

# **Equality Information Report 2017**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

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## Introduction

Equality remains at the heart of what we do at Epping Forest District Council to ensure that everyone who lives, works or visits our district can access our services and benefit from our work.

As a community leader we continuously strive to set high standards and promote values of consideration and understanding, helping to influence attitudes and acceptance.

Our work is underpinned by legislation with specific responsibilities for local government. This legislation requires us to produce an annual report of our work to progress equality.

This report contains our update for 2016-2017 which shows what progress we are making and gives evidence that we are complying with our statutory duties. Just some of the examples of the changes that we have made or services that we have delivered over the past year are included. As an overview of our work, it doesn't necessarily contain information about everything we do. As an organisation committed to equality much of what we do is routine and part of our every-day experience.

**Our ways of working mean that Equality is integrated, embedded and taken into consideration whenever we make changes or introduce something new.**

We hope you enjoy our report.

# Statement of commitment to equality

## Short Statement

*Epping Forest District Council is committed to treating everyone equally and fairly according to their needs*

## Full Statement

- Epping Forest District Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals and groups are treated with respect and are valued equally
- We will endeavour to make our services accessible to everyone
- We will endeavour to eliminate unlawful discrimination through our services and employment opportunities
- We will consult and involve people from our community where appropriate in the design of our services
- We will collect information about our customers where necessary to ensure our services are accessible and that we are providing the right services
- We will endeavour to promote understanding and good relations between communities
- We will continue to take steps to address under-representation and promote diversity in our workforce profile
- We will publish information about our equality work
- We will use our procurement opportunities to drive equality
- We will ensure appropriate resources are available to meet our statutory equality responsibilities;
- We will make sure that appropriate equality and diversity training is provided for all Councillors and staff of the Council.

# Equality Act

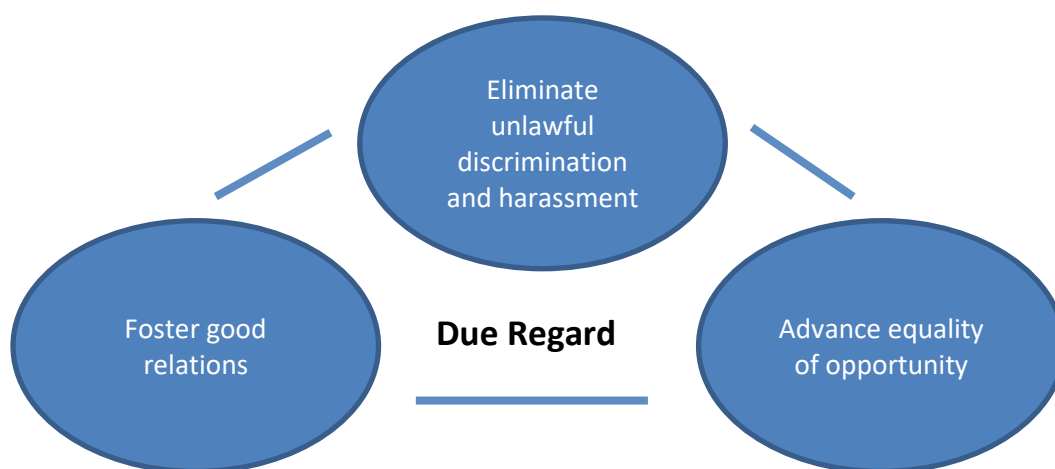
*(also known as the general equality duty' and s149)*

The introduction of the Equality Act in 2010 provided stronger protection against discrimination and greater clarity for employers, businesses and public sector providers about their responsibilities.

Some groups of people can be disadvantaged in society by the way their needs are overlooked. These people are offered protection under the Equality Act. The Equality Act requires us to consider their needs and requirements when carrying out our business as an employer and service provider.

These groups are known as 'protected groups' with 'protected characteristics' which are: age, disability, faith or religion, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and sexual orientation

We have a 'public sector equality duty' to have due regard to the need to:



....setting an expectation that public services must treat everyone with dignity and respect

### **What does 'due regard' mean?**

It means that we must always think about the three public sector equality duty aims as part of our normal business and decision making, removing disadvantage and encouraging participation. We must consider whether the aims of the public sector equality duty can be progressed by the services and activities we are delivering.

