



Medway Council

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy outlines the commitment to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in all aspects of work across the council.
- 1.2 The aim is for Medway to be a fair and inclusive place where everyone, employees, and community, have equal access to opportunities and services, and are included and represented in decisions that affect them.
- 1.3 This means working to ensure that Medway is free from discrimination and positively promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion across the delivery of council services and within our workforce.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees of the council, elected officials, contractors, service users, and anyone engaged with Medway Council. However, this is not applicable to school-based staff.

3.0 Equality Statement

- 3.1 The council is committed to ensuring that no service user, employee, job applicant, those with care experience, partner, contractor, supplier or member of the public will be unlawfully discriminated, harassed or victimised on the grounds of race; ethnicity; nationality; ethnic or national origin; colour; disability; gender identity or presentation; marital or civil partnership status; maternity or pregnancy; family and caring responsibilities; sex; sexual orientation; age; HIV status; religion or belief; political beliefs; social class; trades union activity; or irrelevant spent convictions.

4.0 Core Values and Council Objectives

- 4.1 This policy supports the core values of the council. A strongly held belief is that a consistent approach to employee management and wellbeing is fundamental to the delivery of quality services, one of the aims of the policy is to support this belief.

5.0 Policy Statement

- 5.1 Medway Council is committed to promoting equality, eliminating discrimination, and fostering an inclusive culture that respects and values diversity.
- 5.2 Through this policy and our EDI Strategy we are aiming:
 - for employees of Medway Council, at all levels, to reflect the rich diversity and talent of the whole population of Medway.
 - for Medway to be a place where every individual, no matter what their background, level or vocation can thrive and feel able to be fully themselves.

6.0 The Councils Commitments

- 6.1 The council commits to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace as this is good practice and the right thing to do, the council has a duty both ethically as an employer, and as part of legislation, to ensure that EDI is considered across all areas of the council.
- 6.2 The outline of the Councils Commitments to EDI are listed below.
- 6.3 To create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued.
- This commitment includes training managers and all other employees about their rights and responsibilities under the EDI policy. Responsibilities include staff conducting themselves to help the council provide equal opportunities in employment, and prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination.
 - All staff should understand they, as well as their employer, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, in the course of their employment, against fellow employees, customers, suppliers and the public.
- 6.4 Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination by fellow employees, customers, suppliers, visitors, the public and any others during council work activities.
- 6.5 Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.
- 6.6 Further, sexual harassment may amount to both an employment rights matter and a criminal matter, such as in sexual assault allegations. In addition, harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 – which is not limited to circumstances where harassment relates to a protected characteristic – is a criminal offence.
- 6.7 Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.
- 6.8 Make decisions concerning staff being based on merit (apart from in any necessary and limited exemptions and exceptions allowed under the Equality Act 2010).
- 6.9 Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and update those procedures, the EDI policy and EDI strategy to take account of changes in legislation.

- 6.10 Monitor the make-up of the workforce regarding information such as age, sex, ethnic background, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and disability to help encourage EDI, and meet the aims and commitments set out in this policy.
- 6.11 Monitoring will also include assessing how the EDI Policy, and any supporting action plan and/or strategy are working in practice, reviewing them regularly, and considering taking action to address any issues.

7.0 Legal Framework

- 7.1 The council will comply with all relevant equality and anti-discrimination legislation, including but not limited to:
- Equality Act 2010 (incorporating the Public Sector Equality Duty)
 - Gender Pay Gap
 - Modern Day Slavery Act 2015
 - Protection from Harassment Act 1997
 - Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act
- 7.2 The Equality and Inclusion Strategy sets out how we will fulfil these obligations which apply to all the functions of the council. Both this EDI policy and the accompanying strategy apply to the role of the council as a service provider, employer, and as a leading organisation in the area.

8.0 Responsibilities

- 8.1 All staff, Elected Members, and contractors have responsibilities to ensure that this policy is implemented effectively across all activities which are working towards achieving the aims of the council.
- 8.2 Everyone has, in their council duties, a responsibility for challenging unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, stereotyping and misinformation; promoting equality; fostering good relations between different sections of the community and colleagues; and ensuring that people are treated with respect and dignity.

9.0 Equality Objectives

- 9.1 Equality objectives will be set by the Equality Board to address identified areas for improvement and ensure continuous progress. These will be found in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy's action plan.
- 9.2 Progress towards equality objectives will be monitored with reports being submitted to the Employment Matters Committee on a regular basis to update progress and highlight any issues. Adjustments to the objectives and timelines will be made as necessary.

10.0 Eliminating Discrimination

- 10.1 Recruitment processes will be fair, transparent, and free from discrimination. Steps will be taken to encourage diversity in the workforce, such as the promotion of flexible and hybrid working alongside the availability of accommodations and reasonable adjustments available.
- 10.2 Each year the council publishes a Gender Pay Gap Report. A gender pay gap is the difference between the average earnings of men and women, expressed relative to men's earnings. The current and previous years Gender Pay Gap report for this, and previous years, is available via Medway.gov.uk
- 10.3 In addition to the Gender Pay Gap Report, the council commits to include Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gaps in annual pay reports in the future.
- 10.4 The council will continue to work towards reducing inequality, not only in terms of gender pay, but ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability too.

