

WDC Equality & Diversity Policy Statement

1. Introduction

This policy statement sets out Warwick District Council's (WDC) vision and commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all, including equality of access to those services that we provide and how we support our staff internally. In serving our community and in valuing the contribution of our workforce, we aim to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of the population.

We recognise that Warwick District is becoming an increasingly diverse community and accept that discrimination is a major barrier to a fair and just society. We acknowledge that there are some people who are prevented from taking part fully in the life of our community for a variety of reasons. This may include unfair treatment and exclusion, on the basis of one or more of the following factors: age, race, sex, gender re-assignment, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, or some other personal characteristic or circumstance. We recognise that discrimination affects people in complex ways and that other forms of discrimination exist that have not been specifically mentioned in this document.

2. Our Commitment

The District Council commits itself to the general principles of fairness and equality. We seek to apply these principles by challenging and eliminating discrimination where it exists.

As an indication of our commitment, our 'Equality Objectives' identifies our core purpose for the future this is to:

- Ensure that all our customers are able to access our services and facilities efficiently and effectively, internally for staff and externally for customers
- Promote equality through improving the quality of equality information held and used by the council
- Promote equality through engagement between the council, communities, customers, groups and individuals
- Promote equality through better understanding of our workforce / potential workforce and be seen as a good employer

Central to these aims is our commitment towards ensuring;

- Our communities and individuals are safe and protected from harm and are able to remain independent for longer
- The health and wellbeing of all in Warwick District is protected
- Our economy is vibrant, residents have access to jobs, training and skills development externally and internally training is made available to employees
- Warwick District communities are supported by excellent communications and transport infrastructure
- Resources and services are targeted effectively and efficiently whether delivered by the local authority, commissioned or in partnership
- Joint negotiations with Warwick District Councils recognised Trade Unions in respect of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Cons) Act 1992

Equality and diversity is embedded into the fabric of this statement and is integral to the planned outcomes, ensuring equality of opportunity for all.

3. The Legal Framework

The Equality Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of 'protected characteristics' as follows:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation and
- Marriage and civil partnership (currently this only applies in terms of employment – not service delivery)

The Equality Act also introduces a **Public Sector Equality Duty** on all public authorities. In fulfilling this duty Warwick District Council in all its functions must have due regard to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups and
- foster good relations between different groups

The District Council will in all its decision making, policy setting and service delivery have due regard and ensure equalities is integrated into our day-to-day work and that we positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations.

4. Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when a person or group of people are treated less favourably than others. Discrimination of this kind can be direct, indirect, intentional or unintentional, and can be enacted by individuals, groups or institutions.

We acknowledge that discrimination can occur at both an institutional level, (where prejudices can become embedded within organisations through policies, practices, procedures and criteria for decision making) and at an individual level, (where a person may hold negative attitudes about other people or groups). Either of these could result in inappropriate discriminatory behaviour or outcomes, which we consider to be unacceptable.

5. Achieving Equality and Valuing Diversity

To achieve our equality and diversity aims we will:

- Implement Warwick District Council's Equality Objectives
- Review, audit and report progress annually on our equality and diversity work

- Work with our partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to ensure the best outcomes for the people of Warwick District Council
- Positively promote equality of opportunity within Warwick District Council as part of the council's community leadership role
- Provide appropriate training and development in equality and diversity issues for staff and councillors
- Support our modern and diverse workforce, that is reflective of the community it serves

6. Equality and Diversity in Service Provision

We will aim to:

- Provide appropriate, accessible and effective services and facilities to all sections of the community
- Challenge, review and monitor our services, working practices and resource allocations to ensure that they do not discriminate, and identify where improvements can be made
- Ensure that all employees understand what equality in service provision means
- Ensure that all service users have equal access to our Corporate Complaints Procedure by providing it in a variety of formats
- Offer inclusive and accessible services and advice in person, via telephone or online channels
- Improve resident satisfaction with services and their role in shaping services, through inclusive engagement and consultation

