# Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy

2020 - 2022

Under review

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CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COUNCIL

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# 1. Foreword

We are very pleased to introduce City of Wolverhampton Council's new Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy which sets out our commitment for progressing equality, diversity and inclusion in our City over the next three years.

**The basis of our policy** is our commitment to fairness and inclusion, a deep understanding of the communities we serve and valuing the people who work for us. Our commitment to equality and diversity will remain strong and we will endeavour to ensure our commitment is firmly embedded across the whole of the organisation through its services, workforce, policies, practices and procedures. We will aim to deliver services that are equally accessible and responsive to all our customers and to implement robust policies that will ensure equality in the recruitment, training and development of our employees.

Finally, we would like to express our support for and commitment to the strategy and look to forward to seeing positive outcomes and benefits emerge from its implementation.

**Councillor**
**Ian Brookfield**
*Leader*

**Tim Johnson**
*Chief Executive*

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# 2. City of Wolverhampton Council's Equality & Diversity (EDI) Policy

City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to equality of opportunity, elimination of discrimination and promotion of good relations between all people regardless of age, disability, race, ethnic or national origin, sex, gender re-assignment, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status.

We aim to be responsive and open, to demonstrate both quality and equality to our citizens, our service users and our employees. We aim to ensure that people can fully participate in and benefit from the social, cultural, economic and environmental quality of life the city has to offer.

**Our mission:** is to continue to embed the Principles of equality, diversity and inclusion into all aspects of CWC business.

**Our vision:** is to continue to be a leader and role model in equality, diversity and inclusion and to ensure it remains at the heart of everything we do.

We will translate our commitment by promoting equality in all aspects of our work and our responsibilities in respect of:

**Our role as a service provider** - providing a range of facilities and services which meet the differing needs of local people.

**Our role as an employer** - ensuring fair recruitment, having a representative workforce and providing a working environment that is safe, accessible and free from harassment and discrimination.

**Our role as community leaders** - through our democratically elected members, working with communities and partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to improve quality of life for Wolverhampton residents.

The values and behaviours set out within our Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy will help us to build genuine inclusivity and fairness.

The policies and practices of the council will aim to promote an environment free from all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination, whether it is intentional, unintentional, or institutional and that values the diversity of all people.

We will abide by the relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and particularly the General and Specific Equality Duties established by the Act. The Act protects people on the grounds of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

We will continue to work to eliminate discrimination (direct, indirect, discrimination arising from disability and victimisation) and harassment and will make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees.

Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion extends to councillors, staff, service users, including visitors; our facilities including our web-services and those people and organisations when they are operating on our behalf.

## Our commitment to employment

City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to eliminating discrimination and encouraging diversity amongst our workforce. Our aim is for our workforce to be truly representative of all sections of society and that each employee feels respected and able to give of their best. The purpose of this policy is to provide equality and fairness for all in our employment and not to discriminate because of age, disability (including hidden disability), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We oppose all forms of unlawful and unfair discrimination.

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All employees whether part-time, full time or temporary will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training and any other benefit will be based on aptitude and ability.

*We are committed to:*

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 on the grounds of any of the characteristics protected by law and treat breaches of this policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings
- Creating a working environment where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued
- Promoting a culture based on dignity and respect where intimidation, bullying or harassment will not be tolerated
- Ensuring training and development and progression opportunities are available to all staff
- Ensuring reward strategies and people policies are applied in an open and transparent way and employees are rewarded and appointed for their abilities and the role that they carry out
- Good management practice that embraces equality and diversity and appreciates the sound business sense this makes
- Developing a workforce that reflects the local labour market and is representative of the citizens of Wolverhampton
- Complying with the Public Sector Equality duty that requires us to publish relevant and proportionate information to show how we are responding to the equality duty.

## Our commitment to providing inclusive services

The council aims to serve its communities in inclusive and accessible ways that take account of our diversity and the council will use relevant data and information when we develop services.

*We will provide services which are committed to:*

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010 on the grounds of any of the characteristics protected by law and treat breaches of this policy as misconduct which could lead to disciplinary proceedings
- Creating an environment where individual differences and the contributions of all Wulfrunians are recognised and valued
- Promoting a culture based on dignity and respect
- Ensuring our service management practice embraces equality and diversity and appreciates the sound business sense this makes

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**responding to our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.**

- **Ensuring that we offer fair and accessible services**
- **Ensuring that users are involved in the design and development of those services**
- **Using equal opportunities to guide us when the council is commissioning or procuring services.**

## Our commitment to our communities

We are proud of Wolverhampton's rich diversity. Wolverhampton has long been a diverse city and is becoming even more diverse. This is one of the city's greatest strengths. Embracing the diversity of our city will help us build an inclusive organisation that actively recognises the contribution people from different backgrounds make to all aspects of the council's work and the city's communities.

We know our services are at their best when they reflect this diversity and we will use our resources to maximise their suitability for our diverse citizens and customers.

