

Milton Keynes Council

Equality Policy

Equality, Diversity and Cohesion are key ingredients in building a diverse, competent workforce, excellent people-centred services and promoting the general well-being of Milton Keynes' communities and its citizens.

It lies at the very heart of everything we do in employing people, providing services to people and in shaping the place they live and work. This is encapsulated in the Council's Equality Vision:

'Improve the way we engage, think, plan and act to deliver equality and accessibility for everyone, every day'.

1.1 Equality Matters

Milton Keynes Council is committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The council will have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation,
- advance equality of opportunity, and
- foster good community relations by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Milton Keynes Council will work beyond mere compliance to the Act and consider the impact of its services, actively working to create opportunities and remove barriers. This forms a cross-cutting priority in the Corporate Plan, enabling all of the outcomes contained in the plan

1.2 Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 covers nine protected characteristics, which cannot be used as a reason to treat people unfairly. Every person has one or more of the protected characteristics; so, the act protects everyone against unfair treatment. The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment (including those in transition)
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

This protection covers those discriminated against because they are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic; for example, carers of a disabled child. They are protected by virtue of their association to that person.

The Council promotes equality of opportunity and seeks to avoid discrimination at all times and has a suite of employment policies that build upon this policy including the Dignity at Work Policy and Toolkit, Pay and Recruitment Policies

1.4 Our Equality Commitment

Milton Keynes Council serves a diverse community, where people from a range of backgrounds and experiences enhance the life and development of the Borough.

The council will:

Engage

- Support engagement groups in all equality streams
- Work with partners on equality
- Sustain specific service participation groups
- Capture service user experience

Think

- Publish all Equality Impact Assessments
- Regularly review all equality policies and those associated with equality to reflect learning and current good practice
- Monitor and analyse trends in data and information
- Ensure that its major strategies and policies identify how fairness and respect are promoted and adverse trends reversed

Plan

- Create and review a set of equality objectives
- Update an Equality Development Plan annually
- Ensure Service Plans indicate the main equality challenges
- Ensure all staff are adequately equipped to serve a diverse community

Act

- Scrutinise equality performance annually and publish a report
- Work to achieve excellent differential service users outcomes
- Ensure all residents have easy access to council information and services
- Address accessibility and equality issues promptly

1.5 Partnerships

The council will work with our partners to advance equality in Milton Keynes. This includes working with those partners who are not public authorities, but who exercise public functions, to ensure they meet their equalities duties, as set in the Equality Act 2010.

The council understands that inequality and issues of discrimination are part of a broad and complex social context. The council has adopted a Comprehensive Equality Scheme which describes implementation of its equality objectives and includes this policy.

1.6 Who is Responsible for this Policy?

The Cabinet has collective Member responsibility for overseeing achievement of this policy and accounting for its progress. The Cabinet Member with lead responsibility for Equality also has the lead for the equality policy development.

The Corporate Leadership Team makes sure that activities are in place to deliver on this policy and receives the monitoring details through the corporate performance processes.

Assistant Directors, Heads of Service and Managers have an essential role in delivering this policy. They are to be proactive in developing a service led approach to equalities development and to ensure that staff are adequately trained to meet the requirements of this policy.

Every individual that works in a council service has a role to play in implementing this scheme.

The **Corporate Equalities and Diversity Officer** is responsible for the corporate aspects of the Scheme and equality guidance, and will monitor the performance of this Scheme.

The **Human Resources Department** is responsible for putting policies in place, in line with this policy and equality legislation, and advising and guiding on their implementation.

All members of the council, council employees and people who work for the council (whether volunteers, temporary staff or working for a partner) will conduct themselves in a manner that maintains the council's reputation on equalities and accessibility while carrying out a council function and at other times when their actions could reflect on the council's reputation.

1.7 Review

This policy will be kept under review and be subject to amendments and changes when there are changes in society and legislation. The outcome of any review will be published in the Annual Performance Report, which will be published every June.

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