

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Introduction

1. As a matter of good employment relations practice, it is important for the Council to adopt, implement and monitor a policy on equality of opportunity in employment. This Equal Opportunities Policy underpins the Council's core values; specifically;
 - striving to be a good employer; and
 - promoting equality of opportunity in all we do

The policy embodies the principles contained in the following legislation:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations (Amendment Act) 2000
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- Gender Reassignment Regulations 1999

Policy

2. It is the Council's policy to treat job applicants and employees in the same way, regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, age, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion or disability.
3. The policy applies to the advertisement of jobs, recruitment and appointment to them, training, promotion, conditions of work, pay and to every other aspect of employment. The policy also applies equally to the treatment of our service users.
4. Every line manager and employee has personal responsibility for the implementation of the policy. Any instance of doubt about the application of the policy, or other questions, should be addressed to the Director of Finance and Personnel who is responsible for the effective operation of the Equal Opportunities Policy.
5. Employees who are disabled or become disabled in the course of their employment should inform and may also wish to advise the Council of any "reasonable adjustments" to their employment or working conditions which they consider to be necessary or which they consider would assist them in the performance of their duties. Careful consideration will be given to any proposals of this nature and, where reasonable and reasonably practicable, such adjustments will be made. There may however be circumstances where it will not be reasonable or reasonably practicable for the Council to accommodate those proposals and where less favourable treatment may be justified in accordance with the statutory provisions.

Discipline

6. All complaints of discrimination will be sensitively investigated and, if proven, may result in disciplinary action for the perpetrator. Failure to comply with the terms of the policy may also result in disciplinary action.

Recruitment and Monitoring

7. The Council's objective is to select the most suitable person for the job based on experience and qualifications. All selections and short listings will be conducted on an objective basis dealing only with suitability for the job.
8. Recruitment adverts will not be worded in such a way as to disadvantage any one group of applicants unless there is a genuine occupational qualification which applies to any particular situation.
9. Council staff involved in the recruitment process will be given a copy of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and reminded of this policy prior to any recruitment campaign.
10. All employees and job applicants will be asked to complete a form denoting their sex, race, ethnic origin and any disabilities. The Council guarantees that this form will be used for the purpose of monitoring the effectiveness of its equal opportunities policy only.

Training

11. An induction will be provided for all new staff, which includes an explanation of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
12. Training and development opportunities will be provided in accordance with this policy.
13. Appropriate Equal Opportunities training will be provided to Council employees.

Complaints about discrimination

14. Any member of staff may use the grievance procedure to complain about discriminatory conduct. The company is concerned to ensure that staff feel able to raise such grievances and no individual will be penalised for raising such a grievance unless it is untrue and made in bad faith.

Forms of Discrimination

The following are types of discrimination which are against the Council's policy.

Direct discrimination

15. For a reason which relates to a person's disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marital status, colour, ethnic origin, race or religion the Council treats him or her less favourably than it treats or would treat others who are not disabled, or who are of the opposite sex, unmarried or of a different race or religion, or who have undergone sexual reassignment or because of their sexual orientation.

Indirect discrimination

16. Occurs when the Council applies or intends to apply a requirement or condition which :
 - is such that the proportion of a particular gender, married persons or persons of a specific racial or religious group who can comply with it, is considerably smaller than the proportion of the opposite sex, unmarried persons or persons not of that racial or religious group, and which
 - cannot be shown to be justifiable irrespective of the sex, marital status, race or religion of the person to whom it is applied; and
 - is, therefore, to that person's detriment

All three conditions must apply.

Victimisation

17. A person is victimised or treated less favourably than another person in the same circumstances because they have asserted or are suspected of asserting their rights under the legislation listed in section 1.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments

18. The Council fails to comply with a duty to make reasonable adjustments for a disabled person.

Harassment

19. An employee is subjected to harassment, intimidation or unfavourable treatment. Harassment can be described as unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct.
20. Alterations to the physical working environment that cause offence, such as putting up offensive pictures, will be treated as a form of harassment.

The physical working environment of the Council will be maintained and developed so that it is accessible and welcoming to all.