



## Equity and Inclusion Policy V1.2

### Free2B Alliance Equity and Inclusion

Version: 1.2

Date: 27/2/2021

Authorised: Board of Directors

NEXT REVIEW DUE:

Next review period in 4 years - February 2025

Unless an earlier review is triggered by any of the following changes:

- There are changes to operating environment / or strategic direction of the company
- Work behaviour issues that require clarification
- Changes to government policy or legislation



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## Equity and Inclusion Policy V1.2

### 1 Introduction

This policy clarifies the role of Free2B as an organisation and of Free2B staff, volunteers and members within the framework of equalities legislation

### 2 SCOPE OF THE POLICY

Free2B Alliance recognises that discrimination is completely intolerable and that it is our responsibility to ensure that the principles of equity of opportunity are always followed.

We recognise that in order to achieve better fairness in giving people what they need there is a requirement to go beyond treating everyone the same. There will be times where we need to treat parts of our communities differently, and proportionately, dependent on need. This different treatment, and proactive approach, will be part of the key to reaching true equality.

We are using the following statement when considering equality vs equity. Both equality and equity promote fairness. Equality achieves this through treating everyone the same regardless of their needs. Equity achieves this through treating people differently depended on their needs.

This policy applies to all members, supporters, employees, including those on part-time, apprentice, fixed-term and job share contracts, as well as casual workers, self-employed contractors and volunteers.

We expect everyone who works for Free2B to be treated, and to treat others, with respect. Our aim is to provide a working environment free from harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in any form that may affect the dignity of an individual.

We further recognise the benefits of employee individuals from a range of backgrounds, as this creates a workforce where creativity and valuing difference in others thrives. We value the wealth of experience within the community in which we operate and aspire to have a workforce that reflects this.

### 3 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Free2B recognises that an effective equity and inclusion policy will help all employees develop to their full potential, which is clearly in the best interests of Free2B and its employees. We aim to ensure that we do not only observe the relevant legislation, but also do whatever is necessary to provide genuine equity of opportunities to utilise the skills of everyone involved in the organisation, this includes job applicants, employees, volunteers or members.



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We will ensure that these people do not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, age, race, disability, sexuality, nationality, ethnic origin, pregnancy, religious belief, social background, class, political belief, parental and marital status, or indeed any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of their role.

Free2B seeks to ensure that no one suffers, either directly or indirectly, as a result of unlawful discrimination. This extends beyond the individual's own characteristics, to cover discrimination by association and by perception.

This policy is non-contractual but aims to set out the way in which Free2B aims to manage equal opportunities and dignity in the workplace.

Free2B is an active member of the LGBT Consortium Equity and Inclusion working group and is committed to work towards the sector developed Equity & Inclusion Principles. See appendix 2

### 3.3 Policy principles

Free2B Alliance is dedicated to the following:

- making certain that there is absolute access and fair treatment to all people who wish to participate in our activities
- recruitment and promotion is assessed completely on the basis of a person's suitability, capability and qualifications relevant to the post
- any incidents of discriminatory behaviour will be regarded as gross misconduct, therefore they will be dealt with seriously
- encouragement and support of the personal development of employees, volunteers and members
- employees and volunteers working with the organisation will be informed of the Equity & Inclusion policy and the reason for having it in place. They will also receive any training on related issues as appropriate
- records containing all details are kept of any discriminatory incidents.

### 4 Responsibilities of Free2B Alliance employees

The Equity and Inclusion lead for Free2B is: Lucie Brooke (Director)

Whilst it is our responsibility to ensure that all principles mentioned within this policy are followed properly, the attitudes and compliance of our staff, members and volunteers is also crucial to the successful operation of this policy. All people involved with Free2B should:

- comply with the policy and arrangements
- inform the person in charge if they become aware of any discriminatory practice
- not victimise, harass or threaten other employees and members on the grounds specified in this policy
- not discriminate or encourage others to do so.



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Everyone within Free2B should familiarise themselves with this policy and be aware of their responsibility and role in promoting equality of opportunity and not discriminating unfairly or harassing colleagues, job applicants or ex-employees, nor encouraging others to do so or tolerating such behaviour.

Employees are also encouraged to challenge any unacceptable behaviour should they either witness it or experience it directly. Disciplinary action, including dismissal, may be taken against any employee found guilty of unfair discrimination, harassment and/or victimisation.

Employees should be aware that not only is the employer liable for any cases of discrimination or harassment that occur, but individuals also may be held personally liable for their own acts and behaviour.

