

Basildon Council

BASILDON • BILLERICAY • WICKFORD



Equality and Diversity Policy



Basildon District Council's Equality and Diversity Policy

Basildon District Council is committed to ensuring that it provides Equality of Opportunity in employment and in the delivery of services. This commitment has been reflected by the Council's adoption of 'equal opportunities', as one of its core values.

The Council is committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination, and achieving equity and equality of opportunity as an employer and service provider. The Council is also committed to the provisions of the Equal Pay Act (1970), the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) as amended by the Equality Act 2006, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) as amended in 2005, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) 2003 and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) regulations 2003 and the Sexual Orientation Regulations 2007 and Religion or Belief regulations (2007) on service provision and Age Regulations (2006). The Council's commitment to a fair deal for disadvantaged groups in recognition of the difficulties and inequalities, which these groups continue to face. Equal Opportunities mean access to jobs, services, information and participation for everyone.

This also means making sure that no person or group of people living, working or visiting the District will be directly or indirectly discriminated against because of their gender (including transgender), sexual orientation, marital status, responsibilities for dependants, race, religion, age, disability or unrelated criminal convictions. Copies of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy are available for all members of the public from The Basildon Centre Reception Area and on request by telephone.

1. The Council recognises that discrimination can take different forms:

- (a) **Direct Discrimination** - Direct discrimination is treating one person less favourably than others, solely because of, for example, their gender, disability or race.
- (b) **Indirect Discrimination** - Indirect discrimination is creating a condition or requirement of service delivery, which cannot be justified and which, in practice, prevents people from certain groups receiving a service or being employed.
- (c) **Institutional Racism** - Specifically, and more broadly, institutional discrimination consists of the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, ethnic origin, gender or disability, etc. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping which further disadvantage such people.
- (d) **Harassment** - Harassment is discriminating, and specifically with regards to Equal Opportunities where an individual or group of individuals are harassed or abused because of their race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion / belief. Such action is considered "less favourable treatment" in that people who are harassed may feel less comfortable in the service/working environment or may even decide not to pursue their right to receiving the service.
- (e) **Victimisation** - Victimisation is where a person is treated less favourably because they have, or it is suspected that they will pursue rights to equality in employment/service delivery via the Complaints Panel and/or legal proceedings.

2. Service Provision

As a provider of services to the whole community of Basildon District, the Council believes that it should take action to make sure that the needs of all sectors of the community are identified and that steps should be taken to eliminate any discrimination in how its services are delivered. By this the Council means that:

- a) There will be **CONSULTATION** with the community to find out the needs of different groups of people, especially those from traditionally disadvantaged groups. This will be done through Elected Members, Equity/Equality Task Group, voluntary and community organisations, Focus Groups, representative organisations, and individual comments. Consultation will take place both on a corporate level, and by individual service departments.
- b) **ACTION PLANS** will be drawn up to provide a programme of work to improve the delivery of services for the whole community. The Equity/Equality Task Group will consider any Equal Opportunities issues, which have corporate impact and make recommendations to Council for approval. They will report back to the Management Group on progress against the Action Plans.
- c) Service Department Managers will be responsible for drawing up and implementing an Action Plan to improve the delivery of their service in order to meet the identified needs of the whole community. Reports on progress against the Action Plans will be given to Service Committees and any other groups as required by the Council.
- d) **MONITORING** - Each service department will establish an appropriate system for monitoring performance in delivering their service to the whole community. This will enable individual departments, and the Council as a whole, to assess the success of the various Action Plans, and the Equal Opportunities Policy and will inform future actions. The results of the monitoring will form part of an annual report to the Council.

3. Employment

Basildon District Council has both social and legal responsibility for ensuring that it provides equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination for all existing and potential employees regardless of:

- Gender
- Race
- Ethnic or national origin
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or Belief

The Council considers that the provision of equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination are central to the health and well being of its workforce. It is, therefore, committed to dealing effectively with any proven act of discrimination, abuse or harassment committed either by staff or service users. The Council also considers that this provision is

essential to the operation of an effective service and therefore requires that staff treat both members of the public with dignity, courtesy and respect at all times, ensuring that they adhere to the Council's policies and procedures designed to promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice in the workplace.

Quality and equality in service delivery and employment are closely linked to promote equity and social justice for all our communities. By trying to ensure that the workforce is representative of the people it serves, the Council aims to ensure that those who deliver services, or who make decisions about services, implement non-discriminatory policies, procedures and practice to meeting the needs of the whole community. Systematic recruitment and workforce monitoring will be used annually to review the Council's position as an Equal Opportunity Employer and develop appropriate Action Plans to address any gaps arising out of the monitoring.

The Council makes it a condition of service that all employees follow the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy. All staff are given a copy of the Equal Opportunities Policy Statement with their contracts. The meaning of the policies are made clear to new members of staff by their line managers as part of their induction programme, and all staff attend the compulsory "E-Quality Services Programme" on joining the organisation. We expect all our staff to promote equality in the workplace and in the services we deliver. In this way, the Council can help redress inequality. If any member of staff does not adhere to the policy, disciplinary procedures could be set in motion, which ultimately may result in dismissal