

Great Aycliffe Town Council



EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY & CODE OF PRACTICE

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EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY & CODE OF PRACTICE

Introduction

- 1 Great Aycliffe Town Council values the diversity of the community we serve. We therefore strive to ensure that our services reflect the needs of all people within the community. All individuals can expect to receive equal access to employment and our services.
- 2 The Council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in employment by treating the diverse range of employees in a fair and equitable manner and that we do not unfairly discriminate against any job applicant or existing employee.
- 3 An Equality and Diversity Policy has benefits for employers, as well as responsibilities, as detailed below.
 - Fair treatment in all aspects of employment.
 - Right to raise a grievance if employees feel they have been discriminated against.
 - Employees are responsible within the policy for providing equal opportunities to both staff and members of the public.
- 4 This policy does not give contractual rights to individual employees. The Council reserves the right to alter any of its terms at any time although you will be notified in writing of any changes.

Our Commitment under this Equality & Diversity Framework is:

- 5 **As an employer we will:**
 - Ensure that our recruitment and selection procedures are fair and equitable.
 - Train all employees who participate in recruitment.
 - Monitor our workforce.
 - Make reasonable adjustments to the workplace to minimise barriers to employment faced by disabled people.
 - Consult with employees regarding the development of this strategy.
 - Provide a working environment where harassment and bullying is unacceptable behaviour which will be challenged.
- 6 **As a Service Provider we will:**
 - Minimise the barriers faced by people using our buildings and facilities.
 - Train all staff to recognise the diverse needs of the people we serve.
 - Produce a range of information about our services and make that information available in various formats, if requested.
 - Provide a mechanism through our Comments & Complaints procedures for employees and service users to express their views about our services.

Who does the policy and code of practice apply to?

- 7 This policy and code of practice covers all employees, including part-time workers, agency workers, contractors, job applicants, service users and Elected Members.
- 8 The principles set out in the policy apply:
 - In the workplace
 - Outside the workplace in a work-related context, such as on business trips, customer supplier events or work-related social events and at any time while a member of staff is wearing a work uniform.

Equality Principles

- 9 There should be no discrimination, whether direct or indirect, because of any of the protected characteristics set out in the Council's statement of principle on equal opportunities contained above. The types of discrimination that are prohibited are explained below.

Discrimination may occur in the following terms

Direct discrimination

- 10 Occurs when someone is treated worse than someone else just because of a protected characteristic. For example, it would be direct discrimination if a manager excludes an employee from a training course just because of that person's sexuality.
- 11 It is also direct discrimination when someone is treated worse than someone else because they associate with someone with a protected characteristic or because they are perceived to have a protected characteristic. For example, it would be direct discrimination if an employee ostracised a colleague because of the colleague's flatmate's sexual preference or because he thinks the colleague is too religious.

Indirect discrimination

- 12 Occurs when an apparently neutral practice or requirement disproportionately disadvantages one group and cannot be justified by the needs of the business. For example, imposing a requirement that job applicants must speak fluent English disproportionately disadvantages non-English groups and would be unlawful unless it could be justified on genuine business grounds.
- 13 It is also discrimination when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected to their disability and this cannot be justified by the needs of the business or when the business fails to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person.

Victimisation

- 14 Is treating someone less favourably because they have asserted their right not to be discriminated against because of a protected characteristic. An example of this would be an employee claiming that they had been discriminated on the grounds of their disability and then their manager deciding when they left not to give them a reference because they had claimed disability discrimination.

Harassment

- 15 Is unwanted conduct, related to a protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for someone or violating their dignity. Harassment may also be of a sexual nature or may occur because someone has harassed the victim and the victim either rejects or submits to it and, because of that rejection or submission, that person treats the victim less favourably. More information on what can constitute harassment is set out in the Council's bullying and harassment policy.

Disability discrimination

- 16 Includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.

Responsibility

- 17 All employees and Elected Members of the Council are expected to treat each other and members of the public equally and with respect regardless of – Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage & Civil Partnership; Pregnancy & Maternity; Race; Religion & Belief; Sex or Sexual Orientation.
- 18 The Town Clerk and Service Managers will be responsible for ensuring this policy is adhered to.

