

# Equality and Diversity Policy

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This Equality and Diversity Policy evidences due regard to the aims and requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty. The policy consists of ten sections:

1. Purpose
2. Accountability
3. Legal and policy framework
4. Our Commitments
5. Equality and diversity in employment
6. Equality and Diversity in service provision
7. Equality and Diversity in procurement and commissioning
8. Our responsibilities
9. Governance, implementation and monitoring
10. Review

## 1. Purpose

This policy sets out how North Tyneside Council seeks to:

- ensure compliance with the 2010 Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty, and thereby
- achieve its aim that North Tyneside becomes a place where people feel safe and no one experiences discrimination or avoidable disadvantage because of their protected [characteristics](#), background or personal circumstances<sup>1</sup>.

The characteristics protected under the 2010 Equality Act are:

- [age](#)
- [disability](#)
- [gender reassignment](#)
- [marriage and civil partnership](#)
- [pregnancy and maternity](#)
- [race](#)
- [religion or belief](#)
- [sex](#)
- [sexual orientation](#)

## 2. Accountability

The policy is the executive responsibility of Cabinet, and sits within the portfolio held by the Cabinet member for Inclusion, Employment and Skills and with the Assistant Chief Executive.

Oversight of the policy, its implementation and monitoring rests with Senior Leadership Team, supported by [Corporate Equality Group](#) (whose members include representatives from service areas, trades unions and our Strategic Partners). It is chaired by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

However, equality affects and involves everyone and as individuals we are all responsible for own actions and efforts.

## 3. Legal and policy framework

The content of the policy is determined by the following:

- The [2010 Equality Act](#)
- The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#)
- Codes of practice published by the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#).

As one of the borough's leading service providers and employers, and in accordance with our corporate values, North Tyneside Council is committed to developing the borough to be an inclusive place in which to live, work, visit and invest to achieve the ambitions set out in the [Our North Tyneside Plan](#).

## 4. Our commitments

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<sup>1</sup> Protected characteristics cover everyone – we are all a mix of multiple visible and invisible protected characteristics.

To achieve our purpose (as set out in section 1) North Tyneside Council will:

- a) proactively embed equality and diversity considerations in everything we do and challenge others to do the same
- b) meet all our legal equality duties under the [2010 Equality Act](#), the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#), and follow codes of practice published by the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)
- c) not tolerate discrimination, harassment and victimisation on any grounds, and take action against it. This includes all forms of hatred including those targeting protected characteristics such as anti-Semitism (as defined by the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\) definition and supporting guidance](#)) and other religious hatred, racism, sexism, ageism, disablism, religion, homophobia and transphobia (this is not an exhaustive list)
- d) raise awareness of how to report discrimination, harassment and victimisation and the support that is available
- e) publish our equality objectives, equality data<sup>2</sup> and report progress in [our Annual Equality and Diversity Review](#)
- f) undertake and implement the actions from [Equality Impact Assessments](#) on our decisions, policies, plans, practices and procedures
- g) ensure everyone feels listened to, and has the opportunity to be involved in making decisions about our services, with due regard being shown to those with protected characteristics
- h) build understanding amongst residents, employees, partners and elected members of the needs of different protected groups across North Tyneside
- i) celebrate the diversity of our communities and seek to raise awareness of the benefits of diversity and inclusion
- j) take account of, and respond to, the needs of residents and customers when delivering our services, ensuring due regard is shown to their protected characteristics
- k) create an environment where elected members, employees, residents and visitors are confident to be themselves

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<sup>2</sup> [Equality and diversity data](#)

Where we ask employees and service users to provide us with personal information, this will only be used to improve access to and the quality of the services we provide.

Collecting equality information helps us to:

- understand the needs of our residents
- design policies and services which are effective and meet those needs
- demonstrate compliance with the 2010 Equality Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty and other statutory duties
- measure more effectively how we are improving as an employer and a service provider.

We will only collect information when it is relevant and will be used by managers to develop an understanding of take up and need. While employees and service users are encouraged to provide equality information, it is their choice whether or not to answer all the questions. Confidential information will be handled in accordance with the strict controls of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the information gathered will be used to inform North Tyneside Council policy and planning, and to report on performance.

- l) strive to make our workforce more representative of the borough's population and the residents it serves, by ensuring equal opportunity to access to jobs, training and career progression
- m) require others providing services on our behalf follow our approach to equality.

## **5. Equality and Diversity in Employment**

This section applies to all employees and people seeking work with us. As outlined in our Human Resources and Organisational Development and Employment and Skills strategies, as a local employer we have a key role to play in tackling inequality and discrimination. We positively promote equality of opportunity and inclusion through all of our employment policies and practices: including recruitment, terms and conditions, learning and development, promotion and when ending employment.

