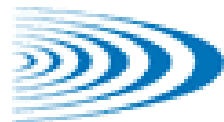


Human Resources Service



Stockton-on-Tees
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Equal Opportunities Policy

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EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT COMPLETED	Oct.09
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1.0 Introduction

Stockton Borough Council is committed to ensuring that its employment practices are fair and consistent, compliant with employment legislation and in line with 'best practice' principles. The Council has a legal responsibility to ensure there is no unlawful discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, faith/belief, gender, race and sexual orientation.

This policy and related procedures applies to all Council staff including:
Chief Executive
Chief Officers
¹staff recruited by and working in schools with a delegated budget.
Employees on probationary service, whether or not extended beyond its originally specified duration.
Employees engaged on a casual basis.

1.1 The Council's Commitment

The Council is committed to the promotion of equality and diversity and ensuring that all its services are fully accessible. We recognise that people may be disadvantaged due to a range of circumstances and we will actively work to engage with all our employees to understand, reduce and ultimately eliminate this disadvantage.

Equality and diversity is embedded in everything the Council does and this is reflected in the Council's Single Equality Scheme. This policy focuses on employment related issues, such as recruitment, retention, employment practices and how the council monitors workforce information.

The Council is one of the largest employers in the borough and has committed itself to the highest standards of equality and diversity in all service areas. The Council is also committed to working towards ensuring that its workforce is reflective of the diversity of the borough's residents. This is achieved by ensuring that effective and appropriate consultation and engagement is undertaken with the diverse communities.

The Council is reviewing all of its HR policies to ensure they fully embrace the spirit of equality and diversity. As part of this the new People Strategy has been fully impact assessed to support the goals contained within it.

The Council is also committed to reviewing the job application process, considering the need for positive action and is working with key stakeholders on this. There is a clear commitment to identify any barriers that may hinder potential applicants from applying for vacancies. A Recruitment and Retention action Plan is in place to support this process.

¹ Schools policies are saved on the Extranet NOT the Intranet

1.2 Leadership and Accountability

Equality and diversity is everyone's responsibility. It is already mainstreamed across the Council and is also embedded within the Customer 1st Programme, thus ensuring that it is an integral part of providing excellent customer service.

1.3 Aims and objectives

A golden thread runs throughout the Council's planning and policy development processes from the Sustainable Community Strategy through to Council wide strategies such as the Single Equality Scheme to Service Improvement Plans. Equality and Diversity is a key part of this golden thread and can be seen throughout our plans and policies. This Equal opportunities policy relates to recruitment, retention and employment practices and supports the Council's overall approach embedded in the Single Equality Scheme.

The overall aim of this policy is to:

- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote equality of access and
- Promote good relations between diverse communities

This policy will influence and be reflected in the council's employment policies and practices, in service delivery and in engagement with partners and communities in the borough.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Set out the Council's approach to equality.
- Ensure that recruitment and selection procedures are fair and equitable.
- Ensure equality of access to development opportunities for all employees and that the principles of equality are embedded in the Council's training programmes
- Ensure that all policies and procedures within the Council are free from discrimination by conducting equality impact assessments.
- Gather and analyse workforce data in relation to equalities
- Support the provision of a working environment where unacceptable behaviour will be challenged e.g. bullying and/or harassment.
- Ensure equality of pay through a fair and transparent job evaluation process.
- Provide links to related policies and procedures

2.0 Responsibilities

2.1 Corporate Management Team (CMT)

Corporate Management Team (CMT) has strategic responsibility for ensuring effective policies and procedures are developed and that managers and

employees have the necessary skills and ensure effective and consistent implementation.

2.2 Corporate Diversity Working Group (CDWG)

The role of the Corporate Diversity Working Group (CDWG) is to provide a strategic lead relating to equality and diversity issues. This group is responsible for setting equalities targets and making decisions strategically.

2.3 Human Resources Strategy Group (HRSG)

This group are responsible for making recommendations, reviewing and approving any policy or procedure before it is released for all to use.

2.4 Employees with line management responsibilities

Line managers/supervisors in the Council have a responsibility to promote equality. This involves:

- Being proactive and leading by example through their own behaviour
- Making sure that they and their staff have equalities training so they understand about equalities legislation, the Council's responsibilities in this area and their own responsibilities.
- Ensuring that their staff have equal opportunities and fair treatment in relation to training, promotion, redeployment, redundancy, disciplinary, grievances or any other employment related issues.
- Ensuring that their services meet the different needs of the community
- Helping the Council to achieve it's targets in relation to the Equality Framework for Local Government

2.5 Employee's responsibilities

All employees have a responsibility to be aware of this policy and to ensure that their behaviour is in line with the Council's Dignity at Work policy.

Employees should also understand the other corporate policies and those that relate to their own area of work and comply with them in a non-discriminatory manner.

If an employee is subject to or witnesses something that is discriminatory based on gender, race, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation, they should report the incident to their line manager in the first instance. Alternatively, the employee can contact Human Resources (HR) for advice. The employee can also contact the Dignity at Work Advisors or look at the Dignity at Work or Grievance policies for reference. Details of these policies can be found on the intranet under 'Handbook of HR policies and procedures'.

