



**Corporate Equality and Inclusion  
Policy  
2017 - 2021**

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## **Introduction**

This document sets out Ashfield District Council's Corporate Equality and Inclusion Policy 2017 - 2021

### **1. Our Commitment**

The Council's Corporate Plan for 2016 – 2019 sets out an ambitious programme for the Council including a firm commitment to equality and diversity and an ambition to improve the quality of life for residents.

We want Ashfield to be a place where no-one experiences discrimination or disadvantage because of their individual characteristics.

Our aim is to make Ashfield District a place where the diversity of our community is recognised, supported and valued. We want everyone in the District to feel safe from harassment and to be able to access high quality services that respond to their individual and diverse needs.

Equality is about ensuring that all people are treated according to their diverse needs. This does not mean treating everyone the same but recognising the differences in life situations and experiences and ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all people taking into account their individual needs.

The Authority self-assessed as being successful against the Achieving level of the Equality Framework for Local Government in 2016. The Authority continues to improve services and working practices to embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity for everyone.

### **2. Equality of Opportunity**

Ashfield District Council believes that equality is one of the key values of the organisation and must be embedded within all of the services we provide. The Authority will treat everyone as individuals with the same attention, courtesy and respect to ensure that people do feel valued and respected and have equality of opportunity regardless of:

- Marital or civil partnership status
- Sex
- Gender reassignment/gender identity
- Religious belief
- Race (including colour, nationality or ethnic origins)
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Maternity and paternity

The Authority is legally required to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations within and between communities to build good community relations

### **3. Our Equality Objectives**

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires public bodies to consider the needs of different groups and individuals when carrying out their day to day work. It requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

Our equality objectives were reviewed in 2017 to reflect the Corporate Plan, namely:

- **To maintain a modern and diverse workforce that is reflective of the local community and whose staff feel valued and treated fairly**
- **To ensure community engagement and consultation is effective**
- **To recognise the needs of different customers and make reasonable adjustments**
- **To support individuals and communities to achieve a better quality of life particularly targeting resources at areas of most need**

### **Delivering against our objectives**

We will measure and report on the effectiveness of our service delivery and employee policies and processes in relations to these objectives through performance monitoring and management information. The Equality Position Statement will demonstrate what progress has been made against the objectives.

### **4. Our Purpose, Values, Priorities and Commitments**

Improving the life of Ashfield residents offers a significant challenge and one that that cannot be met by the Council on its own but through working closely with partners and other agencies to achieve.

The Authority is committed to sharing strong links with partners, public agencies and local businesses to help shape the future of the district. Customer feedback and consultation is important to the Authority and the community will be consulted on key issues that affect their future.

## **Our Purpose:**

- The Council exists to serve the communities and residents of Ashfield.
- We will provide good quality, value for money services.
- We will act strategically and plan for the future, working with others to bring about sustainable improvements in people's lives.

## **Our Values:**

- Enterprising, Ambitious and Innovative
- Community and Customer Focussed, Putting People First
- Positive, Proactive and Successful
- Collaborative
- Transparent and Accountable

## **Our Priorities:**

- Health and Wellbeing
- Economic Regeneration
- Housing
- Place and Communities
- Organisational Improvement

## **Our Commitment**

- To Residents
- To Employees
- To Councillors

## **5. Our Workforce**

We are committed to employing a diverse workforce that reflects the community we serve and aim to provide a working environment where all employees are valued and respected and where discrimination, bullying, harassment and the promotion of negative stereotyping are not tolerated.

The People Strategy supports the achievement of the key themes in the Council's evolving Corporate Plan. An effective People Strategy enables the Authority to plan for the future with a clear focus on improving services through partnerships. The People Strategy and associated Workforce Development Plan is an integral part of the Council's performance management framework. The strategy provides a link between valuing and developing people, with improving and developing services and enabling local leadership

Assessment for recruitment, selection, appraisal, training and career progression purposes is based both on the individual's ability and suitability for the work. We are committed to providing all staff with opportunities to 6

maximise their skills and achieve their potential, offering flexible working arrangements wherever possible.

Key policies and documents in relation to equalities are available to staff via the intranet or they are able to request copies from their manager, trade union reps or directly from Human Resources, these include:

- Flexible working
- Career break
- Grievance
- Bullying & Harassment
- Annual Workforce Profile Report
- Gender Pay Gap Report
- People Strategy and Action Plan

## **6. Learning and Development**

The Council is committed to its employees and their ongoing development.

It is important that all employees can contribute to the achievement of the Authorities objectives and have access to learning and development covering all equality areas. Training courses have been designed to meet the specific needs of officers in front line roles to support them in meeting the diverse and individual needs of customers.

All Councillors are provided with equality and diversity training as part of their personal development programme.

The training for employees and members takes place through various methods including, mentoring and coaching sessions, focus groups, employee briefings, lunch time learning sessions, Extended and Aspiring Leadership Team meetings and electronically through the e-Learning portal.

Equality training also forms an integral element of the corporate induction course through e-Learning. This training seeks to equip participants with the awareness, knowledge, skills and information necessary to manage and respond to equality and diversity issues experienced in the workplace. It also focuses on legislation and the Council's own policies and procedures for equality.

## **7. Equality Impact Assessment**

All our policies and practices are at the heart of equality impact assessment. Ideally an impact assessment should form part of any relevant new policy or practice and be factored in as early as possible to determine if there is any risk of discrimination or disadvantage. Equality impact assessments will help an organisation to analyse the impact of the changes and mitigate any negative impact to promote equality. 7

## **8. Consultation**

The Authority has developed a Consultation and Engagement Strategy for 2017 – 2021 which is designed to support the Council’s corporate vision and values and its commitment to residents. The Council will:

- Treat customers with courtesy and respect
- Recognise the needs of different customers and make reasonable adjustments
- Engage with customers and seek their views
- Be transparent and open in its decision making
- Make it easier for customers to contact and access Council services

## **9. Procurement**

Ashfield District Council is now part of a shared service arrangement led by Bassetlaw District Council and involving other local authorities.

The Council provides a wide range of services to the community and businesses in the District. In some cases these are provided directly by Officers employed by the Council, but in other cases, contractors and partners may provide them on its behalf. Therefore, the services provided to the community should be geared towards their diverse needs and requirements. Spending by the Council sustains and maintains a significant number of jobs within the District, and the Council has a statutory duty to ensure that public money is spent in a way that ensures value for money and does not lead to unfair discrimination and social exclusion.

## **10. Partnerships**

The Authority recognises that working alone will not accomplish all our ambitions so for that reason we work closely with other agencies, local communities and voluntary organisations to achieve our objectives and enhance the perception of Ashfield as a great place. The Authority will aim to ensure the ingredients for a good quality of life are in place with a commitment to design services around the needs of individuals and places rather than institutions.

The Authority continues to look towards shared service arrangements or partnership opportunities

## **11. Roles and Responsibilities**

We live in a democratic society governed by a legal framework which respects individual liberty, responsibilities and rights. Everyone has a right to be treated fairly with dignity and mutual respect. For this to happen we need to understand and embrace difference and take responsibility for our actions and behaviours. 8

The Council will provide adequate capacity and assign specific responsibilities to ensure that officers and members are equipped with the skills necessary to effectively deliver and support the Corporate Equality Objectives. However it is the responsibility of everyone at the Council to lead by example and uphold the equality objectives.

In addition a number of individuals or groups have been given specific role and responsibilities as follows:

### **Councillors**

- The Portfolio Holder for Resources has lead portfolio responsibility for Equality and Diversity
- Provide leadership and support for improving equality practice
- Consider and apply equality in all work with the local community
- Ensure that resources are made available to support the delivery of equality objectives
- Provide a scrutiny and overview role
- Ensure that the Council meets all its legal obligations according to current equality legislation

### **Chief Executive and Corporate Leadership Team**

- The Director for Resources and Business Transformation has lead officer responsibility for equality and diversity
- Provide leadership and support for improving equality practice
- Collective accountability for delivering against the Equality Objectives and ensuring that reporting mechanisms are in place
- Responsibility to champion the Corporate Equality and Inclusion Policy and ensure that employees are motivated to deliver it
- Lead by example and challenge activity or behaviour that falls below expected standards or fails to uphold the corporate values and equality objectives
- Ensure that the Council meets all its legal obligations according to current equality legislation under the Equality Act 2010

