

Single Equality Scheme

2009-2012

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1. The Council's Vision, Values & Aims

Our Vision

The Council's vision for the District is a simple one:

"To make Rochford District a place which provides opportunities for the best possible quality of life for all who live, work and visit here."

Our Values

In working to achieve our vision, the Council adopts the following values:

- Be an open, accountable, listening, responsive Council.
- Put customer and citizen at the heart of everything that we do, delivery services in a caring and sensitive manner.
- Coordinate the management of resources with an emphasis on sustainability.
- Value the contribution of partners, employees and citizens, trusting each other and working collaboratively.

Aims

The new Sustainable Community Strategy for Rochford, which was produced in partnership with other public agencies, the business and voluntary sector, has key themes relating to:

- Supporting the aging population
- Fostering greater community cohesion
- Strengthening the third sector
- Increasing accessibility to services
- Keeping Rochford safe
- Encouraging economic development
- Promoting a greener District.

To contribute to these themes, the Council has agreed that its key objectives revolve around "Making a Difference" to:

1. Our People
2. Our Communities
3. Our Environment
4. Our Local Economy

2. Purpose of our Single Equality Scheme

The Council has long been committed to mainstreaming equalities and diversity and to working to achieve this objective. The Single Equality Scheme incorporates the policies and practices that have already been approved and provides a single focus for the development of our approach to equality and diversity.

Our Single Equality Scheme intends to bring together the different strands of equalities and demonstrate our commitment to developing services that meet the needs of all our customers, potential customers and residents in Rochford and develop and maintain a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Our Single Equality Scheme includes an Equalities Action plan that illustrates how we will mainstream equalities and diversity in regards to service delivery and employment practices.

Legislation has placed an important duty upon public bodies to promote equality. The duty places greater responsibility on organisations to think strategically about equality.

To meet our duties, the Council has already produced individual Equality Schemes for Race, Disability and Gender. However, to capture all equality dimensions to ensure a coherent, comprehensive and robust approach to the 'Equalities Agenda', the Council have decided to incorporate these schemes into one document which also includes responsibilities covering age, religion & belief and sexual orientation. The Council is keen to ensure all groups are included and are further committed to promoting our equalities and diversity agenda.

The Council also takes a wider perspective. It will be using opportunities to form strategic partnerships to engage with communities in a more holistic manner. The approach will reflect what the Commission for Equality and Human rights expects, that is;

'Public Authorities in the UK have obligations to promote and protect Human rights, and all public authorities must act in a way that is compatible with the European Convention on human rights. This means treating individuals fairly, with dignity and respect, while also safeguarding the rights of the wider community,'

The Council has produced the Single Equality Scheme Plan for the next 3 years incorporating the legislative requirements, setting out the vision for Equality and Diversity within the Council over the next 3 years.

3. Facts About Rochford

Rochford is a relatively small district located in south east Essex. The District has three larger urban areas and a number of smaller settlements. The District's towns and villages are diverse in character reflecting their history, location and size.

The district has a population of 82,200 people, living in 34,282 households, with a forecasted large increase of those over 85 years. A breakdown of the percentage of individual ethnic groups as of 2001 is as follows:

White British	96.7	White Irish	0.61	Other White	0.93	Mixed Parentage Caribbean and White	0.21
Mixed Parentage Black & White Caribbean	0.06	Mixed Parentage Asian and White	0.19	Other Mixed Parentage	0.13	Indian	0.31
Pakistani	0.04	Bangladeshi	0.03	Other Asian	0.09	Caribbean	0.10
African	0.06	Other Black	0.06	Chinese	0.24	Other	0.13

The area is relatively affluent ranking 314th least deprived out of 354 authorities nationally. Eighty six percent of households are owner occupied (the 4th highest percentage in the country), with 6% renting privately and 8% in social housing. Average house prices are higher than that across England and Wales making affordability a growing concern.

