

**Appendix 1**



**Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy  
2024 – 2028**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 North West Leicestershire District Council (the Council) prides itself in its proactive approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. This Policy provides a clear and strong direction so that our staff, partners, members, and stakeholders know what to expect from the Council's equality agenda and objectives.

Linked to this Policy is our Equality Action Plan that outlines in detail our Equality Statement, objectives, and actions we will take over the life of this Policy. This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is the Council's public statement of commitment. This document, which the Council refer to as the Policy, has been developed to ensure that we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, respectively.

1.2 The Policy, however, goes much further and contributes to our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion with specific focus on: -

- Reinforcing the Council's responsibility under the Equality Act 2010, and our role as:
  - **Community leaders** through our democratically elected Members working with communities and partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to improve the quality of life for the people within our district.
  - **A service provider**, by providing services and facilities which meet the diverse needs of our residents and people who work in and visit our district.
  - **As an employer**, by being fair in our recruitment, promotion, training and in the development of our staff. By aiming to have a representative workforce that reflects the communities we support and by providing a work environment that is safe, accessible, and free from harassment and discrimination.
- Developing an action plan to help us ensure equality of opportunity across all sections of the community, and our workforce. To ensure our services to all residents are provided fairly and without discrimination. This action plan is created in accordance with the Local Government Association (LGA) Equality Framework.
- Promoting equality and diversity across our staff and among our residents, to ensure the removal of unfair discrimination and disadvantage, harassment, and to foster good relations, in the workplace and between different community groups.
- Educating all staff at all levels to approach their work with an open mind and to offer support and assistance to others.

1.3 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (E, D&I) is a duty that everyone must hold and move forward in a collective manner. The Council, via this Policy and other mechanisms has made a public commitment to E, D&I. To apply this Policy, the Council will ensure that we understand the communities that we serve and those that work for us. The Council follow and adhere to the principals as recommended by the Local Government Association and their Equality Framework, and accordingly has drafted an Equality Action Plan based on these recommendations, data analysis and an understanding of what the key priorities should be. The Council will abide by the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and particularly the General and Specific Equality Duties established by the Act.

## **2. WHAT IS EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION?**

2.1 **Equality** means everyone is treated fairly, with respect and are given good opportunities. The Council realises individual needs are sometimes best met in different ways, but people must not be unfairly discriminated against. The Equality Act 2010 ensures that we must all contribute to creating a positive environment where discriminatory practices and unfair discrimination do not happen. The Council adopts an equitable approach by giving individuals resources according to their needs, so that everyone can fully participate at work and in society. Equality of opportunity, in terms of access to fair and equitable services, is equal treatment and outcomes that meet the needs of the individual.

2.2 **Diversity** refers to the differences that exist between each of us and that we must consider our own unique needs when helping others. This means understanding how people's differences and likenesses can be used for the benefit of the individual, the organisation, and our communities. People with diverse backgrounds and attitudes will bring a variety of ideas and experiences, and a diverse organisation can draw upon these so it can listen to and meet the needs of its employees, customers, and the community it serves.

2.3 **Inclusion** is where those differences are seen as a benefit, and where perspectives and differences are shared.

## **3. DEFINITIONS**

### **EQUALITY ACT 2010**

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unfair discrimination on the grounds of the nine protected characteristics: -

- **Age:** The Act makes discrimination on the grounds of age in employment and education provision unlawful.
- **Disability:** defined as having a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative impact on your ability to do normal daily activities.
- **Sex/Gender:** The Act makes discrimination on the grounds of age in employment and education provision unlawful.
- **Gender Reassignment:** a person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or attributes of sex. Therefore, the individual does not have to be going through with the process but may in fact identify with a particular gender.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership:** The Equality Act 2010 prohibits employers from discriminating against employees because they are legally married or in a civil partnership<sup>12</sup>. Marriage and civil partnership can be between a man and a woman or between partners of the same sex<sup>1</sup>.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- **Race/Ethnicity/Nationality:** refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.
- **Religion or Belief:** religion refers to any religion or lack of religion and belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- **Sexual Orientation:** whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

3.2 It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of any of these nine 'protected characteristics'.

3.3 The Council has recognised that the some vulnerable/disadvantaged groups are not legally covered as a protected characteristic. The Council has chosen to recognise the following as a non-legal protected characteristic. Care Leaver: A care leaver is an adult aged under 25 who has spent time in care as a child (i.e., while under the age of 18). This care could have been approved by the state through a court order or on a voluntary basis. It encompasses various forms of care, such as foster care, residential care (including children's homes), and other arrangements outside the immediate or extended family.

