

Equality & Diversity Policy

1. Purpose

Blofield Parish Council and associated organisations (Blofield Court House and Blofield Park) are committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion, ensuring a supportive and inclusive environment for everyone. This policy defines how Blofield Council operates to provide equality and fairness to all hirers, volunteers, and staff, and to prevent less favourable treatment based on protected characteristics. This policy therefore aligns with the Equality Act 2010. The policy applies to all councillors, volunteers, staff, contractors, and users of the premises, supporting their work and activities.

We have a duty of care and are committed to the protection and safety of everyone who enters any parish council premises, ensuring an environment free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. We also have a duty to support our councillors, volunteers and staff in promoting equality and diversity.

2. Definitions

- Protected characteristics: Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, ethnic origin, colour, nationality, national origin, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Discrimination: Directly or indirectly treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic.
- Harassment: Unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.
- Bullying: Offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting behaviour that involves an abuse or misuse of power intended to undermine, humiliate, or injure the recipient.
- Victimisation: Treating someone badly because they have made or supported a complaint about discrimination or harassment.

Persons affected:

- All councillors, volunteers, and staff.
- All those attending any activity or service that is being delivered from associated premises.
- All visitors and contractors.

3. Policy principles

Blofield Parish Council and associated organisations are committed to:

- Equality and fairness: Providing equal opportunities and fairness to all hirers, volunteers, and staff, and ensuring representation from all sections of society.
- Dignity and respect: Creating an environment that promotes dignity and respect for everyone.
- Zero tolerance: Not tolerating any form of discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation.
- Inclusive culture: Promoting an inclusive culture for all our community, in which individual differences and the contributions of everyone are recognised and valued.
- Training and awareness: Making training available to all volunteers and staff where appropriate.
- Reporting and action: Encouraging individuals to raise concerns about discrimination and applying corrective measures promptly.

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- Continuous improvement: Regularly reviewing practices and procedures to maintain fairness and compliance with current legislation.

4. Procedures

- 4.1 All members the Council and of any management committee, steering or working group will familiarise themselves with their equality and diversity responsibilities, undertake training if appropriate and ensure that they understand the principles set out in this policy.
- 4.2 All members of the Council and any management committee, steering or working group will work together to promote a culture that promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion, and that enables any related issues to be addressed.
- 4.3 When candidates for the Council or any management committee, steering or working group or other volunteer positions are selected, it will be on the basis of their aptitude and ability only.
- 4.4 Blofield Council and associated organisations welcome bookings from all sectors of our community and will provide equal opportunities to all hirers. However, bookings which may be detrimental to our community centres, their values and that of our wider community (including, but not restricted to, groups who promote homophobia, religious intolerance, or any kind of prejudicial groups), should not be accepted.
- 4.5 All hirers, volunteers, staff, councillors, management committee or steering / working group members must be treated fairly and with respect.
- 4.6 The Council, and any management committee, steering or working group managing either of the premises will require all hirers to have read and agreed to the Terms & Conditions of Booking. This requires all hirers to assist us in meeting our commitments to ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion, and to avoid discrimination, to treat other hirers, volunteers and staff fairly and with respect, and to confirm that they have understood and will adhere to the premises' principles and procedures with regard to safeguarding.
- 4.7 Blofield Parish Council, and any management committee, steering or working group responsible for premises, will consider all acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation as unacceptable behaviour. Hirers supporting such behaviour will be prohibited from future use of the premises.
- 4.8 Any individual who believes they have been subject to discrimination, harassment, bullying, or victimisation should report the incident to the Council, or the relevant management committee, (steering group or working party). Complaints must be taken seriously and managed promptly and confidentially.
- 4.9. The Council will conduct an annual review of this policy to ensure it remains relevant and effective. Updates may be made as necessary during interim periods.