

DRAFT
Equality & Inclusion Strategy

Pathfinder House
St Mary's Street
Huntingdon

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Further information

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If you would like a copy or a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388032 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

The strategy is freely available from our website –

www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

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1. Introduction

The council recognises that some people do not have equal access to our services or information about them. To ensure fairness and equity in the provision of our services, some services may need to be developed to meet different needs.

The council also recognises that discrimination or exclusion cannot always be dealt with as a single issue. Different strands, particularly those relating to race, disability, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, rural isolation, gender and deprivation, may combine to cause inequality and social exclusion.

To meet our priorities of providing high quality services and effective community leadership the council understands that:

- ◆ Huntingdonshire is made up of many different communities
- ◆ some communities have greater or different needs than others
- ◆ equality does not mean doing the same for everyone
- ◆ to make progress we must target resources to meet the greatest needs
- ◆ we cannot afford to ignore communities with fewer needs, and
- ◆ everyone needs to feel involved.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a framework and common approach to deal with equality and social inclusion.

2. About Huntingdonshire

Huntingdonshire is a large rural district, which covers an area of approximately 910 square kilometres. Nearly 157,000 people live in the district, with about 45% of the population living in the 4 market towns of Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots.

Overall we do not have a high proportion of people from a black or minority ethnic background (BME) or have high levels of deprivation or social exclusion. We know that, generally:

- ◆ the local economy is strong
- ◆ unemployment is low
- ◆ educational attainment is above the national average (based on pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSE's grades A-C)
- ◆ income is above the national average (but below the regional average)
- ◆ our houses are in a good condition
- ◆ there are low levels of crime
- ◆ most local people are in good health
- ◆ the numbers of claimants for Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance is below the national average.

More detailed information from the 2001 Census and other research indicates that:

- ◆ nearly 22% of the population are aged 15 or under
- ◆ nearly 6% of the population are aged 75 or over
- ◆ over the next 15 – 30 years, Huntingdonshire will have a larger proportion of its population in the 65+ age group, and there will be more people over 75 due to longer life expectancy

- ◆ a small proportion of the population (2.85%) are from ethnic minority communities including Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Chinese
- ◆ 93% of the population was born in the UK
- ◆ of the 63,062 households in the district, 24% are one-person households
- ◆ of the 63,062 households in the district, just over 14% have no vehicle
- ◆ 1% of people of working age are unemployed, 11% of the population is retired and 2.9% are permanently sick or disabled
- ◆ nearly 24% of the population have no qualifications, however, 20% of the population have a degree or higher qualification
- ◆ 4.3% of households are without central heating, only 0.2% are without a bath or shower and 3.5% of households are overcrowded.

Against this background the council accepts the need to undertake further work to be able to understand the diversity of needs within the district and how deprivation and social exclusion affects small sections of our communities.

3. Outcomes

It is a council priority to deliver high quality services to our communities. To achieve this we must ensure that we understand the diverse needs of local people, that our services meet those needs and that they are provided in a fair and accessible way.

Providing leadership in our communities is also one of the Council's priorities. An important part of this leadership role is to promote equality, inclusion and the benefits that come from understanding and valuing diversity in our communities.

To contribute towards meeting these priorities this strategy identifies two outcomes that we need to achieve and two measures that will tell us how successful we are -

Outcome	Measure
That our services are provided in ways that meet diverse local needs	% of local people who believe that council services meet their needs
That the council is recognised for promoting equality and inclusion in communities.	% of local people who believe that the council promotes equality and inclusion in their community.

To achieve these outcomes we will establish a programme of actions to develop and improve the way we –

Consult & engage with our communities

To ensure that we understand the diversity of the needs of local people, we will:

- ◆ use appropriate methods of communication and consultation to engage with different communities and individuals
- ◆ use national and local data, particularly from other local authorities and community or voluntary agencies to increase our understanding of local need
- ◆ use information from our established complaints procedure.

