

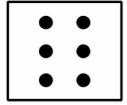


Durham County Council

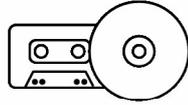
Equality Policy

2017

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format.



Braille



Audio



Large print

العربية Arabic

(中文 (繁體字)) Chinese

اردو Urdu

polski Polish

ਪੰਜਾਬੀ Punjabi

Español Spanish

বাংলা Bengali

हिन्दी Hindi

Deutsch German

Français French

Türkçe Turkish

Melayu Malay

Email: equalities@durham.gov.uk

Telephone: 03000 268019

If you would like to contact the equality team please contact us as follows:

Email: equalities@durham.gov.uk

Post: Equality Office, Durham County Council, County Hall
Durham, DH1 5UF

Telephone: 03000 268019

Background

The **Equality Act 2010** brought together a number of existing laws so that it is easier to use. It sets out the personal characteristics that are protected by the law and the behaviour that is unlawful. The **protected characteristics** under the Act are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation.

Under the Act people are not allowed to **discriminate, harass or victimise** another person because they have any of the protected characteristics. There is also protection against discrimination where someone is perceived to have one of the protected characteristics or where they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.

As a major employer and provider of services Durham County Council is committed to **advancing equality of opportunity** and **providing fair access and treatment** in employment and when delivering or procuring services, or working in partnership.

This policy reinforces our responsibility under the **public sector equality duty** which was created under the Equality Act 2010. It consists of a general equality duty and specific duties.

General Duty

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Specific Duty

- To publish information to demonstrate how we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty, and
- To prepare and publish equality objectives.

The specific duties help us to improve performance on the general duty, by **improving focus and transparency**.

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that discrimination, harassment or victimisation is not tolerated.

Policy statement

Our policy is to treat people fairly, with respect and dignity. We believe that everyone in County Durham deserves excellent public services which take account of their needs and circumstances. As an employer, service provider, partner and community leader we will

ensure that all communities have opportunities to access our services, be involved in decision making and be part of our workforce.

Equality is more than just meeting our legal obligations, we will take action to improve our policies and everyday practice.

Responsibilities

Our policy applies to every elected member, employee, volunteer and any other person or organisation employed by the council to work or to deliver services on its behalf. This includes contractual and commissioning arrangements. The policy applies to all work-related situations including social events and the use of electronic communications and social media.

It is the individual's responsibility to:

- Treat others fairly, with dignity and respect,
- Follow council policies and procedures,
- Ensure documentation, information and activity is lawful,
- Consider reasonable adjustments and other requirements relating to disabled people,
- Challenge discrimination and unfair treatment, reporting it where appropriate,
and
- Attend relevant training and ask for advice where necessary.

All actions, which are intentionally contrary to this policy, will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedure.

