

Adur District Council
Worthing Borough Council

Equalities Policy

Date Agreed: July 2011

Contact: Corporate Centre

Introduction

Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils (hereafter referred to as “the Councils”) are committed to providing equality of opportunity in all our activities and to ensuring that discrimination does not occur.

We will strive for a workforce that reflects the diversity of the local community in order that our services are provided appropriately and the Council benefits from a wealth of experiences.

The Councils will involve the wider community in our decision-making processes and use our influence to progress equality issues in the Adur District and Worthing Borough.

Scope

This is a council-wide policy that outlines the equalities commitment to staff and members of the public. Detailed operational activity is contained in documents referred to in the “Further Reading” section of this policy.

Legislative Framework

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended)

The Councils Equalities Policy sets out the measures the Councils are taking to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (hereafter referred to as “the act”) and other legislation bringing together all previous equality legislation.

Protected characteristics

The Act covers the following eight protected characteristics:

- Age,
- Disability,
- Gender reassignment,
- Pregnancy and maternity,
- Race,
- Religion or belief,
- Sex (gender)
- Sexual orientation.

People with those characteristics are referred to in this policy as **protected groups**.

The General Equality Duty

Those subject to the equality duty as set out in the Act 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
- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

What are the benefits of the equality duty?

Compliance with the general equality duty is not only a legal obligation, but the council believes that it makes good business sense. An organisation that is able to provide services to meet the diverse needs of its users should find that it carries out its core business more efficiently. A workforce that has a supportive working environment is more productive. The councils believe that a diverse workforce draws on a broader range of talent and better represents the community that we serve.

Compliance with the general equality duty should also result in better informed decision-making and policy development.

Employment

The Councils recognise that our employees are our greatest resource and all our employment and recruitment policies will reflect our commitment to equalities and best practice.

We work towards a workforce that reflects the diversity of the local community to fully utilise their skills and abilities and take positive action where appropriate to encourage underrepresented groups into our workforce.

No employees will be discriminated against in the areas of pay or conditions of service, access to training and development or promotion.

We promote flexible working practices in recognition that many of our employees have caring responsibilities. For more detail please refer to the Work Life Balance Policy.

All employees are required to behave in non-discriminatory ways towards colleagues and the public and anyone who does not comply may be subject to disciplinary action. We will maintain an up to date Dignity at Work Policy, and Disabled Employees Policy.

Services

We will ensure that all services provided by or on behalf of the Councils are made accessible where reasonable to all individuals and groups without discrimination.

We will ensure that our buildings are fully accessible and where this is not practical we will provide reasonable alternative methods of access so no one is discriminated against by physical barriers.

With regard to residential accommodation, Adur Homes Services undertake adaptations to improve access and facilities in Council homes to meet specific needs of tenants with disabilities in consultation with W.S.C.C. Occupational Therapists or Medical Practitioners. Other aspects of access and equalities are considered at design stage of all other repair and improvement contracts

We will be responsive to the needs of local people and recognise the importance of removing barriers to communication. Individuals will be consulted about their communication needs and preferences.

Wider community

The Councils will continue to build closer links with those who may be subject to discrimination. We will use our influence within the local community to give a lead to other employers and work in partnership with other local agencies to promote equalities.

The Councils undertook research and published Community Profiles for Adur and Worthing in 2011. Community profiles help to build an understanding of the communities that make up Adur and Worthing, and the needs of those communities. In turn this will help to inform the development of policy and decision making.

The Councils have developed and will continue to support the Community Equality Working Group as one means of engaging with our communities.

The Councils have a Community Cohesion Officer who seeks to engage with the equality groups in Adur and Worthing, including those groups that are referred to as “hard to reach”.

We will seek to ensure that all contractors directly supplying goods and services or working on behalf of the Council comply with the relevant statutes and encourage good practice.

Consultation

Regular consultation on issues concerning the policy will be undertaken with our customers and the local community to establish whether our services are accessible to all. The Adur and Worthing Citizen’s Panels will be used as a mechanism for the Council to consult with the wider community. The Councils will use a variety of means of engaging with the local community, recognizing that some engagement tools will be more effective with different groups.

We will regularly consult with the relevant trade unions and our employees using a range of consultative structures and engagement methods. The Councils will keep these means of communication under review to ensure they are effective.

We will report back to the community and our employees on the progress we have made on the corporate equality action plan.

Monitoring: Impact of decisions

Monitoring is a way of checking that no one is being treated unfairly in our employment practices and in our service delivery, to find out if our policy is working, if any remedial action has been effective, or if additional action is required. The Councils have introduced the use of Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to help analyse the effect of its policies and practices on equalities.

Monitoring: employees

Employees are asked to supply information about themselves so we can identify how representative our workforce is of the wider community and we will also monitor job applicants. Staff training and promotion will be monitored to evaluate the effect of the policy. Monitoring information will be used in a strictly confidential way.

Putting the policy into action

Putting the policy into practice is the responsibility of all staff and Members. Both employees and Members must comply with both the spirit and wording

of the policy. This policy is incorporated into every employee's terms and conditions of employment with the Council.

Executive Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that their services are delivered without discrimination.

All managers are responsible for preventing discrimination and for setting a good example.

Members are responsible for the policy and to set a good example.

The Adur and Worthing Equality and Diversity Working Group has specific responsibility for considering issues that arise from the policy. The Group will also devise and oversee the implementation of:

- Adur and Worthing Equality and Diversity Action Plan;
- Adur and Worthing Service Blocks Summary Action Plan

Measurable and specific equality targets will be identified in corporate and service plans. The Action Plan will be revised at least every four years thereafter.

The Councils have adopted the Local Government Equalities framework standards. To achieve the standards the Council will regularly review our services and employment practices and undertake the necessary action to achieve the standards.

The Councils will communicate the Equalities Policy and related policies to all potential and actual employees for example through the information we send out to prospective employees and through the induction of new employees.

Equalities pages will be maintained on the Councils websites and contain relevant publications and reports promoting the Equality and Diversity work undertaken by the Councils and their partners.

The Equalities Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Adur and Worthing Equalities and Diversity Working Group in consultation with the Human Resources Working Group.

Training

Equalities training is mandatory for all employees to ensure they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Similarly there is an expectation that all Members will attend Equalities training.

Equality issues are an integral part of our training and development programmes, regardless of whether the council uses internal or external trainers.

In addition to the generic Equalities training, tailored Equalities training to reflect the needs of specific services will be encouraged, particularly for services engaging with external customers and / or where there is a significant engagement with protected group(s).

The Council makes a strong commitment to training and development for all staff. All staff will have equal access to training and development and we will take appropriate positive action for those who are underrepresented in our workforce.

Remedies

Staff who feel they have been discriminated against should refer to the Dignity at Work policy. Employees who fail to comply with the policy may be subject to the Councils Disciplinary Policy.

Complaints from customers will be dealt with through the corporate complaints procedure.

Further Reading

The policy refers to a number of groups and plans that support Equalities work in the Councils. The following documents are readily available and can be obtained by calling 01903 221108.

Adur and Worthing Equalities and Diversity Working Group Terms of Reference.
Adur and Worthing Equalities and Diversity Action Plan.
Adur and Worthing Service Blocks Summary Action Plan.
Adur and Worthing Community and Equality Working Group Terms of Reference.
Adur and Worthing Equalities Impact Assessment Template
Adur and Worthing Workforce Development Plan
Dignity at Work Policy
Worklife Balance Policy
Disabled Employees Policy

A copy of this policy can be made available in alternative formats e.g. large print, on computer disk, on tape, translated etc, by calling 01903 221108