



Joint Equality Policy 2017-2020

May 2017

1. Introduction

At the Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire Councils we are committed to equality of opportunity both in providing services and as an employer.

We understand and respect that people are unique and have individual differences. We celebrate this diversity and encourage positive relationships between people with differing needs. The aim of this policy is to provide clear outcomes that intend to improve our approach to equality and diversity and aid in meeting our legal requirements.

2. Legislative requirements

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010, replacing existing anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The Equality Act simplifies the law, removing inconsistencies and making it easier for people to understand and comply with.

The Act requires us to have due regard to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act identifies the 'protected characteristics' as;

- Race
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Age
- Religion and Belief
- Pregnancy and maternity

In addition the Councils want to make sure that no other group or individual is treated unfairly for any other reason, such as their social class, political beliefs, income levels, responsibility for dependants, appearance, geographical area (rural location), criminal record etc.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Integrated within the Act is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the duty requires all public bodies and private bodies that deliver public functions to consider the needs of protected groups when designing and delivering services.

The PSED requires public sector bodies to;

- set and publish specific, measurable equality objectives and review them at least every 4 years; and

- publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty at least annually. This information must include; information relating to employees who share protected characteristics; and information relating to people who are affected by policies and practices and who share protected characteristics

To fulfil these requirements we publish objectives in our action plans and workforce profiles and district profiles on our websites –

Cheltenham Borough Council
 Cotswold District Council
 Forest of Dean District Council
 West Oxfordshire District Council

Enforcement

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is responsible for assessing compliance with and enforcing the Equality Duty. It has powers to issue compliance notices to public bodies that have failed to comply and can apply to the courts for an order requiring compliance. The Equality Duty can also be enforced by judicial review. This can be done by the Commission or any individual or group of people with an interest.

3. Equality outcomes

In partnership we have developed equality outcomes which are supported by each Council. They are:

- Ensuring employment practices are equal and fair
- Improving access to our services
- Understanding our communities and customers' needs

These outcomes form the basis of each Councils individual equality action plan which is developed each year. The plan sets out our equality objectives, timescales for completion and responsible teams to allow progress to be monitored.

4. Putting equality into practice

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

An equality impact assessment (EIA) involves assessing the likely or actual effects of policies or services on people with protected characteristics or any other groups. It helps us establish how the services we deliver affect different groups of people and to ensure their needs are taken into account when we develop or make changes to a policy or service.

As far as possible, adverse impacts should be mitigated or counterbalanced by other measures. Assessments are proportionate, we impact assess decisions that may impact significantly on members of public or staff. Staff are encouraged to complete the assessment prior to decisions being made at committees.