

Equality and Diversity Policy Statement

Approved 15 February 2012

Our commitment

North Yorkshire County Council welcomes and celebrates diversity and the strengths this brings to our communities and workforce. The council aims to provide excellent and efficient local services enabling everyone to fulfil their potential. To do this we must give everyone equal access to services and job opportunities.

Treating everyone the same does not necessarily give people equality of opportunity. Sometimes we need to treat different people in a different way to give them equal access to a service or job.

Our responsibilities

The Equality Act 2010 says that we must not treat people unfairly because of age, disability, sex (gender), gender reassignment, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership. These are called “protected characteristics”.

As a local authority we must:

- stop unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- make sure that people have equality of opportunity whether or not they have a particular protected characteristic; and
- build good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

North Yorkshire is a very rural county and people living outside the larger towns can find it difficult to access services. We will treat people fairly wherever they live and make sure they get the services they need.

There are other factors which affect people's lives. Examples of these are income, education and occupation. We will work to deliver the best possible outcomes for all our communities and citizens.

Meeting our responsibilities

Everyone, including the County Council, has a part to play to realize our vision for North Yorkshire to be an even better place for everyone to live, work or visit. We will work with our communities and partners to achieve our vision.

As part of meeting our responsibilities we make the following commitments.

- We will treat staff and customers with dignity and respect.
- We will develop our councillors and staff to help us meet our equality duties.
- We will use information and talk to people to identify where inequality exists so that we can plan to tackle it.
- When it will help us to improve our services and to understand how we are meeting our equality duties, we will ask questions about people's protected characteristics, including age, race, gender and disability. We will always make it clear that people do not have to answer these questions and that they will still receive the services they need. We will keep personal data confidential.
- We will consider equality issues when we deliver our services. Our service plans will include any major equality actions that we plan to undertake. We will have at least one equality objective which will help us focus on some of the areas which we want to improve.
- When we think about changing our services we will make sure that those making the decision know how the change could affect people with any of the protected characteristics. We will collect information about how people might be affected before making a decision. If the change might cause difficulties for people with a protected characteristic, we will do our best to find ways to reduce this impact. If we can't then we should think carefully about whether we need to make the change to achieve a legitimate aim.
- We have a duty to make reasonable changes to the way we do things so that disabled people can use our services and work for us. We recognise that everyone is different and we will treat people as individuals.
- We will make sure that anyone who provides a service for us treats people fairly. We will do this through our procurement process and by monitoring their work.

- We will recruit, select, train and promote staff fairly. We will try to get the make-up of our staff to match our communities. We will have clear systems for staff to complain if they are treated unfairly.
- We will make it easy for customers to complain if something goes wrong and we will respond quickly and efficiently. If legal action is intended or underway; complaints will be suspended until the legal process is resolved.
- If we find that anyone has broken our equality policy we will investigate and take disciplinary action if appropriate.
- We will monitor our equality actions through our usual reporting systems.
- We will publish information each year to show how we are meeting our equality duties.