#### 4. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY [PSED]

4.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty consists of a general duty which is supported by specific duties. The general duty requires public sector organisations to have due regard to the need to:-

1. **Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.**  
This means the Council must stop people from being treated unfairly or differently because of one of the 'protected characteristics,' listed in the Equality Act 2010. The council also has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2017, to also publish our Gender Pay Gap report annually.
2. **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**  
This means the Council must do its best to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics and stop any unfair treatment suffered by people because of their protected characteristic(s).
3. **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**  
This means the Council must help people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it, to get on together.

4.2 Having 'due regard' means consciously thinking about the aim of the equality duty as part of decision-making processes. This means consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies, such as, how they function as employers; how they form, evaluate and review Policy ; how they design, deliver and evaluate services; and how they appoint and procure or obtain goods and services from others.

## 5. THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF DISCRIMINATION

5.1 Discrimination can be intentional or unintentional and may occur directly, indirectly, by association, or by perception. There are also two specific types of discrimination that apply only to disability: "discrimination arising from disability" and "failing to make reasonable adjustments" (see [Different types of discrimination under the Equality Act 2010](#)).

5.2 Discrimination is not always obvious and can be subtle and unconscious. This stems from a person's general assumptions about the abilities, interests and characteristics of a particular group that influences how they treat those people (known as "unconscious bias"). Such assumptions or prejudices may cause them to apply requirements or conditions that put those groups at a disadvantage. Examples include steering employees into particular types of work on the basis of stereotypical assumptions without considering the particular attributes and abilities of individuals; recruiting or promoting individuals into particular roles because of assumptions about the reactions or preferences of other employees or clients; and using different standards for different groups of employees to judge performance.

### 5.3 Direct Discrimination

Where you are directly treated less favourably than another person, usually because you hold one of the nine protected characteristics. For example, treating a colleague differently to others because of their age.

#### **5.4 Indirect Discrimination**

This occurs when, for example, a rule is applied fairly to all but in fact, the ability of one group to respond to that rule, is much greater than the ability of another. An example of this might be a rule that everyone should apply for something via the internet. This could exclude the older generation who may not have internet access or computer skills.

#### **5.5 Discrimination by perception**

This refers to discrimination because you believe a person has a protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually have that characteristic. For example, Tom is 45 but looks much younger. Many people assume he is in his mid-20s. He is not allowed to represent his company at an international meeting because the managing director thinks he is too young. Tom has been discriminated against on the perception of a protected characteristic.

#### **5.6 Discrimination by association**

This is the form of discrimination which occurs when one person has a protected characteristic, but another person is treated negatively from knowing them. For example, you could be discriminated against because you have a family member or a friend who has a disability. For example, May works as a project manager and is looking forward to a promised promotion. However, after she tells her boss that her mother, who lives at home, has had a stroke, the promotion is withdrawn. This may be discrimination against May because of her association with a disabled person.

#### **5.7 Positive Discrimination**

This is the opposite end of the scale as this is where you treat someone more favourably because of their protected characteristics. For example, if two employees apply for a promotion (one with no protected characteristic and one with a physical disability). If the manager chooses to promote the worker with the disability over the other employee even if that employee has effectively shown that they are more suitable for the job, this could constitute positive discrimination. Despite the fact it is called "positive" and may look like it is a step in the right direction, it is not and is unfair and unlawful.

#### **5.8 Positive Action**

This refers to any action taken to attempt to put right an imbalance in the makeup of a workforce or deal with existing stereotypes/problems. For example, an organisation may wish to employ more individuals with a disability or those who align themselves as from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, in order to have a more diverse workforce and therefore, encourage people from these protected groups to

apply for vacancies, e.g., disabled people are guaranteed an interview if they meet all the essential criteria.

## **6. OTHER DEFINITIONS**

### **6.1 Human Rights**

Every person in the world has basic human rights and freedoms. Human rights are based on core principles such as dignity, fairness, equality, respect, and independence. They are relevant to day-to-day life and protect people's freedom to control their own lives, effectively take part in decisions made by public authorities which impact upon their rights and get fair and equal services from public authorities.

### **6.2 Harassment and sexual harassment**

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating someone else's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone else.

Sexual harassment is conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; and less favourable treatment related to sex or gender reassignment that occurs because of a rejection of, or submission to, sexual conduct.

### **6.3 Victimisation**

Victimisation is treating another person detrimentally either because that person has made a complaint of discrimination or harassment, or because they have supported someone else who has made such a complaint, for example by giving a witness statement that supports the allegations.

### **6.4 Bullying**

There is no legal definition of bullying. However, the Council regards it as conduct that is offensive, intimidating, malicious, insulting, or an abuse or misuse of power, and usually persistent, that has the effect of undermining, humiliating, or injuring the recipient.

