Fairness for All Policy

*Promoting equality, celebrating diversity*

Borough of Poole’s Equality Policy
2016 - 2020

We can give you help to read or understand this information

(01202) 633035
Text Relay 18001 01202 633035

http://www.poole.gov.uk/accessibility
Borough of Poole’s Equality Policy

Foreword

Our Equality Policy “Fairness for All” sets out our policy commitments to promote equality and celebrate diversity. We will do this for and with Poole’s residents and visitors, our partners and contractors, and our employees and Councillors.

This policy is for everyone who uses services, facilities and information provided by, or on behalf of, the Council.

We recognise that people have different needs, find themselves in different circumstances, and may face barriers that could limit what they can do and be. We recognise that by promoting equality and celebrating diversity we will provide better quality services and outcomes for the people of Poole. We see our policy’s commitments as important to achieving real improvements in the way that we work.

We have published the equality outcomes we want to achieve for our community in our Corporate Strategy. This policy, however, lets residents know what they can expect from us in making our services and employment practice inclusive but, perhaps more importantly, it sets out the Council’s expectations of Members and officers in their roles.

We have taken steps forward over the life of our previous equality and diversity policies but we are still on a journey. We would like to thank those who have helped us move forward this far. We know there is still more work to do.

We created the policy based on the views of residents and partners but want this to be a ‘living’ programme of work. We will continue to welcome your feedback or suggestions about where we can do better. We will regularly review and report on our progress and let you know how we are doing.

Andrew Flockhart
Chief Executive

Councillor Karen Rampton
Portfolio Holder for Equality

2016 - 2020

Please contact Sue Newell, Community Strategy and Equality Manager, on 01202 633035 or e-mail s.newell@poole.gov.uk for more information or to tell us what you think.
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitions of Equality and Diversity</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Fairness for All Commitment</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Vision for Fairer Outcomes</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Informs Our Commitment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who Delivers Our Commitment</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How We Will Check and Report How Well We are Doing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framework for Our Approach</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivering Our Commitment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Everyone can access the services and information they need</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. People can have a say in decisions that affect them</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. People feel part of their community and safe in their daily lives</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. People report incidents of abuse or discrimination and trust that we deal with them well</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. People achieve a good quality of life</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Our workforce includes people from all parts of Poole’s community and values what they add to the Council</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How We Pay For This Work</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing Our Approach and Welcoming Your Views</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Definitions

Equality

Equality is concerned with breaking down the barriers that block opportunities for certain groups of people, in society, the workplace, education and so on.

Equality policies aim to identify and minimise the barriers that exclude people. They aim to ensure that everyone has equal access to all aspects of life and work.

Eliminating unfair discrimination is important in achieving equality. It is not just physical environment or poor policies that create barriers. It is also ways of working, attitudes and stereotypes about different groups of people.

Diversity

Everybody is different, with different needs and potential. Treating everybody in the same way fails to recognise the differences between people and can cause unfairness and inequality.

By recognising diversity and meeting different needs effectively, every individual has a better chance of being able to live and work in the way that is best for them.

Britain and Poole are made up of increasingly diverse communities. The Borough of Poole has a leadership role to play to make sure people from different backgrounds get on well and value each other, as well as encouraging the celebration of diversity in our local community.
Our Fairness for All Commitment

We are committed to taking action to:

• Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct for those protected by the Equality Act 2010, by removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics

• Advance equal opportunities by taking steps to meet needs of these groups where these differ from the needs of others

• Foster good relations by encouraging people from groups to participate in public life where this is disproportionately low

Our Fairness for All commitment covers promoting equality and celebrating diversity on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (in the case of employment), pregnancy and maternity, sex, race, religion and/or belief, and sexual orientation as described in the Equality Act 2010. These are collectively known as the nine protected characteristics.

Under the Equality Act people looking after someone who is elderly or disabled are also protected against direct discrimination or harassment because of their caring responsibilities. For more information about carers rights please see this government guidance.

We also recognise that people on very low incomes or who live in relative poverty may also experience inequality and reduced life chances. Other groups also need additional support or specialist services to achieve their aspirations, including children looked after by the Council. Our commitment extends to all people who live in, work or visit Poole.

Our commitment is recognised in our Corporate Strategy, which shapes everything the Council does.

