Borough of Poole's
Corporate Policy
on

Promoting Equality, Respecting Diversity

We can supply this information in large print, on audio tape or have it translated for you. A member of staff will also be happy to discuss this with you. Please call Sue Newell on 01202 633035.

The information is on boroughofpoole.com, where it can be translated into many languages.

Forward

We, the Borough of Poole, are committed to promoting equality and respecting diversity in our town, our services and our workplace. Our ***Promoting Equality, Respecting Diversity Policy*** sets out our aims of achieving this through the Borough of Poole's role as a community leader, as a service provider and as an employer. It provides a steer to everyone in our organisation, our partners, our contractors and residents of Poole on what, why and how we are trying to achieve this.

Signing up to promoting equality and respecting diversity, which stems from the Council's values, will mean each of us in the organisation improving how we currently undertake our roles. Everyone in Poole has the responsibility to champion equality and diversity. We will encourage the Council's partners and others in the town with whom we work to strive towards the same vision.

Borough of Poole wants to provide services that improve the quality of life of all Poole's residents. To achieve equality of access and outcomes for people in our community we may need to address particular issues and needs in relation to a person's race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and/or faith or religious belief.

As one of Poole's major employers we are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all potential and existing employees throughout their time with the Council. The contribution and talents of our diverse pool of employees are an essential asset to our organisation.

We will not tolerate discriminatory behaviour[1], harassment, victimisation or bullying from anyone. More than that we wish Poole to be a place where the contribution of everyone in the town is welcomed and celebrated.

We want to be held to account for the promises set out in this document and we are looking forward to turning our commitments into a reality for Poole.

Councillor Ann Stribley
Member for Social Inclusion & Equality

John McBride
Chief Executive

Approved March 2006
Amended December 2006

[1] Racism; sexism; disablism; ageism; homophobia etc.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council's Commitment to Promoting Equality & Respecting Diversity

The Borough of Poole's *Promoting Equality, Respecting Diversity Policy* outlines its vision for positively promoting equality and respecting diversity in the community, in service delivery and employment practice. This commitment stems from the Council's values of providing 'equality of opportunity', as set out in *Striving for Excellence - our Corporate Strategy*'.

The Council wants to support social justice by tackling inequality and social exclusion. Borough of Poole recognises that some groups and individuals in society continue to be discriminated against and often suffer multiple oppression. Everyone in Poole, whatever their ethnicity, gender, disability, faith, age or sexual orientation, has the right to use the facilities and services we provide. Meeting the needs of equality groups means that we recognise that we may need to adapt services to provide equality of outcomes.

To promote a stronger, more active and vibrant community, the Council will strive to:

- Champion equality and diversity in the community and with our partners
- Recognise and value the diversity of Poole's visitors, residents and our employees
- Promote fair and equal access to services, and employment and career development opportunities
- Improve participation of all equality groups in decisions that affect their lives
- Identify and eliminate discriminatory behaviour and harassment
- Integrate equality issues into the mainstream business planning and service delivery of the organisation.

By improving performance against the equality agenda the Council can improve:

- People's quality of life
- Access to and take up of its services and employment opportunities
- Satisfaction of its service users and employees
- Poole's sense of community and all residents' sense of belonging
- The efficient and effective use of the Council's resources.

This document sets out the foundations on which:

- Councillors and Council Officers will provide leadership by example to the community and partners
- Service Units will plan and provide services based on the needs of all members of the community
- Poole residents and users of Council services can expect fair access to relevant, high quality services
- Council employees understand their roles and responsibilities with regard to the equality and diversity agenda, as well as understand what can be expected of the organisation for which they work
- Partners, including statutory agencies, private and voluntary sectors, know what is expected of them when working with the Council.

1.2 Who the Policy Relates To

This policy relates to individuals or groups of people who are more likely to have experienced or are vulnerable to discrimination or inequality (known throughout the remainder of the document as 'equality groups'). It sets out Borough of Poole's commitments to its statutory duties under specific equality legislation that seeks to protect and address discrimination faced by people because of their:

- race
- disability
- gender
- faith or religious belief
- sexual orientation
- age

Some people may be part of larger equality groups, such as Gypsies and Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, or children and young people 'looked after' by the local authority. Individuals may identify with more than one equality group or face multiple discrimination as a result of, for example, gender and ethnicity.

