



Equality and Diversity Policy No Matter Who

Equality and Diversity Policy – No
Matter Who





Document Control

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Summary

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Review of Policy

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Review undertaken by	Sajjad Miah Principal Community Cohesion and Equality Officer Sarah Cross Project Manager Rochdale & District Disability Action Group (RADDAG)
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Document Approvals

This document requires the following approvals.

Name	Title	Date of Issue	Version Number



Equality and Diversity Policy - No Matter Who

1. Introduction

Our Equality and Diversity Policy- No Matter Who sets out our organisation's commitment to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Our public statements, services and employment practices will reflect this commitment. We will promote this policy and expect respect for it from citizens, users of council services, partner agencies, Elected Members, council employees and our contractors.

2. Policy

Our Vision

Our vision for equality and diversity is:

- Representing, serving and employing people as equals.
- Valuing the diversity of their contributions and aspirations.
- No matter who they are or what their circumstances.

We believe that tackling inequalities provides a strong foundation for cohesive and confident communities. We believe that all citizens have a right to equal access to life opportunities, including representation, services and employment by the council. To achieve this we are working towards removing barriers to opportunities and to narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged and others.

We understand that people may suffer from inequality due to discrimination because of their age, health, race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexuality or because they have a disability, they are pregnant or on maternity leave, they have undertaken gender reassignment, they are married or they are in civil partnerships. We also recognise that some people may experience more than one type of inequality at the same time due to a combination of more than one relevant protected characteristic.

Legislative Context

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 replaced and consolidated existing equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, The Equal Pay Act 1970 and The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The Act sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone.



The Equality Act 2010 covers 9 protected characteristics, making it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of:

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

In addition to the 9 protected characteristics which are specified under the Equality Act 2010, we also recognise that those who have caring responsibilities and Armed Forces and Ex -Armed Forces personnel may face discrimination, and have made a commitment to protect them from discrimination.

A key measure of the Equality Act is the Public Sector Equality Duty which replaced the existing race, disability and gender equality duties and ensures that we, as a public body, play our part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.

Public Sector Equality Duty

On 5 April 2011, the Public Sector Equality Duty (the equality duty) came into force in England, Scotland and Wales. As a public body we must 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.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The general Equality Duty covers the following protected characteristics: age (including children and young people), disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect of the requirements to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

Under the specific duties, we, as a public authority are required to:

1. Initially publish information to demonstrate compliance with the general equality duty by 31 January 2012 and at least annually thereafter. This must include information relating to people who share a protected characteristic who are:
 - our employees, and
 - people affected by our policies and practices.



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2. Prepare and publish one or more objectives that we think we need to achieve to further any of the aims of the general equality duty. This was to be completed for the first time in April 2012 and at least every four years thereafter. The objectives must be specific and measurable.

We must publish both the equality information and the equality objectives in a manner that is accessible to the public.

The role of the council in increasing equality and diversity

Our many functions fit into 3 main roles of representing, serving and employing people.

Representing people

In representing local people's interests, we will seek to promote equality and diversity.
We will:

- Equip Elected Members with the skills and support to engage in and represent the different sections of the community.
- Use our influence in partnerships and with partner agencies.
- Continue to improve our approach to community consultation and engagement so that we achieve results that reflect local people's priorities.

Serving people

We are committed to providing high quality services through understanding and meeting customer needs and aspirations. We know that these differ from customer to customer, so we will plan our services accordingly to ensure that everyone has an equitable chance to use and benefit from our services.

Our commitment means understanding and meeting the needs of customers regardless of age, disability, domestic circumstances, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation, caring responsibility or armed forces background.

Employing people

We want the composition of our workforce to reflect that of the local population, so that we represent and serve the population better. We recognise that some people with protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act face particular disadvantages in employment.

We are one of the largest employers in the borough. Our staff are our largest resource in improving equality and diversity so we want to ensure that they understand its importance and have the confidence and capacity to do so. This includes:

- Developing a workforce that reflects our community profile.
- Giving staff the knowledge and confidence to tackle equality and diversity issues.

Trade union activities

The Council is committed to ensuring that employees are not disadvantaged or discriminated against by virtue of their trade union membership or role as a trade union representative.



