EDI Case study for M25 consortium

bpf – British Psychotherapy Foundation. A Higher Education training organisation with c 450 students and 50 staff (part-time tutors not included).

Issue

Over the past four years, the bpf has undergone significant growth and organisational change. From a small organisation of around 100 students, it has expanded considerably, with corresponding increases in student and staff numbers. This growth highlighted the need for robust equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies, greater organisational awareness and a more coordinated approach to embedding inclusive practice. At the outset, no formal EDI policies were in place at the bpf, creating a clear need for structured action.

What happened next?

The bpf entered the National Centre for Diversity's Investors in Diversity accreditation programme, beginning an organisation-wide process to embed Fairness, Respect, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement (FREDIE) across its culture, policies and ways of working.

Through consultation, focus groups and external assessment, colleagues, members and trainees contributed their experiences and feedback, informing a more strategic approach to inclusive leadership, policy development, recruitment, appraisal, student support and organisational monitoring.

The bpf achieved the 'Investors in Diversity - Silver Award' in 2024 and retained it following reassessment in 2026, with re-accreditation valid until 2028. This recognition reflects substantial progress while reinforcing the need to continue listening, learning and taking action to make inclusion an enduring organisational priority.

Investors in Diversity - The British Psychotherapy Foundation

The library as a driver of inclusive practice

FREDIE principles have been embedded across library, learning support and student services, with a focus on accessibility, equitable participation and responsive provision.

The bpf's Russell Library has played a central role in translating FREDIE principles into practical improvements for students.

A significant step was the library's relocation in 2024 from an upper-floor room reached only by steep stairs to a more visible and accessible ground-floor space at the London premises. The Russell Library now accommodates wheelchair users and offers largely reachable, browsable stock, alongside book retrieval and collection access assistance where required. Online and in-person inductions help students use the service confidently, while email support and a postal book service ensure that students with additional needs, those studying remotely and trainees based outside London can engage with the collection.

The library also contributes to curriculum development by reviewing its stock and course reading lists through an EDI lens. This continuing work seeks to broaden the range of authors, identities, clinical traditions and lived experiences represented in learning materials, while identifying gaps and informing future acquisition priorities.

Learning, access and wellbeing support

Students are invited to identify additional support needs through a short confidential form when they begin their studies, although support may be requested at any stage and a formal diagnosis is not required. An initial one-to-one discussion can lead to a Learning Support Agreement (LSA), developed collaboratively to record agreed adjustments. Students decide whether the agreement is shared with tutors. Support may address learning differences, sensory disabilities, mental or physical health conditions, caring responsibilities, long-term health conditions or other circumstances affecting study.

Through the library, students can access one-to-one academic support covering coursework structure, research strategies, study skills, referencing, e-resources, Google Scholar and the refinement of research topics. Its inclusive learning provision also includes RNIB Bookshare, which offers alternative reading formats, texts and practical strategies for students with dyslexia, other specific learning differences, autism or wider neurodivergence. Our use of Moodle complements these services with a central directory of assistive tools, specialist agencies and outreach support.

"The library's study support for those with additional learning needs has helped me feel supported academically and set out what help was available for someone with neurodiversity issues. I have been better able to focus on developing as a clinician with this assistance."
Bpf trainee

" The library doesn't just give me access to books – it gives me the support I need to learn, think, and develop as a psychotherapist. The specialist psychoanalytic texts, one-to-one support, accessible formats, and skilled, compassionate staff have transformed my academic and clinical progress." ***Bpf trainee***

Equitable access begins at recruitment, when applicants are encouraged to request reasonable adjustments. At the London premises, provision includes step-free access to the ground floor, an accessible toilet, step-free garden access by arrangement and a quiet room that can also be used for prayer. Adjustments to teaching materials and presentations, including subtitling or recordings where appropriate, can also be considered.

Students studying away from London, including those training with bpf North, can access learning support, academic guidance and library services remotely.

Student wellbeing is supported through regular mental health and wellbeing surveys and a phased programme developed in response to feedback. The Mental Health and Wellbeing page offers practical information and signposting to all BPF students, including those training with bpf North.

Continuing professional development

Our librarians have undertaken relevant continuing professional development, which has included practical EDI work in library and information services, introductory British Sign Language, autism awareness and working online with people with specific learning differences. This learning informs the continuing development of accessible services and inclusive practice. The library manager has also attended M25 Consortium training, including a Middlesex University event led by Beth Montague-Hellen to launch a practical guide to EDI in libraries.
Practical Tips for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Libraries (PTLIP Practical Tips for Library and Information Professionals) : Montague-Hellen, Beth: Amazon.co.uk: Books

Future priorities

Future priorities include further development on working with neurodivergent and trans students, alongside unconscious-bias training. FREDIE principles are incorporated into appraisal objectives for bpf employees, while workforce and student data are monitored to identify inequalities and inform policy development. This sustained cycle of learning, review and action is intended to keep inclusion central to organisational practice. Upcoming bpf events and courses related to EDI

Analytic Diversity for working with Neurodiversity Workshop – The British Psychotherapy Foundation

Certificate in Autism and Mental Health - The British Psychotherapy Foundation

Polly Mortimer

Library Manager

BPF

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