### 5 Government guidance and legislation

#### Equal Opportunities and Discrimination (Equality Act 2010)

The Equality Act came into force in October 2010 and replaces all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales – *namely the Race Relations Act 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, the Sex Discrimination Act, the Equal Pay Act, the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, The Civil Partnership Act 2004, the Employment Equality Regulations 2003 (religions and belief and sexual orientation).*

The Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics are:

Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief sex and sexual orientation.

In valuing diversity Free2B is committed to go beyond the legal minimum regarding equality. The Equality Act 2010 harmonises and strengthens and replaces most previous equality legislation. The following legislation is still relevant:

- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- The Work and Families Act 2006.
- Employment Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000 (as amended).

### 6 Forms of discrimination

It is important as part of this policy that all members of Free2B understand what is considered as discrimination and the various forms that it can occur in:

direct discrimination – this occurs when one employee or member is treated less favourably than another would be treated in the same circumstances, on the grounds mentioned previously.

- expecting a person, solely on the grounds stated above, to comply with requirements that are different to the requirements for others, for any reason whatsoever



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- imposing on individuals requirements that are in effect more onerous than they are on others. This would include applying a condition (which is not warranted by the requirements of the position), which makes it more difficult for members of a particular group to comply than others not of that group

indirect discrimination – this happens when a job requirement or condition is applied equally to all but it has a detrimental effect on one group in society, as it is difficult for that group to comply with it (e.g. because of their religion)

victimisation – this occurs when a person is treated less favourably than others because they have taken action under one of the above regulations/acts

harassment – this can be described as unwanted behaviour that either violates a person's dignity or creates a threatening, unfriendly and humiliating environment for the person. It can occur through verbal or physical contact

discrimination by association – this is when someone is discriminated against because they associate with someone who possesses a protected characteristic

discrimination by perception – this is discrimination on the grounds that the person is perceived as belonging to a particular group, irrespective of whether or not this is correct

Any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation, as described above is considered as serious misconduct and any employee volunteer or member who discriminates against, harasses or victimises any other person will be liable to appropriate disciplinary action.

## 7 Recruitment and selection

Free2B aims, through appropriate information, training and supervision, to ensure that all those who are responsible for recruitment and selection are familiar with this policy.

Selection will, as far as possible, be conducted on an objective basis and will focus on the applicants' suitability for the job and their ability to fulfil the job requirements. Our interest is in the skills, abilities, qualifications, aptitude and potential of individuals to do their jobs.

Person specifications will be reviewed to ensure that criteria are not applied which are discriminatory, either directly or indirectly, and that they do not impose any condition or requirement which cannot be justified by the demands of the post. Shortlisting and interviewing will normally be carried out by more than one person, to minimise the risk of conscious or unconscious bias.

Questions asked of candidates will relate to information that will help us to assess their ability to do the job. Questions about marriage plans, family intentions, religious or political commitments, caring responsibilities, intention to join a pension scheme or to opt out, or about any other issues which may give rise to suspicions of unlawful discrimination should not be asked. Selection tests will be specifically related to the job and measure an individual's actual, or inherent, ability to do or train for the job.



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Job adverts should encourage applications from all types of candidates and should not be stereotyped. They will normally state: Free2B is an equal opportunity employer and values diversity".

### 8 Terms and conditions of employment

Free2B will ensure that all of our employment policies and any other relevant issues associated with terms and conditions of employment, are formulated and applied in such a way as to remove/minimise any discrimination on the grounds of a protected characteristic (gender, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, religion or belief, age, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, gender reassignment) or indeed any other characteristic unrelated to the performance of the job.

These will be reviewed regularly to ensure there is no discrimination. Length of service as a qualifying criterion for benefits will not exceed five years unless clearly justifiable. Employees will not be subjected to any detriment if they wish to join a pension scheme, nor will they be offered any inducement not to do so. This would include refusing promotion or training to someone who decided not to opt-out, or refusing or reducing a pay increase if it would bring the worker within the band of earnings that would make them eligible for auto-enrolment etc.

### 9 Grievances, disputes and disciplinary procedure

Employees who believe they have been discriminated against should bring this to our attention as soon as possible.

In the first instance, employees are encouraged to do this informally, but where it has not been possible to resolve this informally, or where the matter is particularly serious, they are advised to use our internal grievance policy.

An employee who, in good faith, brings a complaint of discrimination must not be victimised or less favourably treated as a result. However, false allegations that are found to have been made in bad faith will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedures.

Bullying or harassment will not be tolerated, and any individual who feels that they have been subjected to bullying or harassment should refer to our bullying and harassment policy. Equally, anyone who witnesses incidents of bullying or harassment should report this to their line manager.

When dealing with general disciplinary matters, care is to be taken that employees who have, are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic, are not dismissed or disciplined for performance or behaviour which could be overlooked or condoned in other employees.



