



Appendix A: Draft Borough of Poole Corporate Equalities Policy

Promoting Equality & Respecting Diversity

We can supply this document in large print, on audio tape, arrange a translation or provide a member of staff to discuss the details.

Please call the Council's Equality Officer, Sue Newell on 01202 633035.

Forward

We, the Borough of Poole, are committed to promoting equality and respecting diversity in our town, our services and our workplace. This policy sets out our aims of achieving this through the Borough of Poole's role as a community leader; as a service provider and as an employer.

Signing up to promoting equality and respecting diversity, which stems from the Council's values, will mean each of us in the organisation improving how we currently undertake our roles. Everyone in Poole has the responsibility to champion equality and diversity. We will encourage the Council's partners and others in the town with whom we work to strive towards the same vision.

Borough of Poole wants to provide services that improve the quality of life of all Poole's residents. To achieve equality of access to our services we are aware they will have to be flexible and responsive to different needs.

As one of Poole's major employers we are committed to providing equality of opportunity to all potential and existing employees throughout their time with the Council. The contribution and talents of our diverse pool of employees are an essential asset to our organisation.

We will not tolerate discriminatory behaviour, harassment, victimisation or bullying from anyone.

We want to be held to account for the promises set out in this document and we are looking forward to turning our commitments into a reality for Poole.

Councillor Ann Stribley
Member for Social Inclusion & Equalities

John McBride
Chief Executive

Contents

1.0	<u>Introduction</u>	4
1.1	<u>The Council's Commitment to Promoting Equality & Respecting Diversity</u>	4
1.2	<u>Who the Policy Relates To</u>	5
2.0	<u>Why Are We Doing This?</u>	
2.1	<u>Understanding and meeting the needs of the community</u>	5
2.1.1	<u>The demographic make up of Poole</u>	5
2.1.2	<u>Listening to our community</u>	8
2.2	<u>Meeting Our Legislative Duties</u>	7
2.3	<u>Achieving Our Priorities</u>	8
3.0	<u>How the Council Will Implement the Corporate Equalities Policy</u>	8
4.0	<u>Whose Responsibility It Is</u>	10
4.1	<u>Political Leadership</u>	10
4.2	<u>Officer Structures</u>	10
5.0	<u>How We will Pay for Equalities Work</u>	11
6.0	<u>How We Will Measure Our Progress</u>	11
6.1	<u>Internal Monitoring</u>	11
6.2	<u>External Monitoring</u>	12
6.3	<u>Publishing the Results</u>	12
7.0	<u>Complaints Processes</u>	12
8.0	<u>We Welcome Your Views</u>	13
8.1	<u>Additional Corporate Equalities Guidance</u>	13

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Council's Commitment to Promoting Equality & Respecting Diversity

The Borough of Poole's Corporate Equality Policy (CEP) outlines its vision for positively promoting equality and respecting diversity in the community, in service delivery and employment practice. This commitment stems from the Council's values of providing 'equality' of opportunity for all, as set out in [Striving for Excellence - our Corporate Strategy](#).

The Council wants to support social justice by tackling inequality and social exclusion. Borough of Poole recognises that some groups and individuals in society continue to be discriminated against and often suffer multiple oppression. All adults, young people and children have the right to use the facilities and services we provide. Meeting the needs of [equality groups](#) means that we recognise that we may need to deliver services differently.

The Council will strive to:

- Champion equalities and diversity in the community and with our partners
- Recognise and value the diversity of Poole's visitors, residents and those we employ to promote a stronger, more active and vibrant community
- Promote fair and equal access to services, and employment and career development opportunities
- Improve participation of all equalities groups in decisions that affect their lives
- Identify and eliminate discriminatory behaviour and harassment
- Integrate equalities issues into the mainstream business planning and service delivery of the organisation.

By improving performance against the equalities agenda the Council can improve:

- People's quality of life
- Access to and take up of its services and employment opportunities
- Satisfaction of its service users and employees
- Poole's sense of community and all residents' sense of belonging
- The efficient and effective use of the Council's resources.

