



Equality & Diversity Policy

Introduction

Promoting equality, respecting diversity and encouraging more independent communities while protecting the most vulnerable

South Holland Council recognises that different people have different needs and our aim is to provide services that can respond to those needs. Our residents and businesses should have fair and equal access to our services.

We recognise, respect and value diversity within our workforce as an asset in meeting the diverse needs of our service users.

As a local authority we have a variety of roles; as a provider of services, a regulator, a commissioner and contractor, an employer and a community partner. We need to make sure that when we provide services or take action, we do so in a way which does not discriminate unfairly or which is unlawful.

In promoting a sense of fairness and equality of opportunity, we also want to build a strong sense of belonging and pride for everyone who lives, works or visits the district. We want people of all backgrounds to feel valued and be able to fully participate in, and contribute to, building a strong and independent community in South Holland.

What is our aim?

South Holland Council is committed to promoting fair and equal access to services and equality in employment. We recognise need to advance equality of opportunity for the people we serve and employ and ensure we eliminate discrimination, harassment or victimisation of all, especially in regards to our differing characteristics

These differences include:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race including nationality and colour
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Why are we doing it?

This policy supports our priorities of developing safer, stronger, healthier and more independent communities while protecting the most vulnerable and supporting South Holland and its residents to develop and thrive.

Understanding our residents, who they are and what they need, helps us to do all we can in the current economic climate to maintain services that they tell us are important.

Under the Equality Act 2010, we have a public sector duty to:

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

This policy sets out our ambitions in line with the Equality Act 2010, full details of which are available in [The Act](#) and we will continue to work to the requirements of this Act and any changes.

How will we do it?

As a service provider we will:

- Consult with interested parties to ensure our services meet the needs of those who live, work or visit the borough.
- Integrate and embed equalities into service design and delivery.

- Assess the impacts of changes we make to policies or services and mitigate against anything which is potentially negative.
- Arrange, where appropriate, alternative communication support including BSL, large print, Braille, interpreting and translation.
- Ensure our buildings are accessible.
- Continue to offer and deliver services in an accessible way including using the latest technology.
- Take action to remove discrimination and inequality when we deliver services.
- Make our services easy for everyone to use.
- Engage people from all communities to help shape our services.
- Make sure others providing services on our behalf comply with our commitments.
- Take action to address social, economic and geographical disadvantage.
- Aim to have a workforce which reflects the diverse communities we serve.
- Treat all employees fairly.
- Tackle bullying and harassment.
- Provide employees with training on how equality affects their work and how they can help deliver services that take everyone's needs into account.

As an employer we will:

- Be committed to treating all employees (and applicants for employment), fairly and on merit, and to the development and implementation of employment policies, procedures and practices that do not discriminate unlawfully on the grounds of the protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010.
- Ensure that all policies, procedures and guidelines comply with the Equality Act 2010 and create a working environment that encourages diversity, respects difference and treats employees with dignity at all times.
- Be committed to providing equal access to training and development within available resources.

- Regularly monitor employee and applicant data and review the composition of the workforce.

As a community leader and partner the Council will:

- Aim to improve and enrich the quality of life of those living and working within this district by creating a sustainable community; a place of choice for people to want to live, work, study and visit, now and in the future.
- Commit to ensuring we challenge and eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.
- Ensure that all residents are provided with equal access to our services.
- Develop a community where everyone feels valued and there is equal access to services and employment across the statutory, private and community/voluntary sectors.
- Promote a sense of pride and belonging in the district where everyone is valued and able to live or work side by side, contributing together in building a strong, independent community.

In the commissioning and procurement of services we will:

- Where relevant, include equality related questions in our tender documents for example when a provider requires specific know-how or skills relating to equality, such as cultural awareness.

How will we measure our progress?

- We will monitor, where relevant and proportionate, who uses our services with respect to the differences outlined above.
- In line with our statutory requirements, we will annually:
 - Publish information about our residents and staff.
 - Publish information on how we are meeting our general equality duty.

Who will do this?

Equality is the responsibility of every councillor, employee and everyone who represents the council or delivers services on our behalf.

- All officers have a responsibility not to discriminate against services users or colleagues.
- Managers have a responsibility to ensure that services meet the needs of our residents.
- The Corporate Management Team have a responsibility to lead the equality and diversity agenda for the organisation.
- The Members have a responsibility to ensure that equality is reflected in their relevant portfolio areas.
- Organisations that we commission or procure to provide direct services to our residents, have a responsibility as they are acting on behalf of the council. The vision of this policy will be achieved by:
 - Including a commitment to equality in our tender specification
 - Including specific equality clauses in contracts
 - Monitoring contractors' performance where relevant.