

Promoting Equality and Diversity

We recognise that there are key challenges ahead for the Council if we are to shift our thinking and approach to the equalities agenda. As a progressive organisation, we want to adopt a 'way of working' whereby equality and diversity become part of good management practice and not an afterthought.

Delivering our Equality and Diversity Objectives

In order to ensure that our corporate equality and diversity aims are delivered, there needs to be collective ownership for the setting, monitoring and implementation of the equalities strategy. We recognise that for equality and diversity to be taken seriously, all staff must appreciate their responsibilities and take ownership of the strategy if it is to have any meaningful relevance.

To facilitate this process, corporate responsibility for overseeing the implementation of our equality and diversity targets rests with the Chief Executive and Lead Director for Equalities. They have an overarching duty to ensure that the strategy is put into practice.

Clearly, equality and diversity must remain at the heart of our everyday working lives. It is not a foreign concept. It is about good quality assurance and effective performance management – and it is everyone's responsibility to ensure they apply those principles in the way they carry out their roles.

Scope of the Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

This policy statement is designed to compliment and strengthen key corporate policies including:

- *Corporate Equalities Strategy*
- *Corporate Equalities Action Plan*
- *Harassment Policy*
- *Grievance and Disciplinary Policy*
- *Race Equality Scheme*

The Equality and Diversity policy statement will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure that it is in line with current best practice and forthcoming legislative requirements.

Should you require a copy of this policy statement in another format such as large print, braille or another language please contact Customer Services on: 01793 463725

Swindon Borough Council

Fairness for all

Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

A summary of the Corporate Equalities Strategy

www.swindon.gov.uk



Fairness for all...

Swindon Borough Council is committed to creating an environment whereby no one is discriminated against on the basis of their:

- *Age*
- *Disability*
- *Gender*
- *Race*
- *Religion*
- *Sexual Orientation*

Our Corporate Equalities Strategy highlights our commitment to equality and diversity. It also sets out the priorities for the Council over the next few years.

Swindon Borough Council aims to ensure that as an organisation we promote equality in the way our services are delivered and in our employment practices. In addition, we want to create an environment whereby potential and existing members of staff feel welcomed, developed and able to fulfil their potential.

Responding to the needs of diverse communities means having robust systems, processes, policies and procedures in place which support equality and diversity. It also means having staff with the right mix of skills, knowledge and expertise and with a strong commitment to continuous improvement.

There are a number of key actions which as a Council we need to commit to if we are to realise this aim. There is a need for:

- *Strategic direction and leadership on equalities so that it remains at the forefront of the corporate agenda*
- *Collective ownership of the equalities agenda*
- *Outward facing consultation and monitoring of our services*
- *Rigorous monitoring of our workforce diversity profile*
- *Action where necessary to remedy any identified areas of concern*

Finally, there is a need to celebrate and promote equality and diversity.

However, we recognise that there are many forms of discrimination and that there is a need to challenge discrimination wherever it occurs. As a public sector organisation we have a moral and legal duty to ensure that wherever possible we pro-actively challenge and oppose all forms of discrimination.

There is a range of equalities legislation on race, gender and disability, European Directives relating to Religion and Sexual Orientation, and forthcoming legislation relating to Age. The underlying message from this is clear – as a public sector organisation, we need to take pro-active steps to remove institutional barriers which prevent us from recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce; we need to ensure that equalities is embedded within a performance management framework; we need to ensure our services respond to the needs of diverse communities rather than expecting service users to fit into what we provide; we need to ensure that staff are made aware of their responsibilities under the law.

Our Commitment...

As part of our commitment to eliminate discrimination and mainstream equality and diversity, we have committed ourselves to the following principal objectives:

- *Setting appropriate equality and diversity targets to address disparities or areas of concerns within our services and Human Resources functions*
- *Monitoring those targets through Departmental and Corporate Action Plans to ensure progress is being made*
- *Providing appropriate training and awareness raising sessions to counter poor practice and discriminatory behaviour*
- *Rigorous monitoring of our workforce diversity profile, procurement/partnership arrangements and service delivery*
- *Ensuring that all information provided is available in formats and languages which are accessible and relevant*
- *Ensuring there is transparency in our consultation processes*
- *Working with our coalitions to ensure their views are communicated and represented in our policies and strategies*
- *Consulting with the community and voluntary sectors to promote best practice in the way our services are delivered*
- *Adopting a zero tolerance approach to any form of harassment and 'hate' incidents against our customers, the public and our employees*
- *Monitoring all complaints, taking action where necessary*
- *Promoting good relations between people of diverse communities*
- *Celebrating and promoting equality and diversity through the organisation and participating in events and exhibitions, both internally and externally*
- *Encouraging collective ownership of our Corporate Equalities Strategy through identifying and maintaining clear lines of responsibility*
- *Ensuring that in our partnership and outsourcing arrangements, we audit for equalities to ensure suppliers and other partners share our core values and do not discriminate*
- *Becoming an employer of choice by delivering good equality practice in our services and as employers*