### **And the definition of 'equality of opportunity'?**

We must:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages
- Take steps to meet different needs
- Encourage participation when it is disproportionately low

### **What about 'fostering good relations'?**

This means promoting understanding between different groups of people

## Our equality initiatives and progress

As well as our public sector equality duty we have two additional duties which are:

- To set equality objectives at least every four years that will help us to further the aims of the public sector equality duty
- Publish information annually to show the progress we are making to deliver these objectives

In 2016 we set the following objectives to take us forward to 2020:

1. Integrate the Council's public sector equality duty into our partnership working
2. Apply robust equality requirements in commissioning, procurement and contract management
3. Develop our capacity so that our employees have the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver our plans
4. Improve and develop equality in our business activities

An action plan was developed in order to achieve against these objectives and our Corporate Equality Working Group meet regularly to coordinate progress. In addition the Councils elected members monitor progress on a six monthly basis. These objectives have been fully achieved representing significant progress to further the aims of the public sector equality duty.

Overleaf we have shared some of the achievements from this action plan.

## **Integrating our equality duty into partnership working**

We have included our equality requirements in terms of reference or service level agreements as appropriate of new partnerships. We have also reflected our public sector equality duty in governance documentation relating to partnerships listed in the Corporate Partnerships Register.

## **Applying robust equality requirements in commissioning, procurement and contract management**

We have reviewed our procurement strategy to ensure it reflects 'buying better outcomes' mainstreaming equality considerations in procurement guidance requirements.

## **Equality Impact Assessment**

For every activity or new initiative that we work on we need to test and analyse the nature and impact of what we are doing to ensure that we have due regard to the 'public sector equality duty'. All colleagues throughout the Council have been provided with an assessment tool to help them carry out this analysis and identify the potential impact. Should there be an adverse impact on any 'protected group' an action plan is agreed to mitigate these impacts.

This analysis has always been conducted however we have enhanced our training and tools to further improve the assessment.

## **Community grant decisions**

An Equality Impact Assessment report is now required for all community grant decisions, completed as part of the grant allocation decision making process. The Grant Aid criteria ensure no unfair restrictions on membership/ participation is acceptable in terms of groups applying for funding against all of the protected equality characteristics. Advice is given in any scenario that doesn't meet the criteria.



## **Work experience for young people**

We are continuing to work with members of the public and managers to respond to work experience requests and in 2016/17 we were able to provide sixteen placements to Year 10 students from in and around the district. One of these placements were so successful that the candidate came back to do some additional work for the department during the school summer holiday.

We offer apprenticeship opportunities for school/college leavers and in the 2017 cohort we have taken on 9 new Business Administration apprentices and 1 Multi Skilled apprentice. As with our 2013 cohort, all of our 2015 apprentices (who completed the two year training programme) were successful in obtaining permanent opportunities within the Council.

Members of the HR team along with our apprentices attend the annual Epping Forest College Careers fayre and do our best to publicise the Council as a potential work place for young people on completion of their studies. For younger students thinking about what options to study, we offer advice on potential careers within the Council and what the exam expectations are.

For the second year running, we have worked with the Change 100 organisation and provided a twelve week work experience placement for a University student with a disability. This placement provides the Intern with valuable work experience which will hopefully help improve opportunities for them in the world of employment.

## **Reducing the impacts of isolation for older people**

In October and November 2016 we held Stay Well winter events in Ongar, Chigwell and Loughton which were attended by 170 older people. Organised in conjunction with West Essex Clinical Commissioning group the events delivered key messages to help residents stay healthy, well and safe.

Attendees met over 20 local services including our Care and Repair team which helps vulnerable people to remain at home in greater comfort, warmth and security. The Care and Repair team offer a wide range of services including a handy person and assistance with disabled adaptations. For further information and details contact C.A.R.E., Housing Directorate, Epping Forest District Council, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex, CM16 4BZ. Telephone 01992 564086 or [www.information@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:www.information@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

Also in attendance at the events were Alzheimer's Society, Age UK, Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF), Community Nurses and the Fire Service.