Borough of Poole recognises that discrimination also occurs for a range of other reasons, including social and economic status; marital status; homelessness; caring responsibilities; trade union activities and past criminal convictions. Acts of unjustifiable discrimination on any grounds will not be acceptable to the Council.

The way the Council is able to assess whether equality groups or individuals will have particular needs that require addressing, or that a service is likely to have an adverse impact on them, is by using a tool called Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs). EQIAs are used when a new policy or service is being developed or one is being changed, so that considerations can be addressed from the design stage.

Using this process can help Borough of Poole identify its highest priorities and the relevance of an the equality issue to a particular service. Priority is given to where there are specific needs, disparities or likely discrimination against a particular group. This is more likely in our frontline services or employment practice, and where there is a high level of local or national concern about how different groups are treated.

The Council has additional equality policies and guidance to support particular equality groups, such as its Race Equality Scheme. Borough of Poole will need to develop a response to new legislation including the Disability Equality Duty by December 2006 and the Gender Equality Duty by April 2007, to outline our specific commitments to these equality groups.

The Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP), which accompanies this policy, outlines what each service unit has committed to do on the equality agenda for the coming three years (Nov 2005 - Nov 2008). Service specific policies, such as the Educational Inclusion in Poole, also support the organisation's equality agenda.

2.0 Why Are We Doing This?

2.1 Understanding and meeting the needs of the community

Of Poole's 137,900 residents, many will be touched directly or indirectly by one or more equality issue. Understanding who makes up our community and workforce, their concerns and where discrimination is more likely to occur we can plan for and address particular needs, addressing the imbalance in opportunities and social exclusion.

2.1.1 The demographic make up of Poole

Statistics are one of a number of tools that helps inform how our services are designed. Below is a small sample of data relating to the equality agenda:

- **The small number of people from black and ethnic minorities in Poole, just over 4% of the total population[2], is rising and is younger than the majority population.** Current local skills shortages are attracting people from overseas, particularly from Central and Eastern Europe, to live and work in Poole.

  In 2004/05 year there were 102 racist incidents, ranging from verbal abuse, graffiti and violence, reported to agencies[3] in Poole.

- **4,500 people in Poole claim disability living allowance**. A similar number of people have registered with Social Services[4] as having either a visual, hearing, physical, learning disability or mental health problems. In the 2001 Census 18.5% of the population (25,500 people) said they had a limiting long-term illness. Over half of these were aged over 65 and 23.9% of the Irish community is affected.

- **Women outnumber men in Poole by 71,700 to 65,800.** The gap widens with the older age brackets. There are 2738 women over 85 compared to 1235 men[5].

  The number of reports of domestic violence has increased from 150 in April 2001 to 220 in March 2004. Most victims in 2003/04 were women aged between 15-24.

  The Council's workforce is made up of 75.2% of women, of which 62% work part-time. Of our top 5% of earners women make up 41.2% (December 05).

- **Poole's population is ageing.** People over 50 years represent almost 40% of the total population. The number of those aged 50-64 and 65-84 will increase by around 6% and 7% by 2011. The most marked rise will be for those aged 85+, which is set to rise to over 5,000 people by 2011 (by approximately 28%).

- **Almost two thirds of Poole's residents said they were Christian**, 16% stated they had no religion, 8% did not state their religion, and the remaining 1% belong to other denominations (2001 Census). The faith sector in Poole offers support and services to people of many different backgrounds.

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[2] 2001 Census data
[3] the Police, the Council and Dorset Race Equality Council
[4] Many people do not register their disability so this is unlikely to be a true reflection of the number of disabled people in Poole
[5] Mid Year Estimates 2004

- **There is no local information about the size of the gay community in Poole but Central Government estimates that 5-7% of the UK population is lesbian, gay or bisexual.** A national TUC survey suggests that as many as 44% of lesbians and gay men have experienced discrimination in the work place.

  Poole saw 20 Civil Partnerships[6] celebrated in the first two months of the ceremonies being introduced by legislation.

More statistical information, including where in the town is particularly affected, is available from the Statistics for Poole webpage.