Bullying can be physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct. It is not necessarily face to face and can be done by email, phone calls, online or on social media. Bullying may occur at work or outside work.

If the bullying relates to a person's protected characteristic, it may also constitute harassment and, therefore, will be unlawful.

## **7. OUR COMMITMENT TO E, D&I**



7.1 Equality, diversity, and inclusion in the workplace is not only good practice but makes good business sense. We will create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued. This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the equality, diversity, and inclusion Policy. All staff should understand that they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public:

- Take complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination seriously by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others during the organisation's work activities.
- Make opportunities for training, development, and progress available to all staff.
- Make decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act).
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness and update them and the Policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability in encouraging equality, diversity, and inclusion, and in meeting the aims and commitments set out in the E, D & I Policy.

## **8. OUR ROLE AS LEADERS**

8.1 This Policy assists the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), Team Managers and Team Leaders, to fully meet the aims set out in the Equality Statement and to fully realise the equality objectives of the Council. All supporting documents, codes of practice, legislative information, monitoring and training will be aimed at helping all employees, to implement the Policy effectively, in terms of service delivery and employment practice. These responsibilities are: -

- To provide leadership through CLT who will work with the political leadership in creating an equality and diversity culture within the Council.
- For all employees to embrace the principles of equality of opportunity and apply these to their everyday activities.
- Not to harass, abuse or bully any other employee or customer, on the grounds of a protected characteristics.

- For the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer to provide guidance to staff on equality and diversity law and be pro-active in promoting equality and diversity.

## **9. PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

9.1 The Council collaborates closely with many partners and agencies in the delivery of its functions and services. We are a member of the Leicestershire Equalities Forum (LSEF), which is a group consisting of equality officers from all statutory organisations in Leicestershire. The Forum meets regularly and focuses on tackling issues shared by all members. We are also accredited under the 'Disability Confident Employer' scheme, and currently are awarded level 2 status, which is valid up to 05/06/2025. This accreditation further showcases our commitment to E, D&I, and Inclusion, and ensures that we are continually reviewing our ways of working, collecting data and improving diversity in the workplace so that we can be on track (in the future) to apply for leadership level 3 within the scheme.

## **10. OUR WORKFORCE**

10.1 The Council operates a pay and reward system which is transparent, based on objective criteria and free from bias. All new posts are reviewed, and any existing posts regraded as part of reviews, to ensure equal pay. Through these actions we aim to avoid unfair discrimination in our pay and reward system. Each year we produce information in relation to the characteristics of our workforce which, whilst being a legal requirement, is also useful for workforce planning. We report on Gender pay gap and publish this information annually. This is an important exercise not only because it is a legal requirement, however it is the right thing to do, and allows us as an organisation to further enhance our role of creating a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

10.2 The Council continually collects and monitors workforce data which is characterised by protected characteristic, it must be noted that this is in line with data protection and bound by the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) principals. This data evaluation then determines our equality projects and areas of further prioritisation. It is, however, recognised that staff are only encouraged and not directed to disclose protected characteristics if they so wish, which is usually done via the self-declaration portal. We also use this data to compare it to our demographic information that we collect as part of the Census, to ensure that our workforce is largely representative of the communities that we serve.

10.3 There are a wide range of policies to support people who work for us and future employees. These policies let staff know what is expected from them as employees and what they can expect from the Council as an employer. Equality monitoring starts at the point of application and continues through to minimise any unconscious bias and to help us achieve a workforce that is representative of the district.

10.4 The Council staff are active in promoting and supporting diversity in the workforce. This includes:

- Making sure we are fair in what we pay people, through having a non-discriminatory job evaluation scheme.
- Making sure bullying and harassment does not happen in the workplace.
- Supporting employees in making sure they have a good balance of work life and home life (work-life balance).

10.5 The Council understands the law in respect of reasonable adjustments and our duty as an employer to take such steps as are reasonable to prevent any practice, Policy, physical feature of the workplace or any other arrangements being made, which places a disabled employee or applicant at a disadvantage compared to a non-disabled employee or applicant. The Council will consider disability in advance of a recruitment campaign so that advertising, application forms and assessments, arrangements for interviews, job descriptions and employee specifications, and selection criteria are appropriate and as inclusive as possible.

10.6 The Council will ask applicants at the outset if they require any reasonable adjustments to be made to the recruitment process. These may include [ensuring easy access to the premises for an interview/adapting psychometric tests/replacing psychometric tests with an alternative option/providing an alternative to a telephone interview for a deaf candidate/providing a suitable chair for an interview with a candidate suffering from back problems/list other relevant examples].

