

ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

2002



ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY DOCUMENT

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INTRODUCTION
EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY DOCUMENT

1. THE ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

- 1.1** The Isle of Wight Council needs a corporate policy and strategy to ensure a co-ordinated, well focussed, effective approach to demonstrating the value of Equality in everything the Council does.
- 1.2** The Head of Paid Service, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service are committed to promoting equality objectives and sharing good practice. This will be done both internally within their Directorates and service planning as well as externally with partnering organisations and in our dealings with the public.
- 1.3** The policy encompasses the Isle of Wight Council's Mission:
- Improving Island Life.
- 1.4** The policy builds upon the Isle of Wight Council's Values:
- Listening to people.
 - Working in partnership.
 - Giving good service.
 - Being open and fair.
 - Caring for our unique environment.
- 1.5** Equality is a common thread running through all of the Council's Objectives:
- To care for vulnerable and disadvantaged people.
 - To raise standards of achievement, encourage learning and promote opportunities for all.
 - To develop the knowledge and skills needed for employment opportunities
 - To protect and enhance health, safety and environment of the Island and its people.
 - To develop the Island's transport network for the benefit of local people.
 - To support and develop council staff and to manage the council's property and resources efficiently and effectively.
 - To promote sustainable tourism, economic, leisure and cultural development.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Isle of Wight Council appreciates the diversity of the people of the Isle of Wight. We recognise that to provide the best quality of local government we must identify and address the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community.

The Isle of Wight Council will therefore:

- Work in partnership with other community organisations to provide services which meet the requirements of residents of The Isle of Wight and are accessible to everyone who needs them.
- Consult and involve local people and service users when taking decisions that affect them.
- Promote equality of opportunity for everyone and strive to eliminate unfair discrimination and disadvantage.
- Recruit people based only on the basis of merit, ability and justifiable job requirements; ensuring that employment terms, conditions and benefits are offered fairly and consistently.
- Support the development of strong, secure, self-reliant, self-confident communities free from unlawful discrimination.

Although this list is not exhaustive, we will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of:

- Disability.
- Ethnic or national origins, race or colour.
- Gender.
- HIV status.
- Age*.
- Income level.
- Marital status.
- Religious beliefs.
- Responsibility for children or dependants.
- Sexuality.

* The Council has set a general maximum retirement age of 65. This has been found to be acceptable under case law and accords with the Directive on Discrimination in Employment.

2. BACKGROUND NOTES

2.1 Introduction

Early legislation in the field of equalities, whilst having sections on goods and services tended to emphasise equal opportunities in employment, training and promotion. The Isle of Wight Council has achieved much in these areas with an open and accountable recruitment and selection procedure and formal appraisal systems. The Personnel Services Manager continues to be responsible for the role of promoting good practice and monitoring its effectiveness in relation to employment within the Council.

However, with the introduction of new legislation under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, equality of access and service delivery has become increasingly important, hence the decision to emphasise this in the future Equality Strategy. This involves 'mainstreaming' of equality issues into all of our services ensuring that equality is considered at every stage of planning and delivering services.

2.2 Equality - an Isle of Wight Council value

The Isle of Wight Council needs a corporate policy and strategy to ensure a co-ordinated, well focussed, effective approach to demonstrating the value of Equality in everything the Council does.

The Isle of Wight Council adopts the definition of Equality as:

Promoting Equality of opportunity in service delivery, employment and treating people fairly and with dignity.

2.3 The link between Equality and Quality

Promoting Equality of opportunity in employment enables us to improve the quality of the services we provide for all sections of the local community. Equality is one of the components of a quality service, ensuring that the service is accessible, flexible to the requirements of users and treats people fairly and with dignity.

Embedding Equality into everything the Council does:

- **Ensures we treat everyone fairly.**
- **Increases local democracy and accountability** by ensuring that all residents are fully engaged in policy making and service planning.
- **Enhances community satisfaction** by delivering the services that local people need in the most appropriate ways. A good Equality strategy will strengthen our resolve in seeking accurate and unbiased information about existing and potential customers and will lead to provision of services tailored to local people's needs. This is of key importance for achieving Best Value.

