

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Employment Policy

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1. Purpose and Scope

Reading Borough Council is committed to creating a working environment that is inclusive and free from discrimination or harassment.

This policy acts as a guide for all staff, managers, councillors, volunteers and those who are working on behalf of Reading Borough Council, to the Council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in employment. It also outlines the Council's duty to comply with relevant equalities legislation and guidance.

The main objectives of this policy are to:

- Embed the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of employment including: advertising vacancies, recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, training and personal development and monitoring of reasons for ending employment.
- Ensure that no person or group of persons applying for employment, services or contracts with the Council is treated less favourably than any other person or group of persons on the grounds of their gender, age, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment status, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership status or any other protected characteristic.
- Support the creation of a work environment that is free from discrimination, harassment and bullying, where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.
- Outline the main requirements of the [Equality Act 2010](#) that relate to employment, provide best practice guidance and the role of HR in meeting the requirements of this policy.

Any claims of discrimination or harassment will be investigated and dealt with under the relevant policy.

2. Public Sector Equality Duty

The [Equality Act 2010](#) places an equality duty on public bodies and organisations carrying out public functions. Its main aim is to support good decision-making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities. It also helps to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective, accessible, and that meet different people's needs, as much as is reasonably possible.

The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the [Equality Act 2010](#) which places a duty on public bodies to pay due regard to:

- the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination,
- advance equality of opportunity and
- foster good relations between different groups of people.

3. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all staff, managers, councillors, volunteers and anyone else who works for or on behalf of the Council to apply the principles of this policy in their day to day working practices.

Every member of staff is responsible for their own compliance with this policy. Breaches of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy will be regarded as misconduct and could lead to disciplinary action against employees and termination of contracts for services of contractors or agency staff.

Employees who feel they have been discriminated against should raise the matter with their line manager. Initially the employee and manager should aim to resolve the matter informally. It may be that discriminatory action is unwitting and easily resolved once the problem is clear.

Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR&OD)

The role of the HR&OD is to ensure that managers, employees and all relevant parties are aware of the commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and to work to achieve a more open, inclusive and diverse organisation.

HR&OD will advise staff and managers on a range of areas including:

- Ensuring that there are bias free methods of selection and handling of any allegations of discrimination.
- Different ways of encouraging employment applications from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.
- Promoting career progression within the authority for underrepresented groups.
- How to make necessary reasonable adjustments
- Provision of equalities monitoring data about the Council's workforce on at least an annual basis to help understand whether the workforce reflects the demographic of the wider community and, if not, how inroads can be made to achieve this over time. This will include Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Reports.

4. Discrimination

The Council strives to ensure that discrimination of any kind is prevented. If discrimination does occur, specific steps will be taken to tackle it, whether it is direct, indirect, associative or perceptible, harassment, third party harassment, victimisation or any other kind of unlawful behaviour. See [Section 10](#) for links to other key policies.

For more information on these and other types of discrimination identified in the Equality Act 2010, please see specific guidance on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) website.

Advice and support on how to prevent or tackle discrimination will be given by HR&OD in the instance that it is needed.

5. Commitment to accessibility

The Council aims to remove barriers to access and will provide specific support to people with a disability by making reasonable adjustments, where it is necessary and reasonably possible to do so.

The aim of this action is to ensure that any person with a disability, including staff, councillors, volunteers or anyone else who works for or on behalf of the Council has access to everything that they need to carry out their work.

For more information on reasonable adjustments, please see specific guidance on the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#) website. The Council's [Tailored Access Agreement](#) and [Reasonable Adjustments Guide](#) also provides additional information, along with the guidance on Recruitment and Retention of People with a Disability

6. Positive Action

The Council seeks to overcome or minimise disadvantages that people who share a protected characteristic may experience. An example of this is being a '[disability confident](#)' employer, which includes the commitment to interviewing all disabled applicants who meet the minimum essential criteria for the post.

The Council may take 'positive action' to encourage people from groups with different needs, or with a past track record of disadvantage or low participation, to apply for jobs, particularly in service areas where certain groups are underrepresented.

The Council is committed to support working groups and forums within the organisation to make this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy effective.

7. Equalities Monitoring

To improve understanding of local communities the Council collects and analyses local population and staff data relating to the nine protected characteristics included in the Equality Act 2010: age, race, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership.

Areas that are monitored include:

- Job applications
- Recruitment
- Promotion
- Age profile of workforce
- Disability profile of workforce
- Ethnicity profile of workforce

- Staff turnover
- Provision of training
- Salary and grading/status distribution
- Provision of employee benefits
- Grievances, particularly relating to harassment
- Disciplinary action
- Capability action
- Part-time working
- Action taken in relation to discriminatory behaviour

Ongoing monitoring of the Council's workforce data is essential to work towards having a workforce that is more representative of the local community. The results of equality monitoring are shared with the recognised trade unions.

The policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis consulting with recognised trade unions to reflect changes in the law, demographics and service delivery requirements.

8. A Good Practice Guide

Recruitment and Selection

The Council endeavours to have a representative workforce and ensure fair treatment through the recruitment and selection process, this includes:

- Checking that job descriptions and person specifications are non-discriminatory.
- Shortlisting based on the requirements of the job.
- Ensuring at least two employees on an interview panel.
- Keeping records of the recruitment and selection process, such as interview notes.
- Monitoring recruitment and selection activities against protected characteristics.

Promotion

Promotion decisions must be made on the basis of the individual's ability and skills in line with the person specification and job description, rather than assumptions based on age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation. Clear and transparent records should be kept to evidence all decision-making processes.

Training

Training must be accessible to all employees and reasonable adjustments will be made, where necessary and possible, to enable the employee to perform their role to the best of their abilities. A range of training methods will be used, such as e-learning and face to face training sessions to ensure that everyone has equal access to training irrespective of disability, location or hours of work.

All staff undertake equality, diversity and inclusion training at induction and periodically thereafter.

9. Data Protection and Confidentiality

The use of personal information will be treated with appropriate levels of confidentiality and will be fair and lawful. Reading Borough Council will ensure that personal information is accurate; not kept for longer than is necessary; secure; and adequate, relevant and not excessive. All information will be processed in accordance with the data protection rights of the individual. Inappropriate access or disclosure of personal data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the organisation's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the organisation's disciplinary procedure.

10. Links to Other Key Policies

Below are policies which link to this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Employment Policy (the list is not exhaustive):

- [Tailored Access Agreement](#)
- [Reasonable Adjustments Guide](#)
- [Whistleblowing Policy](#)
- [Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Flexible Working Policy](#)
- [Employee Wellbeing in the Workplace Policy](#)
- [Recruitment and Selection Policy](#)
- [Recruitment and Retention of People with a Disability](#)