

North West Leicestershire District Council

Equality Policy

2005 - 2008

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity, good community relations, and to tackling all forms of discrimination in North West Leicestershire through the Council's roles as service provider and commissioner, employer and community leader.
- 1.2 We will work with our partners in the private, public and community sectors to achieve our objectives.
- 1.3 We believe that the diversity of the North West Leicestershire Community should be celebrated and valued.
- 1.4 Our commitment to equality is expressed through the Council's key seven priorities for 2005 – 2008 – “Quality, Good Value, Accessible Services” and “to develop strong inclusive communities”
- 1.5 The strategic aim outcomes are;
 - “To provide for all of our community, reliable, well performing & value for money services”
 - “To ensure everyone has equal opportunity to access our services, be socially included through strong communities”
- 1.6 Equality considerations are a part of our Service Delivery Processes, and are incorporated into annual plans prepared for each of the Council's five divisions. The Divisional action plans will incorporate the practical measures being undertaken at service level to ensure the equality objectives are achieved.
- 1.7 The Comprehensive Equality Policy forms the basis of our commitment to the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Standard will:

 - provide a systematic framework for mainstreaming equality
 - help us to meet our obligations under the law
 - integrate policies and objectives with Best Value
 - encourage anti-discrimination practice appropriate to NWLDC
 - provide a basis for tackling all forms of institutionalised discrimination
 - provide a framework for improving performance over time
- 1.8 There are five levels to the standard which will be monitored by the Audit Commission. The Council aims to achieve the highest level.
- 1.9 This Policy sets out our commitments. The objectives within the Policy will be implemented through a Equality Policy Implementation Plan setting out clear targets and timetables for achieving them.

2 Timescale

- 2.1 The Policy is effective from April 2005. It will be reviewed annually and amended as necessary to reflect any changes in legislation, codes of practice, or special issues of local concern.

3 Scope

- 3.1 The Policy applies specifically to discrimination, equality of opportunity and the promotion of good community relations in respect of:
- age
 - disability including mental ill-health specified in the DDA.
 - ethnicity, race, colour and national origin
 - gender
 - religion
 - sexual orientation
- 3.2 The Policy applies to all aspects of the Council's functions including:
- service provision
 - commissioning and purchasing of goods and services
 - recruitment, employment, training and staff development
 - grants to voluntary and community organisations
 - landlord functions in respect of housing and other property
 - exercise of statutory powers and responsibilities
 - partnerships with other organisations
 - community involvement
 - promotion and publicity
 - planning
- 3.3 The Policy applies at all levels of the Council's activities including corporate, divisional, service and individual.

4 Aims

- 4.1 The Council aims to:
- eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination
 - promote equality of opportunity
 - celebrate and value diversity
 - promote community cohesion

5 Objectives

5.1 Leadership and Commitment

- Ensure that the allocation of financial resources takes into account equality considerations.
- Ensure that equality considerations are integrated into all relevant areas of mainstream service planning, management and delivery.
- Ensure funding information/ funding given by the council reflects the diversity of the district

5.2 Consultation, Community Development and Public Scrutiny

- Improve the Council's awareness and understanding of the needs of different groups in the district through effective community profiling, consultation, liaison and involvement.
- Encourage participation in local democracy and representation on public and voluntary bodies.
- Improve community relations and promote diversity through events, publicity, educational programmes and other initiatives.
- Ensure that all sections of the community have opportunities to benefit from the regeneration of the district.
- Work with partners in the community, voluntary, public and business sectors to achieve the Policy's aims.

5.3 Service Delivery and Customer Care

- Ensure that Council services are accessible, and are delivered appropriately and sensitively in order to facilitate equality of treatment.
- Ensure that information about services is offered in appropriate formats and languages.
- Ensure that the Council's commissioning and purchasing policies and procedures promote equality of opportunity.
- Continually review existing services to assess their impact on the groups covered by the Policy.
- Improve the monitoring of service take up and use.
- Assess the impact of proposed new policies and proposals to significantly change existing policies.
- Develop appropriate arrangements for travellers.

- Tackle all forms of hate crime and harassment and promote safety and security.

5.4 Employment and training

- Promote opportunities to ensure that the Council's workforce is diverse and representative of the local community.
- Ensure that Council jobs are accessible to people from all sections of the community.
- Train employees and members to ensure that they are aware of the Policy and are able to apply it to their own area of work/responsibility.
- Ensure that employees and members are treated equitably in all areas of employment including career development, pay, training and promotion.
- Tackle harassment and bullying in the workplace.
- Carry out regular workforce profiling.
- Improve consultation with employees from the groups covered by the policy.