Tackling discrimination

It is our policy not to discriminate unlawfully or unfairly against anybody, however sometimes we have to differentiate between people, for instance in selecting candidates for jobs or deciding on people's eligibility for services. In these cases it is our policy to act lawfully and fairly, only taking into account relevant factors, and explaining our decisions on that basis.

We do know, however, that unlawful and unfair discrimination is common in society. It's based on stereotypes and false assumptions, and the belief that some groups of people have more or fewer rights than others. We oppose unfair discrimination as an abuse of advantage and power.

We also know that institutions as well as individuals can unlawfully and unfairly discriminate. We define institutional discrimination as:

- The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of who they are.
- Processes, attitudes and behaviour, which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping.
- Not just actions taken by a person or organisation, but also actions not taken, neglect, or services provided which do not meet the needs of members of different social groups.

Institutional discrimination can be unwitting, and it can exist no matter how good the intentions of the individual or the organisation. This is a challenge that all organisations, including ourselves, need to face honestly and openly. We'll examine our policies and practices and their outcomes to guard against disadvantaging any section of our local communities.

Local Context

Rochdale Borough Council is 1 of 10 metropolitan districts in Greater Manchester. 214,200 people live in the borough. *Source: ONS Mid-Year Estimates (MYE) 2015*

The need and aspirations of people in the borough set the context for this policy. But the Government and other organisations also influence our pursuit of objectives and our choice of solutions.

What we will do

Age

The age structure of a population is important for planning and shaping services to meet the needs of the community. According to the ONS Mid-Year Estimates 2015 Rochdale borough's population is younger than that of other Greater Manchester areas, 42,634 children who are aged 0-15 years live within the Borough, and this comprises 19.9% of the total population.

However the population of the UK and the borough is getting older, and will become more so in years to come. According on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), by 2025, nearly 1 in 5 people in Rochdale Borough will be aged 65 or over. That's an increase of 19% between 2015 and 2025. The population aged 85 and over is expected to increase by 28%.

We recognise that people may face discrimination because of their age and so we will:-



- Ensure that we do not discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone due to their age - unless it can be objectively justified.
- Not compulsorily retire an employee unless it can be objectively justified.
- Carry out our duties under the law to stop harassment or victimisation related to age and provide equality of opportunity.

Disability

The number of Rochdale Borough residents reporting a long-term health condition or disability is 44,359 (21%). *Source: 2011 Census*

Our actions will be based on the Social Model of Disability; which states that disability is caused by the way society is organised, rather than by a person's impairment.

We recognise that people may face discrimination because of their disability and so we will:

- Ensure that our communication is accessible and usable by everyone and meet the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard.
- Involve disabled people in the identification of priorities and the development and review of actions.
- Gather information about our services, policies and strategies and assess their impact on disabled people.
- Promote equality of opportunity and reduce discrimination for disabled people in line with our specific and general duties under the Equality Act 2010. This includes elimination of harassment, promotion of equal opportunities, promoting positive attitudes and encouraging the participation of disabled people in public life.

Gender Reassignment

Gender reassignment is the process of transitioning from one gender to another. The census does not measure how many residents within the borough identify as transgender, however, the Gender Identity Research and Education Society estimates that 1 in 4,000 of the UK population seeks support to change their gender. If we use this estimation for the borough's population the number equates to an estimated 54 people who might identify themselves as transgender. People who identify as Transgender have reported that they consider themselves to be amongst the most marginalised and discriminated against groups in society. *Source: ONS Mid-Year Estimates (MYE) 2015 and Gender Identity Research and Education Society*

We recognise that the trans community may experience discrimination and harassment. To address this we will:

- Ensure that our services do not discriminate against staff or people who come into contact with the council because their gender identity differs from the gender assigned to them at birth.
- Provide appropriate support to our staff who are undertaking gender reassignment.
- Build positive attitudes towards our workforce and community who identify as transgender.
- Offer equal access for everyone to representation, services and employment and encourage partner organisations and contractors to do the same.



Marriage and Civil Partnership

The 2011 census showed almost 73,323, (44.2%) of residents as being married and 293 (0.2%) in civil partnerships in Rochdale borough.

We will ensure that service conditions of employees offer the same benefits to same sex relationships as heterosexual relationships, including pensions and parenting leave.

