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At the heart of our vision for equalities in Hounslow is putting our communities first. The Council is committed to improving the quality of life for all its residents and employees and strives to improve the active participation of its citizens in the economic, educational, cultural, social and community life of the borough. We aim to have a staff complement that reflects the diversity of our communities.

We also believe that Individuals make a unique and rich contribution to a community by virtue of their race, disability, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, culture and values. Diversity and social inclusion is about recognising and harnessing this richness and focusing it towards creating an outstanding quality of life in Hounslow.

**Our Commitments**

The Council has an unequivocal commitment to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating all manifestations of institutional discrimination in service delivery, procurement and employment.

In Hounslow, maintaining social and community cohesion through promoting diversity and equalities has been a key priority for many years for the Council.

In 2003, the Council’s Executive made further commitments to the promotion of community cohesion and diversity by committing the Council to developing equalities standards in all services, in employment and to improve community satisfaction in order to increase confidence in Council services.

We are committed to achieving community cohesion by tackling disaffection in ways that do not alienate communities. Hounslow’s revised Community Plan promotes a new sense of social solidarity and puts forward the need for mutual responsibility to achieve social inclusion. We aim to work actively with partners by addressing common concerns and by developing joint priorities for the Borough.

This policy together with the Community Plan and the Community Cohesion Strategy are essential pillars towards building a shared, common vision and a sense of belonging for all our communities.
This *Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy* renews our long-standing commitment to the diverse communities of Hounslow. It acknowledges our duties, obligations and responsibilities towards all our communities. This policy commitment is an essential part of the Council's Equalities Management Framework which guides and directs the council's responsibilities arising from the equalities legislation.

The Council welcomes its legal obligations under the following legislation:

- *The Equal Pay Act 1970 and amended regulations in 1984*
- *Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Code of Practice*
- *Race Relations Act 1976*
- *Mental Health Act 1983*
- *Children Act 1989*
- *NHS and Community Care Act 1990*
- *Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Code of Practice*
- *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*
- *Human Rights Act 1998*
- *Asylum and Immigration Act 1999*
- *Local Government Act 1999*
- *Care Standards Act 2000*
- *Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and associated codes of practice*
- *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001*
- *EU Directives on Employment and Equal Treatment and relevant regulations regarding discrimination on the grounds of religious belief, age and sexual orientation.*

The Council's policy commitment covers all aspects of the council's work. It also applies to all services that are provided by external organisations or service providers who are partly or wholly funded by the Council.

Each Council Department will need to develop a Departmental Equality Action Plan in response to this policy. Furthermore, each department will need to identify actions and resources to implement their plans.
Hounslow Council is committed

To identify and eradicate any form of institutional discrimination. The council accepts its statutory responsibilities in accordance with the relevant legislation. This commitment applies to equalities in employment and the delivery of services

To eliminate discrimination on the grounds of gender, disability, race, faith, age, colour, ethnic origin, religious belief, marital status, sexuality, and HIV status

To promote equality of opportunity and fair treatment for all our communities, especially marginalised communities, lesbian and gay communities, black and ethnic minorities, faith communities, white low income communities, single parents, carers, travellers, people with disabilities, younger people and older people;

To promote fair and equal access to services by all citizens on the basis of need and to provide services in a manner which is sensitive to the individual, whatever their background.

To improve the quality of life for all its residents and employees

To improve the active participation of its citizens in the economic, educational, cultural, social and community life of the borough

To have a staff complement that reflects the diversity of our communities.
To promote equality of opportunity and fair treatment in employment and training

To celebrate diversity and promote social inclusion and community cohesion

To exercise its community leadership role by promoting the social, economic and environmental well being of the local area and our communities

To work in partnership with stakeholders and communities

To ensure that every employee of the council is responsible for implementing the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

To ensure that the Community Plan is informed by the need to promote and achieve equalities outcomes and promote community cohesion

To develop a clear plan, with targets and timescales, to deliver the agreed Corporate Equalities Plan and to develop the capacity needed to achieve it.