6 Implementation

- 6.1 The Council will produce a 3-year Equality Policy Implementation Plan which will set out the actions, targets and timescales and resources required to meet the objectives in the Policy.
- 6.2 All the Council's relevant policies, functions and services will be reviewed through a rolling three-year programme of Equality Monitoring. The policies, functions and services will be assessed on the basis of a risk assessment to identify the areas requiring most urgent attention.
- 6.3 Reviews to assess the impact on the groups covered by the Policy. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out for all proposed new policies or policies for which significant changes are proposed.
- 6.4 The Council's Race Equality Scheme will be reviewed to ensure the objectives and arrangements align with the objectives and arrangements documented in the Equality Policy Implementation Plan. The timescales for the two plans will be aligned to the 2005 – 2008 period accordingly.

7 Resources

- 7.1 The Council is committed to integrating equality policy into mainstream service planning and budgetary allocation.
- 7.2 Employees in the Human Resources section have specific equality responsibilities and each Division has employees with specific duties to co-ordinate the implementation of the Policy at Divisional level.
- 7.3 The Council will allocate funds specifically for the purpose of equality training for staff.

8 Responsibilities

- 8.1 The Council has a portfolio member - Cllr Straw, who has overall responsibility for the policy. The Executive Board of the Council has responsibility for ensuring that adequate resources are provided for its implementation.
- 8.2 The Council's Manager of Central Support has responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the policy and the monitoring process.
- 8.3 Divisional Managers and Section Heads are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the Policy.
- 8.4 All employees are required to ensure fairness towards colleagues, service users and other members of the community in carrying out their duties.
- 8.5 All employees should help to promote the Policy in the workplace in all aspects of service delivery and to work towards the elimination of discrimination.
- 8.6 All employees have a duty to report instances of discrimination to their manager at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate action can be taken to remedy the situation.
- 8.7 The Council requires that those who provide services on its behalf or organisations which are funded by the Council, ensure that their service provision and employment practices are consistent with the Policy.

9 Monitoring and review of the Policy

- 9.1 The Social Inclusion Action Team and the Council's Management Team will regularly review the Policy to ensure that it is consistent with current legislation and codes of practice.
- 9.2 The Policy and Development Review Board will annually monitor progress against the Standard with the Performance Monitoring Board monitoring the corporate and divisional targets set out in the Equality Policy Implementation Plan.
- 9.3 Performance Indicators will be included in the Equality Policy Implementation Plan.
- 9.4 Reviews will take into account the views of elected members, staff, community and voluntary groups, and trade unions.

10 Dissemination of the Policy

- 10.1 The Policy will be published on the Council's website and on the Intranet.
- 10.2 A summary document will be available in a range of formats and languages.
- 10.3 A copy of the Policy and summary will be available for all Employees.
- 10.4 Applicants for Council posts will be made aware of the policy and it will form part of the induction programme for new recruits.

Appendix 1 – Legislation

Human Rights Act 1998

It is unlawful for local authorities to act in a way which is incompatible with the rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the European Convention of Human Rights.

Race Relations Act 1976

It is unlawful for local authorities, in carrying out their functions, to discriminate, directly or indirectly, on grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origin.

Local authorities, in carrying out their functions, must have due regard to

the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups

Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2001

Local authorities must publish a Race Equality Scheme and monitor recruitment, promotion, grievance and disciplinary procedures, employment termination and training by reference to the racial groups to which staff and job applicants belong.

Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003

These contain new definitions of indirect discrimination and harassment and make other amendments to reflect the provisions of Council Directive 2000/43 EC.

This provides for equal treatment between persons in the areas of employment, social protection, social advantage, education and access to goods and services which are available to the public, including the provision of housing.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

It is illegal to discriminate against disabled people in employment, provision of goods and services and buying or renting land or property.

Employers and service providers are required to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers.

Equal Pay Act 1970

Prevents discrimination between men and women in the terms of their employment, including pay.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

It is illegal to discriminate directly or indirectly against men or women in selection for appointment, promotion and training.

Sex Discrimination Amendment Act 1999

It is illegal to discriminate against a person who is undergoing a gender reassignment in terms of employment and training.

European Directive on Employment (Article 13 Amsterdam Treaty)

Provisions make it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of religion and sexual orientation in employment and training by 2003; and age and disability by 2006.

Appendix 2 – Codes of Practice

Commission for Racial Equality

The duty to promote race equality

Equal Opportunities Commission

Sex discrimination

Equal Pay

Disability Rights Commission

Elimination of discrimination in the field of employment against disabled people or persons who have had a disability

Rights of access to goods, facilities, services and premises