This document sets out the foundations on which:

- Councillors and Council Officers will provide leadership by example to the community and partners
- Service Units will plan and provide services based on the needs of the community
- Poole residents and users of Council services can expect quality, relevant and fair access to services
- Council employees understand their roles and responsibilities with regard to the equalities and diversity agenda, as well as understand what can be expected of the organisation for which they work
- Partners, including statutory agencies, private and voluntary sectors, know what is expected of them when working with the Council.

1.2 Who the Policy Relates To

'Equalities groups' and communities are groups of people who have experienced or are vulnerable to discrimination or inequality. These include:

- Black and minority ethnic people
- Disabled people
- Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals
- Older people
- People of different faiths or religious beliefs
- Transgender people
- Women
- Younger people

Some people may be part of larger groups, such as Gypsies and Travellers, refugees and asylum seekers or children and young people 'looked after' by the local authority. Discrimination also occurs for a range of other reasons, including social and economic status; marital status; caring responsibilities; trade union activities and past criminal convictions. People may identify with more than one equalities group or face multiple discrimination as a result of gender and ethnicity.

2.0 Why Are We Doing This?

2.1 Understanding and meeting the needs of the community

Of the 137,900 people who live in Poole, many will be touched directly or indirectly by one or more equality issue. By understanding who makes up our community and workforce and what concerns them we can begin to plan for and address their needs, ultimately improving life opportunities for everyone.

2.1.1 The demographic make up of Poole

- **Poole's population is ageing.** People over 50 years represent almost 40% of the total population. The number of those aged 50-64 and 65-84 will increase by around 6% and 7% by 2011. The most marked rise will be for those aged 85+, which is set to rise to over 5,000 people by 2011 (by approximately 28%).
- **The small number of people from black and ethnic minorities in Poole, currently just over 4% of the total population, is rising and is younger than the majority population.**

In 2004/05 year there were 102 racist incidents, ranging from verbal abuse, graffiti and violence, reported to the agencies in Poole.

- **4,500 people in Poole claim disability living allowance.** A similar number of people have registered with Social Services¹ as having either a visual, hearing, physical, learning disability or mental health problems. In the 2001 Census 18.5% of the population (25,500 people) identified themselves as having a limiting long-term illness (LLTI). Over half of these were aged over 65 and 23.9% of the white Irish community are affected.
- **Women outnumber men in Poole by 71,700 to 65,800.** The gap widens with the older age brackets. There are 2738 women over 85 compared to 1235 men because of the greater life expectancy of women (Mid Year Estimates 2004).

The number of reports of domestic violence has increased from 150 in April 2001 to 220 in March 2004. The majority of victims in 2003/04 were women aged between 15-24 years old.

BoP's workforce is made up of 67.7% of women. They make up 41.2% of BoP's top 5% of earners.

- **Almost two thirds of the Poole's residents said they were Christian,** 16% stated they had no religion, for 8% religion was not stated, and the remaining 1% belong to other denominations (2001 Census).

There is a strong faith sector in Poole that offers support and services to people of many different backgrounds.

- **Central Government estimates that 5-7% of the UK population is lesbian, gay or bisexual.** Poole's neighbour Bournemouth is said to have the 5th largest lesbian and gay community in the UK.

A national TUC survey suggests that as many as 44% of lesbians and gay men have experienced discrimination in the work place.

More statistical information, including where in the town is particularly affected, is available from the [Statistics for Poole](#) webpage.

Central Government, the equalities commissions, Unions and voluntary sector organisations also provide us with evidence of how particular groups are affected by a particular issue nationally. BoP will monitor how national concerns for all the groups play out locally so that we can begin to prioritise and address them in our services and employment practice.

2.1.2 Listening to our community

Listening to equality groups in Poole can help us understand the particular requirements of children and young people, older people, women, men, transgender people, black and minority ethnic people, people of different faiths, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people who live, work and visit Poole. This can help us to design and deliver our policies and services and improve their quality of life.