To mainstream our equalities commitments and actions and to integrate equality and diversity in our Best Value Reviews.

To ensure that all Departments develop and implement an Equality Action Plan with resources, targets and timescales.

To improve Communications at all levels in order to ensure full participation and involvement by all our communities

To monitor and evaluate all aspects of service delivery and employment and to eliminate differences demonstrated by unfair outcomes
The council’s Equal Opportunities and Diversity Commitments will be taken forward by a number of key actions. These actions are grouped under five strategic equality and diversity objectives.

One

PROMOTING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Two

IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS AND PROMOTING CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

Three

PROMOTING EQUALITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY

Four

PROMOTING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY IN EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Five

EVALUATING THE SUCCESS OF OUR EQUALITIES COMMITMENTS
Hounslow's Community Plan

Hounslow’s Community Plan, endorsed by the members of the Hounslow Local Strategic Partnership, sets out a blueprint for the kind of place where we can all live, study and work. It recognises how we need to work together with our partners to build an inclusive borough that meets the needs of the whole community.

Hounslow’s revised Community Plan integrates equality and diversity to promote a new sense of social solidarity and mutual responsibility for social inclusion with partners by addressing common concerns and by developing joint priorities for the Borough.

Hounslow Council will continue to ensure that its community plan responds to the needs of local communities.

Exercising Community leadership through the Executive and Area Committees

Area Committees are a means for bringing together different community interests and for promoting a common vision in which local communities have a sense of belonging. Area Committees and local councilors play a key role in building cohesive communities at ward level.

Hounslow Council will continue to promote local & community interests through its area committees.
Community Cohesion Strategy

Projects promoting community cohesion. The aim in promoting community cohesion is to tackle disaffection in ways that do not alienate communities.

The Community Cohesion Strategy will

- develop a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- respect and celebrate the diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances;
- build strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods;
- promote the inclusion of newly arrived communities; develop opportunities for disaffected white communities; promoting the development and inclusion of BME communities in areas of deprivation;
- ensure that services are based on consultation with those that receive our services
- ensure that positive steps are taken to include hard to reach groups through consultation and work with Area Committees.

Supporting People

The Council will develop strategies and projects supporting all people in need, particularly those affected by low incomes, inadequate housing, or poor health to access good quality, appropriate services and better quality of life, and helping such people to play an active role in determining their future opportunities.

Corporate Equality Plan

The Council will develop a Corporate Equality Plan which sets the scope, outcomes, targets and arrangements for monitoring
Communications Strategy

The Council will develop a communications strategy in order to ensure that
the public have access to the information and services we provide

The Council will

• engage with users and designated community groups, staff and stakeholder groups on
its service delivery to deliver appropriate and responsive services and to make that
process clear, open and inclusive
• consult through the Community Planning process, the Local Strategic Partnership
and Area Committees
• ensure that information on key council services can be made available in a range of
the most frequently required community languages for communities for non-English
speakers
• ensure a professional interpreting service is available in a range of community
languages for service users whose first language is not English
• keep under review the changing demands for translated materials and provide
translated information in the most frequently required languages
• ensure that access to services address the access requirements of the Disability
Discrimination Act for example, brailing, taping, signing, and other
communications aids are made available as appropriate
• ensure that an accessible complaint procedure is in place to ensure against
discrimination in service allocation and delivery
• consult on policies we are proposing to introduce and publish the results
• consult on its Race Equality Scheme and also the Corporate Equality Plan
• work in partnership with local voluntary organisations representing the interests of
people with disabilities, ethnic minority communities including refugees and asylum
seekers and gay and lesbian communities in the development of the Corporate
Equality Plan and on the arrangements to undertake assessments of the impact of
proposed new policies and arrangements for consultation and monitoring
Assess Functions and Policies

The Council will undertake a comprehensive assessment of the relevance of functions to equalities legislation and commitments.

The Council will undertake a comprehensive impact assessment of relevant functions, policies and proposed policies and publish the results.

