



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Policy Development and Version details

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5	January 2025	Amendments to reflect restructure	MPJ
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Exeter City Council works with the fundamental principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 ¹ and welcomes the diversity of the community living, working, visiting and learning in the city. As a service provider, community leader and employer the council is committed to being an exemplar in promoting equality and tackling social exclusion.
- 1.2 This document sets out our aims for the Council and what we need to do to achieve those aims. It provides an overarching direction for our work and other policies and activities will be developed and reviewed to ensure that we can achieve our aims.

2. How will we achieve this?

2.1 As a provider of services

- 2.2 We will continue listen to what our customers tell us about how to make our services easier to use and more accessible for everyone in Exeter. This will include:
- enabling the communities we serve to engage with us to increase our understanding of their needs
 - making it easier for customers to find information about and access our services through our Digital Customer Service Strategy and Translation and Interpretation Policy
 - looking at ways to make our buildings and public meetings more accessible to customers

2.3 As an employer

- 2.4 We believe that having a workforce that reflects the diversity of the local population; feels it is treated equally and fairly; and has the opportunity to grow and develop at work will help us to provide a quality service to the people of Exeter. Our aim is to be an equal opportunities employer. To do this we need to:
- analyse workforce data and look at ways in which the diversity of the workforce can be improved to reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.
 - ensure all staff are paid equally for work of equal value
 - ensure that staff are treated fairly and have equal opportunities at work regardless of their background or status
 - ensure that all staff can work in an environment and culture free from harassment, bullying and discrimination
 - ensure that all staff have the skills and understanding they need to meet the diverse needs of a diverse population
 - listen to what staff tell us about their needs and adapt buildings and systems to ensure they are able to fulfil their potential
 - provide appropriate training to staff to help them to understand their rights and responsibilities and to increase awareness of the council's legal duties, obligations, practices and procedures.

2.5 When helping to build successful communities:

¹ <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

- 2.6 The council has an important role to play in helping to build and support successful cohesive communities that have an active role in shaping services and local neighbourhoods. To do this we will continue to:
- ensure policies developed by the council promote community cohesion and resilience.
 - increase the engagement of people from diverse communities with the council's decision-making process
 - continue to support and invest in asset based community development

3. Scope of the policy

- 3.1 This policy is intended to reflect the Equality Act 2010 including the public sector equality duty which states that:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -

(a) **eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited** by or under this Act;

(b) **advance equality of opportunity** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) **foster good relations** between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

- 3.2 Due regard to the duty should occur when making decisions and in other day to day activities. The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour, and with an open mind, and in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- 3.3 The duty applies to nine 'protected characteristics' as set out in the Equality Act 2010: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (in relation to point a. at work), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation.
- 3.4 Everyone who uses services, facilities and information provided by the council should be treated in line with this policy. This includes customers, members of the public, partners, contractors, employees, volunteers, people on work placements and elected members.
- 3.5 The Equality Act 2010 is built on the principles of the Human Rights Act. The council supports the purpose and articles of the Act and specifically Article 14 which provides that 'the rights and freedoms set forth in (the Human Rights Act) shall be secured without discrimination on any ground'.
- 3.6 The Council supports the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of Antisemitism: "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." ([What is antisemitism? | IHRA \(holocaustremembrance.com\)](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/what-is-antisemitism))
- 3.7 Following the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, and in response to a recommendation from the Council's review of the General Buller Statue, the Senior Management Board and Executive Members developed an Anti-Racism Statement (see Appendix A).

4. Our supporting policies, structures and processes

4.1 The council has several supporting policies, structures and processes in place, in addition to this policy. These include:

- An Equality Impact Assessment toolkit to help anticipate the consequences of work on customers and staff. In doing this we can make sure that, as far as possible, any negative consequences are eliminated, minimised or counterbalanced by other measures, and opportunities for promoting equality are maximised. This also improves efficiency because we can identify where to target our resources most effectively.
- Employment policies covering recruitment and selection, flexible working and procedures for dealing with discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation.
- Codes of conduct covering employee, member and customer behaviour
- Communication standards including policies and guidance for translations, interpreting and alternative formats, and use of social media.
- Evaluations against current accessibility regulations and recommendations for upgrading and improvement where relevant
- Procurement/commissioning standards and clauses
- An elected member and officers who have designated responsibility for leading on equality, diversity and inclusion, raising awareness and building capacity within the organisation.
- A Consultation Charter and development of a Consultation and Engagement Strategy to guide our engagement work
- Partnership meetings such as the Community Safety Partnership which provide governance to how we work with other agencies on issues we cannot tackle in isolation.
- Minimum standards for gathering data related to services and employment which includes protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 to allow us to better understand the needs of customers and staff and tailor our services accordingly.
- An action plan with specific, measurable, achievable, resourced and timebound objectives to address gaps in work and drive continuous improvement.
- External benchmarks to measure ourselves against such as the Equality Framework for Local Government.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Ultimate responsibility

The ultimate responsibility for the provision of equality, diversity and inclusion lies with the council. The Public Sector Equality Duty cannot be delegated. This means that the duty will always remain the responsibility of Exeter City Council. In practice, this may mean that the council will need to ask suppliers to take certain steps (such as monitoring service users), in order to enable the public authority to meet their continuing legal obligation to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

5.2 Individual responsibility

5.3 Members

Each Exeter City Councillor has the personal responsibility to comply with the policy.