10.7 The Council is committed to training its workforce on the importance of E, D&I, and therefore all new starters must attend equality, diversity, and inclusion training as part of their onboarding programme.

Every current employee must attend regular equality, diversity, and inclusion training on at least a three-year basis.

All staff are expected to proactively support our E, D&I initiatives in everything that they do.

## **11. ACCESSIBLE COMMUNICATIONS**

11.1 The Council wants to encourage communication with people from different communities and make sure this is done in a way that prevents exclusion.

The Council will: -

- Talk to people and listen to people in the way they find the easiest and best. We will also help others to do the same.
- Look at ways to raise the profile of equality and diversity through targeted positive communications, equality, and diversity events, either as a Council, or working in partnership with other organisations and government bodies. Invitations and publicity for events will clearly state the appropriate booking systems to request any facilities or services required.
- Continue to provide information upon request in a number of different formats or community languages and offer to go through a document personally with

someone to help them understand it. Alternative formats which may include large print, Braille and audio will be available on request.

- Continue to ensure, where possible that public meetings and events are accessible. This includes providing, upon request and in agreement, alternative formats for written documents, help with using the hearing system, level access, accessible toilets, where possible assist with the provision with transport to and from the venue, and adequate emergency exit procedures.

## 11.2 TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION SERVICE

Translation and Interpretation guidance is available to assist officers and our customers in delivering our services. We have access to a service called Language Line, which is available upon request.

Interpreters (including sign language interpreters) can be provided where we receive prior notification that they are required. Information about our services can be provided in different formats/languages with advanced notice.

## 11.3 COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

Comments and complaints are encouraged from our customers in any form of communication – by email, telephone, in writing or face-to-face.

The Council has formal processes for the management of complaints to ensure customers receive informed and considered responses in circumstances where they are unhappy with our services. The Council recognises that information from complaints can help us to improve services in the future.

The Council's mission is to put customers at the heart of what is done and how it is done, regardless of how they chose to contact us. We will respond positively to customers' views and actively seek to promote opportunities for customers to tell us what they think and for them to influence future service development and delivery.

## 12. EQUALITY MONITORING

12.1 Equality monitoring is looking at the information that is collected about different services and groups of people. This will tell us how well equality and diversity is embedded in the work we do. It is something we think is especially important for understanding our customers. Information about the people who work for us is collected and monitored for the same reason.

This information will be used to: -

- Understand how many people from different protected characteristics are employed by the council
- Understand how many people from different protected characteristics use our services or are not using those services.

- Help understand what diverse groups think about our services and about what can be improved to meet their needs.
- Support service provision, monitor inequalities and demonstrate compliance with legislation.

a generic equality monitoring form has been produced to collect equality and diversity information of service users, residents, and partners, etc.

### **13. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

13.1 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process reflects best practice in the sector and is in place to support any new/amended proposal, policy, service, or function. This shall be achieved by the following:

- Team Leaders and Managers will all be trained in completing Equality Impact Assessments
- Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) documentation with corresponding guidance notes is available to direct the document writer throughout the process.
- There is a question-and-answer sheet that shall provide information as to common queries that were raised throughout the process of creating the new EIA form.
- EIA's are reviewed and monitored closely by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, and advice given.
- EIA's that are completed to a high standard within service departments have the opportunity to allow permission for these to be shared with the staff group. If permission is given, then these are shared.
- Actions arising from equality analysis and assessments will be reflected in Service Plans.

### **14. PUBLISHING THE RESULTS**

14.1 The Council recognises the importance of not only communicating our clear commitment to equality, diversity, and social inclusion but also the importance of keeping local people regularly informed of the progress being made and the outcomes being achieved. This includes opportunities for local people to take part in this work and help contribute to the improvements the council is seeking. To help keep local people informed we will: -

- Share results with selected consultation groups.
- Report to the Corporate Scrutiny Committee annually on progress with the action of this Policy.
- We will publish information on our intranet.
- Produce an end of year report of our progress against the Equality themes which are contained within the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan, and make this available on the Council's website.

- Publish information on the Council's website about the work we do to progress our overall equalities agenda.
- Ensure our customer centre can provide leaflets, documents on Council services and information on new initiatives in community languages upon request.

## **15. CONCLUSION**

15.1 The Policy recognises the constant diversity changes happening across the district and our organisation, and as such the Council is committed to continually reviewing and improving existing structures and practices. There is a firm commitment to provide equality of opportunity, tackling discrimination, harassment, hate and disadvantage and to fostering good relations. The Council is also committed to achieving the highest equality standards in service delivery, decision-making and employment practice.