



# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION POLICY

## 1 POLICY STATEMENT

The Council is committed to providing the highest quality of service provision and recognises that the implementation of an effective Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is an integral part of such an approach.

The Council will treat all its employees, partners and customers with dignity and respect, free from discrimination, victimisation, and harassment, whilst recognising, respecting, and valuing differences.

The Council understands its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and is fully committed to its duty, imposed by section 149 of the 2010 Act.

The Council understands the requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty 2022, and will proactively advance equality, by promoting inclusion, providing services in accessible formats, and engaging with diverse community groups.

The Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and declares its opposition to any form of less favourable treatment, whether through direct or indirect discrimination, on the grounds of the protected characteristics as specified in the Equality Act 2010.

The Council is an Equal Opportunities employer and provider of services.

The Council is committed to the promotion, maintenance, and protection of the rights of individuals and to promoting human rights and freedom, based on the principles of dignity and respect.

All policies of the Council will be designed to support the principles and practices of equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion, to foster a fully integrated community and maintain harmony.

## 2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The Council, as a corporate body, has responsibility as an employer, a service provider, and a public authority.

Both Councillors and employees as individuals also have responsibilities, as well as rights.

This policy applies to all staff, councillors, volunteers, and contractors working for or on behalf of the Council.

## 3. RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The Council has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy.

The Executive Officer is responsible for monitoring, enforcing, and reviewing this policy.

In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty 2022, the Council will publish equality objectives every four years. These will be reviewed annually, alongside progress towards these.

All employees, volunteers and Councillors should ensure that they take the time to read and understand the policy. Any breach of this policy should be reported to the Chair/Executive Officer.



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Questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be directed to the Executive Officer.

### 4. LEGAL POSITION

**Under the Equality Act 2010** it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual on the following grounds:

- a) age
- b) disability
- c) gender reassignment
- d) marriage and civil partnership
- e) pregnancy and maternity
- f) race
- g) religion or belief
- h) sex
- i) sexual orientation

These are known as “protected characteristics” in section 4 of the 2010 Act.

Section 149 of the 2010 Act imposes a Duty on Town Councils to consider:

- a) The need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- b) To advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) To foster good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not.

**The purpose of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** is to make sure that public authorities think about how they can improve society and promote equality in every aspect their day-to-day business. This means that they must consider, and keep reviewing, how they are promoting equality in:

- ❖ Decision-making
- ❖ Internal and external policies
- ❖ Procuring goods and services
- ❖ The services they provide
- ❖ Recruitment, promotion, and performance management of employees

The three aims of the PSED are to make sure that public authorities have due regard to the need to:

- ❖ Put an end to unlawful behaviour that is banned by the Equality Act 2010, including discrimination, harassment, and victimisation
- ❖ Advance equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not
- ❖ Foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not

Meeting the general duty may mean that the Council may treat some people more favourably than others. For example, it is reasonable to treat a disabled person more favourably than a non-disabled person by allowing them priority access to accessible allotments.



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### 5. THE COUNCIL AS AN EMPLOYER

The Purpose of this policy is to provide equal opportunities to all employees or prospective employees, irrespective of their characteristics (unless there are genuine qualifications or objectively justified reasons for a different approach to be taken).

The Council oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination, victimisation, or harassment on the grounds of any protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010.

All employees, whether full-time, part-time, fixed contract, agency workers or temporary, and all Councillors, will be treated fairly and equitably.

Selection for employment, promotion, training, remuneration or any other benefit will be based on aptitude and ability.

In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council will analyse diversity data on employees and use this to understand equality issues and inform objectives and decisions. The Council will also assess the impact on equality of all new policies, procedures, and changes to services, and take action to mitigate adverse impacts.

The Council will make any reasonable adjustments and accommodations for disabled employees, or prospective employees. Requests should be made to the Executive Officer.

All employees and Councillors will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential; talents and resources will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the council.

Everyone is entitled to a working environment that promotes dignity and respect to all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated.

The Council will encourage and develop all employees and Councillors to support and carry out the requirements of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy.

Breaches of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy by employees will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary proceedings.

Breaches of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy by Councillors will be considered under the Code of Conduct and referred to the Monitoring Officer.

The commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense as it seeks to utilise the talents available from the local community, representing Society as a whole.

This policy is fully supported by all Members of the Council and adopts the model contract as devised by the employee professional body in the local government sector (the Society of Local Council Executive Officers)

### 6. THE COUNCIL AS A DIRECT SERVICE DELIVERER

The Council's service users have the right to expect fair and non-discriminatory treatment whilst participating in or receiving all the Council's services or activities.

In accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council will analyse diversity data on service users and use this to understand equality issues and inform objectives and decisions.



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The Council will assess the impact on equality of all new policies, procedures, and changes to services. When changes are proposed to services, the impact on equality will be assessed before implementation, with action taken to mitigate adverse impacts before changes are made.

The Council will:

- Make any reasonable adjustments and accommodations for disabled service users.
- Make information accessible in alternative formats when requested, such as large print, translated versions etc.
- Engage with diverse community groups when making decisions to understand their needs.
- Take steps to foster good relations between people from different groups to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The Council's service users should feel valued and have equal access to services irrespective of gender, race, age, or any other factor.

### **7. PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING**

The Council require contractors and suppliers to comply with equality legislation and the council's policy, and to demonstrate compliance.

### **8. FUNDED GROUPS AND THOSE WORKING ON BEHALF OF THE COUNCIL**

The Council require funded groups and those working on behalf of the Council, e.g. Allotment Associations, to comply with equality legislation and the council's policy.

### **9. TRAINING**

Employees and Councillors will undertake regular equality and diversity training. This will be offered at the start of a Council term for Councillors, with refresher training after 2 years. Employees will receive equality and diversity training every two years.

### **10. IMPLEMENTATION AND ENFORCEMENT**

The Executive Officer is responsible for implementation and compliance.

Complaints about the council's services and compliance with this policy, whether delivered by the Council or another, will be dealt with through the Council's Complaints Procedure.

Complaints and disclosures of breach of this policy by employees will be dealt with under our Disciplinary Procedure.

Complaints and disclosures of breach of this policy by Councillors will be referred to the Monitoring Officer at Northumberland County Council and dealt with via the Council's Adopted Code of Conduct.

### **11. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

The Executive Officer shall be responsible for reviewing this policy annually to ensure that it meets legal requirements and reflects best practice.