Equality, Diversity, Dignity and Respect Policy (People We Support)

Supportive Bridge Ltd | Community Support and Healthcare Staffing | Bradford, England

POLICY AT A GLANCE

- **Everyone is treated fairly:** we never discriminate against anyone because of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (Equality Act 2010).
- **Dignity and respect on every shift:** we are guests in people's homes. We protect privacy, use the name the person prefers, and never rush or talk over them (CQC Regulation 10).
- **Support that fits the person:** culture, faith, language, communication needs and preferences about who supports them are recorded in the support plan and respected.
- **Communication:** we use professional interpreters (not family, except in an emergency) and provide information in formats people can understand (Accessible Information Standard).
- **Choice and independence:** people stay in control of their own lives and routines, including choices others may not agree with.
- **Zero tolerance:** discrimination, harassment or disrespect by staff is a disciplinary matter and may also be a safeguarding concern.

SERVICE DETAILS (fill in before issuing)

Registered Manager	Iffrah Ishtiaq
Nominated Individual	Iffrah Ishtiaq
Interpreting service used (name and phone)	LanguageLine UK / 0800 169 2879
Local advocacy service (name and phone)	VoiceAbility / 0300 303 1660
Office phone	07448 266215
Date issued	01-10-2026
Next review date	

This summary is a quick guide only. All staff must read and follow the full policy on the following pages.

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This policy explains how Supportive Bridge Ltd ("Supportive Bridge", "we", "us") makes sure that everyone we support is treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and receives support that reflects who they are: their identity, culture, beliefs, language and way of life.

1.2 It reflects Regulation 10 (Dignity and respect) of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, our duties under the Equality Act 2010, and the rights protected by the Human Rights Act 1998.

1.3 We believe that the differences between people are a strength. Our workers come from many backgrounds, and so do the people we support. We want everyone to feel safe, valued and understood.

2. SCOPE

2.1 Supportive Bridge Ltd operates two arms, and this policy applies to both: our **healthcare staffing service**, supplying care and support workers to care homes, hospitals and other providers; and our **community support service**, where our own support workers visit adults and older people in their own homes, including council housing, on morning and evening shifts, to support them with daily living.

2.2 Supportive Bridge does **not** provide personal care. Personal care is a regulated activity under the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and we will provide it only if and when we are registered with the Care Quality Commission. Our support workers provide non-personal support such as companionship, meal preparation, shopping, domestic help, prompting, and support to get out and about. This policy is written to meet both local authority provider assurance requirements and the standards we will be assessed against at CQC registration.

2.3 It covers how we treat the people we support, their families, friends and representatives, from the first enquiry and assessment through every shift to the end of the service, and how our workers behave when supplied to a client organisation.

2.4 How we treat our own staff and job applicants is covered in our separate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy for Staff. Both policies work together.

2.5 Failure to follow this policy may lead to action under our Disciplinary Policy. Staff can also be held personally responsible in law for acts of unlawful discrimination.

3. OUR COMMITMENTS

3.1 Supportive Bridge will:

- make our service open and accessible to everyone in our area who needs it, and never turn someone away or offer a poorer service because of a protected characteristic;
- find out, record and respect each person's identity, culture, faith, language, communication needs and preferences, and build them into their support plan;
- make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people are not put at a disadvantage;
- protect people's privacy and dignity on every shift;
- support people to stay as independent as possible and in control of their own lives;
- train all staff in equality, diversity, dignity and human rights, and check through spot checks and feedback that this training is put into practice;
- act quickly and fairly on any concern or complaint about discrimination or lack of respect, and learn from it.

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

4. KEY TERMS AND THE LAW

4.1 Under the **Equality Act 2010** it is unlawful to discriminate against someone because of a **protected characteristic**. There are nine protected characteristics:

Protected characteristic	In simple terms
Age	A person's age or age group, for example people in their 80s.
Disability	A physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term effect on a person's ability to carry out normal daily activities. Many people we support are disabled under this definition, including many people with dementia, sight or hearing loss, or long-term conditions.
Gender reassignment	A person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process to change their sex.
Marriage and civil partnership	People who are married or in a civil partnership, including same-sex couples.
Pregnancy and maternity	Being pregnant, or having given birth in the last 26 weeks, including breastfeeding.
Race	Colour, nationality (including citizenship), and ethnic or national origin.
Religion or belief	Any religion, any religious or philosophical belief, and also having no religion or belief.
Sex	Being a man or a woman, as defined in the Equality Act 2010.
Sexual orientation	Whether a person is attracted to people of the same sex, the opposite sex, or both.