Unemployment levels are below regional and national averages at 2.4% with 79% of people of working age in employment (as at June 2008). 68% of the workforce use good transport links to commute out of the area. People in Rochford have a high life expectancy of nearly 81 years.

4. What do we mean by Equality and Diversity

Diversity is about the recognition and valuing of difference in its broadest sense. It is about creating a working culture and practices which recognise, respect, value and harness difference for the benefit of the organisation, the individual and the customers and communities we serve.

Diversity is more than a focus on the individual equality strands supported by legislation.

Diversity is more about a collective mix of individuals, cultures, beliefs, expertise and organisational expertise – all the differences which make us individual and the common factors that connect us for the benefit of the customer and the organisation.

Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It is backed by legislation designed to address unfair discrimination (including potential discrimination) that is based on membership of a particular group.

It is often summarised in terms of:

- Equal access
- Equal treatment
- Equal outcomes

There are six strands that make up the core equality and diversity agenda covered by legislation:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sexual orientation

5. Our Commitment to Equalities & Diversity

Rochford Council is committed to improve equality practice at a corporate and departmental level as it believes that everyone should have an equal, fair and equitable opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, society and that a diverse community is a positive asset to the district. The Council is also determined to encourage social inclusion and make sure that the Council's services are more accessible to those who want or need them. The Council is committed to lead by example and actively promote equalities and celebrate diversity. We will treat people in accordance to their diverse needs and requirement when they are:

- Seeking access to or using Council services or those provided on the Council's behalf,
- Contracting to supply goods or services to the Council,
- Applying for employment with the Council or already employed and seeking access to promotion and training/personal development opportunities,
- Involved in public consultation/engagement with the Council regarding its services.

The Council will use monitoring data and proactive measures to eliminate institutional practices. We aim to create a discrimination free work environment, fair and transparent processes and practices, relevant and accessible services and active consultation/engagement with all sections of the community especially those from traditionally disadvantaged groups.

We are committed to developing equality and diversity objectives and targets, systematic consultation and impact assessments, monitoring, audit and scrutiny.

The Council has adopted an inclusive approach to equalities and diversity. This means that equalities actions include a wide range of equality strands such as

gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, age and religion/belief. It is the responsibility of every employee or contractor to uphold and implement our Single Equality Scheme and is the direct responsibility of managers to realise it by adopting best practice in employment, consultation, contracting/procurement and service delivery planning. The emphasis is upon ensuring that fairness and equality of opportunity is a mainstream and not a peripheral activity and that is the responsibility of manager and service providers.

6. The Equality Standard/Framework for Local Government

Rochford Council has adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government as a driver to mainstreaming equalities and diversity into all services, policies and functions across the council. The Council is aiming to reach Level 4 of the Equality Standard for Local Government by the end of April 2009.

From April 2009, the Equality Standard for Local Government will be replaced by the Equality Framework for Local Government. The Equality Framework has 3 levels of achievement. These include:

- Emerging – formerly levels, 1 and 2
- Achieving – formerly level 3
- Excellence – formerly level 5

If the Council reaches Level 4 of the Equality Standard, it will be awarded the temporary 1 year status of 'moving towards excellence'.

The Equality Framework consists of five key themes. These include:

- Knowing Your Community – Equality Mapping
- Place Shaping, Leadership, Partnership and Organisational Commitment
- Community Engagement and Satisfaction
- Responsive Services and Customer Care
- Modern, Diverse and Reflective Workforce

The Council will be aiming to maintain 'moving towards excellence' status and wishes to reach excellence status by December 2010.

7.0 Legislative Background and Requirements

7.1 There are a number of pieces of legislation which outlaw discrimination and some of these (in respect of equal pay, race and sex discrimination) were enacted in the 1970s. In order to give impetus to the elimination of discrimination, the government has amended acts and/or brought new ones

into being with very specific requirements for public sector organisations. These require us to work to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in all our activities. Although there are common themes (which are outlined below), the legislation has been passed at different times and there are subtle differences between requirements. All of these commonalities and differences need to be taken into account when we identify how to ensure equality of opportunity.

