



 NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL	Equality Policy	
	Equality Impact Assessment: January 2011	

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy updates the provisions in North Ayrshire Council's Equal Opportunities Policy to ensure that the Council complies with the provisions in the Equality Act 2010.

2. Our Commitment

- 2.1. North Ayrshire Council is committed to upholding the principle of equality of opportunity and to promoting measures to reduce inequalities. It is committed to tackling discrimination on the basis of a person's age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, employment status, caring responsibilities or trade union activity. Equality is a core value of the Council governing the actions of its Elected Members and its employees.
- 2.2. The Council, through the Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement and the Council Plan, sets out its aim to promote measures to tackle discrimination and reduce inequalities. The Council's vision is to offer a better life, better services and better opportunities than ever before. Treating people respectfully, fairly and equally is a value which is central to all that the Council delivers. Being an equal opportunities employer is an integral part of how this is done.
- 2.3. The Council will also achieve its vision by integrating an equality perspective into all of its activities, strategies, policies and service planning. This mainstreaming of equality will ensure that it is fully taken into account when developing and reviewing services. New policies and initiatives will be assessed in terms of their impact on all of the Council's communities. In this way the Council will fulfil its commitment to deliver its services in a fair and equitable way to all.
- 2.4. The Council in leading the community planning process will ensure that equality of opportunity underpins all community planning activities. The Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) with the Scottish Government contains a local outcome to reduce disadvantage on the basis of race, disability, gender, age, religious belief or sexual orientation under the national outcome to tackle the significant inequalities in Scottish society. This will be expanded in the future to include the new protected characteristics of pregnancy and maternity and of gender reassignment in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- 2.4. Equality of opportunity will be integrated into all of the Council's Human Resources Policies and practices, ensuring there is fairness and equity in its treatment of its employees and prospective employees. Equality of opportunity means that appointments, promotions, training and development will be based on individual merit and the requirements of the job. Employees





are encouraged and given the opportunity to develop their full potential.

- 2.5. As a major employer in North Ayrshire, it is the Council's aim to reflect the composition and diversity of its communities within its workforce. In doing this, the Council recognises the importance that equality of opportunity has in improving the retention of staff and improving motivation and performance. This can stimulate a healthy and productive working environment and can broaden the range of talent and the diversity of its workforce.

3. Working Together

- 3.1. The Council recognises that North Ayrshire is made up of a diverse mix of different communities of interest and that there is need to give particular attention to involving individuals and groups which are often excluded from the decision making and the democratic process. The Council will work together with local community groups to challenge discrimination and tackle disadvantage.
- 3.2. The Council also recognises that management and staff must work together to uphold the principle of equality and to eliminate discriminatory and other unacceptable practices in the workplace.

4. Our Outcomes

- 4.1. The outcomes of this Equality Policy are:
- Disadvantage on the basis of race, disability, gender, age, religious belief or sexual orientation is reduced (SOA Local Outcome (7c))
 - Equality is integrated into all of the Council's activities in delivering its services and as an employer.

5. Implementation of Policy - Responsibilities

- 5.1 **The Executive of the Council** is responsible for the initiation, development and review of equality strategies.
- 5.2 **The Scrutiny Committee** is responsible for monitoring the performance of services in implementing the Single Equality Scheme and receives an Annual Equality Report on its progress.
- 5.3 **Political leadership** on equality issues is provided by the Elected Member on the Executive of the Council with the community planning portfolio. This Elected Member is also the chair of the Council's Corporate Equality Group. All Elected Members have a responsibility to take equality considerations into account in their decision-making and scrutiny activities.





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- 5.4 **The Chief Executive** of the Council is responsible along with the Corporate Management Team for taking forward progress in promoting equality and ensuring that the Council is meeting its equality duties.
- 5.5 **The Head of Human Resources** implements, maintains, monitors and reviews the policy in relation to equal opportunities in employment. The Head of Human Resources also has responsibility for training and guidance on the effective operation of the policy in this regard.
- 5.6 **Corporate Directors and Heads of Service** will be responsible for ensuring equality is applied and practised within their Service in relation to employment matters and service provision. They will be responsible for ensuring that their employees are aware of the implications of the Policy, their obligations under the law, and that their managers, supervisors and staff are given the relevant training to ensure that the Council's policy is delivered.
- 5.7 **Equalities Working Groups** within each service group support the Council's work in mainstreaming equality and are responsible for promoting equality in our service delivery.
- 5.8 **Employees** have a duty to comply with the Council's Equality Policy, to deliver Council services in a fair and equitable way and to assist in making the working environment free from discrimination.

