

Foreword

Councillor Kevin Wren (Leader of the Council), Councillor Don Culver (Resources Portfolio Holder), and Councillor John Cole-Morgan (Community and Housing Portfolio Holder)

Salisbury District Council is committed to equalities and diversity and this is enshrined within the council's core values. This policy revision sets out how we will promote diversity through our political leadership, provide equal access to all our services and make sure people have equal opportunities in getting jobs and in career development.

The policy also shows how we will make sure that equal access to jobs and services is a reality. We are dedicated to high-quality services for everyone ensuring that they are accessible to people with diverse needs and ambitions.

We are also working to increase the diversity of staff we employ, widening the opportunity to employ the best people. We welcome the diversity of people in our district and know that all communities bring positive benefits to the area.

We want you to use this policy to know what our plans for equalities and diversity are, so you can make sure we keep these promises. We will make sure that our employees and councillors take responsibility for putting this policy into practice in the short and long term. We will regularly review this policy, and actions arising from it, and we will regularly report progress through our Corporate Plan.

Introduction

In 2002 we first published a joint equalities and diversity commitment with our partners from the Primary Care Trust and Council for Voluntary Services. We now wish to build on this commitment by publishing our Comprehensive Equalities Policy, which has the full support of our Cabinet, councillors, senior management team, and staff. At the heart of our role is a commitment to delivering public services and supporting social justice by tackling inequality and social exclusion. The Comprehensive Equalities Policy sets out how we promote equalities within our organisation and how we promote equal opportunities within the district and those organisations we work with.

Why do we need a Comprehensive Equalities Policy?

We recognise and accept that:

- disadvantage and discrimination exist in society;
- some people are unfairly denied equal access to services and/or employment;
- people often experience more than one form of disadvantage.

The Comprehensive Equalities Policy is our commitment to put right any imbalance found and to make sure that everyone has equal access to services and employment.

The Comprehensive Equalities Policy is a corporate document affecting all other policies and practices. Councillors and officers will help to change the way we work so that consideration of equalities is integrated into all of our activities. We will

improve equalities practice at a corporate and service level, and will meet our legal obligations and statutory duties to promote equal opportunities. This includes adherence to the following legislation:

- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, and the various amendments to the Act
- Equal Pay Act 1970, and the various amendments to the Act
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (as amended in 1986)
- Race Relations Act 1976 [as amended in 2000]
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 [as amended in 2005]
- The Human Rights Act 1998
- The Sex Discrimination [Gender Reassignment] Regulations 1999
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- Employment Equality [Religion or Belief] Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality [Sexual Orientation] Regulations 2003
- Asylum and Immigration [Treatment of Claimants etc] Act 2004
- Carers [Equal Opportunities] Act 2004
- Children Act 2004
- Civil Partnership Act 2004
- Domestic Violence Crime and Victims Act 2004
- Employment Relations Act 2004
- Gender Recognition Act 2004
- Mental Capacity Act 2005

We will further respond to new legislation and proposed changes expected to become law in 2006:

- Equality Bill
- Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill
- Identity Cards Bill
- Immigration and Asylum Bill
- Incitement to Religious Hatred Bill
- Parental Rights Bill
- Employment Equality [Age] Regulations

Leadership and corporate commitment

Political leadership

- The Leader of the Council together with the Cabinet portfolio holder for Resources and the Cabinet portfolio holder for Community and Housing collectively lead on the Comprehensive Equalities Policy.
- The Cabinet and scrutiny panels will monitor performance against the Race Equality Scheme and Equality Standard for Local Government.

Officer structures

- The Extended Management Team is responsible for co-ordinating and overseeing equal opportunities at a corporate and service level.
- The Equalities and Diversity Group supports officers and councillors in taking this work forward. The Equalities and Diversity group has representation covering each of the 4 portfolios and spreads good practice in equal opportunities, particularly in delivering services.

