

Proud to be naturally inclusive

Proud of who we are

On 25 August 2019 in Manchester, something great happened. We flew the flags and righteously supported the Manchester LGBTQ+ community. We marched with colleagues from BPDTS, the Department for Work and Pensions, HMRC, Home Office and many other government departments under one unified banner – A Proud Civil Service. We stood strong and shoulder to shoulder with our civil service allies and told Manchester just how proud we are of our LGBTQ+ colleagues.

The theme of the day was deep space, imagining a world with total equality. From inflatable aliens, to pink wigs, bubble guns, gender bending cyborgs right through to what matters... smiles from ear to ear, we celebrated bursting with pride about who we are, what we do and where we come from.

Naturally Inclusive

Creating a naturally inclusive environment where people can be themselves, thrive, celebrate their differences and succeed is so important to us at BPDTS. Our goal is to make diversity and inclusion part of everything we do, rooted deep into our culture, policies, strategies and the way our people think and act.

Diversity to us, means understanding that each person is unique and individual. We recognise these differences and acknowledge that they may be visible and they may not. Differences can include anything from gender and ethnicity through to beliefs, disability, sexuality and family status.

Inclusion to us, means understanding and valuing individual differences. We strive to build a culture within our organisation for our people to prosper and flourish. This means our individuals are supported, respected, engaged, have a voice, and are able to develop skills and talents in line with BPDTS's values, aims and goals.

By creating an environment in which people can be authentic and true to themselves, we'll help them to unlock their potential and support them to be their very best. Working with colleagues from diverse backgrounds will bring fresh ideas, make us more creative and innovative – and we'll deliver more.

We help build digital solutions for a rich and diverse nation, so we want the diversity of our people to reflect this.

Proud of what we have done so far

Over the past few years we have worked hard to build the foundations of an

organisation where diversity and inclusion runs through our DNA. Whilst we have ambitious plans as to how much more we want to do, we're proud of the progress we have made to date.

For example:

- our BPDS Women in Digital Network run events across the country promoting and supporting women in digital and technology roles
- we've been awarded Disability Confident Employer status
- we have an apprenticeship scheme in place, encouraging a wider range of people to embark upon a digital career or progress within the digital community, regardless of socio-economic background
- trained mental health first aiders to support our people who are both living with mental health issues and caring for those who experience mental issues
- we've worked closely with other areas of the civil service to ensure our people have access to some really great and established people networks
- we've signed and committed to the Tech Talent Charter – a commitment by organisations to a set of undertakings that aim to deliver greater inclusion and diversity in the UK tech workforce

Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

But we know that there is much more to do. So we've developed a Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that sets out what we'll do to embed our approach and commitment to diversity and inclusion. For 2019 to 2020 we will focus on 3 main areas.

Supporting our people

This means being able to be who we are, recognising our differences and respecting each other. It's about listening to each other and letting people be heard, raising our awareness of our individual and collective needs.

Creating our environment

Creating the kind of place where we all want to work, free from discrimination and harassment, with fair working practices and where we can feedback. Somewhere we can be understood and gain recognition for who we are and what we've achieved.

Attracting and retaining diverse talent

For example looking at how we recruit people – the way job adverts are written attract different people, they may have a gender bias or be off putting for people with certain needs. This also needs to include opportunities that come up internally and for people returning to work.

Underpinning and delivering this strategy will be an action plan delivered by our Diversity and Inclusion Group and people networks, self-organising teams of volunteers, dedicating time to delivering our goals.

Joe Tetley, Diversity and Inclusion Group chair says:

We want everyone at BPDTS to be happy in the workplace and to be able to be who they are. Our mission is to give advice to corporate teams and take practical action to support diversity and inclusion.

Our Employee Pledge

We've launched also an Employee Pledge so that we can all commit to champion diversity and inclusion:

- I will treat all my colleagues as equals, respecting, acknowledging and valuing who they are as an individual
- I will create a space and a culture where we can all be ourselves, free from discrimination or unfair treatment
- I will stand by all of my colleagues as an ally

It has been signed by hundreds of people already.

