



**Youth Offending  
Service:  
Policy and Procedure  
for Diversity**

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## Youth Offending Service Diversity Policy

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## **Accessibility**

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## 1 Introduction

Promoting equal opportunities is about pro-actively aspiring to meet individual needs and appreciating and celebrating difference. This is the overriding ethos that will guide Diversity within Bracknell Forest Youth Offending Service.

The Youth Justice System plays a critical role within the community. Its primary objectives are to prevent offending and re-offending and to protect the public. In addition the Youth Offending Service has a responsibility to promote community cohesion and social inclusion in all matters relating to Youth Justice. To achieve these goals the confidence of all sections of the local community must be maintained. However, we recognise that unfair discrimination is a major barrier to this and that many people in the community suffer or perceive that they suffer unfair treatment based on prejudice. This policy sets out the vision and commitment of Bracknell Forest YOS to ensuring equality of access, opportunity and service to YOS staff, partner agencies, the community and all service users.

## 2 Values

Bracknell Forest Youth Offending Service recognises that a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice is a pre-requisite for an effective service for both its service users and staff. We acknowledge that we all have the potential to discriminate, whether it is conscious or sub-conscious, overt or covert. We acknowledge that to a great degree our beliefs, values and prejudices are influenced by our upbringing and life experience. This can impact on our practice, in assessment and our intervention. We are committed to pro-actively striving to achieve equitable treatment and fair outcomes for all.

As a YOS in a local authority area with a diverse population we value the richness of culture, backgrounds and traditions within our community. In addressing issues of diversity in our practice we will value all aspects of difference, which includes, but is not restricted to race, gender, age, religion, class, disability, and sexual orientation. Within the Youth Offending Service we will strive to promote equality, fairness and justice for all and it is this range of values that the YOS will promote.

## 3 Defining Diversity

Diversity refers to the visible and invisible, large and small differences that exist between people, such as gender, race, ethnic origin, physical and mental ability, sexual orientation, age, economic class, language, religion, nationality, education, family and marital status, social background, height, weight and other individual characteristics.

An understanding of diversity recognises that these visible and non visible differences between people can also lead to differences in experiences, values, attitudes, and ways of thinking, behaving, communicating and working.

The Youth Offending Service recognises that discrimination and prejudice can take many forms and can be based on both large and small differences. We are committed to making equality of opportunity a reality. Regarding discrimination resulting from major differences, we recognise that certain groups of people are likely to be at particular risk from unfair discrimination and acknowledge that discrimination may be based on many grounds such as age, gender, ethnicity, disability, social background, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, being involved in the criminal justice system or being a looked after child.

## 4 Principles

Bracknell Forest Youth Offending Service is committed to achieving equality of opportunity as a key partner agency working with children and their families, and as a lead agency working with socially excluded young people within and at risk of entering the criminal justice system. This policy is guided by the following principles:

The YOS has a duty to:

- raise the confidence of minority ethnic communities who may come into contact with the Youth Justice system,
- ensure that services are accessible and equitable, and that people are treated fairly and with respect,
- record the ethnicity, gender and any disabilities of all clients and use this information to improve access to services,
- ensure that unfair and/or unjustified discriminatory practices or behaviours on the part of colleagues within the team or in partner agencies is challenged,
- provide a safe environment that is free from unfair discrimination for all people working in or visiting the YOS,
- ensure that YOS staff and service users are able to participate fully in YOS activities, without risk of exclusion due to overt or covert discrimination,
- ensure that all YOS staff have an equal opportunity within the YOS to access appropriate training and development,
- encourage YOS staff, partners and service users to contribute to improving our services through consultation, the results of which will be used to improve access to services which meet the needs of individuals from disadvantaged groups,
- give and be receptive to receiving appropriate and constructive challenge and criticism regarding any practice or use of language that may be unfairly discriminatory.

## 5 Employment and Staff Development

Bracknell Forest YOS will aim to ensure that diversity and equality of access underpin all aspects of employment policy and practice to ensure that people are appointed on merit and are fairly assessed on the basis of their skills, abilities and objective criteria related to the job.

It is the responsibility of Managers to :

- implement and actively promote the YOS Diversity policy in regard to recruitment practice and staff development
- recruit and retain a workforce that reflects the expertise and diversity of our community.
- support staff in increasing their understanding of diversity issues through regular staff development programmes.
- promote the career development of minority ethnic staff and those who come from other disadvantaged communities and/or groups

- create a safe working environment where any form of unfair discrimination and harassment is dealt with quickly, appropriately and effectively and where staff feel supported in challenging unfair discrimination and harassment.

## 6 Service Delivery

Bracknell Forest YOS will aim to ensure that diversity and equality of access underpin all aspects of practice. It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- Ensure that they understand the aims and principles of the Bracknell Forest Youth Offending Service Diversity Policy
- Ensure that they adopt the YOS vision of equality of opportunity and embrace the expectations of the Policy
- Put this policy into practice in all areas of work in which they are engaged which involves being prepared to appropriately challenge [in a non confrontational manner,] comments and / or actions from colleagues which conflict with the YOS Diversity Policy
- Act to tackle unfair discrimination by reporting any concerns to their manager so that issues can be discussed, problems addressed and action can be taken to remedy the situation.
- Ensure that they identify with their manager ways in which equal opportunities can be improved and promoted.
- Make all clients aware of the Bracknell Forest YOS Diversity Policy and the treatment they can expect under that Policy and advise people of their right to complain if they feel they have been discriminated against.
- Develop and use consultation processes to establish the needs and satisfaction levels of disadvantaged groups
- Ensure that services are adapted to be culturally sensitive respecting customs and religious practices which may conflict with normal office hours

## 7 Rights of Service Users

The rights of all service users with regard to the implementation of this diversity policy are as follows:

- The right to be treated as an individual and with respect.
- The right to be provided with up to date information regarding the YOS services
- The right to receive a relevant, accessible service that is free from unfair discrimination
- The right to have equal access to all appropriate services from the YOS and not to feel excluded because of age, disability, ethnic background, skin colour, language, faith, health, social and economic backgrounds, sexuality or other prejudice.

- The right to expect that all Service Level agreements negotiated between the YOS and suppliers of services will incorporate equality principles and that performance against these will be monitored.

## **8 YOS Management Board**

This policy sets out the vision and commitment of Bracknell Forest YOS to ensuring equality of access, opportunity and service to YOS staff, partner agencies, the community and all service users. The policy is endorsed by the YOS Management Board, who will actively promote and support its continuing implementation. The Board will:

- Operate as a multi agency partnership to actively promote this policy, and adhere to the principles herein, in its role as the governing body of the YOS on behalf of the Bracknell Forest Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
- Actively work with the Head of the YOS to respond to unmet need in relation to service provision for disadvantaged groups
- Monitor the integration of equality of opportunity in YOS performance
- Ensure that the agencies represented on the YOS Management Board share a joint commitment to addressing diversity issues and discrimination within their own agency

## **9 References**

This Policy and Procedure is informed by and written to comply with the:

- The Race Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations amendment Act 2000.
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986.
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996.
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
- National Standards in for Youth Justice (Youth Justice Board 2004).