- All staff are responsible for the policy while in work time:
- We will communicate the Comprehensive Equalities Policy to all staff and will make full copies available at training sessions and on the council's website

The Comprehensive Equalities Policy Statement

This Comprehensive Equalities Policy is a statement of how we intend to tackle unfairness, discrimination and harassment and develop a better understanding of diverse communities.

- We will work towards ending discrimination, including stopping victimisation and harassment because of:
 - age;
 - economic or social background;
 - location (rural or urban);
 - gender;
 - sexual preference;
 - disability (physical and mental);
 - race;
 - religion faith or belief; or
 - gender identity.
 - any other irrelevant factor
- We believe that discrimination against any person or group is unjustifiable and that no individuals or groups should be denied equality through intentional or unintentional discrimination.
- We recognise that the diversity of people in Salisbury and South Wiltshire is an asset to the district
- We will make services relevant and accessible as a right to all citizens who use our services.
- We will not tolerate favouritism or special treatment of individuals or groups solely because of their position, status, or association to particular groups or organisations
- We are working towards making sure that our employment opportunities and services are of the highest possible quality. There will be equality, equity and consistency in working practices, pay and conditions.
- We will achieve equal opportunities by making sure that we give equal consideration to people's needs and develop flexible and responsive services and employment opportunities to tackle those needs.
- We will encourage our staff to use positive action to overcome disadvantage, discrimination and deprivation.
- We will value all our staff and create an environment where staff from diverse communities feel valued and supported.
- We will work jointly with our South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to develop effective ways of asking for and including the views of diverse communities without overburdening them.
- Funding to community and voluntary groups will be dependent on them demonstrating a commitment to equalities.
- The Council is committed to the Wiltshire Compact including the Equalities and Diversity Code of Best Practice and Voluntary Sector Funding Code of Best Practice

- We will ensure that our Passport to Services feedback procedure for staff, and citizens takes account of discrimination against, and harassment of, people from diverse communities.
- We will support anti-harassment strategies developed by the Community Safety Partnership, which will tackle racial and other types of harassment.
- We will promote our Dignity at Work Policy which seeks to tackle harassment at work
- As a leading partner of the South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance, we will seek the inclusion of diversity issues within the community strategy.
- We will build equality considerations into the procurement of goods, facilities and services

How will we measure and monitor the policy?

Equalities is an important corporate policy, so other policies will be subject to equality impact assessments to strengthen equal opportunities in the council.

Equalities and diversity is measured through two national Best Value Performance Indicators:

- The Local Government Equalities Standard
- Race Equality Scheme

We aim to be in the top 25% of district councils for both these performance indicators.

We publish our Corporate Plan every year. This will set out our progress against this policy, and highlight what major steps we plan to take in the following year.

In our 2006/7 Portfolio Plans (part of the Corporate Plan) we will include a section on equality which will outline a review of the services against the equality standard, set out a three-year rolling programme of equality impact assessments of services, and, where appropriate, set equality targets.

From 2006/7 onwards we will report on the progress against the equality standard by each portfolio, and by the council as a whole as part of the quarterly performance report.

We will establish a corporate framework to undertake equality impact assessments that are subject to external scrutiny and audit.

From 2006/7 onwards we will ensure that equality assessments are incorporated as part of all new policies, strategies, plans, best value reviews, scrutiny reviews and service reviews completed as part of the Business Process Re-engineering project.

How will we pay for equal opportunities initiatives?

- Each portfolio will report within its annual portfolio plan on whether any additional resources are required to meet its equal opportunities action plans and considered as part of the annual budget setting process.
- Large items of new expenditure (for example to meet Disability Discrimination Act requirements in public buildings) will be considered as part of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

How will we consult?

- We will consult service units, citizens, democratically elected representatives, users of our services, and equalities organisations on the contents of our equalities action plan, and will update our actions as needed in line with expectations.
- We will monitor and develop services with communities, customers and users of our services, through existing mechanisms, as set out in our consultation strategy and compact agreements, adapting them where necessary and reasonable to get appropriate representation.
- We will work with our South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to engage hard to reach groups when consulting on community plans, strategies and service provision

How will we involve all staff in improving equal opportunities?

