



Equality policy statement

North Yorkshire County Council aims to be a responsive County Council providing good-quality and efficient services. An essential part of providing good-quality services is making sure that everyone has equal access to services and employment opportunities.

Statement of commitment

We are committed to equality and to making fair treatment an important part of everything we do. We make this commitment because we want to provide the best service we can to our community and because we value the contribution our employees make to achieving this.

The aim of our equality policy

We aim to make sure that services are provided fairly to all sections of our community, and that all our existing and future employees have equal opportunities.

We will take action to identify and get rid of any direct or indirect discriminatory practices, which act as barriers to achieving these aims. We oppose all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination, whether because of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex or gender reassignment (see note 1), marital status, family status, sexuality, religion or beliefs, disability, age or any other condition or requirement which places a person at a disadvantage and cannot be justified.

Putting our equality policy into practice

To achieve the aims of the equality policy statement in **delivering our services**, we will do the following:

- Continually improve services to make sure that they are accessible and provided fairly to everyone in our community.
- Understand that some groups of people experience more disadvantage than others, and promise to target services to meet their particular needs.
- Make sure that all service users are treated with dignity and respect, and that we recognise and value people's differences.
- Consult and involve service users, potential users and community groups in the way we plan and deliver services.
- Make sure that complaints procedures are easy to use, and that we respond to complaints efficiently and promptly.
- Communicate our equality policy to contractors delivering services on our behalf, and take account of equality factors when we award and monitor contracts.
- Communicate to service users our expectation that they must not discriminate against our employees.

To achieve the aims of our equality policy statement in **employment**, we will do the following:

- Make sure that our recruitment, selection, training and promotion processes support us to appoint the best people for the job, and to develop and maintain the highest standards of skills and expertise.

Note 1: Gender reassignment means the physical, psychological and social process of changing sex.

- Take positive action to develop a workforce that reflects the community it serves.
- Create and maintain a workplace where all employees are treated with dignity and respect, and where the need to achieve a balance between work and personal responsibilities is recognised.
- Continue to develop fair and flexible employment policies and practices that respond to the different needs of employees, and include employees in the development process.
- Provide effective procedures for reporting incidents of discrimination or harassment, from colleagues or service users, that make sure complaints are dealt with fairly and promptly.

To **help us put** our equality policy statement into practice, we will do the following:

- Act in line with all relevant legislation and codes of practice, for example the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and 2000, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
- Make sure that all employees and other people who help us deliver services are aware of this policy statement.
- Develop and train our members and employees to help them recognise equality issues and further understand their role and responsibilities in achieving equality.
- Include equality in all management processes so that it becomes part of everything we do.
- Develop effective auditing and monitoring procedures for services and employment, and report, at least once a year, to members, employees and the community on how we put this policy statement into practice.
- Promote the principle of equality whenever possible, share successes and good practice, and promise to provide a positive role model to other organisations and employers in our community.

We are developing a programme of action to put our equality statement into practice, and will monitor its progress against the relevant equality standards, including the Commission for Racial Equality's Standards for Local Government.

Applying our equality policy

This policy statement applies to all our activities.

Responsibility for carrying out our equality policy

The County Council is responsible for creating a framework through which equality in service delivery and employment are provided. Directors and managers are responsible for taking active steps to put the policy into practice and for making sure that their employees act in line with it. However, **all employees** have a role in putting the policy into practice and supporting it. In particular they must:

- act in line with the policy and its related procedures;
- promote equal opportunities;
- treat colleagues and service users with dignity and respect;
- not unlawfully or unfairly discriminate;
- not harass or victimise others;
- challenge discrimination or inappropriate behaviour; and
- report suspected discriminatory actions.

Breaking our equality policy

If we find that anyone has broken our equality policy, we will take the matter extremely seriously and carry out a formal and thorough investigation, which will result in disciplinary action where appropriate. Any act or failure to act that breaks the relevant legislation may also result in legal action being taken against us, and possibly against the employee responsible for that act or failure to act.