Plan & deliver services

To ensure that our services are available to all that need them and are delivered in an appropriate way we will:

- ◆ use the information from listening, consulting and engaging with our communities to plan and deliver services
- ◆ avoid discrimination when designing, delivering or charging for services
- ◆ ensure that when new and existing policies are developed their impact upon equality & inclusion will be considered
- ◆ seek to ensure that information about services is published widely and in ways that will help local people to use them
- ◆ continue to assess and review ways of making services more accessible
- ◆ frequently review access arrangements to Council premises
- ◆ seek to ensure that our partners adopt the same approach to equality and social inclusion
- ◆ ensure equality and inclusion is incorporated into our procurement arrangements.

Support our communities

To ensure that we promote equality and inclusion in our communities we will:

- ◆ ensure that our communities have access to and information about our services
- ◆ consult, when relevant, local people in planning for our services
- ◆ support democratically elected representatives to support communities and individuals
- ◆ ensure that council policies do not discriminate directly or indirectly against any groups in our community
- ◆ identify and address unmet needs and gaps in services where appropriate
- ◆ promote activity in community based organisations
- ◆ identify socially excluded groups and develop measures to promote inclusion
- ◆ ensure that community and welfare rights information is easily available
- ◆ engage and support voluntary, community, charitable organisations and social enterprises.

Develop & support employees

To ensure that our employees and employment practices contribute to the outcomes of this strategy we will:

- ◆ maintain a separate equal opportunities employment policy, which promotes equality and diversity in our workforce
- ◆ develop our employees to help them promote equality and inclusion in our communities
- ◆ identify clear responsibilities for equality within the council (Appendix 1)
- ◆ provide guidance to help employees ensure that policies, strategies and plans are fair
- ◆ help employees to recognise and prevent discrimination
- ◆ allocate resources for improving equality and social inclusion practices
- ◆ help employees comply with the requirements of all relevant legislation and good practice guidance.

Monitor & evaluate our performance

To ensure we are making progress we will:

- ◆ monitor our performance against Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) and local measures
- ◆ report performance on equalities & inclusion indicators as part of the council's comprehensive performance management framework
- ◆ use the Equality Standard, and Race Equality Assessments to collect and publish evidence of good practice throughout the council.

Responsibilities

All Councillors, employees and others who work on behalf of the council have a duty to implement the outcomes of this strategy through the action plan. Particular responsibilities include:

Councillors

Councillors will support this strategy and work towards the promotion of equalities and social inclusion in all council and community activities.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the implementation of the Equality & Inclusion Strategy for the council as a whole.

Directors

Directors have a duty to promote the Equality & Inclusion Strategy throughout their directorates. They also have responsibility for the implementation, review, monitoring and performance of any equality schemes (e.g. disability and gender checklists etc) or requirements specific to a service that fall within their directorate.

Services

Heads of service, activity managers and team leaders are responsible for implementing the strategy in the day-to-day delivery of their service, including the collection of data.

Employees

All employees have a responsibility to implement the strategy and work towards the provision of services that meet the goals and objectives of the policy. Appropriate training will be provided to help employees achieve this.

Head of Policy

The Head of Policy will ensure that the Strategy is reviewed and maintained on a 3 yearly basis, and will evaluate and verify performance data that has been provided.

Contractors

When a contractor carries out any function on behalf of the council will be expected to conform to relevant equality legislation.

