



Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy 2023

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DIVERSITY

EQUALITY

INCLUSION

1 Introduction: About the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

We can only achieve a flourishing future for our whole community if everyone in Redcar & Cleveland is given the chance to participate fully in our economic, social and cultural life.

What is equality?

At its core, equality means fairness: we must ensure that individuals, or groups of individuals, are not treated less favourably because of their protected characteristics.

Equality also means equality of opportunity: we must also ensure that those who may be disadvantaged can get the tools they need to access the same, fair opportunities as their peers.

What is diversity?

Diversity is recognising, respecting and celebrating each other's differences. A diverse environment is one with a wide range of backgrounds and mindsets, which allows for an empowered culture of creativity and innovation.

What is inclusion?

Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued whilst also acknowledging their differences and how these differences contribute to the organisation's culture and business outcomes. Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination. The aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and our customers, and for each employee to feel respected and able to give their best.

Promoting equality means treating people fairly, valuing differences and removing the barriers that prevent people from fully participating in public life and realising their full potential. We have worked extremely hard to reduce inequality, yet we know that people still experience disadvantage and unfair treatment simply because of who they are or the background from which they come.

The Council is committed to taking positive action that opens up services and opportunities to people that need them, ensure that difference and diversity is embraced, and that people are always treated

fairly and with respect. Equally, the Council is committed to eliminating discrimination and will therefore take action to challenge and correct behavior where the high standards expected are not upheld.

This Policy sets out the key principles of equality that guide the way in which we make decisions, provide services; recruit and support our employees; work with other organisations; and involve local people. It is supported by other policies (e.g. HR), strategies and action plans that set out the Council's priorities and activities that will ensure we meet our Equality Duty.



2 Corporate Plan: Vision, Values and Priorities

The Council's Corporate Plan (which is reviewed every four years) contains the vision for the Borough: Redcar & Cleveland Borough will be zero carbon, safer and more prosperous and attractive. People will live longer, more fulfilling and independent lives and will have access to the means of support when they need it.

It also sets our core values that guide how we should work individually and as a Council. These are:

TO KEEP COMMUNITIES CENTRAL TO WHAT WE DO

TO BE CARING AND RESPECTFUL

TO BE BOLD, AMBITIOUS AND ASPIRATIONAL

TO PROMOTE EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

TO ALWAYS AIM TO GET THE JOB DONE TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY, WITHIN AVAILABLE RESOURCES

The plan sets out four clear priorities and a full range of actions underpinning all the priorities that have equality, diversity & inclusion at their heart. After all, the role of local government is, in many ways, to provide services, support and

enhance the quality of life for those people and communities that may not be able to adequately support themselves for a range of reasons. Many reasons may stem from factors that are linked to people's "protected characteristics".

PRIORITIES

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



We shall make clear how, in partnership, we will make Redcar & Cleveland carbon neutral by 2030



We shall achieve a step-change in recycling rates in the Borough



We shall support biodiversity with actions to support wildlife and plant life

MEETING RESIDENTS' NEEDS



We shall improve long-term physical health and mental well-being, get young people more active, and ultimately save lives



We shall take more preventative actions, to keep people safe, to enable more children and older people to live safely at home, with the right support at the right time



We shall further strengthen partnerships with schools and colleges to ensure young people's aspirations are raised, they get a better secondary school experience and acquire the skills they need for future jobs

IMPROVING THE PHYSICAL APPEARANCE OF THE BOROUGH AND ENHANCING PROSPERITY



We shall be more proactive in the way we look after the appearance of our Borough



We shall progress and deliver landmark projects to create jobs, increase pride and improve quality of life



We shall have an exciting cultural and visitor offer for all to enjoy

INVESTING FOR THE LONG-TERM



We shall make sure our Members and staff have access to training, development and support, including mental wellbeing, to enable them all to continue to do an excellent job



We shall ensure community needs are better met in localities as we rationalise our assets and buildings and manage demand by enabling people to digitally help themselves, whilst maintaining the face-to-face contact that our residents value



We shall continue to lobby Government for a fair share of resources for our Borough, whilst managing public money well, keeping the Council financially sustainable, and minimising the financial impact of Covid on local people

3 Our legal and other responsibilities

The Council will always set out to meet its legal duties in respect of equality, diversity & inclusion. The key piece of legislation is the Equality Act 2010, which came into effect in October 2010. It replaced and consolidated the raft of anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, and It has implications for us as an employer and a service provider.

