



Corporate Equality Policy

2020-2024

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Foreword

Erewash Borough Council is committed to promoting equality and the quality of life for all our citizens. Our vision for Erewash is a first class borough in which people have pride and where they choose to live, work and play.

We want Erewash to be a borough of equal opportunity, where everyone has a fair chance and people from all backgrounds take part in community life, creating a borough that is varied, vibrant and proud.

Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are treated fairly and equally and no less favourably, specific to their protected characteristics.

This is achieved by supporting council staff, elected members and local partnership agencies to deliver strategies and services that promote and enhance equality of opportunity and cohesion.

We will seek to ensure that we treat all individuals fairly and with dignity and respect the differences of the people we serve and the staff we employ. We will aim to safeguard those who may face inequality or harassment due to one or more of the nine 'protected characteristics'.

We value and recognise the benefits of a diverse workforce and are committed to providing a working environment that is free from any form of discrimination and victimisation and promote equality of opportunity for all staff.

We are committed to supporting equal opportunities for all and we value the diversity of thought and attitude that our communities bring.

Introduction

As a service provider and major local employer, Erewash Borough Council is committed to promoting diversity and equality of opportunity to everyone it comes into contact with. We are determined to meet our legal duties relating to equality and diversity; we want Erewash to be a place where no one experiences discrimination or disadvantage because of their individual protected characteristics.

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 taking into account their individual needs.

We are committed to providing good quality services shaped by an understanding of the needs of different people and ensuring that how we employ people and deliver services promotes equality and challenges inequality. We will seek to understand our communities and to work effectively to reduce and eliminate disadvantage, unlawful discrimination and hate crime.

Purpose of the Policy

We believe we play an important role in leading public services and other partners across Erewash. We are committed to creating and maintaining a community that embraces change and welcomes diversity; diversity helps to build such communities by celebrating differences and combining our talents. In Erewash we will:

- Ensure that all our staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities to all of the people of Erewash.
- Continue to strive to employ a workforce which reflects the communities we serve.
- Fully include diversity and equality issues in delivering our services.
- Value differences.
- Give our staff the necessary skills to challenge and work with our partners effectively.
- Give all staff the opportunities to develop themselves and their careers, so they can achieve their full potential.

Erewash Borough Council is committed to providing value for money and accountability which will underpin the delivery of all corporate priorities. Working with others the council will deliver services that are well-governed, ethical, effective, efficient and economically viable.

Who is this Policy for?

This Policy is for our residents and partners so that we can demonstrate what we will do over the next four years to make Erewash a fairer place for everyone. It is also for our employees to demonstrate the value we place in them.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) sets out the general equality duty, which in summary requires that those subject to the equality duty 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.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission states that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking 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.

The Equality Act 2010 covers the following protected characteristics:

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

A definition of each of these protected characteristics can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition to the general equality duty, the Equality Act's specific duties require the council to publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the general equality duty, and prepare and publish one or more equality objectives that the council thinks it needs to achieve in order to meet one or more of the general equality duties and then at least every four years subsequently. These objectives must be specific, measurable and published in a way that is accessible for the public.

The publication of information includes information relating to people who share protected characteristics that are affected by the council's policies and practices, and information related to its employees. This information is published in the equalities sections of the Council's website.

The Equality Duty 2010

The duty does not set out a particular way for assessing the impact of policies on equality. However, the duty does require local authorities to have due regard to the aims of the equality duty when making decisions and setting policies. It is important for decision makers to understand the potential impact that their decisions could have on people with different protected characteristics. Therefore it is advisable to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) as a tool to determine the impact policies and decisions will have on different groups of people.

What are EQIAs?

An Equality Impact Assessment is a way of deciding whether an existing or proposed policy, procedure, practice or service does (or may) affect people differently, and if so, whether it affects them in an adverse way.

Assessments will be carried out on all new policies and services, as they are developed and as part of a review programme for existing policies and services. All issues will be considered alongside the protected characteristics, a summary of all EQIA's can be found on our website.

The Council's Equality Objectives

The council has established the following objectives based on the information and knowledge it has and on consultation undertaken with our community and staff:

- **Provide a welcoming and safe place for our communities, visitors and businesses which embraces equality and is free from discrimination.**

- **Provide relevant services that are free from discrimination and delivered in a way that is responsive and accessible.**
- **Foster an accessible and inclusive working environment for all our staff and strive to achieve a workforce that is representative and diverse.**

The council has focussed on setting objectives that are stretching and which reflect the bigger equality challenges that will have the greatest impact on promoting and improving the three aims of the duty.

In setting these objectives we have considered what evidence we have from both internal and external sources and the types of equality issues raised by staff and customers. We have also identified how we will measure progress against these objectives.

Achieving our Objectives

This equality policy reinforces our commitment and responsibility to our communities and workforce. We recognise the need to continuously improve and build on our past achievements. The Equality Act 2010 makes it clear that taking into account the needs of our communities is key to removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by those most in need.

A key element of delivering against this policy will be to ensure the effective monitoring of our equality performance. The associated activities outlined in the next section will support the delivery of our equality objectives.

A key driver of ensuring that our equality performance is managed effectively will be to ensure that linkages are consistently and regularly made across all our policies, strategies and outcome indicators.

