



**BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT**

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

**November 2021**

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# 1. Introduction

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) support the range and breadth of cultural relations work that we undertake. They are essential to enable deep, trusting, mutually beneficial relationships.

Equality seeks to eradicate unjustified discrimination on irrelevant grounds and promote human rights and social justice. When we talk about equality at the BCS, we mean treating people fairly, impartially and without bias. We mean creating conditions in the workplace and wider society which encourage and value diversity, promote dignity and inclusion and a culturally sensitive approach. Equality doesn't mean treating everyone the same. Rather it means treating people equitably. This involves acknowledging and trying to redress imbalances through a differentiated approach, where necessary and appropriate.

# 2. Aims of the Policy

Diversity is about recognising, valuing and respecting visible and invisible differences and reflecting this in the way we work and treat each other. It includes a workplace that is respectful, collaborative, flexible and inclusive. Diversity is about giving everyone the opportunity to be included and contribute regardless of gender, age, linguistic and cultural background, religious beliefs, disabilities, sexual orientation, pregnancy and family responsibilities.

BCS recognises and values people's differences and will assist them to use their talents to reach their full potential. We will do all we can to ensure we recruit, train and promote people based on qualifications, experience and abilities for all roles within the organisation.

This policy is designed to ensure that BCS complies with its obligations under equality legislation and demonstrate its commitment to treating people equally and fairly.

Using fair and objective employment practices, the organisation aims to ensure that:

- All customers, employees and potential employees are treated fairly and with respect;
- All customers and employees have the right to be free from harassment and bullying of any description, or any other form of unwanted behaviour. Such behaviour may come from other employees, members/volunteers or by third parties;
- All employees have an equal chance to contribute and to achieve their potential, irrespective of any defining feature that may give rise to unfair discrimination;
- All customers and employees have the right to be free from discrimination because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic or because others perceive that they have a particular Protected Characteristic, even if they do not.

### 3. Policy Statement for BCS Staff

BCS is committed to promoting equality, fairness and eliminating discrimination in its role as an employer, a membership society and as a service provider. We aim to create an organisation that respects and values each other's differences and encourages individuals to develop and maximise their true potential. We are committed, wherever practicable, to achieving and maintaining a workforce that broadly reflects the local community in which we operate.

We will strive to ensure that we do not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of any or a number of the protected characteristics which are described below.

We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination. We expect all our employees, volunteers, learners and members to be treated and to treat others fairly and with respect. Employment, promotion, training, or any other benefit will be based on their skills and ability. We will work to create an organisational culture where people are able to express their individual identities and celebrate diversity. People must feel confident and supported to challenge attitudes and behaviours which are deemed biased, discriminatory or disrespectful. We want to embed our BCS values<sup>1</sup> throughout the organisation. It is only by accepting and valuing diversity that we enable people to achieve their full potential

We will do all we can to ensure no one receives less favourable treatment or is to be disadvantaged by requirements or conditions, which cannot be shown to be justifiable.

### 4. Our Workplace Diversity Objectives

The main objective of this policy is a commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive workforce; that is, directed at eliminating employment-related barriers (visible or invisible). This will be supported through the other objectives of the plan:

- recognising, valuing and respecting differences and reflecting this in the way we work;
- creating a flexible working environment that supports the effective contribution of everyone – including balancing work, family and other caring responsibilities effectively;
- ensuring that BCS policies are aligned to the BCS Values and Code of Conduct
- preventing and eliminating any discrimination in the workplace.

### 5. General Statements for Customers

We are committed to ensuring behaviour which promotes equality, encourages diversity and contributes to an inclusive organisational culture. We require that our staff treat our clients, customers and suppliers fairly, with dignity and respect, to earn and maintain their trust and confidence. We want to ensure there is no unjustified discrimination on the grounds of age, disability including HIV/AIDS status, gender including transgender and intersex, marital status including civil partnership, political opinion, race / ethnicity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic background, spent convictions, trade union activity or membership, having or not having dependents, work pattern, or on any other irrelevant grounds. We promote equality, good relations and inclusion aligned to the Equality Act 2010, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Welsh Language Act 1993, and relevant legislation aligned to the geographical regions in which we operate.

## **Disability**

We recognise disability as a broad concept that includes physical, sensory, learning and mental health issues and long-standing and fluctuating health conditions e.g., HIV/AIDS and cancer. We strive for disability inclusion, recognising the skills and expertise many disabled people hold and the richness of experience this brings to our work and to cultural relations. Language around how to refer to disabled people is contested. Where possible we use 'disabled people' in line with the social model of disability. In some countries the term 'disabled people' is not recognised as positive and the term 'people with disabilities' may be preferable. We are committed to addressing unjustified discrimination against and promoting the inclusion of disabled people in our workforce and work in public life.

## **Gender**

We are committed to tackling gender discrimination. Our focus is on promoting equality and eradicating unjustified discrimination in relation to women and girls who frequently experience social and economic disadvantage, negative attitudes, alienation, abuse and violence worldwide. We recognise and seek to eradicate unjustified discrimination that people are subjected to based on their gender reassignment, or perceived gender reassignment, or because they are intersex, or hold a non-binary gender identity which may include being gender fluid. We aim to enable everyone to be recognised and referred to as they wish and to meaningfully and effectively respond to any concerns and issues raised.

## **Race / Ethnicity and Culture**

Racial discrimination includes less favourable treatment based on nationality, ethnic and national origins, skin colour and other physical markers. It interacts with religion and culture and includes caste and tribe. We believe that our work is enriched by the different racial / ethnic, cultural groups and travelling communities we engage with and that cultural relations has an important role to play in mutual understanding and exchange between different racial / ethnic and cultural groups.

## **Religion and Belief**

We value and respect the different religions / beliefs held by staff, customers and the external contacts and communities in which we operate, including those who hold no religion or belief. We try to ensure that religious / belief needs, and preferences, are met where we can. We know that in some contexts, the religion / belief might mean particular support or guidance is needed. We seek to offer a supportive environment to all colleagues and customers regardless of their religion / belief and working context. We believe that developing a better understanding of other people's religions and beliefs will contribute to improved cultural relations.

## **Sexual Orientation**

We are committed to supporting people of diverse sexual identities including lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, asexual, heterosexual and others to feel included and valued and to tackling discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation. We believe all colleagues have the right to be themselves at work without having to be concerned about sharing aspects of who they are. Whilst we respect the right of individuals to be open, or otherwise, about their sexual orientation we recognise that sexual minorities can face especial challenges and be fearful of doing so in the workplace and beyond, due to homophobia and heterosexism, as well as persecution. We want our workplace to be open and inclusive and a safe space for staff regardless of their sexual orientation.

## **Bullying and harassment**

Bullying and harassment are about misuse of power and should not be a part of our working culture or practices. There can sometimes be a tendency for incidents of bullying and/or harassment to be 'swept under the carpet' which means they are ignored and not treated seriously as they should be. This is counter to the organisational culture we aspire to and all staff are encouraged to speak up using relevant procedures (see section on the Speak Up

policy below). Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious and/or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, that undermines, humiliates, or injures the recipient.

Harassment, in general, is unwanted conduct affecting someone's dignity. It can be related to age, disability, ethnicity / race, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or any personal characteristic of the individual. It may involve persistent incidents or an isolated one. The crucial aspect is that the actions or comments are deemed to be demeaning and unacceptable to the recipient and create a hostile environment.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

All employees have a responsibility regarding workplace diversity.

### Responsibilities of the CEO

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for:

- upholding and promoting BCS Values and the Code of Conduct;
- supporting managers and employees to promote workplace diversity;
- promoting a workplace that has no tolerance for discrimination;

### Responsibilities of managers

Managers are responsible for:

- practising and promoting behaviour consistent with the BCS Values and Code of Conduct;
- maintaining a workplace that is respectful where everyone will be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy;
- supporting flexible working arrangements to meet employees' and BCS's needs;
- recognising and utilising the diverse skills and knowledge of employees;
- resolving workplace issues quickly, sensitively and effectively;
- supporting employees who require reasonable adjustments;
- calling out inappropriate behaviour when seen;
- actively supporting and encouraging equitable access to development opportunities for all employees.

