



Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy

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Why we need an Equality and Diversity Policy

Hartlepool Borough Council recognises that some sections of the community experience discrimination due to factors such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, disability, sexuality, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnerships and age. The Equality Act 2010 helps us to promote equality and our Equality and Diversity Policy will shape and guide our equality work.

Our approach to equality and diversity is to value that each individual resident, visitor, partner, service provider, service user and employee is unique.

The Equality Act 2010 came into force April 2011, introducing the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the act
- Advance equality of opportunity, between people who share protected characteristics and those who don't
- Foster good relations, between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

We welcome our responsibilities as an employer, as a provider of services, and as a leader of public opinion, and value the legislation that supports our commitments to equality and fairness.

We believe that it is unacceptable for any sections of our communities to experience harassment or discrimination and take seriously our responsibility for promoting equality.

We first produced an equality policy in 2002. Our first Single Equality Scheme was published in 2008. We have now decided to review the policy to reflect changes in the law, the increasing differences in the town's population and changes in our responsibilities to our employees and people in our communities.

- 1.8% of the population belong to a black or ethnic minority group
- 1 in 4 of people has a disability or long term limiting illness.
- It is expected that by 2021 the numbers of people above retirement age will increase by 27%.
- Approximately 10% of the population are gay, lesbian, bisexual.

We need an equality policy because we know that prejudice and discrimination still affect the lives of many of our citizens. We know that the way organisations work often leads to unintentional discrimination against groups of people ('institutional discrimination'). This results in reduced opportunities for some of our citizens and limits their access to jobs and services.

Since we first published our policy, we have put in place policies and structures and have many examples of good practice in equality work. However, we know that we need to improve our approach to mainstreaming, making sure that all aspects of our business processes (how we plan, manage and monitor our work) take account of and reflect the different needs of the population). As a major provider of services in the town, we are committed to providing high-quality services which everyone can use.

As an employer, we value diversity and want a workforce that reflects the community that we serve. The term 'diversity' refers to the fact that we are all different. Having a diverse workforce improves our work. It makes sure that we draw from the widest available pool of talent and that we relate better to the community that we serve. Tackling discrimination helps to make sure that we attract and keep the very best workforce. Our commitment to equality is supported by a legal duty to provide all services and employment opportunities fairly and to keep to all relevant codes of practice. By law, we must promote equality and publish our plans to do so.

'Our approach to equality and diversity is to value that each individual resident, visitor, partner, service provider, service user and employee is unique.'

How we will deliver

Our equality work has the following aims.

We will:

- work to end unlawful discrimination;
- promote equal opportunities; and
- promote good relations between people from different communities.

We will make sure that any partnerships we are involved in and any contractors who carry out public work on our behalf follow these principles.

We will make sure that equality is central in all aspects of our business, at planning, delivery and monitoring stages.

The principles set out in this policy are supported by a detailed corporate equality action plan, which is incorporated into the Policy.

All our services will update and develop the action plans as necessary, setting out the particular equality issues facing their service and their arrangements for delivering improvements in relation to these issues.

'We will make sure that equality is central in all aspects of our business, at planning, delivery and monitoring stages.'

Our Equality and Diversity Statement

Hartlepool Borough Council is committed to promoting a community and organisational culture that fully respects and values everyone's differences and needs. Equality and diversity is integral to our core business, our staff and our service users.

In working towards our commitment to equality we will:

- Work towards providing services which meet the needs of all sections of our communities.
- Ensure that respect and dignity is valued as a core principle for all.
- Promote equality and fair treatment and equal access to our services and services commissioned by us.
- Offer a range of translation and interpretation services for those whose first language is not English and also provide information in other formats such as Braille and audio.
- Actively seek the views of our customers and take account of their comments and complaints and allow a reasonable timescale for consultations
- Consult a range of communities and avoid selecting single minority ethnic organisations or individuals
- Assess and monitor the impact of new and existing policies and plans on equality groups.
- Publish an annual report that outlines progress on eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunities.
- Promote the community cohesion framework.
- Provide straight forward information about our services.
- Strive for a workforce that reflects the diversity of the population of Hartlepool.

The action we will take to improve Equality as a Service Provider

Policy and Planning

- We will publish our Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy setting out what we are doing to put the policy into practice.
- We will include equality in all our business processes (how we plan, manage and monitor our work) and have a system in place to manage and monitor this.
- We will work to make sure that we consider equality in our corporate and departmental policies and plans, including budget and service plans and service reviews.
- Where necessary, we will identify new procedures for taking equality issues forward, for example, to improve access to services for disabled people and to tackle violence against women.
- We will work with partners, as appropriate, to improve services for equality groups.
- We will make sure that third party organisations that we work with have equality policies in place on employment matters and delivering services.
- Where appropriate, we will include equality commitments in agreements that we are part of.