Pregnancy and Maternity

In 2015 2,911 babies were born to local residents (from 2844 the previous year). Birth rates are higher among our local ethnic minority groups and in areas of deprivation. *Source Rochdale Borough Locality Plan EIA + 2015 MYE (Components of population change)*

The Equality Act prohibits discrimination because of pregnancy and maternity including treating a woman less favourably because she is breastfeeding within 26 weeks of giving birth, if a woman is treated less favourably because she is breastfeeding her baby who is over 26 weeks after giving birth, this may be covered under sex (gender) discrimination.

We recognise that women may be discriminated against because they are or have been pregnant, to address this we will:-

- Ensure that our employment practices do not discriminate on the grounds of pregnancy or in relation to maternity leave or returning to work.
- Respect the statutory right of women to breastfeed their children in public areas of our buildings and recognise that some women who make the choice to breastfeed may require access to privacy; we will work to create a supportive environment, which is safe and comfortable for all breastfeeding mothers and their children.

Race

Race can relate to a person's colour, nationality, ethnicity or national origins, it also includes ethnic or racial groups. A person's race can be made up of two or more distinct racial groups.

The 2011 Census revealed that in Rochdale Borough 166,481 people identify as White British which makes up 78.6% of the local population. The largest ethnic minority group is Pakistani which makes up 10.5% of the local population (22,265), and the second largest is Bangladeshi with 2.1% of the population (4,342). *Source: 2011 Census*

We recognise racism as any unfair discrimination on the grounds of people's skin colour, accent, religious beliefs, dress, culture or ethnic origin. We are determined to challenge racism and to create an environment that is free from discrimination. Racist assumptions create the barriers which can hinder appropriate democratic representation, services and employment opportunities.

We have adopted the Lawrence Inquiry definition that:

"A racist incident is any incident perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person."

We recognise that the seriousness and effects of racist incidents demand swift but sensitive responses and so we will:

- Work towards eliminating discrimination based on the grounds of a person's race.



- Ensure equality of opportunity for all employees and members of our communities regardless of their race.
- Identify, challenge and act on racist attitudes, remarks and behaviour.
- Ensure that information is accessible to everyone and available in community languages where possible.

Religion and belief

Christians form the main religious group in the Rochdale Borough with 128,186 (60.6% of the total population) people. The next largest religious group is Muslim with 29,426 (13.9%) people in the Borough. The number of residents which stated that they had no religion is 40,014 which is 18.9% of residents in the Borough. *Source: 2011 Census*

We recognise that a workforce with diverse beliefs will have a greater understanding of the needs of the local population which we serve, we will respect the right of every customer and staff member to hold or to not have a religion or belief.

We'll respect and accommodate people's religious observances in serving, employing and representing them, and we will expect others to do the same.

We realise that at times some people's beliefs may conflict with other aspects of this policy. We'll try to resolve any such conflicts, but we will treat the aims of this policy as overriding and expect others to comply with it.

We will work to meet the specific needs of those who hold a religion or believe and those who do not by:-

- Offering flexible working for religious holidays and time off to observe festivals and ceremonies.
- Providing Multi-faith and quiet spaces, with appropriate hygiene facilities, for our staff.
- Ensuring that we meet the dietary requirements of staff in our canteens and restaurants.
- Respecting different forms of dress in the workplace, according to cultural and religious backgrounds.
- Creating a climate of respect for people who have a religion or belief and those who do not.

Sex (Gender)

According to the 2015 Mid-Year Estimates there are slightly more women than men in the Rochdale borough; with approximately 108,841 people identifying as female compared with 105,354 of the local population identifying as male.

Our aim is to promote equality of opportunity between men and women and eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment. We acknowledge that women are more likely to experience discrimination on the basis of their gender, however we recognise that both men and women can experience disadvantage and discrimination and so we will:-

- Tackle issues relating to imbalances in employment in services around non-traditional roles for men and women.
- Ensure involvement of our staff and communities in the council's decision-making systems and procedures regardless of their gender.
- Challenge discriminatory assumptions about gender roles.
- Ensure fair development opportunities for all our staff regardless of gender.



- Support the fact that both women and men may need to work flexibly or part time to meet their caring and domestic responsibilities.

