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Equality and Diversity Policy

September 2026

POLICY STATEMENT:

Beacon Plus is committed to its mission of 'developing the prosperity and wellbeing of the communities we serve' through ensuring fair access to education, equality of opportunity for all and embracing the diversity of our local community. Promoting and embedding equality and diversity in our culture and practices is pivotal to being an employer and a provider of choice. We also have a moral and legal responsibility to develop and support learners to be responsible members of society. We will therefore take every reasonable step towards ensuring that equality and diversity is at the heart of everything we do. We will treat all staff, learners, visitors and stakeholders with respect and dignity. We unequivocally oppose all forms of prejudice and will not tolerate any discrimination on the grounds of disability, marital or civil partnership status; race; colour; ethnicity; nationality; , , sex; gender identity; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; trade union activity; age; religion or belief; pregnancy and maternity; and sexual orientation, trade union activity; age; religion or belief, pregnancy, maternity, paternity or sexual orientation.

Beacon Plus will consistently pay due regard to:

Eliminating unlawful discrimination

Advancing equality of opportunity

Fostering good relations between people from diverse backgrounds

PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate Beacon Plus commitment to upholding and valuing the principles of diversity, inclusion, fair treatment and equality of opportunity. The policy outlines the commitment to the protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010 as well as the operational steps to advance and monitor equality within the organisation. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

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The policy applies to all members of staff and learners, visitors, contractors, service providers, and any other persons associated with the functions of the Beacon Plus. Subcontractors are expected to work in accordance with this policy and evidence how they meet any equality objectives as determined by specific funding rules e.g. ESF. This policy covers all sites on which Beacon Plus carries out its activities.

DETAILS:

1.Definition of Terms

Discrimination is defined as an act which has the effect of treating a person less favourably because of factors related to their personal characteristics such as disability or sexual orientation, and unrelated to their merit. It can be direct (against an individual) or indirect (against a group of individuals that share the same protected characteristic). Discrimination on the basis of perception and association is also illegal. Diversity encompasses all forms of difference in individuals even if they are not covered by legislative acts, such as height and weight.

Extremism can be defined as ideologies or beliefs considered to be far outside the mainstream attitudes of a society, generally to the extent that there is a violation of common moral standards. Extremism can take many forms, including political, religious and economic.

Harassment is unwanted conduct which may create the effect (intentionally or unintentionally) of affecting an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment which interferes with an individual's learning or working environment. Harassment may be persistent or an isolated incident, and may be by an individual against an individual or involve groups of people.

Stereotyping is defined as a standardised mental picture that one person or group of people holds in common about another person or group of people, and can be either positive or negative.

Positive Action is the deliberate introduction of measures to eliminate or reduce discrimination, or its effects. It is not about special treatment for any one particular group, but the fair treatment of all people. It is distinct from positive discrimination, which is unlawful.

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Digital accessibility for all learners and staff. We will ensure that online learning platforms, websites, and digital materials meet . meet WCAG 2.2 standards, or any subsequent recognised accessibility standard adopted by the organisation.

Assistive technologies and alternative formats will be provided to support individuals with disabilities.

2. Responsibilities

It is the duty of every member of staff, learner, governor, contractor, and visitor to avoid discriminatory practices, to accept personal responsibility for the application of the policy and to bring any potential or actual infringements to the attention of management so that they can be addressed. Specific responsibilities are as follows:

Governors are responsible for:

- Ensuring the Beacon Plus meets all its duties under relevant legislation.

Principal is responsible for:

- Giving a consistent and high profile lead on all equality issues
- Promoting the equality policy both internally and externally
- Making sure the equality policy and its procedures are followed
- Making sure that all staff at all levels know their responsibilities and receive support and training.
- Taking action against staff or learners who discriminate, harass or victimise others for reasons of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, age, gender reassignment, maternity and paternity, marriage or civil partnership

Staff at all levels are responsible for:

Putting the policy into practice, championing equality and diversity and acting as roles models to ensure that it is promoted and embedded at every opportunity.