7.2 There are three areas in particular (with respect to Race, Disability and Gender) where we are expected to produce a policy or scheme and an action plan.

7.3 **Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) (RR(A)A)**

7.3.1 The original Race Relations Act (1976) outlawed discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins and covers employment, education, and the provision of facilities or services. The RR(A)A amends this legislation and requires us to take a more proactive approach to:

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

7.3.2 In addition we need to comply with a number of other conditions – we must:

- prepare a written policy on race equality
- assess the impact of our policies on service users and staff
- train staff on our legal duties
- monitor the diversity of our workforce
- set out arrangements for publishing the results of equality impact assessments.
- publish an annual report on our progress

7.4 **Disability Discrimination Act (2005) (DDA)**

7.4.1 The DDA amends the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) which laid out the original definition of disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”. The 2005 Act has widened this definition in that it includes some conditions such as cancer from the day of diagnosis and removes the requirement for a mental impairment to be “clinically well recognised”. The Act defines “substantial” as being more than minor or trivial and “normal day to day activities” and includes obvious activities but also includes mobility, manual dexterity, lifting, hearing, eyesight, speech, memory and the ability to concentrate, learn, or understand. In general, however, for a condition to be treated as a disability it has to last or be expected to last for twelve months or longer.

7.4.2 The DDA requires us to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- provide training to staff
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

7.4.3 In order to achieve the aims above, we must produce, publish and implement a Disability Equality Scheme and then report on it and review and revise it at least once every three years.

7.5 **Equality Act (2006)**

7.5.1 The original Sex Discrimination Act (1975) outlawed discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, or gender reassignment and covers employment, education, and the provision of facilities or services. The Equality Act (2006) which amends the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) introduced the Gender Equality Duty – requiring us to pay “due regard” to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act and discrimination which is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act and
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women

7.5.2 In addition to comply with a number of other conditions – we must:

- prepare a written scheme on gender equality, including an action plan with gender equality objectives
- formulate gender equality objectives, considering the need to have objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap
- gather and use information on how policies and practices affect gender equality
- provide training to staff informing them of our legal duties
- consult employees, service users and others
- assess the impact of current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality
- implement the actions set out in the written scheme and review progress at least once every three years

7.5.3 The term “sex” is used to describe biological differences between women and men. The term “gender” refers to the wider social roles and relationships which structure men’s and women’s lives. The gender equality duty covers

men, women and transgender individuals. Transgenderism or transsexualism is a recognised medical condition where an individual believes he or she was born in a body of the wrong sex.

7.6 **Summary of requirements - Race, Disability and Gender legislation**

7.6.1 As can be seen from the above outline of the legislation regarding Race, Disability and Gender, there are common themes to the requirements they place on us. These are:

- eliminating unlawful discrimination/harassment
- promoting equality of opportunity
- preparing a written policy or scheme on how we will address the aims above
- assessing the impact of our policies, practices and procedures on different groups and publishing results
- providing equality and diversity training
- monitoring our workforce and the take up of services
- reviewing and revising policies and/or schemes and action plans once every three years

8. **Other Equality Legislation**

8.1 In addition to the Acts noted above there are other relevant pieces of legislation which impact on our work on equality and diversity.

8.2 **Age Discrimination**

8.2.1 The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 outlaw age discrimination against employees (including applicants for jobs). We cannot, therefore, discriminate against people in relation to recruitment and selection, access to training and development, promotion opportunities, and retirement. Staff are entitled to request to work beyond their normal retirement date and this request will be considered. Retirement Guidelines which outline the process to be followed are available from the Human Resources department.

8.3 **Sexual Orientation**

8.3.1 The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 outlaws discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment. Sexual orientation is defined as an orientation to the same sex, the opposite sex, or the same and opposite sex. The Equality Act 2006 widened the scope of the Regulations to cover the provision of goods, facilities, services and education. The law also covers discrimination against someone because of a perception about their sexual orientation, even if that perception is not correct. The Civil Partnership Act 2004 gave same-sex couples the same rights as married heterosexual couples.

