

# Equality and Diversity Policy

## 1. Our Commitment to Equality

We want North Tyneside to be a place where people feel safe and no one experiences discrimination or disadvantage because of their [characteristics](#), background or personal circumstances.

As one of the borough's leading service providers and employers, we are committed to developing North Tyneside to be an inclusive place in which to live, work, visit and invest.

### Our commitments

To achieve this North Tyneside Council will:

- Proactively embed equality and diversity considerations in everything we do and challenge others to do the same.
- Meet all our legal equality duties under the [2010 Equality Act](#), the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) and follow codes of practice published by the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#).
- Not tolerate discrimination, harassment and victimisation on any grounds.
- Publish our equality objectives, equality data and report progress in [our Annual Equality and Diversity Review](#).
- Undertake and implement the actions from [Equality Impact Assessments](#) on significant decisions, policies, plans, practices and procedures
- Ensure people with protected characteristics feel listened to and have the opportunity to be involved in making decisions about our services.
- Work to build understanding amongst residents, employees, partners and elected members of the needs of different protected groups across North Tyneside.
- Take account of, and respond to, the needs of residents and customers with protected characteristics when delivering our services.
- Work to create an environment where employees, elected members, residents and visitors are confident to be themselves.
- Strive to make our workforce more representative of the borough's population and the residents it serves, by ensuring equal access to jobs, training and career progression.
- Ensure that others providing services on our behalf follow our approach to equality.

## 2. Equality and Diversity in Employment

This section applies to all employees and people seeking work with us. As a local employer we have a key role to play in tackling inequality and discrimination. We aim to positively promote equality of opportunity through all of our employment policies and practices: including recruitment, terms and conditions, learning and development, promotion and when ending employment.

We will:

- Provide equality of opportunity to all applicants and prospective applicants through fair recruitment and selection procedures.
- Recognise that people with particular protected characteristics, including people with disabilities or from BME communities, may experience discrimination in employment, and therefore seek to take positive and proportionate action to recruit and retain employees from such groups, while taking into consideration the duty to appoint on merit.
- Make reasonable adjustments to enable the employment and redeployment of employees with disabilities.
- Use the information and feedback we collect to understand more about, and respond to, employee's experience of working for North Tyneside Council.
- Ensure that all employees are considered for promotion on the basis of their merits, abilities and skill, and are given equal opportunities to progress within the Authority.
- Create an appropriate balance between work and home commitments to maximise equal opportunities for all.
- Wherever possible, give employees the training and development opportunities needed to attain their full potential to the benefit of North Tyneside Council and themselves.
- Ensure that all employees undertake equality training so that they understand its importance in the work place and in service delivery and know how to challenge any inappropriate behaviour.
- Develop an anti-discriminatory and supportive culture where employees are aware of their rights and enjoy working for North Tyneside Council.
- Respond to any allegations of discrimination, victimisation or harassment through appropriate internal processes, including our [resolution](#) and [discipline](#) procedures.

## 3. Equality and Diversity in Service Provision

We will seek to provide appropriate, accessible and effective services and facilities to all current and potential service users.

We will:

- Use our equality impact assessment process to help us challenge, review, monitor and improve our services, working practices and resource allocation.
- Use a range of channels to enable service users to access our services independently and appropriately.

- Ensure that the information we provide can be read or received and understood by the people for whom it is intended.
- Ensure that all buildings, facilities and services used by our customers are welcoming and accessible.
- Work with our partners to tackle any discrimination affecting groups within our communities.
- Use the equality data we collect to identify and take action to address the needs of under represented groups, those who are disadvantaged or have particular needs due to their characteristics.
- Involve residents in shaping our services through inclusive engagement and consultation.