Our Vision for Fairer Outcomes

We are committed to promoting equality and celebrating diversity in our town, services and workplace. The outcomes we want to see are:

1. People can access the services and information they need
2. People can have a say in decisions that affect them
3. People feel part of their community and safe in their daily lives
4. People report incidents of abuse or discrimination and trust that we deal with them well
5. People achieve a good quality of life
6. Our workforce includes people from all parts of Poole’s community and values what they add to the Council
What Informs Our Commitment

Our ‘Fairness for All’ commitment sets out how we will meet our duties under equality legislation. We aim, however, to carry out our work in the spirit of the law and go beyond the minimum legislative requirements.

Our Fairness for All vision is shaped by our wider learning and experience over the last few years. Each of the above sources helps us identify issues that we need to address locally and is used in shaping and designing our services.

We recognise the need to involve people on an ongoing basis and to fill gaps in our knowledge. We will regularly review new information and update our approaches as a result.

Who Delivers Our Commitments

Everyone - our Councillors, employees, suppliers and contractors - are responsible for working together to meet all our policy commitments. All Councillors represent and need to reflect the needs of all parts of our community. However some people have specific responsibilities:

- **Portfolio Holder for Health and Well-Being, Adult Social Care, Housing and Equalities** is the Member lead that makes sure that Cabinet embeds equality and diversity into our culture and our policies

- **Member Champion for Equality** acts as an advocate / spokesperson for equality as part of the Council’s business. This person works alongside other Member Champions for mental health, dementia, domestic violence, learning disabilities and carers to encourage communication and positive action on issues of equality and diversity

- **Chief Executive** has overall leadership responsibility for the Fairness for All policy

- **Strategic Directors** are responsible for providing leadership and delivering consistent practice on the equality and diversity agenda across services

- **Service Unit Heads** are responsible for making sure that equality and diversity is integral to their service delivery and employment practice
- **Line managers** are responsible for making sure their teams are aware of the Council’s Fairness for All commitments. They should provide support to achieve these and deliver good practice in their services and employment practice. They are also responsible for recruiting and employing people fairly.

We require all employees and Councillors to deliver our commitments by:

- Ensuring that services, facilities and information are accessible to all
- Treating colleagues and customers fairly, with dignity and respect
- Reporting and responding to prejudice incidents and complaints in a positive, proactive way
- Meeting specific needs of service users, the public and those they work with

We have an Equality Leadership Group. This is made up of:

- Portfolio Holder for Health and Well-Being
- Member Champion for Equality
- Lead representative from opposition parties
- Strategic Director with an equality lead
- Head of Legal and Democratic Services
- Head of Human Resources
- Community Strategy and Equality Manager
- Community Support Officer for Equality

This group meets quarterly to steer and monitor delivery of our equality outcomes and commitments. The Community Strategy and Equality Manager supports them by developing, co-ordinating and reporting on this work. They recommend key decisions to Cabinet.

Each service unit has an Equality Representative to champion equality practice in their service. They meet every six months to discuss the agenda and share good practice. Guidance, practice and training are also shared via the intranet and e-learning portal.

**How We Will Check and Report How Well We are Doing**

We have three Overview and Scrutiny Committees based on the strategic themes of the Council’s work; People, Place and Business Improvement. Each Overview and Scrutiny Committee looks at the effectiveness of our policies and practice in our service delivery. An additional Committee exists for decisions that are ‘called-in’ or challenged. Each Committee looks at equality issues in relation to their area of work. The Business Improvement Committee has the overall responsibility for reviewing our equality work and they will be presented with an annual progress report.

We report on our objectives set out in the Corporate Strategy to Cabinet, including our equality objectives, every six months. This information is published on our website. We will undertake a full review of this policy, alongside the Corporate Strategy, every three years.

We use the Bournemouth and Poole Diversity Forum to help shape and scrutinise our equality work. The forum is made up of community and voluntary sector organisations with an interest, knowledge and understanding of equality issues.

Any performance issues will be referred to the Equality Leadership Group to investigate and recommend actions to be taken.
Framework for Our Approach

Driven by:
Our Corporate Strategy
Legislation

Led by:
Equality Leadership Group

Implemented via:
Consistent Equality Impact Assessments and monitoring across our services & partnerships

Embedded through:
Equality Representatives Group
Performance Management Framework
Programme and Project Management
Customer Service Standards
Communications Guidance
Procurement Strategy
Asset Management Plan
Community Engagement
Research Governance
Appraisals
Staff Development

Outlined in:
Equality specific guidance
Corporate guidance on the above areas

Support to employees:
Trade Union Representatives
Employee Groups
Chaplaincy and other employee support services

Scrutiny and Performance Management through:
Cabinet
Overview and Scrutiny Committees
Customer and community feedback
Progress reviews
Inspections and performance measures
Delivering Our Commitment

This section sets out our policy for delivering our commitment.