2.1.2 Listening to our community

Listening to equality groups and individuals in Poole can help us understand the particular needs of children and young people, older people, women, men, transgender people, black and minority ethnic people, people of different faiths, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people who live, work and visit Poole. This can help us to design and deliver our policies and services and improve their quality of life.

One of the headline messages from Poole Partnership's consultation in 2002 was that people want to better understand each other's culture and needs. They want Poole to be a community where all people respect diversity and care for one another.

Common themes that have emerged from consultation with equality groups include:

- The importance of providing information in an easy and accessible way
- The built environment needs to be more accessible for people with mobility impairments
- Concerns about personal safety and reporting prejudice incidents to agencies
- There are particular services they would like to access but more generally it is important that service providers understand and respond to specific needs in the design and delivery of services
- There is a need for specific support to be provided in the community and workplace to reduce a sense of isolation and the lack of understanding of issues particular to the equality strands.

We will continue to develop ways to make our consultation on decision-making and planning genuinely accessible and encourage people to get involved with shaping our services.

Central Government, the Equality Commissions[7], Trade Unions and voluntary sector organisations also provide us with evidence of how particular groups are affected by a particular issue nationally. We will monitor how national concerns for all the groups play out locally so that we can begin to prioritise and address them in our services and employment practice. This evidence will be used in EQIAs when we are developing new policy and services.

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[6] legal recognition of a same sex relationship, which gives parity of treatment in a wide range of legal matters with those opposite-sex couples who enter into a civil marriage.

[7] Commission for Racial Equality; Equal Opportunities Commission; Disability Rights Commission and the forthcoming Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR)

2.2 Achieving Our Priorities and Values

As a service provider, Borough of Poole has committed to achieving 'equality' and 'public focus' in its core values. We recognise that providing services that are relevant, fair and accessible will help achieve our priorities.

As an employer, the Council's People Strategy reinforces our commitment to equality of opportunity in employment policy and practice. It outlines our aim to recruit and retain a capable and talented workforce. Key to this will be harnessing the diversity of talent and contributions made by all our employees.

Examples of how the Council can achieve its priorities by addressing equality issues:

Our Priorities	How this policy could support the priorities
Supporting young people	- Promote diversity and cultural awareness in early years providers, schools, libraries and youth activities - Tackle bullying with children and young people
Vibrant economy	- Undertake an Equal Pay Audit for our employees - Take action so the Council's workforce more closely reflects the diversity in Poole's population
Clean, green & safe	- Work with partners to increase prejudice reporting - Improve the support to victims of such incidents
Strong sense of community	- Celebrate cultural diversity through local events - Integrate equality into Poole's Local Area Agreement
Health & well-being	- Make open spaces more accessible to disabled people - Provide a service for carers of older people so that they can take planned rest breaks

2.3 Meeting Our Legislative Duties

We acknowledge our responsibilities under existing and evolving equality legislation. For example, the general duty of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2002 requires public authorities to have 'due regard' to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity; and
- promote good race relations between people of different racial groups

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 duties include to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

The Equality Act of 2006 creates the Gender Equality Duty from April 2007, which means Authorities, need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women

We expect our approach to go beyond the minimum legislative standard. We will apply these duties to all equality groups[8] so that they become an integral part of the Council's policies and practices.

3.0 How the Council Will Implement this Policy

As a Community Leader we will:

- Be a lead agency for reporting and supporting people through 'prejudice incidents'
- Encourage the participation of equality groups and individuals in the Council's and partners decision-making processes
- Celebrate diversity and promote the contribution made by all groups of people to the economic and cultural life of Poole
- Develop and strengthen the voluntary community sector, and increase the support local people give to each other

As a Provider of Services we will:

- Treat all people fairly and courteously with sensitivity to their needs
- Consult widely with equality groups to inform how we design and deliver services so that they are relevant, fair and accessible for those who visit, live and work in Poole
- Listen to the views of the equality groups and individuals and support them to find solutions to issues they face
- Provide clear and concise information about our services, and provide free interpreting, alternative formats and translations when appropriate
- Organise events and meetings that are accessible to equality groups and make all Council buildings accessible where practicable
- Monitor and review policies and services to identify intentional or unintentional discrimination, using Equality Impact Assessments

