

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy



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VERSION CONTROL SHEET

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1. What is an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy?

1.1 An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy states what measures an organisation takes to eliminate and prevent discrimination and their duty to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace. This equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) policy covers all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation at work.

Thurrock Council is committed to encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion among our workforce, and eliminating unlawful discrimination.



We aim to provide a safe environment for staff to work in, free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and victimisation with a clear focus on delivery of high-quality services to residents of the council.

People from many different backgrounds contribute to the council's success and being inclusive is an expression of our values. Our actions are focused on making the council a place where people are valued, respected and supported to fulfil their potential. We work hard to foster an environment where people can speak up to remove barriers to success and collaborate to put the best ideas into practice.

1.2 Our Strategic Delivery Plan will ensure that all staff feel comfortable, safe, included and supported to be their very best in all that they do; that the council is the best it can be, with a high performing and diverse staff community; and that all staff visibly contribute to the values of the council and its wider impact to our residents.

We will achieve this by adopting three clear themes:

- Demonstrable equality in experience for all staff
- Strengthen our diversity and improve inclusion across the workforce
- Delivery of our ambition to embed equality, diversity and inclusion

1.3 Our equality statement confirms our belief that the diversity of Thurrock communities is a positive asset, reflecting our motto 'By Thames to all people of the world'. The people who live, work and visit Thurrock come from diverse backgrounds and circumstances. However, the disadvantage and discrimination that some communities experience has a negative effect on the quality of their lives.

The council is committed to:

- promoting equality of opportunity
- celebrating and valuing diversity
- eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in all forms
- promoting good relations and integration

We want Thurrock to be a place where all citizens feel they are listened to and have a stake in their community – and which supports and values individual and community initiatives that bring people together.

Thurrock Council has 4 equality objectives. These are:

- Access to services
- Supporting community integration and cohesion
- Improving resilience
- Workforce development

1.4 Our values are what support our vision, shape our culture and reflect council standards. They are our identity, our beliefs and they set out how we do things at the council, and how we will work together.

- Our values help us in our decision-making processes
- Our values help us to inform our residents of who we are
- Our values form part of our recruitment and retention processes.
- Our values enhance our employer brand
- Our values help employees to identify expectations of performance and behaviours.
- Our values are demonstrated by or behaviours in what we say and do and how we act.

Having clear values and behaviours will help us to celebrate what we are doing well, share good news, and see where we need to develop. How we act defines who we are.

The six values are:

- **Proud** - *of everything we do and championing Thurrock Council*
- **Ambitious** - *by continually improving*
- **Compassionate** – *by building relationships based on empathy, respect and dignity*
- **Inclusive** - *we fully accept and support those we work with and serve*
- **Empowered** - *by removing barriers to influence outcome*
- **Collaborative** - *by working together to achieve better outcomes*

2. Policy statement

2.1 The council values the diversity of its staff and recognises that equality of opportunity is fundamental to maximising the engagement and performance of its people to deliver its priorities. We will strive to create a positive environment through education and awareness-raising of ED&I issues.

2.2 The council wholeheartedly supports the principle of equal opportunities in employment and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 opposes all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination on the basis of the protected characteristics as

below:

- Race
- Sex
- Disability
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Religion/belief
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

- 2.3 The council has a zero-tolerance approach to **bullying, harassment and unlawful or unjustified discrimination, including discrimination** on the grounds of one or more of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010
- 2.4 This policy cross references with all relevant HR policies and support documents, including Grievance, Harassment & Bullying, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation Support Document, as well as Religion & Belief in the workplace, Disability Support Document and Managing Sickness absence policies, which can be used by staff who feel they have been treated unfairly or unequally during their employment.
- 2.5 The council commits to promoting a zero tolerance to racism throughout the organisation, this is supported by our Race Equality Charter and means:
- We will not tolerate racial prejudice, discrimination, harassment, victimisation, abuse, microaggressions or violence against any individual.
 - We will continue to take a stand against racism and promote a more inclusive and equal society for all.
 - We will continue to collate and report the following information:
 - data to correctly reflect the heritage, ethnicity and backgrounds of our staff
 - breakdown of employees by pay grade
 - Gender pay gap report
 - Ethnicity pay gap report
- 2.6 The council is committed to working with Thurrock Community Safety Partnership to reporting incidents of discrimination or hatred against any member of staff.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all employees and casual workers at the council, including schools-based staff where the school has adopted this policy, In addition, any person(s) who represent the council in any capacity are expected to adhere to this policy, failure to do so, may result in the termination of their contract using the appropriate Council procedures.