Code of Practice - Purpose

- 19 The purpose of this Policy and Code of Practice is to give practical guidance to promote equality of opportunity within the Council for all employees and potential employees in accordance with the principles set out within the document and in the provision of services. The Code also gives advice on the initial measures which need to be taken to achieve equality of opportunity and shows the close link between equal opportunities and good employment practice and fair service provision.
- 20 This Code does not seek to cover all circumstances at this stage. It will be expanded and developed as necessary as the Council identifies areas of concern and will be amended to form a comprehensive guide.

Promotion and Training

- 21 The Council is committed to the on-going training and development of its employees. The principles of equality and fairness must be applied in considering training programmes for individuals and teams within the Organisation.
- 22 Promotion and training decisions will be made on the basis of merit. We will not unlawfully discriminate against any employee in making promotion or training decisions. We believe all employees should have an equal opportunity to progress and develop.
- 23 We will advertise promotion and transfer opportunities widely, including deputising opportunities and secondments which could lead to permanent promotion.

Complaints Procedure

- 24 Internal and external job applicants who think that they have been unfairly treated during the recruitment and selection process should direct their complaints to the Town Clerk, who will initiate and monitor appropriate action.
- 25 The provisions of this policy will be covered by the Council's established Discipline, Grievance and Comments and Complaints procedures.
- 26 Employees who feel that they have been discriminated against in relation to recruitment, promotion, training opportunities or any other employment terms on the grounds of sex, race, religion, marital status, age or disability should pursue their complaint through the Council's Grievance Procedure. During this process, employees will retain their individual statutory rights should they wish to pursue the complaint further.
- 27 Any employee who commits an act of discrimination, bullying or personal harassment will be liable to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Provision of Services to the Community

- 28 Provision of services to the community will be based on principles of fairness and accessibility for all sections of the community.
- 29 The Council will seek to ensure that all its services are publicised widely and that, as far as reasonably possible, the timing of events and access to facilities and buildings are designed to ensure that minority groups are not discriminated against.
- 30 The Council will seek to consult the community and the community's representatives wherever possible when it proposes changes to its service.

Monitoring

- 31 Monitoring systems will be developed and maintained by the Town Clerk and periodic reports will be presented to the appropriate Committee.

Dealing with abuses of the policy

- 32 Employees who attempt to abuse this policy may face disciplinary action.

Recruitment and Selection

- 33 The Council aim to ensure that job requirements and job selection criteria are clear and based on only what is required to get the job done effectively. The Council will avoid making stereotypical assumptions based on protected characteristics about who is able to do a particular job.
- 34 The Council aim to ensure that no job applicant is placed at a disadvantage by practices or requirements which disproportionately disadvantage protected groups and which are not justified by the demands of the job.

Disabled Applicants

- 35 The Council is a Disability Symbol User and will guarantee an interview to a disabled applicant who meets the essential job/person specification requirements. Applicants must have the opportunity for a fair interview and must be assessed on the basis of their ability, not their disability.

Terms and Conditions of Service

- 36 Any local agreements and the implementation of National and Local Conditions of Service will be applied fairly to all employees.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENT

Great Aycliffe Town Council is fully committed to equality of opportunity in employment and in the way we deliver our services.

We recognise that it is essential to employ the best people to deliver high quality services to our clients and as such we will ensure that prejudice, stereotypes and irrelevant factors are not used to exclude potential candidates for jobs within the Council or to prevent people from doing their jobs to the best of their ability.

We also recognise that equality is part of achieving efficiency, effectiveness and value for money in the way we use resources, including the way we recruit, employ and manage. It is therefore a key element of our core vision, within our Corporate Plan to ensure that all employees are valued equally, and equality practices become integral to the way we work throughout the Council.

This Policy therefore seeks to:

- Enhance and promote high quality services which are responsive to the needs of service users, partners and stakeholders.
- Assist in creating a productive and prejudice free working environment which treats all employees fairly and with respect.
- Demonstrate and promote a commitment to equality by challenging discrimination and valuing diversity amongst employees.
- Improve the motivation, performance, skills and morale of the workforce.

We acknowledge that equal opportunity is the responsibility of every employee within the Council, particularly those who have line management responsibility in the workplace.

The Council's commitment to equality of opportunity will ensure that no potential or current employee or anyone using our services will receive less favourable treatment because of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage & Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy & Maternity
- Race
- Religion & Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

All employees will be made fully aware of this Policy and without exception must adhere to its requirements. Any employee who feels that they have grounds for complaint in relation to discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation has the right to pursue their complaint through the relevant internal policies and procedures.