

Greenwich Council's Equality Policy



Introduction

We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity, good community relations, and to tackling all forms of discrimination in Greenwich through the Council's roles as service provider and commissioner, employer and community leader. We will work with our partners in the private, public and community sectors to achieve our objectives. We believe that the diversity of Greenwich is one of our greatest assets and should be celebrated and valued.

Our commitment to equality expressed in the Greenwich Strategy and our 'Vision For The Borough' will help to ensure that all residents benefit from the long term plans to make Greenwich a better place to live, work, learn and visit. Our commitment is also embedded in our Management Values which emphasise the value we place on our diverse workforce. Equality considerations are a fundamental aspect of our Best Value Reviews and help to ensure they are mainstreamed into all our services. This Policy will also help us to meet the equality objectives included in the Greenwich Social Inclusion and Justice Strategy.

The Equality Policy forms the basis of our commitment to the Equality Standard for Local Government which we adopted in October 2002.

The Standard will:

- provide a systematic framework for mainstreaming equality
- help us to meet our obligations under the law
- integrate policies and objectives with Best Value
- encourage anti-discrimination practice appropriate to Greenwich
- provide a basis for tackling all forms of institutionalised discrimination
- provide a framework for improving performance over time

There are five levels to the Standard which will be monitored by the Audit Commission. The Council aims to achieve the highest level.

This Policy sets out our commitments.

The objectives within the Policy will be implemented through a Corporate Equality Plan setting out clear targets and timetables for achieving them.

The Policy replaces the Strategic Equalities Vision for Greenwich 1997. Its scope is more focused than that of the Vision in order to ensure that the more exacting requirements of the Equality Standard are fully met.

Timescale

The Policy is effective from July 2003. It will be reviewed annually and amended as necessary to reflect any changes in legislation, codes of practice, or special issues of local concern.

Scope

The Policy applies specifically to discrimination, equality of opportunity and the promotion of good community relations in respect of:

- age
- disability
- ethnicity, race, colour and national origin
- gender
- religion
- sexual orientation

The Policy applies to all aspects of the Council's functions including:

- service provision
- commissioning and purchasing of goods and services
- recruitment, employment, training and staff development
- 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
- education, promotion and publicity
- planning

The Policy applies at all levels of the Council's activities including corporate, departmental, service and individual.

Aims

The Council aims to:

- eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- celebrate and value diversity
- promote community cohesion

Objectives

Service Delivery

- Ensure that the allocation of financial resources takes into account equality considerations.
- Ensure that equality considerations are integrated into all relevant areas of mainstream service planning, management and delivery.
- Improve the Council's awareness and understanding of the needs of different groups in the borough through effective community profiling, consultation, liaison and involvement.
- Ensure that Council services are accessible, and are delivered appropriately and sensitively in order to facilitate equality of treatment.
- Ensure that information about services is offered in appropriate formats and languages.
- Ensure that the Council's commissioning, purchasing and grant giving policies and procedures promote equality of opportunity.
- Continually review existing services to assess their impact on the groups covered by the Policy.
- Improve the monitoring of service take up and use.
- Assess the impact of proposed new policies and proposals to significantly change existing policies.
- Train staff to ensure that they are aware of the Policy and are able to apply it to their own area of work.

Employment

- Promote opportunities to ensure that the Council's workforce is diverse and representative of the local community.
- Ensure that Council jobs are accessible to people from all sections of the community.
- Ensure that staff are treated equitably in all areas of employment including career development, pay, training and promotion.
- Tackle harassment and bullying in the workplace.
- Carry out regular workforce profiling.
- Improve consultation with staff from the groups covered by the policy.
- Continually review human resource policies to assess their impact on the groups covered by the policy.
- Monitor recruitment, promotion, training opportunities and take-up, grievances, disciplinary procedures and exit from employment.
- Assess the impact of proposed new policies and proposals to significantly change existing policies.

Other Equality Objectives

- Tackle all forms of hate crime and harassment and promote safety and security.
- Encourage participation in local democracy and representation on public and voluntary bodies.
- Improve community relations and promote diversity through events, publicity, educational programmes and other initiatives.
- Ensure that all sections of the community have opportunities to benefit from the regeneration of the borough.
- Work with partners in the community, voluntary, public and business sectors to achieve the Policy's aims.

Implementation

The Council will produce a Corporate Equality Plan which will set out the actions, targets and timescales and resources required to meet the objectives in the Policy.

All the Council's relevant policies, functions and services will be reviewed through a rolling three year programme of Equality Monitoring Reviews to assess their impact on the groups covered by the Policy. Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out for all proposed new policies or policies for which significant changes are proposed. It is anticipated that this process will result in real changes in many aspects of the Council's work.

Resources

The Council is committed to integrating equality policy into mainstream service planning and budgetary allocation.

The Council also provides specialist resources devoted to developing, promoting and monitoring equality policy. The Social Inclusion and Justice Division provides a corporate policy development, scrutiny and practical support role. Staff in the corporate Human Resources team have specific equality responsibilities and each Department has staff with specific duties to co-ordinate the implementation of the Policy at Departmental level.

The Council will allocate funds specifically for the purpose of equality training for staff.

Responsibilities

The Council's Cabinet has overall responsibility for the policy and ensuring that adequate resources are provided for its implementation. Members will scrutinise progress against the objectives set out in the policy.

The Greenwich Management Team has responsibility for overseeing implementation of the policy and monitoring process.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that all aspects of their services comply with the Policy.

All staff are required to ensure fairness towards colleagues, service users and other members of the community in carrying out their duties.

All staff should help to promote the Policy in the workplace in all aspects of service delivery and to work towards the elimination of discrimination.

All staff have a duty to report instances of discrimination to their manager at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate action can be taken to remedy the situation.

The Council requires that those who provide services on its behalf or organisations which are funded by the Council, ensure that their service provision and employment practices are consistent with the Policy.

Monitoring and Review of the Policy

The Social Inclusion and Justice Scrutiny Panel will regularly review the Policy to ensure that it is consistent with current legislation and codes of practice.

The Social Inclusion and Justice Scrutiny Panel will annually monitor progress on the corporate and departmental targets set out in the Corporate Equality Plan.

Performance Indicators will be included in the Corporate Equality Plan.

Reviews will take into account the views of elected members, staff, community and voluntary groups, and trade unions.

Progress reviews carried out by the Social Inclusion and Justice Scrutiny Panel and reports of equality impact assessments and equality monitoring reviews will be made available to the public.

Dissemination of the Policy

The Policy will be published on the Council's website. (www.greenwich.gov.uk)

A summary document will be available in a range of formats and languages.

A copy of the Policy will be available for all staff.

Applicants for Council posts will be made aware of the policy and it will form part of the induction programme for new recruits.



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