¹ Many people do not register their disability so this is unlikely to be a true reflection of the number of disabled people in Poole

One of the headline messages from Poole Partnership's consultation in 2002 was that people want to better understand each other's culture and needs. They want Poole to be a community where all people respect diversity and care for one another.

Some of the common themes that have emerged from consultation with equalities groups, include:

- The importance of providing information in an easy and accessible way
- The built environment needs to be accessible to all people
- Concerns about personal safety and reporting prejudice incidents to agencies
- There are particular services they would like to access but more generally it is important that service providers understand and respond to specific needs in the design and delivery of services
- There is a need for specific support to be provided in the community and workplace to reduce a sense of isolation and the lack of understanding.

We will continue to develop ways to make our consultation on decision-making and planning genuinely accessible and encourage people to get involved with shaping our services.

2.2 Meeting Our Legislative Duties

We acknowledge our responsibilities under existing and evolving equalities legislation. For example, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 include duties to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Eliminate harassment (of disabled people)
- Promote good relations or positive attitudes between different people and communities
- Encourage (disabled) people to participate in public life

We expect our approach to go beyond the minimum legislative standard. We will apply these duties to all equalities groups² so that they become an integral part of the Council's policies and practices.

2.3 Achieving Our Priorities

As a service provider, Borough of Poole has committed to achieving 'equality' and 'public focus' in its [core values](#). We recognise that providing services that are relevant, fair and accessible will help achieve our priorities.

As an employer, BoP's [People Strategy](#) reinforces our commitment to equality of opportunity in employment policy and practice. It outlines our aim to recruit and retain a capable and talented workforce. Key to this will be harnessing the diversity of talent and contributions made by all our employees.

² legislation is likely to evolve to include similar duties for gender and possibly the other equalities strands

Examples of how Borough of Poole can achieve its priorities by addressing equalities issues include:

BoP's Priorities	How the CEP could support the priorities
Supporting young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote diversity & cultural awareness in early years providers, schools, libraries & youth activities - Tackle bullying with children & young people
Vibrant economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Undertake an Equal Pay Audit for our employees - Take action so BoP's workforce more closely reflects the diversity of Poole's population
Clean, green & safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with partners to increase prejudice reporting - Improve the support to victims of such incidents
Strong sense of community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Celebrate cultural diversity through local events - Integrate equalities into Poole's Local Area Agreement
Health & well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Make open spaces more accessible to disabled people - Increase participation & retention of people from equalities groups on adult learning courses

3.0 How the Council Will Implement the Corporate Equalities Policy

As a Community Leader we will:

- Be a lead agency for reporting & supporting people through 'prejudice incidents'
- Encourage the participation of all groups of people in BoP's & partners decision-making processes
- Celebrate diversity & promote the contribution made by all groups of people to the economic & cultural life of Poole
- Develop & strengthen the voluntary & community sector, & increase the support local people give to each other

As a Provider of Services we will:

- Treat all people fairly & courteously, with sensitivity to their needs
- Consult widely with interested parties to inform how we design & deliver services so that are relevant, fair & accessible for those who visit, live & work in Poole

- Listen to the views of the community & support them to find solutions to issues they face
- Provide clear & concise information about our services, & provide free interpreting, alternative formats & translations when appropriate
- Organise events & meetings that are accessible to all & make all Council buildings accessible where practicable
- Monitor & review policies & services to identify intentional or unintentional discrimination, using [Equality Impact Assessments](#)
- Undertake equalities monitoring of service users & complaints where appropriate
- Assess whether contractors & partners meet BoP's expected equality standards
- Enable service users to feedback or raise complaints about our services through a clear & easy to use [compliments/complaints process](#)
- Integrate equality considerations into service design & business planning & report to Elected Members regularly

As an Employer we will:

