# **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy**

**Policy summary**

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| **Purpose** | This policy sets out Dorset Council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. Dorset Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and promoting a culture that actively values difference and recognises that people from different backgrounds and experiences can bring valuable insights to the workplace and enhance the way we work with the diverse communities that make up Dorset. |
| **Scope** | This policy applies to all who represent Dorset Council in any capacity including elected members (councillors), employees, agency workers, consultants, and volunteers. In addition, it also applies to suppliers, sub-contractors, and agencies in our supply chain and to customers and residents.  |

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**1. Introduction**

1.1 This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy sets out Dorset Council's commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and recognising and celebrating the diversity that exists in our workforce and among our communities in Dorset.

1.2 Promoting equality of opportunity means creating an environment where people have the chance to achieve their potential, free from barriers, prejudice, and discrimination.

**2. Scope**

2.1 This policy applies to all who represent Dorset Council in any capacity including elected members (councillors), employees, volunteers, agency workers and consultants.

2.2 The policy also applies to suppliers, sub-contractors, and partners in our supply chain and to customers and residents.

2.3 We all have a right to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. We are also responsible for ensuring that our own actions and behaviours are fair and that we respect the dignity of others.

**3. Understanding equality, diversity, and inclusion**

3.1 Equality is not about 'treating everyone the same' but recognising that everyone is different, and that people's needs are met in different ways. We would define equality as essentially being about fairness and ensuring that we all have the best possible chance to succeed in life whatever our background or identity.

3.2 The right to fair treatment is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010. The Act entitles all of us to be treated fairly and not be subjected to discrimination on the basis of a protected characteristic[[1]](#footnote-2).

3.3 Diversity is about understanding that everyone is unique, recognising, respecting, and celebrating the added value that differences bring.

3.4 Inclusion is where difference is seen as a benefit and where perspectives and differences are shared, leading to better decisions. An inclusive working environment is one in which everyone feels valued, that their contribution matters, and they can perform to their full potential, regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances. An inclusive workplace enables a diverse range of people to work together effectively.

**4. The Legal Framework**

4.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone, such as direct and indirect discrimination, discrimination by perception or association, harassment, victimisation and failing to make a reasonable adjustment for a person with a disability.

4.2 The Equality Act also introduced the term 'protected characteristics' to refer to specific aspects of a person's identity these cannot be used as a reason to discriminate against. These are:

* age
* disability
* gender reassignment
* pregnancy and maternity
* marriage and civil partnership
* race
* religion or belief
* sex
* sexual orientation

It is important to note that carers are also protected through association to any of the above nine protected characteristics.

4.3 Everyone has a one or more protected characteristics, so the Act protects everyone against discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

4.4 The Equality Act 2010 also places specific responsibilities on public bodies. The Public Sector Equality Duty includes the General Duty which requires public bodies to:

1. publish information to show compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty
2. set and publish equality objectives at least every four years.

4.5 In addition, Dorset Council is required to have due regard to the need to:

1. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it; and
3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those do not share it.

4.6 The general duty applies to all the protected characteristics. However, for the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership it applies only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

4.7 Having due regard means consciously considering the three aims of the equality duty in relation to our decision making and delivery of services and in our duties as an employer.

4.8 Dorset Council acknowledges and welcomes its legal duties. However, we also recognise that there are some additional characteristics that impact on people and their ability to access services and/or participate in public life and we consider these also when making decisions and refer to these as 'Dorset Council characteristics'. These include:

* rural isolation
* socio-economic status
* single parents
* people with an armed forces background and their families
* gender identity (how someone describes their gender)

4.9 Dorset Council has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of anti-Semitism. In adopting this definition, we have undertaken to oppose all forms of anti-Semitism, hatred and harassment towards people who belong to the Jewish faith, and people with a Jewish ethnic or cultural background (see Appendix 1).

**5. Our aims**

5.1 When we develop our policies and plans or make decisions we will aim to:

* design our services to meet the diverse needs of our residents
* prevent, challenge, and eliminate inequality
* involve and consult with individuals and organisations including the recognised trade unions as necessary
* foster good relations within Dorset so that it is welcoming to all those who live, work and visit.
* undertake an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) to consider the actual or potential impact of our activities and decisions on people and to remove or reduce negative impacts.

5.2 When we deliver services we will aim to:

* ensure that our services are relevant and take different needs into account
* provide information that is clear, accurate and accessible
* ensure that customers receive a quality service
* respond to, investigate, and take appropriate action to address complaints of bullying, harassment, discrimination, or victimisation
* monitor services, analyse gaps in provision and identify and remove any barriers to access.

5.3 When we procure or commission services, we will aim to:

* consider equality of access in service delivery
* ensure contractors, suppliers and partners are aware of what the authority expects in relation to equality and diversity and understands that they must provide services that are free from harassment, discrimination, or victimisation
* ensure that the tendering processes include equality and diversity as part of the selection criteria
* provide guidance to employees about how to include equality and diversity in procurement and commissioning processes.