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Action Plan 2004/2005

Council outcomes	Equality & Inclusion Strategy outcomes	Measures	Targets	Equality & Inclusion Priority Actions	Specific Actions	Timescale	Responsibility
Effective management	That our services are provided in ways that meet diverse local need	% of local people who believe that council services meet their need	<i>To be determined following baseline assessment after the annual survey (March – May 05)</i>	To plan & deliver services	Produce policy statements on age, gender, disability, rural inclusion, sexual orientation and religious belief	Adopted by April 2005	Head of Policy
Key behaviours				To improve the accessibility of published information	2007/08	All	
				Ensure that key corporate documents are available in different formats	April 2006	Head of Policy	
				Revise DDA assessments for HDC buildings	<i>Date to be confirmed</i>	Head of Environment & Transport Head of Personnel	
Council services that meet local needs				To develop & support employees	Provide diversity & equality training for employees	6 course per year	Head of Policy
					Provide examples & case studies to help employees (for the above policy statements)	April 2006	Head of Policy
Accessible services					Produce guidance on different faiths within the district	April 2005	Head of Policy
					Produce guidance on the collection of data relating to ethnicity	September 2005	Head of Policy
					To work towards achieving the Equality Standard for local government	Achieve Level 1 by 2006	All
					To produce guidance for staff to help achieve the Equality Standard for local government	September 2005	Head of Policy
					To assess council services & policies in accordance with the Equality Standard for local government	April 2006	Head of Policy & Heads of Service
					Assess council services and policies in accordance with our Race Equality Scheme	By end March each year	Head of Policy

Council outcomes	Equality & Inclusion Strategy outcomes	Measures	Targets	Equality & Inclusion Priority Actions	Specific Actions	Timescale	Responsibility			
Community leadership	That the council is recognised for promoting equality & inclusion in communities	% of local people who believe that the council promotes equality & inclusion in their communities	<i>To be determined following baseline assessment after the annual survey (March – May 05)</i>	To support our communities	Training & development for councillors	2006/7	Policy/Democratic Services & Personnel			
Managing expectations							DDA & community buildings	<i>Date to be confirmed</i>	Head of Environment & Transport	
							Research to identify the extent of social exclusion in Huntingdonshire	April 2006/7	Head of Policy	
Good reputation							Provide and develop community information centres in Yaxley and Ramsey.	Yaxley (on-going) Ramsey re-opens after refit May 05	Head of Community Services	
							To consult & engage with our communities	Provision of grant aid to voluntary and community organisations who meet the District Councils eligibility criteria.	On-going	Head of Community Services
								Support the work of Diversity Forum	On-going	Head of Policy
								Involve young people to inform the development of the Young Person's Housing Strategy	<i>Date to be confirmed</i>	Head of Housing
								Complete the survey of BME communities to inform the BME Housing Strategy	<i>Date to be confirmed</i>	Head of Housing
								Involve older people to inform the Older Person's Housing Strategy	<i>Date to be confirmed</i>	Head of Housing
							Contribute to the Diversity Forum project to improve consultation & engagement with BME communities	Autumn 2005	Head of Policy	
				To support the 'making changes for the future' Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) project.	<i>Date to be confirmed</i>	Head of Policy				

Audit Commission Performance Indicators – Equalities

BVPI	Indicator	Actual 2002/03	Actual 2003/04	Target 2003/04	Target 2004/05	Target 2005/06	Comments
2a	The level of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the authority conforms	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	Level 1	
2b	The duty to promote race equality check list score	N/A	68%	63%	68%	74%	HDC are in the top quartile
156	The percentage of council buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to people with disabilities	6%	6%	12%	12%	12%	Top quartile 2004/06 is 64% HDC achieved 6% (which is equal to 1 building) in 2004/05. Our poor performance is due to many buildings being old and too costly to make alterations.
174	The number of racial incidents recorded by the authority per 100,000 population	0.6	1.2	0	0	0	This relates to where an individual (customer) feels that HDC has discriminated against them in terms of service provision
175	The percentage of racial incidents that resulted in further action	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

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Definitions

The Council recognises that it is important to be guided by national definitions of discrimination and harassment and the terms used in this strategy have been defined below.

Not all of the terms defined below have been used in this strategy however it was decided that because some of these terms are often used without explanation in other documents or reports, it would be useful to provide a definition of them here.

Consultation

Asking for views on policies or services from staff, colleagues, service-users, general public or representatives from our communities. Different circumstances call for different types of consultation. For example, consultation includes public meetings, focus groups, surveys and questionnaires, and meeting with experts.

Deprivation

People can be said to be deprived if they lack the types of diet, clothing, housing, household facilities and fuel, and environmental, educational, working and social conditions, activities and facilities which are customary. People are in poverty if they lack the resources to escape deprivation (Townsend 1979).

