

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY AT NTCA

1. Policy purpose and scope / key principles

1.1 As an employer, commissioner of services and public body, the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA), is fully committed to complying with the Equality Act 2010 and to fulfilling its statutory duties towards its employees and residents with regards to equality and inclusion.

1.2 However, our ambition extends beyond this. We want North of Tyne to be a welcoming and truly inclusive region in which everyone is able to share in our prosperity, culture and community life regardless of their age, socio-economic background, disability, race, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status or whether they are pregnant or on maternity leave.

1.3 For us to achieve our ambition, promote the wellbeing of our residents and develop a truly inclusive economy which works for all, we will need to tackle the longstanding and emerging inequalities in our region which prevent people from fulfilling their potential. By creating the conditions where people can realise their full potential, the economic growth of our region will be strengthened.

1.3 We know that some people face prejudice and discrimination and that this can be due to fear, a lack of understanding or because of hatred or intolerance. Prejudice and discrimination may manifest itself in the form of lack of respect and contempt, harassment, hate speech or actual violence and may be linked to racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia or hostility to people with a disability. Disabled people may also face barriers which mean that they do not have the same opportunities as non-disabled people.

1.4 We will lead by example in terms of how we promote and support equality and diversity amongst our staff as well as in the wider community. We will foster a culture for our staff where everyone is treated with respect, feels able to speak up and contribute and has their health and wellbeing supported. We will spread these values in the wider community through responsible procurement, working with the supply chain to ensure a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. In addition, we will go further than our statutory duties under the 2010 Equality Act by seeking to implement the Act's socio-economic duty (Part 1 Section 1) so that we will assess whether our policies reduce or increase inequalities caused by socio-economic disadvantage. This will be incorporated into our Equality Impact Assessments.

2. Accountability

2.1 Oversight of the policy, its implementation and monitoring, rests with the Senior Management Team.

2.2 Equality affects and involves everyone and so all NTCA employees, and everyone who represents the NTCA or acts on our behalf, has a personal responsibility to treat everyone with respect, consideration and in a non-discriminatory way.

3. Legal and Policy Framework

The content of this policy is determined by the following :

- The 2010 Equality Act. As a public sector body we are also fully committed to complying with the specific requirements of the Act's Public Sector Equality Duty
- We are also committed to implementing the Socio-Economic Duty under Section 1 of the 2010 Equality Act
- Codes of practice published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

4. Our Commitments

To support our commitment to equality and diversity and achieve our purpose as set out at the start of this policy document, we will:

- meet all our legal equality duties as laid out in the 2010 Equality Act and follow codes of practice published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission;
- undertake and implement the actions from Equality Impact Assessments on our significant decisions, policies, plans, practices and procedures;
- take action to address social, economic and geographical disadvantage;
- regularly monitor, assess and consult on the impact of our policies and (commissioned) services to ensure that they are fair, anti-discriminatory;
- engage people from all communities to help shape our services and ensure people with protected characteristics are listened to and involved in decisions about our projects and programmes;
- proactively embed equality and diversity considerations in everything we do and encourage others to do the same;
- require organisations from whom we are commissioning services to follow our approach to equality;
- build understanding amongst our staff, partners and residents of the needs of different protected groups across North of Tyne;
- strive to make our workforce representative of North of Tyne's diverse population and the residents it serves by ensuring equal access to jobs, training and career progression for all groups in the community;

- treat all employees fairly and provide them with support on how equality affects their work and how they can help deliver services that take everyone's needs in to account.

5. Equality and Diversity in our Employment Practices

5.1 This section applies to all NTCA employees and people seeking work with us

5.2 We will treat our employees and people who apply for our jobs fairly. We want a workforce which reflects the diversity of our region and for NTCA to be a place where people from different backgrounds feel welcomed and enjoy working. We will therefore promote equality of opportunity through all our employment policies and practices, including recruitment, terms and conditions, learning and development, promotion and when ending employment.

To enable this, we will:

- provide equality of opportunity to all applicants and prospective applicants through fair recruitment and selection procedures. We recognise that people with particular protected characteristics, including disabled people or from BAME communities, often experience discrimination in employment and so we will take positive and proportionate action to recruit, retain and provide career opportunities to employees from such groups;
- make reasonable adjustments to enable the employment and retention of employees with disabilities;
- provide all employees with the professional development opportunities needed to attain their full potential to the benefit of themselves and the combined authority;
- ensure that all employees are considered for promotion on the basis of their merits, abilities and skills, and are given equal opportunities to progress within the Authority;
- create a good work / life balance through flexible working arrangements so as to maximise equal opportunities for all employees;
- develop an anti-discriminatory and supportive culture in which employees are aware of their rights and know how to raise issues if they feel discrimination has taken place;
- respond to any allegations of discrimination, victimisation or harassment through appropriate internal processes, including our disciplinary procedures.

6. Equality and Diversity in Procurement and Commissioning

We will ensure that our procurement and commissioning practices fulfil our equality duties and meet our ambitions for equality and diversity.

7. Review

7.1 We will review this policy on a regular basis every two years to ensure that it meets the needs of the Combined Authority and ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

7.2 The policy can be reviewed earlier if any new guidance or legislation is produced before the next scheduled review date.

7.3 Any review of this policy will be carried out in consultation with the recognised trade unions and other relevant parties.