

Warwickshire County Council EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENT



1. Introduction

Warwickshire County Council is committed to making sure that everyone has equal opportunities including equal access to the services that we provide. In serving our community and through valuing our workforce we aim to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of the local population.

Over the years Warwickshire has become increasingly diverse with many different communities settling here, and we accept that discrimination can be a barrier that prevents some people from taking part in the life of our community for a variety of reasons. This could be because of their: age, race, sex, gender identity, disability, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, or some other personal characteristic or circumstance. We also recognise that discrimination affects people in different ways and that other forms of discrimination exist that may not be specifically mentioned in this document.

2. Our Commitment

The County Council is committed to the values of fairness and equality. We have a zero tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment and will seek to apply these values by challenging and eliminating discrimination where it exists. We will do this by ensuring there is public satisfaction with our services, by having a diverse workforce that is valued and through our leadership role within the community.

To demonstrate our commitment to equalities the One Organisational Plan 2020 sets out our core purpose for the future to 'make Warwickshire the best it can be.' Which is supported by two outcomes:

- Warwickshire's communities and individuals are supported to be safe, healthy and independent.
- Warwickshire's economy is vibrant and supported by the right jobs, training and skills and infrastructure.
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Equality and diversity is central to this plan and is vital to our ambitions and planned outcomes.

3. The Legal Framework

The Equality Act protects people from discrimination on the basis of nine 'protected characteristics'; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership (currently marriage and civil partnership only applies in terms of employment – not service delivery)

The Equality Act also introduced a **Public Sector Equality Duty** on all public authorities. In meeting this new duty the County Council must show how it will:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups and
- foster good relations between different groups

4. Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when a person or group of people are treated less favourably than others. Discrimination of this kind can be direct, indirect, intentional or unintentional, and can be carried out by individuals, groups or institutions.

We acknowledge that discrimination can occur at both an institutional level, (where prejudices can become rooted within organisations through policies, practices, procedures and criteria for decision making) and at an individual level, (where a person may hold negative attitudes about other people or groups). Either of these could result in inappropriate discriminatory behaviour which Warwickshire County Council has a zero tolerance approach to.

5. Achieving Equality and Valuing Diversity

To achieve our equality and diversity aims we will:

- Carry out the county council's Equality Objectives
- Review, audit and report progress on our equality and diversity work
- Work with our partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to make sure there are the best outcomes for the people of Warwickshire
- Positively promote equal opportunities within Warwickshire as part of the council's community leadership role
- Provide equality and diversity training and development for staff and councillors
- Support a modern and diverse workforce so that it reflects the community it serves

6. Equality and Diversity in Service Provision

We will aim to:

- Provide easy to use and accessible services and facilities to all our communities
- Provide clear and easy to reach information about our services in various formats and languages when needed
- Review and monitor our services, working practices and resource allocations to ensure that they do not discriminate, and identify where improvements can be made
- Promote and publicise to staff what equality in service provision means

- Ensure that all service users have easy access to our Corporate Complaints Procedure
- Offer services and advice that are accessible either in person, via telephone or online channels
- Improve satisfaction on our services by engaging and consulting with residents

7. Equality and Diversity in Procurement and Contracting

When we buy services and develop contracts we will make sure we include equalities by:

- Requiring any commissioned services to have considered equality of access and service delivery
- Ensuring contractors, suppliers, volunteers and partners are aware of what the authority expects in relation to equality and understands that they must provide services that are free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation.
- Making sure that our selection and tendering processes include sections on equality.
- Giving guidance to staff about how to include equalities in procurement documents and tenders.
- Including equality and diversity in the quality assurance of commissioned services

8. Equality and Diversity at Work

As a major local employer it is essential we guarantee that equality is central to our employment policy and practice and as such we will aim to:

- Eliminate unfair treatment and discrimination through our policies and activities
- Provide appropriate training and development opportunities to all staff
- Ensure that employees receive fair and equal treatment in relation to their employment, regardless of whether they have full time, part time or temporary positions
- Recognise that employees have the right to work in a safe and harassment-free environment. Any allegations of discrimination, victimisation or harassment will be dealt with through the normal disciplinary processes
- Wherever possible, make reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities
- Ensure employees are aware of their own responsibility to follow and support this Equality and Diversity Policy.

9. Consultation

We will consult widely with individuals, partners and community representatives in order to make appropriate decisions in relation to the services we provide. Wherever possible, we will attempt to involve disadvantaged or marginalised people or groups who might not otherwise be involved in the normal consultation process.

We will carry out regular employee surveys to check staff satisfaction levels in relation to the working environment and the conditions we provide. This will help us to ensure that we are developing and maintaining an inclusive organisational culture.

10. Monitoring and Measuring Progress

We will review, monitor and evaluate all our employment and service delivery policies, procedures and practices to make sure we meet our equality duty. Sometimes we need to ask employees and service users to give us their personal information. This will only be used to improve access to and the quality of the services we provide or for auditing purposes. To help us to achieve this we need the co-operation and understanding of our staff and service users.

11. How to Make a Complaint

Comments and complaints provide us with an opportunity to examine the quality of our services and to actively address any issues that have been raised.

If a service user or resident has a complaint against the County Council about the services we provide, including services delivered by external providers on the Council's behalf, they can complain through the Corporate Complaints Procedure. This can include discrimination complaints. A copy of the procedure is available from the Customer Relations Team, Resources Group, Warwickshire County Council, PO Box 9, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RR, .or by telephoning the Team on 01926 410410. Alternatively, it can be found on our web site: www.warwickshire.gov.uk.

If a member of staff feels they have been discriminated against or victimised/harassed by a colleague or service user they should consult the Dignity at Work Policy. Any allegations will be taken very seriously and investigated. Where necessary disciplinary action will be taken against staff who have breached, ignored or abused the County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.