We will work to ensure all council services (and information about them) are available to - and shaped to meet the differing needs of our communities and users are involved in the design and development of those services. The council will continue to work with communities to find a way to support them within the available resources. We are committed to working with our communities to ensure that the city's diversity remains its key strength and we will continue to shape our identity locally and nationally.

## Our commitment to specific equality groups

We will seek to identify where groups or individuals face disadvantage and consider how services and employment practices can best respond.

### *Disabled people*

City of Wolverhampton opposes discrimination based on disability and adopts the Social Model of Disability. As such, we recognise disability arises from society's negative treatment of disabled people; it is not an inevitable consequence of people's impairments. So, equality is possible and can be achieved through removing barriers. We are committed to removing barriers wherever they occur and in relation to education, employment, housing, leisure, training and access to services, information and buildings. We will take opportunities to promote positive statements about disability, including hidden disability through our actions and the images we use. We are committed to consulting and involving disabled people on issues that affect them, rather than with people acting on their behalf. Our aim is to provide appropriate, accessible services for disabled service users. The council's corporate Access Strategy sets out our commitment to work with disabled people

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to prioritise improvements for access to council premises, services and facilities. It also aims to improve access to premises and services within the wider community, including transport. We will improve access to communication by providing information in accessible formats. We will work towards tackling harassment and violence towards disabled people, including people with hidden disabilities and we will aim to monitor and deal rigorously with such hate incidents using our hate incident procedures.

As an employer we will work to provide supportive, flexible and responsive working arrangements that enable disabled employees, including those with hidden disabilities to achieve their full potential. We will take positive steps to become an employer of choice for disabled people. These commitments are affirmed by our commitments as a "Positive About Disabled People" employer. The council recognises that key schemes are needed to translate words and policies to action on the ground. The council has developed a 'buddying scheme' so disabled people who would like to work for the council or exiting employees who might acquire a disability will feel the benefit of the council's principles. The scheme pairs a new disabled employee with an existing disabled employee who informally "shows them the ropes" for the first few weeks of their time with the council. this scheme is of course optional to the disabled person and in addition to the more formal strands of support offered to new recruits. The Buddying Scheme itself is an initiative that the council developed as a result of its work with the council backed Disability and Age Staff Equality forum created by the council in 2016.

### *Lesbian, gay and bisexual people*

City of Wolverhampton Council recognises that lesbian, gay and bisexual people can be a less visible group in our community whose needs often go unidentified and unmet. This is exacerbated by the fear of prejudice, discrimination, harassment and violence, which can prevent lesbian, gay and bisexual people from being "out" about their sexual orientation.

The council is committed to developing consultation and involvement with lesbian, gay and bisexual communities, working with our partner agencies to make sure we recognise all people's needs. We will work to raise awareness and understanding of lesbian, gay and bisexual communities' experiences and needs with council leaders, managers and employees, so that we can deliver high quality services to all customers. The council co-ordinates an LGBT+ Staff Equality Forum and as a result of this engagement, we have developed the new Trans Employee Policy and other policy initiatives. Nevertheless, there is always more work to do and therefore the council has made a public commitment to work against the independent and nationally recognised Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

We also aim to monitor and act to deal with homophobic incidents using our hate incident procedures. Our aim is for lesbian, gay and bisexual people to be able to live, learn, work and socialise in Wolverhampton free from the fear of discrimination, harassment or attack.

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### *People with families and caring responsibilities*

City of Wolverhampton Council recognises that carers do a valuable job for society, yet they are often undervalued. It can be particularly difficult for carers to access and benefit from services, education, training employment and leisure activities. The council is committed to providing support for parents and carers through flexible and responsive services and better access to good affordable childcare and respite care. By operating family friendly employment policies, we will aim to provide flexible working arrangements for council employees, so parents and carers are able to combine their work and caring responsibilities without fearing this will limit their career aspirations. Through its work with the Gender, Maternity and Paternity Staff Equality Forum, the council has also strengthened the support new parents are offered. Staff can volunteer to become a buddy to help support new parents through the stress of achieving a new work-life balance, that includes the care of a baby or adopted child when they return to work. This support can simply be signposting the new parent to different resources or broader discussions of where other resources are available. All the information about the scheme is given to employees when they go on maternity leave.

### *Race*

City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to taking action against unlawful discrimination that people experience because of their race, ethnicity, colour, culture, nationality, asylum seeker or refugee status or because they are from traveller communities. We are also committed to promoting equality and good relations between people of different racial groups, so that we can build a strong and cohesive community.

Our aim is to make sure that all people have the same rights of access to services and employment and benefit from them equally. We recognise Wolverhampton's people are from diverse ethnic communities and we will take responsibility for making sure we meet all needs that arise from this.

