

MERTHYR TYDFIL COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council recognises that people are different, and that these differences impact on opportunities, choices and outcomes. It is intended to ensure that the needs and experiences of different groups are taken into account in a way that is fair and lawful, and which allows genuine equality for all.
- 1.2 The Local Authority acknowledges and respects the importance of all policies, procedures and practices – whether employment related or service related, to meet in accordance with the requirements of all Equal Opportunities Legislation and good practice.
- 1.3.1 The Local Authority accepts and seeks to enforce rigorously the statutory requirements associated with:-
- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended 1986 & 1999)
 - The Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended)
 - The Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended)
 - The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
 - The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
 - The Gender Re-assignment Regulations 1999
 - The Welsh Language Act 1993
 - E.U. Directives
 - The Asylum and Immigration Act 1996
- 1.4 The Local Authority recognises that the pursuit of equal opportunities is both a moral and legal responsibility, whilst also an important part of the Modernisation of the Local Government agenda and the Best Value initiative.

2.0 Purpose

- 2.1 It is the aim of this Local Authority to utilise this Policy as a means of formal communication, commitment and intent in striving to overcome and eliminate unfair discrimination within service delivery and employment.
- 2.2 It is a statement to reflect the intention of this Local Authority to ensure that no person receives less favorable treatment on any grounds or conditions that cannot be justified.

3.0 Service Delivery

- 3.1 Whilst the Local Authority will actively work to eliminate discrimination, it will also consider ways in which it can ensure that its services are reaching everyone who needs them.
- 3.2 Working with the concept of equal opportunities creates an essential role for our community, and will reinforce the Local Authority's commitment to provide services that meet the real needs and requirements of all our community and not just some.
- 3.3 It is therefore necessary to reinforce the Local Authority's commitment to provide services which are constructed upon listening to its' service users, understanding their needs and responding to them appropriately.
- 3.4 The Local Authority will be taking positive steps to ensure that every member of the community will have equal access to the services provided. This will be an area included within the Local Authority's work programme.
- 3.5 It will be imperative to consult community groups and Organisations about the provision of services relevant to their needs. This will take place through questionnaires, public meetings etc.
- 3.6 Properly equip employees to take account of the different needs of particular groups when providing services on behalf of the Local Authority.
- 3.7 To ensure that all service users are treated fairly, and that they do not become subject to any type or form of harassment or discrimination by any employee of this Local Authority.
- 3.8 The Local Authority will ensure that equality considerations from the onset are built into all policies and practices.
- 3.9 The Local Authority will make sure that it is easy for everyone in the community to find out about the services provided and to obtain them easily when they need them.
- 3.10 To use equalities codes of practice and guides as benchmarks of good practice in conducting Best Value Service Reviews.
- 3.11 Regularly monitor the policy with regard to access and delivery of services to all.

4.0 Employment

- 4.1 Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council is the largest employer within the County Borough, employing approximately 3,500 people. The Local Authority also provides a wide range of diverse services to its community.
- 4.2 Existing employees and potential employees of this Local Authority, for the purpose of their employment will be entitled to the provisions of equal opportunities in:
- Job Advertisements
 - Recruitment and Selection
 - Training and Development
 - Career progression
 - Pay and appropriate Pay related Schemes
 - Appropriate Job Evaluation Schemes
- 4.3 The provisions of equal opportunities in employment will be applicable to all employees regardless of length of service or hours of work.
- 4.4 All appointments that take place, will be made on the basis of merit, and will therefore not discriminate against an individual on grounds of gender, sexuality, gender re-assignment, marital status, disability, race, ethnic origin, age, religious beliefs or any other factor unrelated to the real requirements of the job.
- 4.5 The Local Authority will also endeavor to follow the Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission Codes of Practice on employment and appropriate Disability guidelines.
- 4.6 The Local Authority will regularly and comprehensively monitor the policy with regard to recruitment and the workforce profile and will present this information on a regular basis to Cabinet and Council, and additionally to any interested party.

5.0 Community Leadership

- 5.1 The Local Authority will strive to build equalities into all strategic plans, community development and regeneration programmes.
- 5.2 To work in partnership with the public, voluntary and business sectors on equalities programmes, using the community planning process to exert influence.
- 5.3 To make full use of the community profile of Merthyr Tydfil.
- 5.4. To develop consultation plans that will help develop internal expertise in working with minority and disadvantaged community groups.