4.2 The Equality Act protects people from:

Type	What it means
Direct discrimination	Treating someone less favourably because of a protected characteristic, including because of a characteristic someone is wrongly thought to have (perception) or because of someone they are linked to, such as a disabled relative (association).
Indirect discrimination	Having a rule or way of working that applies to everyone but puts people with a particular characteristic at an unfair disadvantage, when it cannot be justified.
Discrimination arising from disability	Treating a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability, when it cannot be justified.
Failure to make reasonable adjustments	Not taking reasonable steps to remove barriers that disabled people face.
Harassment	Unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic, or of a sexual nature, that violates someone's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.
Victimisation	Treating someone badly because they have complained about discrimination, or helped someone else to.

4.3 The **Human Rights Act 1998** protects basic rights such as the right to respect for private and family life, freedom from inhuman or degrading treatment, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and freedom from discrimination. Under the Care Act 2014, providers of support arranged or funded by a local authority must act in line with these rights, and we apply the same approach to everyone we

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

support.

4.4 Treating people fairly does not always mean treating everyone the same. Sometimes we need to do things differently for different people, for example by arranging an interpreter, adjusting shift times around prayer, or providing information in large print, so that everyone gets the same quality of support.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Role	Responsibilities
Nominated Individual	Makes sure the company meets its equality and human rights duties, that this policy is resourced and reviewed, and that equality-related complaints, concerns and feedback are reviewed at least quarterly.
Registered Manager	Makes sure people's identity, culture, communication and dignity needs are assessed and planned; arranges interpreters and accessible information; plans rotas to meet reasonable preferences; makes sure staff are trained; and acts on any concern about discrimination or disrespect.
Field Supervisor / Care Coordinator	Gathers this information during assessments and reviews, observes dignity and respect during spot checks, and asks people for feedback about how they are treated.
All staff	Treat everyone with dignity and respect, follow the support plan, challenge or report discrimination and disrespect when they see it, and never allow their own personal beliefs to affect the support they give.

6. GETTING TO KNOW THE PERSON

6.1 During the initial assessment and every review, we ask the person (and, with their consent, people close to them) about the things that matter to them. We use the "Getting to Know Me" checklist (Appendix A). This includes:

- the name they like to be called and how they wish to be addressed, including their pronouns if they wish to share them;
- their first language, whether they need an interpreter, and any communication, sight, hearing or learning needs;
- their religion, beliefs or cultural practices and how these affect their daily life, support, diet and dress;
- any preference about the sex of the worker who supports them;
- important relationships, routines, interests and things they do not like;
- any past experiences that affect how they want to be supported.

6.2 People only share what they want to share. We explain why we ask, record information accurately and respectfully, and keep it confidential in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. We never assume a person's needs or beliefs based on their background, appearance or age; we ask them.

7. DIGNITY AND RESPECT IN PEOPLE'S HOMES

7.1 Our workers are guests in people's homes. On every shift they must:

- knock or ring and announce themselves, show their ID badge, and wait to be invited in unless the support plan says otherwise;
- respect the person's home, belongings and house rules (for example, removing shoes if asked);

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

- greet the person by their preferred name and avoid terms such as "love" or "darling" unless the person has said they like this;
- explain what they are going to do and ask for consent before giving support;
- talk to the person, not over them, and never have private phone calls or conversations with colleagues in a language the person does not understand while supporting them;
- give the person time and never rush them, even when running late;
- leave the person comfortable and the home tidy and secure.

Privacy

- close doors, curtains and blinds where the person wants privacy, and make sure others are not present unless the person wants them to be;
- respect modesty needs linked to culture or faith, as recorded in the support plan;
- knock before entering any room, and never look through a person's belongings, post or paperwork without their agreement;
- encourage the person to do as much as they can for themselves.

