

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Policy Statement

West Lindsey District Council values all of its employees, councillors and residents and recognises the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion. It aims to achieve this by ensuring equality of opportunity and valuing the strength of diversity.

The council will promote equal treatment in accordance with legislation and will strive to provide an environment free of prejudice and unlawful discrimination. Senior management will be responsible for ensuring that this is understood and adhered to by all employees of the council.

We work to the following principles:

- We recognise nine main equality strands as recognised in UK law, giving all equal importance. These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- We will recognise and treat people with the protected characteristic of gender reassignment according to the gender in which they present unless it is necessary, in exceptional circumstances, to use the services and employment exceptions as a proportionate means to achieve a legitimate aim in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- We aim to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different and diverse communities.
- We support the progressive approach of promoting good relations between different groups in order to tackle prejudice and end discrimination and apply this to all equality strands.
- We are committed to developing and promoting an anti-discriminatory environment within the Council and City as a whole and will reflect this in our policies and practices.
- We are committed to improving our equalities practice at corporate, departmental, service and individual levels throughout the council and want to maintain a positive and inclusive workplace culture that values all employees equally.
- We aim to identify and eliminate barriers in our own systems and procedures, training staff and managers to enable them to help make this happen.
- We will actively engage with the local community through communication and consultation to ensure that our services meet the needs of and are fully accessible to our diverse population.
- We recognise the value of an energetic and creative voluntary/community sector and will work with groups, individuals and organisations to provide culturally specific services, with equalities firmly embedded in those relationships and projects.

- We will ensure a commitment to equalities and diversity in our commissioning and procurement arrangements and expect suppliers and contractors to fully comply with this equalities and diversity policy.
- We encourage real participation in local democracy and representation on various bodies and in our processes, from people who may normally feel excluded from decision-making processes.
- We will comply with all our legal obligations and follow best practice guidance.

Scope of Policy

All Councillors, employees and others who work on behalf of the council are expected to carry out their responsibilities under this policy and to follow relevant policies and procedures. All employees have a role to play in ensuring fairness towards colleagues and to all sectors of the community we serve.

This policy applies to all aspects of the Council's functions including:

- Provision of services
- Commissioning and purchasing of goods and services
- Recruitment, employment, training and development of staff
- Grants to voluntary and community organisations
- Landlord functions in respect of housing and other property
- Exercise of statutory powers and responsibilities
- Partnerships with other organisations
- Community involvement
- Consultation with local people
- Promotion and publicity

Any breach of this policy by employees may result in action being taken under the Disciplinary Policy. Volunteers and contractors may be excluded from further involvement with provision of council services.

Valuing our Employees – As an Employer

The Council aims to provide a safe and accessible working environment for existing and potential employees, one that is free from harassment and discrimination, where individuals' values, beliefs, identities and cultures are respected. All Council employees are responsible for complying with this policy and must follow it as part of their conditions of service.

Council staff must not discriminate against anyone, persuade another employee to discriminate, tolerate or condone discriminatory practices, harass or abuse other employees or members of the public – for any reason. In return we expect our staff to be treated with respect and we will not tolerate discriminatory or abusive behaviour towards our staff from members of the public.

The Working Environment:

- We aspire to being an employer for whom local people will want to work.
- We have a staff code of conduct in order to ensure we act professionally and treat others with dignity and respect.
- We run equality and diversity training for staff, including as part of our induction training for all new starters.
- We ensure that we consider individuals' needs and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate in order to remove barriers for disabled people and resolve issues relating to disability.
- We will implement and review our policies to support the health and wellbeing of our staff.
- We take action to protect employees who are at risk of violence while carrying out their duties.
- We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults. Staff are aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- We have a domestic abuse policy to ensure that every employee who is experiencing or has experienced domestic abuse has the right to raise the issue with their employer in the knowledge that we will treat the matter effectively, sympathetically and confidentially.
- Where there is demand for them, we facilitate and support staff networks for those from minority groups or those who face disadvantage or discrimination in society.

Recruitment practices and career development:

- We aim to eliminate any unfair or unlawful bias in our pay systems and practice that impact on pay. We believe that all employees should receive equal pay for the same or broadly similar work, for work rated as equivalent and for work of equal value.
- We aim to make sure that advertised jobs with the council are accessible to all sections of the community, and that our recruitment policies and practices do not indirectly discriminate against any equality groups.
- We promote opportunities to ensure that not only is the Council's workforce representative of the local community, but that this representation is also reflected across all levels and grades.
- We are a Disability Confident employer and are committed to recruiting, retaining and supporting disabled employees. The Council aims to remove barriers, resolve issues relating to disability and consider individual needs. This includes taking positive steps towards promoting equality of opportunity, inclusion for all and promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people.

Valuing our Customers - Delivering Services

It is our aim that:

- Service users receive fair, sensitive and equal treatment when accessing services, and are treated with dignity and respect.
- Services are relevant and responsive to the changing and diverse needs of our local population, and are delivered without discrimination, prejudice or bias.
- Services, buildings and information are fully accessible, particularly to those groups or individuals who face disadvantage or discrimination.
- We provide clear and understandable information about services and policies in accessible formats and languages.
- All external contracts comply with the council's equality policy.
- Service users are aware of their rights and entitlements when receiving services.
- We will ensure that all job applicants, employees and service users have access to this policy.

Training, Communications and Resources

We provide equality and diversity training for staff and managers including mandatory equalities training within induction programmes for new staff.

Consultation and Involvement

The Council undertakes regular consultation with service users to ensure that the views of all communities are heard.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

EIAs are a mechanism to equality check council functions and policies to ensure they do not discriminate or cause any adverse impact relating to equalities and diversity. The Council will undertake EIAs on all relevant policies and functions.

Monitoring

Monitoring is an essential and integral element of the Council's equalities performance and is a requirement of the revised Equality Standard. We also monitor our services to meet the specific duties as set out in The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, which support the general equality duty of the PSED.

Legislation

We are committed to complying fully with our legal obligations under equality laws and guidance, and to responding to these speedily and thoroughly. The main UK law relating to equality and diversity is the Equality Act 2010.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act brought together all the previously existing strands of equality and discrimination legislation, with the aim of clarifying existing law and extending it to cover some anomalies in existing discrimination law.

The nine main pieces of legislation that have merged are:

- The Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- The Equality Act 2006, Part 2
- The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

For full information on the Equality Act see:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010)

The broad purpose of the equality duty is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public authorities. 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 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.

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