- **Makes the Council a better employer.** A staff who are diverse, inclusive and have the opportunity to develop their skills, will be motivated and skilled in responding to the needs of a diverse population. Developing a reputation as a friendly, fair and inclusive employer will help to attract the best applicants.
- **Avoids discrimination:** Laws exist to protect individuals against discrimination because of their race, gender, marital status, sexuality or disability. Unfair discrimination is morally and legally wrong, and undermines morale amongst staff and does not enhance an organisation's reputation.
- **Promotes social inclusion:** Helping to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate in society and feel that they have a stake in the Isle of Wight's future.

2.4 Who will benefit from this Policy?

Everyone on the Isle of Wight will benefit if the Council designs services and procedures to suit the needs of all service users, and is a flexible employer committed to developing all staff.

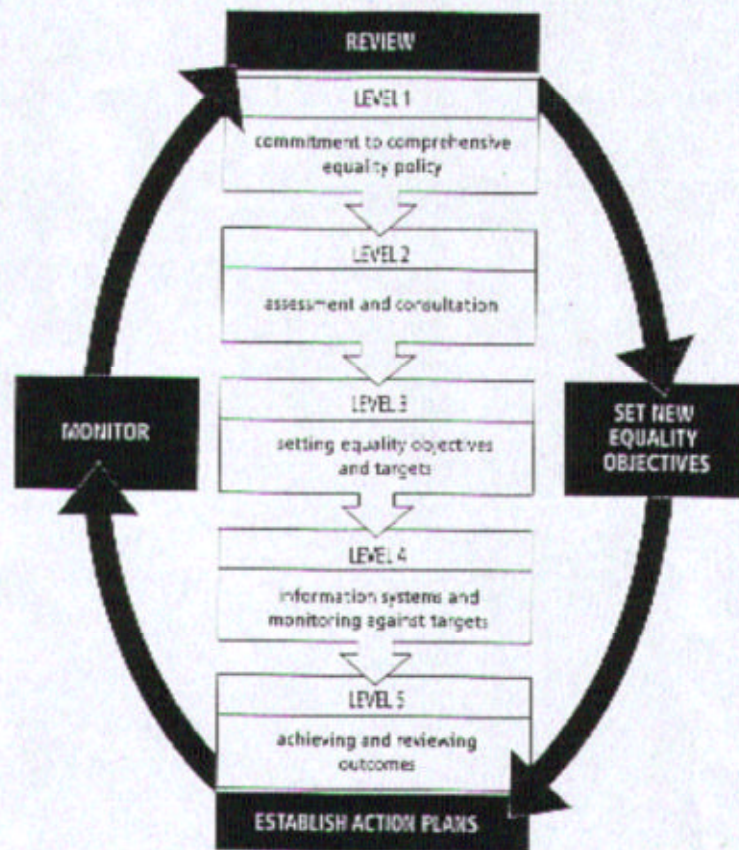
To achieve these benefits the Council's approach will focus on the needs of particular groups on the Isle of Wight who are known to be disadvantaged or likely to face discrimination. These include:

- Disabled people
- Women
- People from ethnic minorities
- Carers and people responsible for children and other dependants
- Gay men and lesbians
- People on low incomes
- People with minority religious beliefs
- Young people
- Older people
- People with HIV
- People with learning difficulties

Some people may face extra disadvantages through belonging to more than one of these groups.

