

HILLINGDON'S EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Cabinet Member	Councillor Douglas Mills
Cabinet Portfolio	Improvement, Partnerships and Community Safety
Officer Contact(s)	Vicky Trott, Central Services
Papers with report	Equality and Diversity Policy 2012 (Appendix A)

1. HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	The Council's equality and diversity policy has been updated to reflect changes in equality legislation and requirements under the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty. Cabinet are asked to approve the policy and the proposed equality objectives.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	The policy supports the Council's vision of "putting our residents first". It supports the objectives in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the purpose of the Equality in Employment Policy.
Financial Cost	Not applicable.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee.
Ward(s) affected	All

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet approve the Equality and Diversity Policy (Appendix A) including the objectives presented within the policy.

Reasons for recommendation

The current equality policy "Equal Opportunities for All" was written and published in 2007. It references the old equality legislative and performance frameworks and doesn't accurately reflect the Council's current vision of 'putting our residents first'. The updated version addresses these points in a shorter and more succinct way, relating equality directly to the Council's roles as an employer, service provider, commissioner of services and community partner.

The equality and diversity policy demonstrates the Council's commitment to equality for residents and staff and how the organisation is complying with equality legislation and the public sector Equality Duty.

The Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to publish objectives of how it will meet the general Equality Duty over the next four years. The objectives for Hillingdon have been integrated into the equality policy to avoid the need for a separate document and plan.

Alternative options considered / risk management

Alternative options are to stay with the existing policy or to develop a new policy in a different way, with or without the specific equality objectives which could be published separately.

The current policy is out of date and needs updating so the "do nothing" option was dismissed.

The proposed new policy at Appendix A aims to capture the priorities of the Council in putting residents first, as well as reflecting its role as employer, service provider and community partner. It is a proportionate and streamlined document which reflects the ways in which the duties required under equalities legislation are woven into the council's day to day activities.

Policy Overview Committee comments

A Working Group chaired by Cllr Peter Kemp, reporting to the External Services Scrutiny Committee, has recently undertaken a multi-agency review on dementia, which will be important in helping finalising the Dementia Plan as set out as one of the objectives in the Equality and Diversity Strategy. The Working Group's review will be presented to Cabinet shortly.

3. INFORMATION

Supporting Information

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplified the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with. It also strengthened the law in important ways, to help tackle discrimination and inequality.

The public sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Act) came into force on 5 April 2011. The Equality Duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective, accessible to all, and which meet different people's needs.

The Equality Duty is supported by specific duties, set out in regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011. The specific duties require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty and to set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives.

The deadline for publication of the compliance information was 31 January 2012 and the council has met this requirement. More information can be found at:

<http://www.hillingdon.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=24029>

All public bodies subject to the specific duties must, in addition, publish their first equality objectives by 6 April 2012. Subsequent objectives must be published at least every four years. It is for each public body to decide what equality objectives it should set and how many there should be. These can be changed at any time to meet changing business needs or priorities.

The objectives presented in the policy cover the protected characteristics as defined by the law and are taken from existing Council or partnership plans. The work, therefore, to meet the objectives, is integral to the Council's role as employer and service provider. This approach is in line with the view that equality should be embedded in the council's routine business, rather than as separate activities or a stand-alone plan.

Financial Implications

None.

4. EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendation?

The recommendation will have a positive effect on residents and staff. The updated policy reflects the new equality legislation and demonstrates the Council's commitment to providing fair and accessible services for residents and an inclusive working environment for staff.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

Consultation has been carried out with internal stakeholders. The objectives have been taken from existing council and partnership plans.

5. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and is satisfied that there are no additional financial costs associated with the recommendations of this report.

Legal

As stated in the report, Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to adhere to the Public Sector Equality Duty. This includes a requirement to advance equality of opportunity between persons who have different "relevant protected characteristics" (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation).

Further, The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require the Council to publish, by 6 April 2012, its equality objectives so that it will achieve compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. These objectives must also be reviewed at least every 4 years.

In addition, there have been a number of successful legal challenges to decisions of local authorities to re-provision services because an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has either not been carried out or because the EIA was defective.

The Borough Solicitor advises that by taking the steps set out in this report and by adhering to the Equality & Diversity Policy whenever the council proposes to alter service provision, the council will comply with its obligation under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

Relevant Service Groups

All corporate groups have been consulted on the proposed policy.

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Equality Act 2010

Public Sector Equality Duty



HILLINGDON
LONDON

Equality & Diversity Policy



“Putting our residents first”

Introduction

Promoting equality, respecting diversity and encouraging civic pride

The London Borough of Hillingdon recognises that different people will have different needs and our aim is to provide services in a way that responds to those needs. Our residents should have fair and equal access to our services.

We recognise, respect and value diversity within our workforce as an asset in meeting the diverse needs of our service users.

As a local authority we have a variety of roles; as a provider of services, a regulator, a commissioner and contractor, an employer and a community partner. We need to make sure that when we provide services or take action, we do so in a way which does not discriminate unfairly or which is unlawful.

In promoting a sense of fairness and equal opportunities, we also want to build a strong sense of belonging and pride for everyone who lives, works or visits the borough. We want people of all backgrounds to feel valued and be able to fully participate in, and contribute to, building a strong community in Hillingdon.