The Council also has an [incident reporting procedure](#) this can be used if a person is a victim or a witness of an offensive incident from the public.

2.6 Human Resources Responsibilities

Human Resources (HR) are responsible for developing this policy, providing training and coaching as required and for offering advice and guidance on putting policies and procedures into practice. They will also work in partnership with managers to assist with any appropriate investigations involving a Dignity at Work issue e.g. bullying and/or harassment.

2.7 Trade Unions Responsibility

The Council welcomes the clearly stated support for equality of opportunity from the Trade Unions and recognises the important role the Unions can play in achieving the objectives of this Policy. The Council will consult with the Unions on the implementation of this Policy, including procedures for the regular monitoring and review of its operation.

Trade unions should ensure that their officials are trained in the role of acting as an employee's representative and understand the Equal opportunities policy.

3.0 Equality of Opportunity in Employment

3.1 Recruitment, Selection and Promotion

- The Council will provide equality of opportunity to people who apply for jobs with the council by ensuring that there is no unlawful discrimination in the recruitment and selection procedures.
- Any applicant or employee of the Council will be treated equitably in all aspects of the employment relationship.
- Recruitment, selection and promotion will be determined by following fair and equitable criteria in line with the Code of Practice for Recruitment and Selection.
- All recruitment and selection criteria and documentation will be reviewed periodically to ensure discrimination does not occur.
- Vacancies will be advertised in a way that promotes a diverse workforce. As a minimum, jobs will be advertised on the Council's intranet (except for situations where the Council is required to adhere to employment statutory legislation). Where appropriate, jobs will also be advertised on internet sites, Job Centre+ and e-mailed to different faith and community groups in order to attract a sufficient number of applications from a diverse background.
- All members of the interview panel must have undergone recruitment and selection training or refresher training at regular intervals and safeguarding training as appropriate.
- Applicants will compete in a fair and transparent recruitment process and the successful candidate shall be appointed on merit. Further details are available on the Code of Practice on Recruitment

and Selection available on the intranet under 'Handbook of HR Policies and Procedures'.

- The Council uses the 'Two Ticks Symbol' to indicate to employees and potential employees the Council's commitment to best practice in the employment of disabled people, including interviewing all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy.
- As part of the pre and post recruitment and selection process, reasonable adjustments must be made to ensure that employees who are or have become disabled are supported at work with the appropriate health and safety measures put in place. Please refer to the attendance management policy available on the intranet under 'Handbook of HR Policies and Procedures'.
- Managers should ensure that all employees have an equal opportunity to be considered for higher graded posts when promotion opportunities are made available at work.

3.2 Training, Development & Appraisals

Training and equality of access to training will be provided to enable all employees to perform their jobs effectively and to pursue career developmental opportunities in line with organisational objectives.

[Staff training and development opportunities](#) are regularly communicated and updated by the training department.

Managers, who are responsible for conducting appraisals and identifying development needs of their staff, will ensure that their decisions are based on objective job-related criteria and do not give rise to unfair discrimination.

In addition the Council will:

- Provide training to all employees on equality and diversity as part of the corporate training programme.
- Ensure that Recruitment & Selection training has an element of diversity.
- Ensure that the content of all the training courses reflects the Council's commitment to equality.

3.3 Induction

Equality and diversity forms an integral part of the Council's Induction Programme. All new members of staff have to attend corporate induction where they are made aware of their responsibilities under the Equal Opportunities policy.

3.4 Terms and conditions of service

The Council will ensure that terms and conditions of service are applied fairly to all employees and don't discriminate against individual groups. To this effect, the Council's [Single Status Agreement](#) the Statement of

Written Particulars and the Council's HR policies and procedures have been fully impact assessed.

3.5 Part-time staff and those on maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave

Under the Equal Opportunities policy, it is important to keep those staff who work part-time or are on maternity/paternity/adoption/parental leave informed about any changes in the workplace which may have an impact on their work or unfairly disadvantage them in any way e.g. re-structure within a service, promotion opportunities or training.

3.6 Complaints of bullying and harassment

If any employee thinks that they have been discriminated against during the course of their employment, they should seek advice from the Human Resources (HR) Advisory Service in the first instance. If the individual wants the issue to be dealt with informally then mediation may be an initial step. However, any formal action has to be pursued via the Council's grievance or dignity at work policies as appropriate. Details of the Dignity at Work policy can be found on the intranet under 'Handbook of HR policies and procedures'.

Policies and procedures relating to bullying and harassment are regularly monitored and reviewed by the 6 diversity strands in order to ensure that they don't disproportionately affect any specific group of employees. Where persistent concerns/trends are identified, appropriate measures will be taken to escalate the matter to senior management e.g. head of service.

4.0 Exit Interviews

The Council has recently reviewed its exit interview process. The information obtained via the exit interview process will then be analysed and the data, including all six equality strands will be examined to extrapolate any trends or obvious areas for improvement e.g. mainly women or younger people leaving the Council and the reasons why.

