Equality Policy

Incorporating Equality in Employment
May 2017

North Somerset COUNCIL

To obtain a copy in an alternative format or language please contact the Equality and Diversity Team on 01934 634832 or send an email to: louise.roberts@n-somerset.gov.uk

Introduction

North Somerset Council welcomes our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and are committed to meeting them.

Everyone who lives and works in North Somerset is covered by the Equality Act and we are pleased to publish this refreshed Equality Policy. This policy supports the ongoing work carried out by the council to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to live, work, learn and feel part of the community free from prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

We recognise that to achieve this we need to deliver services in ways that are appropriate to everyone and, whenever possible, to remove barriers that limit access to services and employment opportunities. We celebrate the diversity of North Somerset and are striving to promote and reflect that diversity within our organisation.

We are exploring many new ways of supporting communities and providing access to services. Considering the needs and the impacts of any changes on our diverse communities will continue to be a core consideration as we move forward.

The council's overall Vision is:

'A great place to live where people, businesses and communities flourish. Modern, efficient services and a strong voice for North Somerset.'

In support of our vision we aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- Prosperity and opportunity
- Health and wellbeing
- Quality Places

Ensuring equality of opportunity and recognising diversity is central to delivering these outcomes, making this policy the responsibility of everyone including elected Members, managers, staff, and our partners.

This policy sets out how the council integrates equality and diversity into its key functions, including strategic planning, policy and decision-making right through to how we commission, support or deliver services and employ staff.

If you would like to comment on the policy or would like any more information please contact Louise Roberts, Equality and Diversity Manager 01934 634832 or via e-mail at louise.roberts@n-somerset.gov.uk

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Our Commitments

North Somerset Council is committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of services and aims to create the best possible quality of life for people who live in, work in or visit the area.

We recognise and accept that particular individuals or groups are sometimes denied equality through discrimination and we will work hard to ensure that wherever possible this is challenged and put right.

Our commitment is to create an environment for everyone in North Somerset:

- that promotes dignity and respect for all;
- where people are able to recognise, value and respect diversity and difference;
- where people are treated fairly and according to their needs;
- where people from different groups feel comfortable living alongside one another in communities;
- where no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment is tolerated;
- where causes of unfairness are understood and where possible addressed.

We will treat everyone with the same attention, courtesy and respect regardless of:

- Age
- Disability
- Race or racial group (including colour, nationality and ethnic origin or national origins)
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Gender reassignment/ gender identity
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation

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

We will strive to achieve these commitments by:

1. responding positively to the duties placed upon us by the Equality Act 2010

2. using equality impact assessments to ensure we wherever possible eliminate or reduce inequality, including the consideration of equality and diversity throughout our decision making process

3. providing mandatory training for all employees and training for elected Members, so that they have a good understanding of their role and responsibilities under equality legislation and the diverse needs of different people

4. developing and delivering services which are designed to meet the diverse needs of our customers and are of the highest possible quality and accessible

5. ensuring that people have the opportunity to engage with and participate in the planning and delivery of services

6. providing clear information about our services in a variety of formats

7. monitoring our services to ensure that they do not discriminate, using the information gathered to make improvements to services

8. procuring goods and services only from organisations that demonstrate a commitment to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010

9. supporting and encouraging our partners to fulfil their equality and diversity commitments

10. investigating and taking appropriate action on all reported hate incidents

11. having clear structures for responsibility to ensure the consideration of equality and diversity matters across the council

12. ensuring equality of opportunity in employment

1. Responding positively to the duties placed upon us by the Equality Act 2010

The council will fulfil the duties of the Equality Act 2010 to ensure equality of opportunity, elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations between all communities in North Somerset.

The council acknowledges and welcomes these statutory duties and uses the legislation and national guidance as a framework to maintain and, where possible, improve standards and be accountable to the people within our communities.

