



# Equality Policy 2020

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## About this document

Equality Policy Version 1

Responsible officer: Business manager Corporate Responsibility

Approved by Cabinet on 23 September 2020, due for review in September 2022. To be retained for six months after policy review or replacement.

## Introduction

The Council is committed to ensuring that we, and Publica as the employer of many of our staff, treat everyone who lives, works and visits our districts with dignity and respect. We understand and respect that people are unique and have individual differences, we celebrate this diversity and encourage positive relationships between people with differing needs. The aim of this policy is to reduce any inequality and to ensure equality of opportunity both in providing services and as an employer. It aims to provide clear outcomes that intend to improve our approach to equality and diversity and aid in meeting our legal requirements.

The policy is intended to apply to both the Council and Publica. Where the words “we” or “us” appear, where the context permits this should be deemed to include both the Council and Publica.

Equality is the responsibility of every Councillor, employee and any other person or organisation employed or engaged by us. To ensure that we all understand our responsibilities all staff and Councillors are required to complete equality training and as part of any procurement or commissioning process we ensure that anyone who is engaged to provide services either has its own legally compliant equality and diversity policy/policies or commits to adhere to the policies that we have in place.

## Our Legal Responsibilities - Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

We acknowledge and welcome our legal duties as set out within the Equality Act 2010 and will ensure that all legal duties are adhered to by using the legislation and national guidance as a framework to improve standards and be accountable to the people we serve. However, we are not only driven by legislation, our policy and the work we do goes further. We also make sure that no other group or individual is treated unfairly for any other reason, such as their social class, political beliefs, income levels, responsibility for dependants, appearance, geographical area (rural location) or criminal record. We are committed to ensuring that hate crime or domestic violence are not tolerated within our communities.

The Equality Act 2010 states that public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Duty requires all public bodies and private bodies that deliver a public function, to consider the needs of protected groups when designing and delivering services. It ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all individuals in their day to day work, in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

The Equality Duty protects people from discrimination on the basis of the following nine protected characteristics;

- Race
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Age
- Religion and belief
- Pregnancy and maternity

Under the act we must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between different groups including those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people

- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low
- Tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between different communities

## Specific Duties

The Equality Duty is supported by specific duties which came into force in September 2011 and requires public bodies to;

- Set and publish specific, measurable equality objectives and review them at least every 4 years;
- Publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating our compliance with the Equality Duty at least annually;

Public bodies must publish information to show that they consciously thought about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision-making.

## Equality objectives and actions

To enable us to record, monitor and track our progress we have developed three equality objectives. Our equality objectives have been developed using evidence and information collected from various national, county and local sources; including Office of National Statistics data; county council data and local knowledge. The objectives as introduced in 2017 and reviewed in June 2020 are:

- Ensuring our employment practices are equal and fair.
- Improving access to our services.
- Understanding our communities and customers' needs.

These objectives form the basis of equality action plans.<sup>1</sup> These plans identify specific tasks that will support the achievement of the objectives. We will monitor, review and report on the progress against these plans at least quarterly.

## Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An equality impact assessment involves assessing the likely or actual effects of policies or services on people with protected characteristics. It helps us to make sure the needs of the community are taken into account when we develop and implement a new policy or service, or when we make a change to a current policy or service. We constantly strive to deliver services that are easily accessible by all who need them, and to support people to participate in public life. The EIA will look at the overall policy or service and decide if it has a positive or negative impact on any particular group

An impact assessment will be carried out at the earliest opportunity and ideally before the service, policy or strategy is developed. This ensures that any impacts are clearly identified at the outset and provides an opportunity to mitigate any negative impacts. Depending on the extent of the policy or service it may be necessary to undertake a further assessment as the change is implemented so that any areas of concern can be identified and addressed quickly.

If the assessment identifies a negative impact on a particular group or sector of the community, where possible this should be eliminated, minimised or counterbalanced by other measures. An action plan to minimise, reduce or eliminate negative impact should be developed and kept under review. Help and advice will be provided by the manager responsible for corporate equality and diversity and where appropriate will have input from our legal and human resources departments. We will publish completed assessments on our website.

## Antisemitism

We have also adopted the non-legally binding working definition of antisemitism: demonstrating our clear intention that no one should be treated unfairly.

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<sup>1</sup> Actions plans can be accessed via the Council website

*“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities”*

## **Employing, supporting and developing our workforce**

We are committed to being a fair and supportive employer, developing the skills and talent within our workforce so that employees are able to deliver high quality services to everyone. To achieve this we will:

- Carry out recruitment fairly
- Provide training to employees so that they can implement this policy
- Treat all employees fairly, with dignity and respect at all times
- Tackle unacceptable behaviour in the workplace
- Provide employees with opportunities to influence the development of our policies and practice
- Reward all employees fairly and provide employment conditions which support them to do a good job
- Promote a good work-life balance and opportunities to work flexibly
- Support disabled employees by making reasonable adjustments

Our employment practice is guided by the principles of equality and fairness. This includes recruitment, terms and conditions, appraisals, learning and development, promotion and when ending employment.

As stated in our specific commitments, all employees and elected members should be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace. The Council will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour in any form.

## **Equality Information**

The Equality Duty requires public bodies with over 150 employees to record information relating to employees who share protected characteristics. As the Council itself has less than 150 employees we are unable to publish this data without the possibility of compromising individuals anonymity. The Council will uphold its duty to protect an individual's right to privacy, and will not publish information that could identify an individual. Nor will the information be used to identify an individual or make a decision about them purely on the grounds of the information that has been provided in relation to their protected characteristics. All personal data will be processed in accordance with GDPR. However, the Council acknowledges the importance of the accessibility of workforce data and will therefore work with Publica to ensure that Publica records and publishes this data.

## **Gender Pay Gap**

The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 require all organisations with 250 or more employees to publish data on the gender pay gap within each organisation. Like the workforce data the Council itself does not meet this threshold however, this data will be published by Publica.

## **Conclusion**

This policy clearly sets out our legal duties and how we comply with the requirements. However, a policy is a very small part of embedding equality and diversity and we are committed to ensuring that everyone who lives, works or visits our district is treated fairly and with dignity and respect, by our actions as both a service provider and employer.