[8] legislation is likely to evolve to include the other equality strands

- Undertake equality monitoring of service users and complaints where appropriate
- Assess whether contractors and partners meet the Council's expected equality standards
- Enable service users to feedback or raise complaints about our services through a clear and easy to use compliments/complaints process
- Integrate equality considerations into service design and business planning and report to Elected Members regularly

As an Employer we will:

- Integrate equality issues into employee policy and practice
- Recruit and retain a capable and talented workforce which is committed to delivering excellent services to the community of Poole
- Have a fair and consistent recruitment and selection process
- Seek to ensure the authority is representative of the people it serves, taking positive action to support under-represented groups. This includes fulfilling our commitment to the 'Positive about disabled people standard'
- Provide fair and competitive pay and terms and conditions, which will be reviewed through an Equality Pay Audit, and offer opportunities for flexible working to promote work life balance
- Skill managers to meet their responsibilities to their colleagues and services
- Train all employees appropriately so that they understand the organisation's expectations and their obligations and contribution to the equality agenda
- Provide equal access to skills and training for all employees
- Harness the diverse backgrounds, talent and potential of all employees to develop a productive and supportive environment in which organisational goals are met efficiently and effectively
- Promote a positive working environment where everyone is treated with respect and dignity, and where any form of bullying, harassment and victimisation is dealt with quickly, appropriately and effectively. Employees will feel supported to challenge inappropriate language and behaviour (see Dignity at Work Policy)
- Seek to make adjustments to an existing post or look for alternative employment for employees who become affected by ill health or a disability (See Redeployment Assistance Pack)

- Consult with staff, as well as reflect on equality issues that affect them in Employee Development Interviews

- Extend equality monitoring of personnel and training practices

The Corporate Equality Action Plan that accompanies this policy outlines more fully what each service unit has committed to do on this agenda for the coming three years.

4.0 Whose Responsibility It Is

Every Elected Member and employee of the Council has a responsibility to treat members of the public, service users, other Elected members and fellow employees with respect and not discriminate. Depending on someone's role they may have additional responsibilities:

4.1 Political Leadership

The Cabinet is responsible for approving and monitoring the implementation of this policy and the supporting Corporate Equality Action Plan. Overview Groups will support Service Units in the implementation of the policy and action plan. Scrutiny Committees will monitor and review performance against them.

A Portfolio Holder has a lead responsibility to champion Equality and Social Inclusion.

4.2 Officer Structures

The Corporate Management Team is responsible for providing direction on the equality agenda and ensuring the organisation is managed in a way that supports this agenda. It is also responsible for supporting Service Units in the implementation of the work and monitoring their performance. A Policy Director has a lead role in supporting the Improvement and Policy Officer - Equality in ensuring this policy is implemented, and being an ambassador for equality issues.

Heads of Service, as managers of services and employees, are responsible for implementing, monitoring and reviewing their Service Unit's activities and operations, including work with partners and contractors, in accordance with this policy.

The Managing Diversity Working Group's[9] role is to shape and share the Council's equality policy and practice. It should also scrutinise its implementation.

The Improvement and Policy Officer - Equality role is to co-ordinate, support and monitor the development of corporate equality policy and practice. Providing advice and guidance to Service Units on how to integrate equality issues into business planning and service delivery.

[9] MDWG is chaired by a Policy Director; has representatives from each Service Unit and the Union; and is attended by the Chief Executive

4.3 All Employees & Members

All employees and Members are responsible for the implementation of for the Promoting Equality, Respecting Diversity policy. All employees must promote equal opportunities and work in a positive way to include people from different backgrounds. They must treat people with dignity and respect. They also have a responsibility to report prejudice incidents witnessed or received at work or in the community.

4.4 Partners & Contractors

The Council's partners and contractors are expected to share the same commitment to equality and diversity. This will be set out in our contractual relationships and we will introduce relevant monitoring where appropriate.

5.0 How We Will Pay for Equality Work

Most work on this agenda is about making sure all services and employment opportunities are accessible to everyone. As a result we will plan for the costs of it through annual budget setting processes.

We will target resources for groups and communities which are most excluded, and will encourage positive action to overcome disadvantage, discrimination and deprivation. Priorities will be identified using EQIAs, which should also be used if a change in policy or budget means a service is considered for withdrawal.