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### 10 References

Free2B will not discriminate against individuals who have left the company, all references given will be based on factual information only.

### 11 Retirement

Free2B has no fixed retirement age and anyone who wishes to work beyond State Pension Age may choose to do so.

### 12 Communication of this policy

All job applicants and employees will be made aware of this policy. Clients may also be made aware of this policy.

### 13 HR policies and procedures

Our HR policies and procedures will be reviewed regularly to improve, amend or adapt current practices to promote equality of opportunity within our business.





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### Appendix 1: Equity and Inclusion Sector Values & Principles

#### Values

**Accessibility.** Observe, promote and practise good equity principles, enabling access and inclusion for all LGBT+ people.

**Accountability.** Value each other's diverse perspectives, language and capacity.

**Collaboration.** Positive and proactive collaboration with other LGBT+ Third sector organisations, minimising inefficiencies and conflict without losing individual autonomy.

**Respect.** Be considerate of the resource, support and insight gained through Consortium and not using this to further own goals to the detriment of Consortium or its other members.

*(Membership Values ratified at the 2020 Consortium AGM)*

#### Introduction

These seven Principles of Equity and Inclusion for the LGBT+ Sector have been collaboratively designed by the Equity and Inclusion Working Group and are read alongside the LGBT+ Outcomes Framework.

The principles provide a clear, collective message on equity & inclusion for the LGBT+ sector to buy into and 'get behind'. They outline the values of the sector and help shape a shared culture. They help us ensure that every LGBT+ person feels accepted, included, and equitably treated.

The principles could also provide individual LGBT+ community groups and organisations with a basis for designing community engagement activities, services, and communications; they could also be built into strategic plans, aims and ambitions.

#### The Principles

##### Promoting accessibility

Accessibility is about providing services that:

Are designed and delivered in a way that accommodates differing experiences and requirements.

Actively includes all LGBT+ people.

Remove barriers to access.

Accessibility relates to the wide range of factors that may exclude individuals. This includes any factors that create barriers, whether actual or perceived.

##### Valuing cultural diversity

Valuing Cultural Diversity is about recognising that:

Our LGBT+ communities are made up of people and groups that have different shared characteristics including culture, religion, ethnicity, language, nationality, sexual orientation, sex and gender diversity and trans identities, age, disability, health differences,



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socio-economic factors, geographic location, experiences, interests, skills, needs and values and those differences must be both respected and promoted.

Actively promoting diversity can help build trust and confidence in our organisations amongst LGBT+ communities.

Recruit diverse volunteers and staff to generate a richer mix of ideas, talents, and skills.

The LGBT+ sector is more efficient, effective, and accountable when decision-making is reflective of the diverse views of the communities we serve.

### Promoting Participation

Promoting Participation looks like:

LGBT+ organisations developing policies, processes and services with the involvement and leadership of the people who will be affected by them.

Working with groups that are under-represented to establish structures for participation.

Ensuring they have an active role in shaping the LGBT+ organisation and wider sector.

Encouraging collaboration, openness, and accountability in all that we do.

### Promoting Equity of Opportunity

Promoting Equity of Opportunity means:

Recognising that not all LGBT+ people and communities have the same access to services. That experiences of accessing services may be poorer because of structural oppressions and institutional discrimination.

Recognising that some people and communities commonly experience unequitable access to employment, training opportunities and;

are under-represented in the workforce, particularly at senior level, because of oppression and institutional discrimination.

Making changes to our organisations and wider society to treat people fairly and without bias, remove barriers, and create equitable chances for everyone to participate, achieve and benefit.

### Creating Inclusive Communities

Creating Inclusive Communities looks like:

Creating communities with diversity and intersectionality at their core.

Where the totality of people's identities are recognised and valued.

Working to eliminate all discrimination, inequality, and injustice so that all LGBT+ people can feel safe and valued.

Providing opportunities for people to develop positive connections with people who are different to themselves.

### Working towards eliminating Disadvantage and Exclusion

Working towards eliminating Disadvantage and Exclusion means:

Supporting LGBT+ people and communities who experience disadvantage and exclusion, giving them a platform to amplify their voices.

Recognising, listening to believing and not diminishing people's experience of discrimination/oppression.



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Proactively working to reduce / eliminate incidences of institutional discrimination in our organisations and communities.

Actively challenging all acts of discrimination, exclusion, and injustice.

Learning about Equity and Inclusion

Learning about Equity and Inclusion means:

Recognising our own power, privilege and unconscious biases and working to reduce the negative impact these may have on people and groups.

Educating ourselves about equity and inclusion issues in order to implement them when designing and delivering our work.

Recognising the need to facilitate equal access to resources and learning in accessible formats.