



Broxtowe
Borough
COUNCIL

Equality and Diversity Policy

January 2015

Chief Executive's Department

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1. INTRODUCTION

This Equality and Diversity Policy sets out Broxtowe Borough Council's commitment to promoting equality and fairness and recognising and celebrating the diversity that exists among our local communities. It also outlines the duties placed upon us by equalities legislation and the corporate framework within which we operate.

1.1 What Is Equality and Diversity?

Equality is about ensuring that all people are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, and that they have equal opportunities to access appropriate services and have the right to achieve equal outcomes. As a service provider, we want our resources and services to be available and accessible to everyone, irrespective of individual backgrounds or needs. As an employer we want fair employment practices for everyone and we want to see a workforce which reflects the diversity of the population of Broxtowe.

Diversity refers to all the differences that make up the local community. Diversity is about recognising, accepting, valuing and celebrating different people's beliefs, practices and backgrounds.

This policy is an expression of our commitment to ensure that everyone can have equal access to all council services, free from discrimination and can contribute to and benefit from the social, cultural and economic well-being of the borough.

1.2 The Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 consolidates a great deal of the equality and anti-discriminatory legislation and regulation that built up over a number of years. The Act seeks to simplify the law, harmonise definitions and exceptions and to develop a common approach to dealing with unfair treatment and discrimination.

The Act highlights nine 'protected characteristics' which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly. The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

The Equality Act places particular responsibilities on public sector organisations. The **public sector equality duty** includes the General Duty which requires public authorities to:

- Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually
- Set and publish equality objectives at least every four years.

As a public authority, Broxtowe Borough Council is required to have **due regard** to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and 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.

The duty applies to all of the protected characteristics. However, for the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership it applies only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

Having due regard means consciously considering the three aims of the equality duty in relation to our decision making and delivery of services and in our duties as an employer.

Having due regard to the need to **advance equality of opportunity** involves considering the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Meet the needs of people with protected characteristics
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low.

2. OUR VISION, VALUES AND PRIORITIES

2.1 Our Vision

Our Vision is 'Listening and responding to ensure the delivery of efficient and effective services.' Whether we are delivering direct Council services or working with our partners, our aim is to meet the aspirations and expectations of people in our community.

2.2 Our Values

- Integrity and professional competence
- A strong caring focus on the needs of communities

- Continuous improvement and delivering value for money
- Valuing employees and enabling the active involvement of everyone
- Innovation and readiness for change

2.3 Our Priorities

As a Council we recognise the need for a multi-agency approach to the delivery of shared outcomes for our residents and customers and the borough's aspirations are delivered through a number of key strategic partnerships. The Sustainable Community Strategy 2010-2020 is our shared vision for the local area. It sets out our priorities and a set of outcomes which aim to focus the work of all the partners on the Broxtowe Partnership.

The partnership's priorities for a sustainable Broxtowe are to make Broxtowe:

- A thriving and vibrant place with access to services, jobs and opportunities for all
- A safe place, where crime is under control and people don't live in fear of being a victim of crime, and where there are fewer accidents on the road and in the home
- A healthy place, where improving health enhances people's quality of life
- A place where children can grow personally and socially outside of poverty, are aspirational and are respected for participating in the community
- A place where everyone has access to a good quality home, with access to excellent community facilities
- A clean and green place, an attractive area in which to live, work and play and where the environment is cared for and respected both today and for future generations
- A place where everyone is treated fairly, a caring community where people feel they belong.

Community Safety is a key priority for Broxtowe. The sharing of resources and intelligence has developed into shared service delivery in the South Nottinghamshire Community Safety Partnership, which brings three district councils in the south of the county together with the county council and the Police. The partnership jointly employs a data analyst whose information and statistical data provides the basis for targeted partnership action and initiatives.

The Council is represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board for Nottinghamshire. The Board, which is led and facilitated by Nottinghamshire County Council, brings together local authorities and other public service providers, health care professionals and service users with the shared aim of improving the health and wellbeing of the county's population. The Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Nottinghamshire 2014-17 contains four key ambitions:

- A good start
- Living well
- Coping well
- Working together

A delivery plan has been developed to outline the actions that will be taken to deliver the aims of the strategy.

