

Equality and Diversity Policy

Date of agreed policy: January 2023

Date of review: January 2026

Standing in the Gap

Standing in the Gap is an early intervention mental health charity started in Oxfordshire in 2017. We help preschool and Primary aged children manage big emotions such as a fear anxiety, anger and grief. We bridge the gap in child mental health support with a programme of talks, workshops, online resources and bespoke support for families.

We are a local charity with a global footprint, and we aim to support children and parents before they hit crisis.

We live by our values which all our policies seek to reinforce. Our values are: We build emotional wellbeing with kindness, using empowering partnerships in a safe and professional manner, motivated by our Christian faith. We work with children and families of all faiths and none while our trustees and Clinical Director identify as Christians.

The Aim of this Policy:

Standing in the Gap are committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and to avoiding unlawful discrimination. This policy is intended to assist putting this commitment into practice. Our aim is that the work environment is free of harassment and bullying and that everyone is treated with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equal opportunities in employment.

The Law

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of a 'protected characteristic'. The Equality Act 2010 defines the protected characteristics as being age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, nationality, caste and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership.

As a Christian charity we have an occupational requirement for our trustees and Directors to identify as Christians.

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass a member of the public or service user in the provision of services or goods or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability.

The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

Types of Unlawful Discrimination

- **Direct discrimination** is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic. However discrimination may be lawful if there is an occupational requirement which is core to a job role and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- **Indirect discrimination** means putting in place, a rule or policy or way of doing things that has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one, when this cannot be objectively justified.
- **Harassment** is where there is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or which creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.
- **Associative discrimination** is where the individual treated less favourably does not have a protected characteristic but is discriminated against because of their association with someone who does e.g. the parent of a disabled child.
- **Perceptive discrimination** is where the individual discriminated against or harassed does not have a protected characteristic but they are perceived to have a protected characteristic.
- **Third-party harassment** occurs where an employee is harassed by third parties such as service users, due to a protected characteristic.
- **Victimisation** is treating someone unfavourably because they have taken some form of action relating to the Equality Act i.e. because they have supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because they are suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if they acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.
- **Failure to make reasonable adjustments** is where a rule or policy or way of doing things has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage

A) Policy Statement:

1. We recognise that certain individuals and groups in society suffer discrimination on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religious belief,

gender, gender reassignment, disability, and marital status, culture and socio-economic background.

2. We will seek to ensure that we do not engage in direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds above.
3. We will seek to ensure that our services and resources are relevant to all members and service users and are perceived by them as being so.

The aim of the policy is to ensure no job applicant, trustee, employee or volunteer is discriminated against either directly or indirectly on the grounds above.

4. The Trustees and Clinical Director have primary responsibility for ensuring equal opportunities in service delivery and employment practice. All trustees, employees and volunteers must adhere to this policy in the course of their work, monitor it on a day-to-day basis and report on its operation to the Trustee Board.

B) Standing in the Gap's Responsibilities

We will:

1. Communicate the policy to all trustees, staff, and volunteers through the use of handbooks, policies, notice boards, circulars, written notification to individual employees and other methods of communication as appropriate.
2. Discuss and, where appropriate, agree with employee representatives any proposed changes in the policy's contents and implementation.
3. Make it known to all job applicants and, where appropriate to all users of our services.
4. Ensure that disciplinary and grievance procedures incorporate principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination.
5. Regularly examine existing procedures and criteria, including recruitment practices, and terms and conditions of employment and change them where they are actually or potentially discriminatory.
6. Ensure that the organisation is kept up to date and within the law.
7. Provide training and guidance to enable staff to carry out the policy and provide specific training for relevant decision makers, including members of the Board of Trustees where appropriate.
8. Regularly monitor the application of the policy.
9. Make reports annually on progress in implementing the policy and on any necessary changes.

C) Recruitment and Selection

1. We will endeavour through appropriate training to ensure that employees making selection and recruitment decisions do not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making these decisions.
2. Promotion and advancement will be made on merit and all decisions relating to this will be made within the overall framework and principles of this policy.
3. Job descriptions, where used, will be in line with our diversity and equal opportunities policy. Job requirements will be reflected accurately in any personnel specifications.
4. We will adopt a consistent, non-discriminatory approach to the advertising of vacancies.
5. All applicants who apply for jobs with us will receive fair treatment and will be considered solely on their ability to do the job.

6. All employees involved in the recruitment process will periodically review their selection criteria to ensure that they are related to the job requirements and do not unlawfully discriminate.
7. Short listing and interviewing will be carried out by more than one person where possible.
8. Interview questions will be related to the requirements of the job and will not be of a discriminatory nature.
9. Selection decisions will not be influenced by any perceived prejudices of other staff.

D) Service Provision

1. We will work actively towards ensuring that our services and resources are relevant to all members and service users.

We will examine each area of work to determine whether:

- The service is offered in an accessible and relevant way.
- Alternative methods would be more appropriate.
- Additional services should be developed.
- There are any practices/procedures which are discriminatory.

2. All written resources for groups and individuals produced by Standing in the Gap will reflect the mixed community within which we work and stereotyped images of particular groups will not be reinforced. All trustees, employees and volunteers must ensure that their work reflects these principles.
3. Users must have easy access to information about Standing in the Gap's services which may involve making materials available where appropriate in a variety of media, e.g. in large print or electronically
4. It is also recognised that Standing in the Gap will not be able to meet all the demands made upon its services. The annual priorities are agreed and identified as the Strategic Plan for Standing in the Gap.
5. Additionally, it is recognised that there may from time to time be complaints against members of staff or the service. A notice will be displayed on the website www.standinginthegap.uk giving details of how a complaint may be made. The procedure will also be regularly publicised.

E) Employment

1. Staff are entitled to support from management and colleagues. Staff will receive regular supervision from their line manager. Where this is not possible, Standing in the Gap will make funds available from the staff development/training budget to allow for supervision to be obtained from other agencies or individuals.
2. Standing in the Gap recognises that training is an important factor in leading to job achievement and opportunity. Induction training is particularly important and will be made available to all new staff. When other needs are identified, every effort will be made to ensure that training is provided.
3. Standing in the Gap recognises that from time to time family and social circumstances may change and consequently workers may need to change their conditions of work. Standing in the Gap will attempt, where circumstances and resources permit, to accommodate the needs of those workers.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Bullying and Harassment
- Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Trustee Policy