The Act contains a Public Sector Equality Duty, which requires all public bodies and private bodies that deliver a public function, to consider the needs of diverse groups when designing and delivering services. Under the Act, the Council must 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; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.



Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- Tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between different communities.

The Council must also comply with the Conventions contained within the Human Rights Act 1998, which sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms to which individuals in the UK have access to.

It is important to recognise that at times we want to go further than the legal minimum requirements. In this respect, the Council adopts the Holocaust Memorial Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism as set out on the Alliance's website (as detailed below).

The following websites provide a wealth of useful information about Equality and Human Rights:

- www.equalityhumanrights.com
- www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities
- www.acas.co.uk
- www.holocaustremembrance.com

4 Who is responsible for equalities?

Equality is the responsibility of every Councillor and every employee of the Council, as well as organisations who provide services on behalf of the Council. In particular Cabinet has a key role to play, as the key decision-makers in implementing the corporate plan and medium-term financial plan. Specifically, one of the Cabinet Members has been identified as the lead Member for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion across all portfolios.

Members of Committees and especially the Scrutiny & Improvement Committees have a role to play in promoting equality as well as challenging decision-makers on equality issues. Training is made available to elected Members and from the 2023 elections, it will become a mandatory training programme for all Councillors.

Our customers also have a responsibility to treat our staff with dignity and respect, and to tell us if they require assistance or adjustments to enable them to access our services. We will do what we can to remove barriers to access.

Overall responsibility for ensuring that our decisions are compliant with equality legislation lies with the Council’s Managing Director, who is supported by the Executive Management Team and their Directorate Management Teams. A staff Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Group operates to help drive forward our work. It is chaired by one of the Executive Management Team members. We have a robust process to ensure we consciously think about the aims of the Equality Duty as part of our decision-making process, and this is set out in our Impact Assessment Policy. That information and analysis is captured and made available to Members when making decisions.

5 Who are we protecting?

The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty protects people on the grounds of specified protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

The Council seeks to ensure that due regard is given not only to the Public Sector Equality Duty but also to the wider implications of decisions taken. Set out under the below heading are a range of additional factors which the organisation considers when taking decisions. This enables a full and integrated assessment of the impacts of the decisions to be presented to decision-makers.

Care Experience (for young people): many care experienced people face discrimination, stigma, and prejudice in their day to day lives. Public perceptions of care experience centre on the idea that children are irredeemably damaged and that can lead to discrimination and assumptions being made. Borough Council agreed in October 2022 to adopt care experience as if it is a protected characteristic so that we, as a public body, can be more proactive in seeking out and listening to the voices of care experienced people when developing new policies based on their views.

Community Integration: this is a term which encompasses the full participation of all people in community life, including people from different ethnic backgrounds (including refugees), people who have recently arrived in the Borough, disabled or older people who may be at risk of isolation.

Social Inclusion: this means the provision of certain rights to all individuals and groups in society, such as employment, adequate housing, health care, education and training, etc.

Poverty and economic inequality:

whilst there are many definitions of poverty, the essence of this factor is recognising the importance of providing opportunities for people on lower incomes to help them gain access to work and well-paid jobs and, in turn, a better quality of life.

Health inequalities: Health inequalities are unfair and avoidable differences in health outcomes across the population, and between different groups within society. Health inequalities arise because of the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. Health inequalities result in poor health being experienced from a younger age, at a higher intensity for a greater proportion of life and ultimately in premature death, reducing both life expectancy and healthy life expectancy.

