

Equality of Opportunity Policy

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline Huntingdonshire District Council's commitment to Equality of Opportunity and establish how this is achieved and monitored.

2. Policy Statement

It is the policy of Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) as an Equal Opportunities Employer to ensure that no employee or job applicant receives less favourable treatment on any grounds of age, disability, ethnic origin, religion and sexual orientation. HDC is committed to positively eliminating direct, indirect or institutional discrimination in all employment practices; recruitment, training and policies and procedures.

3. Commitment to Equality of Opportunity

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to:

- ◆ Develop our employees and Councillors to help them promote equality and inclusion in our communities.
- ◆ Identifying clear responsibilities for equality within the Council
- ◆ Providing guidance enabling employees to ensure that policies, strategies and plans are fair.
- ◆ Helping employees and Councillors recognise and prevent discrimination.
- ◆ Allocating funds for the purpose of equality training and ensuring employees have the necessary knowledge and skills to implement this policy.
- ◆ Helping employees and Councillors comply with the requirements of relevant legislation and good practice guidance.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. All employees

Every employee, all temporary staff and contractors are responsible for their own behaviour and for helping to promote equality and diversity within Huntingdonshire District Council, for following adopted policies and procedures and for challenging all forms of potential discrimination.

4.2. Activity Managers, Managers and Supervisors

Activity Managers, Managers and Supervisors should ensure they lead by example, treating others with dignity and respect and ensuring that the policy is fairly and consistently applied across all areas. Additionally, they should ensure that all employees managed are aware of their obligations under the policy.

4.3. Managing Director, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service

The Managing Director, Assistant Directors and Heads of Service should ensure that they lead by example, treating others with dignity and respect ensuring that the policy is fairly and consistently applied across HDC.

5. Breach of Policy

Huntingdonshire District council recognises its duty of care to provide a safe working environment for all our employees, one that is free from discrimination. Discrimination causes harm to individuals, and reduces the effectiveness of a wide range of activities. Discrimination will not be tolerated and, where appropriate, disciplinary action will be considered.

6. Equality and legislatively defined areas

6.1. Equality of opportunity and direct, indirect and institutional discrimination

6.1.1. Equality of opportunity means taking positive action to ensure that no discrimination is experienced either directly or indirectly by any employee or applicant

6.1.2. Direct Discrimination – involves treating an individual favourably or less favourably on grounds of age, disability, gender, ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation.

6.1.3. Indirect Discrimination – takes place when a condition or requirement is applied, whether intentional or not, and adversely affects particular groups of people on grounds of age, disability, gender, ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation.

6.1.4. Institutional Discrimination – is ‘the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.’

6.2. Equality of opportunity and age

6.2.1. Age discrimination is based upon preconceived ideas of an individual’s capabilities at certain stages in their lives. HDC is committed to ensuring that:

- ◆ age is not a barrier to recruitment, selection, promotion, training or personal development.
- ◆ age will not be considered adversely where redundancy or retirement may apply.
- ◆ age discrimination is eliminated through learning and development activities.

6.3. Equality of opportunity and disability

6.3.1. Disability is defined as an individual who 'has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

6.3.2. HDC has achieved 'Positive about Disability' status and is committed to ensuring the equality of opportunity for all those with a disability. In order to ensure this HDC will:

- ◆ give full and fair consideration to disabled applicants and act in accordance with the guidelines set by positive about disability in order to maintain this status.
- ◆ give equal opportunity for training, career development and promotion to all employees.
- ◆ modify equipment and/or provide aids and/or support where necessary to enable a disabled person to do a job.
- ◆ ensure all premises, where reasonable, are compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requirements.
- ◆ seek to eliminate discrimination through learning and development activities.

6.4. Equality of opportunity and gender

6.4.1. As a relatively large employer in the district HDC is committed to ensuring the best person, regardless of gender, is employed in any vacant position. In order to achieve this HDC commits that:

- ◆ all information, publicity and advertising for employees and applicants will be non-sexist
- ◆ full and fair consideration is given to all applicants

6.4.2. This applies to all employees and applicants whether homosexual, bi-sexual or heterosexual and those who have, are, or intend to undergo gender reassignment.

6.5. Equality of opportunity and ethnic origin

6.5.1. It is recognised that ethnic minority groups may face potential discrimination and under the Race Relations Act 1976, and subsequent amendments, acknowledge the duty to promote racial equality. HDC will:

- ◆ monitor the effectiveness of policies and processes in regard to all areas of employment.
- ◆ give full and fair consideration to all applicants regardless of ethnic origin.

6.6. Equality of opportunity and religion

6.6.1. HDC recognises that working in a multi-cultural environment is of benefit both to the individual and the organisation.

6.6.2. HDC acknowledges there are employees who wish to practise their religion actively although the active promotion of any religion is not considered acceptable.

6.6.3. However, it is recognised that those actively practising a religion may have specific needs associated to that practice. HDC will:

- ◆ make arrangements, where practical, through local agreement enabling members of staff continue to practise their religion
- ◆ give full and fair consideration to all applicants regardless of religion

6.7. Genuine occupational requirements (GORs)

6.7.1. There may exist for a limited number of positions being advertised, a genuine occupational requirement, that exempts the position from Equality considerations. Due to the nature of the role it may be that the job requires a person from a particular group. In general HDC seeks to encourage diversity amongst employees and would only apply the use of GORs in exceptional circumstances.

7. Employment Monitoring

Huntingdonshire District Council will monitor all employees under the above equal opportunities areas, subject to available data, in the following areas:

- ◆ workforce make up (employees and new starters)
- ◆ training
- ◆ discipline, capability and grievance
- ◆ performance appraisals
- ◆ employees leaving the Council's employment

Information collected will be used to:

- ◆ highlight potential discrimination
- ◆ investigate underlying reasons for identified differences
- ◆ deal with potential unfairness, disadvantage or discrimination
- ◆ ensure our recruitment and selection processes are full and fair