



Our Approach to Equality and Diversity 2016 - 2020: DRAFT Refreshed September 2017

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Foreword :



Councillor Patricia Hardy
Cabinet Member, Communities and
Housing

In Sefton we believe that strong communities will prosper if individuals and groups are treated fairly, with respect and given the support to access the services they need. The Sefton 2030 Vision sets out our commitment to see all our communities thrive in the future.

Our aim is to provide opportunities to Sefton residents, businesses and organisations to fully engage in the community. We understand that for ambitions to be achieved equality and diversity must be something that everyone understands and feels able to contribute to. We will ensure that people and partners are involved in making our activities, information and services more accessible and the Council will be guided by a number of core principles.

There is real strength in our diverse local communities, Sefton is a borough where people are proud to say they Live, Work and Take part in community life together. By placing fairness at the centre of what we do, by promoting equality of opportunity and by celebrating diversity and community cohesion we can help to build a fairer future for all.

This document sets out the Council's approach and commitment to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in line with the Equality Duty 2010.

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Developing Sefton's Approach to Equality & Diversity

Background

The Sefton 2030 Vision shows that we, together with our partners, are determined to see all our communities thrive in the future to make the Borough 'A confident and connected Sefton'.

The Sefton 2030 Vision, which was co-produced following consultation with over in excess of 3500 people, sets out the following themes

- Together a stronger community
- A borough for everyone
- Living, working and having Fun
- A Clean, Green, Beautiful Borough
- Visit, Explore and Enjoy
- On the Move
- Open for Business
- Ready for the Future

Sefton Council's Core Purpose provides an outline to how the Council will contribute to achieving the ambitions set out in the Vision 2030:-

- Protect the most vulnerable:
- Facilitate confident and resilient communities
- Commission, broker and provide core services:
- Place-leadership and influencer:
- Drivers of change and reform:
- Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity
- Generate income for social reinvestment
- Cleaner and Greener

This document sets out Sefton Council's approach and commitment to Equality and Diversity and its contribution to achieving the 2030 Vision. The Council will work within its Core Purpose to build better partnerships and help others to make a difference in Sefton.

We recognise that there are certain groups of individuals who are likely to need more support than others and we will actively seek to ensure that these groups of people are protected and that their access to opportunities is actively promoted.

We acknowledge our role and responsibilities as an organisation including providing clear leadership. We commit to ensuring that our internal processes and ways of working promote equality and ensure that no one is disadvantaged by how we operate as an organisation. We also acknowledge our role in shaping and influencing the area and the culture of the communities in Sefton, and we are committed to ensuring that principles of equality and diversity are embedded.

Our policies and procedures are intended to promote fairness for all and reinforce our commitment to tackling inequalities wherever they exist and to prevent the unacceptable treatment of any person.

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What is Equality & Diversity?

Equality means ensuring people are treated fairly, giving them equal access to services and employment.

Diversity is about valuing differences, whatever an individual's background.

We will consider equality and diversity across the nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race,
- Religion or belief,
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

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Equality & Diversity: the National Context

Background

On 5 April 2011, the Public Sector Equality Duty (the Equality Duty) came into force. The Equality Duty was created under the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Duty

The Equality Duty was developed in order to harmonise the previous Equality Duties and to extend it across the protected characteristics. It consists of a General Equality Duty, supported by specific duties which are imposed by secondary legislation.

In summary, those subject to the Equality Duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general Equality Duty. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The Act states that meeting different needs involves taking steps to take account of disabled people's disabilities. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. It states that compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

The Equality Duty covers the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Public authorities also need to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination against someone because of their marriage or civil partnership status. This means that the first aim of the Duty applies to this characteristic but that the other aims (advancing equality and fostering good relations) do not apply.

Purpose of the duty

The broad purpose of the Equality Duty is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public authorities. If you do not consider how a function can affect different groups in different ways, it is unlikely to have the intended effect. This can contribute to greater inequality and poor outcomes. The general Equality Duty therefore requires organisations to consider how they could positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations. It requires equality considerations to be reflected into the design of policies and the delivery of services, including internal policies, and for these issues to be kept under review.