- We review our managers' equalities skills and training requirements as part of the annual Staff Development Interviews and assess them as well as all staff for equalities as one of the council's key competences.
- For all new policies, strategies, plans, and significant projects, equality impact assessments will be developed at the planning stage and completed assessments published as background papers.
- We will encourage staff to be involved in equality impact assessments for services and setting equality targets relevant to their areas.
- Trade unions are invited to attend the Equalities and Diversity Group and are consulted with on this policy

How will we know who is using our services and whether some people are discriminated against?

- We will undertake initial equality impact assessments to identify the potential impact on diverse communities and the likely numbers of users affected by services. Where there is an identified requirement, we will monitor who uses our services by the potentially affected groups. We will use this information to:
 - ensure that nobody is excluded from using our services;
 - develop action plans to correct any imbalances in services; and
 - set equality targets for service use
- Our personnel information system produces details on a range of recruitment, retention, and other HR issues which are reported quarterly to the Joint Consultative Forum.

What responsibilities do our contractors, suppliers and grant-aided voluntary organisations have under this policy?

Under our procurement guidelines, contractors and suppliers must deliver an effective and appropriate service to all diverse communities. This includes:

- employment policies, procedures and practices which must not discriminate;
- developing services which are appropriate and accessible, consulting citizens who use our services;
- providing opportunities for people from diverse communities to win council contracts; and

- monitoring whether contracts do meet these equalities promises.

The baseline standards for investment in the voluntary sector include a requirement for grant-aided organisations above an agreed threshold to have an equalities policy, to monitor service uptake and to meet their duties under equalities legislation. This, together with our Procurement Strategy, will enable us to take reasonable steps to encourage contractors, suppliers and funded organisations to promote equalities and diversity.

How will all councillors and staff know how to put the Comprehensive Equalities Policy into practice?

- All staff will have access to the Comprehensive Equalities Policy.
- Increase awareness through the roll-out of online equalities training models for all staff and councillors and provide more detailed staff training programmes for those officers who regularly come into direct contact with customers/clients.
- Specialist assistance to nominated portfolio officer representatives to undertake service and policy equality impact assessments

Positive action and positive images

- We use positive action to put right imbalances in the workforce and in how we provide services.
- Images and language can be a powerful influence on people's beliefs and attitudes. Our Communication Strategy commits us to making sure that all our publications (including the Citizen, Tourism Guide, our website and promotional leaflets) promote positive images that reflect the district we serve. We will work with the local media to challenge stereotypes of diverse communities and promote positive images.

What can I do if I'm discriminated against?

- If you are discriminated against, you can make a complaint using our complaints procedure. If you are one of our employees, you can use our Dignity at Work policy and procedure.
- The Comprehensive Equalities Policy can be used to highlight the rights of employees and people who use our services when dealing with a complaint, but it can also be used to make clear to employees and people who use services not to discriminate or harass.

Equalities and diversity in employment

Introduction

This document is a statement of Salisbury District Council's policy for achieving diversity in its employment practices.

Diversity takes a whole organisational perspective and creates a vision of what is being aspired to. Diversity is different to equal opportunities. Diversity is:

- broader in scope than equal opportunities
- about individuals, whereas equal opportunities is about groups
- reflecting organisational culture as opposed to meeting legal requirements
- proactive and strategic whereas equal opportunities is more reactive

The council embraces its legal and social responsibilities, but believes that an organisation committed to diversity must ensure full integration of this aim with the business need. This policy sets the framework for action, but acknowledges that this is not enough, in itself, to ensure that discrimination and disadvantage in employment is removed. Actions to ensure that every employee feels valued for their individual contribution to the organisation are also necessary. The council aims to build a workforce which is valued and whose diversity reflects the community it serves.

The framework

In adopting a best practice approach, the council fully recognises that its employment practices are a major influence on the community at large and intends that its equalities policies should reach out into the community it serves.