#### **4. Equality and Diversity in Procurement and Commissioning**

We will ensure that our procurement and commissioning practices fulfil our equality duties by ensuring that:

- Contractors, suppliers, volunteers and partners:
  - are aware of the authority's position on equality, we will include a commitment to equality in tender specifications
  - have an equality policy that is compliant with national and European public procurement legislation and understand their obligation to provide services that are free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
- Our selection and tendering processes address and include equality considerations.
- Our contract monitoring processes are inclusive of equalities considerations.
- Relevant employees receive guidance on equality issues for procurement.

#### **5. Our responsibilities**

Equality, and the implementation of this policy, is the responsibility of all employees, elected members and everyone who represents North Tyneside Council or delivers services on its behalf. More specifically:

##### 5.1 As Individuals

All employees and elected members have an individual responsibility to:

- ensure their equality training and awareness is up to date
- promote and deliver equality in the workplace and in serving local communities
- behave in a way that supports this policy and is compliant with relevant legislation and codes of practice
- report, and if they consider it safe to do so, challenge any discriminatory behaviour or practices they encounter in the course of their work.

## 5.2 As Elected Members

Elected members also have a responsibility to:

- lead the equality and diversity agenda of North Tyneside Council
- represent and provide leadership for all groups and communities across North Tyneside
- provide a scrutiny role
- demonstrate '[due regard](#)' to the equality implications of the decisions they make.

## 5.3 As Managers

Managers are responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy in their service areas via their service planning process, this includes ensuring:

- the identification and elimination of discriminatory practices
- equality objectives and improvement actions identified in the Annual Equality and Diversity Review are included in service plans
- processes are in place to systematically collect and report equality performance management data
- effective equality impact assessment of significant decisions, policies, plans, practices and procedures is undertaken
- service delivery demonstrates due regard to the needs of people with protected characteristics
- employees are fully aware of their individual equality responsibilities, and those of the organisation, under the 2010 Equality Act.

## 5.4 Trades Unions

Unions have a responsibility to:

- represent the views and concerns of employees on equality and diversity issues
- support the continuous improvement of equality policy and practice.

## **6. Complaints**

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

- dealing with all complaints of discrimination, harassment and victimisation, seriously, promptly and confidentially
- ensuring that any person who feels they have suffered any form of discrimination by North Tyneside Council is given guidance in making a [complaint](#).

In relation to specific types of complaints:

- Employee complaints - should an employee have any complaint in respect of their treatment in relation to this policy, this should be taken up through internal processes, such as our resolution or discipline processes.
- Public complaints - information on how to make a complaint can be found in our libraries, leisure centres, customer first buildings and Quadrant headquarters or at [www.northtyneside.gov.uk](http://www.northtyneside.gov.uk).

## 7. Monitoring

We assess and monitor our progress through:

- Regular performance and progress reports to the Cabinet Champion for Equality and Diversity, the Senior Leadership Team and Service Management Teams.
- [Corporate Equality Group](#), which has representatives from each of our services and our strategic partners. It meets to co-ordinate, identify and support the successful implementation of practical solutions to help the Authority fulfil its equality duties in accordance with the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Our equality impact assessment process to ensure we properly consider the potential impact of Cabinet and Full Council decisions on protected groups
- The identification of the equality and engagement implications of the decisions recommended in our Cabinet and Full Council reports.
- Publication on our website of our Annual Equality and Diversity Review, which includes
  - profiles of our service users and workforce compared to the borough population\*
  - progress reports against our Corporate Equality Objectives and service equality actions and is evaluated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to check accessibility and compliance with the 2010 Equality Act and public Sector Equality Duty.

### Equality information\*

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.

Collecting equality information helps us to:

- understand the needs of our residents
- design policies and services which are effective and meet those needs
- demonstrate compliance with the 2010 Equality Act, the public Sector Equality Duty and other statutory duties
- measure more effectively how we are improving as an employer and a service provider.

We will only collect information when it is relevant and will be used by managers to develop an understanding of take up and need. While employees and service users are encouraged to provide equality information, it is their choice whether or not to answer all the questions. Confidential information will be handled in accordance with the strict controls of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the information gathered will be used to inform North Tyneside Council policy and planning, and to report on performance.