Some equality works will be undertaken on a short-term and/or small-scale project basis. Funding these may be planned as part of the annual budget planning cycle or could be funded by or in partnership with external organisations.

Some costs are large (such as making all Council buildings accessible) so they will need to be planned and budgeted for. The works will be prioritised and carried out over several years to spread the costs.

6.0 How We Will Measure Our Progress

We believe that promoting equality and diversity is a continuous process and that we will need to continually measure our progress, review and scrutinise action plans.

6.1 Internal Monitoring

- Review and update Service Unit's contribution to the Corporate Equality Action Plan (CEAP) annually. The Managing Diversity Working Group will scrutinise progress

- Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees will receive half yearly reports to monitor and review progress against key Corporate Equality Performance Indicators, as apart of Corporate Performance Reports, and annual progress reports against the CEAP. Policy Directors and Service Unit Heads will review performance at twice yearly Performance Forums

- Develop, set and review targets corporately and within services to demonstrate that progress is being achieved. Borough of Poole has committed to reaching Level 3 of the Equality Standard by March 2008

- Monitor and review, where appropriate, who uses our services and makes complaints, according to their age, disability, gender and race, and where appropriate, faith or religious belief and/or sexual orientation

- Monitor our employment practice for staff in post; applications for employment, training and promotion; those who receive corporate training; those who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of performance assessments; those involved in grievance procedures; those who are subject to disciplinary procedures; and those who leave the Council's employment

- Develop our community and workforce profiles to compare to our monitoring data

6.2 External Monitoring

In 2005, the Audit Commission assessed Borough of Poole as a 3 star rating and improving well. As part of future Corporate Performance Assessments and annual service inspections, it will increasingly expect us to demonstrate an understanding of the different communities in Poole and how we are meeting their needs.

6.3 Publishing the Results

We will publish and share information on the work undertaken and progress made.

7.0 Compliments and Complaints Processes

We will identify areas for improvement from our monitoring. If we identify likely adverse impact on some equality groups we will take steps to reduce or change a policy or service. Other ways the Council can receive feedback are:

Compliments or Complaints about our service

- Users of our services should try to raise the matter with the Service Unit concerned in the first instance. If they have tried and been unable to make a complaint they may wish to make this formal through our Council's complaints process. (Our Customer's Count leaflets are also available at our main receptions).

Prejudice incidents

- Employees and members of the public are encouraged to report verbal abuse, graffiti, violence or any other incident that they think is related to their own or someone else's age, disability, gender, race, religious belief or faith, or sexual orientation. These are known locally as *'prejudice incidents'*. The person making the report can be either a victim or a witness. A report can be made to any Council employee[10] who has a duty to report this. All incidents are investigated following the current guidance in the Council's racist incident protocol.

Complaints about employment practice

- Employees should report any unresolved employment issues relating to equality to their immediate line manager. If this is not appropriate they can approach the Principle Personnel Manager; the Employee Counselling Service; a buddy; Chaplain to the Council; a Union representative; the Policy Director lead on equality, or the Chief Executive.

This policy can be used to highlight the rights of employees or people who use services when raising a complaint. It can also make clear to employees and people who use services that we will not tolerate harassment or discriminatory behaviour against other employees or other service users.

8.0 We Welcome Your Views

This policy will be reviewed after three years. In the meantime we welcome comments and suggestions from local residents, businesses, communities, the voluntary sector or other interested parties on our equality work. To tell us what you think about this policy or for further information please contact Sue Newell on 01202 633035, minicom 01202 743636 or e-mail performance@poole.gov.uk.

Information about the our procedures for following up and dealing with prejudice incidents can be obtained from the Community Safety Manager on 01202 633027.

8.1 Additional Corporate Equality Policies and Guidance

The following equality policy and guidance is also available[11]:

- Race Equality Scheme
- Accessible Meetings Checklist
- Accessible Communications Guidance
- Corporate Equality Impact Assessment Guidance
- Corporate Equality Monitoring Guidance
- Racist and homophobic reporting protocol
- Dignity at Work

[10] The Police, other statutory and other voluntary agencies are also able to take reports
[11] This information is available to employees on the Equality Loop page