

Our policy statement on equality and diversity

Why do we need a policy?

We take pride in being one of the most culturally rich and diverse (varied) boroughs in the United Kingdom. This policy document sets out our commitment to creating an environment in which everyone in Tower Hamlets can take a full part in the social, cultural and economic wealth of the borough. It also sets out our commitment to promoting equality and diversity among our residents and staff. Our equality and diversity policy links directly to some of our strategies and plans, in particular our strategic plan which sets out our priorities for action to improve the quality of life for everyone living and working in Tower Hamlets.



What are our aims?

We want to see a strong spirit of community and good race relations in Tower Hamlets. We will put in place a range of actions to get rid of prejudice, discrimination and victimisation within the communities we serve and our workforce. We will develop and promote policies and systems which make sure that the borough's communities and our workforce are not discriminated against or bullied for any reason.

How will we deliver our commitment?

In looking to the future we have formally adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government. This is a nationally-recognised framework which we will use to measure our progress in achieving equality and diversity on behalf of our community and workforce. We have set ourselves the aim of reaching the highest level of achievement possible (level 5) by 2006.

We have called this policy 'Celebrating diversity' in recognition of the value that people bring to our communities with their different ideas and contributions. It means making an ongoing commitment to make sure that our services meet the varied and complicated individual needs of people living and working in the borough. We will make sure that our employment practices (including recruiting, holding onto, training, developing, appraising, promoting staff, and retirement) are accessible to everyone and that we actively value and celebrate the wide variety of lifestyles and cultures within our borough.

We welcome:

- the Equal Pay Act 1970;
- the Sex Discrimination Act 1975;
- the Race Relations Act 1976;
- the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000;
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- the Human Rights Act 1998; and
- their contributions to provide equal opportunities for everybody.

Our commitment is supported by a legal duty to provide all services and employment opportunities fairly, without discrimination, and to keep to all relevant codes of practice. We believe we have a strong moral and social duty to recognise that discrimination takes place and to do everything we can to challenge prejudice and discrimination and promote equality.

We are committed to providing high-quality services which everyone can get access to. Where appropriate, we will work through the Tower Hamlets Partnership, with other organisations, to provide services which promote equal opportunities to all by:

- building on our good practice;
- consulting with and involving all sectors of our community on using this policy;
- providing accessible information and ways people can comment on all our services;
- carrying out equality impact assessments of new and existing policies and practices to make sure that they will not discriminate against anyone;
- delivering services which are appropriate to the needs of the community;
- removing barriers which deny people access to our services;
- using our powers to make sure that organisations providing services on our behalf work in line with this policy; and
- promoting an environment which gives all residents an equal chance to learn, work and live free of discrimination and prejudice.

We will put in place a range of actions in our Integrated Equalities Action Plan and Race Equality Scheme. These are aimed at tackling prejudice and celebrating diversity within our workforce by:

- developing a workforce which reflects the community at all levels;
- making sure that all employees and councillors know the effects of this policy and provide appropriate training;
- making sure that all employees (and the resident communities) know about their rights of protection from discrimination, harassment or bullying;
- developing and promoting policies which give everyone equal access to employment and opportunities; and
- setting performance targets so we can measure our progress.

With the help of feedback from our community groups, service users and employees, each year we will monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of our employment and service-delivery policies and our Equalities Action Plan. If our monitoring reveals any gaps in our policies, we will take action to deal with this.