4. Aims & objectives

- 4.1 The council aims to ensure:
- there is a basis upon which to develop good employment practices for the benefit of existing staff and prospective employees, in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Equality Act 2010;
 - everybody has access to the same opportunities at the council with respect to their employment;
 - the council achieves and maintains a workforce which reflects the local community in which it operates;
 - an environment is created which is conducive to better working relationships, greater job satisfaction and improved service delivery;
 - the policy is monitored and reviewed in light of any developments in employment legislation or good employee relations practice, and if necessary revised to ensure its continuing relevance and effective.

5. Employer and Employee Responsibility

- 5.1 Director of HR, OD and Transformation has responsibility for the promotion, development and coordination of the policy.
- 5.2 However, all members of staff have an obligation to comply with the policy and to cooperate in measures introduced by the council to implement or reinforce it. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

6. Employment equality

- 6.1 Equality at work is about creating a fair environment where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential.
- 6.2 Every possible step will be taken to ensure that individuals are treated equally and fairly in the areas of recruitment, selection, promotion and training.
- 6.3 In order to achieve these aims the following initiatives have been implemented:
- a Recruitment and Selection policy that clearly sets out our commitment to ensuring fairness and equality of opportunity at all stages of the recruitment process that is reviewed on an annual basis
 - all adverts will contain a statement regarding our commitment to the principles of ED&I.
 - selection criteria will be strictly relevant to the job specification.
 - shortlisting is carried out via Oracle Recruiting Cloud where personal data (such as name, age and any other identifying factors) are removed from the hiring manager until after shortlisting is complete
 - in accordance with our commitment to the disability confident scheme, where a candidate has declared a disability they will be offered an interview if they demonstrate in their application how they have met the essential criteria specified in the job profile and person specification

- recruitment and selection training provided to hiring managers includes relevant training on ED&I
- interview panels, must contain a minimum of two panel members and wherever possible should include women and men and members of different ethnic origin so is 'balanced' in terms of gender and race.
- reasonable adjustments will be actively considered at all stages of recruitment and selection with support from our Occupational Health team in order not to disadvantage any employees or potential employees
- all staff must complete ED&I training as part of their induction and at regular intervals throughout their employment with us where appropriate

6.4 To continue our positive action, some people are disadvantaged or under-represented in some areas of life, or have particular needs linked to their protected characteristic. They may need extra help or engagement if they are to have the same chances as everyone else. The council is committed to taking proportionate steps to help people overcome their disadvantages or to meet their needs, through the areas outlined in this policy and other associated policies. In individual circumstances, where two candidates are equal in all other criteria a positive action could include selecting, in reference, the person(s) with a protected characteristic, this underpins our commitment to have a workforce that supports and reflects our community. Please refer to the Recruitment and Selection Policy before such a decision is taken.

7. Occupational requirements

7.1 On rare occasions it may be necessary to recruit applicants with a specific protected characteristic or background, this is where it is a 'genuine occupational requirement' and is proportionate to apply the requirement in that particular case. For example a social services team may need to recruit female Somali social workers to provide services to women from the Somali community due to cultural sensitivities. Please refer to the Recruitment & Selection Policy for further information.

8. Work and the family

8.1 The council is committed to improving opportunities for staff to combine work and domestic responsibilities (for more details, see the Flexible Working and Working Families Policies). A number of issues will be explored, including:

- Job sharing and part time employment at all levels.
- Maternity and paternity leave;
- Carers Passport
- Special leave following a miscarriage
- Career breaks for all employees;
- Childcare vouchers scheme;
- Flexible shift patterns to fit in with domestic commitments.

8.2 The council will ensure that working practices recognise the needs of both men and women caring for children and other dependents. Posts will be open to job share

wherever practicable and maternity/paternity procedures will be applied fairly and reasonably.