5.4As an employer we will aim to:

* recruit and retain a workforce that reflects the diversity of Dorset
* welcome the contribution made by the experience, knowledge, and skills that a diverse workforce brings
* promote and work with the recognised Trade Unions
* make reasonable adjustments to support current employees and potential employees
* provide all employees with access to learning and development opportunities
* ensure that equality, diversity, and inclusion is an integral part of the council's induction for all new employees and members
* provide an environment free from harassment, discrimination, victimisation, and bullying
* use our behaviours framework to promote dignity and respect
* take seriously any employee grievance concerning harassment, discrimination, victimisation, and bullying
* deal with acts of harassment, discrimination, victimisation or bullying by an employee against another employee or a member of the public under the disciplinary policy and procedure
* deal with comments made on social media, as outlined in our social networking policy
* provide ex-offenders with equal employment opportunities in accordance with the policy on the employment of ex-offenders
* guarantee to offer an interview to all disabled applicants who fulfil the essential criteria for a post
* promote access to our employee well-being support service
* promote and work with our employee networks
* promote flexible working to help employees balance their work/life commitments and still achieve their full potential
* provide support to employees who are undertaking the process of gender reassignment (transitioning)
* ensure that managers with responsibility for recruitment and selection do not discriminate unfairly.
* ensure that managers with responsibility for selecting employees for redeployment or redundancy do not discriminate unfairly in the process of selection
* incorporate legislative requirements and best practice to all our employment policies and procedures and support these with appropriate and accessible guidance.

**6. Support to implement this policy**

6.1All our policies are supported by training or briefing sessions and guidance. For the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy we will:

* provide on-line training via Learning Online including the mandatory equality and diversity courses.
* provide advice and support including bespoke equality, diversity, and inclusion training
* provide information on the intranet and the internet.
* work with the trade unions where possible to deliver joint training and learning development opportunities

**7. Monitoring and measuring progress**

7.1 Dorset Council collects equality information from employees and potential employees, this helps us to make sure our policies and working practices are inclusive do not discriminate against certain groups.

7.2 We will work with employees to understand the barriers that stop individuals from declaring data and try to remove these barriers.

7.3 We will make sure that we keep sensitive information confidential and secure (with only appropriate employees having access, e.g. HR or IT employees where access to the data is necessary for performance of their roles).

7.4 Dorset Council with work with external benchmarking equality organisations to map progress in the organisation around equality, diversity, and inclusion.

**8. Promoting and communicating equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)**

8.1 We will use all available routes to communicate and promote this policy. In addition:

* elected members will promote our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion in their day-to-day work
* Senior Leadership Team will be responsible for overall management and direction of EDI commitments
* the EDI Executive Advisory Panel will oversee this policy and monitor the extent to which we are achieving our commitments
* managers will make sure EDI is core to service delivery and employee management
* all employees will ensure they are aware of this policy and take responsibility to promote EDI and challenge discrimination
* contractors, suppliers, and potential suppliers will be advised of this policy through the tendering and contract review processes and will be expected to adhere to the policy.

**9. Review**

9.1 Dorset Council will continually seek to develop its approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion by identifying good practice in employment and service delivery. This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis by the relevant portfolio holder and taken through the committee process every three years, to ensure that it reflects the latest legalisation, best practice, and other council policies.

**10. Further information**

10.1 Further information on equality, diversity, and inclusion visit

 [Dorset Council/Equality](https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/your-council.aspx?folderIds=5547,275)

10.2 Employees can also contact a Trade Union representative for support and guidance on equality and diversity issues.

Date policy was agreed: 10 December 2019

Policy updated: 12 June 2021 to include Appendix 1

Appendix 1:

Adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism

Dorset Council has joined with the Government and other public bodies across the UK in adopting the internationally recognised International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, as follows:

“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”

To guide IHRA in its work, the following examples may serve as illustrations:

Manifestations might include the targeting of the state of Israel, conceived as a Jewish collectivity. However, criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic. Antisemitism frequently charges Jews with conspiring to harm humanity, and it is often used to blame Jews for “why things go wrong.” It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits.

Contemporary examples of antisemitism in public life, the media, schools, the workplace, and in the religious sphere could, taking into account the overall context, include, but are not limited to:

* Calling for, aiding, or justifying the killing or harming of Jews in the name of a radical ideology or an extremist view of religion.
* Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective — such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions.
* Accusing Jews as a people of being responsible for real or imagined wrongdoing committed by a single Jewish person or group, or even for acts committed by non-Jews.
* Denying the fact, scope, mechanisms (e.g. gas chambers) or intentionality of the genocide of the Jewish people at the hands of National Socialist Germany and its supporters and accomplices during World War II (the Holocaust).
* Accusing the Jews as a people, or Israel as a state, of inventing or exaggerating the Holocaust.
* Accusing Jewish citizens of being more loyal to Israel, or to the alleged priorities of Jews worldwide, than to the interests of their own nations.
* Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.
* Applying double standards by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation.
* Using the symbols and images associated with classic antisemitism (e.g., claims of Jews killing Jesus or blood libel) to characterize Israel or Israelis.
* Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis.
* Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel.

Background:

On 12 December 2016, the UK Government formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism (together with the IHRA ‘illustrative examples’ of antisemitism).

Following its adoption of the definition the UK Government wrote to all local authorities in January 2017 inviting them to adopt the definition and many have done so.

There is no specific offence or definition of antisemitism’ in the law of England and Wales. Instead, offences involving antisemitic hostility are prosecuted with the framework of the legislation dealing with racially or religiously aggravated hate crime.

Case law has decided that Jews are members of a racial group and a religious group. The legal framework for hate crime is contained primarily in the Crime and Disorder Act (CDA) 1998 and the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) 2003.

It was proposed that the council should adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism, together with its illustrative examples, incorporating it as an appendix to the council’s Equality, Diversity & Inclusion policy.

Adoption of the definition signals our support for the elimination of antisemitism and our support for individuals who have experienced from antisemitism.

The definition and examples can be used as a learning resource.

1. See section 4.2 for definition of protected characteristic [↑](#footnote-ref-2)