Compliance with the general Equality Duty is a legal obligation, but it also makes good business sense. An organisation that is able to provide services to meet the diverse needs of its users should find that it carries out its core business more efficiently. A workforce that has a supportive working environment is more productive. Many organisations have also found it beneficial to draw on a broader range of talent and to better represent the community that they serve. It should also result in better informed decision-making and policy development. Overall, it can lead to services that are more appropriate to the user, and services that are more effective and cost-effective. This can lead to increased satisfaction with public services.

Specific Duties

There are two Specific Duties that organisations are required to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty to demonstrate general compliance. These are to:

- Publish information to demonstrate compliance with the Duty in relation to employees and people affected by policies and practices and update this at least once a year.
- Prepare and publish one or more targets to achieve to meet any of the aims of the general duty.

We will work within the Equalities Act 2010, and any subsequent additional legislation in support of this Act, in order to ensure that we deliver and commission services to the community that are free from discrimination and to uphold our Public Sector Equality Duties.

In order to do this we will use and continue to develop mechanisms that help us identify where barriers exist, remove them in order to work towards inclusivity. These mechanisms will include impact assessments, consultation and engagement, and identifying within our business plans key equality objectives for improving services, against which we will set clearly understood and expected outcomes.

Equality & Diversity: the Sefton Context

Approach, policy and practice

We are committed to taking account of the diverse needs of the population we serve and our employees. We are working towards eliminating discrimination, advancing opportunities and fostering good relations, for our employees and between people within our community.

We recognise the challenge of ensuring the delivery of effective services and employment practices and we will continue to seek to identify these needs and any direct, indirect discrimination, harassment or victimisation that may occur and work to eliminate this.

We will foster an equality culture of continuous improvement and innovation in order to have outcomes that make a difference for all people regardless of their protected characteristics.

Employment

We know that an organisation that values the different backgrounds of its employees attracts the most talented people and we are committed to doing this. This will assist us in improving the activities, information and services. We strive towards achieving equal opportunities and respecting people's differences. We will work towards having a workforce which reflects the communities we serve, where employees feel valued and where employees' experiences of the work place are inclusive.

Working together

We will work with a range of organisations and agencies to further our commitments to equality and diversity. In working with partners we will strive to make equality and diversity central to what we do. In our work with other agencies we will look at the experiences of the many different communities we serve.

Consulting and assessing on strategy, policy & service delivery

We will inform, engage with and consult the communities of Sefton, our employees and trade unions, to develop and put in place strategies, policies and services that are appropriate to our diverse community.

Through community engagement and co-production we will seek to understand how effective we are at meeting the needs of the community. We will use equality analysis in a relevant and proportionate way.

We will put people at the heart of what we do

We recognise the role of the wider community, faith and voluntary sectors in building and maintaining positive relations. We will work with residents, communities and partners to build strong and inclusive communities.

We will assess the effect of strategies, policies and services on all communities to ensure that needs are understood and met. We will let the public and our employees know about what we do as a result of our engagement, co-production, consultation and assessments.

Commissioning & Procurement

As a council, we are responsible for managing budgets and buying services from third parties, such as private companies and the voluntary sector, who then deliver these services directly to the community. We expect all organisations that we commission or have a contract with to have policies and practices that are compatible with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

We will try to ensure that these contracts not only are good value for money, but that the services meet need; that the companies have good employment practice; that we help sole traders, small local business and the voluntary sector to compete for contracts by opening up the procurement process and simplifying it as best we can.

Monitoring our Approach to Equality and Diversity

We will gather and analyse knowledge and information to get a clear understanding of the protected characteristics of the people of Sefton.

We will monitor the effect of this approach, both in terms of service delivery and in employment. We will analyse and publish the results and take action if we need to.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

The Equality Act 2010 superseded the previous legislation and does not require or refer to Equality Impact Assessments. However, the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Act still requires organisations such as Sefton Council to assess the impact of policies and decisions. Evidence that this has been done has been required by case law. Sefton Council have decided to continue to use EIAs as they are an effective tool for achieving this.

