Connecting Boroughs

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Charity Number: 1211291

Policy Owner: Connecting Boroughs CIO

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Review Frequency: Annually, or sooner where required

Next Review: September 2027

1. Policy Statement

Connecting Boroughs is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion in all areas of its work. We aim to create an environment in which beneficiaries, children and young people, families, volunteers, trustees, staff, partners and members of the community are treated fairly, respectfully and with dignity.

We value the diversity of the communities we support and are committed to preventing unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and unfair treatment.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- promote equality of opportunity and fair treatment;
- recognise, respect and value difference;
- remove or reduce unnecessary barriers to participation in our services and activities;
- ensure decisions about beneficiaries, volunteers, staff and trustees are made fairly;
- support an inclusive environment for children, families and adults at risk; and
- provide a clear approach for raising concerns about discrimination, harassment or exclusion.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all trustees, staff, volunteers and anyone acting on behalf of Connecting Boroughs.

It applies to the charity's services, activities, events, recruitment, volunteering, governance, partnerships, communications and interactions with beneficiaries and members of the public.

4. Our Commitment

Connecting Boroughs will seek to:

- provide services fairly and without unlawful discrimination;
- treat people with dignity and respect;
- make reasonable adjustments where appropriate for disabled people;
- consider accessibility when planning activities, events and communications;
- encourage participation from people from different backgrounds and communities;
- challenge inappropriate discriminatory behaviour; and
- consider equality and inclusion when developing or reviewing services.

5. Protected Characteristics

Connecting Boroughs recognises the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

No person should receive less favourable treatment unlawfully because of a protected characteristic.

6. Children, Young People and Families

Children and young people participating in Connecting Boroughs activities should be supported to participate safely and fairly.

Bullying, discriminatory language, harassment or exclusion based on a person's identity, background, disability, family circumstances or other personal characteristic will not be accepted.

Where children require additional support to participate, reasonable and proportionate steps should be considered in partnership with parents, carers and relevant professionals where appropriate.

7. Disability and SEND Inclusion

Connecting Boroughs aims to make its activities accessible to disabled people and children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

- considering reasonable adjustments to activities and environments;
- asking families about relevant support or accessibility needs where appropriate;
- considering sensory, communication, mobility and behavioural needs;
- providing appropriate information to staff and volunteers on a need-to-know basis; and
- working with families and partner organisations where additional support may be needed.

Adjustments must be considered alongside safeguarding, health and safety and the needs of other participants.

8. Cultural and Religious Inclusion

Connecting Boroughs supports people from a wide range of cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

We will seek to respect cultural and religious needs where reasonably practicable, while ensuring that safeguarding, equality, health and safety and legal responsibilities are maintained.

No beneficiary should be pressured to participate in religious or cultural activity as a condition of receiving charitable support.

9. Recruitment and Volunteering

Recruitment and volunteering opportunities should be managed fairly and decisions should be based on the requirements of the role, relevant skills, experience, suitability and safeguarding considerations.

Where a role requires particular checks, qualifications or experience for safeguarding or legal reasons, these requirements should be applied consistently.

10. Behaviour and Respect

Everyone involved with Connecting Boroughs is expected to communicate respectfully and avoid behaviour that intimidates, humiliates, excludes or discriminates against another person.

Discriminatory jokes, insults, bullying, harassment, threatening behaviour and victimisation are not acceptable.

Concerns should be addressed promptly and, where appropriate, under the charity's complaints, safeguarding, volunteer or conduct procedures.

11. Access to Services

Connecting Boroughs will aim to make information about its services understandable and accessible.

Where resources are limited, eligibility or prioritisation decisions should be based on transparent and relevant criteria rather than personal favouritism or unlawful discrimination.

Where a person cannot be supported directly, Connecting Boroughs may signpost or refer them to another appropriate service where possible.

12. Reasonable Adjustments and Accessibility

Where the charity knows that a disabled person may face a substantial disadvantage, reasonable adjustments will be considered where applicable.

This may include adjustments to communication, physical access, timing, activity arrangements or the way support is delivered.

Not every requested adjustment will necessarily be possible, but requests should be considered respectfully and individually.

13. Safeguarding

Equality and inclusion must operate alongside Connecting Boroughs' safeguarding responsibilities.

A person's background, disability, culture, religion, immigration status, financial circumstances or family situation must never be used to dismiss or minimise a safeguarding concern.

Safeguarding concerns must be reported in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy.

14. Reporting Discrimination or Harassment

Beneficiaries, volunteers, staff or other individuals who believe they have experienced or witnessed discrimination, harassment or unfair treatment are encouraged to raise the concern with an appropriate senior representative of Connecting Boroughs.

Concerns will be considered fairly, sensitively and as confidentially as reasonably possible.

Where the matter also raises safeguarding concerns, the safeguarding procedure will take priority where necessary to protect an individual.

15. Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion within the charity and ensuring appropriate policies are maintained.

The Founder/CEO and designated leads are responsible for promoting inclusive practice in day-to-day activities.

All staff and volunteers are expected to treat people fairly and respectfully, follow this policy and raise concerns about discriminatory behaviour.

16. Training and Awareness

Connecting Boroughs will provide appropriate information or training to trustees, staff and volunteers where necessary to support equality, diversity, inclusion and respectful practice.

Training needs may be identified through safeguarding reviews, incidents, feedback or changes to the charity's activities.

17. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding Policy;
- Health & Safety Policy;
- Volunteer Policy;
- Code of Conduct;

- Complaints Policy & Procedure;
- Safer Recruitment & DBS Policy;
- Data Protection & UK GDPR Policy; and
- SEND & Inclusion Policy.

18. Monitoring and Review

Connecting Boroughs will consider feedback, complaints, incidents and participation information where appropriate to identify barriers or areas for improvement.

This policy will be reviewed by the trustees at least annually and sooner where significant changes or concerns make this necessary.

Approved by the Board of Trustees: _____

Date approved: _____

Signed on behalf of the trustees: _____

Next review date: _____