

Equality and Diversity Policy

This policy explains the Council's vision and commitment to equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in its role as a provider of quality services to the people who live, invest and bring up families in South Tyneside, as a significant employer in the local economy and in its community leadership role. We recognise that South Tyneside is a diverse place and this policy seeks to promote this by valuing the uniqueness of each individual.

Our Vision

South Tyneside will be an outstanding place to live, invest and bring up families.

The overall aim of this policy is to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination; Promote equality of opportunity; Promote equality of access; and Promote good relations between diverse communities in the Council's employment policies and practices, in our service delivery and in our engagement with partners and communities in the borough.

The Legal Framework

South Tyneside Council acknowledges its responsibilities as set out in the Equality Act 2010. We will ensure that our policies and procedures are compliant with any forthcoming legislation; Codes of Practice and guidance published by national equalities bodies and Commissions.

Achieving Equality

The Council will integrate equality of opportunity and respect for diversity into all aspects of its activity. To achieve our aims we will:

- Positively promote equality of opportunity and respect for diversity within South Tyneside as part of the Council's community leadership role;
- Challenge all forms of unfair discrimination, whether intentional, unintentional, institutional or otherwise;
- Profile the make up of the community in order to inform our priorities;
- Develop a Single Equalities Scheme and Action Plan to implement this policy;
- Undertake Equality Checks on service provision and employment and take appropriate action;
- Establish clear local targets for improvement within service areas and employment (equality objectives);
- Engage with and listen to the views of our communities and service users, to assist in the development of our equality agenda;
- Incorporate equality of opportunity into all policies, plans and strategies;
- Develop services that are appropriate and accessible to all members of the community;
- Seek to create a workforce profile that reflects our diverse community at all levels;

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- Provide appropriate training and development in equality and diversity issues for our Elected Members and employees;
- Review, self-assess, audit and report progress annually on our equalities work;
- Work to develop procedures to respond to and address all forms of harassment and victimisation;
- Work with our partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to ensure the best outcomes for people who live, invest and bring up families in South Tyneside.

Equality and Diversity in Service Provision

Service users and potential service users can expect the Council to aim to:

- Design and deliver appropriate, accessible and effective services and facilities to all members of the community;
- Provide clear and accessible information about our services, which is available upon request in a variety of appropriate formats and languages which meet the needs of all members of the community;
- Use effective systems for challenging, reviewing and monitoring our service delivery and to ensure that quality and equality are continuously evaluated and improved and to ensure that all sections of the community are receiving fair access and outcomes;
- Ensure that all our Elected Members and employees understand what equality in service provision means by providing specific training;
- Engage with and listen to all sections of the community in identifying needs and in decisions on the way the Council plan and deliver its services;
- Monitor and evaluate service up-take in relation to age, disability, gender and race.

Equality and Diversity in Procurement and Contracting

In addition to complying with national and EU Public Procurement legislation, the Council aims to:

- Ensure that contractors, suppliers, volunteers and partners are aware of our position on equality and are clear about their obligation to provide services that are free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation;
- Recognise and promote the application of national guidelines and advice, in line with our own contracting procedures;
- Make sure that our selection and tendering processes positively address and include equality considerations that are in line with the procedures mentioned above;
- Provide training for relevant staff in equalities issues for procurement.

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Equality and Diversity at Work

The Council is one of the major local employers, and as such recognises that a representative workforce provides greater sensitivity to the needs of our community.

Therefore we have a key role to play in tackling inequalities and discrimination in the workplace. In order to ensure that equality underpins all aspects of our employment policies, procedures and practices, we aim to:

- Ensure that our employment, training and development policies, procedures and practices comply with this policy and do not discriminate intentionally or unintentionally against any group or individual;
- Monitor our employment processes by age, disability, gender and racial group and take action to address any inequalities that are apparent;
- Recruit employees in a manner which is fair and open;
- Ensure employees are aware of their personal responsibility to apply this policy;
- Eliminate discrimination in the provision of training and development to ensure that all employees can realise their full potential and contribute to the development of the Council;
- Ensure that all Elected Members are offered relevant training and that all employees undertake relevant training in equal opportunity issues to raise their awareness, understanding and importance of equal opportunities in the work place and in service delivery;
- Ensure that the content of all training and development activities reflect our commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity;
- Promote a culture of fairness and respect in all employment policies, procedures and practices;
- Provide appropriate training and development opportunities to all employees;
- Take positive action to encourage under-represented groups to apply for posts or specific training;
- Ensure pay structures reward all employees fairly;
- Recognise that employees have the right to work in a supportive, safe and harassment-free environment and all complaints are dealt with robustly;
- Ensure that we have an equal pay policy in place;
- Make reasonable adjustments, wherever possible, to enable the employment and redeployment of staff with disabilities.

