

Knowsley Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Policy Statement

2022 - 2025

Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Protecting People Against Discrimination And Harrassment	5
3.	Our Roles And Responsibilities As An Organisation.....	5
3.1	Knowsley Council as an employer.....	5
3.2	Knowsley Council as a purchaser and commissioner of services	6
3.3	Knowsley Council’s policy, strategy and decision making procedures.....	6
3.4	Equality Impact Assessments	7
4.	Our Roles And Responsibilities Outside The Organisation	8
4.1	Knowsley Council’s responsibilities	8
5.	Governance And Accountability	9
5.1	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	9
5.2	Elected Members	10

1. Introduction

Whilst the physical assets of the borough - its green space, leisure facilities, its infrastructure and connectivity - are of very high quality, its greatest potential asset is its people and their families. Fundamentally we want more families wanting to come to live in our borough to make it sustainable and to do this we need to put the conditions in place so that all families can thrive and achieve their full potential.

The Knowsley Council Plan has a clear vision of 'Supporting Knowsley's People and Communities to Thrive' and is focused around three key priorities:

- Effective Support for those in Need – ensuring that all Knowsley residents are able to access the necessary support and services.
- Inclusive Growth and Skills – ensuring that all of Knowsley's communities are able to share in the opportunities from local economic growth – including a focus on improving education and skills levels in the Borough.
- Achieving Net Zero by 2040 – ensuring that we play a leading role in local action to address the Climate Emergency.

To be successful, the Council will adhere to the developed principles of “Knowsley Better Together” to build better partnerships and help others to make a difference in Knowsley. The Council will also continue to be a community leader by connecting with residents, helping to shape opportunities, sharing responsibilities, and always championing Knowsley within and outside the borough.

The Knowsley Better Together principles are founded on four behaviour qualities:

- **Integrity** - Honesty and openness in all our dealings with staff and residents;
- **Respect** – Maintaining a position which ensures all are treated in accordance with their needs;
- **Accountability** – Being responsible for actions; and
- **Communication** – Dispersing any information in as clear a way as can be understood by all.

We recognise that there are certain groups of individuals who are likely to need more support and protection than others and we will actively seek to ensure that these groups of people are appropriately catered for and that their access to opportunities is actively promoted.

We acknowledge our roles and responsibilities as an organisation, and we commit to ensuring that our internal processes and ways of working promote equality and ensure that no one is disadvantaged by how we operate as an organisation. We also have a role in shaping and influencing the area and the culture of the communities in Knowsley, and we are committed to ensuring that principles of equality are embedded in this role.

This policy statement sets out our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, and provides the overarching context within which we work.

The legislative context for equality, diversity and inclusion:

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 was introduced to protect people from harassment in the workplace and also in wider society. The Equality Act places responsibilities on public sector organisations. As such, local authorities must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work – in shaping policy, in delivering services and in relation to their own employees. It also requires that public sector organisations:

- have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination;
- advance equality of opportunity; and
- foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

The Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998 was introduced to ensure people are treated with dignity and respect. Respect for the rights of individuals or groups is fundamental to their quality of life. The Human Rights Act has at its core the principles of FRED A – Fairness, Respect, Equality, Dignity and Autonomy.

2. Protecting People Against Discrimination and Harassment

The Equality Act sets out nine characteristic groups who are protected from discrimination or harassment by law. It is therefore illegal to discriminate against people because of their:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race (including gypsies and travellers)
- Religion and belief
- Sex (Gender)
- Sexual Orientation

In recognition of particular local characteristics, Knowsley Council has chosen to include within our equality impact assessment analysis Carer's, Offending Past, Socio-economic Status and Child Poverty and Armed Forces personnel, Veterans and their Families.

3. Our Roles and Responsibilities as An Organisation

3.1 Knowsley Council as an employer

- Promote equality of opportunity for all staff
- Make reasonable adjustments to allow staff to fulfil their potential and act, where it is needed, to tackle inequality and promote diversity
- Make opportunities for training, development and progress available to all staff, who will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential, so their talents and resources can be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the organisation.

- Protect and promote the health, wellbeing and safety of all staff
- Ensure our recruitment practices and procedures are do not discriminate against anyone negatively and are subject to regular review and updated to reflect changes in the law
- Review employment practices and procedures when necessary to ensure fairness, and also update them and the policy to take account of changes in the law.
- Monitor our workforce regularly to identify any issues with regards to equal opportunity or development
- Promote and protect equality and respect for diversity in the culture of our workforce
- Create a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued
- Enable, encourage and support staff to report discrimination or harassment in the workplace. Such acts will be dealt with as misconduct under the organisation's grievance and/or disciplinary procedures, and appropriate action will be taken.

3.2 Knowsley Council as a purchaser and commissioner of services

- Ensure that when we purchase or commission services from organisations, we are confident that these organisations respect equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure the money we spend on services protects and promotes equality in employment
- Ensure our services are accessible to everyone
- Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is built into our processes and procedures around procurement and commissioning

3.3 Knowsley Council's policy, strategy and decision making procedures

- Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion issues are considered in the development of all policies and strategies
- Develop policies and strategies to reduce the inequality faced by whole communities or individuals
- Ensure the Council is fully aware of any adverse impacts that may occur because of decisions made, and actively seek to mitigate any negative impact
- Regularly evaluate the impact of our policies and strategies with regard to equality, diversity and inclusion issues

3.4 Equality Impact Assessments

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to assess the impact of decisions on underrepresented groups. Knowsley Council's method for complying and further documenting our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is through the implementation and completion of Equality Impact Assessments. An equality diversity and inclusion impact assessment is a way of finding out whether a decision affects different groups of people in different ways. These assessments must be undertaken to comply with our organisational commitments and statutory obligations.