11.0 Positive Action

- 11.1 Positive action is the deliberate introduction of measures to remove or reduce the effect of discrimination in the employment market. It is a way of encouraging and increasing job applications from people who are members of under-represented groups and is lawful under the Equality Act 2010.
- 11.2 This means that if there is an imbalance in the workforce, with certain groups under-represented, the Equality Act permits the council to attempt to remedy this.
- 11.3 Positive action measures bring benefits to the council because it:
- widens the pool of talented, skilled and experienced people from which to recruit,
 - helps to create a dynamic workforce able to respond to changes, and
 - gives the council a better understanding of the needs of a more diverse range of customers.
- 11.4 As an Equal Opportunities employer, the council strives to ensure the workforce represents the community of Medway, positive action enables the council to do this.
- 11.5 The council are committed to equality, including making sure our recruitment, selection and promotion process encourages applications from a wide range of people, reflecting the differences in the community.
- 11.6 The Equality Act does not limit the action the council can take, as long as it is a balanced means of achieving, enabling, or encouraging participation. It could include:
- the provision of bursaries to obtain qualifications
 - outreach work within the community to raise awareness of job availability
 - reserving a percentage of places on training courses
 - targeted networking opportunities, and
 - mentoring.

- 11.7 The council is committed to attracting the best candidates from all backgrounds to ensure our workforce represents the communities we serve.
- 11.8 Positive action should not be confused with positive discrimination. Positive discrimination is the act of favouring someone based on a 'protected characteristic' and is unlawful.
- 11.9 Setting quotas or benchmarks in the recruitment process to take on a proportion of people from a protected characteristic group or promoting a specific number of people within a minority group would be positive discrimination. This type of initiative is not one the council would adopt as the best candidates are selected based on their performance, skills and merit.

12.0 Inclusive Practices

- 12.1 The council can work towards becoming an inclusive and accessible workplace by ensuring that the council:
- communicates appropriately and in accordance with recognised disability etiquette guidelines, and
 - explores what reasonable adjustments might be required by colleagues to enable and support them in the workplace.

13.0 Reasonable Adjustments

- 13.1 Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of individuals with disabilities.
- 13.2 Under the Equality Act 2010, disabled employees are protected against discriminatory treatment that occurs for a reason related to their disability. One of the key duties under the Act is for employers to make reasonable adjustments to working arrangements, working practices and premises.
- 13.3 Should an existing employee become disabled an employer can help practically by considering what reasonable adjustments could be made to accommodate the employee's needs and ensure they are successfully retained in employment. The employee may have suggestions, which employers should of course consider, but it remains the employer's responsibility to identify and implement any adjustments.

14.0 Declarations

- 14.1 The council encourages employees and those applying for roles to declare if they feel they need additional support.
- 14.2 The council operates an open approach to reasonable adjustments for those living with a disability. It is recognised that what may support one person may not be suitable for another, even if they have the same or similar conditions.

- 14.3 Employees sharing their needs helps to ensure they are not disadvantaged. It also enables them to perform to the best of their ability.
- 14.4 The best way to for an employee or applicant to declare their disability is to do so when asked for equality data. If this is during the recruitment process a recruitment officer will contact the individual to understand what support may be required.
- 14.5 It is always helpful to share any adjustments that have previously been received and/or for to think about what type of support might be required. There are various adjustments available, and the solution may consist of more than one. A reasonable adjustment could involve making changes to:
- the workplace;
 - equipment or services provided (both current or new services), for example an appropriate keyboard for someone with arthritis;
 - the ways things are done, or
 - making sure information is provided in an accessible format.
- 14.6 Examples of reasonable adjustments can include:
- providing the right type of phone for those using a hearing aid
 - arranging for an interview to be held on the ground floor for a user of a wheelchair
 - providing desks or chairs for those with disability affecting their backs
 - giving more one-to-one support to help prioritise the work for someone suffering from anxiety
 - a phased return to work for those on long-term sick leave because of a disability
 - allowing more frequent breaks for someone with diabetes to get the right amount of food or drink throughout the day
 - giving more time, rest breaks, use of a laptop, provision of a scribe/reader and/or software packages to support those with neurodiversity as part of the interview process and as part of their day-to-day requirements if successful
- 14.7 The council recognises that some people may be unsure if they meet the criteria for reasonable adjustments or feel uncomfortable declaring a disability. HR officers are here to help, so if this is the case please contact the HR team via [Request HR Advice](#) on Service Desk or by calling the HR advice line extension: 334499 Monday – Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm.
- 14.8 Further guidance can also be found via [Medspace](#).

15.0 Reporting and Monitoring

- 15.1 This policy will be reviewed to ensure its effectiveness and relevance as per the review schedule or in light of any internal or external policy, legislative and best practice changes.

16.0 Communication and Training

- 16.1 This policy will be communicated to all employees and stakeholders, emphasising its importance and their role in its implementation.
- 16.2 Training on equalities principles will be provided to all employees, with regular updates to ensure awareness and understanding.
- 16.3 Alongside delivering mandatory training, regular offers of training to refresh and enhance the knowledge of officers within the council will be made as training sessions become available.

17.0 Data Protection

- 17.1 Medway Council will manage records efficiently and systematically, consistent with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA18) and the Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on Records Management, supporting the business objectives of the council and meeting legislative, regulatory, funding and ethical requirements.

18.0 Version history

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