3. The Equality Standard for Local Government

- 3.1** The Equality Standard for Local Government is the means by which the Isle of Wight Council is going to achieve those aspirations and goals detailed in the previous sections.
- 3.2** The Equality Standard has been developed by a partnership between the Commission for Racial Equality, the Disability Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Employers' Organisation for Local Government with assistance from the Audit Commission and the Standard is incorporated into the Best Value Performance Indicators scheme.
- 3.3** The Council recognises that by implementing the Equality Standard it is mainstreaming equalities into service delivery and employment and that working through the Standard will identify disadvantage and barriers that create disadvantage, both of which will have to be tackled.
- 3.4** The Council recognises that resources are limited and subject to many competing pressures but some specific resources will be targeted annually on progressing the implementation of the Equality Standard.
- 3.5** The Equality Standard builds upon the principles of quality leadership and community involvement that are central features of modern local government. Successful implementation of the Standard depends upon a sound partnership between the Council and the wider Island community and will involve:
- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Councillors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- to provide leadership and support- to ensure resources are available- to engage with the local community- to provide a scrutiny role |
| Managers/staff/trade unions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- to work towards speedy implementation- to organise and participate in training- to challenge existing cultures and traditions- to engage with the community |
| Community/voluntary sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- to work with the equality planning process- to participate in scrutiny- to extend knowledge of the Equality - Standard within the community |
- 3.6** The Council recognises that the Standard is the tool that can bring about changes and break down discriminatory barriers, but as with any tool the results of its use will only be as good as people who use it.
- 3.7** The Equality Standard facilitates continuous improvement through equality management. (See diagram)
- 3.8** The Council's target is to achieve Level 5 of the Equality Standard within 7 years; that is by 2009.



4. The Equality Standard Framework

LEVEL 1: COMMITMENT TO A COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY POLICY

To achieve Level 1 of the Standard an authority must have adopted a Comprehensive Equality Policy that commits it to achieving equality in race, gender and disability through:

- improving equality practice at both corporate and departmental level;
- earmarking specific resources for improving equality practice;
- equality action planning and equality target setting within all departments and service areas;
- systematic consultation;
- a fair employment and equal pay policy;
- an impact and needs/requirements assessment;
- progress monitoring;
- audit and scrutiny.

These general commitments translate into action in the four substantive areas of the Standard:

Leadership and corporate commitment

- formulate and adopt a comprehensive equality policy for the authority covering race, gender and disability;
- ensure that the written policies are in line with current legislation (Race Relations Act and Race Relations (Amendment) Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act, Disability Discrimination Act and Codes of Practice issued by the three equality Commissions);
- make a corporate commitment to developing a Corporate Equality Plan (CEP) indicating how equality policy will be implemented. The CEP should incorporate or be consistent with the authority's statutory Race Equality Scheme;
- make a corporate commitment to carrying out a process of equality impact and needs/requirements assessment including those assessments of organisational and individual requirements required for compliance with the DDA;
- make a corporate commitment to a fair employment and equal pay policy;
- make a corporate commitment to earmark specific resources for improving equality practice;

Consultation and community development and scrutiny

- corporate commitment to consult with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on all aspects of equality policy;
- each department and service area to make a commitment to contribute to the consultation and scrutiny section of the CEP;
- make a corporate commitment to equality self-assessment, scrutiny and audit;
- each department and service area to commit to engage in consultation with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on its service delivery;

LEVEL 1: COMMITMENT TO A COMPREHENSIVE EQUALITY POLICY (CONTINUED)

- make a corporate commitment to consult departments and service areas on equality objectives;
- each department and service area to commit to processes of equality self-assessment, scrutiny and audit on its service delivery.
- Incorporate equality policy as a key theme within the 'Community Strategy' drawn up by the local authority and its partners;
- Make a commitment to establish mechanisms for responding to discrimination and harassment on the grounds of race, disability and gender.

Service delivery and customer care

- departmental and service area commitment to a comprehensive equality policy appropriate to its service delivery;
- department and service area commitment to implementing the equality impact 'needs/requirements' assessment for its service delivery including those assessments of organisational and individual requirements required for compliance with the DDA;
- department and service area commitment to developing equal access service plan element of CEP, and to set targets within each department and service area as part of their business plans;
- department and service area commitment to equality action planning and equality target setting within all departments and service areas;
- department and service area commitment to allocate specific resources for improving equality practice.