8.3.2 Legislation recognises both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. A person who is a civil partner in a registered civil partnership of a same-sex couple should not be treated less favourably than a

married person in similar circumstances. If a civil partner is treated less favourably, they may be able to bring a claim for sexual orientation discrimination under the Sexual Orientation Regulations or a claim for sex discrimination.

8.3.3 The Regulations outlaw direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of sexual orientation. It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass someone after the working relationship has ended. The definitions of discrimination includes discriminating against someone because of their perceived sexual orientation (even if this turns out not to be the case) or because he/she is friendly with others of particular sexual orientations.

8.4 Religion or Belief

8.4.1 The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 outlaw discrimination on the grounds of a person's religion or belief in employment. Religion or belief is defined as being "any religion, religious belief, or philosophical belief". In general, three criteria are used to determine a religion:

- a belief in a supreme being
- worship of that supreme being; and
- a group or following of people who observe the beliefs, values, customs and traditions as set down by that supreme being.

8.4.2 Philosophical beliefs are less well defined in the Regulations.

8.4.3 Political beliefs are explicitly excluded in the legislation. The Equality Act 2006 similarly extended the scope of these Regulations to cover the provision of goods, facilities, services and education.

8.4.4 The legislation covers discrimination on the grounds of perceived as well as actual religion or belief and the religion or belief of someone with whom the person associates.

8.4.5 The Regulations outlaw direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of religion or belief. It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass someone after the working relationship has ended. The definitions of discrimination includes discriminating against someone because of their perceived religion or belief (even if this turns out not to be the case) or because he/she is friendly with others of particular religions or beliefs.

8.5 Planning for the Single Equality Act

8.5.1 Equalities legislation has developed over more than 40 years, and the law is set out in many different places, including Acts of Parliament, regulations and orders. The government has acknowledged that everyone who needs to

understand discrimination law would benefit from a Single Equality Act, which simplifies the law as far as this can be done.

- 8.5.2 In October 2007, the government brought together a number of equality commissions (Disability Rights Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality) into a single commission, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).
- 8.5.3 In addition, it has begun planning for a Single Equality Act which will bring together equality strands in one harmonised, modernised and simplified piece of legislation. It proposes to “replace the race, disability and gender equality duties with a single duty on public authorities to promote race, disability and gender equality”¹ and also to consider “whether a single public sector equality duty should be extended to cover age, sexual orientation, and/or religion or belief”.¹

9. Developing strong leadership and corporate culture to promote equality and diversity across the Council.

- 9.1 We believe that clear lines of corporate accountability and leadership are essential to ensure equality and diversity is embedded into all structures and functions of Rochford District Council. Tackling inequality, delivering services that meet the needs of all our service users and members of the public and developing and maintaining an inclusive and diverse workforce are key drivers for the Council.
- 9.2 The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for Equality and Diversity within the Council. The Head of Community Services is the strategic lead for Equality & Diversity and the chair of the Council’s Corporate Equality & Diversity Group. The Equality and Diversity Group will formulate policy and report progress on this Scheme and associated Action Plan to the Senior Management Team.
- 9.3 Line managers, supervisors and Heads of Service are responsible for monitoring that their staff are complying with the Scheme, for carrying out actions arising from the associated Action Plan and for promoting equality and diversity.
- 9.4 Our Equality and Diversity learning events will play a key role in raising awareness and understanding of our equality and diversity agenda. The learning events will focus awareness raising, understanding how equalities is linked to job roles and responsibilities and will shape our equalities agenda for future challenges.

