

# Policy Statement on Equality & Diversity in Employment

## 1. Aim of Policy

The aim of this policy is to provide employees with a clear statement about West Sussex County Council's (WSSCC) commitment to promoting equality and diversity within employment.

We seek to ensure that our working environment is one that respects and includes everyone regardless of their sex or gender reassignment; marital status (including civil partnership); sexual orientation; race, language, ethnic or national origins and nationality (including citizenship); religious belief; disability and / or medical conditions; age; whether they have dependants; trade union membership status and activity or political views/affiliations.

## 2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all employees of WSSCC, but excluding staff based in schools (for whom there is an equivalent policy).

This policy applies to all employees regardless of how long they have been employed, their contractual hours and contract type.

### Definitions

At WSSCC "equality" is about opportunity, access, participation and contribution on a fair and equal footing and providing a framework for this to happen.

The term "diversity" acknowledges there are differences between people and the organisation values and respects the variety of backgrounds, perspectives, values and beliefs of its employees.

## 3. Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010 places a statutory duty on the authority to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations between people from different groups.

#### **4. Links to other Policies**

The Treating People as Individuals (TPI) Policy sets out the Authority's commitments, values and objectives in relation to equality and diversity. It covers residents, service users and employees.

The Behaviour at Work policy sets out how we expect employees to behave toward one another and outlines the framework for addressing issues that are raised.

The WSCC Standards of Conduct sets out the expected standards of behaviour and conduct for all employees.

All the policies mentioned above can be accessed via the Intranet.

#### **5. Guiding Principles**

- We are committed to providing equality of opportunity for all by eliminating discrimination. We will do this by ensuring that our practices reflect relevant employment legislation and good practice. Our employment decisions are based upon job related, objective criteria.
- We are committed to having a workforce that reflects the diversity within our community where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

#### **6. Employee Responsibilities**

All employees, irrespective of their role, have a personal responsibility to comply with this policy, associated policies and to abide by the Equality Act 2010, in dealing with each other, managing staff and in their relationships with customers.

In particular, employees, must not:

- discriminate against colleagues, other workers, job applicants, or customers;
- bully or harass colleagues, other workers, job applicants or customers;
- encourage or try to encourage another person to treat others unfairly or to practice unlawful discrimination;
- victimise people who have made allegations or complaints of discrimination or who have provided information about such discrimination.

We will not tolerate any of the above behaviours. Where employees commit an act of unjustified or unlawful discrimination, or allow discrimination to occur without taking appropriate action, then they could be liable to a claim being brought against them as an individual, for example at an Employment Tribunal. The employee could also be liable to disciplinary action for a breach of the County Council's Standards of Conduct, which could result in dismissal.

For more detailed information please see the following documents:

- WSCC Standards of Conduct
- Policy Statement on Behaviour in the Workplace
- Definitions of bullying, harassment and victimisation
- Types of discrimination

## **7. Employer Commitment**

We will carry out the following activities in order to demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity, and also to fulfil our legal responsibilities.

### **7a. Employment Policies**

We will ensure that our employment policies and practices are fair to all by undertaking an equality analysis when we carry out employee related projects, policy developments and reviews.

We will monitor the implementation of these policies to ensure that they remain fair in practice and that any barriers to and within employment are removed.

### **7b. Consultation**

We have consultation arrangements with a number of trade unions and professional associations.

### **7c. Staff Groups**

There are three work-related interest groups organised by West Sussex County Council staff in partnership with UNISON. These are:

- LGBTQ+ Staff Group;
- Disabled Staff Group;
- the Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff group;
- Women in the Workplace Group; and
- Carers Staff Group.

West Sussex County Council makes a commitment to:

- promote the existence of these groups;
- provide staff with reasonable time to prepare for and attend

- Staff Group meetings during the working day; and
- support reasonable use of existing resources (for example, office equipment).

#### **7d. Monitoring**

We monitor the effectiveness of our policies and practices by collecting data on potential recruits and existing employees. We encourage all employees to disclose personal information including their ethnicity, disability status, sexual orientation, and religion or belief, to help inform us about how we can best support diversity in the workforce.

The data collected is used confidentially to help us identify areas where action may be required. Information provided by applicants for employment is not considered as part of the selection process, other than to ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place where requested by disabled applicants. All data is used in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. We will ensure that reports will not enable individual members of staff to be identified.

We publish aggregated data about the diversity of our workforce annually on the Internet.

We use this data to improve our performance in relation to equality and diversity.

#### **7e. Continuous improvement**

We have a rolling three-year HR Equality & Diversity Action Plan. The actions set out in the Plan enable us to meet our Corporate Equality Objectives and legal requirements, as well as address any issues which have come to light.

### **8. Accessibility**

If you would like this information in another format, please email [People.Management.Policy&Practice.Team@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:People.Management.Policy&Practice.Team@westsussex.gov.uk)