

Draft Essex County Council Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy Statement

1. Introduction

We are committed to developing a culture that embeds the effective management of equality, diversity and inclusion in all we do.

We understand the importance of closely engaging with our partners to enable a system level response to challenging inequality and promoting fairness.

We recognise the importance of tackling discrimination and advancing equality between different groups in the community, whilst also addressing the diverse needs of individuals.

We celebrate the diversity of Essex and are striving to promote and reflect that diversity within our organisation. We work to treat all employees and job seekers fairly and without discrimination.

This policy statement describes how we will:

- Respond to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 as part of its core business
- Fulfil our system leadership role in tackling deprivation and inequality

2. Our Responsibilities

The Equality Act 2010 places a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on us to have 'Due Regard' in all of our functions to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

This applies to the following Protected Characteristics: *age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership*. Adhering to the PSED ensures that our decisions are sound and fair.

3. Our Commitments

Everyone's Essex, our plan for levelling up the county 2021-2025, sets out our areas of focus over the next four years. It articulates our aim to achieve better outcomes for Essex residents and outlines how we can work better as an organisation to meet our ambitions.

Three themes have been identified – Renewal, Equality, Ambition – to ensure we are well placed to address the challenges ahead. Alongside these themes, that run through everything we do, we are focused on four areas where outcomes really matter for the quality of life of our residents.

They are:

- The economy
- The environment
- Children and families
- Promoting health, care and wellbeing for all the parts of our population who need our support

Our equality objectives for 2022-25 are aligned to Everyone's Essex and outline how we will ensure that fairness, diversity and inclusion are central to everything we do over the next four years:

- 1. We are committed to addressing inequalities and levelling up life chances for our residents and advancing equality of opportunity for our communities.**

- 2. We are committed to being an employer that values difference and attracts, recruits and retains talented individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds. We will support and encourage our employees to be the best they can be at work and provides them with an employment deal that is fair and inclusive.**

Specific areas of focus have been identified under each of these objectives to demonstrate the impacts being made. These will be kept under review and we will monitor and report on progress. **Updated equality objectives will be published here:** [Equality and diversity: Our approach - Essex County Council](#)

4. Meeting our commitments and responsibilities

Through our delivery of services we will:

- Engage with and understand the needs of our service users to ensure access is fair, and that we can assess the impact of our decisions by protected characteristic mitigating any adverse impacts where possible.¹
- Ensure they are appropriate and responsive to need by assessing and measuring impact based on robust evidence.
- Ensure they are delivered by people who are adequately trained
- Involve service users and representative groups in decision making through consultation and engagement.
- Ensure that our complaints procedure is open, accessible and transparent so that discriminatory behaviour can be dealt with.
- Provide clear strategies and policies to advance equality and promote inclusion.

As an employer we will:

- Create a workforce in which people feel comfortable and valued.
- Ensure all employees and job applicants are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.
- Promote people's right to freedom from harassment and bullying in the workplace, and promote equality of opportunity.
- Provide training to make sure employees and Members understand the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda and how it applies to their role.
- Monitor and understand our workforce through recruitment and staff surveys and work towards it being representative of the communities we serve, and that satisfaction levels can be measured by protected characteristic.

Through working with partners across the system we will:

- Support partners to align, enable and deliver the equality and inclusion policies and practices required to effectively address deprivation and inequality.
- Drive innovative partnership initiatives relating to equality and inclusion that help to integrate and improve local services.
- Ensure clear leadership and governance is in place to enable a focused and sustained approach to tackling inequality.
- Ensure our work to reduce inequality is underpinned by research, analysis and effective methodologies.
- Share knowledge, resources and services to provide solutions to agreed equality and inclusion priorities delivering benefits to partners.

¹ This may mean that service areas will need to ensure that data collection methods are in place that enable them to differentiate performance in relation to the groups covered by these characteristics.

- Communicate with and engage partners in the delivery of our equality and inclusion priorities.

We aim to embed these commitments in all our policies, procedures, day-to-day practices, and external relationships.