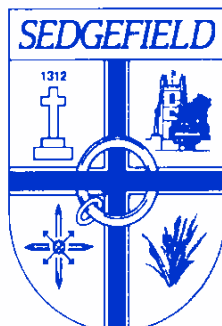


SEDGEFIELD TOWN COUNCIL



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Adopted July 2009
To be reviewed 2013

Sedgefield Town Council is committed to meeting the varied needs and circumstances of its residents and employees and to ensuring that services are equally appropriate to all without discrimination. The Council's goal is to support the development of strong, secure, self-reliant, self-confident communities, free from unlawful discrimination.

In support of this commitment, the Council has adopted a policy statement for employment and service delivery.

Employment:

No Council employee or job applicant will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, trade union activity, age, religious or political beliefs, disability or will be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be justified.

Service delivery:

The Town Council will ensure that its services, including the ones carried out in partnership with any other agency are available equally to all, regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origins, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, age, religious or political beliefs, making sure that no one is disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be justified.

Legislation:

In developing this Policy, Sedgefield Town Council has taken into account all current appropriate legislation; the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) guidelines, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Code of Practice, the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) guidelines.

Discrimination and harassment:

Sedgefield Town Council will take action to ensure that all forms of discrimination are eradicated from its policies and practices.

Discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of his or her colour, disability, gender, race, nationality, religion or beliefs, sexual orientation, HIV status or age.

Legally, it is not necessary to prove that someone intended to discriminate: it is sufficient only to show that the outcome of an action was less favourable

treatment. Less favourable treatment can take many forms - words, actions or failure to provide opportunities or services and can be perpetuated by individuals, groups or institutions.

Sedgefield Town Council recognises that harassment and discrimination of employees and service users is unacceptable and is working towards building an organisational culture that reinforces this belief. The Council is committed to addressing harassment of employees and service users, since it is a barrier to achieving its equalities objectives.

Equality in employment:

Sedgefield Town Council recognises the value of a workforce in which people from differing backgrounds are encouraged to introduce fresh ideas and perceptions, enabling it to deliver high quality services to all members of the community.

To underpin its commitment to equality in employment, the Council:

- Will ensure that all recruitment, selection and training procedures operate in a fair and non-discriminatory way, so that the best person to do the job is appointed
- Will consult regularly with the National Association of Local Councils and other agencies to identify gaps in its employment policies and take action to remedy them
- Will consider sympathetically any request for flexible working, job-share, travel arrangements, child and dependant care leave and will guarantee interviews for disabled people who meet the essential criteria for a job

Equality in service delivery:

Sedgefield Town Council will ensure that all services are accessible to all people without discrimination.

The Council aims to ensure that all employees, contractors and partners have the information they need to provide equality of opportunity and that this is reflected in their conduct. The Council will require, where legally possible, partners and contractors to have equal opportunities policies, and will seek sufficient information and evidence that compliance with equalities legislation is genuine.

Responsibilities:

The accountabilities and responsibilities in relation to this policy can be

summarised as follows:

Town Councillors take the lead in promoting equality, ensuring equalities issues are given due consideration within their area of responsibility, in decision-making and in monitoring services.

The Town Clerk will actively support and assist the equalities work by:-

- Monitoring the performance of the Town Council's services, agreeing the necessary action and maintaining a commitment to the Council's equalities work
- Being pro-active in developing a service led approach to equalities development
- Ensuring that employees are adequately trained to meet the requirements of this policy
- Establishing and maintaining appropriate consultation with minority groups
- Working within the framework of the agreed Commission for Racial Equality's standards

Other employees have responsibility for implementing the policy as an integral and core element of the work of the Town Council. Employees also support the Town Council in meeting the requirements of this policy; seek training opportunities and personal development, as appropriate.

Conclusion:

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis and updated as necessary. This is a framework within which the Town Council and its employees can work towards making the policy a reality.

The Town Council has approved a complaints procedure, details of which can be found on the Town Councils website www.sedgefield.net , or obtained from the Town Councils Offices at The Advice & Information Centre, Sedgefield. TS21 3AT. Tel 01740 621273 email: Julia@sedgefield.net

For further information about this policy or the work of Sedgefield Town Council, please contact the Town Clerk at the above address.