

# **Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy**



## **1. Introduction**

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau is committed to equality and eliminating acts of unlawful discrimination.

Any act of unlawful discrimination will not be tolerated.

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau is committed to promoting and encouraging diversity and equal opportunities among our workforce and volunteer pool.

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau is committed to embedding a human rights based approach for service delivery and within its workforce and volunteering pool.

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau is committed to and will ensure that the bureau is an environment which is free of harassment and bullying. The bureau has a separate 'bullying and harassment' policy, which deals with these issues.

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau is committed to and will ensure that all individuals including members of staff, volunteers, clients, third parties, contractors or other members of the public are treated with dignity and respect.

This policy is intended to assist the bureau to put these commitments into practice and compliance with this policy will ensure that employees, volunteers or others do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination or any other act which may be contrary to its principle aims and objectives.

## **2. Equality Act (2010)**

This policy aims to ensure that no individual suffers unlawful discrimination (as defined under the Equality Act 2010) due to a protected characteristic i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including nationality, and ethnic or national origin), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation.

The term 'unlawful discrimination' refers to prohibited conduct as defined under the act including: direct discrimination (including by association or perception), indirect discrimination, harassment, victimisation, failure to make reasonable adjustments and discrimination arising from disability.

### **3. Equal opportunities in employment and volunteering**

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau is an equal opportunities employer and will apply this policy at all times, including in respect of: recruitment, pay and benefits, terms and conditions of employment, dealing with grievances and disciplinary matters, dismissal, redundancy, leave for parents, requests for flexible working, and selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities.

The bureau is committed to ensuring we promote diversity and equality of opportunity to ensure that our workforce and volunteer pool are truly representative of all sections of society and the communities in which they serve. Promoting equality and diversity in the workforce and volunteering pool is deemed to exemplify best practice as well as good business sense.

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau by actively ensuring it provides a working and volunteering environment that is free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination and will ensure dignity and respect for all is achieved and that individual differences and the contributions by all staff and volunteers are recognised and valued.

The bureau will implement all reasonable adjustments where these put a disabled job applicant, volunteer or employee at a substantial disadvantage.

The bureau will provide regular equality and diversity and human rights based approach training to all managers, staff and volunteers to ensure that they know of their rights and responsibilities under this policy and can actively help the bureau to achieve its aims.

### **4. Clients, volunteers, suppliers and others**

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau will not discriminate unlawfully against clients using or those seeking to use facilities or services provided by the bureau, or against suppliers or contractors, stakeholders or other members of the public encountered in the course of its usual functions.

Employees and volunteers should report any bullying or harassment against or by any individual including clients, suppliers or contractors, stakeholders or other members of the public encountered in the course of its usual functions to their line manager or supervisor who will take appropriate action.

The bureau will make reasonable adjustments where these put a disabled individual at a substantial disadvantage. The bureau will take other reasonable measures to ensure that the service and its facilities are accessible to all based on other equality factors including for example via the provision of interpreters.

The bureau will undertake regular equality impact assessments and twice yearly client surveys to help inform progress and practices being embedded to ensure this policy is adhered to and continual development and improvement is achieved which reflects client needs and lived experiences.

## 5. Your responsibilities

Every employee and volunteer must adhere to this policy and assist the bureau to meet its commitments during the course of their volunteering or employment.

Employees and volunteers **must not** discriminate against or harass any individual in the course of their employment or when volunteering with the bureau. Employees and volunteers can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the bureau for any act of unlawful discrimination and individuals who commit acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

For employees acts of unlawful discrimination including harassment or victimisation are not tolerated and constitute a potential disciplinary offence which will be dealt with under Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizen's Advice Bureau's disciplinary policy and procedure. Acts of unlawful discrimination, including harassment or victimisation if upheld may constitute gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice if upheld in full or part.

For volunteers, acts of unlawful discrimination including harassment or victimisation are potential offences which could lead to your volunteering role with the bureau being terminated with immediate effect if upheld in full or part.

Employees and volunteers **must** report any breach of this policy and/or incident of unlawful discrimination including harassment or victimisation to their line manager or supervisor immediately who will take appropriate action.

## 6. Grievances and complaints

If you are an employee and you consider that you may have been bullied or unlawfully discriminated against, you may use the bureau's grievance policy and procedure to make a complaint.

If you are a volunteer and you consider that you may have been bullied or unlawfully discriminated against, you may use the bureau's ordinary complaints procedure to make a complaint.

If your grievance or complaint involves bullying or harassment, you should also refer to the bureau's 'bullying and harassment' policy.

Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau will take any grievance or complaint seriously and will take action on any matter that it upholds in full or part.

You will not be penalised for raising a grievance or complaint, even if your grievance or complaint is not upheld, unless your complaint is untrue, vexatious and/or is found to have been made in bad faith.

## 7. Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored regularly by the bureau to examine its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with, and when required by changes in the law.

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau processes personal data collected for equality monitoring of job applicants and volunteers in accordance with its privacy policies and all data collected is anonymous and processed confidentially.

Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau has an equality sub-committee and equality action plan to further ensure that this policy is adhered to and that as far as possible the bureau is able to meet, embed and improve on its stated aims, commitments and objectives.