



IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Equality and Diversity Policy

Version number	Signed off by	Written/Amended by	Last Updated/Reviewed	Date of next review
V0.1		Deborah Carr	March 2017	March 2020
V0.2		Deborah Carr	March 2020	
V0.3		Deborah Carr	March 2021	March 2024

Introduction

Ipswich Borough Council is proud of its diverse community; it's what makes this area a great place to live, work and visit.

This policy seeks to promote and uphold the principles of equality, diversity, fairness and inclusion within our employment practices, service design and delivery, procurement and partnership working. The policy is in line with Ipswich Borough Council's duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

As a Council we will not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation and will strive to promote equality of opportunity, understanding and foster good relations within our organisation and our community.

We want Ipswich to be a town that is fair and sustainable, ambitious, fun, and creative for all. We will continue to work with others to achieve better outcomes for the borough through a combination of innovation and collaboration. An Action Plan will be created to address issues and incidents of discrimination within the Council and encourage greater inclusion across the Council and its' employment practices, service design and delivery, procurement and partnership working.

We want to live in an equal society that recognises and accepts the needs of differing cultures, differing backgrounds, situations, and goals, and removes barriers that limit what people can do and can be.

The Council is legally required to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity;
- foster good relations within and between our communities with a view to building good community relations.

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Council Members;
- Employees, whether part-time, full-time, or temporary, and all job applicants;
- Service users, those applying to access services, tenants, carers, other members of the public and those persons affected by the Council's delivery of public services;
- Contractors and sub-contractors;
- Volunteers;
- Partnership arrangements.

We should not treat people unfairly because of reasons protected under the Equality Act 2010 (protected characteristics). Subject to the particular exceptions in the Equality Act 2010, we will treat everyone with the same attention, courtesy, and respect regardless of:

- Age;
- Disability (and carer status);
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and Civil Partnership;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;

- Sex;
- Sexual orientation.

Our commitment

We are committed to promoting equality by:

- recognising, valuing, and respecting diversity and difference;
- aiming to ensure that our services are accessible and relevant to the needs of our community;
- having effective recruitment, employment and promotion practices and procedures to ensure that everyone is valued and supported as an individual;
- letting contracts to suitable/appropriate suppliers of services;
- consulting with communities and groups affected when developing policies;
- providing diversity training opportunities for employees and councillors, implemented in line with frequent monitoring and the delivery plan, which will include a method to provide information, training and guidance to councillors, managers and staff;
- creating a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all employees are recognised and valued;
- taking any complaints seriously and compassionately of bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities;
- ensuring equal access to our complaints and other procedures, including making reasonable adjustment to allow for flexibility in the procedure where the Council's adopted method for access is not most suitable for the individual concerned;
- ensuring effective and regular equality monitoring and evaluation to inform the Council's service development;
- encouraging the use of the staff Whistleblowing Policy where appropriate to diminish fear of coming forward;
- adopting the working definition of anti-Semitism, in line with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), and incorporate a commitment to opposing anti-Semitism into relevant processes, practices and toolkits, and give consideration to this in the delivery of services;
- continuing to support community groups through the Grants process;
- continuing to build on good practice and be accessible to all Community Leaders.

We will take all reasonable steps to ensure that we do not unlawfully discriminate.

Roles and responsibilities

We live in a democratic society, with a legal framework which respects individual liberty, rights, and responsibilities. This means we all have a right to be treated fairly, with dignity and mutual respect, and understand and embrace difference. For this to happen we all need to take responsibility for our actions and behaviours.

We recognise that unlawful discrimination may still take place. This is clearly not in line with the Councils' values and priorities and is something that all staff should strive to challenge, either directly or through the customer or staff complaints process.

Principles

In all of our activities we will:

- give due regard to equality and diversity and take a conscious approach to the Equality Act principles to consider our duties and any impact when reviewing existing and developing new strategies, policies, services and functions, to ensure that we provide excellent services, secure flexible and fair working practices and fairly award contracts, grants and commissioned services;
- comply with our public sector equality duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010;
- engage and involve interested groups and individuals (both internal and external to the Council) within our decision-making processes;
- deal with all complaints of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation promptly and with sensitivity to all those involved;
- take all opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations within and between our communities.

In delivering our services we will:

- assess the needs of our existing and potential service users and ensure fair access to our services. For example, making reasonable adjustments for disabled people to enable the full use of our services. We will take steps to fully understand the diversity of our population and identify low uptakes of services;
- ensure the availability of appropriate support services;
- provide access points for reporting hate crimes;
- work with and between communities to help develop and strengthen relationships and resilience.

Support to implement and monitor the policy

The Council has a range of policies and practices in place for all aspects of our work. They are all guided by this Equality and Diversity Policy and support respectful behaviours. All are supported by appropriate training or briefing sessions and guidance provided by appropriate services. Mandatory equality and diversity e-learning modules are available through the Health and Safety team and advice and guidance is also available from Human Resources. Robust monitoring of equality and diversity courses will take place as part of the training and development section of the Action Plan.

Key policies – such as those relating to employment, service delivery, community engagement, commissioning, and procurement - are specifically designed to:

- promote equality of opportunity;
- protect people against unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- and foster positive relationships with and between communities.

We will collect and analyse data relating to these areas of policy, to identify trends and areas of inequality, and then take appropriate action. Action around the monitoring of equality data and how the Council uses it will be included in the Action Plan.

Communications

The Equality and Diversity Policy is available on the intranet and our external website. We will use all opportunities to promote the policy and embrace technology to do this, for example: at induction events for new staff and within our procurement and commissioning processes.

Reviewing this policy

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner to reflect changes in the law if appropriate.