Deprivation refers to unmet need, which is caused by a lack of resources of all kinds not just financial.

Discrimination

Discrimination can be both direct and indirect and that it can occur in many ways. The council considers discrimination to be broadly defined as:

To discriminate is to treat a person more or less favourably on the basis of race, colour, nationality or ethnic origin, religion, culture, gender, disability, age or sexual orientation, or other such category that is irrelevant to the individual's right to receive fair and equal treatment.

Discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, colour, ethnic origin, gender, age and disability is unlawful. Direct discrimination is deliberate. Indirect discrimination is where an act or failure to act, intentionally or inadvertently, has a disproportionate impact on an individual or a particular group.

Diversity

No legal or universally agreed definition for diversity exists. Diversity has not replaced equality but has added a further layer of understanding to the statutory obligations about race, gender and disability. Diversity is about improving how people can work together by valuing people's differences and similarities.

Institutional discrimination

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (Macpherson, 1999) found that institutional discrimination could affect the way organisations operate and the way services are provided. Institutional discrimination is defined as *'the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, ethnic origin, gender, disability or age. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping which disadvantage on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, disability or age.'*

Definition of Disability

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) provides the following definition of disability:

'A disabled person has physical or mental impairment which has a substantial, long-term, adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day duties'.

Ethnic monitoring

A process for collecting, storing and analysing data about individuals' ethnic (or racial) background to see whether all groups are fairly represented.

Functions

The full range of activities carried out by a public authority to meet its duties.

Policies

Policies are the sets of principles or criteria that define the different ways in which an organisation carries out its role or functions and meets its duties. Policies also include formal and informal decisions made in the course of their implementation.

Poverty

People are in poverty if they lack the resources to escape deprivation, in other words a lack of money or material possessions. Townsend (1979) describes poverty as 'individuals, families and groups can be said to be in poverty if they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged or approved in the societies to which they belong'.

A family can also be defined as being in poverty if their income is 60% lower than the average local earnings.

Procurement

Procurement relates to any process or action carried out by the council that results in the obtaining of goods or services.

Race equality duty

This term is used to refer to both the general duty and, where appropriate, the specific duties, placed on public authorities under section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976, as amended and the Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2001 & Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) (Scotland) Order 2002.

Race equality impact assessment

This is a systematic way of finding out how a proposed policy is likely to affect the promotion of race equality.

Race equality scheme

Most public authorities bound by the general duty have a specific duty to produce a race equality scheme. This is a document setting out how the public authority plans to meet its statutory duties under section 71(1) of the Race Relations Act 1976 and in particular articles 2 (2) and 2 (3) of the Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) Order 2001 & articles 2 (3) and 2 (4) of the Race Relations Act 1976 (Statutory Duties) (Scotland) Order 2002.

Racial group

A group of people defined by race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. All racial groups are protected from unlawful racial discrimination.

Racism

This term is used to describe a range of ideas and attitudes, used to justify placing (a) particular racial group(s) in an inferior position to another. The Race Relations Act (1976) defines 'a racial group' as a group of persons defined by skin colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins. These negative attitudes often result in discriminatory or oppressive behaviour.

The Act defines direct racial discrimination as:

- ◆ treating one person less favourably than another on racial grounds. Direct discrimination is unlawful under the Race Relations Act 1976. This definition can be expanded to include other forms of discrimination such as age, disability and gender.

The Act defines indirect racial discrimination as:

- ◆ that a rule or condition which is applied equally to everyone can be met by a considerably smaller proportion of people from a particular racial group
- ◆ the rule is to their disadvantage
- ◆ and the condition or rule cannot be justified on non-racial grounds.

All three conditions must apply. Again this definition can be expanded to include other forms of discrimination such as age, disability and gender.

Definition of Racial Harassment:

Racial harassment is unwanted conduct of a racial nature, or other conduct based on race affecting the dignity of women and men.

Definition of a Racist Incident:

Recommendation 12 of the Stephen Lawrence enquiry defines a racist incident as:

- ◆ any incident, which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person.