We will:

- a) provide equality of opportunity to all applicants and prospective applicants through fair recruitment and selection procedures
- b) recognise that people with particular protected characteristics, including people with disabilities or ethnic minority communities, may experience discrimination in employment, and we will adopt selection and retention practices designed to eliminate any such discrimination always taking into consideration the duty to appoint on merit
- c) make reasonable adjustments to support colleagues to succeed in their roles
- d) annually publish gender pay gap data and any other pay gap data required by law
- e) use the information and feedback we collect to understand more about, and respond to, employee's experience of working for North Tyneside Council
- f) ensure that all employees are considered for promotion on the basis of their merits, abilities and skill, and are given equal opportunities to progress within the Authority
- g) create an appropriate balance between work and home commitments to maximise equal opportunities for all, including promoting flexible working where possible
- h) aim to give employees the training and development opportunities needed to attain their full potential to the benefit of North Tyneside Council and themselves
- i) ensure that all employees undertake equality training so that they understand its importance in the workplace and in service delivery and know how to challenge any inappropriate behaviour
- j) develop an anti-discriminatory and supportive culture where employees are aware of their rights and enjoy working for North Tyneside Council
- k) respond to any allegations of discrimination, victimisation or harassment through appropriate internal processes, including our [disciplinary](#) and whistleblowing procedures.

## **6. Equality and Diversity in Service Provision**

We and our strategic partners will seek to provide appropriate, accessible and effective services and facilities to all current and potential service users in accordance with our customer promise and corporate values.

We will:

- a) use our equality impact assessment process to help us challenge, review, monitor and improve our services, working practices and resource allocation
- b) ensure all of our customers receive services in accordance with our customer promise and that reasonable adjustments are made
- c) use a range of channels to enable service users to access our services independently and appropriately
- d) ensure that the information we provide can be read or received and understood by the people for whom it is intended
- e) ensure that all buildings, facilities and services are welcoming and accessible
- f) work with our partners to tackle discrimination, ensuring that clear procedures are in place for reporting any such discrimination
- g) use the equality and diversity data we collect to identify and take action to address the needs of under-represented groups, those who are disadvantaged or have particular needs due to their characteristics
- h) involve residents in shaping our services through inclusive engagement and consultation.

## **7. Equality and Diversity in Procurement and Commissioning**

We will ensure that our procurement and commissioning practices (as set out in our [Procurement Strategy and Social Value Priorities](#)) fulfil our equality duties by ensuring that:

- a) contractors, suppliers, and strategic and commissioned partners:
  - i. are aware of the authority's position on equality, we will include a commitment to equality in tender specifications
  - ii. have an equality policy that is compliant with public procurement legislation and understand their obligation to provide services that are free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
- b) our selection and tendering processes address and include equality considerations
- c) our contract monitoring processes are inclusive of equalities considerations
- d) relevant employees receive guidance on equality issues for procurement.

## **8. Our responsibilities**

Equality, and the implementation of this policy, is the responsibility of all elected members, employees and everyone who represents North Tyneside Council or delivers services on its behalf (including our Strategic Partners – Equans and Capita). More specifically:

### 8.1 Everyone who works with or for North Tyneside Council

We all have a personal responsibility to:

- ensure our equality training and awareness is up to date
- treat our colleagues and customers with dignity and respect
- promote and deliver equality in the workplace and in serving local communities
- behave in a way that supports this policy and is compliant with relevant legislation and codes of practice
- report, and if you consider it safe to do so, challenge any discriminatory behaviour or practices you encounter in the course of your work.

### 8.2 As Elected Members

Elected members have a responsibility to:

- lead the equality and diversity agenda of North Tyneside Council
- represent and provide leadership for all groups and communities across North Tyneside
- provide a scrutiny role
- demonstrate '[due regard](#)' to the equality implications of the decisions they make.

### 8.3 As Leaders and Managers

Leaders and managers are also responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy in their service areas via their service planning process, this includes ensuring:

- the identification and elimination of discriminatory practices
- equality objectives and improvement actions identified in the Annual Equality and Diversity Review are included in service plans and progress is monitored to achieve timely delivery
- processes are in place to systematically collect and report equality performance management data
- effective equality impact assessment of significant decisions, policies, plans, practices and procedures is undertaken
- service delivery demonstrates due regard to the needs of people with protected characteristics
- employees are fully aware of their individual equality responsibilities, and those of the organisation, under the 2010 Equality Act.

### 8.4 As Trades Unions

Unions have a responsibility to:

- represent the views and concerns of their members on equality and diversity issues
- challenge and address any incidents of discrimination within workforce membership
- support the continuous improvement of equality policy and practice.

### 8.5 Strategic Partners

Our Strategic Partners have a responsibility to:

- ensure compliance with the 2010 Equality Act and delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- demonstrate 'due regard' to the equality implications of the decisions they make

- support North Tyneside Council to achieve the purpose of this policy – including active participation in the work of the Corporate Equality Group.

### 8.6 Partnership Boards

The Partnership Boards at which North Tyneside Council is represented are expected to:

- ensure compliance with the 2010 Equality Act
- demonstrate ‘due regard’ to the equality implications of the decisions they make
- support North Tyneside Council to achieve the purpose of this policy.