At BPDTS we're creating a naturally inclusive environment where people are supported and encouraged to be themselves and to flourish. Manchester Pride was such an amazing opportunity for us to stand up and shout about it. To everyone who marched, everyone who watched and everyone who helped – you have my heart and my eternal thanks! Here's to next year...

**[UN Human Rights Council 42:
Interactive Dialogue on the Democratic
Republic of Congo](#)**



The UK thanks the United Nations Joint Office for Human Rights for their report and tireless efforts to improve the human rights situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

The UK welcomes the reported decrease in the number of human rights abuses and violations since the last reporting cycle, in particular violations of civil and political rights. Whilst we recognise the opening up of democratic space and improvements in the freedom of the press, we also note with concern attacks and intimidation against human rights defenders, journalists and other civil society actors by state agents. We call on the Government of DRC to ensure the protection of freedom of expression, and of assembly and association.

We echo the Joint Office's recognition of the Government's efforts to combat impunity and sexual violence and note the increase in convictions of this area. Whilst we appreciate the challenges still facing the government in their efforts to reform the judicial system, we urge the Government to take steps to ensure that state agents operate according to the highest international standards, and to bring those responsible for human rights violations to justice, regardless of rank or affiliation.

Following the formation of the new government, the UK encourages early action to address the human rights situation.

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Guidance: Pet travel: approved air, sea and rail carriers and routes

Check the transport companies and routes you can use to bring your pet cat, dog or ferret to England, Scotland or Wales.

Helping SMEs evaluate their medtech: apply for funding

The life sciences is a key sector of the UK economy made up of 5,000 companies with a turnover of £70 billion and employing 235,000.

It is developing the medicines, devices and digital technologies that improve patients' lives.

Most companies in the sector are small and find it difficult to provide the real-world evidence needed if the NHS is to adopt their innovations.

The [Office for Life Sciences](#), working with Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, has up to £1.5 million to support evaluation of innovative medical devices, diagnostics and regulated digital technology in real-world clinical settings.

Studies should target NHS priorities

Projects can win support for work to plan and prepare for a study, or for running a study, to collect data on clinical performance and cost-effectiveness.

They must be in line with at least one NHS priority area such as those outlined in the [NHS Long Term Plan](#) and show how they could give patients access to innovative new technologies.

Priority will be given to projects in the fields of:

- ageing well
- cancer
- digital transformation
- learning disabilities and autism
- mental health
- personalised care

- prevention
- primary care
- starting well
- stroke
- workforce

Competition information

- the competition opens on 30 September 2019, and the deadline for applications is at midday on 11 December 2019
- projects must be led by an SME
- we expect projects to range in size, with up to £100,000 to plan and prepare a study, or up to £500,000 to run a study and collect clinical performance and cost-effectiveness data

Bristol housing charity sanctioned for misconduct and mismanagement

A charity that ran supported housing facilities in Bristol has been sanctioned and heavily criticised by the charity regulator over long-running management failings.

[In an inquiry report published today](#), the Charity Commission finds that a number of former trustees of Bristol Sheltered Accommodation and Support (BSAS) are responsible for misconduct and mismanagement in the administration of the charity.

The Commission has issued the charity with an Official Warning to address past failings in its administration and two of the charity's former trustees have signed voluntary undertakings not to serve as trustees for a period variously of four and five years.

Five residents have died at Wick House since 2014. A recent inquest into the death of one of the residents heard in November 2018 did not find the charity responsible.

However, the report is critical of the trustees' failure to show that they had addressed the lessons from serious incidents involving the well-being of beneficiaries, including their failure to report the deaths of residents to the regulator.

Two new trustees were appointed in March 2019 and have positively engaged with the Commission. They are not responsible for the charity's past failings.

Separately, the Commission says that this and other cases have highlighted

wider issues around the oversight of supported accommodation which it is discussing with government, and other decision makers.

Findings of the investigation

Safeguarding and the failure to report serious incidents

The Commission notes that the charity had adequate written safeguarding policies in place, and that trustees, staff and volunteers were appropriately vetted.