### **Epping Forest Dementia Action Alliance**

In May 2016 we launched Epping Forest Dementia Action Alliance. The alliance has one key aim; to bring about a society wide response to dementia. It encourages and supports communities and organisations to take practical actions, enabling people to live well with dementia and build community resilience. The alliance has an independent chair and is encouraging organisations to join. To date 13 organisations have joined and produced their own key actions. The alliance has a page on the Dementia Action Alliance website highlighting these actions.

[http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/local\\_alliances/16879\\_epping\\_forest\\_district\\_dementia\\_action\\_alliance](http://www.dementiaaction.org.uk/local_alliances/16879_epping_forest_district_dementia_action_alliance)

A simple guide for organisations on how to join our Dementia Action Alliance has been produced along with a leaflet to promote and raise awareness. For more information, or if you would like to become a member please contact Karen Murray at [kmurray@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:kmurray@eppingforestdc.gov.uk) or call 01992 564222.

### **Dementia Friends**

We have created 313 'Dementia Friends' through delivery of awareness sessions. A Dementia Friend learns a little bit more about what it's like to live with dementia and then turns that understanding into action - anyone of any age can be a Dementia Friend. For more information and details on awareness sessions in your local area please visit [www.dementiafriends.org.uk](http://www.dementiafriends.org.uk)

### **Senior Safety Day**

Our Community Services team have delivered a number of Senior Safety days. Aimed at our senior residents, the events provide residents with vital tools and knowledge they need to keep safe in and around the home and they are encouraged to share what they have learnt with their families, friends and neighbours. The events continue to be well attended and received. One resident who attended an event said 'it was a wake-up call making people aware of scams' another said that she was 'overwhelmed by the speakers'.

## **Disability Inclusion Project**

The Epping Forest Inclusion project has secured funding of £38,110 from Action for Children to provide a wide range of sport, physical and leisure activities for children and young people with disabilities until October 2018. The funding will enable the co-ordination and delivery of a range of sessions and activities meaning we have been able to engage with children and young people with a wide range of interests. The project not only benefits the child with a disability but the whole family. The inclusion of siblings at our holiday activities has been crucial for parents. Many parents do not often have the choice or opportunity to send siblings to the same activity as their child with disabilities. Having a child with a disability can often stretch the family unit, small things like being able to do activities together can prevent this. To date 624 individual children and young people with disabilities have accessed this project.

The project has also successfully secured £12,312 capital funding from Essex County Council to purchase trampolines that will be based at Debden Park School and used to benefit children and young people with disabilities.

## **Making sure our employees have the skills and knowledge to serve our community**

We continue to provide relevant and up to date Equality and Diversity training for our managers and employees. The aim of this training is to ensure that equality is embedded in everything we do, from making decisions on policies, budgets and service provision to creating awareness and correcting behaviour so that staff and customers have the same equality of opportunity and that Epping Forest District Council is a safe and dignified place to work.

Our training provider regularly updates the course to ensure that it keeps up to date with case law, working with our Learning and Development Manager to ensure that any issues raised as a concern within the Council are addressed in the course.

## Looking forward

We are currently in the process of agreeing our new Corporate Plan for 2018-2023.

Our Corporate Plan sets out how we will work to achieve a prosperous district with a high quality of life for everyone. It's the cornerstone of our transformational plans to build an even more confident, capable Council. We aim to put our customers at the heart of everything we do and ensure that we deal with the things that matter the most to our local communities.

In view of the fact we are setting our new strategic aims and objectives we thought it would be timely to look at how we can enhance our Corporate Equalities action plan.

We will consult with a number of potentially vulnerable groups who may be at risk of discrimination and asking for their views. We are keen to reach out to and listen to these groups to understand what matters most to them so that we can ensure we are focussing on the key things they see as priorities. Our priority is to ensure that all of our services and facilities at Epping Forest District Council are completely accessible for everyone.

These consultations will take place throughout the coming months and the feedback received will help us to shape our new Equality Objectives, in line with our new Corporate Plan for 2018-2023.

We will publish an update on our Equality activities in September 2018.