- Integrate equality issues into employee policy & practice
- Recruit & retain a capable & talented workforce which is committed to delivering excellent services to the community of Poole
- Have a fair & consistent recruitment & selection process
- Seek to ensure the authority is representative of the people it serves, taking positive action to support under-represented groups. This includes fulfilling our commitment to '[Positive about disabled people standard](#)'
- Provide fair & competitive pay & terms & conditions, which will be reviewed through an Equality Pay Audit, & offer opportunities for flexible working to promote work life balance
- Skill managers to meet their responsibilities to colleagues & their services
- Train all employees appropriately so that they understand the organisation's expectations & their obligations & contribution to the equalities agenda
- Provide equal access to skills & training for all employees
- Harness the diverse backgrounds, talent & potential of all employees to develop a productive & supportive environment in which organisational goals are met efficiently & effectively

- Promote a positive working environment where everyone is treated with respect & dignity, & where any form of bullying, harassment & victimisation is dealt with quickly, appropriately & effectively. Employees will feel supported to challenge inappropriate language & behaviour ([see Dignity at Work Policy](#))
- Seek to make adjustments to an existing post or look for alternative employment for employees who become affected by ill health or disability (See [Redeployment Assistance Pack](#))
- Consult with staff, as well as reflect on equalities issues that affect them in EDIs
- Extend equalities monitoring of personnel & training practices

4.0 Whose Responsibility It Is

Every Elected Member and employee of the Council has a responsibility to treat members of the public, service users, other Elected members and fellow employees with respect and not discriminate. Depending on someone's role they may have the following additional responsibilities:

4.1 Political Leadership

The Cabinet is responsible for approving and monitoring the implementation of the CEP and the supporting [Corporate Equalities Action Plan](#).

Overview Groups will support Service Units in the implementation of the CEP and [CEAP](#) and Scrutiny Committees will monitor and review performance against them.

4.2 Officer Structures

The Corporate Management Team is responsible for providing an organisational steer on the equalities agenda. It is also responsible for supporting Service Units in the implementation of the equalities agenda and monitoring their performance. A Policy Director has a lead role in supporting the [Improvement and Policy Officer - Equalities](#), ensuring the CEP is implemented and being an ambassador for equalities issues.

Heads of Service, as managers of services and employees, are responsible for implementing, monitoring and reviewing their Service Unit's contribution to the equalities agenda.

The Managing Diversity Working Group's³ role is to shape and share the Council's equalities policy and practice. It should also scrutinise its implementation.

³ MDWG is chaired by a Policy Director; has representatives from each Service Unit and the Union; and is attended by the Chief Executive

The Improvement and Policy Officer - Equalities role is to co-ordinate, support and monitor the development of the corporate equalities policy and practice. They provide advice and guidance to Service Units on how to integrate equalities issues into business planning & service delivery.

All employees & Members are responsible for the equalities policy. All employees must promote equal opportunities & work in a positive way to include people from different backgrounds. They also have a responsibility to report [prejudice incidents](#) witnessed or received at work or in the community.

5.0 How We Will Pay for Equalities Work

Most work on this agenda is about making sure all services and employment opportunities are accessible to everyone. As a result we will plan for the costs of it through annual budget setting processes.

We will target resources for groups and communities which are most excluded and will encourage positive action to overcome disadvantage, discrimination and deprivation.

Some equalities works will be undertaken on a short-term and/or small-scale project basis. Funding these may be planned as part of the annual budget planning cycle or could be funded through external organisations.

Some costs are large (such as making all Council buildings accessible) so they will need to be planned and budgeted for. The works will be prioritised and carried out over several years to spread the costs.

6.0 How We Will Measure Our Progress

We believe that promoting equalities is a continuous process and that we will need to continually measure our progress, review and scrutinise action plans.

6.1 Internal Monitoring

- Review and update Service Unit's contribution to the [CEAP](#) annually. The Managing Diversity Working Group will scrutinise progress
- Portfolio Holders⁴ will monitor and review progress against the [CEAP](#) and Corporate Equalities Performance Indicators at Performance Forums twice a year. Where there is a risk of Service Units not achieving equalities indicators these will be monitored more regularly. Cabinet will receive half yearly reports to monitor progress.
- Develop, set and review targets corporately and within services to demonstrate that progress is being achieved. BoP has committed to reaching Level 3 of the [Equality Standard](#) by March 2008.