1.1 Public Sector Equality Duties (PSEDs)

The Equality Act 2010 (Section 149) sets out public sector equality duties, which the council must consider. The General duties are:

1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Advancing equality of opportunity involves, in particular, having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of people who do not share it;
- encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.

Meeting different needs includes, for example, taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities.

Fostering good relations includes having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

Compliance with the general equality duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

1.2 Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act includes the requirement to consider the following protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment

- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- and marriage and civil partnership. (This protected characteristic applies only to general duty 1.)

The council carries out a wide range of activity in response to these duties, including:

1.3 Publishing Equality Information

We publish a range of equality information to demonstrate the breadth of information we have and also to illustrate how this information has been used in developing and delivering services.

The type of information we publish includes:

- Demographic information
- Employment data about our staff including; recruitment, establishment and training data
- Information about our service users including the demographic profile of who receives a service from us
- The results from our consultation exercises, where possible and appropriate with the results disaggregated by protected groups

The information is included within a wide range of council documents, available on our website, and is updated on a regular basis.

1.3 Setting Equality Objectives

We use the information we gather through the analysis of our equality information, the results from consultation activity and the actions required by Equality Impact Assessments to identify equality objectives for the council.

Equality objectives help focus attention and priority on key equality issues and are incorporated into Annual Directorate Statements, the outcomes from the objectives are monitored on a regular basis by the Corporate Management Team and Equality Scheme Implementation Group.

The council has 4 equality objectives, which have been set in consultation with stakeholders and staff:

- Services and information we provide are accessible and meet the needs of all our diverse customers.
- Where we know there is a difference in outcomes for equality groups, we will work to reduce it.
- The Council and its partners will work to provide and enable employment opportunities for people and equalities groups.
- We will ensure that all who work for and with us support our commitment to promoting equality and diversity and tackling inequality and social exclusion wherever it occurs.

The Equality Objectives along with success measures, projects and performance measures can be found on the council's web page.

2. Using Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to ensure we wherever possible eliminate or reduce inequality

The Code of Practice on the Public Sector Equality Duty[1] states that to comply with the requirements of the duties the following should occur:

- Establish the relevance of the duty to your functions
- Collect and use equality information
- Assess the impact of decision making, policies and practices on equality issues
- Develop an evidence base through engagement with people with different protected characteristics

The above steps have been incorporated into the Council's Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Process.

To support compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duties, equality impacts are assessed and considered:

- During the development or amendment of council policies
- As a part of the council's Performance Management Framework
- At the start of any new procurement or commissioning exercise
- As a key part of the council's budget setting process alongside the development of the medium term financial plan and any associated budgetary reductions.

All of the 9 protected characteristics as listed in the Equality Act are considered in an EIA.

The council also recognises that other groups may also be disadvantaged and experience inequality and requires officers (where relevant) to consider the impact of the proposal on any other relevant groups, which includes (but is not exclusive to):

- Parents, Carers, Service and Ex-service Personnel and their families, children looked after by the authority, Ex-offenders, people in low socio-economic groups and those living in rural communities.
- The impacts on reducing the wide geographical differences in health and life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas is particularly important in North Somerset.

The information gathered through an EIA is presented to decision makers in an appropriate way so that it can influence the decision making or approval process.

Council EIAs are available on the Council's webpage.

[1] http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/EqualityAct/PSED/essential_guide_update.pdf

3. Raising awareness of Equality and Diversity

As a provider of services and community leader it's important that all our staff and elected Members understand about equality and diversity and how to operate in a non-discriminatory and inclusive way.

We take seriously our responsibility to ensure that elected Members, managers and staff are aware of the equality issues that affect the work that they do, but also to ensure an awareness of broader equality issues.

We continue to use and develop formal and informal methods of training to support staff and managers. A range of training is offered, this includes; Fair for All (mandatory training for all staff), Equality Impact Assessments and focused training sessions on areas including deaf awareness, the needs of gypsies and travellers, responding to hate incidents and accessible information and services etc.

