



THE COMMUNITY BROKERAGE NETWORK

V1 DRAFT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Community Brokerage Network (CBN) is committed to promoting an environment of respect, understanding, encouraging diversity and eliminating discrimination by providing equality of opportunity for all. Throughout the network there will be a consistent approach in promoting equality and diversity across all areas of our work and expect to see the same in the Partners we engage with.

We expect all employees, self-employed brokers, volunteers and directors to abide by this policy. This policy also covers discrimination by and towards members of the public, governing body, members, contractors and staff from other agencies. CBN opposes all forms of unlawful discrimination.

We recognise diversity consists of visible and non visible differences including factors and characteristics such as:

- Disability
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Religion and belief
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender
- Gender reassignment
- Marital status
- Social and economic background
- Political persuasion
- Caring responsibility
- Trade union membership

We believe that harnessing these differences create a productive environment where everyone feels value, their talents are fully utilised and through which the organisational and business goals are met.

BACKGROUND AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Tackling inequality is an on going area of policy development and legislation across the UK. Despite good progress inequalities still exist across the country. The Equality Act 2010 is the current legislative framework and this policy will be compliant with the current legislation and promotes a culture of dignity and respect for all. We also comply with the relevant European Directives and the Equality and Human Rights Commission Codes of Practice.

OUR POSITION

CBN is opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. All employees, self-employed brokers, volunteers, directors and others who work with us or for us will be treated fairly and will not be discriminated against on any of the above grounds.

CBN does not tolerate any form of discrimination including:

- Direct discrimination (less favourable treatment because of a characteristic listed above)
- Indirect discrimination (less favourable treatment as a result of a policy or practice which applies to everybody but has a negative effect on a particular individual or group with a characteristic listed above)
- Failure to make a reasonable adjustment (less favourable treatment because an adjustment was not made for a disabled person even though it was reasonable for the organisation to do so)
- Disability-related discrimination (less favourable treatment due to something arising in consequence of a person's impairment or condition)
- Discrimination by perception (less favourable treatment because the organisation thinks the person has a characteristic listed above)
- Discrimination by association (less favourable treatment because a person is associated with a person who has a characteristic above)
- Victimisation (less favourable treatment as a result of taking legal action in relation to discrimination, trying to take legal action, or being suspected of taking legal action).

- Harassment (a violation of a person's dignity or the creation of an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment)
- Institutional discrimination (less favourable treatment arising from the practices, policies or procedures or culture of an organisation)

CBN takes a positive approach to equality and diversity. In addition to avoiding discrimination, we also value difference. This approach ties in with our vision, and underpins all of the work we do.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

This Equality and Diversity Policy seeks to establish CBN as a champion of equality and diversity. We will embed equality and diversity into all of our policies, programmes and actions. CBN will: -

- Ensure integration with equality and diversity practices into all that we do, and ensure that employees, self employed brokers, directors and people we come in contact with are treated with fairness and respect from each other and from members of the public, committee members, and contractors.
- Implement fair and just employment practices ensuring that no job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment on any grounds.
- Ensure self-employed brokers, people who are recruited to work with us and employees are engaged and where appropriate promoted solely on the basis of their own merit, experience, ability and potential. This applies throughout the entire duration of engagement or employment, as all decisions will be based on only relevant merits.
- Provide an environment appropriate to the needs of those from all walks of life, and offer a culture that respects and values each other's differences and promotes dignity, equality and diversity.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY AND RESPONSIBILITY

The CBN Board is responsible for the policy but the day-to-day responsibility for its implementation is the responsibility of the co-ordinator.

CBN will ensure that all employees, directors and people providing work on our behalf such as self – employed brokers or volunteers will receive induction on this policy. The policy will be widely promoted and integrated into all policies and

procedures within CBN, and copies of the policy will also be freely available via the website.

Appropriate training and guidance will be available to promote equality and diversity among staff, self-employed brokers, volunteers and directors.

This policy applies to everyone in CBN and everyone has a responsibility to be alert to discriminatory behaviours and practices should they occur. Unacceptable behaviour and practices must not occur, however if a situation arises, it will be dealt with immediately. Breaches of the equality and diversity policy will be regarded as misconduct and will lead to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.

RECRUITMENT & SELECTION

It is CBN's policy that all recruitment and selection decisions will be based completely on the merits and abilities of candidates alone and no other criteria will be used. In order to achieve this, equality and diversity practices will be integrated into every stage of the recruitment and selection process.