Employment and training

- adopt recruitment procedures which use non-discriminatory practices;
- commitment to an employment equality assessment of the local labour market area, workforce profiling and equal pay review;
- commitment to establish a fair employment and equal pay policy;
- commitment to establish an equal employment section of the CEP incorporating the employment related issues from the Race Equality Scheme and including those assessments of organisational and individual requirements required for compliance with the DDA;
- commitment to adopt procedures to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants;
- commitment to produce a standard range of application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit;
- commitment to review personnel information system for monitoring suitability including underpinning the Council's statutory ethnic monitoring duties;
- commitment to make procedures consistent with Employment Codes of Practice;
- commitment to develop a programme of staff training in equality issues.

LEVEL 2: ASSESSMENT AND CONSULTATION

To achieve Level 2 of the Standard an authority will need to demonstrate:

- that it has engaged in an impact and needs/requirements assessment;
- that it has engaged in consultation with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups;
- that it has engaged in the development of information and monitoring systems;
- that it has engaged in an equality action planning process for employment, pay and service delivery;
- that it is developing a system of self-assessment, scrutiny and audit.

These general activities and developments translate into action in the four substantive areas of the Standard:

Leadership and corporate commitment

- publish draft Corporate Equality Action Plan;
- demonstrate corporate engagement in an impact and needs/requirements assessment process;
- develop corporate mechanism for assessing development of service level equality objectives and targets;
- create corporate structure for overseeing development of information and monitoring systems;
- ensure that mechanisms for responding to harassment on the grounds of race, disability and gender are in place.

Consultation and community development and scrutiny

- ensure that draft Corporate Equality Action Plan has been circulated to designated community, staff and stakeholder groups with consultation timetable and is published in an appropriate range of languages and formats;
- review equality content of 'Community Strategy';
- engage in consultation with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups and the wider community on all aspects of equality policy;
- engage in consultation with members, employee representatives, departments and service areas on impact and needs/requirements assessments and all aspects of the CEP;
- each department and service area to engage in consultation with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups on its impact and needs/requirements assessments and its service delivery;
- each department and service area to engage with equality self-assessment, scrutiny and audit on its service delivery;
- seek to ensure that the equality policy and objectives are incorporated in 'partnership' arrangements engaged in by the authority.

LEVEL 2: ASSESSMENT AND CONSULTATION (CONTINUED)

Service delivery and customer care

- engage in department and service area impact and needs/requirements assessment;
- engage in development of department/service level equality objectives and targets;
- review of services should include the procurement function and all contracted services and partnership arrangements;
- each department and service area to establish planning groups for monitoring and information systems.

Employment and training

- develop and adopt fair employment and equal pay policy element of CEP;
- engage in employment equality assessment of the local labour market area ;
- engage in an equal pay review;
- adopt procedures to ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applicants;
- produce a standard range of application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit;
- review personnel information system for monitoring suitability including supporting the council's statutory ethnic monitoring duties;
- develop a programme of equality training to support the CEP and departmental service objectives.
- ensure that the training programme is consistent with the training arrangements in the council's Race Equality Scheme;
- make all employment procedures consistent with current legislation and Employment Codes of Practice.

LEVEL 3: SETTING EQUALITY OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS

To achieve Level 3 of the Standard an authority will have to demonstrate:

- that it has completed a full and systematic consultation process with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups;
- that it has set equality objectives for employment, pay and service delivery based on impact and needs/requirements assessment and consultation;
- that equality objectives have been translated into action plans with specific targets;
- that it is developing information and monitoring systems that allow it to assess progress in achieving targets;
- that action on achieving targets has started.

Leadership and corporate commitment

- ensure that all departments and service areas set targets based on equality objectives;
- establish corporate guidelines/prescriptions for information gathering and equality monitoring;
- seek agreement on equality targets with partners in local 'partnerships';
- establish mechanisms for ensuring that equality targets are met by contractors through contract management;
- ensure completion of equality action plans at department and service level incorporating performance indicators;
- adopt where appropriate national targets/performance indicators as prescribed by Government departments or by the Audit Commission;
- implement systems for reviewing progress and revising the CEP and departmental action plans;
- members and senior officers to endorse action plans as appropriate;
- link action planning to Best Value process;
- ensure that action on achieving targets has started.