'Where necessary, we will identify new procedures for taking equality issues forward, for example, to improve access to services for disabled people and to tackle violence against women.'

Access to Services

- We work towards ensuring that members of the public have equal access to Council services and support, information, employment, education, transport and buildings, land, sites and other facilities.
- Our aim is to establish an inclusive society where all Hartlepool residents and visitors
 - have equal access to all Council services and support, information, employment, education, transport and buildings, land, sites and other facilities without discrimination (except where statutory restrictions or other eligibility criteria apply); and
 - are aware of what services are available / provided and how to access them.
- It is our intention to:
 - strive for delivering Council services in line with people's needs; and
 - ensure that Council services and support, information, employment, education, transport and buildings, land, sites and other facilities should be accessible to all and where necessary, reasonable adjustments should be made to remove barriers preventing such access.

'We believe that Council services and support, information, employment, education, transport and buildings, land, sites and other facilities should be accessible to all.'

Monitoring

- We will link equality monitoring to our performance management framework (how we measure how our services are performing).
- We will assess and monitor the impact of new and existing policies and plans on equality groups and people with protected characteristics.
- Monitoring will enable us to:
 - find out if our equality and diversity policies are working
 - find out which groups are using our services
 - determine whether we are offering equality of opportunity and treatment to all groups
 - highlight areas where we are not complying with our equality and diversity policy
 - find solutions and make changes, rather than using guesswork or assumptions
 - provide evidence that we know who our users and non-users are, and that we have found out what their needs are
 - avoid what could be costly complaints of discrimination, by making sure that we identify problems and issues at an early stage
 - improve our reputation as a good and fair provider of services.
- We will, on an annual basis, publish a report containing a summary of:
 - What we have done to comply with the Equality Duty
 - What we have done to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity
 - Completed Impact Assessments

Complaints

We will record and monitor complaints to ensure there are no barriers in accessing our services.

‘We will assess and monitor the impact of new and existing policies and plans on equality groups and people with protected characteristics.’

Consultation and Communication

- We will consult with discussion groups and partner organisations including:
 - The All Abilities Forum
 - The Learning Disability Partnership Board
 - Hartlepool Access Group
 - The Champion of Older Lifestyle Group (COOL)
 - The 50 Plus Forum
 - Hartlepool Young Voices Forum
 - Hart Gables (gay, lesbian and bi-sexual)
 - Scrutiny Forums
 - Ward Surgeries and other individual elected member activity
 - Face the public events
 - Youth Forums

- We will ensure that we use a variety of techniques including postal surveys, face-to-face interviews, discussion groups, consultative forums, mystery shopping and e-consultation, via:
 - Viewpoint (citizen's panel) – postal and on-line questionnaires
 - E-consultation system (Survey Monkey)– on line questionnaires and discussions
 - General satisfaction surveys – self completion/postal questionnaires
 - Employee Surveys – postal and on line surveys

- We will continually review the process to make sure that our consultation arrangements best reflect changes in law, changes in structures and other agendas.

- We will communicate our commitment to equality to all our employees and everyone living in Hartlepool.

- We will produce documents and promotional material in plain language, other languages and in a range of other formats to suit the needs of different groups and individuals.

- We will continue to offer a Translation and Interpreting Service to meet the needs of people who do not speak English and also provide information in other formats such Braille and audio.

‘We will produce documents and promotional material in plain language, other languages and in a range of other formats to suit the needs of different groups and individuals.’

Community Cohesion

The vision for the Community Cohesion Framework is that 'by 2020 Hartlepool will be made up of cohesive communities where there is a sense of belonging for all and where people of different backgrounds, circumstances and generations have access to the same opportunities and are able to get along free from discrimination and harassment.'

The draft framework is currently undergoing consultation. Feedback from the consultation will be used to inform the proposed objectives and supporting actions and will be considered in line with our equality objectives.

'by 2020 Hartlepool will be made up of cohesive communities where there is a sense of belonging for all and where people of different backgrounds, circumstances and generations have access to the same opportunities and are able to get along free from discrimination and harassment.'

