



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 Ashfield District Council's Corporate Plan for 2023-2027 sets out an ambitious programme for the Council including a firm commitment to enabling everyone to live healthier and happier lives, to prosper in their communities and remain independent throughout life. We want Ashfield to be a place where no-one experiences discrimination or disadvantage because of their individual characteristics, and where the diversity of our community and employees is recognised, supported and valued.
- 1.2 The Council has self-assessed as being at the Achieving level of the three levels of achievement set out under the Equality Framework for Local Government. This policy sets out the Council's commitment to valuing diversity and inclusivity, promoting equality of opportunity in all of its activities. As a Council we will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or victimisation and will strive to promote equality of opportunity for everyone, improve services and working practices to embrace diversity and inclusion, and foster good relations within our organisation and our community.
- 1.3 This policy will apply to all Council employees and Councillors. It will also set the standard by which we wish our partners and third-party service providers to conduct themselves in the services they provide on our behalf. This policy sets out how the Council will meet its legal responsibilities as defined within the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty both as an employer and public service provider.

2. Our Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Council believes that equality is one of the key values of the organisation and must be embedded within all of the services we provide. The Council will treat everyone as individuals with the same attention, courtesy and respect to ensure that people do feel valued and respected and have equality of opportunity regardless of:

- Marital or civil partnership status
- Sex/Gender
- Gender reassignment/gender identity
- Religious belief
- Race (including colour, nationality or ethnic origins)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Maternity and paternity

These are known as “Protected Characteristics” under the Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”). Additionally, the Council, recognising the difficulties and potential disadvantages and discrimination that children and young people with care experience may suffer from, has formally and voluntarily agreed to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic.

2.2 The Council’s general duty under the Act requires it to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

2.3 The Council has specific duties to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty and to set specific, measurable equality objectives at least every four years.

3. Our Equality Objectives

3.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to consider the needs of different groups and individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work. It requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations

between different people when carrying out their activities.

3.2 The Council's equality objectives were reviewed in 2022 to reflect the Corporate Plan, and are as follows:

- 1) To maintain a modern and diverse workforce that is reflective of the local community, who feel valued and treated fairly;
- 2) To ensure community engagement and consultation is effective, enabling participation;
- 3) To provide advice, information and services in a way that is effective, inclusive and accessible;
- 4) To support individuals and communities to achieve a better quality of life particularly targeting resources at areas of most need.

3.3 We will measure and report on the effectiveness of our service delivery and employee policies and processes in relation to these objectives through performance monitoring and management information. The Equality Position Statement (published annually) will demonstrate what progress has been made against the objectives each year.

4. Our Workforce

4.1 The Council is committed to the principles of equality of opportunity within its employment practices. We are committed to employing a diverse workforce that reflects the community we serve and aim to provide a working environment where all employees are valued and respected and where discrimination, bullying, harassment and the promotion of negative stereotyping are not tolerated.

4.2 All employees and applicants for employment will be treated fairly and not discriminated against based on any of the protected characteristics as defined within the Act or any other reason unless it can be shown to be justified (for example, positive action).

4.3 Training and development opportunities will be made available

according to business requirements and will be allocated fairly to staff. We will ensure that development and learning opportunities are inclusive in their own right and reasonable adjustments will be made according to individual need. We are committed to providing all employees with opportunities to maximise their skills and achieve their potential, offering flexible working arrangements wherever possible.

4.4 We will ensure the workplace is as accessible as possible.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for any disabled employee or Councillor.

4.5 Training for all employees seeks to equip them with the awareness, knowledge, skills and information necessary to manage and respond to equality, diversity and inclusivity issues experienced in the workplace as well as focussing on legislative requirements. The profile of the Council's workforce and its recruitment processes will be monitored in order to understand the issues that affect them and ensure equal treatment for all.

5. Our Customers

5.1 Our customers and residents will be treated with fairness and respect, and without discrimination. Appropriate monitoring of service usage will take place in order to understand our customers and ensure that any barriers to services are removed.

6. Equality Impact Assessments

6.1 Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's) are undertaken before making important decisions to assess the potential impact on residents, communities and employees and to identify what the Council needs to do to mitigate any negative impacts, including early consultation with those affected by the Council's decisions.

7. Procurement

7.1 The Council provides a wide range of services to the community and businesses in the District. In some cases these are provided directly by employees but in other cases, contractors and partners may provide them on the Council's behalf. The Council will seek to ensure that its procurement activity promotes equality of opportunity for all and expects suppliers, contractors and those delivering services on behalf of the Council to share these values.

8. Partnerships and Third-Party Providers

8.1 The Council recognises that working alone will not accomplish all our ambitions so for that reason we work closely with other agencies, local communities and voluntary organisations to achieve our objectives and enhance the perception of Ashfield as a great place to live and work.

8.2 As an organisation we will always seek to promote equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the District. We will work with our partners and other organisations on equality, diversity and inclusion issues that affect the District and will encourage them to adopt and implement equality, diversity and inclusion policies and plans similar to our own. We will promote inclusion, fairness, equality and diversity within partnership working and our internal and external communications.

9. Corporate Responsibility

9.1 The Council will assign specific responsibilities to ensure that employees and Councillors are equipped with the skills necessary to effectively deliver and support the Corporate Equality Objectives. However, it is the responsibility of everyone at the Council to lead by example and uphold the equality objectives.

9.2 This policy will be overseen by Councillors and the Strategic Leadership

Team who will provide leadership and support for improving equality practice and ensure that resources are made available to support the delivery of equality objectives. In addition, Councillors will consider and apply equality in all work with the local community as well as providing a scrutiny and overview role. The Strategic Leadership Team is responsible for championing the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and ensuring that employees are motivated to deliver it.

- 9.3 The Corporate Leadership Team will be responsible for the achievement and effective monitoring of the policy in their services, supported by service managers. In addition, the Corporate Leadership Team will ensure that equality impact assessments are carried out on all relevant policies and activities of the service area, identify equality related actions and incorporate them within service planning, ensure that all employees have completed equality training, ensure that all employees are aware of the process and procedure for reporting hate crime or discriminatory and prejudicial activity or behaviour, share equality data, correspondence and good practice in team meetings and consult with service users.
- 9.4 All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure the effective communication of this policy to all Councillors and employees. Councillors and employees will be offered skills training to enable them to meet the requirements of this policy. All employees are expected to understand, uphold and promote the corporate values and equality objectives, treat colleagues and service users with respect and according to their individual need, challenge activity or behaviour that is discriminatory, falls below expected standards or fails to uphold the corporate values and equality objectives and report any hate crime or discriminatory and prejudicial activity or behaviour observed.
- 9.5 The internal Equality Monitoring Group will oversee the development and embedding of this policy, monitor and review progress against the Corporate Equality Objectives, communicate corporate equality information and initiatives to service areas, share service delivery good

practice in response to the equality, inclusion and diversity issues faced by the Council and oversee the rolling Equalities Improvement Plan.

9.6 Partner Organisations will adhere to any equality guidelines in agreements or contracts, demonstrate their commitment to equality, inclusion and diversity and have policies and procedures in place to achieve this, share service delivery good practice and participate in consultation and provide feedback on Council services, procedures and processes.

10. Review

10.1 This Policy will be kept under regular review to ensure that it reflects best practice, changes in law and organisational changes.