



HR Employment Information & Guidance **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 Wyre Forest District Council recognises and celebrates the diverse nature of the people who live, work in and visit the Wyre Forest District and who work for the Council, its partners and contractors.
- 1.2 The purpose of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is to set out the Council's commitment to an inclusive and supportive environment for staff, contractors and visitors that is free from discrimination, where all are able to participate and where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. Equally, the policy sets out the Council's expectations, where each member of staff has a responsibility to adhere to and uphold the policy.
- 1.3 The policy promotes positive attitudes towards inclusivity and valuing diversity. It also seeks to ensure that all who are subject to the Council's policies, practices and procedures are treated fairly and are not treated less favourably on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion and belief
 - Sex and sexual orientation
- 1.4 An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is a key way to implement the way in which the Council seeks to meet both its statutory equality responsibilities and its own aspirations for an inspirational and inclusive working environment.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The Council:
 - is guided by its core value that people will be treated fairly and according to their needs.
 - support and promotes equality of opportunity in employment and service delivery
 - will endeavour to treat all people equally and fairly
 - will seek to eradicate all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of the protected characteristics
 - accepts that it has a unique and influential position in the community as a major employer and quality service provider
 - acknowledges without reservation its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010

2.2 The Council will monitor and review all service delivery plans, policies, practices and procedures and address any areas of inequality in accordance with latest legislation, best practice and the Council's own Performance Management Framework.

Monitoring activity includes:

- identifying possible inequalities associated with relevant policies or functions
- investigating the underlying causes of these inequalities
- taking action to remove any unfairness or disadvantage

3. Scope and Responsibilities

3.1 All Council staff, Agency Workers, contractors and visitors have equalities related responsibilities.

3.2 The Corporate Leadership Team is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Council meets its legal obligations relating to equality
- Ensuring that an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is carried out on all proposed policies and decisions where appropriate

3.3 Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that procedures relating to staff recruitment, selection, career development, discipline and grievance are carried out in accordance with the statutory duties to promote equality and eliminate discrimination
- Fostering a culture in which equality, diversity and inclusion considerations are embedded into their work areas
- Ensuring that staff are encouraged and enabled to reach their full potential
- Identifying appropriate staff development to meet the needs of their respective areas

3.4 Human Resources are responsible for:

- Leading and supporting the Council in creating an inspirational, inclusive and diverse environment
- Ensuring employment practices are consistent with this policy
- Supporting managers in ensuring that procedures relating to staff recruitment, selection, career development, discipline and grievance are carried out in accordance with statutory duties to promote equality and eliminate discrimination
- Providing advice, guidance and support on the application of this policy
- Advising colleagues to address equalities related employment
- Managing the Equality, diversity and Inclusion function

3.5 Employees are responsible for:

- Upholding and implementing the aims of the policy

- Promoting equality of opportunity
- Contributing to a safe and inclusive environment that celebrates diversity

3.6 The portfolio holder and elected members are responsible for:

- Being familiar with the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and understanding the extent to which it has an impact on their role
- Observing and promoting the policy in the performance of their roles and duties
- Ensuring adequate resources are available for the Council to meet its legal responsibilities concerning equality of opportunity
- Contributing to the scrutiny of equality work as required and driving forward change through the relevant Committees, panels or working groups

3.7 Responsibilities regarding Employment

The Council will have consideration for the following:

- be a fair and equal opportunity employer in all areas of employment, including recruitment and selection, and career development, ensuring that individuals are selected and promoted according to their relevant merits and abilities;
- ensure that all employees and elected members are involved with recruitment are appropriately trained to avoid unlawful discrimination;
- ensure that job applicants do not receive less favourable treatment, unless there is a genuine occupational requirement for a restriction being placed on a particular post (This would only be applied when all other employment options had been excluded);
- draw job applicants from the wider labour market to ensure that a diverse range of job seekers is made aware of the opportunities with the Council. This will be achieved by communicating job opportunities to all sections of the community without discriminating or discouraging applications from any particular section;
- make this Policy available to all job applicants and existing employees, Elected Members and relevant organisations;
- take positive action wherever practicable to retain and redeploy existing employees who become disabled or who, on account of changes in personal circumstances, are unable to continue in their existing jobs;
- take all complaints from employees regarding discrimination, victimisation or harassment seriously by ensuring such incidents are investigated thoroughly and promptly. Under our disciplinary procedure breaches of

this policy, including serious acts of harassment, victimisation, discrimination or verbal abuse against employees, clients or members of the public on grounds any protected characteristics may be regarded as gross misconduct and may lead to termination of employment;

- ensure all employees are treated fairly and equally in terms of conditions of employment and contractual rights;
- seek advice from external support programmes, Job Centre Plus in relation to opportunities and services available for people with disabilities;
- ensure its commitment to equality in all aspects of employment, recruitment selection, career development, training and promotion is maintained and that procedures, practices and records are monitored and evaluated accordingly;
- ensure as far as possible that the composition of our workforce reflects that of the local community and to take any steps permitted by law to help disadvantaged and under-represented groups to compete for jobs on a genuine basis of equality;
- ensure that all job applicants and employees receive the help they need to attain their full potential to the benefit of the Council and themselves;
- continually monitor and seek the views of employees from minority groups;
- undertake and maintain monitoring and regular analysis of internal records providing a basis for appropriate action to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- ensure that all employees receive equality and diversity training;
- establish strong links with Trade Unions, managers and employees in order to consult regularly and effectively when employment policy is developed and reviewed.