Procurement

Our Procurement Strategy is aligned with the strategic aims and objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and with other corporate and service based strategies and plans that form elements of our strategic framework. We must make sure public money is spent lawfully and is used to support and encourage equality of opportunity and good community relations.

There are four main aspects to consider in terms of ensuring equality of opportunity in relation to procurement:

- avoidance of discrimination against a provider
- the requirement on a supplier to be in line with our own equality and diversity statement and ensuring compliance with legislation
- avoidance of discrimination against users and potential users of a service, and
- our duty to promote equality.

Procuring officers should ensure that they do not discriminate against providers, who in turn should not discriminate against any of their customers on the grounds of gender, gender reassignment, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity or religious beliefs. The wording of any documentation should not discriminate on these grounds.

We expect providers to:

- operate within employment practices and
- deliver the service or product in a way that is compliant with the legislation and in line with our equal opportunities policies and our duty to promote equality.

Potential providers are therefore provided with a questionnaire about their equal opportunities practice at the selection stage of the Council's tender process. Additionally equality clauses are inserted into the standard Contract Conditions, to which providers must comply.

Procuring officers must consider the impact that the purchase will have on all users or potential users of the product or service, no matter what gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, marriage or civil partnership, race, disability, age, sexual orientation and/or religious beliefs. It must not be more difficult for a person to use the product or receive the service because of these reasons.

'Procuring officers should ensure that they do not discriminate against providers, who in turn should not discriminate against any of their customers on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics.'

The action we will take to improve Equality as an Employer

Monitoring & Setting Objectives

We will assess the effect of new and existing policies and practices. This will allow us to measure the effect of our actions and make sure that they do not discriminate against any group or person.

We will set objectives and take action to meet those objectives.

We will continue to monitor and report our performance in terms of our workforce profile and recruitment statistics and aim, over time, to meet the Equality and Human Rights Commission's expectations in respect of workforce equality reporting.

Positive Action

We recognise that inequalities within society prevent certain groups from competing effectively for jobs. We have developed and continue to explore the further development of positive action schemes to provide relevant training for people in target groups before they apply for jobs.

We have been awarded the two tick symbol by Job Centre Plus as we have made commitments to employ, keep and develop the abilities of disabled staff and we are also a Mindful Employer.

We have entered into a partnership arrangement with Hartlepool College of Further Education to increase the number of Apprenticeship opportunities within the Council.

Employee Development & Training

We have developed training schemes across the council to reinforce our commitment to challenge prejudice and discrimination, and promote equality when providing council services. Through induction, we will make sure that all employees understand our equality policy and their responsibilities. We will make sure that everyone who is responsible for recruiting and managing employees receives appropriate training and guidance on our equality and employment policies and understands their responsibilities.

'We will strive for a workforce that reflects the diversity of the population of Hartlepool.'

Complaints

Discrimination and harassment in the workplace is not acceptable. To directly confront harassment and victimisation, we have developed a dignity at work policy. If an employee or person applying for a job feels that they have been unfairly treated or discriminated against, they can make a complaint in line with the agreed procedures.

'We have been awarded the two tick symbol by Job Centre Plus as we have made commitments to employ, keep and develop the abilities of disabled staff and we are also a Mindful Employer.'

Equality Objectives

Since the first objectives were published in April 2012 the Council has based them on the relevant outcomes and actions from the Council Plan. By doing this the Council hopes to demonstrate that equality and diversity is a core part of what we do as an organisation and not an add on activity. The Council's equality objectives from April 2017 are set out on the following pages:

Equality Objectives – April 2017

Strategic Priority	Key Deliverable
Growing our Economy, Jobs and Skills	Establish pathways to get young people into high value sustainable employment.
	Work with learning providers and employers to deliver a new approach to targeting learning, skills and employment pathways for unemployed adults and parents.
Developing and promoting Hartlepool as a great place to live	Deliver a wider range and choice of supported accommodation for care leavers and vulnerable adults.
Developing new services for people and communities	Increase the availability of high quality care for older people with care and support needs.
	Deliver new opportunities for working age adults with care and support needs to live independent and fulfilling lives.
Building better beginnings and better futures for our children and young people	Launch a programme to improve the emotional wellbeing of children and young people by 2017.
	Deliver the specialist support services children in care need to ensure they are cared for and feel cared about in stable and secure placements and that they are healthy, happy and making good educational progress.
	Implement improvements to the support provided to children with special educational needs and disabilities by 2018.
Providing effective leadership based upon innovation and efficiency	Develop the apprenticeship opportunities provided by the Council.