



Joint Equality Policy 2017-2020

May 2017

1. Introduction

At Cotswold, Forest of Dean and West Oxfordshire Council we are committed to equality of opportunity both in providing services and as an employer. The aim of this policy is to provide clear outcomes that intend to improve our approach to equality and diversity and aid in meeting our legal requirements.

2. Legislative requirements

The Equality Act 2010 requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act identifies the 'protected characteristics' as:

- Age;
- Disability;
- Gender reassignment;
- Marriage and civil partnership (but only in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination);
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Race;
- Religion or belief;
- Sex;
- Sexual orientation.

In addition the Councils want to make sure that no other group or individual is treated unfairly for any other reason, such as their social class, political beliefs, income levels, responsibility for dependants, appearance, geographical area (rural location), criminal record etc.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

Integrated within the Act is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) that requires all public bodies and private bodies that deliver public functions to consider the needs of protected groups when designing and delivering services.

The PSED requires public sector bodies to:

- set and publish specific, measurable equality objectives and review them at least every 4 years; and
- publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty at least annually. This information must include information relating to employees who share protected characteristics and information relating to people who are affected by policies and practices and who share protected characteristics.

To fulfil these requirements we publish objectives in our action plans and workforce profiles and district profiles on our websites:

[Cotswold District Council](#)

[Forest of Dean District Council](#)

[West Oxfordshire District Council](#)

Enforcement

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is responsible for assessing compliance with and enforcing the Equality Duty. It has powers to issue compliance notices to public bodies that have failed to comply and can apply to the courts for an order requiring compliance. The Equality Duty can also be enforced by judicial review. This can be done by the Commission or any individual or group of people with an interest.

3. Equality outcomes

In partnership we have developed the following equality outcomes which are supported by each Council:

- Ensuring employment practices are equal and fair.
- Improving access to our services.
- Understanding our communities and customers' needs.

These outcomes form the basis of each Council's equality action plan which is developed annually and sets out our equality objectives, timescales for completion and responsible teams to allow progress to be monitored.

4. Putting equality into practice

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An EIA involves assessing the likely or actual effects of policies or services on people with protected characteristics or any other groups and helps to ensure their needs are taken into account when we develop or make changes to a policy or service. As far as possible adverse impacts should be mitigated or counterbalanced by other measures. A common template will be used. Assessments will be proportionate, we impact assess decisions that may have a significant impact on members of public or staff. Staff are required to complete the assessment prior to decisions being made at committees.