- Advancing equality of opportunity
- Operating within this policy at all times
- Challenging inappropriate language and behaviours

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- Completing mandatory equality and diversity training

Contractors and Service Providers are responsible for:

Following the Equality Act 2010 and any equality conditions in contracts or agreements

Learners are responsible for:

Following the Equality and Diversity Policy and Behaving in a manner that is in accordance with the requirements of the Policy

3. Meeting the needs of learners

3.1 Information, advice and guidance is available to all learners in accessible formats that meets their individual needs. The ethos of information, advice and guidance within Beacon Plus is to challenge stereotypes within society, provide impartial support and to help remove barriers to individual achievement.

3.2 All applicants to the Beacon Plus receive a fair interview process relevant to their needs, with reasonable adjustments made where necessary. Admissions and enrolment procedures will be supportive and as straightforward as possible.

3.3 All learners receive a full induction which introduces the culture of the Beacon Plus as a non-discriminatory and liberating place to learn. As part of their induction programme, learners will be made aware of the Equality and Diversity Policy, the Learner and Staff Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policies and of their rights and responsibilities according to Beacon Plus's Expected Behaviours and Beacon Plus's Complaints Procedure.

3.4 Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will have the same rights of access as other learners. Guidance and support will be provided to enable such learners to be integrated into the full range of programmes of study according to capability.

3.5 Beacon Plus will endeavour to offer individual and flexible programmes of study to learners who request and/or need them. Measures to assess and accredit prior

learning and/or experience will be introduced where this is permitted by examining bodies.

3.6 Learners who are eligible for support to complete their studies are assured of this support from Beacon Plus. This includes financial, learning and pastoral support.

3.7 Beacon Plus originated curriculum materials will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that they do not promote sexism, racism, or any other form of discrimination. (An exception may be permitted with the inclusion of materials used for illustrative purposes within the context of the subject being taught). Any incitement of discrimination, harassment or extremist views will be tackled immediately by staff.

3.8 Diversity is celebrated by learners and staff at Beacon Plus and enrichment activities support this agenda. The Learner Union will be responsible from planning and celebrating diversity events.

3.9 Beacon Plus has a robust Safeguarding Policy which supports all learners and ensures a safe and fair learning environment which is free from all forms of discrimination. Beacon Plus fulfils its duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Duty Guidance and is committed to ensuring all learners understand the risks associated with extremism, radicalisation, discrimination and hate-related behaviour

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3.10. Beacon Plus will aim to ensure that information about its programmes of study and services is made available to the widest possible audience. Publicity materials will be produced in a range of formats to avoid prejudice and discrimination

4. Staffing and recruitment

4.1 Beacon Plus embraces diversity in all its forms and seeks to employ a workforce that reflects the communities it serves.

4.2 In seeking to achieve a balanced workforce at all levels, Beacon Plus will ensure that no employee, job applicant or candidate for promotion will be disadvantaged or treated less favourably because of conditions or requirements that are not related to the job.

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- To provide inclusive and accessible recruitment
- To ensure job adverts are advertised through a range of channels and in accessible formats
- To offer interviews to disabled applicants who meet the essential criteria for the role, in line with the organisation's inclusive recruitment commitmentsTo provide reasonable adjustments for all interviews
- Support any existing employee who acquires a disability or long term health condition enabling them to stay in work

4.5 Beacon Plus is committed to neurodiversity and welcomes the skills and contributions of people on the autistic spectrum. Terminology used in the recruitment process is inclusive and reasonable adjustments at interview are offered.

4.6 Beacon Plus will aim to ensure that all staff are recruited, selected, trained and promoted solely on the basis of ability and the requirements of the job. All staff will be made aware of the equality policies and Beacon Plus will ensure that Human Resources policies and practice fulfil the principles of Equal Opportunities.

5. Staff development and training

5.1 Staff are expected to complete training in equality and diversity when they commence employment at the Beacon Plus and to refresh this regularly. Staff induction provides new staff with awareness about the culture of Beacon Plus and staffs' roles and responsibilities in ensuring equality and diversity is upheld.

