

Dignity, Equity and Inclusion

1. Who does this policy apply to?

- 1.1 This policy applies to all employees, officers, consultants, contractors, volunteers, interns, casual workers and agency workers.

2. What is the purpose of this policy?

- 2.1 Our aim is to encourage and support diversity, equity and inclusion and actively promote a culture that values difference and eliminates discrimination and bullying in our workplace and the wider community we serve. It applies to all aspects of employment with us, including recruitment, pay, benefits and conditions, flexible working and leave, training, annual conversations, performance management, conduct, disciplinary, grievance and capability procedures and termination of employment. Absolutely everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and we have a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and bullying in any form.

3. What roles do the employee, line managers, the Council and HR play in this policy?

3.1 Employee Responsibilities

- To report all types of bullying, harassment and discrimination to their line manager as soon as possible (whether this is aimed at them or somebody else);
- To be familiar with this policy and comply with it.
- Respect people's gender identity, name and pronouns.
- To be mindful of behaviour which could cause offence, and to avoid behaviours which could in any way be considered bullying or harassment.
- To discourage inappropriate behaviour by making it clear that it is unacceptable and providing support to colleagues who are considering raising a concern.
- To treat everyone with dignity and respect at all times, this includes citizens of the District, customers, visitors, employees and any other people with a connection with the Council.

3.2 Line Manager Responsibilities

- Managers should set a positive example by treating everyone with dignity and respect at all times.
- All levels of management have a duty to implement this policy and to make every effort to ensure that bullying, harassment and discrimination do not occur.
- Managers have responsibility for being alert to any unacceptable behaviour, or incidents of bullying, harassment and discrimination and take appropriate action promptly and confidentially, consulting with HR in all cases.
- Managers should be responsive and supportive to any member of staff who makes an allegation of bullying, harassment or discrimination. Managers should also ensure full support to the alleged perpetrator throughout the process.
- To treat everyone with dignity and respect at all times, this includes citizens of the District, customers, visitors, employees and any other people with a connection with the Council.

3.3 HR Responsibilities

- ❑ The HR Team have a responsibility to ensure this policy is followed fairly and consistently, which includes:
 - Advising on the content and application of the policy and on incidences where individuals feel they are being harassed or bullied in employment;
 - Providing support and guidance to managers and employees, as appropriate;
 - Ensuring the effective implementation of the policy, including provision of relevant training;
 - Monitoring incidences of bullying, harassment and discrimination and initiating appropriate action;
 - Reviewing and amending the policy as necessary.

3.4 Council responsibilities

- ❑ To comply with equality law and good practice, including carrying out our public duties to promote equality.
- ❑ To provide equitable opportunity and tackle bullying, discrimination, harassment and intimidation and disadvantage in employment and when delivering services.
- ❑ To strive to make all communities across the district, large and small, urban and rural, to be strong places with a sense of togetherness and belonging, where everyone works for the good of their community.
- ❑ To foster good relations between people with differences.
- ❑ To support every citizen and employee in realising their full potential to exercise genuine choice and control over their own lives and participate fully in the community life of the district.
- ❑ To provide appropriate training on recognising and avoiding discrimination, harassment, victimisation, unconscious bias and promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in the areas of recruitment, development and promotion.
- ❑ To publish information to demonstrate how we are complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty and to prepare and publish equality objectives.

4. Our Commitment

4.1 LCC is committed to being a fair and supportive employer, enabling our workforce to deliver high quality services to everyone. To achieve this, we will:

- ❑ Ensure all recruitment is carried out fairly and effectively
- ❑ Ensure all managers and staff are appropriately trained and equipped to implement this policy
- ❑ Treat all employees fairly, and with dignity and respect at all times
- ❑ Apply a zero-tolerance approach to unacceptable behaviour and take necessary action to deal with any such act swiftly and appropriately
- ❑ Create an environment where employees are fully engaged in the development of our policies and practices
- ❑ Provide fair and transparent pay, rewards and conditions of service
- ❑ Promote the opportunities to work flexibly across the organisation and promote an appropriate work-life balance
- ❑ Make reasonable adjustments in line with our legal duties
- ❑ Continually monitor the make-up of our workforce and aim to employ a workforce that reflects the population of the district we serve.

5. Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination

5.1 You must not bully or discriminate against other people, including current and former staff, job applicants, clients, customers, suppliers and visitors. This applies in the workplace, outside the workplace (when dealing with customers, suppliers or other work-related contacts or when wearing a work uniform), and on work-related trips or events including social events.