We'll ensure that we have policies in place which are designed to prevent discrimination in:

- Recruitment and selection
- Determining pay
- Training and development
- Discipline and grievances
- Countering bullying and harassment

Sexual Orientation

There are no accurate statistics available regarding the profile of the lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) population either in the Rochdale borough or the UK as a whole. Sexuality is not incorporated into the census or other official statistics. It's acknowledged that approximately 6-10% of any given population will be LGB. In Rochdale borough this would be between 12,852 and 21,420. *Source: MYE 2015 and Stonewall*

We recognise that our LGB community may face discrimination and hostility through intolerance and ignorance. As a result, they may experience harassment, and some live in fear of being "outed".

Action will be taken to prevent discrimination or harassment on the grounds of a person's sexual orientation, including those who identify as heterosexual and so we will:

- Ensure that our services take account of individual needs.
- Create a climate of respect in the workplace where all people feel safe to be open about who they are.
- Challenge stereotypes of Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals that can contribute to limited choices and opportunities

Armed Forces and Ex-Armed Forces Personnel

There are around 14,623 armed forces veterans in Rochdale representing approximately 8.7% of the over 16 population. This is around the Greater Manchester average. *Source: NHS Wirral, 2012 estimates*

We recognise that armed forces and ex armed forces personnel can experience discrimination and so we will make every effort to prevent discrimination or other unfair treatment against them and their families. We are committed to working with, and supporting, our Armed and Ex armed Forces personnel and so we will:-

- Proactively look at ways to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant.
- Work with partner organisations to ensure no member of the Armed Forces family is disadvantaged as a result of service
- Continue our corporate commitment to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant
- Encourage local organisations to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant
- Encourage local businesses to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant



- Provide support to Armed and Ex armed Forces Personnel by having a dedicated armed forces helpline, which offers help, advice, signposting to armed and ex armed forces, and their families on issues such as health, education, housing, training and jobs
- Continue to implement a guaranteed interview scheme for ex armed forces personnel applicants, where they meet essential qualifying criteria.

Caring Responsibility

Within the Borough of Rochdale 23,260 people identified themselves as a Carer in the 2011 Census.

We have adopted the definition that a Carer is someone who provides unpaid care to a spouse, partner, parent, child, sibling other relative or friend who due to illness or disability, would not be able to live in the community without their help. This could be due to age, physical or sensory impairment, mental illness or addiction. According to the 2011 census there are 6,105 people within the Rochdale Borough (2.9% of the total local population) providing 50 or more hours of unpaid care per week. This is above regional and national comparators.

Our vision for carers in Rochdale Borough is for a future in which, carers are recognised, valued, appreciated and supported for the positive contribution they make to our community and are enabled and empowered to take control of their own lives.

We recognise that people with caring responsibilities may face discrimination either directly or indirectly, as a result of their association with the person that they care for; indirect discrimination is covered by the Equality Act 2010. We will:

- Meet the requirements of the Work and Families Act 2006 which gives specified carers, the right to request flexible working
- Have due regard to the requirements of the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014
- Provide maternity, paternity, partner or support leave for birth, adoptive and foster parents
- Support Carers through the services of the Carers Resource Centre
- Promote the availability of a Carers Assessment, where there is an appearance of need, which matches the rights of the person being cared for

3. Process for Monitoring Compliance and Effectiveness of the Policy Document

How we will monitor and review the policy

We will review 'No Matter Who' every 3 years, or more often when necessary, to meet the requirements of new legislation, to ensure that we are still delivering our desired outcomes and learning from evaluation.

We will achieve our objectives in equality and diversity at corporate and service levels. We will monitor local communities and our workforce as well as our services to ensure that we are meeting their needs.



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We will set at least one equality objective every 4 years, which will be regularly reviewed and monitored, to meet the requirements of the Equality Duty.

We will continue to carry out Equality Impact Assessments on all policies, projects and decisions so that they do not discriminate against any of the protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and those with a caring responsibility or armed and ex armed forces personnel.

We require every Elected Member and member of staff to recognise and carry out their own responsibility to contribute to the success of this policy.

Directors and service managers, supported by staff, have an essential role in delivering this policy by:

- Actively developing their services' approach to equality and diversity.
- Ensuring that all staff are adequately trained to meet the requirements of this policy.
- Establishing and maintaining appropriate consultation with the local community and key stakeholder groups.
- Ensuring that equality issues are given due consideration in council policy, and in the monitoring of the services provided by the council.

We will use appropriate methods of consultation and communication to ensure that we reach different groups of people, including stakeholders from within the council as well as from the local community, when monitoring and reviewing this policy.


4. Review Date

August 2019



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