We recognise that delivering our objectives presents a challenge and we will need to overcome barriers inside and outside the council to ensure we make a difference. In delivering our objectives we aim to:

- Work with partners to deliver public services in a fair way;
- Promote equality and diversity with the partnerships we are involved in and be seen as an organisation that takes diversity and equality seriously; and
- Use our strong position to make a noticeable difference to the range of providers we give contracts to, and make sure the firms and contractors we work with are clear about how they can help us to achieve our aims and meet our legal responsibilities.

Focusing on Equality and Diversity as an Employer

We are committed to ensuring equal access for all to opportunities for employment, learning and development and promotion, with the aim of developing a diverse and inclusive workforce which respects, values and reflects the wider community it serves. We want to recruit, develop and retain the most talented people, regardless of their background. We will promote a culture of respect and dignity and actively challenge discrimination, should it ever arise. We will remove unnecessary barriers for our employees seeking opportunities through training and development, promotion and career planning.

We will achieve our aims and meet our legal responsibilities by:

- Giving our staff the necessary skills and training;
- Making sure managers have the information and support available to allow them to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of disabled staff so they can carry out their work;
- Ensuring that staff surveys include equality and diversity questions and publishing and acting on the results; and
- Improving our monitoring systems to enable more relevant information to be collected and acting on the results.

We will make sure we deliver our aims by:

- Providing clear and positive leadership;
- Including questions and consideration on diversity and equality in our employee performance development reviews; and
- Improve monitoring of our workforce profile to identify trends and challenge inequalities.

Our commitment as an employer

- We will treat all employees fairly and in line with our legal duties and our human resources policies.
- We will strive to make sure every employee takes part in equality and diversity training sessions.
- We will give every employee equal access to training, development and promotion, and our recruitment and promotion processes will be open and transparent.

Our expectations of our employees

We expect our staff to:

- Treat each other and service users with respect and dignity, putting into practice the principles of diversity and equality in daily working life;
- Take responsibility for their own learning and professional development making good use of the opportunities and resources we offer; and
- Comply with legislation and act in line with our policies and procedures.

Our Corporate Equality Objectives and Actions

The following objectives have been set using customer feedback and wider consultation with specific groups.

Objective 1

Provide a welcoming and safe place for our communities, visitors and businesses which embraces equality and is free from discrimination.

To support the general duty we will continue to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. We aim for good relations to be promoted between and within communities.

We aim to:

- Continue to improve equality monitoring.
- Remove barriers to ensure that all groups have the same chances of success.
- Work in partnership to make Erewash a place free from discrimination and where people are proud to be who they are.
- Strive to ensure that the contribution of all groups is valued.

Objective 2

- **Provide relevant services that are free from discrimination and delivered in a way that is responsive and accessible.**

To support the advancing of equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, our aim is for all services, facilities and information to be accessible to all, and for people to be satisfied with our services and facilities. We aim for the different needs of people to be considered in the planning and delivery of our services, facilities and information, and for

reasonable adjustments to be made. We will collect and analyse data from communities to further develop our understanding of communities and service users.

We aim to:

- Use a range of appropriate and accessible methods of communication to ensure people with different needs get information about our services.
- Collect and use service user equality information and information from our communities to inform services, policies and equality impact assessments.
- Monitor the outcomes of equality impact assessments.
- Use information from equality impact assessments to influence and affect decision making.
- Provide services that are inclusive and designed to meet customer needs.

Objective 3

Foster an accessible and inclusive working environment for all our staff and strive to achieve a workforce that is representative and diverse.

We aim for our workforce policies and practices to provide equal opportunities for employees to progress and develop and to be responsive to the needs of our workforce. We also aim for our workforce to understand and support our equality commitments. We recognise that our employees are our most valuable asset.

We aim to:

- Analyse our employee profile and create strategies for improving representation if required.
- Ensure that all employees are treated with dignity and respect and that no form of intimidation, bullying or harassment is tolerated.
- Make training, development and progression opportunities available to all staff.
- Ensure that all of our employment policies and practices reflect our commitment to equality and fairness in the workplace.

- Foster good relations between people of different groups within the workforce and external parties such as job applicants.
- All employees will be given help and encouragement to develop their full potential and utilise their unique talents.

Training, Monitoring and Review

Equality Monitoring

National policy, legislation and performance indicator requirements require that we have sound data collection, analysis and monitoring systems, which help measure and inform the council's progress on equality and diversity issues. We recognise that we need to monitor delivery to ensure that our services and employment practices meet the diverse needs of our service users, potential customers and employees.

Equality Training and Development

Equality training and development is a key component of the success of this policy. We will identify and provide equality and diversity training for all staff and councillors.

Performance Management

We will continue to develop our performance management arrangements to capture equality and diversity information, actions and improvements. Good equality analysis enables us to understand the differences in outcomes and opportunities experienced by people in different communities in key areas of life such as health, education, community safety, housing quality, access to work and so on. Equality analysis is about identifying where the outcomes and opportunities gaps are for different communities, including those sharing the protected characteristics.

We are opposed to all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination and will not tolerate any form of intimidation, bullying, or harassment.

Equality performance will be managed and monitored by the Corporate Equality Group, with oversight being provided by the Corporate Management Team.

Appendix One – Definitions of the protected characteristics

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of a protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Definitions of these protected characteristics can be found below:

Age: A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 years old) or range of ages (for example 18 – 30 year olds).

Disability: A person has a disability if he or she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

Gender reassignment: The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same sex couple. Same sex couples and opposite sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

Pregnancy and Maternity: Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race: The protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

Religion or belief: Religion refers to any religion, including lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex: A man or a woman.

Sexual orientation: Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.