5.0 Equal Pay

The Council implemented its Single Status Agreement on 1st April 2008 which included a new pay and grading structure following a job evaluation exercise. An equalities impact assessment was undertaken by the Council and the trade unions to ensure it was non-discriminatory. An equal pay audit will be undertaken on an annual basis.

6.0 Breach of this policy

Any breach of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy which leads to an act or acts of discrimination against others, may, following an investigation and disciplinary hearing, result in dismissal. Details of the

disciplinary policy can be found on the intranet under 'Handbook of HR Policies and procedures'.

7.0 Single Equality Scheme (SES)

The Single Equality Scheme is the over-arching framework that sets out the strategic direction of the equalities agenda for public sector bodies like the Council. This Equal opportunities policy is developed to complement the scheme from an employment perspective.

The Single Equality Scheme sets out how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council will meet its duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Disability Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006.

It meets the requirement in each piece of legislation to develop a specific Equality Scheme, bringing the three areas together without losing focus on the specific needs of any community.

Though the Council is only required by law at this time to publish a scheme or schemes about race, disability and gender, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's commitment to equality is wider. It also encompasses age, religion and belief and sexual orientation.

Equality and Diversity are embedded in the Council's service planning and delivery processes. Action plans are regularly monitored and updated accordingly in the Service Improvement Plans.

8.0 Equality and Diversity action plan

The Corporate Diversity Team produce three separate action plans to show how the Council will be implementing and carrying out the work necessary to reach each level of the Equality Standard. To date the Council has achieved level 3 of the Equality Standard. [The Single Equality Scheme](#) provides further details.

9.0 Equalities monitoring information

The Council publishes a workforce profile annually. Equalities information is collected regularly on employees and potential employees via:

- Regular data matching on employee data held by the authority
- Equal opportunity forms (Equal Opportunities Monitoring Forms) issued with application forms for jobs within the council
- Employee Audits to ensure employee information held is accurate and up to date.
- Recruitment, retention and exit data

This information is analysed at least annually to inform the Council of:

- The ethnic breakdown of the workforce

- The percentage of the workforce which considers themselves to have a disability
- The age profile of the workforce
- The gender profile of the workforce
- The pay profile of employees by ethnicity, age, gender and disability
- The ethnicity, age, gender and disability profile of those applying to work in the Council compared to those appointed and of those who leave the council

All information is broken down into service areas as well as being available Council wide. There is a commitment to interrogating data linked with for example training, length of service, promotion, reasons for resignation and disciplinary action.

The Council is seeking ways to improve the data collection and analysis to include areas such as the impact of the absence management policy on different groups of staff by the 6 diversity strands. In addition, the Council regularly carry out staff surveys and has developed two staff forums to help understand the experiences of minority groups and those with disabilities of working within the Council. Information Technology (IT) systems are in place to allow accurate processing of this data and build up a good quality workforce profile.

In relation to recruitment and selection, application forms received and appointments made are all monitored by the 6 diversity strands. To obtain the required information candidates are voluntarily asked to complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form. This is included with all application forms. When completed application forms are returned, the monitoring forms are separated from the application forms to ensure that the information does not in any way influence the short-listing process. The Council received an excellent return of 90% for the period April 2006 to March 2007.

In addition, to ensure that the workforce is reflective of the population of the borough, research is being carried out to look at the ways different groups of people access and search for jobs. As a result of this, a recruitment engagement and retention action plan has been developed looking at recruitment exercises that appeal to all sections of the community.

10.0 The Impact Assessment of Policies

The Council is committed to ensuring that all adverse impact assessments within policies, procedures, and practices are removed. To this effect, the Council carry out comprehensive equality impact assessments on all policies and procedures in all service areas. Equality impact assessments aim to ensure that no unidentified barriers exist and that equality and diversity issues are identified and subsequently addressed.

11.0 Further information

Copies of this policy can be made freely available in other languages, Braille, large print and tape version, on video in British Sign language, as a printed document or in an electronic format upon request. This policy is also available on the intranet.

12.0 Related policies and procedures

Codes of Practice and Equality related policies:

[Disability Discrimination Act](#)

[Sex Equality](#)

[Aids and HIV Policy](#)

[Racial Equality](#)

Avoidance of Age Discrimination

[Religion and Belief Equality](#)

[Sexual Orientation Equality](#)

[Single Equality Scheme](#)

[Diversity](#)

[Dignity at Work Policy](#)

13.0 Main Legislation

Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005

Employment Equality Act 1998

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations 2005

Employment Equality (sexual orientation) Regulations 2003

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

Equality Act 2006

Equal Pay Act 1970

Equality Standard for Local Government

Gender Recognition Act 2004

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Race Equality Duty

Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006

Race Relations (Amendment) act 2000

Sex Discrimination (Gender reassignment) regulations 1999

14.0 Monitoring and review of this policy

This policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis by Human Resources to ensure that it is being applied fairly and consistently throughout the Council. The policy will be reviewed annually to reflect any changes in responsibilities and/or changes in legislation.