6. Achieving Equality

- 6.1. The Council intends to achieve equality through a variety of methods. These include:-

Action Planning - to deliver the Single Equality Scheme Action Plan

Service Planning - to highlight equalities issues within Service Plans.

Communication - to communicate with our employees on the Equality Policy and its practical implementation in their everyday work, to keep up to date with equality developments, and to apply best practice within the Council.

Best Value Framework - to mainstream equalities so that they are integrated into all Council activities. This will involve:-

- (i) Ensuring equality considerations are part of all strategic reviews and that the impact of policy proposals on equal opportunities are assessed.
- (ii) That account is taken of equality requirements in all Council procurement and within its procurement strategy.
- (iii) Ensuring equality performance information and targets in relation to Council services are identified and measured through public performance reporting.





Public Service Improvement Framework – to provide evidence of the mainstreaming of equality through all Council services

Equality Impact Assessment – to undertake equality impact assessments on the Council's policies and practices to ensure that they are accessible to everyone and that there is no discrimination arising from them. Equality impact assessments are also undertaken of the Council's financial decisions to ensure that they are fair and take account of the needs and rights of different members of our community

Accessibility - to aim to provide services which are accessible to everyone and which meet the differing needs of all its service users. This recognises that equality does not mean providing the same service to all but involves adapting services to meet the different needs of groups of people. This will be reflected in the planning, design and improvement of services.

Community Planning – to work in partnership with our Community Planning partners in promoting equality.

Strategic Links – to link this policy with the Council's other strategic equality documents such as:

- **North Ayrshire Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement**– the key strategic document of the Community Planning Partners.
- **North Ayrshire Council Plan** – the Council's framework for delivering its core objectives.
- **North Ayrshire Single Equality Scheme** – a scheme which details the Council's arrangements to promote equality. This Scheme links with this Equality Policy and should be read in conjunction with it. Equality Act 2010.

Consultation – to consult with and involve minority groups in discussing Council proposals to adapt services and make them more accessible for everyone.

Training – to ensure that staff are aware of the Council's commitment to equal opportunities, its requirements and obligations in the workplace and when delivering services to support the mainstreaming of equalities throughout their work.

Human Resources procedures and practices - to have Human Resources procedures, associated guidance and codes of practice that address and implement equal opportunities within the Council, with particular reference to:

- Recruitment, selection and promotion procedures and practices
- Harassment, bullying and aggression at work
- Training and induction of new employees
- Maternity Scheme





Positive Action - To use positive action as allowed by employment legislation e.g. encouraging applications for employment from ethnic communities.

7. Monitoring and Reviewing

- 7.1. The Council will monitor the effectiveness of the policy in a number of ways. These are:
- Monitoring comments and complaints received through the Listening and Learning Scheme
 - Meetings of the Council's Corporate Equality Group and other forums, e.g. Multi Agency Diversity Incident Monitoring Group
 - The publication of an annual equality report
 - Completing Statutory Performance Indicators for equality
 - The periodic monitoring of the workforce
 - Producing and reviewing the statutory information required under the Equality Act, 2010
 - Reviewing of equality monitoring forms completed by applicants, including information submitted through the recruitment portal
 - Recording and review of applications for and delegates at training courses
 - The numbers of applications for flexible working
 - Recording and investigating cases of harassment, bullying and aggression at work.

8. Dealing with Complaints

- 8.1. A member of the public can express their dissatisfaction about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff affecting them as an individual or as a group through the Council's Listening and Learning Scheme.
- 8.2. An employee who wishes to make a complaint that they have been discriminated against contrary to the policy can pursue the matter through the Council's Grievance Procedure or specialist complaints procedures detailed in Human Resources Policies and Procedures.

9. Legislative Framework

- 9.1. Equality of opportunity is regulated by Acts of Parliament and related Codes of Practice. These are detailed in Appendix 1.





Appendix 1

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK**

Acts of Parliament

- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, 1974
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act, 1974 (Exemptions) Order, 1975
- Employment Rights Act, 1996
- Scotland Act 1998
- Employment Relations Act, 1999
- Human Rights Act, 2000
- Part -Time Workers (Prevention of Unfavourable Treatment) Regulations, 2000
- Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Unfavourable Treatment) Regulations, 2001
- Equality Act 2010

Codes of Practice

- Equal Pay
- Disability
- Race Equality
- Equality Act 2010 (When Published)

It should be noted also that the Local Government Act (Scotland), 2003 includes a statutory duty on all Local Authorities with regard to Equal Opportunities.