The policy applies to potential as well as actual employees and relates to all aspects of employment, including recruitment, pay, terms and conditions of service, promotion, development and training, transfer, grievance and disciplinary procedures and in making arrangements for working in the council. The policy will be made known to all employees and applicants for jobs.

All sections of the population will have equal access to jobs offered by the council. No applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment because of gender, disability, age, ethnic or national origin, marital status, creed, sexual orientation, trade union councillorship, gender reassignment, political affiliation or responsibility for dependants unless Genuine Occupational Qualifications (GOQ) apply.

In order to combat indirect discrimination, no unnecessary conditions or requirements will be applied to any council job, which would have a disproportionately adverse effect on any one.

Legal framework for the policy

Legislation designed to eliminate unfair discrimination and improve equality of opportunity has been in place for many years:

- Equal Pay Act 1970 and the various amendments to it
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 as amended
- Sex Discrimination [Gender Reassignment] Regulations 1999
- Race Relations Act 1976 as amended

- Part Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended
- Human Rights Act 1998

In law, discrimination takes two forms:

Direct discrimination

Treating a person less favourably than another, for example, on grounds of sex, marital status, race or disability.

Indirect discrimination

Occurs when an unjustifiable rule or condition which applies equally to everyone has a disproportionately adverse effect on people from a particular racial, gender or disability group in the performance of the job. In short, both employers and employees are responsible for making sure that everyone is treated equally and fairly.

Definitions

Victimisation – This form of discrimination takes place when a person receives less favourable treatment when they have made a complaint, or it is suspected that they have made a complaint, or if they are going to provide or have provided information or evidence about an act of discrimination.

Harassment – See the council's Harassment Policy and Procedures.

How the policy applies to different groups

The Council recognises the different and special needs of the following groups of people who may experience discrimination and be disadvantaged in society.

Men and women

The council is opposed to discrimination on the basis of gender and recognises that social structure may deprive women of opportunities to realise their full potential. The policy aims to improve the opportunities available to women. Women and men will be encouraged to apply for all jobs unless there are genuine occupational qualifications which restrict a job to one gender as defined by law.

Opportunities for career counselling will continue to be made available and where either gender is under-represented the council will try to understand what is needed to encourage the under-represented gender to apply for such jobs. It will also create more equal access by continuing to provide personal development opportunities to equip potential candidates with the skills to apply for those jobs.

The council confirms that its employment practices will be designed to support women and men who have responsibilities for children and dependents whilst ensuring an effective and efficient workforce. Flexible working systems and family friendly policies will be promoted to support people with responsibility for dependants.

The council will take necessary measures to prevent discrimination against employees or potential employees on grounds of gender reassignment in accordance with the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999. Employees undergoing gender reassignment treatment who require time off work for medical or surgical procedures will be treated as all other employees regarding the council's sickness reporting procedures. Personnel procedures will take into account the relevant amendments required to records and systems.

People with disabilities

The council is opposed to discrimination on grounds of disability. Applicants with disabilities will not be barred from selection on grounds of their disability nor will disability in itself be acceptable as a reason for dismissal from any council job. The council will take reasonable steps to provide and adapt premises, facilities, or equipment wherever possible to meet the needs of people with disabilities. Positive steps will be taken to attract people with disabilities to council jobs. Our application form will be available in different formats and special recruitment campaigns may be undertaken. Assistance to complete application forms, where requested, will be considered in special circumstances. The council will take steps to eradicate any oppressive attitudes towards people with disabilities among its workforce and will include these issues in training courses for employees.

Individuals living with HIV/AIDS are protected by the Disability Discrimination Act. The council aims to treat employees who are HIV infected or who have AIDS in accordance with its normal ill-health policy and procedure. The council will not discriminate against employees with HIV or AIDS, and harassment of an employee on account of an AIDS associated condition will not be tolerated.

