

DRAFT

Equality Policy April 2020 - April 2023

1. Introduction

1.1 Buckinghamshire Council is committed to ensuring compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and to advancing equality of opportunity, fostering good relations, and eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation. This Equality Policy sets out the Council's approach to equality and diversity in employment and in service delivery.

2. Equalities Principles

2.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force in April 2011 (s.149 of the Equality Act 2010). It outlines the requirements of public authorities to have due regard to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

2.2 To ensure transparency, and to assist in the performance of this duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities to publish:

- a) Equality objectives, at least every four years (from 6 April 2012)
- b) Information to demonstrate their compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (from 31 January 2012).

2.3 Protection from unlawful discrimination is provided by the Equality Act in relation to the following nine protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- *marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity (which includes breastfeeding)
- race
- religion and belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

*(*Although marriage and civil partnership is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, it is not covered by the second two objectives of the Public Sector Equality Duty)*

2.4 Buckinghamshire Council also has policies which consider the impact of services on specific groups/themes including carers, looked after children, foster carers, single parent families, the Armed Forces, gender identity and customers at risk of social isolation.

2.5 The Public Sector Bodies (Website and mobile applications) Accessibility Regulations 2018 set out that all new public sector websites will need to meet accessibility standards and publish an accessibility statement. All content published to the Buckinghamshire Council website will go through a design process to comply with accessibility guidance.

3. Equalities Objectives and Delivery

3.1 Our communities and our workforce are made up of a diverse range of individuals and groups with differing needs. We want our county to be a place everyone can be proud of, with excellent services, thriving businesses and outstanding public spaces for everyone. We want all our residents, regardless of background, to have access to great life opportunities, living healthy successful lives, doing business with ease, ageing well independently, and working towards achieving their goals in life.

3.2 In line with our ambitions to make Buckinghamshire the best possible place to live, raise a family, work and do business, our main objective is that all of our work is completed within the context of the Equality Duty - tackling discrimination, advancing opportunity and fostering good relations within our communities.

3.3 To do this, we aim to achieve the following objectives, which support the Council's strategic priorities (as identified in our corporate plan):

- a) Develop, commission and deliver inclusive and responsive services
- b) Foster strong relationships within our communities so everyone feels safe, supported to live independently, and residents are encouraged to get involved in improving local services;
- c) Develop and support a highly skilled workforce who are collaborative and ambitious in the work they do, whilst valuing diverse perspectives; and
- d) Ensure leadership and organisational commitment to equalities.

3.4 To support the delivery of these objectives the Council will:

- Gather information about our local communities and their protected characteristics in order to assess local needs, impacts to services and priorities.
- Integrate equality analysis/impact assessment systematically into planning and decision making across the organisation.
- Engage with local communities when making decisions, including those with protected characteristics.
- Engage in planning and delivering activities that foster good relations.
- Seek to ensure services are accessible to local people and communities.
- Monitor, analyse and publish employment data in accordance with statutory duties.
- Provide a range of accessible learning and development opportunities to support councillors and officers in achieving equality objectives and outcomes.
- Meet legal requirements to make reasonable workplace adjustments for disabled people.

4. Responsibility and Accountability

4.1 We are committed to developing a culture that embeds the effective management of equality, diversity and inclusion both in our day-to-day practices and in our policies and procedures. Implementing the equality objectives is the responsibility of all members of staff across the organisation:

- The Cabinet Member for [.....] is the lead for the policy's development.
- The Corporate Management Team is ultimately accountable for the implementation and monitoring of this policy. They will consider and approve the annual report and corporate equality action plan.
- Service Directors have an essential role in delivering this policy. They need to be proactive in developing a service-led approach to achieving equalities and ensure their staff are adequately trained to meet the requirements of this policy.
- Officers in the Deputy Chief Executive's Directorate will take a lead in monitoring the delivery of the equalities objectives and coordinating production of the annual report.

4.2 Working with partners in the statutory, voluntary and business sector is a key feature of the Council's work. It is also an essential part of promoting the general wellbeing of Buckinghamshire's citizens. The Council has a number of strategic partnerships and it will act as an equality champion and promote equality matters in partnership work.