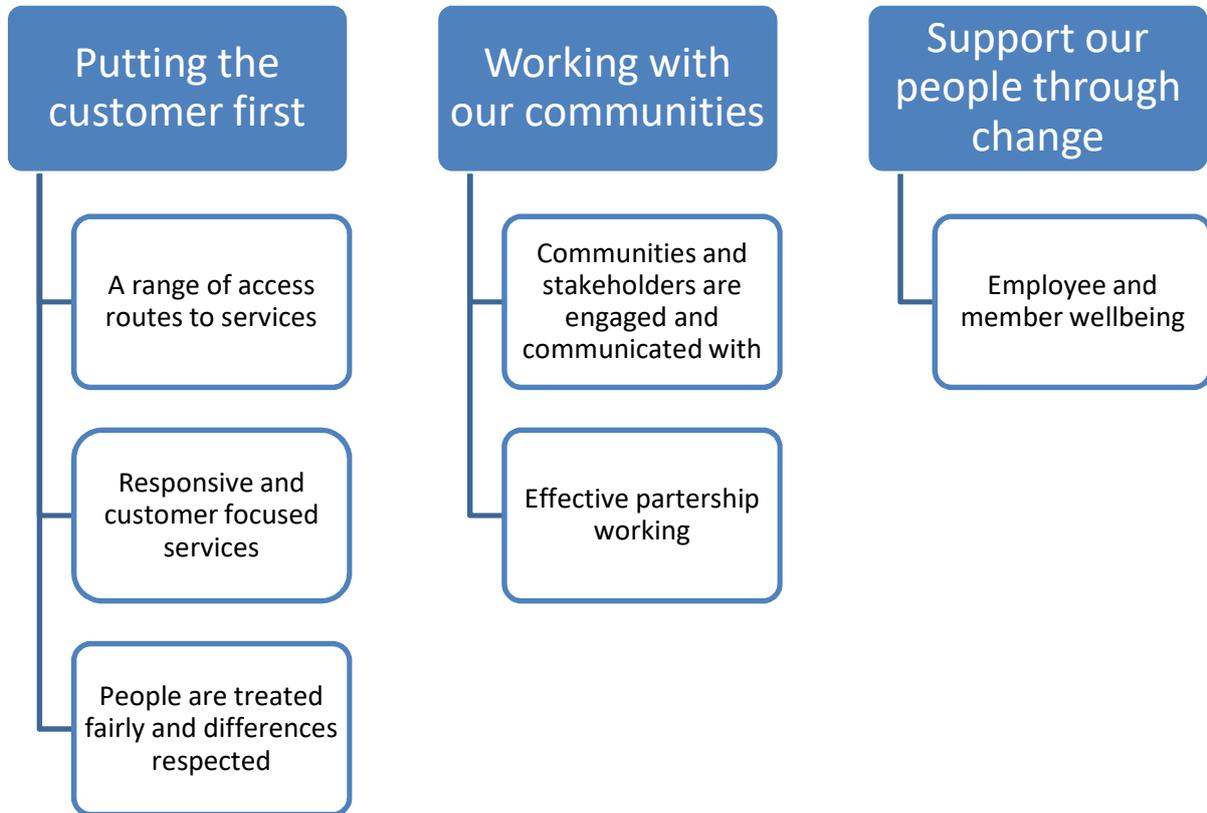
Our commitment

We use a variety of methods to demonstrate and progress our commitment to equality. As part of our specific duty we must develop and deliver equality objectives. We have aligned our equality objectives to the Council and Service plans. These objectives which are based on consultation with local people and Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) are supported by outcomes and actions which are developed annually.

We are committed to integrating equality into mainstream service planning, development, delivery and management. This is also evident through our policy documentation and budgetary decisions and allocation.

Equality Objectives and outcomes

We have founded our three equality objectives; putting the customer first, working with our communities and support our people through change, on the corporate priorities within the Council Plan.



Putting the customer first

Impact Assessment and Equality Analysis

We use a process of impact assessments to support the development of inclusive and responsive policies, procedures and service provision. These are carried out when a new policy, procedure or service is being developed or significantly changed, where a service review is taking place or where a potential inequality has been identified. An assessment includes an analysis of impacts on protected characteristic. This includes all Medium Term Financial Plan savings (MTFP) proposals as well as delegated decisions.

Disabled Access

We are responsible for a significant number of buildings and public spaces throughout the County. We provide a range of services and employment from a large number of these. In order to identify and address areas for improvement, we have developed an

Access Plan process to prioritise where improvements will have the most positive impact on service users, visitors and employees in the most cost effective ways.

Commissioning and Procurement

Effective procurement can drive progress in equality and embed real improvement. Integrating equality into our commissioning and procurement work improves services by making them more appropriate and responsive to the needs of different groups. Equality considerations are embedded in the Corporate Procurement Strategy.

Working with our communities

Community Cohesion

We work closely with a range of agencies including Durham Constabulary under the banner of The Safe Durham Partnership to tackle the underlying causes of crime and behaviour adversely affecting our communities. Our community cohesion toolkit responds to the Government's integration agenda and sets out how the Council will respond to incidents. It acts as a guidance tool for those responding to hate incidents and facilitating community cohesion. We actively continue to raise awareness of equality related cohesion issues and mark specific events such as Holocaust Memorial Day. We have also adopted the working definition of anti-Semitism as set out by International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance¹.

Consultation and Involving others

In order to ensure our services are inclusive and responsive we will involve and consult employees, elected members, trade union, adults and children who use our services, on service changes, including communities and organisations who represent protected groups, e.g. Area Action Partnerships, Disability Partnership, People's Parliament, Gay Advice Durham and Darlington,

Support our people through change

Employee Policies and Practices

As a fair and supportive employer, we will ensure our policies and practices do not discriminate and treat staff with dignity and respect. The principles of Equality are embedded within our employment policies.

Within the Recruitment and Selection policy, we ensure fair recruitment processes which encourage applicants from all groups in the community. This includes our commitment to reasonable adjustments. This takes into consideration the way employment is structured, removing physical barriers and providing specific support. We are required to take positive and proactive steps to prevent, remove or reduce barriers to employment. We

¹ <https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/working-definition-antisemitism>

are a Disability Confident Employer. Disabled job applicants who meet the essential criteria in the person specification are guaranteed an interview.

As an employer we will provide a safe and accessible working environment, creating a culture which is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation. We will monitor our employment procedures to avoid unlawful discrimination and ensure consistent treatment.

All employees will receive fair and transparent pay, reward and employment conditions, as well as options to work flexibly and access to learning and development opportunities.

Monitoring

This policy links to the actions identified within Service plans. These actions will be monitored on a quarterly basis through service plan monitoring and also through the annual update to demonstrate our compliance with the public sector equality duty. We also produce a workforce profile annually.

Complaints

There are a number of ways to report equality issues or complaints:

- Employees can raise issues informally with their line manager or Head of Service. Formal complaints should follow the grievance procedure.
<http://intranet/Pages/Grievance.aspx>
- Councillors can report issues through the member officer protocol or the code of conduct depending on the nature of the complaint.
- Members of the public can use the corporate and statutory complaints procedures.
<http://www.durham.gov.uk/complaints>

We will take prompt action to investigate any complaints. Anyone who has complained will not be treated unfavourably or victimised. However, if a complaint is found to be malicious this will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedure.