



Members' Code of Conduct

British Deaf Association

Equality	Access	Freedom of choice
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Updated December 2023

Membership responsibilities

Membership includes agreeing to our Code of Conduct. You can watch the British Sign Language (BSL) version or read the complete Code of Conduct in this document.

BSL version

[Watch the Member Code of Conduct in British Sign Language](#)

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Code of Conduct

The British Deaf Association (BDA) was formed in Leeds as the British Deaf and Dumb Association on 24 July 1890. It was formed to “elevate the education and social status of the Deaf and Dumb in the United Kingdom”. The BDA was founded at a time of intense controversy about the use of sign language and finger-spelling in the education of deaf children, and about the exclusion of Deaf people from national decisions that affected their lives.

The BDDA removed the word “Dumb” from its title in 1971 to become the BDA.

The BDA's charitable objectives

The BDA is a registered charity. Its charitable objects are to relieve deaf people and to advance their education and training. The BDA stands for equality, access, and freedom of choice for Deaf people.

- **Equality:** We believe that Deaf people should be able to access information, services, and support in their preferred language, and have the same opportunities to achieve the same life outcomes as anyone else.
- **Access:** We believe that Deaf people must have access to services, from Government level down, in their preferred language. A key role of our Association is to increase public awareness, recognition, and respect for the Deaf community, with a view to achieving equality of access and opportunity for Deaf people.
- **Freedom of choice:** Every Deaf person should have the right to choose to sign or speak, or both, without sanction and without obstacles.

Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to ensure that all Members of the BDA understand the standards of conduct that are reasonably expected of Members when they are representing the BDA in any capacity, engaged in BDA events, attending BDA meetings, writing in the press, or engaging in a public discussion, whether online or face-to-face.

Members' general conduct

It is important that Members do not conduct themselves in any way that could be detrimental to the BDA, its image, or its reputation. This includes, but is not limited to:

- behaving professionally and respectfully when representing the BDA; and
- not speaking for or in the name of the BDA without the authorisation of the Board of Trustees.

Respect for others and an insistence on equality and inclusion are central to the values of the BDA and the way we work. The BDA is committed to maintaining and promoting an environment within which its members treat each other with dignity and respect. We must all be able to expect that Members will:

- support the promotion of a positive environment and culture;
- support the promotion of respect for others;

- support the promotion of inclusion and the fair treatment of others;
- reject discrimination, bullying, and harassment (see further below);
- exhibit empathy and value others, our Charity, and ourselves; and
- work collaboratively to achieve the goals of the BDA.

What constitutes bullying and harassment?

The BDA recognises as bullying behaviour that may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious, or insulting, or as an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate, or injure the recipient, whether online (trolling) or otherwise. Bullying does not need to be deliberate; someone may demonstrate bullying behaviour that falls within the above definition without intending to.

Whichever form it takes, it is unwarranted and unwelcome to the individual and will often cause embarrassment, fear, humiliation, or distress to an individual or group of individuals. Bullying often results from a misuse of individual power derived from status or position, physical strength, or force of personality. It can also arise from collective power arising out of strength of numbers.

The BDA recognises as harassment any unwelcome behaviour, including sexual advances, when the unwanted conduct has the purpose or effect of making the other person uncomfortable, violating the other person's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for that person. Harassment does not need to be deliberate; someone may harass another person without intending to.

In some situations, where the unwanted conduct is serious, a single incident may constitute harassment. In other situations, conduct may become harassment if it is repeated or sustained. Unwelcome written or visual interaction can constitute harassment. This may include sending unwelcome videos, emails, notes, or pictures, or displaying or sending offensive material on any BDA social media, websites, blogs, etc.

Members' conduct as members of a charitable company

The BDA is a registered charity and, as such, Members of the BDA are also expected to understand and act in accordance with their duties as members of a charitable company. These include a duty to:

- declare any personal interests which may conflict with the BDA's charitable objectives and a member's ability to vote in the best interests of the BDA on resolutions presented to members;
- commit to supporting the Charity; and
- commit to reading carefully documents or other information that will enable engagement with debates at general meetings (including the AGM) and to vote in an informed manner.

Cessation of BDA membership

If the Board of Trustees is of the opinion that it is in the best interests of the BDA that an individual should cease to be a member, it may direct the Chief Executive to inform that individual of its opinion, with reasons. The member has the right to make representations to the Board of Trustees (in writing and in person at a Trustees' meeting). The Board may only decide that an individual should cease to be a member by a two-thirds majority of Trustees present and voting at the meeting.

Summary

This Code of Conduct establishes the principles for all BDA members to adhere to. It encourages trust and respect from its members and any non-members involved in BDA activities. Any Member who is concerned about the behaviour of another in relation to this Code of Conduct should either raise the matter informally with the Chief Executive or report their concern through the BDA's complaints process.

Document version

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