However, the inquiry identified weaknesses in the charity's records which meant the trustees could not evidence having discussed and addressed serious safeguarding incidents, including the deaths of residents, appropriately.

The Commission's report is also critical of the trustees' failure to report serious incidents to the Commission, despite repeated regulatory advice on their duties in this regard. The regulator cites a number of examples, notably the trustees' failure to report:

- the death of a resident in November 2016
- the suspension, by Bristol City Council, of housing benefit payments for the residents at Shepherd Hall in March 2018
- notice given by the landlord of Shepherds Hall in September 2018 that the charity vacate the premises
- the closure of Shepherds Hall in December 2018

Unauthorised private benefit

Trustees of charities may not receive benefit from their charity unless this is expressly permitted by the charity's governing document or the Commission.

The Commission's investigation finds that, despite previous guidance on this matter, unauthorised payments amounting to over £48k in salary payments were made to two trustees between 2012 and 2015.

Unmanaged conflicts of interest or loyalty

The inquiry finds that the trustees did not properly manage a conflict of interest and/or loyalty arising from the fact that one of the trustees was also the director of company that purchased one of the properties the charity was leasing in 2015. Another individual connected to the trustee was also a trustee of the charity at the time.

Poor financial controls

The investigation finds that there were previously significant weaknesses in the charity's financial controls, which resulted in the charity's accounts for 2014 and 2015 being qualified by the auditors.

While the inquiry found no evidence that charity funds were misapplied or misappropriated, these weaknesses, which were not addressed following

regulatory advice and guidance by the Commission, amount to misconduct and mismanagement.

Amy Spiller, Head of Investigations at the Commission whose team led the inquiry into Bristol Sheltered Accommodation and Support, said:

It is clear from our investigation that this charity was mismanaged over a long period of time, and that its trustees repeatedly disregarded regulatory advice and were receiving unauthorised payments. All charities should be managed with care and probity, and residents of Wick House and their families have been let down. We have held the charity to account for these failings.

The public expect charities that work with vulnerable people to demonstrate that the protection and welfare of their beneficiaries is a priority. The trustees in this case could not show that they had taken these incidents seriously, and had not reported all of the deaths of the people in their care to the Commission. We are critical of their failures in this respect. All trustees, of all charities must uphold basic standards of conduct.

Wider concerns about supported housing

The Commission is not the regulator for specialist or professional care or services provided by any charity. It says its investigations into Bristol Sheltered Accommodation and Support have brought to light wider issues around the regulation of supported housing which limit the Commission's ability to hold charities providing such accommodation to account.

Some providers of supported accommodation are registered charities, but not all. Many providers offer a safe, stable and supportive place for vulnerable individuals. Indeed, such provision can be a life line for many vulnerable people. However, the case of Wick House is not the only example the Commission has seen where questions have been raised about the support provided to some residents.

It says that the lack of a regulatory framework setting out expectations of the quality of support provided in such settings, including those that have charitable status, impacts on the Commission's ability to hold trustees to account in that regard.

It is concerned that this, in turn, may mean some charities are not meeting the expectations of beneficiaries, or the public.

It is planning to share its concerns with a number of relevant parties, including the Chairs of two Parliamentary Committees and officials at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Sarah Atkinson, Director of Policy at the Charity Commission, said:

Our inquiry has – rightly – held the former trustees of BSAS to account for their failings.

I am acutely aware, however, that our investigation alone goes a small way towards achieving what the families of men who have died at Wick House deserve. Namely that lessons are learnt from their deaths.

People living in settings such as Wick House – and their families – should have confidence in the support they will get. We are concerned that, at the moment, the lack of agreed standards of and regulatory oversight over what should be on offer in supported accommodation means that neither the public, nor we as the regulator, can confidently hold a charity offering this type of accommodation to account. Conversely, charities that are providing appropriate support cannot currently show the public or their regulator that this is the case.

This represents a problem not just for residents and their families, but also for public trust in charities that are associated in the public mind with care and support for vulnerable people.

We are determined to ensure the lessons are learnt from Wick House and other similar settings.

ENDS