

## **How the Council promotes equality in North Ayrshire**

This booklet gives information and advice on the Council's commitment to promote equal opportunities in our communities and at work. It outlines how you as an employee can play your part in raising awareness about this commitment and making sure it is realised.

It also explains the law and some of the background to the way we implement equal opportunities.

### **A message from the Chief Executive**

“The Council's overall aim of building a better North Ayrshire can't be achieved without reducing disadvantage and promoting equal opportunities.

We are doing this by making sure that people who access and use our services do not face bias or discrimination in any shape or form.

The Council is committed to promote equality where we can and every time we assess and frame a new policy we have to think hard about how it will work and ensure it does not have a negative impact.

As an Equal Opportunities Employer we are committed to ensuring equality in all employment practices. We treat our customers respectfully, fairly and equally and treat employees in the same way so that we can attract, retain and develop our staff.

The Work Life Balance Policy is one example of how we are trying to achieve this.

But our approach must be more profound than that. By thinking through how everything we do will affect people we can all contribute to making North Ayrshire a more equal and better place to be.”

**Elma Murray**

## **Equal Opportunities Policy**

The Council's Equal Opportunities policy places responsibilities on all of its employees and elected members not to discriminate against others on the grounds of their sex, race, disability, age, employment status, sexual orientation, religion and belief, or to engage in any other unjustifiable practices such as harassment, aggression and bullying.

Our Equal Opportunities Policy is based on good practice and compliance with legislation. This can be viewed on the Council website.

### **Your role**

As an employee you have a vital role to play in creating and maintaining a working environment that is free from discrimination and helping make equality a reality by:

- Being open and honest with everyone with whom you have contact
- Acting with fairness, respect and equity in your dealing with other people
- Being self-aware - be aware of how your behaviour may affect others, e.g. what seems funny to you may be offensive to other people, as can swearing or using other offensive language
- Making clear to others when you find their behaviour unacceptable
- Being alert to possible breaches of the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy
- Never harass, bully or victimise anyone in any way

## The Law

Generally the legislation covering equality in employment prohibits:

- **Direct discrimination** - treating a person less favourably than another person not of the same group because of their sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief and age.
- **Indirect discrimination** - applying a provision, criterion or practice equally to all but which disadvantages a particular person or group of persons due to their sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief and age.
- **Harassment** - subjecting a person to unwanted contact on the grounds of all the above criteria which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive working environment.
- **Victimisation** - treating a person less favourably than another because they have alleged discrimination or taken any other action that is a protected act e.g. they have given evidence in connection with harassment proceedings

## How the law affects the Council

There are statutory equality duties for Race, Disability and Gender. North Ayrshire Council has a Single Equality Scheme in place describing these duties and the arrangements that it has in place for promoting equality. There is also an Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit to assist Services in assessing the effect that their policies and functions have on all members of the community.

The Single Equality Scheme and the Equality Impact Assessment Toolkit can be viewed on the Navigate, the Council's intranet site.

There are specific Human Resources policies and procedures and terms of employment that relate to the implementation of equality in the workplace.

These are:

- **Recruitment and selection**
- **Dignity and respect at work**
- **Work-life balance**
- **Special leave including statutory leave for family care**
- **Maternity leave and pay**
- **Adoption leave and pay**
- **Paternity leave and pay**
- **Retention of disabled employees**
- **Child care voucher scheme**
- **Retirement including the Duty to Consider procedure for requests to work beyond 65 years of age**

It should be noted that the Council's Disciplinary Rules make a breach of the Council's Equal Opportunities policies and computer use policies a disciplinary issue. This includes actions or deeds that could be considered to be harassment or disparagement of others because of their sex, race, disability, age, employment status, sexual orientation, religion and belief, or any other unjustifiable practices.

This leaflet has given you a brief summary of how you can help to implement Equal Opportunities, your own rights under the law and the Council's own approach to promoting equality.

You can find out more on Navigate.

Further information is available at:  
Equality and Human Rights Commission,  
The Optima Building, 58 Robertson Street,  
Glasgow G2 8DU  
[scotland@equalityhumanrights.com](mailto:scotland@equalityhumanrights.com)  
Tel: 0845 604 5510 (Helpline)  
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