5.4 Officers

5.5 Strategic Management Board

The Chief Executive has been delegated overall responsibility for ensuring that this policy and the processes underpinning it are developed, implemented effectively, monitored and updated.

The Strategic Management Board is required to ensure good governance of the organisation and has overall responsibility to make sure this policy is consistently applied and taken into account when setting strategic direction and reviewing performance.

The Strategic Director People and Communities has the strategic lead for equality, diversity and inclusion and the implementation of this policy.

Individual strategic directors are responsible for checking that reports to committee include Equality Impact Assessments where necessary.

5.6 Heads of Service are required to:

- manage equality, diversity and inclusion within their services
- ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is clearly incorporated into policy, design and delivery of services and functions, where relevant and that Equality Impact Assessments are carried out proportionately prior to making decisions
- ensure that all employees within their services are aware of the policy and have received training in the implementation of the policy
- ensure that all employees within their services who are involved in recruitment and selection have received training on equal opportunities

5.7 Employees, including volunteers and people on work placements, in general are required to:

- ensure they understand and comply with the letter and spirit of the policy
- actively participate in measures introduced by the council to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and ensure that there is no discrimination
- report to management any discriminatory practices or behaviours
- support the proper investigation of complaints.

Employees and others working on behalf of an employer can be held personally liable for acts of unlawful discrimination where an employer has taken all reasonable steps to prevent such an act.

5.8 Human Resources are required to:

- ensure that the council's recruitment, training and development and other working practices and procedures are non-discriminatory and promote equality of opportunity
- carry out corporate monitoring of employment policies and practices and publish results annually
- ensure that managers and members are aware of the content of the policy relating to employment matters and the legislative framework underpinning it

5.9 Trade Unions are encouraged to:

- work with management in monitoring equality, diversity and inclusion
- ensure that their elected officials are conversant with the council's policy and its application

5.10 Contractors, suppliers and consultants

A requirement to comply with equality legislation will be included in all contracts, service level/delivery agreements and licences. Failure to comply may lead to the termination of contracts. Organisations doing business with us are welcome to adopt our equality, diversity and inclusion policy for their own use.

6. Learning and development

- 6.1 Exeter City Council will treat its employees fairly and offer them the appropriate training and development, to not only help them do their current jobs but also help them develop further within their area of work.
- 6.2 Positive action may be taken in providing training and development to minority groups to ensure that members of the group have equal access to training and development and promotion opportunities.
- 6.3 All employees will provided with access to training and development and reasonable adjustments to support access will be made where needed.

7. Access Statement

- 7.1 The Council undertakes to make reasonable adjustments/provisions to enable employees and their representatives with protected characteristics to effectively access and engage with this policy/procedure. This may include actions such as the provision of communication in a different format (e.g. brail, foreign or sign language interpreter) and ensuring accessibility of office locations and meeting rooms, and/or provision of equipment.
- 7.2 However, in order to fulfil this function, the employee must make their manager aware of their or their representative's access needs.

Anti-Racism Statement

Exeter City Council has a zero tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination. As part of this all-embracing commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion for all, we pledge to become an anti-racist council and to uphold this stance in everything that we do.

What does this mean?

Being an anti-racist organisation is more than being just 'non-racist', it means taking action and actively identifying and opposing racism. We will actively identify, discuss and challenge racism and the impact it has on our organisation, our people, our systems and the residents we serve. We cannot do this on our own so we will work in collaboration with committed and supportive organisations and individuals across the city, to amplify our collective efforts to drive out racism. We will take a leadership role in the city in tackling racism in all its forms.

We are committed to long-term action and visible change and we will:

1. Provide **clarity** on our organisations stance and values, we will have zero tolerance to racism and demonstrate this publicly in our external messages.
2. Develop a **systemic approach** which enables practical action. Lasting change needs a view across the whole organisation to identify and tackle the causes of race inequalities and discrimination at work.
3. Continue to **provide visible leadership** on racial inclusion and demonstrate a willingness to change and commit to sustained action.
4. Through our One Exeter change programme, we will **embed anti- racism** into our people management approach at every opportunity. Attracting and retaining a wider, more diverse talent pool is crucial to developing a workforce which reflects our community. Everyone who joins our organisation must feel welcome, supported and treated fairly and our policies should encourage respectful and positive attitudes to differences.
5. Provide **safe channels** for people to express their voices and share experiences. Learn from this valuable resource and use the information to actively shape our organisation for staff and those who use our services.
6. Ensure **consistent two way communication**. Senior leaders and people managers need to engage in ongoing, responsive, two way dialogue with staff to ensure that they feel listened to and valued.

We recognise that we are on a journey of understanding and learning and do not have all the answers just now but this is not just a statement of intent, it is a declaration of our single minded approach to proudly oppose racism in all its forms.

Exeter City Council Executive Members and Strategic Management Board