Sexism

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 declares that it is unlawful to treat a person more or less favourably than another on the grounds of sex. It is also unlawful to apply a requirement or condition, which discriminates against women because they are less able to comply with it than men are (or vice versa). The same protection applies to married people.

It is also unlawful, in certain circumstances, to treat a person less favourably than another on the grounds that he or she intends to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone gender reassignment (sex change).

Sexuality

This term refers to the general preference of people. It is preferable to the alternative term 'sexual orientation'.

Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is a term used to refer to the experience of specific communities, neighbourhoods, families and individuals. They will have either, a combination of linked problems (such as unemployment, poor skills, low income, poor housing, high crime, ill health, cycles of early pregnancy, family breakdown and isolation) or particular characteristic (such as minority ethnic backgrounds, being in care, old age, drug dependency or abuse, mental illness or a disability). This may mean that their quality of life is significantly disadvantaged compared with the opportunities available to the majority. Social Inclusion encompasses all activities to combat social exclusion.

Outline of the law relating to equality & inclusion

The council has statutory obligations to promote equalities through the following key pieces of legislation:

- ◆ Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
- ◆ Race Relations Act 1976 and its amendment of 2000
- ◆ Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- ◆ Human Rights Act 1998
- ◆ Anti-discrimination in employment directive
- ◆ UN convention on the rights of the child.

The council also has responsibilities to address specific aspects of equal opportunities or discrimination through other pieces of legislation

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)

The DDA introduces measures aimed at ending discrimination on the grounds of disability. The Act's provisions include employment, access to goods, services and facilities, and the buying and renting of land or property. The Act is being introduced on a staggered basis.

The Race Relations Act 1976, The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 came into force in April 2001 and strengthens the 1976 Act. It arose in part due to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and has been targeted at the public sector. It places a new duty on all public authorities to eliminate discrimination, promote racial equality and promote good race relations.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA) prohibits sex discrimination against individuals in the areas of employment, education, and the provision of goods, facilities and services and in the disposal or management of premises. It also prohibits discrimination in employment against married people. The SDA applies to women and men of any age, including children.

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act came into force in October 2000. The Act allows people to claim their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in all UK courts and tribunals instead of going to the European Court in Strasbourg. The Act requires all public authorities in the UK to act in compliance with the Convention rights and has many implications for local government activity.

Anti-Discrimination in Employment Directive (Religious belief & sexual orientation and age)

The Anti-Discrimination in Employment Directive sets out a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation. One of the aims of this Directive is to outlaw discrimination against people at work on the grounds of their religion or belief or sexual orientation.

The provision relating to sexual orientation and religion or belief came into effect in the UK in December 2003. It is now be unlawful for any employer to discriminate against employees and potential employees because of their religion, because of their beliefs or because of their sexuality.

The approach taken to implement these provisions will largely mirror the existing sex discrimination and race discrimination legislation.

Definitions

- Sexual orientation includes orientation towards the same sex, the opposite sex or both sexes.
- Religion or belief is defined as, 'any religion, religious belief, or similar philosophical belief. This excludes 'any philosophical or political belief unless that belief is similar to a religious belief'. Factors to take into account when defining a religious belief include:
 - Collective worship, or
 - Clear belief system, or
 - Profound belief affecting way of life, or work view.

Similar provisions relating to age and employment must be implemented by 2 December 2006. The council also has responsibilities to promote equal opportunities on the grounds of age through working to the standards set out in the Government Statutory Code of Guidance on Age Discrimination in Employment (DFEE 1999) and in advance of the European Union Directive on eliminating age discrimination, when age discrimination in employment and vocational training will become unlawful on 1st October 2006

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The UK signed up to this convention in December 1991. it sets out 42 articles that define basic rights that all young people under the age of 18 years are entitled to. States that are party to the convention are obliged to develop and undertake all actions in light of the best interests of the child. Particular relevant articles to the work of a local authority are articles 9, 12, 15, 16, 19, 23 & 31.