5.2 The Professional Development Plan is created annually and reflects the organisation's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.

5.3 All staff have the same rights to training opportunities whether they are part time or on maternity, paternity or adoption leave. Training and development activities will be scheduled at a variety of times and on different day to accommodate a range of staff needs.

5.4 Staff receive training in embedding equality and diversity within teaching learning and assessment and are supported to ensure good practice is achieved within their roles.

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5.5 All staff members have equal rights to training, promotion and other aspects of career development. Retirement age is when an employee chooses to retire and in line with legislation Beacon Plus does not set a compulsory retirement age for staff. If a member of staff chooses to work longer, they cannot be discriminated against. It is an employee's responsibility to discuss when and how to retire with their employer. This could include phasing retirement by working flexibly and support will be given to them to make the transition i.e. advice on pensions.

6. Disability

Beacon Plus welcomes applications from people with disabilities, values the contribution of existing staff and learners with disabilities, will treat staff and learners fairly should they become disabled and ensure that they are not placed at a disadvantage.

Beacon Plus will pay due regard to reasonable adjustments for staff and learners with disabilities such as:

- adjusting the premises
- offering flexible learning opportunities for disabled learners
- allowing reasonable time off for treatment
- making materials available in the preferred format
- acquiring or modifying equipment

7. Ethnicity and Nationality

Beacon Plus takes positive steps to market courses and employment opportunities to a diverse audience and does not discriminate on grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin

The Equality Act covers direct discrimination, victimisation and harassment in employment or training on the grounds of gender reassignment and applies to both staff and learners. It protects a person who intends to undergo, is undergoing, or has

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undergone gender reassignment from unfavourable treatment on the grounds of their gender reassignment

This includes people preparing for medical treatment. Protection applies from the moment when the person indicates their intention to start the reassignment process, even if they subsequently change their mind. There is a statutory duty on all public authorities, when carrying out their functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment, and promote equality of opportunity between trans people and other people. To comply with this Beacon Plus considers trans issues in the Equality and Diversity policy and considers the impact of policies and procedures on trans staff and learners. We also consult staff and learners on their work to promote gender equality and tackle discrimination against trans people.

7a Gender Reassignment and Gender Identity

Beacon Plus supports individuals whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth and is committed to ensuring that no learner, employee or applicant is treated less favourably because of gender reassignment. Individuals will be treated with dignity and respect and appropriate confidentiality will be maintained.

8. Marriage and Civil Partnership

Beacon Plus supports those in both marriage and civil partnerships. Civil partnerships and marriages have parity of esteem in the Beacon Plus and as such are accorded equal respect.

9. Pregnancy and Maternity

Beacon Plus works to support all learners to achieve the qualifications they desire including those who are pregnant, become pregnant or have recently been pregnant. Where the needs of the learner conflicts with existing working or learning requirements, Beacon Plus will adjust, where practicable, to meet those needs. This may include adaptations for dress code or flexible timetabling. If a learner discloses that they are pregnant at the start of a course, appropriate advice and guidance will be given and risk assessments will be undertaken to ensure that the learner is on the

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right course and can achieve. If a learner becomes pregnant whilst on their course, a risk assessment will be undertaken and support measures will be put in place to ensure that the learner can achieve. It is the responsibility of the learner to disclose pregnancy Beacon Plus will not discriminate against any member of staff or job applicant because of pregnancy or maternity. All staff members have equal rights to training, promotion and other aspects of career development.

10. Religion and belief

Where cultural or religious needs conflict with existing working or learning requirements, Beacon Plus will make reasonable adjustments, where practicable, to meet those needs. This may include adaptations for prayer times, dress codes, dietary requirements or religious holidays

11. Sexual Orientation

Beacon Plus is committed to ensuring that all learners, staff, applicants, governors, contractors and visitors are treated with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their sexual orientation.

