



ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Our Equalities Policy

December 2020

1.0 Our Equality Statement

- 1.1 Adur District and Worthing Borough Councils (hereafter referred to as “the Councils”) are committed to increasing inclusion and providing equality of opportunity in all our activities and to ensuring that discrimination does not occur.
- 1.2 We will strive for a workforce that reflects the diversity of the local community in order that our services are provided appropriately and the Councils benefit from a wealth of experiences.
- 1.3 The Councils will involve the wider community in our decision-making processes and use our influence to progress equality and inclusion issues in the Adur District and Worthing Borough.
- 1.4 To achieve our vision for inclusion and equality we will lead by example, we will listen to our communities and we will seek to work in collaboration with others. As part of this, and as set out in Platforms of Our Places; Going Further plan, we will work to establish a platform that will aim to unlock the energy and unleash the power of people in the community to run and improve their own lives and the places they live. We will undertake this work with care, support and respect, recognising the reality of disadvantage and discrimination experienced by many communities.

Scope and Review

- 1.5 This is a council-wide policy that outlines our equalities commitments to our employees, members and residents.
- 1.6 This policy will be reviewed and updated annually.

Legislative Framework

- 1.7 The Council Equalities Policy sets out the measures the Councils are taking to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (hereafter referred to as “the act”) and other legislation bringing together all previous equality legislation.
 - o Equality Act 2010
 - o Human Rights Act 1998
 - o Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended)

Protected characteristics

1.8 The characteristics that are protected in relation to the public sector equality duty are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex and sexual orientation

Marriage and civil partnership are also protected characteristics under the Equality Act, but it is not covered by the public sector equality duty.

2.0 The General Equality Duty

2.1 Those subject to the Equality Duty as set out in the Act must, in the exercise of their functions, 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
- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- Encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

What are the benefits of the Equality Duty?

2.2 Compliance with the General Equality Duty is not only a legal obligation, but the Councils believe that it makes good business sense. An organisation that is able to provide services to meet the diverse needs of its users should find that it carries out its core business more efficiently. The Councils believe that a diverse workforce draws on a broader range of talent and better represents the community that we serve.

2.3 Adur & Worthing Councils are focused on what is practical: not templates or paperwork for the sake of them, but a genuine focus on real impact. In this context, equality and inclusion for the councils is about:

- Better engagement with customers
- More representative and creative workforce

- Increased level of trust, confidence and resilience within communities
- More responsive services and getting it right the first time
- Actively addressing disadvantage and prejudice, ensuring no one gets left behind.

The policy therefore forms the foundation of Platforms for our Places; Going further, specifically our ‘Effortless Programme’ and associated Good Service standards, where we have pledged to put customers at the heart of what we do, where we seek to improve our services and make them accessible to everyone.

2.4 As Councils, we are clear that our role is to enable individuals and communities to flourish and prosper. We seek to support communities to be resilient, creative, well connected, and adaptive to changing circumstances and have the ability to provide resources to each other. In future interactions of our policy we will seek to develop the link between inequality and poverty.

3. Our Objectives and Delivery Plan

3.1 This part of the policy sets out our equality commitments and areas of focus and action. It guides the work of all employees and elected members in the Councils as we deliver public services. By defining our priorities for the coming years we enable a consistent focus on achieving greater equality and inclusion in Adur and Worthing. This programme of work will be overseen by The Equality Leads, the Director of Communities and the Director for Digital, Sustainability & Resources, supported by the Equality Champions delivery group. Additional specialist equalities support will be identified, for example training, where and when this is needed.

Employment

3.2 The Councils recognise that our employees are our greatest resource and all our employment and recruitment policies must reflect our commitment to equalities and best practice. Our commitments are as follows:

Commitment	Action
We will work towards a workforce that reflects the diversity of the local community to fully utilise their skills and abilities and take positive action where appropriate to encourage underrepresented groups into our workforce.	We will implement the new HR system in 2021 with a priority on collecting and analysing equalities data. Our recruitment process is being reviewed to ensure our workforce is representative of our community and we will take positive action where required. Target for completion of the plan is April 2021.
No employees will be discriminated against in the areas of pay or conditions of service, access to training and development or promotion. We will maintain an up to date Dignity at Work Policy and Disabled Employees Policy.	The Grievance Policy, adopted in January 2018, has been expanded to include dignity at work and is due for review in January 2021. The Disabled Employee Policy is also scheduled to be reviewed in 2021.