Our training programme for equality and diversity provides an opportunity for staff to:

- improve knowledge about statutory responsibilities
- understand their role in challenging discrimination
- improve their confidence in responding to issues of equality and diversity
- improve their understanding of the needs of equality groups within the community and the workplace

3.1 The expectations of our managers and staff

We aim to create an environment which respects and welcomes everyone, and in which no form of bullying, harassment, disrespectful or discriminatory behaviour is tolerated by anyone towards anyone.

We spend a lot of time at work and we want our working life to be productive, rewarding, enjoyable and healthy. We all have a part to play in making this happen in North Somerset Council. The way we behave and communicate with our colleagues becomes the model for others in 'the way we do things around here'.

We promote a positive work environment, in where we:

- believe in treating everyone with respect and consideration
- set a strong personal example of good equalities practice at all times
- are sensitive to the needs and views of others
- colleagues feel valued and we have a sense of loyalty and pride in our organisation
- are open, fair and honest in the way we act and what we do and encourage this in others
- belong to a diverse workforce that reflects our community
- encourage creativity and job satisfaction arising from team work and co-operation
- have a measure of self-determination over how we do our job
- have opportunities for personal development and career progression
- expect high quality leadership and management
- encourage open discussion that leads to resolving conflict
- challenge inappropriate behaviour

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Workplace Behaviour Policy.

3.2 Values and Behaviours Framework

All council officers have a crucial role to play in helping meet the needs of all residents, customers and communities. We place much importance on ensuring that our staff demonstrate the right behaviours and values.

The council's Values and Behaviours Framework describes ways in which staff are expected to behave in all aspects of their work. It sets out the attitudes and approach we expect from staff and managers – how we do things, how we treat others, what we say, how we say it and how we can expect to be treated.

Equality and Diversity is a key feature of the framework and all staff are expected to demonstrate their support for the framework during 1-2-1s, team meetings and appraisals etc.

3.2.1 Elected members

In discharging their community leadership role, council members are expected to lead by example, treating others with respect and not to act in any way that compromises the council's public sector equality duties.

3.3 Promoting equality and diversity across North Somerset

We are committed to creating an environment where people are respected, valued and feel comfortable living alongside one another. It is important that the council uses its influence to promote equality and celebrate the diversity of North Somerset across the area. We will take all available opportunities to promote this positive environment through:

- Features in North Somerset Life and other Council communications
- Attendance at important community events that seek to celebrate diversity such as Your North Somerset and PRIDE.
- Our work with the media

We will test the perception of equality and diversity with our residents through our consultation.

4. Delivering relevant, high quality and accessible services

We aim to deliver and develop services to meet the diverse needs of all of our customers. We also strive to provide a welcoming, friendly environment which is easily accessible to all, to take steps to improve access to services, facilities and information where needed and be honest about what we can and cannot do.

Managers work to ensure that services are monitored and reviewed effectively so that they remain relevant and accessible, these reviews may include:

- Completion of an Equality Impact Assessment to check for any positive or negative impacts a service or policy may have on different people and communities.
- Monitoring where relevant, necessary, possible, appropriate and proportionate.
- Involving people, including minority and disadvantaged communities, so that their needs can be met in the best way.

- Considering alternative methods of provision if the above identifies barriers to access or disadvantage.
- Developing evidence bases to identify the needs of our customers and gaps in service provision, to assist with service development and strategic commissioning.

5. Consultation, engagement and participation in the planning and delivery of service

Consultation, engagement and participation enable the views of those who are affected by a service or policy to be considered. Ensuring the view of equality groups is included does not just mean a general advertising of intended changes and a request for comments, but includes positive efforts to identify and engage in dialogue with those people/groups.

These views help the council to become aware of issues and problems that various groups face (both in the community and our staff) which the organisation might not otherwise discover. Consultation and engagement with communities and staff provides an important means of enabling those who may be adversely affected by the policy to participate in the process and enables us to plan service developments to better meet needs.