3.8 Responsibilities regarding service Provision

We will:

- ensure its approach to customer service, quality and equality is relevant to all services and involves all employees who will be appropriately trained to avoid discrimination and stereotyping;
- equip employees with the skills, knowledge and competencies to provide service in a flexible and sensitive manner encouraging good communication between employees and customers;

- increase understanding of the different needs of all people in the community through the development of community profiling and the use of more effective consultation;
- seek to serve all its customers and potential customers equally, fairly and with respect and ensure that its policies and procedures do not discriminate unlawfully against any individual or group of people;
- seek to avoid discrimination when designing, delivering or charging for services;
- ensure that, wherever practicable, all public buildings and premises owned or occupied by the Council have access and other facilities for people with disabilities;
- seek to respond to any special need requirements of any particular groups;
- actively seek the views and opinions of all groups which experience discrimination and disadvantage in matters relating to service planning and delivery;
- work to remove all cultural and linguistic barriers that may confront our customers whose first language is not English;
- ensure that the procurement of goods and services:
 - is undertaken by contractors, suppliers and partners without unlawful discrimination in line with our procurement standards
 - includes all relevant standards and recognised national guidelines
 - positively addresses all equality issues during the tendering and selection procedures
 - is monitored regularly to ensure that its equalities standards are being met;
- As part of our commitment to maintaining and improving our performance we will, where practicable:
 - develop sensitive and appropriate equal opportunity monitoring systems to identify core service take-up by age, ethnicity, disability and gender.
 - develop realistic qualitative and quantitative performance indicators and outcomes which are specific, measurable and time-tabled for service delivery;
 - monitor the customer complaints procedure to identify complaints made by age, disability, ethnicity and gender.

3.9 Responsibilities regarding working with partners and contractors

- In all aspects of partnership working we will encourage partners, from whatever sector, to work with us to support the principles of this equality and diversity policy. Equalities practice within partnerships will be monitored and examples of good practice shared with all partners on a regular basis
- As a major purchaser of goods and services we will operate fair contracting and procurement policies that monitor compliance with equality requirements and will encourage and support contractors to develop best practice in equality

3.10 Responsibilities regarding equality target groups

- We will continue to develop relationships with existing potentially disadvantaged groups which are diverse and dispersed throughout the district. We are committed to making contact and developing relationships with hard to reach groups and organisations representing potentially disadvantaged groups.
- In particular we are committed to identifying groups within the community whose needs are less well met by our services than those of other groups. Having identified such needs we will take steps to address them.

3.11 Responsibilities regarding equal access to information and services

- We are keen to ensure that everyone has access to the information they need at the time that they need it and improving communication is central to this.
- Information to customers is available through our Customer Services Centre in Kidderminster
- Information can be provided by telephone and is available from the Council's website.
- Working in partnership with Worcestershire County Council translation services are available in a range of community languages and other formats:
 - Documents can be converted to larger print
 - Induction loop facilities are available at several buildings used by the public

4. Making a complaint

- 4.1 The Council takes complaints about the services it provides or about the people it employs seriously and has a well-established corporate complaints procedure for

dealing with any type of complaint from members of the public or outside bodies. This procedure is fully accessible to all members of the community.

4.2 In relation to complaints from employees, the Council has developed the following procedures with which to support an employee's concern:

- Grievance Procedure
- Confidential Reporting Policy (Whistle blowing)
- Dignity at Work Policy and Procedure

4.3 All complaints will be properly and fully investigated within an agreed timescale and people who have raised complaints, whether members of the public or employees, will be informed of any conclusions reached.

5. Consultation

5.1 The Council aims to build on its established methods of consultation and remove barriers to participation by providing information to the community in the following ways:

- Customer satisfaction surveys
- Working parties and focus groups
- Road shows
- Citizens Panel
- WyredIn
- Online polls & questionnaires
- Press releases & public notices

5.2 As part of the assessment and policy development process the Council will conduct structured consultation with employees, the community, partners and stakeholder groups.

5.3 The Council will also work to improve its ability to target and consult with under-represented groups in the community.

5.4 Any breach of this policy will be taken seriously and dealt with under the appropriate policies.

6. Legislative Context

6.1 The Policy is in accordance with relevant equalities related legislation, in particular the Equality Act 2010. As part of its responsibilities under the Act, the Council is subject to the public sector equality duty and so must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant

- protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it