Race

The council recognises that Britain is a multi-racial, multi-cultural society. It acknowledges the existence of institutional racism and accepts that "it can be seen or detected in the process, attitudes and behaviour which amounts to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people."

The council will not tolerate any form of racism, defined as "conduct or words or practices which disadvantage or advantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin."

Steps will be taken to eradicate all forms of unwitting prejudice, and racist stereotyping within the structures of the organisation, and in its processes, policies and practices.

Incidents of racial harassment including verbal or physical abuse or attack against colleagues or councillors of the public will be dealt with under the grievance and disciplinary procedures. A racist incident is defined as "any incident, which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person."

Age

The council recognises that inaccurate assumptions based on prejudice and stereotypes are sometimes made about the abilities and characteristics of younger or older people, which adversely affect them. Discrimination against people can arise as a result of them being considered to be either too old or too young. Salisbury District

Council does not condone such views and age related criteria will not be used in recruitment or development and training decisions. The council is committed to the removal of all age discrimination in its employment practices.

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people

The council recognises that lesbian, gay and bisexual people experience very different forms of oppression. A person's sexuality is not a matter which the council will take into account in determining suitability for recruitment, promotion, training or transfer for any post and will not be grounds for dismissal from any council job.

Harassment, whether physical or verbal, of lesbian, gay or bisexual people and their children by councillors of the public or colleagues will not be tolerated. The council is committed to maintaining grievance, disciplinary and other codes of practice to deal effectively with any incident that may occur. Information and training to increase awareness and support for the policy relating to lesbian, gay and bisexual employees is an essential aspect of its development.

Transsexual People

We will make sure individuals will have the right to define their chosen gender and to be treated as such in the workplace. We will always recognise and respect the chosen gender of any individual in the workplace.

We will not discriminate against someone if he or she:

- Intends to undergo gender reassignment, or
- Is undergoing gender reassignment, or
- Has at some time in the past undergone gender reassignment.

We will make sure that transsexual people receive the same respect, dignity, opportunities and access as other staff.

Other forms of discrimination

The council recognises that other forms of discrimination exist which have not been specifically dealt within this policy document (e.g. religion, dress codes, health issues, trade union activity, etc.) and commits itself to the general principle of fairness, justice and equality. It will seek to apply this principle to every area where inequality is identified.

Consultation

The council will consult widely to ensure that its employment and HR policies and practice reflect the needs of groups who may be disadvantaged as a result of discrimination.

Recruitment and selection

council job requirements will be continuously reviewed to ensure that they do not discriminate directly or indirectly. The detailed procedures for promoting equality of employment in the recruitment and selection process are dealt with separately.

The recruitment and selection process is of crucial importance to the success of this policy. People who are appropriately trained and committed to the principles of the

policy must carry out the process. Specifically, it is important that the 'essential' and 'desirable' criteria identified to select employees to fill vacant posts are capable of objective justification and do not build discriminatory barriers into the selection process. The council will ensure that any employee or Councillor involved in any stage of the recruitment process is thoroughly briefed and trained in the provisions of this policy.

Training and career development of staff

The council will provide resources for equalities training in order to combat all forms of discrimination among its employees. Those employees in 'customer facing' roles will be given priority in terms of access to this training although all employees are encouraged to participate. Equal Opportunities awareness will be part of Salisbury District Council's induction training.

The performance development process will assist employees to identify plans for their own training and development needs. Encouragement will be given to identify career paths, which fall outside traditional stereotyped roles.

Conditions of service

It is a condition of service that all council employees should adhere to the Diversity and Comprehensive Equalities Policy. Acts against colleagues or councillors of the public, whether verbal, visual or physical, which after investigation prove to be discriminatory, are acts of misconduct, which will lead to disciplinary action.

The mode of dress and presentation of council employees will be restricted only on the grounds of health and safety, decency, security and suitability or where the council provides an appropriate form of clothing or allowance for an appropriate form of clothing.