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Consultation

We recognise the value of gaining a variety of perspectives from our local communities and we will:

- Make information available in accessible formats and consider whether we are able to offer support for those who need help to participate in consultation we have organised;
- Ensure that our public meetings and events are accessible;
- Provide practical advice, information and contacts for staff running consultation processes on how best to ensure that their consultation is inclusive of all groups who should be consulted;
- Use existing networks and community organisations where appropriate to seek advice, views and opinions;
- Be creative in the variety of consultation methods we use;
- Join up consultation exercises wherever possible and join with partners to avoid 'consultation fatigue';
- Assess our success in reaching 'hard to reach' groups by including this as a criterion in our evaluation of consultation.

We will undertake regular employee engagement to assess the working environment and the conditions we provide, and to ensure that we are continuing to develop and maintain an anti-discriminatory culture across the organisation.

A shared responsibility

Within the Council, all Elected Members and employees have a part to play in challenging discrimination and in implementing this policy. If anyone witnesses a discriminatory incident at work, they have a duty of care to others to challenge such behaviour and practice.

The Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council are responsible for providing leadership in the implementation of this policy. All Elected Members are responsible for promoting equality and are accountable to the electorate for ensuring equality of opportunity and respect for diversity in all Council services and employment.

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.

All Corporate Directors, Heads of Service and Management Teams are responsible for implementing the policy in their service areas, allocating specific resources to ensure the delivery of equality objectives in relation to service provision and employment. They are responsible for ensuring that employees are adequately informed, trained and supported to ensure that their duties are carried out in accordance with this policy.

All managers are responsible for implementing the equality in service provision and employment and for providing support for employees to work together to achieve equality.

Human Resources have the responsibility to lead on equalities issues for employment, training and development throughout the Council.

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Officers in the Strategy and Performance Team have the responsibility to enable, facilitate, advise and support the equalities process throughout the Council.

Unions support is welcomed on equalities issues and in supporting the continuous improvement of equalities policy and practice.

All employees are responsible for ensuring that they play their part in implementing this policy. They will also be responsible for improving their awareness of the barriers to equality in service provision and employment, for working towards the elimination of these barriers and for performing their duties in accordance with this policy. This expectation will be communicated to all new staff via induction processes.

Contractors, Partners, Suppliers and Volunteers should be aware of our position on equality and be clear about their obligations to provide services that are free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

This policy is recommended to Head Teachers and Governing Bodies to inform Equality and Diversity policy and practice within schools.

Any breach of this policy will be dealt with. Serious offences such as harassment will be treated as misconduct or gross misconduct.

Monitoring and Measuring Progress

The Council will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and the Single Equalities Scheme through consultation with the community, internal grievance process and annual workforce monitoring. Progress will also be monitored annually against equalities performance indicators and targets, which will be included in the Single Equalities Scheme.

Arrangements exist within the Council to monitor service provision and employment and appropriate action will be taken as a result of this ongoing monitoring and measuring. Progress against the Single Equalities Scheme and Equality Objectives will be monitored and reported each year to Cabinet. Amendments to the policy and scheme will be made, where appropriate, in the light of experience or changes in guidance and/or legislation.

Results of monitoring and progression on equality and diversity will be published annually on our website www.southtyneside.info.

How to provide feedback

The Council welcomes your feedback (comments, compliments and complaints) on how well we are implementing this policy in the services we deliver to the public. For general comments and compliments, or if you believe that you have been the subject of unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation by the Council then you should contact us by:

Phone: 0191 427 7000

Text: 07786 200 802

Email: customerhelp@southtyneside.gov.uk

Address: South Tyneside Council, Town Hall & Civic Offices, Westoe Road, South Shields, Tyne & Wear, NE33 2RL

If you know someone who would like this information in a different format contact the communications team on 0191 424 7385

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