

Appendix A

Equality Policy

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to set out West Berkshire Council's vision and commitment to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity. This is in relation to our role as a provider of quality services to the people who live, work and visit West Berkshire, as a significant employer in the local economy and in our community leadership role.
- 1.2 This Policy provides a broad statement of the Council's expectations and responsibilities in relation to equality, and is a reflection of our requirements under current equalities legislation.
- 1.3 The overall aims of this Policy are to:-
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;
 - Promote equality of opportunity;
 - Promote equality of access;
 - Demonstrate that we value diversity; and
 - Promote good relations between diverse communities.
- 1.4 These aims will be achieved by promoting and demonstrating fairness and equality of opportunity in:
- 1.4.1 The provision of services, which relates to:
- Access to services;
 - Treatment while accessing and receiving services;
 - Equal quality of service offered;
 - Outcomes for all service users.
- 1.4.2 The employment of staff, which relates to:
- Fair Access to jobs;
 - Fair treatment in employment;
 - Fair access to training and development opportunities.
 - The right of every employee:-
 - Not to be discriminated against, harassed, victimised or bullied;
 - Not to discriminate, harass, victimise or bully another employee;
 - To make a complaint when they feel they have been unfairly treated, harassed or bullied and to have their complaints acted upon;
 - To challenge and bring discriminator acts and behaviour to the attention of an appropriate person for action;
 - To be respected and valued for who they are and for what they contribute.
- 1.4.3 Promote equality and diversity through community leadership including procurement and commissioning systems and processes that are:
- Fair
 - Accessible to all
 - Transparent
 - Consistent with our public sector equality duty.
- 1.4.4 Achieving progress against our equality objectives, which are based around addressing any inequality in the:

- Provision of services.
- Employment of staff.
- Procurement and commissioning processes.

2. Applicability

2.1 This Policy applies to:

2.1.1 Services provided to local residents and visitors to West Berkshire and all those who use council services.

2.1.2 All non-school based employees working for the Council, including those working from home or at non-Council locations. Policies relating to school based employees are the responsibility of the Governing Body and will have been put in place accordingly.

2.1.3 Other persons including elected members, consultants, agency staff, contractor and contractors' staff working for the Council, and external organisations working with the Council, whilst engaged on Council business

2.2 It is the responsibility of each employee and other persons mentioned in Section 2.1 to familiarise themselves with and adhere to this Policy.

2.3 This Policy has undergone internal and external consultation including with Heads of Service and trade unions and has been ratified by the Executive Member for Equalities.

3. Policy

3.1 West Berkshire Council recognises that the needs of our service users and employees are diverse and that we must consider these differences when developing our activities. We understand that one size does not fit all, and we strive to develop services and practices that will be suitable for all.

3.2 We are committed to ensuring that equality and diversity lie at the heart of our services and employment practices and will work to remove the barriers that limit access and opportunity. We welcome and embrace the strength and resilience that diversity brings to the district.

3.3 We endeavour to treat our service users, employees, and contractors with respect and dignity and according to the framework set out in legislation. We recognise that there are groups and individuals in society who are disadvantaged and discriminated against. We will ensure that no one is treated less fairly on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender identity, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/ belief, sexual orientation, or on any other grounds, as set out in legislation, which cannot be justified.

