

Worcester City Council

EQUALITIES

POLICY



Title	Equalities Policy
Status	Draft
Document Version	V0.1
Author	Rich Morris
Sponsor	Sian Stroud
Owner	Sian Stroud
Approved by	
Approved date	
Review frequency	3 years
Next Review:	January 2027

Version History		
Version	Date	Description
0.1	24.01.2024	Draft for JCSC
	28.02.24	P&GP

1. Purpose of this Policy

1.1 Worcester City Council is committed to promoting and achieving excellence in equality, diversity and inclusion through all of its actions. The Council has a comprehensive Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which sets out four Excellence Aims:

- Understanding and working with our communities;
- Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment;
- Responsive services and customer care;
- Diverse and engaged workforce.

1.2 To support the delivery of the Excellence Aims of the EDI Strategy, this policy's purpose is to set out a brief and enforceable mechanism to ensure the Council can meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

1.3 This policy and the Council's overarching EDI Strategy relate to the Equality Act 2010 "Protected Characteristics" which are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

1.4 Everyone could be affected by one or more of the Protected Characteristics at some point in their life. It is against the law to discriminate, victimise or harass people because of these Protected Characteristics.

1.5 Additionally, public bodies such as the Council have a positive legal duty to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with different Protected Characteristics. The Council expects any person undertaking Council activities, whether that is employees, representatives and service providers, to comply with these duties under the Equality Act.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to anyone who acts on behalf of the Council, works with the Council or is entitled to receive services from the Council. This

includes (but is not limited to) all of the Council's employees, volunteers, contractors, councillors and customers.

3. Policy commitments

3.1 The Council makes the follow commitments which everyone covered by this policy is expected to contribute to, as applicable to their circumstances:

- Encourage equality, diversity and inclusion within the Council, on the basis that this is good practice and make business sense;
- 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 are recognised and valued;
- Support a culture of training, learning, trust, tolerance, and respectful debate and challenge;
- Recognition that individuals, as well as the Council, can be held liable for acts of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, against Council employees, representatives, customers, suppliers and any others;
- Take seriously complaints of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination made by employees, representatives, customers, suppliers and any others in the course of the organisation's work activities;
- Support opportunities for training, development and progress available to all Council employees and representatives, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation;
- Understand the equality implications of decisions while still ensuring that decisions concerning individuals are based on merit and do not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of Protected Characteristics;
- Ensure employment practices and procedures are fair and regularly reviewed to comply with the Equality Act;
- Recognise the value of collecting an appropriate level of workforce and customer data regarding Protected Characteristics for the purpose of informing better decision-making.

3.2 The Council has a number of specific policies where these overarching Equality Act commitments are also relevant. These policies include:

- Dignity at Work (anti-harassment policy)
- Employment policies relating to recruitment, working conditions, acceptable conduct and raising concerns at work;
- Councillor Code of Conduct;
- Customer policies relating to complaints and acceptable levels of service;
- Supplier policies relating to procurement;
- Policies relating to customer and employee accessibility, reasonable adjustments.

4. Potential breaches of the Equality Act

- 4.1 If in relation to a Council activity, a breach of the Equality Act is suspected or alleged, then the Council will follow the relevant policy (see examples above) to take investigate and take action as appropriate.
- 4.2 Anyone can report a concern about a breach of the Equality Act in relation to a Council activity, as follows:
- For employees - the Council's Dignity at Work Policy or Grievance Policy;
 - For customers/suppliers- the Council's Complaints Policy;
 - Anyone can report serious concerns under the Whistleblowing Policy.
- 4.3 Anyone can provide feedback or ask for a response about the Council's performance on equality, diversity and inclusion by emailing: equality@worcester.gov.uk.
- 4.4 In the cases of employees, breaches of the Equality Act will ordinarily be dealt with as misconduct under the Council's disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken. Particularly serious complaints could amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal without notice.
- 4.5 If the Council suspects there is evidence of a criminal offence being committed (for example in relation to harassment or hate crime) then the matter will be referred to the police.

5. Related Documents:

- 5.1 The City Council's Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy can be found in full on this dedicated webpage, along with other supporting documents. <https://www.worcester.gov.uk/council/equality-inclusion>