Organisational arrangements

The Chief Executive, in conjunction with the relevant Policy Director and Head of Personnel and Training Services, will be responsible through service unit heads for ensuring the implementation and monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy. Although it is the responsibility of each service unit head to actively promote equality of opportunity, the policy must be made to work by all employees in all departments. Everyone has a legal duty not to discriminate.

Monitoring

The effectiveness of the policy can only be judged by using information about how it is operating. The council will use a monitoring system to collect data and allow assessment to be made by the council, trade unions and the groups covered by the policy on the progress made in putting the policy into action.

The monitoring system will establish the extent to which ethnic minorities, women, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups are represented in occupational and salary/wage grouping, training and management development activities and the use of the disciplinary procedure and grievances lodged.

The monitoring system depends on information being available. Therefore all employees and job applicants will be asked to indicate their ethnic origin, and whether consider themselves to have a disability on a self-classification basis. The

reasons for monitoring will be made clear to all applicants. The giving of this information will be entirely optional, but the council will urge co-operation to assist in monitoring progress of its equalities programmes. The collection and monitoring of this information will comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

No information obtained as part of the monitoring of equality in employment, which may identify individuals, will be given to any organisation outside the council unless required by law.

Comments and complaints

The council will take seriously and will deal effectively with all complaints of discrimination on grounds of race, ethnic or national origin, disability, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, creed trade union councillorship, political affiliation or responsibility for dependents. Anyone who makes a complaint or who gives evidence will not be victimised, treated less favourably than other employees or otherwise treated as if they are over-sensitive about discrimination. Malicious or frivolous complaints of discrimination will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure.

The council welcomes comments about its Comprehensive Equalities Policy and practices. Grievances by employees arising from this policy will be dealt with using the existing council grievance procedure, which is a confidential process. Bullying or harassment issues will be dealt with using the council's current harassment procedure. Where there is doubt about which policy to use guidance should be sought from a trade union representative or Personnel and Training Services. If there is any doubt the Head of Personnel and Training Services will make the decision about which policy should be followed in consultation with the employee's trade union representative if appropriate. Nothing in the procedures for dealing with comments, complaints or grievances about breaches of the corporate equalities employment policy shall limit or affect the statutory rights of a complainant.

Trade union councillors are encouraged to speak to their trade union representative offer support, advice and representation on any matter within this policy. Any breach of this policy will be considered under the council's disciplinary procedure.

Resources

The council will devote resources to achieve the aims set out in this policy within the constraints of its budget and competing demands.

Equalities and diversity in service delivery and customer care

All citizens have the right subject to any reasonable restrictions that may be imposed by the council in accordance with any policy to use the facilities and services that we provide and to expect to be able to use them in a similar way and on similar terms as everyone else. Developing good access means removing barriers which prevent the full and equal access of disabled people and other equalities communities to services. This is a basic and important part of social inclusion and achieving equality. We are committed to delivering fair services to all customers. We will treat all customers with the same respect and dignity, and offer them all the same opportunities and access. 'Improving access to services' is one of the four priorities of our Community Strategy for 2004-09.

- We may meet the needs of diverse communities better by delivering services differently. Where there is evidence that services are not meeting the needs of diverse communities we will work alongside representatives to develop services which are meaningful and useful and which give the same respect, dignity, opportunities and access.
- We recognise that people from diverse communities have been (and continue to be) disadvantaged when accessing our services. We will budget for the costs of inclusive access to all people from diverse communities, including:
 - accessible formats;
 - interpretation services;
 - help for people with communication impairments and learning difficulties;
 - help for people who require special assistance because of age or mental infirmity.
- In developing our website we will comply with accessibility standards as defined by the World Wide Web Consortium AA standard and provide a translation service
- When we review our practices, policies and procedures we will make sure that they meet all the requirements of equal opportunities legislation and follow the codes of practice.
- We will carry out equality impact screening assessments (incorporating race equality) on all of our policies, strategies, and plans. Where there is a risk of not meeting our equality objectives we will complete a detailed impact assessment which involves:
 - listing the aims, objectives and target groups;
 - collecting research and available data;
 - considering complaints;
 - consulting on our findings (using clear consultation objectives);
 - taking action to put things right;
 - considering how we will monitor and review policies and practices in the future;
 - publishing the results.
- We will carry out a rolling programme of equality impact screening assessments (incorporating race equality) on all of our services to citizens. Where there is a risk of not meeting our equality objectives we will complete a detailed impact assessment as set out above.
- People from diverse communities can be targeted for crime and harassment, and fear of crime is often high within these groups. The South Wiltshire