The council has adopted 3 principles to ensure that our consultation is of a high quality:

1. All consultations must be subject to quality assurance in their design.

2. We publicise all consultations via eConsult and monthly posters (for non-computer users) in libraries. Also Woodspring Talking News is sent a monthly list of consultation for inclusion within its regular publication. Major consultations are also included in North Somerset Life.

3. We report the results of all consultations within 6 months of the close of data entry.

5.1 Accessible consultation

We make every effort to ensure that consultation is inviting, engaging and accessible. We do this through the consideration of people's needs in participating in consultation, for example:

- accessible venues
- format of the consultation
- timing.

For more information please refer to the council's Accessible Meeting Guide.

5.2 Consulting on equality issues

Where relevant we target consultation across diverse communities to ensure they have appropriate opportunities to fully participate in planning services and influencing decision making. The council facilitates a range of engagement groups, they are available for discussion and comment, these groups, include:

- Equality Scheme Implementation Group

- Black and Other Minority Ethnic Engagement Project
- Disability Access Group
- Older People Advisory Group
- Senior Community Link
- Older People's Champions Group
- North Somerset Parent Forum
- Children in Care Council
- Disabled Children and Young People Focus group
- Learning Difficulties Partnership Board
- Learning Difficulties Carers Group
- Healthwatch
- Staff groups

An up to date contact list is available from the Equality and Diversity Team.

6. Providing clear information about our services in a variety of formats

Staff are encouraged to consider the needs of all customers and take steps to make information as accessible and as easy-to-read as possible, use plain English and follow corporate guidance on font size, contrast, typeface etc.

6.1 Accessible formats

Disabled people should not be disadvantaged when accessing council information. This includes the provision of information in a variety of formats, which enables disabled people to access information through reasonable alternative methods, for example text files, Braille, audiotape, large print, in sign language, in person etc. according to their individual needs.

Following clarity of the format with the person making the request, the provision of alternative formats should be met as quickly as possible; the cost of the provision of the information is to be met by the service providing the information.

The council has a duty to anticipate reasonable adjustments for disabled people by making information readily available in alternative formats where there is an expected need. For example, large print, Easy Read and audio. This is particularly important where response times are limited, to avoid putting the disabled person at a disadvantage if their response is delayed whilst waiting for an alternative format to be provided, an example of this would be a consultation exercise.

6.2 Translation

The council will not discriminate against anyone because their first language is not English. To enable us to meet our customer service principles for everyone in North Somerset it is our policy to provide a translation of a written document or an interpreter, where necessary.

Interpreting and translation into a language other than English will be provided upon a request or if a council officer working with a customer identifies it is as necessary to enable the delivery of a service.

It is our policy to use professional interpreters or translators to make sure we can communicate effectively and professionally with our customers.

7. Equality Monitoring to Improve Services

We want to make sure that our services are provided fairly and to those who need them. Equality monitoring information helps us get a picture of who contacts us, uses or does not access our services. It helps improve what we provide and reduce potential barriers to access. In addition we have a requirement under the Equality Act 2010 to understand the impact of our policies and services on protected groups.

For these reasons we encourage service users and employees to participate in equality monitoring. We do however acknowledge that there are some people who prefer not to participate, so offer a 'prefer not to say' option on all monitoring forms.

It is out policy to only carry out equality monitoring where we are confident that we can gather useful information that will be acted upon. Customers and employees will not be asked for personal information unless the information is going to be used to improve services or reveal possible inequality of access.

When requesting equality information we will apply the following principles:

- An explanation of what the data will be used for and why it is important to us will be provided.
- We will ask for the information in an appropriate manner, in line with guidance from the Office of National Statistics and other recognised bodies.
- The information gathered will be treated strictly in accordance with Data Protection legislation.

Please see the Council's monitoring guidance for more information.

8. Procuring goods and services

North Somerset Council is a significant commissioner of services and purchases many things so it can carry out its work and deliver its services.