6.0 Training and Development

- 6.1 Training and Development will be the key theme, central to the effective implementation and success of this Policy.
- 6.2 Training programmes will be developed and delivered to all employees, Directors, Departmental Managers, Elected Members and Trade Union Representatives, in order to promote awareness and understanding of equality issues.
- 6.3.1 It is essential to ensure that everyone is aware of their respective roles and responsibilities within the terms and conditions of the Equal Opportunities Policy and its requirements, applications and implications.

7.0 Complaints of Discrimination/Harassment/Victimisation

- 7.1 Where any type or form of discrimination, harassment and victimisation is identified as taking place against:
- An individual in their potential employment
 - An individual in their existing employment
 - A service user
 - A member of the public
 - A visitor to the Local Authority
 - An employee of another Organisation (including voluntary bodies and contractors)
 - An elected member
- 7.2.1 The Local Authority will take the necessary action to undertake a formal investigation into the incident or action.
- 7.3 A Corporate Equal Opportunities Complaint's Form will be made available for individuals to register their complaints.
- 7.4 Where any complaint of Discrimination / Harassment / Victimisation is made irrespective of the party who makes the initial complaint, it will be investigated in a fair and proper manner.
- 7.5 Thereafter where there is substantive evidence arising from the investigation that conclusively demonstrates that discrimination / harassment / victimisation has occurred, then appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against the individual Officer / Member.
- 7.6 The County Borough Personnel Manager will give advice on how a complaint should be progressed and resolved.
- 7.7 The central point for these type of complaints will be the County Borough Personnel Department who will then determine the complaint with the appropriate Department, and will work in partnership with that Department to resolve it.

- 7.8.1 Where it is considered to be a racially motivated incident then the Local Authority will advise the South Wales Police Minorities and Racial Incidents Unit.

8.0 Monitoring

- 8.1 Monitoring will be an essential part of this Policy, since it will reflect performance, both corporately and departmentally. It is therefore an essential requirement of this Policy to introduce a system of review, which will identify whether objectives and targets are being met.
- 8.2 As such the Local Authority will be adopting the Performance Indicators relating to Equal Opportunities contained within the Citizens' Charter which are as follows:
- Does the Council have a published Policy to provide services fairly to all sections of the community?
 - How does the Council monitor its performance in implementing this Policy?
 - Does the Council follow the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission codes on practice on employment?
- 8.3 The Local Authority in addition to the aforementioned Performance Indicators will also be monitoring the progression of the programme of work.

9.0 Responsibilities

- 9.1 The Chief Executive and Leader have overall responsibility for making sure that the Local Authority as a whole carries forward a coordinated approach to equality of opportunity.
- 9.2 The appropriate Councillors via the Cabinet system ensure that the Council is implementing this Policy.
- 9.3 Directors will be required to ensure that all service related policies, procedures and protocols will reflect and promote equalities within their individual service areas.
- 9.4 Departmental Managers have an ongoing duty and responsibility to ensure that equal opportunities are developed within their Departmental Service Delivery Plans.
- 9.5 All employees have an ongoing role to play in ensuring equal opportunities prevail in their work with fellow employees, members of the public, Councillors and any other person requiring the services of this Local Authority, and as such have a personal responsibility for the practical application of the Policy.

- 9.6 The County Borough Personnel Manager will be responsible for overall coordination, implementation and monitoring of this Policy.
- 9.7. It is equally as important to state that all Governing Bodies have legal responsibilities to ensure equal opportunities in all educational provision.

10.0 Programme of Work

- 10.1 Whilst this Policy will serve to reflect the intentions of this Local Authority in working towards achieving equal opportunities, there is a real need to demonstrate this commitment.
- 10.2 It is therefore intended to develop in association with this Policy a time scaled programme of work, that will contain specific objectives that the Authority aims to achieve.
- 10.3 The work programme will be made available to any relevant party.

11.0 Contractors

- 11.1 It is our firm intention to work closely with the Equality Organisations in order to develop and implement the necessary clauses, which require Contractors to apply equal opportunities principles in the delivery of work they are undertaking on behalf of the Local Authority.

12.0 Interpretation of the Policy

- 12.1 The County Borough Personnel Manager will address any queries or questions of interpretation regarding the Policy.
- 12.2 Any advice on the implementation of the Policy will be available from the County Borough Personnel Manager
- 12.3 Any modifications / additions to improve this Policy will be made by the County Borough Personnel Manager.