7. Equality and Diversity in Procurement and Contracting

We will ensure that our procurement and contracting practices fulfil our current equalities duties, and that they will implement the corporate Equality Objectives by:

- Ensuring that contractors, suppliers, volunteers and partners are aware of the authority's position on equality and understand their obligation to provide services that are free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- Making sure that our selection and tendering processes address and include equality considerations
- Providing guidance for relevant staff in equality issues for procurement

8. Equality and Diversity at Work

We as a major local employer have a key role to play in tackling inequality and discrimination. In order to ensure that equality underpins all aspects of our employment policy and practice, we will aim to:

- Eliminate unfair treatment and discrimination through human resource policies and activities
- Provide appropriate training and development opportunities to all staff
- Ensure that employees receive fair and equal treatment in relation to their employment, regardless of whether they are full time, part time or temporary

- Recognise that employees have the right to work in a supportive, safe and harassment-free environment. Any allegations of discrimination, victimisation or harassment will be dealt with through the normal disciplinary process
- Wherever possible, make reasonable adjustments to enable the employment and redeployment of staff with disabilities
- Ensure employees are aware of their personal responsibility to follow the Dignity at Work Policy and support this Equality and Diversity Policy Statement
- Further detail of our employment policies in relation to equality is set out on our vacancies pages on the internet and intranet.

9. Consultation

We will consult with a wide range of individuals, partners and community representatives in order to make appropriate decisions in relation to the range and accessibility of the services we provide. Wherever possible, we will attempt to identify and make contact with those individuals or groups who are perceived as disadvantaged or marginalised within the community, and who might not otherwise be able to get involved in the normal consultation process.

10. Monitoring and Measuring Progress

We will review, monitor and evaluate all policies, procedures and practices, both in service delivery and employment, from an equality perspective periodically, to ensure that they conform with legislative and other external requirements.

Where we ask employees and service users to provide us with personal information, this will only be used to improve access to and the quality of the services we provide. In order to succeed in this, we require the co-operation and understanding of our staff and service users.

11. How to Make a Complaint

We regard comments and complaints as an opportunity to examine the quality of our services, and to proactively address the issues that have been raised.

If a service user or resident has a complaint against the District Council in respect of the services we provide, they can exercise their right to complain through the Complaints Procedure. This can include a complaint of a discriminatory nature. A copy of the procedure is available on request or alternatively, it can be found on our web site.

If a member of staff feels that he or she has been discriminated against, or victimised/harassed by a colleague or service user, they should, in the first instance, consult the Dignity at Work Policy. Any allegations of this nature will be taken very seriously and investigated.

12. Our Commitment to Dignity at Work?

In line with this policy Warwick District has embedded commitment to maintaining dignity at work for all employees and recognises the need to use both policies where needed together.

Warwick District Council is committed to maintaining a workplace that encourages and supports the right to dignity at work and all employees are expected to respect the rights of individuals to:

- Dignity in their working life
- Be treated fairly
- Be respected for their individuality and diversity

This approach will make a cohesive commitment to the public and our employees.

13. Our Commitment to Equality Impact Assessment (EIAs)

It is good practice and necessary if we are to continue delivering inclusive Council services and to deliver the Council's ambitious equalities agenda.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's) will help us drive forward the equalities agenda locally and with our partners. The benefits of impact assessments include:

- Helping to identify whether we are excluding certain groups from our policies/ services
- Helping to identify any unmet need and rectify for those with protected characteristics
- Helping to mainstream Equality & Diversity into our work
- Helping to improve our overall service delivery
- Helping us to target resources more effectively

Under the General duty of the Public Sector Equality Duty April 2011, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct
- Advance equality of opportunity (remove or minimise disadvantage; meet people's needs; take account of disabilities).
- Foster good relations between people (tackle prejudice and promote understanding).