The general equality duty included within the Equality Act 2010 applies to all of our purchasing activity regardless of its value. The council is responsible for ensuring that any third parties which exercise functions on our behalf are capable of complying with the Equality Duty, are required through contract to comply with it, and that they do so in practice. The Equality Duty and its associated liability cannot be delegated therefore it is the role for the council to ensure that our partners are fully aware of the Equality Duty and what it means to us.

Accordingly it is our policy:

- To require any company or business that wishes to be one of our suppliers or contractors to have developed policies on equality in relation to employment and services delivery.
- To ensure that the relevance of equality is incorporated into the procurement process in a proportionate way. (I.e. the actions taken are proportionate to the degree of relevance of the equality issue to the individual procurement)
- Not to award a contract to any organisation that is not able to adequately demonstrate an understanding of and compliance with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
- To cease issuing contracts to, purchasing from or commissioning any contractor, business or organisation, where they fail to comply with the Equality Duty.

9. Supporting and encouraging our partners to fulfil their equality and diversity commitments

We recognise that our general duties do not end when we are working in partnership with other organisations, even if those organisations are not under the same proactive duties.

We work alongside other public, private, voluntary and community groups to ensure that they have positive plans and approaches to the promotion of equality and recognition of diversity. We will share information and examples of good practice and learn from the good practice of other organisations.

The council leads a number of partnership forums that focus on equality issues, for example the Equality Scheme Implementation Group, Corporate Gypsy and Traveller Group and Learning Disabilities Partnership Board all who work together to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable and marginalised residents in North Somerset.

We will continue to use our position in the community and on partnership boards to promote equality across North Somerset. Through our joint working on the Sustainable Community Strategy with members of the North Somerset Partnership (NSP), and it's partnership boards; the People and Communities Board and Local Economy Board we will work to improve economic, social and environmental well-being in North Somerset.

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10. Responding to hate incidents in North Somerset

The council is opposed to all forms of hate incidents and will positively support residents, visitors or council representatives who experience such incidents.

A hate incident is any incident that is perceived by the victim or any other person as being motivated by the prejudice towards someone's:

- race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin
- religion or belief
- sexual orientation
- disability
- or gender identity *[2]

People in North Somerset have the right to live, work, and visit without being subjected to hate incidents. Where a person believes a hate incident has taken place, they have the right to complain about the incident. The council will take appropriate action to try to prevent these incidents occurring again and to support those affected by such incidents.

Those affected will receive a prompt, sympathetic and sensitive response from the council. All reported hate incidents will be investigated and appropriate action taken by the council.

It is difficult to prescribe what an appropriate response would be in all circumstances as this depends on the nature of the incident and the wishes of the person affected by the incident. However the council endeavours to investigate the situation, make recommendations and agree with those affected the action to be taken.

The Council's policy is to:

- Encourage people in the community and within the council to report any hate incidents
- Make it easy for them to report such incidents
- Support them when they make a report
- Investigate the situation thoroughly within agreed timescales
- Deal with the perpetrators appropriately

The council works in partnership with agencies such as Avon and Somerset Police, health services, housing associations and voluntary and community groups to respond to and resolve hate incidents in North Somerset. This is achieved by identifying trends, resolving issues and reporting results to relevant agencies.

Please see the council's website for more information about Hate Incident Reporting.

11. Clear structures for responsibility to ensure the delivery of equality and diversity across the council.

Everyone who uses services, facilities and information provided by the council should be treated in line with this policy. This includes service users/customers, the general public, partners, contractors, employees and elected Members.

[2] Other elements of identity based incidents are reported and responded to though anti-bullying and anti-social behaviour policies.

Although volunteers are not specifically protected under the Equality Act 2010, they are expected to comply with, and be treated in line with, the spirit of this policy.

Schools and Academies are subject to the requirements of the Equality Act and need to adopt their own individual policy for equality and diversity.