No individual will be treated less favourably, disadvantaged, harassed, bullied or victimised because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, or because of their association with someone of a particular sexual orientation.

Beacon Plus is committed to fostering an inclusive environment in which individuals feel safe to be themselves and are able to participate fully in learning, work and college life free from discrimination.

Any behaviour, language, materials or actions that amount to discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation on the grounds of sexual orientation will be addressed in accordance with the organisation's disciplinary, anti-harassment, safeguarding and complaints procedures.

Equality Objectives

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Beacon Plus will establish and annually review Equality Objectives which support the elimination of discrimination, advancement of equality of opportunity and fostering of good relations. Progress against objectives will be reviewed by the Leadership Team and reported to Governors annually.

12. Implementation of the Policy

The responsibility for making the policy work in practice rests with all leaders, staff and learners.

In ensuring that this policy is fully effective, and that all staff are committed to it, Beacon Plus undertakes to work locally in partnership with the recognised trade unions, and with staff in general, in its development and implementation

Equality and diversity are embedded in policies and procedures and Beacon Plus's Leadership Team maintains oversight and compliance.

Monitoring and review – learners

. Where lawful, proportionate and voluntarily disclosed, Beacon Plus will monitor learner participation, retention, achievement and destinations across relevant protected characteristics to identify and address equality gaps.

Learner experience surveys (start of year and mid-year) will ask learners to feedback on how safe they feel and Beacon Plus's performance on tackling bullying and discrimination.

Retention, achievement and destinations by age, gender and ethnicity will be monitored to inform curriculum and assessment policies and address any achievement gaps.

Monitoring and review – staff

Beacon Plus will use the two main forms of monitoring, i.e. of the composition of the existing workforce and the recruitment process, looking at the workforce with reference to . relevant protected characteristics, where information is voluntarily disclosed and processing is lawful. Beacon Plus will take Positive Action where possible to narrow and eliminate any gaps.

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Beacon Plus will also categorise staff according contract type, i.e. whether full-time, permanent or temporary, age, length of time in post, place of work and salary. Records should also be kept of training, appraisals, promotions, re-grading and discretionary pay awards.

After the employment relationship has ended, Beacon Plus will retain data about the composition of the workforce, including appraisal and promotion records on an anonymous basis for the purpose of carrying out equal opportunities monitoring, and will also look at reasons for resignations and staff turnover. An annual staff survey will be undertaken which asks for staffs' feedback on aspect of equality and diversity such as culture and learning and development opportunities

Staff and learners are encouraged and supported in reporting any instances of discrimination. Beacon Plus will ensure that all allegations are fully investigated and that confidentiality is maintained throughout any investigation. If a member of staff believes they have not been treated fairly, due to prejudice, or discrimination, they should raise their complaint through the correct procedure for grievance or anti-harassment.

If a learner believes they have not been treated fairly, due to prejudice, or discrimination, they should raise their complaint through the Learner Complaints Procedures or if more appropriate the Anti-Harassment Procedure (learners).

Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

Beacon Plus is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity to all learners, staff and visitors. and we ensure all at Beacon Plus are treated equally regardless of age, disability, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership status.

Beacon Plus strives to be an all-inclusive environment where we respect and encourage individual differences. We are always looking for opportunities to champion equality through the broadening of knowledge and experiences of everyone across our community. Our aims are to ensure there are equal opportunities for learners, staff, their families and the wider community, regardless of their disability. This forms an integral part of our improvement plan. The aims for 2026-2029 are to build and improve opportunities to help challenge and bring down barriers for disabled young adults, establishing a recognised and integral role within

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the community. This will include broadening the range and depth of positive experiences of life both inside and outside Beacon Plus and embedding ourselves within our communities (local, county, national and international levels)

UPDATE SCHEDULE

Version	Reviewed	Reason for Update	Next review date
1	Sep 2019	Policy written	Sep 2023
2	Sep 2021	Updates	Sep 2025
3	Sep 2025	Review	Sep 2026
4	Sept 2026	Review	Sept 2027

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