The Council's internal Child Poverty Group meets to develop departmental pledges and to devise targeted work aimed at tackling and alleviating the impact of child poverty. A condensed version of these pledges is submitted to Nottinghamshire County Council where they are captured in a county-wide action plan. The Nottinghamshire Child Poverty Reference Group includes a wide range of public sector organisations including district councils such as ourselves and is responsible for the development of a needs assessment and a strategy for tackling child poverty across the county.

Our own Corporate Plan priorities have been shaped by the views of our residents, members and officers and by evidence of local needs. Our priorities and objectives are reviewed annually to ensure they remain relevant and up to date. The Corporate Plan outlines our commitment to the following five priorities:

- **Housing** – We want a good quality affordable home for all the residents of Broxtowe
- **Jobs and Business Growth** – We want to see more jobs, work experience and apprenticeships available for people in Broxtowe, with growing businesses and regenerated town centres
- **The Environment** - We want the environment in Broxtowe to be protected and enhanced for future generations
- **Bringing People Together** – We want a caring community where people feel they belong
- **Community Safety** – We want Broxtowe to be a place where people feel safe and secure in their communities

The Council's employees have a clear understanding of our priorities and were instrumental in shaping the values we hold and which underpin everything we aim to do. Our staff are kept informed of the contribution they are making toward achieving

our priorities and objectives through briefings, the employee newsletter and the Council's intranet. Our residents are kept informed of the progress made in achieving our aims through our twice-yearly newsletter, 'Broxtowe Matters', which is distributed to local homes and businesses and is available on line.

2.4 Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy

In Broxtowe, we want a society in which everyone can contribute to and benefit from our shared ambitions and priorities. This aim is summed up in our policy statement:

'Broxtowe Borough Council is committed to promoting equal opportunities, valuing diversity and tackling social exclusion. The Council will aim to provide opportunities that meet the diverse needs of different people and groups of people by ensuring that services and employment opportunities are accessible to all. Everyone will be treated fairly and with respect. Diverse needs will be understood and valued. The Council will aim to eradicate all forms of discrimination.'

This policy provides a framework for the Council's approach to the wide ranging equality and diversity agenda. We recognise that we have a duty to mainstream equality and diversity in all we do, but our responsibilities go beyond that. We also have a duty to exercise leadership to promote fundamental rights such as equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination. We must endeavour to promote equality and prevent discrimination through our role as a service provider, an employer and a community leader.

2.5 The Council as a Service Provider

The Council believes that all of our residents and customers have a right to expect and receive high quality services that are appropriate and meet their needs. In order to ensure that services are independently accessible, the Council will work to tackle and eliminate whatever barriers may exist. The Council will:

- Engage with and involve communities in the design and development of policies and services and make revisions to service planning where necessary
- Ensure our buildings to which the public want or need access are as accessible as possible, making reasonable adjustments wherever practicable
- Provide clear information about Council services in ways and in formats that meet the needs of particular individuals or groups
- Monitor take-up of services to ensure they do not discriminate or exclude anyone on grounds of a protected characteristic without justification.

2.6 The Council as an Employer

As an employer, the Council is committed to the promotion of equal opportunities for all of its employees. The Council will:

- Apply a transparent way of evaluating jobs in order to ensure equal pay for equal work
- Endeavour to employ a workforce that is representative of the borough's composition and reflective of its diversity
- Have recruitment and selection processes that are non-discriminatory and which encourage applications from all sectors of the community
- Ensure that all employees have fair access to learning and development opportunities
- Raise and maintain awareness of the Council's commitment to equality and equal opportunities, ensuring that all employees receive equality and diversity training
- Create a working environment free from discrimination, harassment and violence
- Produce an annual Workforce Profile as a means of monitoring employee data and ensuring the aims outlined above are being met.

2.7 The Council as a Community Leader

As a community leader, we have a responsibility to lead by example by promoting equality, valuing diversity and combating discrimination and unfair treatment. The Council will:

- Develop a culture which recognises and celebrates different lifestyles, cultures and religions and beliefs
- Encourage and support everyone to play an active part in community life
- Promote equality of opportunity and encourage partners and contractors to demonstrate a commitment to equality
- Respond to the views of our communities through appropriate and widespread consultation and participation.

