

**Harlow Council**  
**Equality, Diversity and**  
**Inclusivity Policy 2021-22**

## **Introduction**

Harlow Council has a continuing commitment to promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity within Harlow. The Council celebrates difference and believes that tackling inequality will provide a strong foundation for cohesive and confident communities. The Council will work to tackle inequalities throughout its core business within both the services that it provides to the community and in its role as an employer.

The Council is committed to ensuring that no person or group of persons living, working or visiting the district will be directly or indirectly discriminated against because they belong to a particular group with protected characteristics. We intend to meet our duties under the Equality Act by making sure that all people who come into contact with us are treated fairly and can access our services on an equal basis.

While the Council has made significant progress in advancing equality, diversity and inclusivity within Harlow, it will not become complacent in working towards this goal. This Policy therefore sets out our approach. The Policy covers:

1. Why the Council needs a Policy
2. Our legal responsibilities and obligations
3. Our equality and diversity objectives
4. Our action plan
5. How the Council will monitor and report on its progress towards its objectives

## **Why the Council needs a Policy**

1. Harlow Council recognises that its policies and services will have an impact on different groups and individuals in different ways depending upon their background, culture and lifestyles.
2. The Council also has a number of legal responsibilities and obligations which are detailed later on in this Policy.
3. This Policy explains the Council's commitment in eliminating both direct and indirect discrimination and ensuring that everyone in Harlow has the same equality of opportunity.

## **Our Legal Responsibilities and Obligations**

### **The Law**

4. S149 of the Equality Act 2010 [the Act] requires the Council to have due regard to its Public Sector Equality Duty when making decisions, strategic planning and when implementing policies that may impact on those who have protected characteristics.

### **General Equality Duties**

5. There are three aims under the Public Sector Equality Duty. These are:
  - To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those that do not;
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those that do not.
6. The General Equality Duty above supports good decision making as it requires public bodies to consider how different people will be affected by their policies and procedures, therefore, helping public bodies to ensure that services are accessible to all and meet the needs of different people.
7. The General Equality Duty applies to all bodies that carry out public functions, which will include all private companies, voluntary organisations, including the voluntary, community and social enterprise services (VCSEs) and wholly companies
8. To ensure it is fulfilling its statutory duty, the Council looks at how it can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations and

have transparent processes in place when making decisions, delivering services, or implementing policies.

### **Protected Characteristics**

9. There are nine protected characteristics covered by the Public Sector Equality Duty. These are:
- Age
  - Disability
  - Gender reassignment
  - Marriage and civil partnership
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Race
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex
  - Sexual orientation

### **Specific Duties**

10. Listed Authorities (such as the Council) also have to comply with Specific Duties under the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011. These are:
- To publish equality data to demonstrate their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
  - To set specific, measurable equality objectives that should help the Council to meet the General Equality Duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
11. The data published must include information relating to people who share a protected characteristic who are:
- Council employees.
  - People affected by Council policies and procedures.
12. The Council must also publish the objectives that it sets which it believes are needed to achieve any of the aims of the General Equality Duties.

### **Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Objectives**

13. The Council's aim is to ensure that people in Harlow can fully participate in the social, cultural and economic life of the Town.
14. We are committed to promoting equality in respect of:

- **Our role as a service provider** – ensuring that the Council’s services meet the needs of all local people and that people can access our services on an equal basis.
- **Our role as an employer** – ensuring that the workforce is representative of the community, the recruitment processes are fair and that the work environment is safe and free from discrimination.
- **Our role as a community leader** – ensuring that the Council leads on promoting equality and inclusivity within the Town to improve the quality of life for the residents and businesses of Harlow.

15. The Council therefore has three key equality, diversity and inclusivity objectives. These are:

- Our services are accessible to everyone and do not discriminate on any unjustifiable ground.
- Our services seek to meet the needs of our customers and local communities can influence our services.
- Equality, diversity and inclusivity is championed within the Council and our workforce, at all levels, is representative of the local community.

### **Our Equality Action Plan**

16. The Council has created an Equality Action Plan (Appendix A) to support the achievement of the above mentioned equality and diversity objectives.

17. Each action is assigned to a “lead officer” who is accountable for implementing the action by the target date and providing updates on the progress of work.

### **Decision Making**

18. The Council’s decision making is based on its adopted Corporate Plan, adopted Local Plan and associated action plans. The Council will ensure that its Corporate Plan reflects the diverse nature of the Town.

19. The Council must also comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and have regard to relevant equality considerations when exercising its functions.

20. Whilst there is no specific duty to make an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), when dealing with service provision, policies, procedures, functions and projects where the PSED is a significant factor, the Council will complete an EIA form (Appendix D).

21. EIA's help to ensure that the Council is properly serving Harlow's diverse local community and that its services are accessible to all.
22. Completed EIA's will be published on the Council's website.

### **How the Council will monitor and report on its progress towards its objectives**

23. The Council will produce an annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Information Report to report on the progress it has made throughout the year towards its Equality and Diversity objectives and Action Plan. The Council's Action Plan is a dynamic document and will be updated when necessary. in accordance to changes in the legislation
24. The report will look at the services and events the Council has supported or provided.
25. The Council will also collect information on its workforce and the percentage of the workforce with shared protected characteristics. These statistics will be published within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Information Report.
26. The Council will also produce a separate annual Gender Pay Gap Report as required under the Equality Act (2010) Specific Duties and Public Authorities Regulations.

### Appendices

- Appendix A – Equality Action Plan
- Appendix B – Corporate Equalities Monitoring Form
- Appendix C – Governance
- Appendix D – Decision Making Tree and Equality Impact Assessment