

Redditch Borough Council

Equal Opportunity Policy



1. Introduction

Redditch Borough Council recognises that equality of opportunity is fundamental to maximising the potential and performance of everyone to deliver its priorities. We strive to create a positive working environment through education and awareness-raising of equality and diversity issues. The Council opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination and the success of this policy depends upon the full support and commitment of everyone.

2. Scope

The Equal Opportunity Policy pulls together the Council's commitment to equality within the workplace and applies to all aspects of employment and vocational training including work experience within the remit of the Council. It is in the Council's interests and in the interests of all who work for the Council that we ensure that the human resources, talents, and skills available throughout the community are considered when employment opportunities arise.

It applies to all aspects of:

- Recruitment, selection and appointment of staff
- Training and development of staff including appraisal
- Disciplinary and grievance procedures and their application
- Sickness absence and performance management
- Promotion including temporary or permanent and secondment opportunities
- Selection for redundancy and all other forms of dismissal
- Dignity at Work

The policy applies to all managers, employees, prospective employees of the Council, contractors and Elected Members.

3. The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. As part of the Equality Act 2010, public authorities must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The General Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need 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; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

In addition, public authorities also have specific duties and must do the following:

- Publish equality information at least once a year to show how they've complied with the equality duty,
- Prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years.

The Council's Equality Strategy sets out how the Council is meeting its commitments under the Equality Act 2010.

The Act covers nine protected characteristics, and these are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. Every person has one or more of these protected characteristics, so the Act protects everyone against unfair treatment.

The characteristics are:

Age - The Act protects people of all ages. However, different treatment because of age is not unlawful if you can justify it (for example it is a proportionate means of meeting a legitimate aim); age is the only protected characteristic that allows employers to justify direct discrimination.

Disability - Under the Act a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a 'substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. Please see the Disability in Employment Policy at of the council's Equality Strategy Appendix 1 for further information.

Gender Reassignment - The Act covers individuals before, during and after transition; it does not require a person to be under medical supervision to be protected. 'Gender reassignment' is the wording used in the Equality Act; transgender (or trans) is now the more accepted terminology. The Council understands there are many different identities which fall under the trans umbrella, including identities outside of the gender binary.

Marriage or Civil Partnership (in employment only) - The Act protects employees who are married or in a civil partnership; single people are not protected.

Pregnancy and Maternity - A woman is protected against discrimination on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity during her pregnancy and any statutory maternity leave. Absence due to pregnancy-related illness cannot be considered when making a decision about their employment.

Race - Under the Act 'race' includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins. Caste, whilst not explicitly referenced, can be considered under this protected characteristic as an ethnic origin, although the definition of 'caste' is contested.

Religion or Belief- Religion refers to *any* religion (with a clear structure and belief system) but the protected characteristic also covers a *lack* of religion. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief or lack of; to be defined as a belief it must affect a substantial aspect of human life and behaviour.

The Council is committed to fighting prejudice, fear and hatred against specific religions, such as islamophobia and antisemitism. As such, we adopt the international definition of antisemitism:

'Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions

and religious facilities'. The full details are in Appendix 2 of the councils Equality Strategy.

Sex – Both men and women are protected under the Equality Act.

Sexual orientation - The Act protects gay, lesbian, bisexual, *and* heterosexual people.

5. Our Commitment

As an employer we recognise and accept that intentionally or unintentionally, people can and do experience discrimination, social exclusion, or unequal treatment. However, it is our commitment that we will do everything we can to prevent this from happening for all our employees, contractors, and Elected Members. Where we do find inequality, we will take steps to challenge it in all its forms.

We will show our commitment to equality by:

- Promoting equality in all that we do
- Giving everyone a fair and equal chance of obtaining employment, promotion, development and training opportunities with the council while aiming for a workforce that reflects the make-up of the local population
- Ensuring that contractors and other organisations that are providing a service to or on behalf of the Council are required to meet, and are complying with The Equality Act and with the equality policies of the Council as set out in our terms of contracts or agreements with suppliers
- Acting promptly on any complaints of harassment, discrimination or bullying
- Monitoring, reviewing and assessing our policies and procedures for their impact on equality on an ongoing basis
- By being an exemplary employer and employer of choice, create an organisation that values all staff and is fair, supportive and free from discrimination, harassment or bullying
- Regularly consulting our staff and listening to what they say

6. Leadership and Responsibilities

The Council's leadership takes full responsibility for this Equal Opportunity Policy. It is the responsibility of the Council's Cabinet and Senior Management Team to ensure that we are meeting our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive are fully committed to the implementation of this policy. The Head of Business Transformation is responsible for all procedures relating to recruitment, selection, career development, discipline, and grievance, and for ensuring that these are carried out in accordance with the Equal Opportunity Policy, supported by Human Resources and the Policy Team.

Managers are responsible for fostering a culture in which compliance with this policy is regarded as integral to their area of work. Managers are expected to actively promote the principles of equality and take account of the need to ensure equality of access and opportunity in the planning and delivery of their services.

In managing staff, managers are expected to identify appropriate development for themselves and their staff to meet the needs of their respective areas in relation to equality.

Staff are expected to behave in a respectful and fair manner to everyone that works for the Council, visits the Council, or receives a service from the Council. All breaches of this policy will be taken very seriously, and the Council will deal with individuals through the staff disciplinary procedures.

Everyone will be made aware of Council policies and the standards that are expected of them through induction, regular reviews, and training.

Elected Members have an important role to play in championing equality within the council and are obliged to give “due regard” to equality in the decisions they make and must be able demonstrate clearly that they have done so.

7. Policies and Practices

The Council has a wide range of policies in place for our staff and prospective employees. These policies provide support and clear guidance about what is expected of them and what they can expect from us as an employer. We will continue to review the range of policies and be pro-active in promoting and supporting equality in the workforce. These include:

- Policies and procedures covering Recruitment Selection and Employment
- Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Flexible Working
- Procurement, Tendering and Contractor Policies/ Strategy
- Equality Strategy
- Members Code of Conduct

The Equal Opportunities Policy and Equal pulls together the Council’s commitment to equality within the workplace.

7. Consultation and Monitoring

This Policy and any subsequent revisions will be subject to standard consultation processes with the aim of reaching agreement on the content of the Policy and commitment to abide by the Policy between Corporate Management Team, Staff and their representatives and the Council Executive.

8. Further information

[Equality & Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#) - useful information relating to equality and the [Equality Act](#)

[ACAS \(Arbitration, Conciliation & Advice Service\)](#) - useful information regarding equality in the workplace