

EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENT: UPDATED 2019

Watford Borough Council is committed to championing equality and embracing diversity in everything we do. This encompasses our role as a leader in our community, in the delivery of our services, whether we deliver a service ourselves or through partnership, and as an employer.

We see this commitment as going beyond our statutory duty so that we understand the community we serve and are working with them, and for them, to make sure everyone in Watford feels part of our town and is able to access and enjoy all that it has to offer.

The council considers equality issues when making decisions as an employer; when developing, evaluating and reviewing policy; when designing, delivering and evaluating services, and when we commission and procure from others.

We also recognise we have a role in working with other organisations – both in the public and private sector – to influence and champion the advancement of equalities, the breaking down of barriers and elimination of inequalities to make sure everyone in our town has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Equality

Equality is about fair treatment

- It means treating everyone with fairness and respect and recognising the needs of individuals
- It does not mean treating everybody the same, as some people may need further support to have the same chance to participate in our community or use the council's services

Diversity

Diversity is about respecting differences

- It is about valuing and respecting people regardless of who they are and any defining characteristic they may have
- It acknowledges that a community is made up of individuals and groups with varying backgrounds, experiences, styles, perceptions, values and beliefs
- Everybody is different – where there are two people there is diversity

Equality and diversity working together

- We will endeavour to treat people according to their different needs without being unfair to them or others

Our commitments

We want to encourage a culture within the council and across the borough where people of all backgrounds and experience feel appreciated, valued and fairly -treated without discrimination.

To achieve this, we will:

- *meet all our legal, organisational and personal equality responsibilities*
- *promote equalities*
- *ensure that equality analysis is part of our policy and strategy development*

- *challenge discrimination and address inequality when we deliver services and when we see it within our community*
- *make our services easy for everyone to use*
- *encourage people from protected groups to get involved in our town and recognise their voices and contribution*
- *engage people from all communities to help shape our services*
- *insist that anyone providing services on our behalf complies with our commitments*
- *aim to have a workforce which reflects the diverse community we serve*
- *treat all employees fairly*
- *tackle bullying, harassment and victimisation in the workplace when they arise*
- *provide employees and elected members with appropriate training*

The Equality Act 2010

To fulfil the council's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 we will have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a **protected characteristic** and those who do not
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

The **protected characteristics** are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Having due regard involves considering the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics;
- meet the needs of people with protected characteristics
- encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low

Fostering good relations involves:

- tackling prejudice and
- promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others

To comply with the Equality Duty some people may be treated better than others, as far as this is allowed by discrimination law. This may involve making use of an exception or a



positive action in order to provide a service in a way which is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic.

Disabled people's needs may be different from those of non-disabled people. The council is required to take account of disabled people's impairments when making decisions about policies or services. This might mean making reasonable adjustments or treating disabled people better than non-disabled people in order to meet their needs.