The environment / carbon reduction: Redcar & Cleveland Council signed a Climate Emergency Declaration in March 2019, as a result of which we are committed to achieving a carbon neutral Borough by 2030. We need to show how our decisions are moving us towards that goal.

Carers: Cabinet agreed in May 2022 to specify carers separately from disabled people as part of our policy and the impact assessment process. This recognises that carers will have different needs to disabled people.

People and families who are

homeless: The definition of homelessness means not having a home. Someone is homeless if they have nowhere to stay and are living on the streets, or even if you have a roof over your head, someone can be homeless if they do not have rights or permission to stay where they are, or they live in unsuitable housing.

People who have served in the armed forces: in line with the Armed Forces Covenant, is a promise to ensure that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly and have opportunity to access support and services necessary for a good quality of life.

Geographic Impact: Where in the Borough might the change have an impact? This will help us to assess overall fairness – whether some localities that should benefit are missing out or, in the case of cutting services, ensuring the impact is as fair as can be across a programme of savings, not withstanding the need to take account of needs.

It is important to note that protected characteristics cover everyone. We are all a mix of visible and invisible protected characteristics.



6 Making fair decisions and the impact assessment policy

When the Council make decisions, it is important that information is presented in a clear accessible format and that we provide decision makers with the information that they need to make well-rounded decisions.

This means thinking about the wider implications of a decision, such as finance, carbon impact or health and safety, but also equality and diversity and people with a protected characteristic.

Every day, decisions are made within the Council that affect the lives and relationships of local people, service users and its employees.

The Impact Assessment Policy is used to help us make fair, sound and transparent decisions that are based on a robust understanding of the needs and rights of the groups and individuals who may be affected. The Council's Equality Analysis process helps to ensure that appropriate equality information is provided, with a summary in the Member report, so that Members can take this into account when making decisions. It is also used

to identify positive actions that would mitigate any negative effects of our decision (e.g. budget reductions), or enhance any benefits for protected groups and others at risk of disadvantage. It does not mean that there will never be any negative impact on protected characteristics and groups, but that we should be fully aware of them, and are taking appropriate mitigating actions to minimise the impact.

Impact Assessments are published online with agendas and reports for Member decisions. These can be made available on request for anyone without access to the internet.

7 Collating, analysing and reporting on equality information

We will collate, analyse and publish (where appropriate) information about equality and diversity in the workforce, service delivery and our communities. This will be used to help us develop and monitor equality objectives, inform our service planning and decision making, identify ways of improving performance and demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty.

We will routinely ask staff and service-users to provide information about their personal characteristics. This will only be done where the information is relevant to the aims of the equality duty – for example if there are known or perceived inequalities in relation to a particular outcome or service. The Council will always make it clear that disclosure of personal information is optional. However, without gathering some form of evidence, it may be difficult to monitor the impact of policies and procedures on certain protected groups. The Council endeavors to overcome this by creating a culture of trust whereby individuals are comfortable disclosing such information. Whenever we ask for equality information, we will explain why the information is needed, how it will be used,

and how we will ensure that privacy will be protected.

The Council will uphold its duty to protect an individual's right to privacy and will not publish information that could identify an individual. Nor will the information be used to identify an individual or make a decision about them purely on the grounds of the information that has been provided in relation to their protected characteristics. All personal data will be processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) principles and in compliance with our Data Protection Registration with the Information Commissioner.

8 Making our services accessible and easy to use

We constantly strive to deliver services that are easily accessible by all who need them, and to support people to participate in public life. This in turn will help us achieve our duty to foster good relations between different groups and individuals.

We are committed to having conversations with residents, service users and customers to develop an understanding of how we can break down barriers and better meet their needs. This may involve making adjustments to the way we deliver services where it is reasonable to do so.

Our Customer Care Commitments are based around core principles of fairness, equality, respect and inclusivity.

We will make sure that everyone has the information they need about our services. We will provide all information in plain English, and in alternative formats on request.

