

Equality and Diversity Policy

June 2012



Barnsley Council

Equality and Diversity Policy

The Council recognises that all individuals have fundamental human rights and welcomes the diversity of the community living, working and learning in the Borough. As a service provider, community leader and major employer the Council is committed to promoting equality and tackling social exclusion and, as such, will integrate equality into all activities, having due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- To promote equality of opportunity and
- To promote good relations between all groups irrespective of their disability, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, trans gender status, age or marital status.

This list is not exhaustive and there are other forms of discrimination that are unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

As an employer:

We believe that if we have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the local population, that feels it is treated equally and fairly and has the opportunity to grow and develop at work will help us to provide the best possible service to the people of Barnsley. Our aim is to be an equal opportunities employer. To do this we recognise that we need to:

- To increase the degree by which workforce diversity reflects the local population.
- To ensure all staff are paid equally for work of equal value.
- To ensure that staff are treated fairly and equally at work, regardless of their background or status.

- To reduce any differentials in pay received by people from different sections of the community.
- To ensure that all staff can work in an environment and culture free from harassment, bullying and discrimination.
- To ensure that all staff have the skills and understanding they need to meet the diverse needs of a diverse population.

When helping to build successful communities:

The Council has an important role to play in helping to build and support successful cohesive communities that have an active role in shaping their services and local neighbourhoods. To do this we need to:

- increase community cohesion and integration in Barnsley.
- increase the engagement of people from diverse communities with the Council's decision-making process.
- increase the number of services that involve people from diverse communities in their equality impact assessments and service planning processes.
- improve the engagement of people from diverse communities with the development and performance monitoring of our corporate Key Equality Priorities and performance on the Equality Standard for Local Government.

As a partner:

The Council works closely with a range of other organisations - partners, contractors and the voluntary sector. When we do so we look to promote equality of opportunity in our relationships with them, and to challenge prejudice and discrimination in the community. We need to:

- To fund services in the private and voluntary sector that meet the diverse needs of the community.
- To increase equality of opportunity for all sections of the community to successfully bid for Council contracts.

- To support development of the Equality Impact Assessment approach within key partner organisations where infrastructure is weaker, such as schools and the voluntary and community sector.

As a provider of services:

We will make our services easier to use and more accessible for everyone in Barnsley. To do this we will:

- Make information about our services more widely available and more accessible.
- Make our buildings more accessible to customers.
- Make contacting the council easier and more accessible to all customers.

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

We are committed to monitoring and measuring our achievements on fairness, equality and diversity.

- The Council's Equality Scheme describes in detail how the above policy principles will be implemented and evaluated.
- Every Service Delivery Plan will outline relevant equality objectives and the outcome of equality impact assessments.
- Each directorate will agree and performance monitor an Equality Action Plan to ensure the Equality Policy is fully implemented.
- We will audit our performance on embedding equality and diversity practice into our mainstream service planning on a regular basis.

Engagement

- This policy and our equality scheme will be consulted upon with employees, partners, service users and members of the public.
- Our equality priorities will be developed following engagement with members of the community, their representatives and community groups.
- We will work with the local community to provide independent challenge to our equality performance.

Responsibility for the Equality Policy and Scheme:

The Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility for equal opportunities within Barnsley Council and will ensure that adequate resources and leadership challenge are available to fully implement the Equality Policy.

The Executive Corporate Equality Group has the responsibility to develop, implement and monitor the Equality Policy and Scheme. This group is chaired by the Borough Secretary, supported by the Equality and Diversity Manager, with every directorate sending a representative at Assistant Director level or above.

Responsibilities of all managers:

- Treat all colleagues and customers equally and fairly and with respect.
- Ensure that all employees have the necessary skills and understanding to meet the needs of Barnsley's diverse population.
- Ensure that equality priorities are embedded within service planning and performance management processes.
- Foster an equalities culture within the council of asking, learning from and working alongside those most affected by inequality and of respect for diversity.
- Articulate equality priorities for the council - advocate for them in all forums (internal and partnership) and ensure they are embedded within the council's planning and performance management process.
- Not to practice any unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination in carrying out operational duties and in dealing with colleagues and customers.

The Responsibility of Council Customers:

All staff and other customers have the right to be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

- Customers should speak to staff and customers politely and do not abuse or threaten them in any way.
- Customers can in return expect that members of staff and other customers treat them with dignity and respect.
- Abuse, harassment, or bullying of staff or customers will not be tolerated by the Council and any allegations are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

Responsibility of all employees:

Employees can expect to be treated fairly and equitably at all times, not discriminated against and feel safe and valued at work. In return they have a responsibility to

- Not abuse, harass, bully or discriminate against any other member of staff.
- Treat your colleagues with politeness, dignity and respect.
- Not practice unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination in carrying out your duties and in dealing with customers.
- Be sensitive to the needs of the diverse community.

Responsibilities of Elected Members:

- The Cabinet Spokesperson for Corporate Services has the portfolio responsibility for equality within Barnsley Council and will ensure that resources and leadership challenge are available to implement the Equality Policy.
- All Cabinet Members are responsible for applying the Equality Policy to the setting of strategic direction and decisions on funding prioritisation. Cabinet Members will ensure that all proposed decisions, policies and strategies within their portfolio have undergone an adequate equality impact assessment.
- Overview & Scrutiny Commission Members will ensure that items on their work programmes and 'called-in' items conform to equality duties.
- Chairs of Regulatory Committees will ensure that all committee decisions are free from unlawful discrimination.
- All Council Members must deal with constituents' enquiries and representations without discrimination. Council Members must comply with the Council's Equality Policy whilst acting on behalf of the Council. Members must behave without harassment or victimisation towards fellow Members, staff or service users and ensure they treat people fairly without discrimination. All Members must attend appropriate equality training.

The Equality Act General Equality Duty

Those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, 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.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty. The Act helpfully explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their 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.
- The Equality Policy and Scheme describe how the Council will meet all aspects of the public sector general equality duty.

The Specific Equality Duties

A public authority is required to:

- Publish sufficient information to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty across its functions. This information must include:
 - information on the effect that its policies and practices have had on people who share a relevant protected characteristic, to demonstrate the extent to which it furthered the aims of the general equality duty for its employees and for others with an interest in the way it performs its functions.
 - Evidence of analysis that they have undertaken to establish whether their policies and practices have (or would) further the aims of the general equality duty.
 - Details of the information that they considered in carrying out this analysis.

- Details of engagement that they undertook with people whom they consider to have an interest in furthering the aims of the general equality duty.
- Prepare and publish equality objectives. This is to include
 - Objectives that it reasonably thinks it should achieve to meet one or more aims of the general equality duty.
 - Details of the engagement that it undertook, in developing its objectives, with people whom it considers to have an interest in furthering the aims of the general equality duty.

The Council's Equality Scheme will outline how these specific equality duties are to be met. It will detail how it will publish information about the equality impact of the Council's policies and decisions and will outline the Council's equality objectives and how these have been determined through consultation and engagement.