1. Everyone can access the services and information they need

Our vision for customer service is to provide people with quality services we can afford, in a way that meets their needs – simply, fairly and efficiently.

One of the ways we intend to do this is to put more services online so Poole residents can access information and do business with us at a time that is convenient to them. Whilst we encourage those who can to use digital services, we recognise that this does not suit everyone so will continue to support those who need help.

Treating people fairly

We are committed to treating people fairly and according to their needs. When you make contact with us we will:

- Be easy to deal with and provide quality responses to your queries
- Treat you fairly, equally and with respect
- Ensure your privacy in all your dealings with us
- Try to give you all the advice and information you need the first time you contact us
- Where appropriate, give you a case number or reference number and contact details relating to your enquiry
- Advise you of relevant timescales for responding to your enquiry
- Where it is not possible for us to meet the expected timescales we will keep you updated on the progress of your enquiry and let you know when a full response can be provided
- Keep information on our website and in our reception areas up to date

We aim to deliver the highest standard of service to our customers. In return we ask you to:

- Help our employees to help you effectively by being patient when asked for information and by providing answers where you can
- Let us know if you have any specific access needs
- Ask us to explain anything you are not sure of
- No to use any foul or abusive language
- Arrive on time for appointments and tell us if you unable to attend or going to be late

Access to information

We aim to provide our information in an accessible way. This means we will:

- Use plain English
- Follow our guidance on making printed information accessible and/ or provide other formats, such as large print, Easy Read, audio
- Provide access to services via BigWord written and telephone translation services and the Text Relay service for contacting deaf and speech-impaired customers by telephone
- Make arrangements for a British Sign Language interpreter and other face to face language interpreters when necessary
- Use positive images that reflect all sectors of our local community
- Meet web-accessibility standards on poole.gov.uk

Information to support services to do this can be accessed on the Loop, our intranet.

**Access to buildings**

We have audited buildings and facilities run by the Council for their legal compliance with disability access standards. We will work to ensure that physically disabled people are able to access and use our buildings and the surrounding environment using the same route as other people, or make other reasonable adjustments where necessary. Signage will be simple, clear and use symbols. Entry systems, reception points and meeting rooms will be adjusted for ease of access and communication.

We aim for all new and refurbished Council buildings to be fully accessible.

**Access to meetings**

We will make sure events and meetings are easy to access. We expect meeting organisers to ask people in advance if they have any special requirements such as diet, access or communication support. We ask people what their most suitable form of support is and then seek to arrange this. When food and drink are made available, special diets must be identified and catered for, different food separated and clearly labelled. When people attend meetings we plan for emergency evacuations, including how best to evacuate disabled attendees using the Visitor Evacuation Guidance.

Events, meetings, facilities and services must take account of people’s ability to get to them. This includes public transport links, disabled parking bays, slopes or steps around the building. When setting a date or time commitments such as caring responsibilities and religious holidays or Sabbaths, including the implications of fasting, should be considered.

**Buying or commissioning goods, works and services**

Where we buy or commission goods, works or services we expect our staff and suppliers to meet their duty under equality legislation. Equality standards are applied during the procurement process as required in each case regardless of value.

Our procurement guidance clearly sets out our expectations that should be applied, tested and monitored appropriately. Suppliers that cannot demonstrate their commitment to promoting equality throughout the whole process may be challenged. Breaches could lead to termination of contracts.

**Monitoring fair access to services**

We collect data about our customers and employees with their consent. The data is analysed to identify trends and patterns in service delivery and employment practice. The analysis helps us see if we are applying our policies fairly or if they have any unintentional consequences. We look for under or over-representation of different groups of people and use this information to take action where needed.

Data will be collected on the protected characteristics where relevant and appropriate. We may collect other information, such as first language or cultural or religious needs, where this will help deliver our services.
We will implement our guidance about gathering, collecting, using and storing this information sensitively, consistently and appropriately.

2. People can have a say in decisions that affect them

We are committed to enabling people to influence our service design and delivery, and in setting our priorities. This includes minority, disadvantaged, and emerging communities or groups so everyone’s voice can be heard. We want this involvement to be meaningful, and will therefore be honest about what we can and cannot achieve or do.