Consultation and community development and scrutiny

- make public all service level and employment objectives and targets that are available for consultation and scrutiny;
- make provision of language services appropriate to designated consultation and scrutiny groups;
- completion of a full and systematic consultation process with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups;
- consult on involving designated community, staff and stakeholder groups with scrutiny procedures;
- consultation on equality to be linked with the continuing development of the 'Community Strategy';
- publicise how, where and when action on targets will start.

LEVEL 3: SETTING EQUALITY OBJECTIVES AND TARGETS (CONTINUED)

Service delivery and customer care

- complete service element of the CEP and ensure consistency with Race Equality Scheme;
- equality objectives and targets developed within each department/service area;
- service plans to specifically address the importance of barriers, accessibility and reasonable adjustment in the provision of services;
- allocation of appropriate resources to achieve targets;
- establish structures of responsibility at departmental and service level to progress action plans;
- set timetable within action plans for creating/adapting information and monitoring systems within service areas;
- for agencies delivering services on behalf of the local authority, include within contracts a requirement to deliver an effective and appropriate service, fairly and without unlawful discrimination;
- establish monitoring of contracts to secure equal employment and equal service delivery targets;
- start action on departmental and service area targets.

Employment and training

- complete employment section of the CEP and ensure consistency with the Race Equality Scheme;
- set employment equality targets for recruitment, staff retention, workforce profiles;
- conduct an equal pay review and plan for equal pay adjustment;
- establish that policies and procedures associated with equality are part of staff handbook and are understood by staff;
- ensure that staff and members are aware of action plans and the implications for services and employment;
- provide training for managers on the implementation of the standard with contractors and partners;
- training for all staff involved in recruitment on the Equality Standard, setting service objectives, action planning, and monitoring, consistent with the training arrangements set out in the Race Equality Scheme;
- provide training for all staff on the detailed implementation of the Equality Standard including action plans and updates on legal and other developments;
- build equality objectives and targets into management appraisal mechanisms;
- provide information and appropriate training on action plans to support scrutiny process;
- establish a system of guidance and training on relevant equality issues to short-listing panels and interviewers;
- start action on all employment and pay targets.

LEVEL 4: INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND MONITORING AGAINST TARGETS

To achieve Level 4 of the Standard an authority will have to demonstrate that:

- it has developed information and monitoring systems that allow it to assess progress in achieving targets;
- it is measuring progress against targets and effectively using its information and monitoring systems;
- monitoring reports are being produced at specified intervals and circulated to designated consultation and scrutiny groups;
- monitoring systems are providing useful information about progress towards specific targets.

These general activities and developments translate into action in the four substantive areas of the Standard:

Leadership and corporate commitment

- use corporate information system to assess adequacy of departmental information and monitoring systems;
- set up system for review of service and employment monitoring reports by designated consultation and scrutiny groups;
- review targets against monitoring information and produce reports for corporate management team;
- prepare reports on progress against policy objectives for council executive/cabinet, scrutiny bodies and audit;
- take on board responses from designated consultation and scrutiny groups for revising policy objectives and targets;
- the authority has made arrangements for the external scrutiny of the progress of action plans.