	<p>In 2021 the council will establish the Equality Champion's delivery group, where employees will have the opportunity to support, guide and monitor equality work in the authority and with the community.</p> <p>We will regularly consult with the relevant trade unions and our employees using a range of consultative structures and engagement methods. The Councils will keep these means of communication under review to ensure they are effective.</p>
<p>We will promote flexible working practices in recognition that many of our employees have caring responsibilities. For more detail please refer to the Work Life Balance Policy.</p>	<p>Flexible working practices are in place and have evolved further during Lockdown where the pressure of parenting and caring responsibilities escalated for many employees. Overall feedback from employees was very positive about our approach. We will review and embed inclusive flexible working practices as part of our Workspaces review in 2021.</p>
<p>All employees are required to behave in non-discriminatory ways towards colleagues and the public and anyone who does not comply may be subject to disciplinary action.</p>	<p>We do not tolerate discriminatory behaviour towards colleagues and the public. We have robust processes in place to address any incidents of discriminatory behaviour and these will be strengthened through the update of the Staff Handbook and Grievance Policy in 2021.</p>
<p>Putting the policy into practice is the responsibility of all employees and Members. Both employees and Members must comply with both the spirit and wording of the policy. This policy is incorporated into every employee's terms and conditions of employment with the Council.</p>	<p>To support implementation of the policy, regular updates will be provided. The testing, training and implementation of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) approach will support embedding of practice across the platforms. A particular focus will be the 'Effortless' programme and the Good Service standards, ensuring equalities issues are addressed in all change programmes as a matter of course.</p>
<p>The Councils will communicate the Equalities Policy and related policies to all potential and actual employees, for example through the information we send out to prospective employees and through the induction of new employees.</p>	<p>The Staff Handbook will be strengthened in 2021 to reflect the findings and language framing that is generated in the recruitment review. Our recruitment approach and our Staff Handbook will strongly demonstrate our inclusive culture.</p>
<p>Equalities training is mandatory for all employees to ensure they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Similarly there is an expectation that all Members will attend Equalities training.</p>	<p>There is an Equality & Diversity and a discrimination e-learning module available, which is part of the induction process. The 1:1 record template includes tracking for completion of mandatory courses, but this will be strengthened in 2021 with a narrative prompt, again reflecting the language design from the recruitment review.</p>

<p>In addition, to the generic Equalities training, tailored Equalities training for specific services will be encouraged, particularly for services engaging with external customers and / or where there is a significant engagement with a protected group(s). All employees will have equal access to training and development and we will take appropriate positive action for those who are underrepresented in our workforce.</p>	<p>A programme of focus sessions on different equalities issues will be developed in 2021, with an emphasis on lived experience from a range of guest speakers with video sessions recorded to enable the sessions to be watched “on demand” later by others.</p> <p>Member training will be reviewed in 2021.</p>
<p>Employees who feel they have been discriminated against should refer to the Grievance policy. Employees who fail to comply with the policy may be subject to the Councils’ Disciplinary Policy</p>	<p>It is critical that people facing discrimination feel able to report issues and receive the appropriate support from their managers and senior officers. Discussions on this issue will be included in training sessions, and any employee surveys that are undertaken. Work will take place in 2021 to better understand equality complaints and potential under reporting.</p>

Our Services

3.3 We will ensure that all services provided by or on behalf of the Councils are made accessible where reasonable to all individuals and groups without discrimination.