### **Service Area Managers**

- Provide quality services that meet the diverse needs of all service users
- Ensure that equality impact assessment is carried out on all relevant policies and activities of the service area
- Identify equality related actions and incorporate them within service planning
- Identify equality indicators and set targets to measure performance
- Monitor, review and evaluate performance against equality indicators and keep track of progress against actions set
- Ensure that all employees are aware of the Corporate Equality and Inclusion Policy and its key objectives
- Ensure that all employees have completed equality training
- Ensure that all employees are aware of the process and procedure for reporting hate crime or discriminatory and prejudicial activity or behaviour
- Share equality data, correspondence and good practice in team meetings
- Benchmark service delivery with other similar service providers and competitors

- Consult with service users

## **Employees**

- Understand, uphold and promote the corporate values and equality objectives
- Treat colleagues and service users with respect and according to their individual need
- Challenge activity or behaviour that is discriminatory, falls below expected standards or fails to uphold the corporate values and equality objectives
- Report any hate crime or discriminatory and prejudicial activity or behaviour observed
- Share equality data, correspondence and good practice in team meetings.
- Be receptive and open to equality training

## **Equality Steering Group**

- The internal Equality Group will oversee the development and embedding of equality policy and practices
- Monitor and review progress against the Corporate Equality Objectives
- Communicate corporate equality information and initiatives to service areas
- Share service delivery good practice in response to the equality and diversity issues faced by the Council
- Oversee and evaluate the development of the processes for hate crime reporting and the monitoring of equality objectives
- Oversee the rolling Equalities Work Plan

## **Partner Organisations**

- Adhering to any equality guidelines in agreements or contracts
- Demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity and have policies and procedures in place to achieve this
- Share service delivery good practice
- Provide peer support and challenge
- Participate in consultation and provide feedback on Council services, procedures and processes
- Benchmark performance

## **12. Supporting Our Employees**

### **Disability Confident**

The Disability Confident accreditation is awarded by Jobcentre Plus to employers who have made commitments to employ, keep and develop the abilities of Disabled people. By building a reputation as a Disability Confident employer that actively seeks out and hires skilled disabled people, it will positively help to change attitudes, behaviours and cultures, not just within the Authority but in networks, supply chains, and the communities.

The Disability Confident Charter aims to:

- Engage and encourage employers to become more confident so they employ and retain disabled people
- Increase understanding of disability and the benefits of employing or retaining disabled people
- Increase the number of employers taking action to be Disability Confident
- Make a substantial contribution towards halving the disability employment gap

## **Workplace Health**

The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Wellbeing at Work: Workplace Health Award Scheme aims to support businesses of all types to invest in the wellbeing of their employees to achieve the following outcomes for the employer:

- Demonstrate exemplary practice by leading in the area of promoting positive health and well-being of employees the ability to attract a higher calibre of employees for roles
- Improved employee retention
- Improved absences due to illness
- Increased efficiencies
- Increased productivity

Outcomes for the employee:

- Better mental health
- Better work life balance
- increase sense of self value and efficacy
- Increased awareness and ability to improve health
- Improved levels of wellbeing

There is a rolling programme of diverse health and wellbeing events organised throughout the year, across all Council facilities.

## **Mindful Employer Charter**

The Authority has signed up to the Mindful Employer Charter. This initiative supports employers in achieving a positive working environment for people with mental ill health through the following;

- Application and recruitment process
- Providing support for employees disclosing their mental ill health
- Not making assumptions about people with mental ill health
- Providing non-judgemental and proactive support to individual staff who experience mental health issues
- Ensuring that managers are equipped with the right information and training to manage mental health in the workplace

## **Mental Health Awareness training**

A number of employees from across the organisation have completed the NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Mental Health Awareness course. This has equipped the Authority with key members of staff to champion mental health within the workplace.

### **13. Review**

This Policy will be reviewed in 2021

Approval date

Review date: March 2021

Originator: Sharon Allman Equality and Diversity Officer

Last amended: