

Biggleswade Community Garden Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy

Biggleswade Community Garden is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our members, volunteers and leadership team, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.

The aim is for our people to be truly representative of all sections of society and the Biggleswade community and for each of us to feel respected and able to contribute to the community garden.

The organisation - in providing produce, volunteering opportunities and/or other services or facilities - is also committed against unlawful discrimination of our members, volunteers, leadership team or the public.

Our policy's purpose

This policy's purpose is to:

1. Provide equality, fairness and respect for all in our organisation, whether they are our members, volunteers, leadership team or the public
2. Not unlawfully discriminate because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage or civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origin)
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
3. Oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination. This includes in:
 - terms and conditions of membership, use of the garden or volunteering.
 - dealing with grievances
 - dismissal/ banning from the garden
 - lack of resources
 - balance of volunteering time versus other work/ life commitments such as family or employment.
 - selection for activities such as training or other developmental opportunities

Our commitments

The organisation commits to:

1. Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion in the community and among our people as they are good practice and make sense in terms of running a voluntary organisation.
2. Create an environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all our people are recognised and valued.

This commitment may include training our members, volunteers, leadership team or the public and all others about their rights and responsibilities under this equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Responsibilities include our people conducting themselves to help the organisation provide equal opportunities and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.

All of our people should understand they, as well as our leadership team, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their participation, against fellow members, volunteers, leadership team members or the public.

3. Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, fellow members, volunteers, leadership team members or the public, in the course of the organisation's activities.

Such acts will be dealt with by the leadership team, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount a ban from participation.

Further, sexual harassment may amount to a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.

4. Aim to make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all of our people who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the aims of the community garden.

5. Make decisions concerning our people being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).

6. Review our practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.

7. Monitor the make-up of the community garden and our fellow members, volunteers, leadership team regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the equality, diversity and inclusion policy.

Monitoring will also include assessing how the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, and any supporting action plan, are working in practice, reviewing them when needed and considering and taking action to address any issues.

Agreement to follow this policy

The equality, diversity and inclusion policy is fully supported by the leadership team and has been agreed at a steering group meeting on **15/03/23**.

Our disciplinary and grievance procedures

It's often best to try to resolve problems informally first by talking to fellow volunteers or members, especially in a voluntary organisation. It is often difficult to change people's minds, however through open dialogue it is possible to change people's behaviour. We encourage fellow members, volunteers, and leadership team members, to talk to each other or the leadership team if they think they are being victimised, are made to feel uncomfortable in any way, or if they witness this between others. If there are serious problems that need to be addressed formally, we'd encourage our people to tell a member of the leadership team immediately.

Steps to Resolution:

- 1) Informal chat between the volunteers concerned.
- 2) If no resolution is reached, a named mediator will work with the volunteers to resolve the dispute.
- 3) If no resolution is reached, a committee member must be informed.
- 4) A committee member will investigate the dispute and take further action as required, according to BCG policies and procedures.