¹ Discrimination Law Review A Framework for Fairness: Proposals for a Single Equality Bill for Great Britain A consultation paper June 2007, page 82

9.5 Council's Organisational Structure - See Appendix B.

10. How we will conduct Diversity Impact Screening and Assessments (DIAs)

- 10.1 The Council is committed to carrying out a systematic review of all its existing and proposed policies and procedures, services and functions to determine whether there are any equality implications.
- 10.2 The Council has developed a robust Diversity Impact Assessment framework which will consider the equality impact of each current and proposed service, policy, procedure or function and changes in service in terms of race, religion and belief, disability, gender, sexual orientation and age.
- 10.3 Under the Race Relations Act 2000, the Single Equality Act 2006 and the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 we are required to adopt a proactive approach to mainstreaming equality into all services, functions, policies and practices. This involves conducting diversity screenings and impact assessments of our services, functions, policies and practices.
- 10.4 We recognise that conducting inclusive diversity impact assessments is a 'specific duty' under the legislation in relation to gender, race and disability and is designed to ensure that 'due regard' is given to equality in relation to the services that we provide and deliver and the manner in which we recruit, train and develop our employees.
- 10.5 The purpose of an diversity impact assessment is to ensure that our services, functions, policies and practices do not directly, indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally discriminate against our users or employees. Where any adverse impact is found we must develop objectives that tackle the impact through the development and implementation of service-based equality action plans.
- 10.6 We will develop an inclusive diversity impact assessment toolkit that will tackle all possible forms of discrimination and will aim to:
 - Screen our services, functions, policies and practices into priority themes according to 'relevance' and 'likely adverse impact'
 - Identify any adverse impact in the way we deliver our services, functions, policies and practices to BME groups, people with disabilities, people of different religions/faiths, ages, genders, or sexualities, indeed, all vulnerable groups.
 - Consult with our service users, members of the public and our employees
 - Publish the results of our equality impact assessments through publication of our service-based equality action plans

- Implement, monitor and review our action plans with the aim of mainstreaming equality and diversity themes across the Council
- 10.7 The Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) Framework consist of 4 stages, in line with current and forthcoming legal obligations. These will include:-
- Stage 1 – Diversity Screening (Relevance & Adverse Impact)***
- Stage 2 – Scoping***
- Stage 3 – Identifying the Adverse Impact.***
- Stage 4 – Action Planning***
- 10.8 The assessment processes will take into consideration factors such as demographic data and other statistics, including census findings; available research findings; comparisons between similar policies in our own or other Councils; survey data; ethnic monitoring data; one-off data-gathering exercises; However, where there is a big gap in the type and quality of diversity data in respect of both service users and staff, initially, the Council will improve the quality of data before it launches full scale DIA.
- 10.9 If DIAs demonstrate that a current policy, service or function results in a greater adverse impact, or if opportunities arise which would allow a greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, the Council will ensure that the policy, service or function is revised.
- 10.10 All completed Diversity Impact Assessments and associated action plans will be consulted with internal and external stakeholders prior to implementation. All identified equality objectives will also be linked into our Single Equality Scheme on an annual basis.

11. Consulting our Stakeholders

- 11.1 To ensure that all diverse groups are treated fairly we have taken a more inclusive approach to the development of our Single Equality Scheme. To ensure all groups can be consulted, we have involved diverse groups in the development of our Single Equality Scheme.
- 11.2 Rochford District Council recognises that the statutory requirement to consult all service users/residents plays a pivotal role in the development and implementation of our Single Equality Scheme. In order for it to be fully effective, we believe the involvement process should be:
- **Influential** – People outside the organisation should be able to see how the involvement has affected the Council's plans
 - **Transparent** – To maintain the ongoing commitment to consult with service users / residents and employees
 - **Accessible** – To make it possible for a wide range of people to participate fairly and equitably.

- **Proportionate** – The approach taken should be commensurate with the size of the public authority
- **Focused** – The process should be clear about what resources are available and where the Council has the scope to make changes.

11.3 The Single Equality Commission Codes of Practice advises that BME groups, men, women and people with disabilities should be involved in all key aspects of the development, implementation and review of the Single Equality Scheme. We will also go further and state that people of all faiths, sexualities and ages also need to be consulted on our Single Equality Scheme. To do this, we need to:

- Identify barriers faced by people regardless of their ethnicity, gender, disability, faith, sexuality or age.
- Set priorities for action plans
- Continually review and monitor our Single Equality Scheme.