11.1 Council structure

The lines of responsibility delivering the equality and diversity agenda within the council are:

- The Chief Executive and Executive Member for Finance, Human Resources and Asset Management have overall responsibility for this policy, and fulfil the leadership functions both internally and externally.

- The Chief Executive and Executive Member are supported by the corporate champion for equality and diversity whose focus is external leadership, working with our partner organisations and the Head of Performance Improvement and Human Resources whose focus is on equality and diversity within the council.

- The Equality Scheme Implementation Group is made up of officers, elected Members and representatives from Trade Unions, Voluntary and Community Groups and internal forums such as staff forums and directorate equality groups. This group receives a progress report twice a year to enable them to discuss and challenge progress on the council's equality objectives.

- Directorate equality groups perform a monitoring role, and also ensure that the equality impact assessments, objectives and outcomes are agreed within the directorate and are carried through into action.

- The Equality and Diversity Manager is responsible for the co-ordination of the implementation of this policy.

11.2 Feedback

Anyone wishing to discuss this policy or make any comments or suggestions please contact the Equality and Diversity Team; equalities@n-somerset.gov.uk, telephone: 01934 634832.

If you are unhappy with our services please tell us. We want to know so we can try to put things right. If you have a concern or complaint you can access the Council's feedback procedure via the council's web page or contact customer.services@n-somerset.gov.uk, telephone: 01934 888888.

If you are an employee then you should access the Council's Grievance procedure.

12. Ensuring equal opportunities in employment

Outline and Policy

North Somerset Council is committed to ensuring that we provide equality of opportunity to all in our employment. We need a workforce which reflects the community we serve to make sure that we provide appropriate services to all our diverse communities. We will work to ensure that we do not unfairly discriminate against any job applicant or employee for any reason. The council will use positive action to put right past inequalities in the workplace, examples of this positive action include Disability Confident Employer Scheme and the Apprenticeship Development Programme.

1. Policy Statement

North Somerset Council recognises its statutory public sector equality duties and other responsibilities under legislation in terms of employment and is committed to meet them by complying with this policy.

1.1 Commitments

We strive to ensure that the work environment is free from harassment and bullying. Treating everyone with dignity and respect is an important aspect of ensuring equality of opportunity. The council has a separate Workplace Behaviour Policy that sets out our approach to this.

The council is committed to ensuring that no discrimination occurs in recruitment or employment because of a person's protected characteristic. This commitment applies to all employees and elected Members and adheres to our Code of Conduct. We will also be working with our stakeholders, contractors and partners, to influence their employment policies and ensure their practices reflect our policy.

We will achieve this by:

- ensuring that our recruitment and selection policies and procedures are equitable and fair so that the best people are appointed to deliver our services, all recruiting officers must go on to the recruitment and selection training

- only considering applicants for jobs on the basis of their relevant experience, skills and abilities unless a 'Genuine Occupational Qualification' (GOQ) exists for specific posts

- using appropriate methods, including positive action, to address the under-representation of any group which the council identifies as being under-represented in particular types of jobs (for example Disability Confident and Apprenticeship Scheme)

- ensuring that all employees receive fair and equal treatment in relation to their employment, regardless of whether they are part-time, full-time or employed on a temporary basis

- ensuring that disabled people are provided with all reasonable adjustments including support, equipment and facilities in their employment, making use of the Access to Work Scheme wherever necessary

- ensuring that protected characteristic are not used as a criterion for redundancy

- regular review of the support needs of disabled employees under the Health and Disability Absence Management Policy.

- supporting the development and running of employee forums and networks for protected characteristic groups (e.g. disability, carers, BME, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender)

- ensuring that employment policies and opportunities are of the highest possible quality, therefore equality, equity and consistency are embedded in practices, pay and conditions

- promoting opportunities for flexible working, where operational requirements allow

- encouraging and supporting employees to reach their full potential through the provision of work and personal development opportunities within the resources we have available to us

- taking appropriate action against incidents of harassment, bullying or discrimination, and offering support and advice to those directly affected or witnesses to incidents

- taking disciplinary action against employees who discriminate against people who work for the council or those who seek employment with the council – we will take action (including legal action if appropriate) against employees whose behaviour is proven to be discriminatory

- carrying out equality monitoring of our recruitment and employment practices and equality analysis of the results from our annual staff survey.