3. OUR APPROACH TO EQUALITIES IN BROXTOWE

The legal framework for equalities and our aim to be a fair and inclusive employer, service provider and community leader means we must strive to embed equality and diversity in everything we do, from the consultation we undertake with stakeholders to the development of policies and strategies and the delivery of services.

As a means of evidencing what we do, we will meet the requirements of the various levels of the Equality Framework for Local Government, undertake equality impact assessments across our policies and strategies and functions, monitor staff by equality strands and listen to and learn from complaints.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The effective delivery of equality and diversity is everyone's business, but specific responsibilities lie with our elected members, chief officers, managers and employees.

Elected members will:

- Provide leadership by ensuring an effective scrutiny role and by promoting equality and diversity on the corporate agenda and in their conduct
- Identify an equality and diversity champion to promote the equality agenda among members
- Approve the Equality and Diversity Policy and Equality Objectives and note progress as outlined in the Equality and Diversity Annual Report
- In approving new or revised strategies, policies and functions, ensure that they have undergone appropriate equalities impact assessments
- Approve and monitor service delivery information, employment data and performance indicators relevant to equality
- Ensure action is taken to address concerns highlighted by trends or patterns in monitoring data, such as that related to complaints

Chief Officers will:

- Model the standards of behaviour and conduct they expect from their managers and staff
- Provide direction and endorse equalities strategy, policy and practice
- Encourage the integration of equalities into all aspects of departmental work
- Ensure appropriate resources are utilised for the conduct of equalities impact assessments
- Actively promote the corporate equality agenda and equality issues across their departments

Heads of Service and Managers will:

- Demonstrate commitment to equality by promoting it within their roles and across their respective teams
- Identify training needs, ensuring no one is treated unfairly
- Ensure the provision of appropriate information, instruction and supervision

3.2 The Equality Framework for Local Government

The Council utilises the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) to benchmark progress and to ensure continuous development and improvement. The EFLG has been developed by the Local Government Association in partnership with local authorities as a resource to drive improvement in the equalities agenda. The resource enables councils to self-assess themselves against a number of criteria and to determine their position against the framework. The framework incorporates three levels, Developing, Achieving and Excellent, with the latter two levels requiring

validation via an external peer review. The Council was accredited as being at the Achieving level in 2011. Since that time, the focus has been on consolidating that level. More recently, the Council has begun assessing itself against the Excellent level of the framework.

3.3 Equality Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are tools which provide a systematic process for assessing the effect or impact of a policy or function on different groups of people. They are a means of ensuring that the potential impact of the policy or function on persons who share relevant protected characteristics is considered and actions put in place to mitigate any negative impact identified.

A number of possible outcomes will result from the completion of an EIA:

1. No major changes – The EIA demonstrates the policy is robust; there is no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. All opportunities to promote equality have been taken.
2. Adjust the policy – The EIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. Adjust the policy to remove barriers or better promote equality.
3. Continue the policy – The EIA identifies the potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality. Clearly set out the justifications for continuing with it. The justification should be included in the EIA and must be in line with the duty to have due regard. For the most important relevant policies, compelling reasons will be needed.
4. Stop and remove the policy – The policy shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. It must be stopped and removed or changed.

Source: Equality Impact Assessment Quick Start Guide, Equality and Human Rights Commission

3.4 Scrutiny, Monitoring and Review

The Equality and Diversity Policy is part of the Council's overarching performance management framework and is approved by Cabinet, the Council's executive. Cabinet is also responsible for approving and monitoring progress against the Council's equality objectives. It also receives reports on the outcomes of Equality Impact Assessments and the equality and diversity annual report. The Resources portfolio holder is the cabinet member with lead responsibility for equality and diversity and the Council also has a non-executive member champion for equality and diversity.

