

GATESHEAD COUNCIL
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Policy Statement

1. At Gateshead Council we recognise and value a society that consists of many diverse groups and individuals and consider that this diversity is a strength of the borough.
2. We aim to ensure that all groups and individuals within our community and our workforce have equal opportunity to benefit from the services and employment opportunities that we provide.
3. We will take every reasonable and practical step to ensure that no person using council premises or services will receive less favourable treatment or will be disadvantaged by requirements or conditions that cannot be shown to be justifiable.
4. We are committed to ensuring that:
 - There is equality of opportunity in terms of access to the Council's services and that the provision of services reflects, and is appropriate to, the needs of all sections of our community.
 - Prospective and present employees are afforded equal and fair treatment in relation to recruitment, selection, terms and conditions of employment, training and promotion.
5. The policies and practices of the Council aim to promote an environment that is free from all forms of unlawful discrimination and values the diversity of all people. We aim to seek to treat people equally, fairly and with dignity and respect.

Scope

6. This policy applies to all Gateshead Council's elected members, employees and services, and services delivered by third parties on behalf of the council. It also applies to persons who have registered with the Council as volunteers. We will take proactive steps to ensure that the policy is known to all councillors, employees, potential employees, volunteers and organisations that we work with.
7. It describes how we aim to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that the principles of equality are embedded in all our service delivery and decision making.
8. The policy also demonstrates our commitment to actively combating discrimination and ensuring that prospective or existing employees, and those who wish to use the Council's services, are not treated less favourably on the

grounds of the protected characteristics outlined within the Equality Act 2010, namely of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or religious belief
- Sexual orientation
- Sex (formerly gender)

This includes discrimination against persons on the grounds that they are *associated* with a person who shares a protected characteristic or are *perceived* to share a protected characteristic.

Equality in Service Delivery

9. We will ensure that:
 - councillors and employees receive training so that they do not discriminate against service users unlawfully
 - our services are designed, reviewed and monitored to deliver appropriate, accessible services that avoid discrimination against anyone, identify barriers to access, and implement improvement as necessary
 - contractors, suppliers and funded service providers abide by the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and provide an effective and appropriate service to communities
 - when seeking views and engaging in consultation, that we are inclusive and encourage participation from all sectors of our community, including our employees, to ensure robust and informative decisions are reached by the Council
 - we provide clear information about our services, in accessible formats where required.
 - Equality of opportunity is embedded in all our policies, procedures, day to day practices, decision making and external relationships.

Equality in Employment

10. We will ensure that:
 - our employment practices and policies provide equality of opportunity in employment and do not unfairly discriminate against any group or individual
 - managers are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and that employees are aware of its content
 - all employees are responsible for ensuring they conduct themselves professionally and treat colleagues, councillors and customers in a fair and equitable manner at all times
 - managers involved in recruitment and selection processes are appropriately trained to ensure we operate fair employment practices

- access to training and development opportunities are provided to all councillors and employees so that we retain a suitably skilled and knowledgeable workforce
- regular monitoring, data collection and analysis of job applicants is undertaken to identify any barriers to access
- where appropriate, positive action is taken to encourage under-represented groups to apply for posts or specific training
- our commitment to equal opportunities is incorporated into the Council's induction process
- any form of unfair treatment, discrimination, victimisation or harassment of any, or by any, of our employees is properly dealt with by applying the appropriate Council policies and procedures.

Public Sector Equality Duty

11. In carrying out its functions the Council will comply with its duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty and will consider the needs of all individuals in service delivery and policy formulation. This includes our own employees and workers, such as those employed through an agency.
12. The Council will publish information to demonstrate our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty each year and set equality objectives every four years or less. [Link here to report](#)

Responsibility for implementation

13. All councillors and employees have responsibility for ensuring that the Equal Opportunities Policy is implemented and adhered to.
14. The Leader of the Council has overall strategic responsibility for Inclusion and Equalities within their portfolio. Management responsibility is with the Council's leadership team who are required to ensure that this policy is embedded at all levels of the organisation.
15. All Council employees should act in line with this policy and ensure they treat colleagues and customers fairly and with respect.

Breaches of this policy

16. Should breaches of this policy occur, the Council will take action to correct behaviour and reinforce its expectations of employees, service users, volunteers, contractors, suppliers and partners in supporting the policy.
17. This policy is incorporated into the Code of Conduct for our Elected Members so that a breach of the policy by a councillor may be construed as a breach of the Code.
18. Discrimination on grounds of the protected characteristics listed in paragraph 8 is unlawful. Where an employee of the Council knowingly discriminates against another employee or service user for reasons relating to that characteristic, or

verbally abuses, or sends abusive correspondence to another, this may lead to action being taken under the Council's disciplinary policy. For the avoidance of doubt, volunteers are not deemed to be employees of the Council.

Review of this policy

19. Gateshead Council's Equal Opportunities Policy will be reviewed every three years, or earlier should related policy or legislative requirements change.

Revised: 9 May 2019