Over recent years we have improved the research and community development taking place in Poole. Our Research Governance Framework is used to check how effectively equality issues are considered in research that informs our services. We recognise, however, there are gaps in our knowledge and contact with specific equality communities or groups, particularly Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and Trans people. We aim to address through our partnership and community engagement work.

3. People feel part of their community and safe in their daily lives

We are committed to fostering safe, strong communities where people feel included and everyone can contribute and support one another. This involves developing a strong community and voluntary sector that supports and represents a diverse range of Poole people. This includes organisations such as Dorset Race Equality Council, Faith Links, Poole Forum, Access Dorset and Dorset Blind Association. We will work with Poole Community and Voluntary Services (PCVS) and Dorset Race Equality Council to strengthen and broaden the diversity of this sector.

We regularly support and promote events and activities in our communities via social media and our e-newsletters. We want to make sure these appeal to a diverse range of people and that people with specific needs can attend Council organised events. We can help community groups seeking support and advice for particular events that celebrate diversity, and will work with them to promote these. We use social media to raise awareness of religious festivals and awareness raising activities.

We offer advice and support to community groups and individuals who would like to take action in their communities or volunteer for our services. We work also closely with Poole Council for Voluntary Services, who support community groups and promote volunteering for the benefit of Poole. PCVS can also advise and support groups to access funding, and we also support Dorset Community Foundation who offer small grants to local charities.

Neighbourhood Policing Teams, which include the Police, ourselves and other agencies, work across Poole. Through this process local residents decide what the most important community safety issues are for them, and are then involved in finding and delivering solutions to their concerns, including through Restorative Justice Processes.

We support the work of the Safer Poole Partnership. This is made up of local agencies who tackle crime and substance misuse together. They monitor the types and levels of crime and make sure there are local services to support people who are affected. Their priorities include providing support services to domestic abuse victims, preventing violent extremism, and ensuring the safety and well-being of children and adults in coordination with the Bournemouth and Poole Safeguarding Boards for Children and Adults. Safer Poole Partnership also monitor any community tensions.
4. People report incidents of abuse or discrimination and trust that we deal with them well

We aim to challenge all forms of unfair discrimination where we find them. We encourage people to report any issues either through our complaints or ‘Prejudice Incidents Reporting’ processes.

**Making a Complaint against the Council**

We have a [complaints process](#) to encourage people to tell us what we are doing wrong so that we can try to put it right. We take complaints seriously. It is an opportunity to listen to those who use our services to see how services can be improved. People can tell us through this process if they think they have been subject to unfair discrimination, prejudice or harassment and we will record and investigate this as such.

We aim to deal with complaints within 15 working days of receiving one. A review of the complaint outcome can be requested. We aim to deliver this within 20 working days of its referral. Reviews are carried out by a Strategic Director, who is independent of the service.

Complainants also have the right to refer the issue to the Local Government Ombudsman, whose job it is to investigate complaints in a fair and independent way without taking sides.

**Prejudice incident reporting**

We also encourage people to tell us when they have experienced or witnessed any incident that they think is discriminatory based on age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, faith/belief, sex, race and sexual orientation, or a combination of any of these. A ‘[prejudice incident](#)’ could have happened on the street, at school or work. We provide training to our staff on what to do if someone reports an incident to them or if they witness or experience an incident. Where a situation involves criminal acts we would work with the victim to encourage them to report it to the Police.

We follow up on every report. Our Safer Communities Team checks how well we respond. They may be able to help residents where the incident is community based. We also monitor reports collectively with the Police and other agencies, through the Prejudice Free Dorset Group, to see where there are particular problems. We then take action together to provide support to particular communities or groups of people, for example for take away restaurants or taxi drivers. We will also campaign together to raise awareness of the reporting process and put help in place for those affected.

Prejudice Incidents are reported to our Management Team annually and clear actions for the following year are identified and followed up on.

5. People achieve a good quality of life

We work with a range of partners, for example, in [Poole’s Children’s Trust](#) and the [Dorset Employment and Skills Board](#), to ensure that we support local people to reach their potential.

To make sure that the Council supports everyone to maximise their chances and have choices about services, we will make equality and diversity part of our thinking and culture.
We expect managers to consider equality and diversity in all aspects of their business, partnerships, project and programme plans.

We use a tool called Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) to guide our thinking. This helps us to systematically consider how best to meet people’s needs and reduce any potential negative impacts. We use EQIAs when a new policy or service is being developed or changed. EQIAs make use of national and local data, consultation and other feedback to inform developments.