### Responsibilities of employees

Employees are responsible for:

- behaving in a way that is consistent with the BCS Values and Code of Conduct;
- treating everyone with respect and courtesy;
- supporting employees who access reasonable adjustment and flexible working arrangements;
- respecting and supporting the different skills and competencies of all employees;
- calling out inappropriate behaviour when seen.

## Valuing our workforce

BCS will recruit and retain a motivated and professional workforce which reflects the diversity of the wider community. To that end, we will:

- Use selection criteria that does not unlawfully discriminate in recruitment and promotion procedures;
- Ensure entry to employment or progression within it to be based on merit;
- Provide equal opportunities in recruitment, training, promotion or transfer of employees;
- Ensure that every individual is assessed according to his or her personal capability to carry out a given job/role;
- Ensure that all employees are given equal treatment regarding terms and conditions of employment, provided they do the same or broadly similar work, or work of equal value;
- Ensure equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the operation of grievance and disciplinary procedures;
- Ensure that all relevant requirements of the Equality Act in relation to disability are met and adhered to. This will include making reasonable adjustments to ensure access to employment tasks and opportunities. Ensure our HR policies are effective and reviewed regularly.
- Act robustly to challenge and eliminate harassment, bullying or prejudice;
- Support staff and member associations;
- Regularly review our workforce monitoring figures and take action where disproportional or negative impact is shown in relation to complaints from staff;
- Use a variety of different methods to attract and retain staff from all backgrounds and ethnicity;
- Comply with all equalities related employment legislation;
- Provide Assistive Technology and other services for staff with specific needs;
- Train staff in equality and diversity issues to enable them to carry out their jobs in a way that reflects the core values of the organisation;
- Encourage open and honest discussion about issues which support personal development and a learning culture.

Bullying and harassment can manifest in a variety of ways, including by one member of staff to another of a different or equivalent level / pay band, or by one group of staff to an individual member of staff, or an external contact. If bullying or harassment involves issues of gender including transgender, sexual orientation, marital - including civil partnership - status, caring responsibility, race / ethnicity, religion / belief, political belief, age or disability, relevant legislation may apply.

## 7. Communications

BCS will communicate the policy by making it available on the BCS website and the Green Room (BCS intranet).

## 8. Grievances of Concerns

It is hoped that personal concerns can be handled and indeed resolved informally, at least in the first instance. Employees who have a concern may wish to contact Human Resources, or a trusted colleague for support. All concerns must be handled in confidence.

External contacts wishing to complain should use the through our “Contact Us” on the BCS website <https://www.bcs.org/contact-us/>

## 9. Definitions

### Diversity

Diversity in the workplace means that a company hires a wide range of diverse individuals. Diversity is often misconceived as solely multicultural matters, however it also applies to diversity of gender, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, language, educational, background, and so on.

### Inclusion

Inclusion, while closely related to diversity, is a separate concept from diversity. Inclusion is the achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organisation's success.

### Intersectionality

In a nutshell, intersectionality is the idea that people have more than one identity and those identities are inherently combined.

Employees with disabilities also have many other identities that impact their workplace experience. A staff member might have hearing loss and be a recent immigrant, for example.

### Discrimination

Discrimination means treating a person unfairly because of who they are or because they possess certain characteristics. If you have been treated differently from other people only because of who you are or because you possess certain characteristics, you may have been discriminated against.

The Equality Act 2010 highlights 9 protected characteristics:

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Race
4. Disability
5. Religion
6. Pregnancy and maternity
7. Sexual orientation
8. Gender reassignment
9. Marriage and civil partnership

Discrimination that occurs because of one or more of the above characteristics is unlawful under the Equality Act. Considering every person has at least some of these characteristics such as age, race or gender, the Act protects every person from being discriminated against.

## 10. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Head of Compliance to ensure that it remains up to date and reflects the needs and practices of the organisation. The policy may also be reviewed if legislation changes or if monitoring information suggests that policy or practices should be altered.





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