

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

Responsibility:	Liz Scott-Walter, Responsible Officer	Date doc. approved:	V4.0 August 2024
Print name sign off:	Simon Little, Managing Director	Last review date of doc:	V1.0 Sep 2019 V2.0 June 2022 V3.0 August 2023 V4.0 August 2024
Signature:		Next review date:	September 2026

Document Control		
Version Number	Date	Changes
V5.0	18 October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Changed name of Responsible Officer (RO)Updated scope and purpose sectionUpdated Forms of Assessment Section 2

Please Note: This policy has been reviewed at a time when apprenticeship reform is in progress and organisations are transitioning from End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs) to Assessment Organisations (AOs), and from end-point assessment to apprenticeship assessments. The terminology used within this policy is EPAO and End-Point Assessments (EPA), to be updated to AO etc. once that transition is complete.

Section 1 Scope and Purpose

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation is committed to advancing equality of opportunity, fostering inclusivity, and eliminating discrimination in all aspects of its work. We strive to create an environment where all individuals—including staff, associates, learners, apprentices, employers, trainees, visitors, and job applicants—are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness and where all individuals have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

•

At Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation, we believe that diversity strengthens our organisation. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. Our commitment extends to ensuring that no individual is disadvantaged due to:

- Age
- Disability (including physical, mental health, and neurodiverse conditions such as autism or ADHD)
- Gender reassignment, gender identity, or expression (including non-binary and gender-fluid individuals)
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin)
- Religion or belief (including cultural observances)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Socioeconomic background (recognising barriers related to class or social mobility)
- Intersectional identities (e.g., compounded discrimination faced by individuals with multiple protected characteristics)

Legal Compliance

We adhere to all statutory obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation. This policy is regularly reviewed to ensure ongoing compliance with current legal requirements.

Section 3. Legislative context

We adhere to:

- Equality Act 2010
- Employment Rights Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Public Sector Equality Duty (where applicable)
- WCAG 2.1 standards for digital accessibility

This policy will be reviewed in the light of any new legislation.

Section 4. Policy statement

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation is committed to actively promoting diversity and equality of opportunity and ensuring that these aspects are considered at all times in the design, development, and delivery of its End Point Assessment service.

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation, has a public duty to ensure that unlawful or unfair discrimination, whether direct or indirect, is eliminated both in access to, and undertaking of, End Point Assessment for Apprenticeships. Where it is reasonable and practical to do so, it will take steps to address identified inequalities or barriers that may arise.

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation, will take every possible action to avoid discrimination and ensure that any potential barriers to accessing Apprenticeship End Point Assessment are identified and mitigated against.

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation, will work with all stakeholders, including Employers, Apprentices (and/or representatives), and Training Providers to ensure that there are no unreasonable barriers to the Apprenticeship End Point Assessment that it designs, develops, and undertakes.

If the End Point Assessment includes a justifiable barrier, the reason and nature of this will be stated and its inclusion will only be allowed if it manifestly affects the integrity of the Apprenticeship End Point Assessment to not include it.

Assessment activities will be designed to be accessible to all with a range of alternative arrangements in place to mitigate against any issues that may arise, for example online activities when face to face is not

possible.

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation, will monitor any instances where there is believed to be a barrier to Apprenticeship End Point Assessment. These will be recorded and included in discussion as part of the Apprenticeship End Point Assessment review process.

Access to End Point Assessment shall be based solely on individuals' merits and Best Practice Network will collect equality data where available to monitor and ensure compliance with equalities law and regulatory requirements and ensure validity and reliability.

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation, is committed to supporting, developing, and promoting equality and diversity in all its practices and it aims to establish an inclusive culture, free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation, will, in carrying out its activities, have due regard to:

- the promotion of equality of opportunity
- the promotion of good relations between different groups
- the elimination of unlawful indirect and direct discrimination

Best Practice Network End Point Assessment Organisation, recognise the specific requirements of section 53 of the Equalities Act 2010 with regard to Qualifications Bodies (Appendix A).

The Equality Act 2010 (General Qualifications Bodies) (Appropriate Regulator and Relevant Qualifications) Regulations 2010 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/2245/made>

Section 2. Forms of Discrimination

At Best Practice Network End Point Assessment discrimination—whether by or against staff, associates, learners, apprentices, or employers—is strictly prohibited unless a specific legal exemption applies. Discrimination can be direct or indirect and may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

Discrimination—whether by or against staff, associates, learners, apprentices, or employers—is strictly prohibited unless a specific legal exemption applies. Discrimination can be direct or indirect and may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

1. Direct Discrimination: Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of one or more protected characteristics (e.g., age, race, sex, disability). Example: Rejecting a job applicant due to their gender or ethnicity, suggesting they wouldn't "fit in," is direct discrimination.

2. Indirect Discrimination: Indirect discrimination arises when a seemingly neutral policy, rule, or practice puts individuals with a protected characteristic at a particular disadvantage—unless it can be objectively justified as a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. Example: Requiring all staff to work full-time could disadvantage women, who are more likely to have childcare responsibilities. Without justification, this may constitute indirect discrimination.

3. Harassment: Harassment related to any protected characteristic is unlawful. It includes unwanted

conduct that:

- Violates a person's dignity, or
- Creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.

4. Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when someone is treated unfairly because they:

- Raised a complaint about discrimination or harassment,

5. Intersectionality: "Best Practice Network recognises that discrimination can be compounded when individuals hold multiple protected characteristics. We will proactively address intersectional barriers in recruitment, training, and workplace culture through targeted initiatives and data analysis."

6. Microaggressions & Unconscious Bias: Microaggressions (subtle, often unintentional discriminatory actions or remarks) are prohibited. All staff must complete annual unconscious bias training, and managers will address microaggressions through education or disciplinary action as appropriate.

7. Gender Identity & Non-Binary Inclusion: Gender identity and expression are explicitly protected. This includes use of correct pronouns, gender-neutral facilities, and zero tolerance for misgendering. Our Commitment Best Practice Network has a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. All concerns will be investigated thoroughly and addressed in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy.

Section 5. Breach of the policy

Best Practice Network will take seriously any instances of non-adherence to the Equality and Diversity Policy by Apprentices, staff, or visitors. Any instances of non-adherence will be investigated with the intent of resolving such matters. Where appropriate, such instances may be considered under the relevant disciplinary policy for staff or Apprentices.

Apprentices who believe there has been a breach of this policy may complain through the Best Practice Network's Complaints Procedure.

Section 5 Contact Information

If you have any queries relating to enquiries or to report concerns, please contact BPNs EPA Quality and Compliance team in writing:

Email: epa@bestpracticenet.co.uk

Post: Best Practice Network EPAO
Newminster House, 27-29 Baldwin St
Bristol, BS1 1LT