4.3 Buckinghamshire Council remains responsible for meeting our statutory equality duties and complying with legislation even where functions are carried out all, or in part, by external suppliers. Procurement therefore must be carried out in a way that promotes equality of opportunity, ensuring that services provided through contracts meet the needs of all users through the development of good practice. We therefore expect everyone completing our tender/contract awarding process to demonstrate that they take reasonable steps to ensure access and equal treatment in employment and service delivery. Buckinghamshire Council is also committed to tackling Modern Slavery within the public sector supply chain.

5. Training

5.1 Diversity training aims to increase the cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills of participants with the intention of increasing inclusion and service relevance. The Council provides training for all new staff via an induction programme covering equality and diversity and targeted programmes on disability awareness and other areas. E-learning modules on diversity and equality are also available. Training on equalities will also be provided for councillors through the member development programme.

5.2 Both in-house and external providers can be used where appropriate. Courses will be assessed before being made available to staff to ensure that they are accessible to all. Where this is not possible, suitable training will be provided in an alternative format.

6. Monitoring

6.1 Monitoring is an ongoing process of analysis, questioning, investigating and learning. We will monitor progress against our equalities objectives to benchmark performance, gain greater knowledge and understanding of who uses services, what barriers they may experience in trying to take up services and what needs to change to better meet residents' needs.

6.2 A corporate equality action plan will be developed within the first six months of adoption of this policy. Thereafter it will be reviewed annually, and learning and development in this area will be shared via an annual equalities report.

6.3 Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) will be used to ensure that the Council considers equalities issues and assesses the likely impact of its services, policies and decisions. It is possible to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment when there is a change or review to any aspect of the Council's work and the focus may be policy; strategy; service; major project; or a

group of services/policies. The completion of an initial screening template will determine if a full assessment is needed. This approach allows us to:

- Consider equality issues where it is relevant to do so. Where it is clear from the initial assessment that a policy or function will not have any effect on equality for any of the protected characteristics, no further action or analysis is required.
- Take a proportionate approach to comply with our duty. We give greater consideration where there is potential for substantial impact on discrimination or equality of opportunity for the public or our employees.

6.4 Sometimes this process is integrated into another process such as a service review or project implementation document, and sometimes the assessments are standalone documents. If an assessment demonstrates an impact (adverse or otherwise) then the service will consider any possible actions to remedy the situation.

6.5 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, all EqlAs are published on the corporate website at the point of consultation and following the adoption of a policy or strategic change.

[Link to Equalities Impact Assessment Guidance and Screening Templates](#)

7. Additional information

7.1 The following strategies are relevant to and/or support the achievement of our equalities objectives: [\(to be completed\)](#)

[Corporate Plan and Directorate Plans](#)
[Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)
[Children and Young People's Partnership Plan](#)
[Better Lives Strategy](#)
[Modern Slavery Statement](#)

Officer contact:

Tel:

Email:

If you would like this information in a different format or language, please let us know what your particular needs are and we will do our best to help.

Appendix: Useful contacts

[Action against homophobia](#)

[Action against transphobia](#)

[Age UK Buckinghamshire](#) call 01296 431911; email: age@ageukbucks.org.uk

[Beaconsfield Advisory Centre](#) call 01494 672987

[Benefits Information – Department for Work and Pensions](#)

[Buckinghamshire Mind](#), call 01494 463364; email: info@bucksmind.org.uk

[Bucks Voice](#)

[BuDS – Buckinghamshire Disability Service](#) call 07811 142935; email: info@buds.org.uk

[Citizens Advice Bureau \(Aylesbury Vale\)](#) call 0344 4111444

[Carers Bucks](#) call 0300 777 2722; email: mail@carersbucks.org

[Citizens Advice \(Chiltern\)](#) call 01494 545991

[Citizens Advice Service \(South Bucks\)](#) call 0344 2451289 (or 01895 837 551 for South Bucks district residents)

[Citizens Advice Bureau \(Wycombe\)](#) call 0344 2451289

[Equality and human rights commission](#)

[Lesbian gay, bi-sexual and trans-sexual consortium](#) call 020 7064 6500; email: admin@lgbtconsortium.org.uk

[LGBT Bucks](#)

[Q:alliance \(LGBT charity\)](#)

[Samaritans \(Chilterns\)](#) call 01494 432000; email: jo@samaritans.org

[SARI \(Stand Against Racism & Inequality\)](#) call 0117 942 0060

[Thames Valley Police](#) call 101 non-emergency, 999 emergency, 18000 textphone users

[Youth Concern](#) call 01296 431183; email: admin@youthconcern.org.uk