Commitment	Action
<p>The Councils will ensure our services are of high quality and accessible where reasonable to all individuals and groups without discrimination.</p>	<p>Our Good Service standards make a commitment to delivering services which are accessible by all. We will in 2021 roll out service assessments to support implementation of the standard and to identify any priorities for improvements.</p> <p>Our new Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) is designed around our customer and service needs. It will from 2021 enable us to help all our customers more effectively, breaking down organisational silos. It will make accessing customer records and details easier and more consistent, and will enable us to manage specific customer needs more effectively.</p> <p>We will trial a new Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) approach in 2021 to support significant decisions and associated planned changes to services.</p>

	<p>When designing new services the SameRoom service design approach, our Effortless programme (including the Good Service standards) and the EIA process we will ensure the diverse needs of our customers are central. We will constantly review these processes to ensure they are adequately addressing equality and exclusion.</p>
<p>We will be responsive to the needs of local people and recognise the importance of removing barriers to communication. Individuals will be consulted about their communication needs and preferences.</p>	<p>Through our SameRoom service design approach and our Good Service standards we will always ensure user research is undertaken to understand the diverse needs of our customers, designing for all.</p>
<p>We will ensure that our buildings are fully accessible and where this is not practical we will provide reasonable alternative methods of access so no one is discriminated against by physical barriers.</p>	<p>In 2021 we will seek to improve access through the commissioning of new access audits. As part of our workspace review process we will ensure accessibility for both our employees and our residents using services.</p> <p>We will, as necessary, review our community centres and public facilities in order to understand what investment is needed to make these spaces more inclusive.</p>
<p>Adur homes will work with tenants to ensure homes meet equality standards, including accessibility and safety.</p>	<p>In consultation with West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) Occupational Therapists or Medical Practitioners, Adur Homes Services undertakes adaptations to improve access and facilities in Council homes to meet specific needs of tenants with disabilities. Other aspects of access and equalities are also considered at the design stage for all other repair and improvement contracts</p> <p>Adur homes also work with tenants who have mental health or learning disabilities within their household to put in place adequate mitigating measures. If this is not possible we will, where possible, seek to provide a more suitable property.</p>
<p>Adur homes will seek to meet the needs of the homeless and vulnerable with regard to equality standards, including accessibility and safety.</p>	<p>Adur homes will carry out suitability assessments, which take into account all disabilities, and use that information to identify emergency or temporary accommodation. To support this work we will maintain our level access units in our temporary accommodation stock.</p>
<p>Complaints regarding equality and diversity from customers will be dealt with through the corporate complaints procedure.</p>	<p>We will improve our complaints process in 2021 and we will monitor complaints for issues around accessibility and inclusion to identify any remedial action necessary.</p>

We will seek to ensure that all contractors directly supplying goods and services or working on behalf of the Council comply with the relevant statutes and encourage good practice.	The new procurement strategy adopted in December 2020 will support the implementation of this commitment.

Community Consultation and Engagement.

- 3.4 The Councils will seek to actively engage and consult with its residents, especially those who are often excluded and vulnerable to discrimination and disadvantage. We will use our influence within the local community to give a lead to other employers and work in partnership with other local agencies to promote equalities.

Commitment	Action
The Councils will continue to build closer links with those communities who may be subject to exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage.	As part of our Thrive Platform this work will be undertaken by our officers, through partnerships including the Local Strategic Partnership and through our commission with Community Works, a Third Sector infrastructure organisation supporting community strength and voice.
The councils will use information, both qualitative and quantitative, to help build an understanding of the communities that make up Adur and Worthing, and the needs of those communities. In turn this will help to inform the development of policy and decision making.	<p>To enable this work the councils will seek to develop a data and intelligence observatory, supported through the recruitment of a new data analyst in 2021.</p> <p>We will seek to undertake specific pieces of data modelling work to inform, shape and target interventions. In 2021 we will undertake place and community centred mapping using Local Insight.</p> <p>In 2021 a particular focus will be on supporting the Census and we will work to ensure marginalised and excluded communities are given additional support through our Local Authority Partnership Plan.</p>
The Councils are committed to learning from the Covid 19 pandemic, to improve public services, increase community resilience and assist communities in the recovery phase.	<p>The Councils' response to the pandemic has been well regarded by local communities and we are keen to build on this.</p> <p>National data has shown us that the Covid 19 pandemic has affected communities differently, with young people, the BAME community, those</p>