Confidentiality

7.2 Staff do not discuss one person's support with another person they support, or with neighbours or visitors, and do not take photographs or share anything about the people they support on social media. Information is shared only with people who need it, in line with our Confidentiality and Data Protection Policy.

8. CHOICE, INDEPENDENCE AND CONTROL

8.1 People have the right to make their own decisions about their lives and routines, including when to get up, what to wear, what to eat, and how their home is kept, even when others might not agree with those choices.

8.2 Staff support people to do as much as possible for themselves, and to stay connected with their families, friends, faith communities and local activities as much or as little as they wish. Staff report to the office if they notice a person becoming lonely or isolated.

8.3 Where a person may lack capacity to make a particular decision, we follow the Mental Capacity Act 2005, involve them as much as possible, and make any decision in their best interests in the least restrictive way.

8.4 People are supported to get independent advocacy if they need help to express their views or understand their rights. The Registered Manager keeps details of the local advocacy service (page 1).

9. PREFERENCES ABOUT WHO PROVIDES SUPPORT

9.1 Some people prefer a worker of a particular sex, especially where support is close or personal in nature. We ask about this at assessment, record it in the support plan, and plan rotas to meet it. If we cannot meet the preference on a particular shift, for example because of sickness, we tell the person in advance where possible and agree what they would like to do.

9.2 We will try to meet other reasonable preferences, such as a worker who speaks the person's language, or continuity of the same small team.

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

9.3 We will **not** agree to requests to exclude workers because of their race, colour, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or another protected characteristic. If a person or family member makes such a request, the Registered Manager will talk to them respectfully, explain our position, and support the staff member affected. Abuse or harassment of staff is dealt with under our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy for Staff and our Lone Working Policy.

10. COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION

10.1 We follow the **Accessible Information Standard**, which means we: identify each person's information and communication needs; record them clearly; flag them on the person's record; share them with others (such as health professionals) with consent; and meet those needs.

10.2 Depending on the person, this may include large print, easy read, audio, British Sign Language, Braille, pictures, or simply more time and plain language. Staff make sure that hearing aids, glasses and communication aids are clean, working and being used, and report any problems.

Interpreters

10.3 If a person's first language is not English and they need support to understand or be understood, we use a professional interpreting service (telephone, video or face to face), or British Sign Language interpreters for people who are Deaf. Details of our interpreting service are recorded on page 1.

10.4 Family members, friends, children or workers should not normally be used as interpreters for important conversations, such as assessments, support planning, consent, complaints or safeguarding, because the person has a right to confidentiality and to accurate, impartial interpreting. A family member may help with simple day-to-day communication or in an emergency, but a professional interpreter is arranged as soon as possible.

10.5 If a person chooses not to use a professional interpreter, this decision is confirmed through an interpreter and recorded. Key documents, such as the Service User Guide and support plan, are translated or provided in an accessible format where needed.

11. FAITH, BELIEF AND CULTURE

11.1 A person's faith, beliefs and culture can be central to their wellbeing, especially during illness or towards the end of life. People within the same faith or culture can have very different practices, so we always ask the individual rather than making assumptions.

11.2 Examples of what we may need to respect and plan for include:

- **Diet:** for example halal or kosher food, vegetarian or vegan diets, avoiding pork or beef, or not mixing meat and dairy, and handling food accordingly (see our Nutrition and Hydration Policy). If a person refuses food, we check it meets their beliefs before assuming they have lost their appetite;
- **Prayer and worship:** arranging shift times around prayer, helping with washing before prayer, or supporting people to attend places of worship or receive visits from faith leaders;
- **Fasting and festivals:** such as Ramadan, Lent or Yom Kippur. Where fasting may affect health, for example for someone with diabetes, we encourage the person to speak with their GP and follow their support plan;
- **Religious items:** handling holy books, prayer mats, religious jewellery and symbols respectfully, and asking before touching or moving them;
- **Modesty and dress:** including head coverings, and preferences about the sex of the worker;

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

- **End of life:** respecting rituals, wishes and practices around dying and after death, and involving family and faith leaders as the person wishes.