A fair recruitment process will remove barriers to the employment and engagement of self employed brokers and people of different backgrounds. This will enable CBN, when recruiting staff or when seeking self employed brokers, to recruit from the widest pool of talent, and increase the opportunity of a more diverse group of practitioners, which reflects the community, it is serving. A more diverse group of practitioners will improve CBN's service delivery, as it will include people with a full range of knowledge and experience meet and aid in meeting the needs and aspirations of service users and potential service users.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF (SELF) EMPLOYMENT

As part of the employment relationship being covered under this equality and diversity policy all contracts of employment will be issued in accordance with the job role and not the jobholder. Employee's terms and conditions will be standard across all employees regardless of any of the protected characteristics. Employees will not receive less favourable terms and conditions for any reason other than relating specifically to the job role and the grade it attracts.

All self-employed brokers will receive a contract detailing of terms of engagement and will be subject to this equality and diversity policy.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

Equality and diversity will apply throughout all training activities and resources. Training and development opportunities will be given to all employees according to their job role. It is crucial that all employees are able to participate and enjoy any training opportunities or activities without discrimination or fear of harassment. Every attempt will be made to ensure learning materials will provide a positive image of people reinforcing an image and of equality of opportunity.

Appropriate training will be made available for self – employed brokers in line with the developments and priorities of CBN. The self – employed brokers will be treated fairly at all times through their engagement with CBN and supported accordingly, given the unique nature and early developments of brokerage as a model and service.

REDUNDANCY SELECTION

Should there be a need for redundancy selection, this selection will be made according to the statutory requirements and in line with CBN's Redundancy Policy. Criteria will be discussed with the relevant Trade Union or nominated representatives. The criteria will be set out and will be objective, fair and consistent. This will ensure that employees selected for redundancy are selected according to the chosen selection criteria and not in any discriminatory way either indirectly or directly.

IF YOU ARE BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST

Where an employee or self – employed feels they have been discriminated against, victimised or harassed, there are different ways in which a claim can be dealt with depending on the circumstances. In the first instance the employee, self-employed broker should raise the issue informally with their line manager, usually an appointed Director (unless the claim is against their manager, in such circumstances the employee should raise the issue with another director). The Self – employed brokers must raise the complaint with the co-ordinator. However if it is about the co-ordinator they should raise it with the Chairperson of the Board.

Informal Stage

Initially the person and manager/director/chairperson should aim to resolve the matter informally as it may be that the discriminatory action is unconscious and easily resolved once the situation is highlighted. This is often the most efficient way with dealing with such circumstances in order to maintain good working relations.

However, even though the matter has been treated informally a file note should be kept on the complaining person's file of the incident and should include a statement that the note will only be taken into account if further complaints are made. The file note may be necessary if there is a requirement at a later date, should any unacceptable behaviour or practice continue.

Dealing with the matter informally does not remove the individual's right to have the matter dealt with formally, should that be the most appropriate next course of action.

Formal Stage

If the person is dissatisfied with the outcome, or the complaint is very serious, the person should raise the matter, in writing detailing the complaint. The complaint should then be actioned under CBN's Grievance Policy. In line with this process an investigation into the claim will be carried out.

If the outcome of the investigation is that a formal disciplinary hearing should take place this will be conducted in line with CBN's Disciplinary Procedures. Please refer to the appropriate policy for full details.

COMPLAINTS: STAKEHOLDERS

The right to be treated equally with dignity and respect extends to outside contractors, committee members and other agencies whilst at work. They are sometimes referred to as third parties. Should a third party, also known as a stakeholder, complain CBN will investigate the complaint and appropriate action will be taken.

If a stakeholder feels that they are being discriminated against in the course of their working day, the following procedure should be followed.

Informal Stage

Where possible, incidents should be dealt with informally. The stakeholder should report the matter to their lead contact within CBN as soon as possible. It maybe that the discriminatory action is unconscious and easily resolved once the situation is highlighted.

The manager will discuss the situation with the individual whom the complaint is against and explain the expected standards of behaviour and the consequences of failing to comply with these. It will be made clear to the individual that continuation of such conduct may result in being refused access to CBN's services.

Formal Stage

Where informal action is not appropriate or the matter is of a serious nature the complaint will be dealt with using the formal procedure. Where the formal procedure is instigated a thorough investigation will take place in the first instance. Where it is found that the individual has acted in an inappropriate manner, they will be written to officially by the relevant senior manager informing them that their comments, actions, behaviours are not acceptable and potentially discriminatory. The letter will state that further incidents will not be tolerated and that they may result in being refused access to CBN's or contact with its customers/employees/board members. In cases of physical violence or serious threats the appropriate manager will notify the police.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF POLICY

Responsibility for monitoring the application of this policy belongs to the CBN Board however on a day-to-day basis this responsibility lies with the co-ordinator.

The policy will be reviewed annually with the amendments being made as appropriate and communicated to all staff, self-employed brokers and other relevant third parties.