

Equality Policy 2016-2020

APRIL 2016

Strategy, community and commissioning

COUNCIL OUTCOMES AND VALUES

The council's over-arching ambition is to make Croydon a stronger, fairer place where no community is held back.

The council has identified three major priorities that support our ambition to make Croydon a stronger, fairer borough and organisation. These are:

- **Growth:** creating growth in our economy.
- **Independence:** helping residents be as independent as possible.
- **Liveability:** creating a welcoming, pleasant place in which people want to live.

Our corporate values are an integral part of this. They state that as an organisation we are: honest and open, value diversity, proud to serve, take responsibility, and act as one team.

These values inform everything that the council does including our work with partners to improve the quality of life for everyone who studies, works and lives in Croydon.

Our commitment to equality

The council acknowledges its statutory equality duty as a Public Sector employer under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. In particular, whilst we exercise our functions we aim to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The council will ensure that staff, residents and service users are treated equally, with dignity and respect, regardless of: age, disability, race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality and national origin), sexual orientation, sex/gender, religion or belief (including philosophical belief) gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity (the nine characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010). In addition to these 'protected characteristics' we will ensure that

socio-economic status will also be taken into consideration when carrying out our work.

The council recognises it has an important community leadership role and will use this opportunity to advance equality, fairness and community cohesion as well as to improve the social and economic environment in the borough.

The council will monitor and address unequal consequences for different equality groups in the delivery of our corporate outcomes and ensure that our over-arching values are integrated throughout our work.

About Croydon

One of Croydon's unique strengths is its diverse population of which the council is proud. The borough shares similar demographic, economic and social characteristics with both inner and outer London boroughs as well as having:

- One of largest boroughs in London in terms of overall population.
- One of the largest populations of children and young people whilst also having an ageing population.
- Over 100 languages spoken.

- One of the highest proportions of black and minority ethnic groups in South London, and one that is rapidly growing.
- Some of the most deprived places in England.

Legal duties

Under the Equality Act 2010 there are nine different characteristics, which are listed below, provide protected from discrimination. The council is also bound by the Act and the 'public sector equality duty' (PSED) which requires us to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Putting Policy into Practice

The council will engage in a range of activities in order to translate our commitment to equality into practice and to meet our legal duties.

As a community leader we will:

- Promote good relations between communities in our communications and address negative stereotyping of any groups.
- Organise and support a range of equality and diversity events throughout the year to promote understanding and awareness, foster community cohesion and inter-community dialogue.
- Encourage councillors and senior managers to demonstrate personal leadership in equality and inclusion.
- Work with our key partners in the borough to develop and implement the Community Strategy which seeks to improve the social and economic environment.

As a service provider we will:

- Deliver services that are accessible to all and that are tailored to the diverse and individual needs of our community.
- Obtain up to date equality information and data on Croydon residents and use it intelligently to inform priorities and policies as well as target interventions and resources.

- Ensure that equality is a key way of delivering greater social value through our procurement process and monitoring the policies and practices of our suppliers.
- Ensure our work reflects the views of local people by consulting and engaging with all groups in our community especially those representing marginalised or disadvantaged groups or where involvement is low.
- Ensure that all residents have equal opportunity to participate and influence the democratic process.
- Monitor and respond to outcomes for all equality groups (including socio-economic status) in each of the Council's priority areas of work.
- Use equality analysis when introducing any new policy, practice or function.

As an employer we will:

- Ensure the council has a representative workforce.
- Continue to review and develop all of our human resources policies and practices (including recruitment, learning and development, and employee relations) to ensure that they are inclusive and accessible for all staff with those 'protected characteristics'.
- Provide staff with training and support to enable them to manage and/or work within a diverse workforce.
- Address any unfair treatment in the workplace relating to any of the 'protected characteristics'.
- Use equality analysis when introducing any new policies practices and functions in the workplace (including restructures and organisational change).
- Recognise the contribution of the staff network groups and support their work.

Governance arrangements for equality

Equality objectives

The council's equality objectives are set out in our Opportunity and Fairness Plan at appendix one which outline the key areas the council and its partners from public, community, faith, voluntary and business sectors, will focus on over the next four years. The aim is to deliver the highest standard of equality and inclusion practice and secure better outcomes for local people as described in our corporate plan: Ambitious for Croydon. The council equality objectives will help make our borough a stronger, fairer place where no community is held back.

Annual publication of information

The council has a statutory obligation to publish information on its performance on equality and inclusion on an annual basis and demonstrate compliance with the requirements of the PSED set out in the Equality Act 2010. The council is working towards integrating the performance reporting on equality into the corporate performance reporting framework and will commence bi-annual reporting in 2016.

Roles and responsibilities

The individual roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the equality and inclusion objectives are outlined below:

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	
Cabinet and elected members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide leadership and accountability on equality and inclusion. • Review the council's annual performance to ensure that we provide services that are accessible, meet individual need and meet our regulatory and legislative obligations.
Executive Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that leadership, resources and governance arrangements are in place to deliver the council's equality and inclusion vision and objectives.
Communities Board / Culture Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead on defining the strategic equality and inclusion objectives for the council, review progress and set targets for improvements.
Departmental Leadership Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead on integrating equality and inclusion objectives into departmental service plans and monitoring performance. • Cascade information, identify and share best practice within teams.
Council Staff, Contractors and Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for understanding and applying the council's equality and inclusion objectives, standards and behaviours in the services they provide.
Corporate Strategy Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work as business partners to provide strategic advice and support to enable colleagues to embed equality and inclusion good practice.

Benchmarking

The council aims to be a leading authority for promoting equality in local services and being an employer of choice. Our aspiration is to be accredited as 'excellent' for embedding equality and inclusion into our mainstream functions. The equality policy is also closely aligned to the strategic themes of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) - an external national benchmark that is used to measure organisational performance on equality and plan improvements.

The Equality Framework consists of five cross-cutting and performance driven principles which align with the PSED. These are: knowing your communities, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment, community engagement and satisfaction, responsive services and customer care, a skilled and committed workforce.

Taking action when things go wrong

As a council we aim to apply the highest equality and inclusion standards, however, despite the best intentions sometimes things can go wrong.

The council acknowledges that people have the right to complain about either a service they have received from us, a contractor that provides services on our behalf, or their experience in the workplace. The council has a formal complaints procedure for service users and a grievance procedure for employees. We also have a procedure for harassment and bullying for those who feel they have faced with discrimination through service delivery or employment.

The council takes all complaints seriously and actively encourages people to voice their concern when things go wrong, so that the issue can be addressed and lessons can be learnt. Responding to and learning from complaints will form a key part of the council's drive for better local services.

The council does not tolerate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation and will take decisive and appropriate action against people found in breach of this policy. Employees found in breach of this policy may be liable to disciplinary action including dismissal.

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