1.2 Employee Monitoring

Monitoring is an essential part of tackling inequality and discrimination, it helps us check whether our policies, services and organisational culture are meeting the needs of our employees and the wider community.

Any data collected will be analysed and reported on and can be used within the council for:

- setting targets

- reviewing our employment practice and comparing our performance over time

- developing services and assisting with making changes

The council will monitor employees on the basis of their age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, religion and belief and ethnicity across a range of employment areas such as recruitment, training and development, staff survey and those leaving the council's employment where appropriate, and where the information gathered can be usefully used to improve employment opportunities.

Equality monitoring data is subject to the Data Protection Act and will be treated in accordance with this Act.

1.3 Implementation

Managers have a duty to pass on information on Equality in Employment, equality training and complaints procedures to employees and to include equality in all employee induction and appraisal processes.

The council will ensure that employees and elected Members have appropriate training and awareness of equality and diversity, ensuring that individual behaviours and performance are appropriate and don't adversely impact on individuals or groups.

To comply with this policy, all employees and elected Members must:

- co-operate with any measures introduced to ensure equal opportunity;
- report any suspected discriminatory incidents or behaviours
- not influence or attempt to persuade others to practice unlawful discrimination or harassment;
- not victimise or harass anyone as a result of them having reported or provided evidence of discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- not harass, abuse or intimidate others on account of any of the protected characteristics
- not lobby job applicants in an attempt to discourage them from applying or taking up a post; and
- when developing new or changing existing plans, policies or procedures full analysis of the equality impacts will be completed, the outcomes of which will be made available.

1.4 Information and training

Employees will be provided with appropriate training regardless of their protected characteristic or employment status.

The council will:

- Seek to ensure that all employees are developed through appropriate and accessible learning opportunities in line with organisational needs.
- Provide training that complies with the council's Equality Policy.
- Provide appropriate level equality and diversity awareness training as part of its corporate learning and organisational development programme.
- Include equality and diversity as part of its Member development programme.

1.5 Responsibilities

All employees and elected Members are responsible for acting in accordance with the Equality in Employment Policy.

This means that employees and elected Members must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duties:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the council for any act of unlawful discrimination.

Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence. Acts of discrimination, harassment, bulling or victimisation against employees or customers are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedures.

Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

1.6 Complaints

Complaints about breaches of this policy will be dealt with through the council's Feedback Policy or Grievance Procedures depending on the nature of the breach. This could include taking legal action if appropriate.

Other important documents and links

Equality Objectives

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011, the council is required to publish one or more objectives we think we should achieve to do any of the things mentioned in the 3 general duties.

These equality objectives help focus attention and priority on key equality issues.

http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/equality-objectives.pdf

Equality Information

The council publishes a range of equality information to demonstrate the diversity of the area and uses this information in the development and delivery of services.

http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/equality-information-booklet.pdf

Hate Incident Reporting

Hate crimes are crimes targeted at a person because of hostility or prejudice toward that person's: disability, race or ethnicity, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender identity. Use the link below to report a hate incident.

http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/my-services/community-safety-crime/crime-hate-incidents/hatereport/

Accessible info guide

The Equality Act 2010 clearly states that disabled people should not be disadvantaged in accessing information or services. This guide sets out how council officers should arrange information in alternative formats.

https://theaccessofficer.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/accessible-information-guide-2014.pdf

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The council also has a duty to work with the North Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group to develop the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The JSNA is important document to describe the current and future health and social care needs of the North Somerset population including identifying key groups with greater needs. The information is intended to guide priority setting and the commissioning of local services.

http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/community/partnerships/Pages/Joint-strategic-needs-assessment.aspx