### 8.7 Volunteers and other partners

Volunteers and other partners (defined as those who work alongside the Authority but are not commissioned) are expected to:

- ensure compliance with the 2010 Equality Act
- support North Tyneside Council to achieve the purpose of this policy.

## **9. Governance, implementation and monitoring**

As set out in Sections 2 and 3 above, this policy is an executive responsibility of Cabinet, and sits within the portfolio held by the Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Skills and Employment.

Oversight of the policy, its implementation and monitoring rests with Senior Leadership Team, supported by Corporate Equality Group and which is chaired by a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

We assess and monitor our progress against the purpose of this policy by:

- regular reports to the Cabinet Member for Inclusion, Skills and Employment and the Senior Leadership Team
- the activity of Corporate Equality Group, which leads the equality work of the organisation and coordinates a range of activities to help North Tyneside Council fulfil its equality duties in accordance with the requirements of the 2010 Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty
- the inclusion and delivery of actions within our service plans that contribute to the achievement of the commitments made in this policy and the corporate equality objectives and service actions identified in the Annual Equality and Diversity Review
- our equality impact assessment process to ensure we properly consider the potential impact of operational, and Cabinet and Full Council decisions on protected groups
- the identification of the equality and engagement implications of the decisions recommended in our Cabinet and Full Council reports
- managing any potential equality risks through our Risk Management Process
- publication of equality data as required by government, including Gender Pay Gap reporting

- dealing with any complaints<sup>3</sup> of discrimination, harassment and victimisation, seriously, promptly and confidentially and ensuring that any person who feels they have suffered any form of discrimination by North Tyneside Council is given guidance in making a [complaint](#)
- publication on our website of our Annual Equality and Diversity Review, which reports progress reports against our Corporate Equality Objectives and service equality actions and is evaluated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission to check accessibility and compliance with the 2010 Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty

## **Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and the outcome of the review will be reported to Cabinet. However, we will be guided by the EHRC if any new guidance or legislation is produced before the next review date.

The next review will be undertaken by March 2025.

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<sup>3</sup> In relation to specific types of complaints:

- employee complaints - should an employee have any complaint in respect of their treatment in relation to this policy, this should be taken up through internal processes, such as our disciplinary processes
- public complaints - information on how to make a complaint can be found in our libraries, leisure centres, customer first buildings and Quadrant headquarters or [here](#)
- complaints about the behaviour of an Elected Member - information on how to make a complaint about an Elected Member who has not acted in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct can be found [here](#).

## **Appendix 1: North Tyneside Council's Customer Promise**

### **We listen, we care: our customer promise to you**

We are here to serve you, our residents, businesses and visitors. We provide you with a wide range of vital services, from bin collections to social care, often in complicated and difficult circumstances. We strive to deliver excellent customer service to keep North Tyneside a great place to live, work and visit.

Through listening, we have learned what matters to you, and we have developed this promise.

#### **We listen**

- We take time to fully understand and meet your individual needs.
- We are open, honest and use clear language in all our communication.
- Where appropriate, we prefer to serve you via our website, but if this is not right for you, there are different ways to contact us and use our services.
- We use your experiences to design our services and help communities to get involved.

#### **We care**

- We put you in contact with the right person and, when possible, tell you how long it will take to solve your query.
- We keep you informed with up to date information and explain what we have done.
- We treat you with courtesy, politeness and understanding.
- We keep your personal data secure and respect your privacy.
- We admit when we are wrong, we say sorry, and make every effort to put it right.
- We give you straightforward and clear advice about the services that are available to you.
- We work together as a team who support and respect each other.

#### **You can help us to keep our promise by:**

- Letting us know if you have any specific needs.
- Giving us the information we need to deal with your enquiry.
- Telling us when we have done a good job.
- Treating us politely and with respect.
- Telling us how you feel about our service by giving us feedback so we can learn and improve.

#### **Please tell us how we are doing by:**

- Leaving comments at one of our Community Conversation Corners in our Customer First Centres.

- E-mailing your comments to: [engagement@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@northtyneside.gov.uk)
- Using our [Video relay service for British Sign Language users](#)

## **Appendix 2: North Tyneside Council Values**

### **Our values:**

#### **We listen.**

We listen to our customers and colleagues and understand their needs. We pay attention to messages and respond. We express information clearly, are open, honest and encourage people to have their say.

#### **We care**

We care for our customers by understanding their needs, we treat them with respect and safeguard those who are most vulnerable. We care for each other by being a positive role model. We respect each other and work well with colleagues. We care for ourselves by looking after our physical and mental health and asking for help when we need it.

#### **We are ambitious**

We are ambitious by always looking for ways to do things better. We are positive and learn from our mistakes and successes. We can be ambitious by reflecting on our performance and acting on feedback to improve. We strive to reduce the carbon footprint in our services by using less energy in our buildings, travelling less in our vehicles and recycling as much as possible.

#### **We are good value for money**

We are good value for money by delivering services in line with our customer promise and service standards. We use resources carefully, avoid unnecessary cost, try to get things right first time and share resources with colleagues.