5.2 Although there is no legal definition of bullying, it can be described as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is either:

- ❑ Offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting

- An abuse or misuse of power that undermines, humiliates, or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.
- 5.3 Bullying could be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident. It might happen face to face, on social media, in emails or calls. It may happen at work or in other work-related situations and it might not always be obvious to or noticed by others.
- 5.4 It is possible someone might not know their behaviour is bullying, but it can still be bullying even if they do not realise it or do not intend to bully someone. It might look like constantly criticising someone's work, spreading rumours about someone, putting someone down in meetings, giving someone a heavier workload than everyone else, excluding someone from team social events or posting humiliating, offensive or threatening comments or photos on social media.
- 5.5 Bullying can also happen from staff towards someone more senior, for example a manager. This is sometimes called "upward bullying" or "subordinate bullying". It can be from one employee or a group of employees. This might look like showing continued disrespect, refusing to complete tasks, spreading rumours, constantly undermining someone's authority and doing things to make someone seem unskilled or unable to do their job properly.
- 5.6 Bullying can become harassment or discrimination if the conduct relates to a person's age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation (**Protected Characteristics**). Bullying that is not classed as harassment or discrimination might still contribute towards legal issues.
- 5.7 The following are forms of discrimination, and are not only prohibited by this policy, but they are also unlawful:
- (a) **Direct discrimination:** treating someone less favourably because of a Protected Characteristic. For example, rejecting a job applicant because of their religious views or because they might be gay. Direct discrimination can include associative discrimination, where a person is treated less favourably because of their association with an individual with a Protected Characteristic, and perception discrimination, where a person is treated less favourably because of the mistaken belief that they possess a Protected Characteristic.
 - (b) **Indirect discrimination:** something that applies to everyone but adversely affects people with a particular Protected Characteristic more than others and is not justified. For example, requiring a job to be done full-time rather than part-time would adversely affect women because they generally have greater childcare commitments than men. Such a requirement would be discriminatory unless it can be justified.
 - (c) **Harassment:** this includes sexual harassment and other unwanted conduct related to a Protected Characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating someone's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them.
 - (d) **Victimisation:** retaliation against someone who has complained or has supported someone else's complaint about discrimination or harassment. This includes where someone mistakenly believes that the person victimised has done so.
 - (e) **Disability discrimination:** this includes direct and indirect discrimination, any unjustified less favourable treatment because of the effects of a disability, and failure to make reasonable adjustments to alleviate disadvantages caused by a disability.
- 5.8 Colleagues should be mindful that conduct may be considered discrimination whether or not the person behaving in that way intended to offend. Different people find different things acceptable, and everyone

has the right to decide what behaviour is acceptable to them and have their feelings respected by others.

- 5.9 It is important to remember that religious and philosophical beliefs are protected by the Equality Act, and that sometimes those beliefs may conflict with others. We want to encourage a workplace where colleagues feel comfortable to exercise their beliefs, but all colleagues must also understand the importance of dignity and respect and understand that complaints of bullying, harassment or discrimination will be taken seriously.

6. Employee groups and Networks

- 6.1 We support the formation of employee groups and networks as a key part of our diversity and inclusion strategy. Such groups and networks bring together colleagues from across the Council with the objective of promoting the cause of those who are historically underrepresented. They are organised as employee-driven associations that are open to all, where colleagues can participate locally and virtually on a voluntary basis. If an employee wanted to create a new network, they should contact the Wellbeing Group ([link](#)) who always welcome new groups.

7. Support and Advice

- 7.1 If any colleague feels that they have been bullied, harassed, or discriminated against, we encourage them to report this as soon as possible to a line manager or HR and we will commit to dealing with this swiftly and appropriately. Whilst that process is underway, colleagues are encouraged to reach out to our employee assistance provider ([link](#)) who can provide free 24/7 counselling. Colleagues attention is also drawn to the support of our internal mental health first aiders who can be contacted ([link](#)).

8. Breaches

- 8.1 We take a strict approach to breaches of this policy, which will be dealt with in accordance with our Disciplinary Procedure. Serious cases of deliberate discrimination and victimisation may amount to gross misconduct resulting in dismissal.
- 8.2 If you believe that you have suffered harassment, bullying or discrimination, or witnessed it happening to someone else in the workplace, you can raise the matter through our Grievance Procedure. Complaints will be treated in confidence and investigated as appropriate.
- 8.3 There must be no victimisation or retaliation against staff who complain about or report discrimination. If you believe you have been victimised for making a complaint or report of discrimination or have witnessed it happening to someone else in the workplace, you should raise this through our Grievance Procedure as soon as possible to allow for a timely investigation.

Document Control:

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1.0		New policy combining: Equality and Diversity and Dignity at Work	2026

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