Strategic Alliance's Diversity Group will work to improve community safety. We will make sure that we acknowledge people's concerns about safety and take action through the Community Safety Partnership.

- The South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance will develop a joint strategic plan to identify social exclusion and poverty in our community and put in place measures to address them.

How the Policy applies to different groups

The council recognises the different and special needs of the following groups of people who may experience discrimination and be disadvantaged in society.

Black and minority ethnic groups

Our Race Equality Scheme is a statement of our commitment to race equality and how we will put it into practice. We will do the following:

- Set new tasks and challenges to make race equality a part of all our functions and policies. This includes listing and assessing the relevance of all functions and policies to the general duty and carrying a programme of reviews on all our policies and services, which incorporate race equality.
- Make arrangements for consulting, monitoring, training, publishing results and making sure the public have access to information and services relating to all aspects of race equality and the race equality scheme.
- We will work together with our South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners to ensure consultation is effective without over-burdening a relatively small number of groups and individuals.
- Consider how to utilise Peoples Voice and Market Research to be more representative of black and ethnic minority views
- Make sure that decisions on policies, strategies and plans are made after we have carried out an equality impact assessment which include the impact on any racial group.

People with disabilities

We will seek specialist advice from local disability groups, including Shopmobility, and individuals.

We will make sure that we develop new services, which are fully integrated for both able bodied and disabled persons.

We recognise that disabled adults and young people may use all council services, as the wider population, and that all these services should be equally accessible to all adults and young people. We will continue to provide some services specifically to disabled people, such as adaptations, activities and classes

We will provide flexible services, with extra support and equipment where reasonable, to make sure that disabled adults, young people and children have equal access to services. We will take account of the time, inconvenience, effort, discomfort and dignity of the disabled person when we design and deliver accessible services.

There may be specific resources needed to include disabled people in mainstream services. Costs associated with these requirements will be considered in the corporate planning and budget cycle as unavoidable corporate costs.

Access to buildings, parks and open spaces

We will:

- gradually improve sites we own and use to meet Disability Discrimination Act 1995 requirements
- ensure that our new offices and any other new buildings are fully accessible to the current building regulations
- make reasonable access improvements in any planned refurbishment projects, and make sure that future work does not reverse any previous access improvements;
- no longer buy any buildings which are inaccessible to people with disabilities, unless there is a clear and costed plan to make the site accessible to the correct standard within an acceptable period of time
- require any third party providing services on behalf or in partnership with the council in non-council premises meet the council's Disability Discrimination Act obligations
- consult people with disabilities and those with young children on improving access, and recognise their experience of a disabling environment and ask for advice on preferred solutions. We will also actively encourage councillors of the public to comment on access to council buildings and highlight problem areas.

Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals

We will:

- reassure lesbian, gay and bisexual people who use our services that they do not have to deny their relationships or sexuality to receive equal access to a service;
- work with local groups to tackle the problem of homophobic motivated hate crimes;

Older people

Services for older people have become increasingly focused on those with high-dependence needs. In future, we will make sure our services are relevant to all older people. There are a range of public services that help older people maintain their independence.

People with different religious beliefs

We will:

- make sure that we take account of the needs of people who use our services in terms of their religious and cultural beliefs, and develop training for our employees on these issues;
- work with our South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners in promoting understanding and tolerance of different religions, encouraging mutual respect and bringing people together;

Transsexual people

Individuals will have the right to define their gender and to be treated as such in the workplace and in receiving services. We will always recognise and respect the gender definition of any individual in the community.