Hugh Dunnachie
Chief Executive

Cllr Douglas Mills
Cabinet Member for Improvement,
Partnerships and Community
Safety

What is our aim?

The London Borough of Hillingdon is committed to promote fair and equal access to services and equality in employment. We aim to recognise and value the differences in the people we serve and employ.

These differences include:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race including nationality and colour
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Why are we doing it?

This policy supports our priorities of putting residents first, keeping them safe and healthy, and promoting civic pride.

Understanding our residents, who they are and what they need, helps us to do all we can in the current economic climate to maintain services that they tell us are important.

Under the Equality Act 2010, we have a public sector duty to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

How will we do it?

As a service provider we will:

- Consult with interested parties to ensure our services meet the needs of those who live, work or visit the borough.
- Integrate and embed equalities into service design and delivery.
- Assess the impacts of changes we make to policies or services and mitigate against anything which is potentially negative.
- Arrange, where appropriate, alternative communication support including BSL, large print, Braille, interpreting and translation.
- Ensure our buildings are accessible.
- Continue to offer and deliver services in an accessible way including using the latest technology.

Equality Act 2010 Objectives:

- By March 2016, we will increase the number of White British residents in receipt of personalised budgets from 56% to 70% as they are under-represented compared to the Adult Social Care user group.
- We will increase the number of people who use TeleCareLine by 750 people each year for 3 years from March 2012.
- By March 2016, we will establish a young people's "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Unsure" group and increase engagement with the adult LGBT community through existing channels.

As an employer we will:

- Be committed to treating all employees (and applicants for employment), fairly and on merit, and to the development and implementation of employment policies, procedures and practices that do not discriminate unlawfully on the grounds of the protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010.
- Ensure that all policies, procedures and guidelines comply with the Equality Act 2010 and create a working environment that encourages diversity, respects difference and treats employees with dignity at all times.
- Be committed to providing equal access to training and development within available resources.
- Regularly monitor employee and applicant data and review the composition of the workforce. This will identify the impact of policies and practices and provide the basis to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

Equality Act 2010 Objectives:

- Over the next 12 months, we will extend equality monitoring of existing staff to include sexual orientation and religion or belief.
- Over the next 24 months, we will ensure that staff records more accurately reflect levels of disability in the workforce.



The Local Strategic Partnership "Hillingdon Partners" which brings together all the major public service organisations in the borough, as well as representatives from local businesses, community and voluntary groups, is committed to equality of opportunity and reflecting the diversity of the residents it serves.

As a community leader and partner the council will:

- Aim to improve and enrich the quality of life of those living and working within this diverse borough by creating a sustainable community; a place of choice for people to want to live, work, study and visit, now and in the future.
- Commit to ensuring we challenge and eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.
- Ensure that all residents are provided with equal access to our services.
- Develop a community where everyone feels valued and there is equal access to services and employment across the statutory, private and community/voluntary sectors.
- Promote a sense of pride and belonging in the borough where everyone is valued and able to live or work side by side, contributing together in building a strong community.

Equality Act 2010 Objectives:

- By March 2016, we will increase the number of schools who are actively involved in the School's Cohesion Partnership, led through the Strong and Active Communities Partnership, from 8 to 16.
- By March 2014, we will reduce the proportion of women who continue to smoke throughout pregnancy to below 10%.
- By March 2015, we will increase the percentage of adults with learning disabilities known to the council in paid employment from 28% to 38%.

In the commissioning and procurement of services we will:

- Where relevant, include equality related questions in our tender documents for example when a provider requires specific know-how or skills relating to equality, such as cultural awareness.

Equality Act 2010 Objectives:

- By March 2014, we will explore the reasons why some Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities are under represented when accessing adult social care services. BAME communities represent 30% of Hillingdon's population compared to 22% of adult social care users. According to evidence there is a prevalence of some conditions within some BAME communities which suggests that this proportion should be higher. An action plan will be developed and implemented in response to the research findings.
- By 2013, we will have a Dementia Plan in place, agreed with commissioning partners and other stakeholders.

How will we measure our progress?

- We will monitor, where relevant and proportionate, who uses our services with respect to the differences outlined above.
- In line with our statutory requirements, we have:
 - Published information about our residents and staff.
 - Published information on how we are meeting our general equality duty.

And we will:

- Set objectives, publish these by April 2012 and review at least every 4 years.

Who will do this?

- All staff because everyone has a responsibility not to discriminate against services users or colleagues.
- Managers because they have a responsibility to ensure that services meet the needs of our residents.
- The Policy, Performance and Partnerships Service because they have a responsibility to coordinate and deliver on the equality and cohesion objectives and demonstrate compliance.
- Organisations that we commission or procure to provide direct services to our residents, as they are acting on behalf of the council.
- The Corporate Management Team because they have a responsibility to lead the equality and diversity agenda for the organisation.
- The Cabinet in ensuring that equality is reflected in their relevant portfolio areas and specifically the Cabinet Member for Improvement, Partnerships and Community Safety who has lead responsibility for equality, diversity and community cohesion.