EQIAs should:

- Be clear so people can understand how decisions are made
- Show how the service impacts on and meets the needs of different communities
- Allow people to feed into or challenge decisions

Our Management Team, Cabinet, and Overview and Scrutiny Committees expect to see evidence of EQIAs. This enables them to make informed decisions about meeting the needs of specific groups of people. Committee administrators will check that equality implications are outlined in decision-making reports before they are sent to Councillors.

All EQIAs are published on our website and will be reviewed at least every three years by service units. EQIA training is available for Managers who undertake these.

6. Our workforce includes people from all parts of Poole’s community and values what they add to the Council

As a council that values difference, we want people who can build relationships with our diverse customers, bring fresh insight into our teams and challenge assumptions. Achieving this vision will support us in delivering the best services for the people of Poole. Diversity is about much more than simply avoiding unfair discrimination.

Recruiting people fairly
The council will:

- advertise job vacancies that will attract a wide range of applicants
- continue to be a ‘Two Ticks’ champion that is Positive About Disabled People employer
- continue to be a Stonewall Diversity Champion
- use non-discriminatory job criteria – job profiles will not include criteria that could directly or indirectly discriminate unfairly against someone

For example, if previous experience is essential we will not indicate a number of years which could discriminate based on age. The quality and relevance of your experience will be what counts.

- positively consider applications from people seeking to work part time or to job share
- apply a fair interview process – including not asking questions which aren’t directly relevant to the job
- only ask candidates for information relating to their health or disability once a job offer is made
- train managers appropriately in recruitment and selection, including awareness of unconscious bias and the positive impact of having diverse teams
Monitor and review our practice

The council will:

- complete Equality Impact Assessments for all employment policies
- collect and analyse our workforce data to identify any under-representations and use the information to address any imbalance
- collect and analyse information gained through bi-annual staff survey and where possible to identify any statistically significant differences in satisfaction from employees with protected characteristics
- continue to work closely with the trade unions in the development or review of relevant policies

Providing appropriate training

The council will:

- train all staff in equality and diversity as a mandatory requirement of induction – including the council’s equality duty
- provide learning opportunities to build on this knowledge, looking at subjects such as unconscious bias and using online resources to create greater awareness of individual equality issues, such as sexual orientation, autism and dyslexia

Employee support

The council will:

- advertise the support mechanisms available and make sure employees know that they can raise concerns without fear of victimisation

For example, through the grievance and dignity at work procedures, with Trade Unions, the Chaplaincy service, Counselling or HR.

- make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers for disabled employees and make sure they can develop and use their abilities
- make every effort to support employees who become disabled or develop a health condition in order to retain their talent, skills and experience
How We Pay For This Work

Most equality work is about making sure our services and employment opportunities are accessible to everyone. As a result we plan how we can best use our resources through Medium Term Financial Planning, annual budget setting and business planning process.

We will seek to target resources for specific groups and communities as appropriate and within the overall means available to us. Priorities will be identified through business planning and using Equality Impact Assessments.

Some work is undertaken on a short-term, small-scale project basis. Funding this may be planned as part of the annual budget planning cycle or could be funded by, or in partnership with, other organisations. Some large costs (such as making Council buildings accessible) need to be planned and budgeted for over longer timeframes. They will be prioritised and carried out over several years.

We have a small dedicated ‘Corporate Equality Budget’. This is used for:

- Supporting events and activities for celebrating diversity
- Consultation and research with minority or disadvantaged communities and employees
- Producing guidance, campaigns and communications
- Supporting telephone language translations

We undertake and publish an EQIA on the Medium Term Financial Plan annually.

Sharing Our Approach and Welcoming Your Views

We will continue to update guidance and our approach. Employees and Members are kept informed of new developments so they can keep in touch with what is expected of them via our intranet, our email me newsletters and Equality Representatives.

Our equality and diversity pages on poole.gov.uk provide a range of information about our work. Every year we will publish progress reports on our website. We also aim to keep the community informed about progress and developments through ‘Poole News’, our website, our social media and the wider media.

This policy can be made available in a summary version and different formats on request. It is a ‘living’ document which will be regularly updated and fully reviewed after three years. We want to involve people on an ongoing basis, continue to develop our knowledge and make improvements. We welcome comments and suggestions on our equality work and how the issues affect you.

Please contact Sue Newell, Community Strategy and Equality Manager on 01202 633035 or e-mail s.newell@poole.gov.uk for more information.

For more information or advice and guidance:

Commission for Equality and Human Rights
Equality Advisory and Support Service