Women

We will provide choices and services at convenient times so women feel confident and comfortable when they use our services.

We will identify and remove sex discrimination from all service delivery policies, practices and procedures.

We recognise that sexual harassment, domestic and other types of abuse, and concerns about safety at work mainly affect women –in the home and in society generally. We will work with local groups to develop policies and services which tackle these issues.

We will encourage women to use our services, and identify where women are under-using services.

Young people

We will make sure that our services focus on supporting the 5 outcomes for young people. We have developed a Youth Strategy which identifies the specific roles we will play in supporting young people and developing services for them.

We will:

- implement the programme of actions contained within the strategy; and
- continue to work in partnership with other providers to ensure young people have the same access to services as adults. We will particularly focus on rural transport provision and providing better information to young people with other South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners.

Rural communities

We believe that people living in rural areas and rural communities should not be unreasonably disadvantaged because of where they choose to live. We are committed to “rural proofing” our policies, plans and services in the same way as we assess the impacts for other potential inequalities.

We will:

- consider whether policies and service provision is likely to have a different impact in rural areas, because of particular rural circumstances or needs
- make an initial impact assessment of the policy impacts in rural areas and if this is likely to be significant
- make reasonable adjustments to our policy or service provision to minimise the impact and meet the needs and circumstances of rural communities
- consult with parish councils on our assessments
- with other South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance partners:
 - review findings in the Rural Facilities Study to identify villages most deprived of local services
 - review range of services provided by mobile services
 - provide learning opportunities through mobile learning unit

Reducing victimisation and harassment

Policy principles

- All types of harassment, victimisation and bullying are unacceptable.
- Under the health and safety policy, all staff and councillors must prevent and report harassment. All staff are responsible for supporting victims and referring people on to support agencies.
- Managers are responsible for dealing with cases of harassment in the workplace and community, and have responsibility for people who use our services. Managers are also responsible for monitoring harassment which is reported to us and for referring victims to the appropriate agency.
- We encourage people who experience harassment to take action. We will support them to make sure that the harassment stops and is prevented from happening again.
- We treat all complaints of harassment seriously, and in strict confidence. We will deal with complaints fairly and as quickly as possible.
- We will protect anyone asking for advice, making a complaint or helping in an investigation from being victimised.
- We will support the language, physical access and communication needs of the person making a complaint, the person accused of harassment and any witnesses during informal and formal procedures.
- A complaint of harassment may be made after a long period of harassment. Managers should use supervision to stop the harassment in its early stages.
- In finding ways to stop harassment, we recognise that staff may need training on how to relate to people from all diverse communities. We recognise that in some circumstances, ignorance is at the root of harassment. Our managers are responsible for promoting a positive team culture and using training to prevent harassment.
- We do not accept the harassment of staff by anyone who uses our services. Managers will make it clear to anyone who uses our services, either by letter or in a face-to-face visit, that we cannot continue to provide a service if they have been harassing staff. Managers will remove staff from situations if they are being harassed, in line with health and safety responsibilities.

Monitoring and evaluating the policy

Stopping harassment at work

Harassment at work is covered by the Council's Dignity at Work policy. We will keep records on the number and type of complaints of harassment within the council (regardless of whether they are upheld or not) and will report as part of our quarterly performance monitoring reports. We will find ways to record harassment at the informal stage of the employee complaints procedure.

Other types of harassment

We will improve how we report, record and monitor harassment.

We will tell staff and the community about our anti-harassment policies and procedures, raise awareness of harassment issues to council staff and local people, and encourage people to report harassment.

We will find ways to collect information on all types of harassment.

As a more comprehensive picture of patterns of harassment emerges, we and our partners can agree ways of intervening to stop and prevent harassment at work and in the community.

Reporting harassment

Reporting harassment in the workplace: Staff will use the Dignity at Work Policy and procedure. Staff who witness harassment must report it and managers must take action.