



WIGTON TOWN COUNCIL

DRAFT EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY POLICY

WIGTON TOWN COUNCIL

1. Policy Statement

Wigton Town Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of its operations. We aim to create an environment where every individual is treated with dignity and respect, free from discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.

2. Legal Framework

This policy is grounded in the following legislation:

- **Equality Act 2010:** Protects individuals from discrimination based on protected characteristics, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- **Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023:** Effective from 26 October 2024, this Act imposes a proactive duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.
- **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED):** Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, public authorities must have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people.
- **The Equal Pay Act 1970:** The less favourable treatment of men and women in terms of pay and conditions of employment was prohibited.
- **The Sex Discrimination Act 1975:** Men and women were protected from discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status, with regard to employment, training, education, harassment, the provision of goods and services, and the disposal of premises.
- **The Race Relations Act 1976:** This legislation made it illegal to discriminate against a person because of their nationality, ethnic background, or colour of their skin. It applies to housing, the provision of goods and services, education, employment, and job seeking.
- **The Disability Discrimination Act 1995:** This Act made it illegal for service providers to discriminate against service users with disabilities, and for employers to discriminate against jobseekers and employees with disabilities.
- **Race equality duty:** Prior to the race equality duty, the emphasis of equality legislation was on rectifying cases of discrimination and harassment after they occurred, not preventing them happening in the first. The race equality duty

was designed to shift the onus from individuals to organisations, placing an obligation on public authorities to positively promote equality, not merely avoid discrimination.

- **The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003:** This legislation prohibits the discrimination of employees due to their religion or beliefs, including in the context of vocational training, employment agencies and careers advice.
- **The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003:** The unreasonable discrimination against employees based on their sexual orientation, or perceived sexual orientation, was prohibited.
- **The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006:** This prohibited the unreasonable discrimination against employees on the basis of their age. It included a default national retirement age and enabled employees to request to work beyond the retirement age.
- **The Equality Act 2006, Part 2:** This Act also established the Equality and Human Rights Commission. This is a statutory, non-departmental body that is Britain's national equality body. It works with organisations to challenge discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights.
- **The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007:** This Act made it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities, services, education, and public functions.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, councillors, volunteers, contractors, service users, and any individuals interacting with Wigton Town Council.

4. Our Commitments

- **Non-Discrimination:** We will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, or victimisation on any grounds.
- **Equal Opportunities:** We will ensure equal access to employment, training, and services for all individuals.
- **Inclusive Environment:** We will promote an inclusive culture that values diversity and encourages participation from all community members.
- **Preventing Harassment:** In line with the Worker Protection Act 2023, we will take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace.

Why the Equality Act is important to councillors

As a councillor, you will encounter a wide range of individuals and community groups. You fulfil several roles, including representative, advocate, negotiator, and facilitator. Which means that it is important for you to fully understand and respect your local community and residents. Complying with the Act will help you to:

- act lawfully
- treat people fairly
- fully understand your community

- make the best decisions for your community
- be seen as fair and non-discriminatory
- build a good reputation for yourself and your council.

5. Implementation

To uphold these commitments, Wigton Town Council will:

- **Policy Review:** Regularly review and update policies to reflect current legislation and best practices.
- **Training:** Provide training for staff and councillors on equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Monitoring:** Monitor employment practices and service delivery to identify and address any inequalities.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** Establish clear procedures for reporting and addressing complaints of discrimination or harassment.

6. Responsibilities

- **Council Leadership:** Ensure that equality and diversity principles are integrated into strategic planning and decision-making.
- **Managers and Supervisors:** Implement this policy within their areas of responsibility and support staff in upholding its principles.
- **All Staff and Councillors:** Adhere to this policy and promote a culture of respect and inclusion.

7. Review and Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually or as required to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with legal obligations. Feedback from staff, councillors, and the community will inform any necessary revisions.

For further guidance or to report concerns related to equality and diversity, please contact the Town Clerk.