As part of Knowsley's commitment to equality and diversity, impact assessments will be undertaken which consider the Equality Act 2010 General Duty, The Human Rights Act 1998, the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the Care Act 2014.

Knowsley Equality Impact Assessments cover the following protected (and additional) characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race (including Gypsies and Travellers)
- Religion, Belief and non-Belief
- Sex (Gender)
- Sexual Orientation
- Offending Past
- Carer's Status
- Social Economic Status (including Child Poverty)
- Armed Forces personnel, Veterans and their Families

The results of the Equality Impact Assessments will be used to address negative issues which may arise from existing or proposed policies, including the identification of potential for discrimination and the consideration of alternative proposals and activities that will mitigate any adverse impact.

Knowsley Council aspires to recruit and retain a diverse workforce, which generally reflects the local population, and which has the skills and understanding to improve the lives of the people of Knowsley through the provision of quality services responsive to cultural, individual and community needs.

In addition, the Council collects and evaluates workforce monitoring data in compliance with the statutory monitoring duties. The Public Sector Equalities Duty requires that we monitor our workforce, this information is gathered annually and published in the [workforce monitoring report and Gender Pay Gap Report](#).

4. Our Roles and Responsibilities Outside the Organisation

4.1 Knowsley Council's responsibilities

The Knowsley Council Plan has a clear vision of 'Supporting Knowsley's People and Communities to Thrive' and is focused around three key priorities:

- Effective Support for those in Need – ensuring that all Knowsley residents are able to access the necessary support and services.
- Inclusive Growth and Skills – ensuring that all of Knowsley's communities are able to share in the opportunities from local economic growth – including a focus on improving education and skills levels in the Borough.
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Knowsley's population has grown significantly over the last 10-years, with the 2021 census population standing at 154,500. This equates to an increase of 5.97% since 2011 when the Borough's population stood at 145,800. In the preceding two Censuses, Knowsley's population was recorded as 151,200 (2001) and 155,100 (1991). After a period when the population of Knowsley has been in decline over of several decades, the Borough is now seeing the real economic benefits of the Council's growth strategy, resulting in greater population retention and growth. This is the first Census result to show growth in Knowsley since 1981.

In order to achieve these goals through the delivery of the Council Plan and related strategies, the Council will work alongside its strategic partners and local communities to remove barriers eliminate discrimination and address emerging and future challenges. The foundation for this work is predicated on the Knowsley Better Together Principles. These principles are embedded in how we work as an organisation to help make Knowsley the 'Borough of Choice' and reduce any inequalities that may exist within Knowsley.

4.2 Inclusive Growth and Skills

There remains an important opportunity to reduce existing barriers to employment and career progression for residents helping to further reduce the “earnings gap” compared to national averages. To fully address this and other inequalities, it will be crucial to build on improvements in educational attainment and adult skills levels to reduce the longstanding resident skills gap on the Borough.

Knowsley has introduced long-term commitments to ensure the Borough is a more inclusive place to live. We aim to deliver ambitious housing, retail and leisure opportunities so that we continue to have “something for everyone”. Furthermore, we want to ensure that residents are equipped with the required skills, advice and guidance to take advantage of existing and future job opportunities, including key and emerging growth sectors (e.g. Advanced Manufacturing and Low Carbon).

5. Governance And Accountability

We will ensure that our policies, procedures and practices as an organisation around equality, diversity and inclusion are exemplary and set the context for how other organisations or partners in Knowsley should operate. Where necessary, we will support partner organisations to improve their equality and diversity policies and procedures, and we will actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion within our community's governance and accountability

5.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion is within the brief of the Assistant Executive Director (Resources). The role consists of supporting the senior manager cohort, through establishing a governance framework across departments to support the strategic and operational progress of the corporate plan and the development and implementation of the Corporate Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

5.2 Elected Members

Elected Members are equally bound to the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with the same obligations and expectations as all local authority employees. The role of Elected Members includes support and challenge to the local authority's equality and diversity processes on behalf of their constituents and employees. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sits within the portfolio of the Leader of the Council. The Leader of the Council is the Chair of Cabinet, which is the lead forum for all corporate decision making with regard to service delivery and employment.

Appendix:

Definitions of Key Terms:

Equality is based on the principle of providing equality of access to services, in the context of the Equality Act 2010. In its broader sense, equality is about 'creating a fairer society, where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to fulfil their potential' (Department of Health 2004).

Equality impact assessment is a process of explicitly considering the likely equality impact of new or changes to existing policy, project or functions.

Direct discrimination occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because of their gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, religion or belief, age, trade union membership, disability, offending background or any other personal characteristic. An example of direct discrimination would be 1 Miller and Katz (2002) 6 3.7 3.8 3.9 dismissing a female employee because she is pregnant.

Diversity, in this context means recognising and valuing difference in individuals and communities.

Harassment is "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual".

Inclusion: "A sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best"

Indirect discrimination occurs when an unjustifiable condition or requirement is applied which has a discriminatory effect, as the number of people who can comply with the condition or requirement is smaller among a particular group. An example of indirect discrimination would be only sending full-time employees on training courses (as more female employees than male are likely to be part-time).

Protected characteristics are defined by the Equality Act 2010. The characteristics that are protected by the Equality Act 2010 are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership (in employment only); pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex. The Equality Act 2010 protects against discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Victimisation means treating someone less favourably because they have done a 'protected act' (or because you believe that a person has done or is going to do a protected act). A 'protected act' is: Making a claim or complaint of discrimination (under the Equality Act 2010).