3.4 In order to meet our aims, West Berkshire Council will:

3.4.1 Ensure a continuing strategic lead for equalities supported by appropriate policies and guidance;

- 3.4.2 Have regard to our obligations under relevant legislation, particularly the Equality Act 2010;
- 3.4.3 Place residents and service users at the heart of policies and strategies in all our activities
- 3.4.4 In the formation of our policies and services, have due regard to the need to consider people from all communities and promote equality and good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- 3.4.5 Engage with and listen to all sections of the community in identifying needs and in decisions on the way services are designed, planned and delivered;
- 3.4.6 Ensure that Members and staff at every level of the organisation understand what equality in service provision means and apply it in their roles;
- 3.4.7 Promote an environment free from discrimination, victimisation, bullying and harassment, and tackle behaviour in contravention of this;
- 3.4.8 Recognise and value the differences and individual contributions that people make.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Members of Council accept that they are accountable to all sections of West Berkshire's population for delivering equality of opportunity in all its activities. As decision makers they are responsible for discharging the Council's Public Sector Equalities Duty.
- 4.2 The Chief Executive is responsible for providing leadership in the implementation of this Policy and for ensuring that service planning and performance management systems incorporate specific equality objectives in terms of service delivery and employment.
- 4.3 All Corporate Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for implementing the Policy in their service areas, allocating specific resources to ensure the delivery of equality objectives.
- 4.4 All Managers are responsible for implementing the Policy and for addressing equalities issues in the business planning and performance management arrangements for their area of activity. They are also responsible for ensuring their staff act in accordance with the provision of this Policy, providing all necessary support and direction for their staff. In addition, when working with Volunteers, Managers are responsible for ensuring they are aware of the requirement to comply with the Policy and that they take action if it becomes evident that they are not complying.
- 4.5 All employees are responsible for ensuring that they play their part in implementing this Policy, taking into consideration the impact on service users, and consulting effectively with them when designing new policies or services. They are also responsible for treating customers and colleagues fairly and with respect and

promoting equality of opportunity within the Council, and externally with Customers, Communities and Partners.

- 4.6 The Council will promote its shared principles around equality and diversity when working with Contractors, Suppliers and Partners. This is to ensure they are clear about their obligations to provide services that are free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The Council will routinely check their policies to ensure they comply and they will take action if it becomes evident that they are not complying. However, its Contractors, Suppliers and Partners will remain accountable for their own practice.
- 4.7 The Including Everyone Board is responsible for (should there be a separate point detailing the responsibilities of the Equality & Diversity Policy Officer?):
- Being aware of new legislation, new national initiatives together with any policy changes and sharing these with the colleagues in the Council;
 - Prioritising equality activity and focus in light of internal and external drivers, reprioritising when necessary;
 - Reviewing corporate progress against West Berkshire Council's equality objectives;
 - Holding directorates to account for completion of allocated activity;
 - Consulting with and seeking feedback from relevant local groups on the Council's approach to equality;
 - Providing a forum for the discussion of activity and sharing information and good practice between directorates.

5. Failure to comply with the Equality Policy

- 5.1 Any cases of harassment, discrimination, bullying or victimisation will be taken very seriously by the Council.
- 5.2 Job applicants and service users who feel they have been subject to unfair discrimination can make a complaint under the Council's Complaints Procedure. This can be located on the West Berkshire Council website under the following link <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=27928>.
- 5.3 Employees who feel they have been subject to unfair discrimination can raise the issue informally with their line manager, or formally under the terms of the Council's Grievance Procedure.
- 5.4 Employees who are alleged to have committed an act of unfair discrimination or harassment may be liable to disciplinary action in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.
- 5.5 Any individual or organisation working for the Council who commits an act of unjustified or unlawful discrimination, or allows discrimination to occur without taking appropriate action, may have their contract terminated.
- 5.6 Anyone to whom this Policy applies, who commits an act of unjustified or unlawful discrimination, or allows discrimination to occur without taking appropriate action, may be liable to a claim being brought against them by the victim in the Tribunal and/or Civil Court.

6. Review

- 6.1 This Policy will be reviewed to respond to any changes at least every 3 years.
- 6.2 The Including Everyone Board is responsible for reviewing and maintaining this Policy.

7. Further Documentation

- 7.1 Equality Act (2010)
- 7.2 Non-statutory guidance on the Equality Duty (Equality and Human Rights Commission)
- 7.3 Equality Impact Assessment Guidance (West Berkshire Council)
- 7.4 Equality Objectives 2015-19 (West Berkshire Council)
- 7.5 Equality in Employment Policy (West Berkshire Council)
- 7.6 Consultation Policy (West Berkshire Council)

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