Departmental Equality Action Plan

The Council will

- ensure that all departments produce a Departmental Action Plan and that all council services, delivered directly or through contractors, take forward the Council’s equalities and diversity commitments;
- promote the social model of disability in the design and delivery of services;
- ensure that all our services are flexible and responsive to the changing needs of our community;
- identify groups within the community whose needs/requirements are not being met by the Council or are less well met by Council services than those other groups;
- promote customer care.

Fair Treatment

The Council will

- respond to customer complaints against harassment, domestic violence and homophobic and religious discrimination;
- provide appropriate support for the victims of harassment, including racism, homophobia and domestic violence.

Action for Access to Public Buildings

The Council will implement the public building access obligations under the DDA by identifying resources and a program of action.
**Recruitment and Selection**

The Council will recruit, select, promote and treat applicants on objective criteria, having regard to relevant experience, potential, skills and abilities. In particular, the Council will ensure that no applicant or employee will be placed at a disadvantage by requirements or conditions which are not necessary to the performance of the job, or which constitute indirect or unfair discrimination.

**Training**

The Council will

- ensure that staff will be trained to carry out all duties in line with the new legislation and the implementation of Council’s commitments and the Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy;
- produce a training plan which integrates diversity and equal opportunities. This plan will be consulted on with staff and managers;
- undertake training to promote equal opportunities and diversity to all staff at all levels.

**Review**

The Council will ensure that all employment policies are consistent with current legislation and all relevant employment Codes of Practice.

**HR Monitoring**

The Council will

- undertake Workforce Monitoring and analyse implications of the monitoring;
- monitor, by ethnic group, disability, sexual orientation and gender all existing staff, and applicants for jobs, promotion and training and publish these results every year;
- monitor grievances, disciplinary action, performance appraisals, training and dismissals.
**Fair Treatment**

The Council will

- *act on our fair treatment policy by challenging homophobic, racist, sexist, and other discriminatory behaviour which promotes every employees right to be treated with respect;*
- *keep under review complaints from staff against harassment, victimization and bullying and any other discriminatory behaviour.*

**Equal Pay**

The council will implement a fair employment and equal pay policy.

**Complaints**

The Council will safeguard the individual rights of any employee who wishes to complain
Monitoring and Evaluation

The Council will

• monitor our commitment to equality and publish the results
• ensure that systems are developed to audit and monitor service delivery and customer satisfaction
• collect and analyse data on the background of service users, complainants, perpetrators and victims of harassment publish results;
• train staff to undertake peer inspections of services using the self-assessment process.
• will also provide support for monitoring through its executive and scrutiny function;
• promote the use of customer feedback, service delivery feedback, residents survey information and information gathered from user satisfaction surveys to provide further monitoring information;
• promote the use of residents panels to test satisfaction of council services against equality and diversity objectives.

Complaints

The Council will ensure that its complaints procedure is accessible and will protect the complainant against victimisation.
Members and Chief Officers

At member level, The Council has assigned an Executive member with lead responsibility to promote Equality and Diversity who, together with other Executive members, will hold the Councils Directorates accountable for implementing this policy.

Services and Departmental Plans

At Chief Officer level, the Chief Executive and members of the Council’s Corporate Management Team are directly responsible for the implementation of this policy.

They are also responsible for ensuring that all staff are aware of their respective responsibilities under this policy and are given appropriate training and support.

Chief Officers will be required to lead and direct its implementation corporately and within their own departments.

The Corporate Valuing Diversity sub-group will support the Corporate Management Team by guiding the implementation of the policy and for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the implementation of it within their departments.

Within directorates, implementation of this policy will need to be managed through Senior Management Teams and Departmental Management Teams as appropriate.

Following adoption of the Policy by the Hounslow Local Strategic Partnership and its constituent agencies, each partner agency may need to review its policy in the light of this and take appropriate action. Divisions, Units, Service Delivery Teams
Diversity Section

The Chief Executive’s Directorate

The Civic Centre, Lampton Road, Hounslow, TW3-4DN

T: 020 8583 2530 W: www.hounslow.gov.uk

Designed by Chetan Behl Oct 2003

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