrimination at work. It applies to all aspects of employment with us, including pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and discipline, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities. It also covers the treatment and conduct of volunteers. T

### The Policy Statement

T2TWB values diversity. By respecting and using diversity it can maximise its impact through meeting individual needs and staying in touch with the changing societies in which it works. Staff and volunteers recognise and fulfil their personal role in making T2TWB a genuinely inviting and inclusive organisation. T2TWB has a commitment to diversity, which is about:

- Recognising and valuing difference
- Recognising and seeking to redress inequality and disadvantage
- Treating all in a fair, open and honest manner
- Recognising the right of volunteers, employees and service users to be treated with dignity and respect T2TWB is committed to:
  - Equality of opportunity
  - Tackling discrimination and disadvantage
  - Tackling harassment and intimidation
  - Making its workforce and the organisation as a whole more representative of the diverse communities that make up West Berkshire

T2TWB will not tolerate less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, gender, gender reassignment, age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, disability, marital/civil partnership status, sexual

orientation, pregnancy or maternity, responsibility for dependents, trade union or political activities, criminal record, place of residence, religion, faith or other beliefs, health status or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

T2TWB will never use cultural practices as a justification for, or to ignore an issue of, safeguarding.

T2TWB believes that discrimination is wrong and should be actively opposed. Discrimination denies human dignity, a freedom for people to be themselves, and a place in a free society. T2TWB is primarily committed to the welfare of young people and to maintaining their mental health.

T2TWB is also committed to a policy of Equality and Diversity in service delivery and in employment practices and will not accept discrimination in its work with and for young people. This commitment includes training managers and all other employees and volunteers about their rights and responsibilities under the equality policy.

Responsibilities include staff and volunteers conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All staff and volunteers should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, volunteers, customers, suppliers and the public.

### **Procedures Provision of Services**

T2TWB aims to deliver services throughout West Berkshire to young people who need them, without discriminating against, stigmatising or patronising young people. Every service user will be treated in a professional manner, with courtesy and respect. Users of our services and those who take part in our activities will be informed that T2TWB is committed to an Equality and Diversity Policy so that:

- They will know a policy exists and a copy is available so as to guide all members of the organisation and others to share the commitment and code of practice of Equality and Diversity.
- All who come into contact with T2TWB will know the standards that we are trying to achieve and have the opportunity to assist us in trying to achieve them.
- They will know they have the right to complain, if they feel these standards are not being adhered to or are dissatisfied with the service provided to them. T2TWB will make sure that its services meet the needs of its communities by involving communities in identifying their needs and by seeking to meet these needs.
- T2TWB will develop services to make sure there is maximum take up by all communities and particularly those groups facing disadvantage and discrimination. It will do this by:
- Providing information in plain English and use methods other than written documents to present information as appropriate,
- Offering information on request in accessible formats.
- Accessing interpretation, translation and sign language services on request as appropriate.

### **Discrimination**

T2TWB will not unlawfully discriminate against or harass other people including current and former employees, job applicants, volunteers, clients, service users, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work-related contacts), and on work-related trips or events including social events. The following forms of discrimination are prohibited under this policy and are unlawful:

(a) Direct discrimination: treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because they might be gay.

(b) Indirect discrimination: a provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others, and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.

(c) Harassment: this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Harassment is dealt with further in our Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy.

(d) Victimisation: retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment.

(e) Disability discrimination: this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

#### Recruitment and Selection

T2TWB will ensure that recruitment practices fulfil the requirement of the equality and diversity policy. We follow Safer Recruitment practice, interview panels consist of three people who are selected and engage in the whole process, job description, advert, shortlisting -agreeing content of shortlisting form , interview agreeing format and question areas. Vacancies should generally be advertised to a diverse section of the labour market. Advertisements should avoid stereotyping or using wording that may discourage particular groups from applying. All posts will have a job description and person specification, which will contain essential and desirable skills, qualifications and experience. Person specifications will only contain details which are required.

Job applicants should not be asked questions which might suggest an intention to discriminate on grounds of a Protected Characteristic. For example, applicants should not be asked whether they are pregnant or planning to have children. Shortlisting should be done by more than one person if possible. The format for interview will be agreed before it takes place and will remain constant for all interviews for the position. Every effort will be made to make provision for staff and volunteers with a disability through reasonable adaptations. Posts which are deemed suitable will be advertised as available for job share. Job shares may also be available to staff in suitable posts on request, and providing that a suitable job sharer may be recruited. All staff and trustees involved in recruitment and selection will be aware of this policy and adhere to it at all times. All applicants for posts will be treated strictly on merit, against objective criteria that avoid discrimination. As an exception, posts targeted at specific groups of people

will be exempted, as allowed by legislation. All application forms will include an optional and detachable section for equality and diversity monitoring, which will not be used as part of the selection process. The information will be individually confidential and used for assessing recruitment and advertising practices periodically.

An appointed person will be responsible for vetting, in confidence, applicants for sensitive posts; this may include Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. Reasons for the decision to appoint, or not, will be noted and kept for at least six months. Part-time and fixed-term work Part-time and fixed-term employees should be treated the same as comparable full-time or permanent employees and enjoy no less favourable terms and conditions (on a pro-rata basis where appropriate), unless different treatment is justified.

### **Differing Abilities**

If an employee is differently abled or becomes differently abled, they are encouraged to talk about their condition so that reasonable adjustments or support may be considered as appropriate. Training and Development The Board of Trustees, staff and volunteers need to recognise and fulfil their personal role in making T2TWB a genuinely inviting and inclusive organisation.

T2TWB will ensure that all staff and volunteers know about the Equality and Diversity policy and their responsibilities within it, by including it within Induction Training, and ensuring it has a high profile within our internal communications and practices. Additional role specific training will be undertaken to ensure understanding of and commitment to Equality & Diversity policies and procedures as appropriate.

### **Recording and Monitoring of Service Provision**

T2TWB will monitor and review the take up of the service with records being kept of actions and decisions by trustees, staff and volunteers. Monitoring will be carried out on the basis of ethnic background, gender, age, place of residence, sexual orientation and disability. Provision of individual monitoring data will be supplied on a voluntary basis, using agreed categories.

### **Responsibilities**

The Board of Trustees has the ultimate responsibility to provide, implement and review the policy. It is the responsibility of trustees, staff and volunteers to support the policy by ensuring that T2TWB's activities promote equality and diversity. The Chair of Trustees or appointed representative holds the day to day responsibility for ensuring that the policy is implemented and, in the first instance, for dealing with or taking action on disciplinary offences.

The Board of Trustees will receive a report analysing monitoring data on an annual basis, in order to retain oversight of the impact and implementation of the policy.

### **Breaches of this policy**

T2TWB takes seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, volunteers, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities. We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure.

Serious cases of deliberate discrimination may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal without notice. If an employee believes that they have suffered discrimination the matter can be raised through T2TWB's Grievance Procedure or Bullying and Harassment Policy. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate. Employees must not be victimised or retaliated against for complaining about discrimination. However, making a false allegation deliberately and in bad faith will be treated as misconduct and dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.