	<p>with ongoing health conditions and those from disadvantaged communities hit hardest. Through the periods of lockdown and recovery the Councils have developed stronger and closer ties with many communities, including the BAME community and we will seek to develop these relationships and transform our services through our service design approaches described above. This work will be supported and developed through our commission with Community Works and the recruitment of a specialist participation officer in 2021.</p>
<p>The Councils will engage and consult with local communities regarding the implementation of this equality strategy.</p>	<p>Through the Equality Champions group, service reviews, customer feedback and ongoing community engagement, the Councils will seek to establish whether our services are accessible and meeting needs. The Councils will use a variety of means of engaging with the local community, recognising that some engagement tools will be more effective with different groups.</p> <p>A key consultation mechanism concerning disadvantage and inequality in 2021 will be the Climate Change Assembly report which will include a focus on disability and wider equality issues affecting residents in the borough and district.</p> <p>In 2021 the Councils will undertake work to ensure corporate communications support the objectives of the equality policy.</p>

4 Monitoring:

- 4.1 Monitoring is a way of checking that no one is being treated unfairly in our employment practices or in our service delivery, to find out if our policy is working, if any remedial action has been effective, or if additional action is required. This policy is being overseen by the Equality Leads (the Director of Communities and the Director for Digital, Sustainability & Resources) supported by the Equality Champions delivery group. Further monitoring arrangements are undertaken by established service and corporate reporting mechanisms including Platforms For Our Places; Going Further. .
- 4.2 The Councils have introduced the use of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) approach to help understand and guide service and policy reviews. A revised approach has been produced and will be trialed and reviewed in 2021.
- 4.3 Employees are asked to supply information about themselves so we can identify how representative our workforce is of the wider community and we will also monitor job

applicants. Employee training and promotion will be monitored to evaluate the effect of the policy. Monitoring information will be used in a strictly confidential way.

5.0 Putting the policy into action

- 5.1 Putting the policy into practice is the responsibility of all employees and Members. Both employees and Members must comply with both the spirit and wording of the policy. This policy is incorporated into every employee's terms and conditions of employment with the Council.
- 5.2 The policy is overseen by the Equality Leads, the Director of Communities and the Director for Digital, Sustainability & Resources.
- 5.3 Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that their services are delivered without discrimination. All managers are responsible for preventing discrimination and for setting a good example.
- 5.4 Members have responsibility for the policy and to set a good example.
- 5.5 The Adur and Worthing Equality Champions delivery group has specific responsibility for considering issues that arise from the policy.
- 5.6 The Councils will communicate the Equalities Policy and related policies to all potential and actual employees for example through the information we send out to prospective employees and through the induction of new employees.
- 5.7 An equalities page will be maintained on the Councils' website and contain relevant information on equality and diversity.
- 5.8 The Equalities Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Equalities Leads, supported by the Champions Group.

6.0 Training

- 6.1 Equalities training is mandatory for all employees to ensure they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities under this policy. Similarly there is an expectation that all Members will attend Equalities training.
- 6.2 Equality issues are an integral part of our training and development programmes, regardless of whether the council uses internal or external trainers.
- 6.3 In addition to the generic equalities training, tailored equalities training to reflect the needs of specific services will be encouraged, particularly for services engaging with external customers and / or where there is significant engagement with protected group(s).
- 6.4 The Councils make a strong commitment to training and development for all employees. All employees will have equal access to training and development and we will take appropriate positive action for those who are underrepresented in our workforce.

7.0 Remedies

- 7.1 Employees who feel they have been discriminated against should refer to the Grievance Policy. Employees who fail to comply with the policy may be subject to the Councils' Disciplinary Policy.
- 7.2 Complaints from customers will be dealt with through the corporate complaints procedure.

A copy of this policy can be made available in alternative formats, e.g. large print, by contacting:

- *Human Resources: human.resources@adur-worthing.gov.uk*