11.3 People who do not follow a religion are treated with equal respect, and may still value emotional, pastoral or spiritual support at difficult times.

12. SUPPORTING PEOPLE WHO MAY FACE PARTICULAR BARRIERS

12.1 We recognise that some groups may face extra barriers or have had poor experiences of services in the past, for example older lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans people who may worry about being open with staff, people from ethnic minority communities, people with learning disabilities or autism, and people living with dementia.

12.2 We work to make sure everyone feels safe to be themselves in their own home. Staff must never make assumptions about a person's relationships or identity, must treat partners and chosen family with the same respect as any other family, and must keep personal information confidential.

13. RAISING CONCERNS AND COMPLAINTS

13.1 Any person who feels they have been treated unfairly, discriminated against or not treated with dignity is encouraged to tell us. We will support them to raise it through our Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Policy, and they will not be treated any worse for doing so.

13.2 Staff who see or hear discrimination, harassment or disrespect towards a person we support must challenge it if safe to do so and report it to the office the same day. Staff can also use our Whistleblowing (Speaking Up) Policy.

13.3 Where disrespect or discrimination may amount to abuse, including discriminatory or psychological abuse under the Care Act 2014, the Registered Manager follows our Safeguarding Adults Policy and reports it to Durham County Council through Social Care Direct on 03000 267 979.

14. TRAINING

14.1 All staff complete equality, diversity, dignity and human rights training during induction (linked to the Care Certificate), and refresh it at least every three years. Training covers this policy, the Equality Act 2010, person-centred support, communication, the Accessible Information Standard, and recognising and challenging discrimination and unconscious bias.

14.2 Managers check that staff put this training into practice through spot checks, supervision and feedback from the people we support.

15. MONITORING AND REVIEW

15.1 The Registered Manager monitors how well this policy works by reviewing support plans and assessments, spot check findings, feedback surveys, complaints, incidents and safeguarding concerns, and by looking out for signs of a "closed culture" (where poor practice can go unnoticed, which is a particular risk when staff work alone).

15.2 Feedback is sought from the people we support and their families at reviews and through regular surveys, including questions on whether they feel respected and whether their culture, faith and communication needs are met.

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

15.3 The Nominated Individual reviews a summary at least quarterly. This policy is reviewed every year, or sooner if the law or guidance changes, or if a complaint or incident shows it needs to change.

16. LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014, especially Regulation 9 (person-centred care), Regulation 10 (dignity and respect) and Regulation 13 (safeguarding)
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- UK General Data Protection Regulation and Data Protection Act 2018
- Accessible Information Standard (DCB1605)
- NICE guideline NG21: Home care
- CQC guidance on Regulation 10 and on identifying and responding to closed cultures

17. RELATED POLICIES AND FORMS

Related policies: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Staff); Complaints, Concerns and Compliments; Safeguarding Adults; Consent and Mental Capacity; Confidentiality and Data Protection; Accessible Information; Nutrition and Hydration; Whistleblowing; Lone Working; Disciplinary.

Forms: Getting to Know Me checklist (Appendix A); Initial Assessment; Support Plan; Service User Feedback Survey.

18. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version	Date	Approved by	Role	Reason
1.0			Nominated Individual	New policy for local authority assurance and CQC registration

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.

APPENDIX A: GETTING TO KNOW ME

Complete with the person at assessment and review. They only share what they want to. Copy key points into the support plan.

Name I like to be called, and how I wish to be addressed (including pronouns if I wish)	
My first language / other languages I speak	
Do I need an interpreter? (language or BSL)	
How I communicate best, and any sight, hearing or other needs (aids I use)	
Information formats I need (e.g. large print, easy read, audio)	
My religion, faith or beliefs, and practices that matter to me	
Food and drink needs linked to my culture or faith	
Prayer times, fasting or festivals to plan around	
Modesty or dress needs	
Preference about the sex of my support worker	
People who are important to me	
Things that help me feel respected and comfortable	
Things I do not like / please avoid	

Completed by: _____ With: _____ Date: _____

© Supportive Bridge Ltd. Uncontrolled when printed; check you are using the latest version.