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment is to ensure that services, functions, policies and products that are affected by the decision do not directly, indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally discriminate against our stakeholders or employees. Where any adverse impact is found we will develop objectives that tackle the impact through the development and implementation of equality action plans.

Our commitments

What we are trying to achieve

Our ambitions are clearly stated in the Vision 2030 Outcomes Framework - with our partners:-

- “We will focus on our similarities and the strength that comes from diversity, but never on our differences.”
- “The borough is accessible for everyone and positive approaches are in place for those living with mental health issues and disabilities.”
- “Sefton is a borough connected by people, supported by technology”

Working with our partners we have pledged to

- Support strong, equal partnership working between public, private and voluntary sectors and the communities they serve
- Work together to encourage the community to be involved in shaping the delivery of services in local neighbourhoods
- Work together to explore innovative ways of working to enable community capacity to grow and strengthen
- Work together to strengthen community voices
- Target information and encourage participation in initiatives and activities within the local community
- Work together to understand, develop and celebrate local communities
- Work together to develop clear commissioning policies that promote and encourage health and well being
- Work together to explore new solutions with our communities to make a positive difference to people’s lives and the environment

The broad outcomes we are seeking to achieve are:

- People are influencing decisions which affect them and communities work together and with partners to deliver effective change
- Stronger community leadership
- People feel safe and supported and are free from discrimination and harm
- People understand and exercise their safeguarding responsibilities
- People are not socially isolated

Benefits

We will gain many benefits from our continuous work on equality and diversity and these include:

Working with our communities:-

- Helping us to be more aware of possible issues before they arise and helping us to develop better informed strategies, policies and practices;
- allowing us to make more informed decisions;
- making sure that we are targeting our policies and services properly;
- improving our ability to deliver and commission appropriate services, meeting different needs;
- encouraging greater openness and transparency;
- increasing public confidence in our services; and
- helping to reduce complaints of discrimination.

In employment

The Council is an Equal Opportunities Employer and it strives to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, sex, disability, age, gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, or is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable. All employees will be given full opportunity and, where appropriate, special training to progress within the organisation.

How we will deliver our commitments

We will work on a number of priorities to deliver our commitment. These include:

- Considering equality and diversity in all our work
- Getting involved with our communities and employees and understanding and celebrating our differences
- Training employees on equality and diversity
- Through individual performance appraisal
- Providing effective and trusted complaints procedures for both the public and employees
- Celebrating our communities.

Responsibilities

Every Councillor and employee of the Council has a role to play in achieving our equality and diversity ambitions. These roles are set out in the table below.

Partners and individual members of the community also have a role in working with us to foster an environment of mutual respect, and in promoting good relations.

People at different levels in the organisation carry different responsibilities:

Role	Accountabilities
Cabinet Member with responsibility for Equality and Diversity	To put in place and champion a framework for the Council to meet its equality ambitions and duties.
Council's Cabinet	To consider equality implications in its decision making and to advance equality outcomes in cabinet members' respective portfolio areas.
Full Council	To consider equality implications in its decision making and to advance equality outcomes
Scrutiny function	To ensure appropriate checks and balance within the context of delivering the approach.
All Elected Members	To play a community leadership role in promoting equality, celebrating diversity and challenging discrimination.
Strategic Leadership Team	To provide strategic leadership for the organisation in delivering on the equality and human rights approach across the council and delivery within specific areas of responsibility.
Managers	To promote awareness of this approach and for supporting learning and development opportunities to enable teams and individual employees to support the implementation of this approach. Through business planning, all managers are responsible for developing and delivering on relevant equality objectives and in undertaking equality analysis as part of business planning and considering this when developing new policies, strategies or plans or making decisions about changes to services.
Corporate Equality Group	Supporting the whole organisation so we can turn this approach into reality; Developing our approach to equality and diversity; Providing support for employees carrying out impact assessments in order to ensure that services are targeted at those most in need or facing disadvantage. Taking a lead on equality and diversity issues, both within and outside the organisation.

Role	Accountabilities
Individual employees	To comply with the requirements of the approach and apply the good practice learnt in their training and development opportunities.
Providers of Commissioned Services on behalf of the Council	To comply with the General Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010
Contractors	To comply with the General Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Review and reporting

We know how important it is to understand how our equality and diversity approach and practices are making a difference in our community and amongst our workforce.