We are committed to engaging effectively with local people, community groups and other stakeholders. We will actively seek their views about the Council and the services they receive, as well as involving them in shaping services and local decision making.

We actively support those who find it difficult to vote in elections (for example, people who are elderly, infirm or have physical or learning disabilities). This is done through an annual outreach programme of events and a public awareness strategy which is produced for each specific election.

9 Agreeing what we will do to advance equality and making sure we do it

We will continue to advance equality through the delivery of our vision, values, priorities and actions in our Corporate Plan.

This is performance managed to ensure that we do what we set out to do, and progress can be seen in regular reports to Cabinet, Scrutiny, and annually to Council, as well as in communications including BBB (internally) and This is Redcar & Cleveland residents' magazine. This will ensure that equality is an integral part of our day-to-day business planning and activities.

Activities

In addition to the Corporate Plan, included within this document is an action plan which lists a number of actions which will be progressed in the next year to advance equality, diversity and inclusion at Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council.



10 Supporting our staff

We will treat all of our staff, and anyone who applies to work for us fairly and equally. Our employment practice is guided by the principles of equality and fairness. This includes recruitment, terms and conditions, appraisals, learning and development, promotion and when ending employment. Our activities and approach to achieving this are set out in our suite of HR policies.

We want our staff to reflect the diversity of the communities that we serve and will take steps to encourage applications from groups who we know are under-represented in our workforce. We are a 'Disability Confident' employer (a scheme that replaced the two ticks) 'Positive about Disabled People' scheme in recognition of our commitment to employ, retain and develop the skills of disabled people.

All new starters are required to undertake equality, diversity & inclusion awareness training in the first few weeks of employment. Our appraisal process identifies specific training and development needs, including equality, diversity & inclusion, which are then met by sourcing appropriate courses or on-the-job training and development. Further information is contained in our HR policies.

All employees and elected members should be treated with respect and dignity in the workplace. The Council will not tolerate bullying and harassment in any form and the Staff Concerns and Dignity and Work and Grievance Policies set out how individual members of staff might raise concerns they have about actions taking place within the workplace. They cover issues around bullying and harassment; grievances and any areas of concern that staff might have. Elected members are not employees and are the subject of a separate code of conduct which includes specific obligations to treat staff and others with respect, promote equalities and not to discriminate unlawfully against any person.



Employees from protected groups will be supported and encouraged to organise their own interest groups where they can meet to share information, raise concerns and raise awareness. It is recognised that an individual's identification with one or more of the protected characteristics is a matter of self-definition. The Council will support individuals and groups of its staff to achieve their full potential as employees, and therefore supports self-organisation. This can be done in a number of ways, including:

- Participating in the staff Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Group
- Talking to the trade unions
- Raising the idea with line managers
- Suggesting an article in the staff newsletter, BBB

11 Working with other organisations

The Council will use its role as community leader to promote equality in partnership working with public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations.

The Council procures a wide range of goods, services and works from third party suppliers. As part of the Council's procurement process, suppliers are required to sign a Declaration of Undertaking in relation to Equality and Diversity which confirms their compliance and commitment to all legal obligations in relation to Equality and Diversity. It is the responsibility of all Officers connected with procurement activities to ensure that, where appropriate, equality is embedded into all aspects of the process from writing specifications to contract management. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules are available in the Council's constitution.

We have a range of Tees wide joint commissioning mechanisms where we also work to ensure equality & diversity is promoted through our collective commissioning power.

It is important to note here that the Council will use more of our spending power in the local community. Local traders will benefit from our contracts, and local people will gain from employment opportunities. The term 'social value' is often used to describe this, but put simply, the more we spend locally, recycling our money in the local economy, and the more we encourage partner organisations to do the same, the more we will reduce poverty and the impacts this has on inequalities.



12 Protecting people

Safeguarding children, young people and adults who may be at risk of abuse and / or mistreatment is everybody's business, wherever they work and whatever they do for the Council. This includes staff, elected members and people who work for organisations that provide services on behalf of the Council.