Consultation and community development and scrutiny

- consult with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups about what kind of information will be collected and the reasons for it;
- circulate monitoring reports to designated consultation and scrutiny groups;
- undertake a consultation process that demonstrably engages designated consultation and scrutiny groups in review process;
- review by designated consultation and scrutiny groups of progress against targets;
- feed back response on monitoring reports to corporate and departmental teams, to directorate, council committees, employee representatives and members and to 'Community Strategy' partners;
- require contractors to supply monitoring reports on service delivery and take-up

LEVEL 4: INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND MONITORING AGAINST TARGETS (CONTINUED)

Service delivery and customer care

- all departmental and service level units are using information systems and effective and adequate equality monitoring procedures;
- procedures are applied across contracts and partnerships;
- service delivery monitoring reports are produced at specific and regular intervals;
- service delivery monitoring reports are circulated to all designated consultation and scrutiny groups;
- report progress on employment targets to directorate members, council committees, members and consultation and scrutiny groups;
- use monitoring to assess achievements against targets set in action plans and feed back results into policy review, targeting and revised action plans;
- establish inter-departmental scrutiny process.

Employment and training

- use existing or adapted personnel information systems to provide equality data relating to human resource targets (recruitment, promotion, training, grievances, disciplinary action, appraisal, dismissal and other reasons for leaving, retention, and equal pay);
- produce monitoring reports at regular and specified intervals and circulate to designated consultation and scrutiny groups;
- use equality data to monitor use of all personnel procedures;
- use equality data to monitor the number of staff leaving employment and their reasons for leaving;
- use monitoring reports to assess whether authority employment profiles more closely fit the profile of local labour market area;
- report progress on employment targets to directorate members, council committees, members and consultation and scrutiny groups;
- report on implementation of pay review recommendations;
- meet the training needs of staff appropriately.

LEVEL 5: ACHIEVING AND REVIEWING OUTCOMES

To achieve Level 5 of the Standard an authority will have to demonstrate that it has made considerable progress in achieving equal employment and service provision with regard to race, gender and disability. It will need to show that:

- it has achieved progress towards the targets that it set at Level 3;
- it has reviewed and revised targets, monitoring and consultation systems with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups;
- it has initiated a new round of action planning and target setting;
- through its achievements it can be seen as an example of good practice for other local authorities and agencies.

This general assessment and review process translates into action in the four substantive areas of the Standard:

Leadership and corporate commitment

- able to demonstrate success in meeting a range of targets across the authority and for reviewing those targets for future action planning;
- corporate review of targets for future action planning completed;
- the authority's performance is benchmarked against comparable others and its experience shared with others in developing good practice;
- review the Corporate Equality Plan.

Consultation and community development and scrutiny

- there is increased involvement of community and scrutiny bodies and increased satisfaction with services and progress in meeting targets;
- positive results from consultation with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups in assessing how far they think targets have been met and were relevant to their needs/requirements and concerns;
- demonstrate that there is trust and confidence among all stakeholders in the authority's consultation and scrutiny mechanisms;
- assess methods of consultation and involvement with community, staff and stakeholders;
- review the consultation, assessment and scrutiny elements of the CEP. The authority's consultation and scrutiny practice is benchmarked against comparable others and its experience shared with others in developing good practice.

LEVEL 5: ACHIEVING AND REVIEWING OUTCOMES (CONTINUED)

Service delivery and customer care

- complete department and service level reviews of target achievement;
- accurate service user profiles are being used to inform service changes and improvements;
- initiate inter-departmental scrutiny process:
- managers have been appraised against service equality targets;
- demonstration by managers that a full range of equality objectives are mainstreamed as part of their professional practice;
- effective systems are in place for managing equality across contracts and partnerships;
- benchmarking of full range of equality achievements against other authorities in a similar position;
- review equal access service objectives and targets.

Employment and training

- demonstrate movement towards greater equality in the workforce profile and other employment targets;
- the authority can show that it is paying its staff equally for work of equal value;
- complete human resource assessment of results of equal employment and equal pay target achievement;
- complete assessment of target relevance in terms of full range of equality target achievement and changing circumstances;
- demonstrate that staff are fully trained in the systems for delivering full range of fair employment and equal pay objectives;
- managers at all levels can demonstrate that full range of fair employment and equal pay objectives are mainstreamed as part of their professional practice;
- managers have been appraised against employment equality targets;
- benchmarking of full range of equality achievements against other authorities.