We will make sure that we regularly monitor and review our progress.

- we will produce progress reports every twelve months to our Cabinet Members;
- We will ensure our 'Overview and Scrutiny committee' are aware of progress with regard to equality and diversity;
- [We will work with Sefton Equalities Partnership to obtain feedback from the community and identify any issues](#)

We will publish our achievements each year on our website. Alternate formats will be made available.

Our approach to Equality and Diversity is not static. It will be updated and modified as new legislation and codes of practice are introduced and our understanding develops of the needs of everyone living, working and visiting Sefton. We recognise the need to ensure that we work hard to deliver fairly, and that we always make the most of all employees. We are committed to tackling inequality, celebrating diversity and to making steady improvements.

Links to National Documents

This draft strategy is aligned with, a number of National Acts, Strategies and Policies:-

Equality Act 2010
Public sector Equality Duty
Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013
Care Act 2014
Mental Health Act 2007
Humans Rights Act 1998

Links to Local Documents

There are a number of local documents that link to this draft approach. These include:

Sefton 2030 Vision
Local Plan
Housing Strategy
Homelessness Strategy
Health & Wellbeing Strategy
Strategic Needs Assessment
Carers Strategy
Dementia Strategy
Older Persons Strategy
Gypsy and Travelers and Authorised Encampment Policy
Children's & Young People Plan
Domestic and Sexual Violence Strategy
Personnel Policies & Procedures

Consultation & Engagement

The document has been created by the Sefton Council Corporate Equalities Group and has been reviewed in the context of the principles identified in consultation carried as part of the 2030 Vision.

We will engage with [Sefton Equalities Partnership](#) and our [other](#) community groups and partners to ensure that our approach to equality and diversity is appropriate and meets the needs of the most vulnerable in the Borough.

Strategic Objectives

The following strategic objectives have been identified for our approach to Equality & Diversity in Sefton 2016-2020

1. Increase reporting of hate crime/hate incidents
2. Achieve the Navajo Chartermark
3. Maintain the DWP Disability Confident Scheme accreditation
4. Ensure that equalities are taken into account in decision making and service planning

Alternative Formats

This document is available in other formats such as large print, easy read, etc. If you would like more information please contact xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

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Appendix 1 – Action Plan

The purpose of the action plan is to identify actions and responsibilities which will contribute to the achievement of the Council's objectives.

Overall responsibility for delivery of the action plan lies with the Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) and the Corporate Equality Group (CEG).

Objective	Key Activities	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcomes
Consultation and engagement on the Council's refreshed approach to Equality and Diversity to ensure that it meets the needs of the most vulnerable.	Undertake consultation and engagement to get the views of communities and partners on our approach.	Head of Communities	Ongoing	Our approach reflects the views and needs of our communities and in particular the most vulnerable and celebrates our diversity
Build community awareness including promotion of Stop Hate UK Helpline	Training sessions for employees from the Council and other agencies	Head of Communities in partnership with Merseyside Police	Ongoing	Increased awareness of hate crime amongst employees
	Expand and promote 3 rd party reporting network	Head of Communities in partnership with Merseyside Police	Ongoing	Increased opportunities for reporting of crimes/ incidents
Achieve the Navajo Chartermark	Focus the CEG on delivery of the application, and attain buy in from SLB to ensure all employees complete online relevant E&D training	All Heads of Service and Service Managers	Application for award during 2018/19	Chartermark awarded on application

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Objective	Key Activities	Responsibility	Timescale	Outcomes
Maintain the DWP Disability Confident Scheme accreditation		Personnel Department	Ongoing	
Ensure that equalities are taken into account in decision making and service planning	EIA's should form part of the development of and refresh of any policy or practice Officers to consider whether an EIA is necessary as part of the decision making process.	All Heads of Service	Ongoing	Published EIAs for relevant decisions
	Provide training and support to employees as required.	Head of Communities Corporate Learning	Ongoing	
	Work with Sefton Equalities Partnership to obtain feedback from local community and identify issues	Head of Communities	Ongoing	Annual report from SEP