⁴ Elected Members who oversee a particular area of the Council's work

- Monitor and review, where appropriate, who uses our services and makes complaints, according to their age, disability, gender and race, and where appropriate, faith or religious belief and/or sexual orientation
- Monitor our employment practice for staff in post; applications for employment, training and promotion; those who receive corporate training; those who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of performance assessments; those involved in grievance procedures; those who are subject to disciplinary procedures; and those who leave the Council's employment
- Develop our community and workforce profiles to compare to our monitoring data

6.2 External Monitoring

In 2005, the Audit Commission assessed BoP as 3 star rating and improving well. As part of future external [Corporate Performance Assessments](#) and annual service inspections, it will increasingly expect us to demonstrate an [understanding of the different communities](#) in Poole and that we are meeting their needs.

6.3 Publishing the Results

We will develop, publish and share information on the work we are undertaking and progress made.

7.0 Complaints Processes

We will identify areas for improvement from our internal and external monitoring. If we identify find that services are likely to have an unequal impact on some groups we will take steps to reduce the impact, or change the policy or service. If, however, problems do arise the following steps can be taken:

Complaints about our service

- Users of our service should try to resolve the matter with the Service Unit concerned in the first instance. If they have tried and been unable to, they may wish to make a formal complaint through the [Council's complaints process](#). (Our Customer's Count leaflets are also available at main receptions).

Prejudice incidents

- Employees and members of the public are encouraged to [report verbal abuse, graffiti, violence or any other incident](#) that they think is related to their own or someone else's age, disability, gender, race, religious belief or faith, or sexual orientation. These are known locally as '*prejudice incidents*'. The person making the report can be either a victim or a witness. A report can be made to any Council

employee⁵, who has a duty to report and ensure that incidents are investigated following the current guidance in the Council's [racist incident protocol](#).

Complaints about employment practice

- Employees should report any unresolved employment issues relating to equalities to their immediate line manager. If this is not appropriate they can approach the Principal Personnel Manager; [the Employee Counselling Service](#); [a buddy](#); [chaplain to the Council](#); a union representative; the Policy Director lead on equalities, or the Chief Executive.

This policy can be used to highlight the rights of employees or people who use services when dealing with a complaint. It can also make clear to employees and people who use services that we will not tolerate harassment or discriminatory behaviour against other employees or other service users.

8.0 We Welcome Your Views

This policy will be reviewed after three years. In the meantime we welcome comments and suggestions from local residents, businesses, communities, the voluntary sector or other interested parties on our equalities work. To tell us what you think about this policy or for further information please contact Sue Newell on 01202 633035, minicom 01202 743636 or e-mail performance@poole.gov.uk.

Information about the BoP's procedures for following up and dealing with prejudice incidents can be obtained from the [Community Safety Manager](#) on 01202 633027.

8.1 Additional Corporate Equalities Policies and Guidance

The Council has additional equalities policies and guidance that support the CEP. BoP's Managing Diversity Policy, which relates to employment, and the [Race Equality Scheme](#) grow from the aims set out here. We will develop a Disability Equality Scheme by December 2006 and a Gender Equality Scheme by April 2007 to outline our specific commitments to these equality groups.

The [Corporate Equalities Action Plan](#) (CEAP) Nov 2005 - Nov 2008, which also accompanies this policy, outlines what each service unit has committed to do on the equalities agenda for the coming three years.

The following equalities guidance is also available⁶:

- Accessible Meetings Checklist
- Accessible Communications Guidance
- **Total Communications Strategy**
- Corporate Equality Impact Assessment Guidance
- Corporate Equalities Monitoring Guidance – draft
- Racist and homophobic reporting protocol
- Timetable of DDA improvements

⁵ The Police, other statutory and other voluntary agencies are also able to take reports

⁶ This information is available to employees on the Equalities Loop page