The Council has a robust scrutiny structure in place enabling it to hold the executive to account and challenge the decisions of Cabinet. Scrutiny seeks to bring about improvements to services and to make a difference to the lives of the people of Broxtowe. There are three Examination and Inquiry Groups (EIGs) responsible for carrying out scrutiny reviews – People and Places, Sustainable Communities and Services, and examples of reviews undertaken by the EIGs in recent years include:

- Dementia Friendly Communities; Gender Pay Gap (2014)
- Travelling Communities; Social Enterprises (2013)
- Voluntary Organisations in Broxtowe; Community Centres (2012)

One of the earliest reviews undertaken by the People and Places EIG was a review of disability issues in Broxtowe. One important outcome from this review was the setting up of the Broxtowe Disability Forum.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee oversees the work of the corporate Equalities Working Group. Chaired by the Chief Executive, the group is made up of senior managers and front line staff from the Council's departments and key service areas. The Council's member champion for equality and diversity also attends and all members are invited to attend. The trade unions are also represented on the group. Operationally, the group is key to driving the equality and diversity agenda within the Council and is responsible for mainstreaming actions and targets both corporately and across service areas. Its principal aims, as outlined in its terms of reference are to:

- Ensure the Council is kept apprised of the latest developments relating to equality and diversity, including equalities legislation and regulation, guidance and codes of practice
- Identify, develop and share good equality and diversity practice across the Council
- Monitor progress against the Equality Framework for Local Government criteria
- Manage the process of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)
- Identify equality and diversity impacts and consequences in high level strategies and policies
- Monitor the targets and outcomes developed for the annual Public Sector Equality Duty objectives
- Champion equality and diversity in partnership working arrangements, assisting in the identification of equality and diversity issues where appropriate
- Work with the Training Section to identify, pilot and help organise and deliver targeted training
- Ensure the group is adequately and appropriately representative of all Council departments and key functions.

At the level of individual services, Equality Impact Assessments and the action plans that are developed to take forward their recommendations are key tools for monitoring and reporting on progress in promoting equality. Service areas are required to ensure that actions and targets are mainstreamed into delivery plans. At the corporate level targeted work to achieve the aims of our five strategic priorities

are identified in five delivery plans that cut across Council services. In conjunction with these corporate priorities, objectives linked to our support services and regulatory functions are expressed in four additional delivery plans. Each delivery plan incorporates a range of performance measures and management data which is utilised to monitor progress and provide an accurate evidence base for targeted work. Concern over a decline in performance, as evidenced by indicator trend data, for example, can lead to a request for a more detailed scrutiny review.

3.5 Consultation and Engagement

We recognise the importance of consulting with and involving local people in the shaping of our priorities and in the design and delivery of our services. Equally, evidence from our consultation plays an important part in ensuring we are able to set and achieve our equality objectives.

The Council has a number of processes in place to carry out consultation and engagement with the community. These include Community Action Teams, Resident Satisfaction surveys, the Broxtowe Disability Forum, the Tenant and Leaseholder Association and feedback from service areas either in the form of regular monitoring or specific surveys related to a service or aspect of a service.

3.6 Complaints

Comments and complaints are welcomed as an opportunity to examine the quality of the services we provide. Members of the public who believe that they have experienced discrimination in the way the Council has treated them can make a complaint through our complaints procedure. We take all complaints seriously and will not tolerate any form of discriminatory behaviour or harassment. Monitoring complaints is another way of gathering information to see whether we are meeting our equality duties.

Members of staff can use formal employment processes such as the grievance procedure for incidents involving another employee. The Code of Conduct governs the standards of behaviour expected of Members and the Standards Committee deal with complaints about the conduct of members.

3.7 Procurement

The desire to promote equality and prevent discrimination is integral to our commissioning and procurement processes. This ensures that the needs of our communities are considered when procuring goods and services. The Council addresses this by building equality and diversity terms and conditions into standard procurement documents and contracts. For instance, questions within standard pre-qualification questionnaires seek to determine contractors' awareness and consideration of equality and diversity issues. Compliance with equality and diversity requirements is also monitored through standard contract monitoring processes.

3.8 Raising Awareness and Developing Employees

All training and development opportunities offered to employees and members reflect the Council's values and corporate objectives, while our equal opportunities policy underpins our commitment to equality of opportunity amongst our workforce and elected representatives. The Council has been an accredited Investor in People organisation since 1996 and has continued to maintain the accreditation following two periodic reviews. Our commitments as an employer include fair and transparent recruitment and selection processes and equal access to training and promotion opportunities.

Broxtowe has held the 'Two Ticks' standard for over 16 years, demonstrating a positive approach towards the recruitment of disabled applicants. Any applicant who indicates that they have a form of disability and meets the essential criteria for a post is guaranteed an interview.