We recognise Ethnic Minority Groups are particularly subject to the divisive and harmful effects of race discrimination. This discrimination can arise because of negative stereotypes and attitudes that lead to unfair treatment and disadvantage. Racial harassment and violence also damage people emotionally and physically, limiting life choices and opportunities. The council will take all necessary measures to prevent, tackle and monitor racial harassment and discrimination so that people can live in freedom from fear, violence and inequality. We are committed to working with our partner agencies as part of the Wolverhampton's Safer Wolverhampton Partnership and we will continue to engage with Ethnic Minority colleagues through the council's Race, Religion and Belief Staff Equality Forum. This has been a very well-attended forum and made useful proposals that the council has developed into schemes on the ground. The council's Leadership Programme took a diverse group of up-and-coming staff through a detailed high-quality programme and helped to put colleagues in a position where they can better compete for senior roles in the future.

### *Religious and other beliefs*

The council will provide flexible and responsive services and working practices that are sensitive

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and respectful of religious and other beliefs and practices. We will take positive action to promote understanding and break down barriers between faith and other communities, for instance, working with Wolverhampton Inter Faith Council and acknowledging and celebrating religious festivals and events. We will not tolerate unlawful discrimination on the grounds of religion or other beliefs. We are committed to challenging intolerance and we will aim to monitor and deal with hate incidents motivated by religious hatred. Bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation are unlawful and will not be tolerated at any level in any shape or form.

### *Transgender people*

Like other minority groups, our transgender community may confront bias and discrimination in everyday activities such as when shopping and travelling on public transport, as well as when trying to access employment and services. A person's transgender identity can make them visible and be a target for being ostracised, harassed or assaulted. Our support goes beyond the narrow definition of “gender reassignment” described in the Equality Act to embrace a range of people who may identify themselves with the umbrella term “trans”. Specifically, this would include people who identify as non-binary, gender fluid or gender neutral. We will continue to remove binary gender specific descriptors from our policies and processes to encourage wider trans inclusion.

City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to promoting a safe and supportive environment for transgender people in the community and at work. We will achieve this by working to develop awareness and understanding of transgender issues with our employees and people in Wolverhampton. The council’s work with LGB and Transgender colleagues has grown over the past three years, particularly in relation to the development of the council’s Transgender Policy. The council has organised events over the last two years to mark International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia and the newly refreshed Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, which places a stronger emphasis on transgender issues will help the council drive improvement as the council prepares its submission for a submission to Stonewall in 2021. The work to make a submission to Stonewall will see the council update many of its approaches and policies and will develop a much closer working relationship with the LGBT+ Staff Equality Forum whatever the outcome of the submission.

### *Women and Men*

City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to tackling sex discrimination. Women and Men make a positive contribution to Wolverhampton, yet women disproportionately experience social and economic disadvantage, lack of recognition, discrimination, sexual harassment and domestic violence. We will work to challenge this by making sure our services and employment practices are flexible and responsive to the needs of women and men. We will also take positive action to challenge traditional gender expectations in job roles that limit the aspirations and opportunities of women and men. We will work in partnership with other agencies to tackle sexual harassment and domestic violence. We will work to provide refuge places for those who are experiencing domestic violence and need safe accommodation for themselves and children. We will also provide positive support for our employees who are experiencing domestic violence through employee welfare services and flexible working arrangements.

### *Younger people and Older people*

City of Wolverhampton Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity for younger and older people. We recognise that society has negative attitudes, stereotypes and myths about youth, ageing, younger people and older people and that these attitudes and beliefs can lead to

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both younger people and older people being socially and economically disadvantaged, excluded and marginalised. Younger and older people have the right to equality of opportunity and make a significant and valuable contribution to the city. As an employer, the council is committed to tackling age discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between all our employees. As a service provider we will seek to develop consultation and involvement with younger and older people so that our services, plans and priorities reflect those of the community groups we serve. We will also seek to build positive relationships and understanding between people of all age groups in the community, to build a stronger, cohesive and more caring community.

## Our Policy principles - making them a reality

Moving forward, we want our communities and our workforce to hold us to account and to look to the council as a model of good practice in addressing equality and inclusion.

*We define this by:*

- Leading from the top of the organisation and holding ourselves to account
- Listening to our customers who have experienced inequality and exclusion and considering their differing needs and expectations when making decisions
- Working with our communities to promote and support equality and inclusion at a local level
- Demonstrating that we value and respect diversity in how we all speak and behave every day

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- **Actively considering equality and inclusion in very practical ways, in all that we do – so we can see a difference**
- **Embedding equality analysis into policies, practices, functions, services and strategy development – this to ensure that decisions are made based on the deepest understanding of their implications for equality, diversity and inclusion**
- **Having a workforce that is diverse in the widest possible sense and in which diversity of background and thought is valued**
- **Supporting a workplace where colleagues from different backgrounds work together harmoniously and productively and everyone feels valued**

## Monitoring and review

We will periodically look at the services we offer and new ones we develop to make sure that we are working in a way that advances equal opportunities. We will also review our services to ensure they do not impact negatively on people or groups protected by law and if they do, we will do what we can to stop this.

## Who is responsible for this policy?

This policy is the responsibility of councillors, the chief executive, directors, service heads, managers and staff. The Strategic Executive Board provides the strategic direction for the council's equality and diversity policies and practices. All directors across the council manage the implementation of the council's equality and diversity policies and practices.

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