



Equality & Diversity Policy

APPROVED BY SMDC CABINET 20TH JANUARY 2015

Policy Statement

Staffordshire Moorlands District Council (SMDC) (the Council) is committed to fulfilling its duty under the Equality Act 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.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a coherent approach to tackling equality and diversity across all the protected equality characteristics (age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation). It also aims to make Equality and Diversity integral to the way that the Council works in order to achieve:

- A clearer understanding of the needs of the residents of the Staffordshire Moorlands.
- Better informed decision-making and policy development.
- Excellent quality services which meet varied needs.
- More effective targeting of policy and resources that will do the most to increase equality.
- Better outcomes and greater confidence in public services.
- A more effective use of talent in the workforce.

1.2 The Council will ensure:

- Members, employees, contractors, partners and the community as a whole are aware of the Council's approach to equality and diversity.
- All Members, employees and contractors of the Council understand their responsibilities in working towards an equal and diverse community.

- Effective monitoring arrangements are developed and maintained to track progress.
- The public and other agencies are enabled to hold the Council to account for progress.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 The Chief Executive and senior management team are responsible for providing leadership in the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that service planning and performance management systems take account of equality. However, all staff have responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

2.2 Elected members have overall responsibility for the direction and scrutiny of this policy and will ensure that principles of fairness and equality guide the decision making process.

2.3 Managers must:

- Carry out effective consultation processes, ensuring they advise residents affected by proposals, and work to deliver effective outcomes.
- Carry out Equality Impact Assessments as and when required and publish the completed forms on the Council's website.
- Fulfil their responsibilities regarding equality and diversity when carrying out recruitment and selection.
- Ensure an equal standard of service delivery is given to all service users at all times, taking into account the wide range of needs and requirements that exist.
- Ensure that their staff have the training and support required to fulfil their responsibilities.

2.4 Employees must:

- Comply with this policy.
- Ensure that any visitor to the Council who they are responsible for complies with the principles of the policy.
- Treat others with respect at all times.
- Actively discourage and report any discriminatory behaviour or practice.
- Co-operate with Managers and participate in training to eliminate prejudice and promote good practice.

- Be open to learning about groups of people whose lives, experiences, attitudes and needs may vary from their own. As a society our understanding of equality and diversity issues is evolving, acceptable terminology changes over time and at times is disputed even with groups of people sharing a 'protected characteristic'.

3. Consultation and Equality Impact Assessments

3.1 The Council recognises that information gathering and monitoring form the foundation of informed, evidence based policy making, and commits the Council to using such tools to develop policy that meets the needs of all residents.

3.1.1 These processes include: consulting with members of the public through various methods including: focus groups, discussions with interested parties, awareness raising through the local press, the Council's website and other social media sites, as well as, where relevant, through questionnaires.

3.2 The aim of a consultation process is to ascertain whether current service provision and any proposed changes are not only consistent with legal obligations, but also cater for the needs of people defined in the Equality Act 2010 as having protected characteristics.

3.3 Specific issues that the consultation process and Equality Impact Assessments will seek to address include:

- Whether existing management information systems capture sufficient data on who accesses a particular service and who does not.
- Gauging the opinions of all customers who use the service and assess how existing provision impacts on protected groups.
- Whether users, particularly from disadvantaged groups, are provided with appropriate information about the service.

3.4 Equality objectives and targets arising from these assessments and linking into the Council's vision and aims will be published.

4. Training

4.1 Equipping Members, Managers and Council employees with knowledge and skills is essential if the Council is to ensure that equality and diversity is integral to its service delivery.

Training will be focused at a range of levels including:

- General awareness training for all employees on equality and diversity. This will also form part of the induction programme for all new employees.
- Refresher training every 3 years.
- Training for senior managers to ensure an ongoing awareness of the changes in legislation and best practice and their roles and responsibilities under the legislation in promoting equality and diversity.

4.2 Equality and diversity principles will be embedded across the Council's training programme, ensuring that materials, case studies and exercises appropriately reflect equality and diversity.

5. Resources

5.1 The Council will use the outcomes of the completed consultation and Equality Impact Assessments to help decide priorities, ensuring a fair and balanced approach to the Council's financial decisions in the budget-setting process.

5.2 By having objectives that link in with existing work streams, the relevant funds required to deliver against promises and commitments will be established.

6. Service Delivery

6.1 The Council provides direct services, regulates, funds and commissions services. In all these roles and activities the Council is committed to fair and equitable access to services, whether they are provided directly by Council employees, in partnership with other agencies or indirectly through external contract, funding or commissioning arrangements. All service areas will take steps to ensure that Council functions and policies are carried out in a way that complies with statutory requirements, minimises adverse impact on any section of the community and meets the needs of all local people as appropriately as possible.

6.2 The Council aims to:

- Ensure equal access, fair treatment and appropriate provision to the whole community regardless of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion, nationality, social background or sexual orientation, and any other reason not connected to entitlement and availability.
- Provide quality services that are designed to meet a wide range of different needs in the community and regularly review them to ensure that no customers are disadvantaged.

- Provide appropriate services, adapting them, where reasonable, to meet the needs of the whole community promoting equal access to services, including producing clear information about how to access our services (for example in large print).
- Provide and publicise clear information on how customers can complain about the services they have received and respond efficiently to complaints.
- Ensure that, wherever practicable, all services and buildings are accessible to everyone.

6.3 The Council will:

- Assess organisational and individual requirements to achieve compliance with legislation.
- Establish mechanisms for responding to harassment.
- Ensure equal access to services.
- Ensure that all its functions and policies are carried out in a way that complies with statutory requirements, minimises adverse impact on any section of the community and meets (as appropriately as possible) the needs of all local people.
- Set equality and diversity objectives within each service as part of the regular business planning process.
- Develop and implement a framework that enables and supports a regular process of self- assessment, scrutiny and audit.

7. Corporate Equalities Planning Framework

- 7.1 The Council's business planning processes will embed this policy by ensuring clear equality and diversity targets in all plans, together with an Equality Impact Assessment process which is an integral part of the Council's Committee reporting structure and decision-making processes.

8. Standards and Monitoring

- 8.1 The Council will carry out an annual audit against its objectives and amend priorities to ensure their continued relevance.
- 8.2 The progress and audited results will be published on the Council's webpages.

9. Working with Partners

- 9.1 Effective partnerships with a range of agencies will assist the Council to understand the needs of different groups of people in the community and to design and deliver services in response.
- 9.2 The Council works closely with key stakeholders, on numerous issues and will take a leading role to drive equality and diversity forward across the District.
- 9.3 Key partners include community and voluntary groups. These provide an excellent way of communicating and consulting with the people of the area as well as acting as a monitoring forum on how the Council is delivering.

10. Procurement and contract management

- 10.1 The Council will take into account in its tender evaluation and contracting processes a potential contractor's approach to equalities in terms of its employment practices and service delivery. It will do this by asking potential contractors relevant questions and include appropriate provisions in its contract documents relating to these matters. The impact of its procurement strategy with regard to the promotion of equalities will also be monitored and managed during the life of each contract.

11. How the Council will measure its commitments

- 11.1 The Council will publish annually its equality and diversity objectives.

12. Contact details

For further information or if you would like this document in large print, Braille or audio format, contact Mark Forrester, Democratic and Community Services Manager, at:

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