12. Our Arrangements for Monitoring Policies for Adverse Impact

12.1 With respect to the Council's own policies, services and functions, the diversity impact assessment work will identify appropriate mechanisms for monitoring adverse impact.

12.2 Specifically, the human resources information system will enable the Council to meet more easily the ethnic monitoring requirements of the specific employment duty.

12.3 The Council will report on achievement against the specific employment duty to record employee ethnicity.

12.4 Through the work to develop and improve its single equality scheme, diversity impact assessments are being improved, including the ability to monitor policies for adverse impact.

12.5 As part of the performance management arrangements, the Equality and Diversity Group are responsible for overseeing monitoring reports.

12.6 The Equality & Diversity Group will ensure that the Council:-

- screens policies, functions and services,
- collates and analyses the information received from monitoring,
- uses relevant census data, labour force statistics and surveys to establish baseline data,
- records any adverse impact identified, either directly, indirectly or differently between diverse groups,
- looks at what actions need to be taken and include them in our Single Equality Scheme, according to priority and relevance,

- publishes our results from the monitoring undertaken, and where necessary, recommend changes and updates to policies services and functions to meet the identified needs.

13. Our Arrangements for Publishing the Results of Monitoring Reports

13.1 The Council will publish on its website:

- Our Single Equality Scheme
- A summary of the results of diversity impact assessments and consultations through action plans
- A summary of the results of monitoring

13.2 Our Annual Report will publish:

- Employee statistics for each year
- Progress against our Single Equality Scheme 2009 - 2012.

13.3 The Action Plan attached to our Single Equality Scheme contains a commitment to review progress on an annual basis, and results will be published through the equality scheme page of the website and reports and updates to the Equality and Diversity Group

14. Our Arrangements for Access to Information and Services

14.1 The Council has worked to improve access to the Council and to information about its services and functions.

Translation of information

14.2 As set out in our Access to Services Strategy, the Council currently uses a range of techniques to assist with front line access to services for all. Key tools used by the Council include:

- Browsealoud – enabling website content to be read out.
- Large text – available on the website.
- Interpreting and translation – offering a range of language supports for those who need them.
- Hearing Loops – at both its main customer service sites.
- Minicom text phone service.

14.3 The Council has developed a flowchart to assist staff in offering interpreting services (which includes assistance for sight and hearing impaired customers) to ensure that staff across the whole organisation are able to support those for whom English is a second language.

14.4 We will also consider requests for publications and other materials to be transcribed into Braille, large print or audio-cassette formats.

Availability of information

14.5 Information on the services provided by the Council and its functions is available through:

- Letter
- E-mail
- Fax
- Telephone
- The Council's website
- Leaflets
- Published documents

15. Our Arrangements for Training on our Equality duties.

15.1 As part of the Council's approach, training in equality and diversity is mandatory for all staff members and will include our legal duties outlined in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Equality Act 2006 and Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

15.2 The Human Resources department provides on-going training for staff on:

- Customer Care & Diversity for all new staff
- Managing Diversity for all managers, supervisors and line managers
- Diversity Impact Assessment Training

15.3 Training is provided by both internal and external providers. We have engaged specialist consultants to provide on-going equality and diversity training, and training in screening and DIA processes. Training on the general and specific duties is provided by internal specialists and e-learning.

16. Developing and Maintaining a Diverse and Inclusive Workforce

16.1 The Council is committed to ensuring equal access for all to opportunities for employment, learning and development and promotion, with the aim of developing a diverse and inclusive workforce which respects, values and reflects the wider community it serves.

16.2 We strive to achieve equality of opportunity in employment by making sure all employees involved in recruitment are aware that:

- No internal or external job applicant should receive less favourable treatment than another on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexuality.
- They must not impose any conditions or requirements which unfairly affects applicants from one group more than those from other groups.
- Any qualifications or conditions or requirements applied to a job must be relevant and justifiable in the terms of the job to be undertaken,

including where necessary Genuine Occupational Qualifications (GOQs).