Equality training forms an integral element of the corporate induction process. At the induction event, new employees receive a presentation on Equality and Diversity at Work. All employees are given an Equality and Diversity at Work Handbook, designed as a quick reference means of raising awareness of equality and diversity issues across the workforce. In addition, targeted or specific training is delivered which either addresses a particular aspect of equality or a protected characteristic, or is provided in order to meet the specific needs of officers providing a particular service. Examples of the training provided to employees during 2014/15 included:

- Gypsy and Traveller Awareness
- LGBT Awareness
- Dementia
- Mental Health
- Deaf Awareness

In addition, training sessions on faiths and beliefs have been delivered to large numbers of employees by the Nottingham Inter-Faith Council. The borough council subsequently supplemented this work by developing a Religion and Belief Handbook, a copy of which was distributed to all employees.

In 2014, the Council launched the Broxtowe Learning Zone, an e-learning platform offering a wide range of information, resources and courses for learning and development for both employees and members. Containing sections on equality and diversity, the Broxtowe Learning Zone is accessible from a computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone, enabling users to access the site either at work, as part of their agreed learning programme, or in their own time for personal development.

3.9 Ensuring that the Policy is Implemented

We will ensure that all employees and members are made aware of this policy and their responsibilities for implementing it. The outcomes from the work we do within the framework of this policy will be reported in our equality and diversity annual report. The annual report will be available on the Council's website.

4. OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

Our equality objectives have been developed on the basis of consultation and engagement with service users and residents, information about our local communities, the outcomes of equality impact assessments and feedback from peer reviews and external assessments. Our objectives are a combination of internal targets designed to further embed equality and diversity within our organisation and external targets that will help the Council improve its knowledge of the communities we serve and help us to address the needs of the most disadvantaged people.

We have identified five broad headings under which we propose to address our main priorities for improving our understanding of the inequalities in the borough, addressing identified needs and fostering good relations between our diverse communities.

The current Equality Objectives for Broxtowe Borough Council are:

- **Develop our knowledge and understanding of the communities we serve**
 - Develop a consolidated database of borough profile data and undertake an annual review of the statistical profile of Broxtowe and the disaggregated ward and community profiles
 - Improve the quality of data about the issues affecting disadvantaged and minority groups including those protected under the Equality Act
- **Identify and deliver actions which aim to narrow the gap in outcomes between disadvantaged groups and the wider community**
 - Work with partner agencies to identify health inequalities within disadvantaged groups and sections of the community and deliver targeted work through the Health Task Group and the Older Persons Sub-Group of the Broxtowe Partnership
 - Work with partners on the South Nottinghamshire Community /safety Partnership to deliver targeted work to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and improve outcomes for vulnerable people
 - Deliver the pledges we have undertaken to tackle and alleviate child poverty in Broxtowe as part of the countywide Child Poverty Strategy
 - Deliver the recommendations contained within the People and Places EIG review of Dementia Friendly Communities, the Services EIG review of the Travelling Community and the LGA peer review of older persons services
- **Improve service design and delivery through improved communication and engagement with our communities**
 - Promote the use of customer engagement and feedback to inform the way services are designed and delivered
 - Develop a consultation database to capture and consolidate all of the borough's consultations

- Improve and strengthen existing community engagement mechanisms through Community Action Teams, service review groups and local community groups and ensure consultation and engagement outcomes are fed back into the policy making arena
- **Embed equalities throughout the Council**
 - Develop our workforce planning and profile data to improve the quality of protected characteristic information
 - Undertake a self-assessment against the criteria of the 'Excellent' accreditation of the Equality Framework for Local Government
 - Continue to deliver equality awareness training as part of the corporate induction process for employees and members
 - Improve the performance management of the equality impact assessment process, including mainstreaming into the service planning process, improved reporting to members, publication on the Council's website and improved monitoring of targeted outcomes
- **Foster good relations between our communities**
 - Continue to support and promote events and activities that bring people together, celebrating the diversity of the borough and contributing to community cohesion.

These objectives summarise the challenges we believe we are faced with and reflect comments received from external peer reviews and challenges. Targeted activity will be developed under each of the above headings and progress will be monitored by the Equalities Working Group and by Cabinet. These objectives will be reviewed in 2016.

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