The Council has an absolute commitment to the well-being of children and young people. Our anti-bullying policy aims to reduce incidents of bullying that involve children and young people, and to encourage children, young people and adults to show respect and consideration for others. The South Tees Safeguarding Partnership is committed to keeping children safe with the aim of supporting and enabling local organisations and agencies to work together in a system which places the child at the heart of the process, with a key focus on both improving practice and enhancing outcomes for children and their families.

The Council has a legal obligation to safeguard adults with care and support needs from abuse and neglect. Safeguarding means protecting people's right to live in safety,





free from abuse and neglect; it applies to adults with care and support needs who may not be able to protect themselves. In practice, it balances the right to be safe with the right to make informed choices, while at the same time making sure that the adult's wellbeing is promoted. This includes taking the adult's views, wishes, feelings and beliefs into consideration in deciding on any action. The Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board coordinates and ensures the effectiveness of local organisations work to safeguard and promote the welfare of adults across Tees. The Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board provides the scrutiny for Teeswide partnership arrangements but is not responsible for the operational work undertaken by the Council to fulfil its statutory duty to safeguard adults. That responsibility remains with each of the constituent partner agencies.

We will continue to work with our partners to tackle domestic and sexual violence and will implement actions in our Corporate Delivery Plan and associated plans to ensure that all residents in the Borough have a fundamental right to live their lives in an environment which will not tolerate domestic violence, will support victims/survivors and will hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

The Council is also committed to working

www.redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

in partnership to ensure that hate crime is not tolerated within our communities and neighbourhood's. The term 'hate crime' can be used to describe a range of criminal behavior where the perpetrator is motivated by hostility, or demonstrates hostility towards, the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, or transgender identity. It can include verbal abuse, intimidation, threats, harassment, assault and bullying, as well as damage to property. The perpetrator can also be a friend, carer, or acquaintance who exploits their relationship with the victim for financial gain or some other criminal purpose. Nobody should suffer because of who they are, and nobody should put up with it. We will raise awareness of hate crime, encourage victims to report incidents, support known victims and take actions against offenders as necessary.



13 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy Actions and Measuring our Progress

Monitoring Our Progress

It is important that we monitor, analyse and report our progress in achieving the aims as set out in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. As a council we need to adapt our approach to ensure that we are achieving our priorities.

Our Equality and Diversity Group will monitor and review these actions and provide feedback to the Directorate Management Teams and the Executive Management Team. Updates on the action plan will then be reported alongside the quarterly performance updates to Cabinet and Corporate Resources and Governance Scrutiny.



Our Action Plan for the next 12 months

By the end of April 2024, we will have:



Developed and implemented a **new EDI learning and development programme**, including training that is viewed as mandatory for staff and Elected Members.



Engaged with our staff and Elected Members to best understand any issues, challenges, cultural issues which require action.



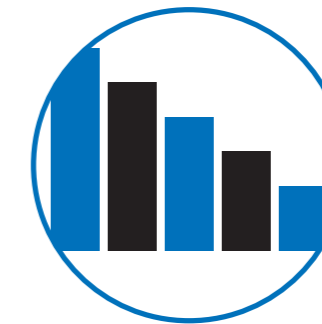
Developed a **Staff Intranet Page** that will provide information on EDI for all employees.



Developed and delivered a **communications campaign** which champions diversity within the workforce and within our communities.



Established and promoted a number of **staff groups/networks** to own and increase the pace of work for Equality Diversity and Inclusion.



Developed a better understanding of our **workforce and local area data**, with regular analysis and reporting taking place to assist decision making.



Developed an **online observatory integrated into the council's website**, bringing together EDI and local area information in a single place.

Measuring Progress:

The council will measure progress against the following measures with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion:

- **Gender Pay Gap**
- **Annual Workforce Profile**

The work to review our workforce and local area data is likely to provide further performance measures to assess the organisation's progress with respect to equality, diversity and inclusion. Further information in this regard will be shared through future update reports to elected members.