- They must assess each individual on their capability to do any given task. This also means recognising the need for reasonable adjustments for disabled people to carry out the duties of the post.
- Any employee who has not received recruitment and selection training will not be permitted to be involved in any recruitment and selection process, except where they are assisting another member of staff who has been trained. .

16.3 The Council has robust policies including equal opportunities, dealing with harassment and bullying at work, staff code of conduct, grievance and discipline and operates a zero tolerance policy to discrimination. However, we believe these policies should be reviewed periodically to ensure we continue to strive for a workforce and service which respects, values and responds to the diverse needs of all our stakeholders, internally and externally. All policies are equality checked and impact assessments are undertaken as necessary in accordance with our Single Equality Scheme.

16.4 The specific employment duties require the Council to:

- Monitor the number of staff in post – The Council monitors diversity through our equal opportunities monitoring forms for recruitment campaigns, using reference to the racial groups to which they belong using the 2001 census categories. The Council produces regular management information which tracks the ethnic makeup of our workforce.
- Monitor applicants for employment – We will monitor success rates in regards to ethnicity, gender and disability. We advertise our job vacancies in a variety of media and promote ourselves as an equal opportunity employer. Our job descriptions and person specifications are carefully worded to avoid disadvantage and to open employment opportunities to all applicants who meet the essential criteria for a job.
- Monitor applicants for training and development. We provide a range of development opportunities, including workshops run in partnership with other Essex authorities. We also provide equality and diversity courses for all existing and new staff members, which include our obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, Equality Act 2006 and Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005. We will monitor the diversity of staff members who have applied and received development.

- Monitor staff who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of the Council's performance assessment procedures.
 - Monitor staff who are subject to the Council's disciplinary procedure.
 - Monitor staff who use the grievance procedure – The Council monitors all forms of grievance in regards to race. We will identify any possible adverse impact and use this information to change employment policies and practices.
 - Monitor staff who cease employment – The Council conducts an analysis of data collected at exit interviews which also informs our actions relating to best management practice and the removal of barriers.
 - Publish the results – We will publish our employment data and results of diversity impact assessments on our website.
- 16.5 Publishing the results of this monitoring annually is an intrinsic part of the specific requirement. The Council will ensure any information published does not identify individuals so as to comply with all legislative requirements, in particular the Data Protection Act.
- 16.6 The Council recognises the need to ensure that our employment policies and practices do not directly, indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally discriminate against any potential or actual employees irrespective of gender, race, disability, age, religion/belief or sexual orientation.
- 16.7 The Council is required to gather information on the impact of policies and practices on the recruitment, development and retention of its employees. This aspect has been identified within the Action Plan in relation to gender, race, disability and age. This includes:
- Number of employees in full and part-time work
 - Number of applicants and short-listed and appointed candidates
 - Training courses attended
 - Career progression, promotion and acting up
 - Appraisals
 - Disciplinary Action
 - Turnover rates and leavers
 - Incidents of harassment and bullying.

16.8 This information will be used to conduct diversity assessments of our employment strategies, policies and procedures with the aim of rectifying any identified problem areas.

17. Review and Monitoring of our Single Equality Scheme

- 17.1 Our Single Equality Scheme will be monitored by the Council's Equality & Diversity Group and annual reports will be made to the Council's Senior Management Team.
- 17.2 The equality objectives arising from our Diversity Impact Assessments will be linked to our Single Equality Scheme and our service planning mechanisms.
- 17.3 We will publish our annual Equalities Report on the Council's website which will be consulted with our internal and external stakeholders.
- 17.4 The progress of our Single Equality Scheme will be reviewed with our external stakeholders every three years.

18. Further Information

If you would like any further information regarding our Single Equality Scheme please contact:

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19. Single Equality Scheme Action Plan 2009 - 2012

- See Appendix A