9. ED&I training

- 9.1 As part of our induction, all new staff must undertake mandatory ED&I training during their probation period.
- 9.2 All employees should participate in ED&I learning to develop their awareness of equality issues. This can be accessed through Oracle learn.
- 9.3 No discrimination will be allowed to enter into any consideration of training and development needs of staff.
- 9.4 Review and monitoring of the practices and procedures used to identify staff development, will regularly take place. This will ensure that any potentially unfair or unlawful bias is removed.

10. Employee Relations and Staff Networks

- 10.1 The promotion of ED&I will have a positive impact on employee relations. This policy aims to promote understanding of ED&I issues and their importance to help facilitate this.
- 10.2 The council supports several staff networks to promote understanding between different groups of people employed by the council. More details on these networks can be obtained from our Thurrock intranet site. Although networks can be set up where there is a desire to do so, we currently have 7 networks, these include:
 - Women's Network
 - Multi-cultural Network
 - LGBTQ+ Network
 - Multi-faith Network
 - Disability Network
 - Mental Health Network
 - Men's Network
- 10.3 Staff are encouraged to promote good relations between colleagues and discourage offensive and discriminatory behavior.
- 10.4 All complaints by staff that feel that they have been discriminated against will be pursued through the Grievance Procedure or the Harassment & Bullying procedure, whichever is most relevant to the circumstances.
- 10.5 All complainants will be protected from victimisation by virtue of this policy.

11. Monitoring

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed in the light of any developments in employment legislation or good employee relations practice and, if necessary, revised to ensure its continuing relevance and effectiveness.
- 11.2 Any amendments and additional rules imposing new obligations shall only be introduced after joint consultation with the recognised trade unions.
- 11.3 The application of this policy in the context of other human resources procedures that are followed in the course of employment, will be monitored by HR and OD and reported to the council's People Board on an annual basis. Annual equality reports will also be produced by our HR and OD and published within our public and staff websites in accordance with the public sector equality duty.
- 11.4 As part of its commitment to ED&I, the council also maintains monitoring information on the composition of staff groups. Such information helps the council to make sure that its ED&I policies are working to the benefit of all concerned and to test whether, for example, job advertisements are reaching a wide audience and the Recruitment and Selection policy is achieving an ability-based workforce which reflects the local community.
- 11.5 Monitoring information through data capture and allowing our staff to share and update their preferences is regularly reviewed and updated to allow the council to better understand its employees' needs through consultation with individuals, staff representatives and specially convened groups.
- 11.6 Information from our data capture will be shared on an annual basis to inform staff about the level of diversity among both staff and leadership team.

12. Discrimination & victimisation

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics in employment and in the provision of goods and services. The relevant characteristics are:
- Race
 - Sex
 - Disability
 - Age
 - Sexual orientation
 - Religion/belief
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership (for staff)
 - Pregnancy and maternity.
- 12.2 Both the employer and individual employee can be liable for prosecution under equality legislation if they discriminate. As an employer, Thurrock Council must be able to demonstrate that its employment policies and practices are applied fairly and

effectively throughout the organisation. It will be necessary to ensure that information and training on ED&I has been made available to all employees to avoid liability in individual circumstances.

- 12.3 It is unlawful to discriminate against workers because of a protected characteristic (outlined in 12.1 above), or to fail to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a worker with a disability (see also policy on Disabled Persons in Employment).
- 12.4 Discrimination is the act of directly or indirectly treating a person less favourably because of a protected characteristic (actual or perceived by the perpetrator), or because of their association with someone else with a protected characteristic. The council considers discrimination to be unacceptable and will take any allegations of discrimination very seriously.
- 12.5 It is also unlawful to treat someone less favourably because they have made a complaint of discrimination or because they have supported a complaint made by someone else, providing those actions have been taken in good faith and not falsely or maliciously. This is considered 'victimisation'.
- 12.6 Staff who feel they have been discriminated against or victimised should refer to the council's Grievance policy and seek advice from Human Resources where necessary.
- 12.7 If an individual is proved to have discriminated against anyone on the grounds of a protected characteristic, it is likely to constitute gross misconduct and will be handled under the Disciplinary Procedure.