



DARLINGTON
Borough Council



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Darlington Borough Council

Equality Policy

2023-2027

Foreword

Inclusion and fairness are a vital part of making sure Darlington Borough Council works for everyone. Since the last Equality Policy we have worked hard to entrench these values in the decisions we make and the way we serve the people of Darlington.

With this refresh of the policy we aim to build on the work we have done to embed the principles of equality in our work, and to strive harder to make sure that no one in Darlington is put at a disadvantage because of where, what or whom they were born, what they believe, or whether they have a disability.

Equality is considered in the way we:

- treat our employees
- work as a community leader
- plan, commission and deliver services to the community
- take decisions in our various regulatory functions (e.g. licensing)
- work in partnership with other organisations in Darlington
- enter into contracts or tender to provide goods and services.

Darlington is a diverse community, and getting more diverse which should be celebrated. This policy sets out the ways we will support our employees to fulfil our legal responsibilities on equality, including eliminating discrimination, advancing equity of opportunity and fostering good relations between people of all backgrounds. We will do this by providing training and support to staff and working with partners and communities.

The key principle running through the policy is that inequality and social exclusion are caused by social and organisational barriers rather than the medical, economic, cultural or other circumstances of the individual.

As part of the bi-annual Council Plan reporting cycle, we will report how we are progressing with the training programme and we will highlight the impacts this is having. We welcome your comments if there is anything you think we could be doing better.

Councillor Jim Garner

Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities

Ian Williams

Chief Executive

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Equality Policy 2023 - 2027

Introduction

1. This Equality Policy sets out Darlington Borough Council's approach to fulfilling its duties under the Equality Act 2010. It is also designed to support and reinforce the Council's activities and decisions and to guide change for some parts of the community so that it does not inadvertently disadvantage others.
2. The Equality Policy is focused on meeting the Council's legal duties and giving positive support and reinforcement to the Council's activities and decisions whilst being proportionate to the Council's capacity and resources.
3. The Equality Policy applies to:
 - a. Darlington Borough Council employees
 - b. Elected Members
 - c. People on work placements with the Council
 - d. Volunteer workers with the Council
 - e. Organisations and individuals commissioned by the Council to provide services or facilities
 - f. Formal partners.
4. Equality should be considered in everything that the Council does, including new policy development, the design and commissioning of services, capital projects and day-to-day service delivery. Decision-making should take account of equality considerations. For simplicity all of these settings in which the policy will come into play are referred to as 'activities' throughout the document.

Vision for Equality

5. The Equality Policy does not stand alone. It is an integral part of the Council's wider commitment to growing the economy, while supporting the most vulnerable residents. Much of the Council's work, together with its partners, is focused on narrowing the gaps in health, attainment, prosperity and quality of life between more vulnerable and disadvantaged people and the Darlington community as a whole. This mission is rooted in the council's overall vision for Darlington's future.
6. The Equality Policy has an important role in making sure that decisions and activities designed to make progress towards one or more of the council's priorities do not inadvertently cause disadvantage elsewhere. The Policy is designed to support and strengthen Council activities and decisions, refining them through the fairness test of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), rather than constraining and limiting them.

A Social Model

7. The key principle running through the policy is that inequality and social exclusion are caused by social and organisational barriers rather than the medical, economic, cultural or other circumstances of the individual.

This principle is well established in the Social Model of Disability but it can be applied more widely. It is the position that underpins EIA and is appropriate across all the legally Protected Characteristics.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

8. The Equality Act 2010 established the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Duty requires local authorities and other authorities carrying out public functions to have due regard to the need to:
 - a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other unlawful conduct that is prohibited under the Act
 - b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant Protected Characteristic and those who do not
 - c. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant Protected Characteristic and those who do not.
9. Having due regard means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty - outlined above - as part of the process of decision-making. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies - such as in how they act as employers; how they develop, evaluate and review policy; how they design, deliver and evaluate services, and how they commission and procure from others. How much regard is due depends on the circumstances and relevance of the three aims to the decision or function in question. The greater the relevance and potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty.
10. The duty set out above is known as the General Duty, and it applies both to the Council and to other people / organisations exercising the Council's public functions on its behalf (such as companies commissioned to provide public services).
11. Having due regard for advancing equality involves:
 - a. Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - b. Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
 - c. Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
12. Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:
 - a. Tackle prejudice
 - b. Promote understanding.
13. Compliance with the Duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under the Act, such as:
 - a. A breach of an equality clause or rule;
 - b. A breach of a non-discrimination rule.
14. The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

15. Under the Act, there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person is at a substantial disadvantage - defined as something more than minor or trivial - in comparison with persons who are not disabled. In addition, the Act requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between disabled and non-disabled people. This may mean treating disabled people more favourably than others, and making reasonable adjustments to activities to enable disabled people to benefit or participate. Further guidance is available in **Annex 2**.
16. The General Duty is reinforced by specific duties that support and aid compliance with the General Duty. The specific duties that the Council must comply with are:
 - a. To publish information annually to show how we meet the General Duty. This publication is known as the Equality Analysis and Darlington Borough Council first published its analysis in January 2012.
 - b. To prepare and publish one or more objectives to meet any aims of the General Duty at least every four years.
17. The three parts of the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act - to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations - mean that the Council must work in diverse ways to promote equality and cohesion, but always of central importance is the duty to ensure that the Council's decisions about its plans, strategies, work programmes and use of resources take full account of (have due regard to) potential impacts on people because of their Protected Characteristics.
18. Whilst producing and publishing a specific Equality Policy no longer forms part of our public duties under law, Darlington Borough Council believes that having an Equality Policy will help to ensure that it complies with the general and specific duties, assist in tackling discrimination and promoting community cohesion and improve its knowledge and awareness of equality and diversity issues.
19. There are nine 'Protected Characteristics' as defined by the Equality Act 2010. Definitions of all the Protected Characteristics are set out in **Annex 1**.
20. Everyone shares one or more of these characteristics. We all have an age, sex and sexual orientation, for example, and therefore everybody has legal protection under the Public Sector Equality Duty.
21. The duty to have due regard recognises that sometimes difficult choices have to be made that may cause disadvantage. However, having due regard also means that it is vital that decision makers have full information about the potential impact of their decisions on people because of their Protected Characteristics, and this policy seeks to ensure that all relevant information is made available through the process of Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).
22. The Council has developed and used EIA as the tool for identifying, assessing and reporting the effects of actions, services and proposals (referred to throughout this document as activities) on people in respect of their legally Protected Characteristics. This policy adopts the established approach to EIA, but updates some key aspects.
23. Guidance to carrying out EIA is set out in **Annex 3**.

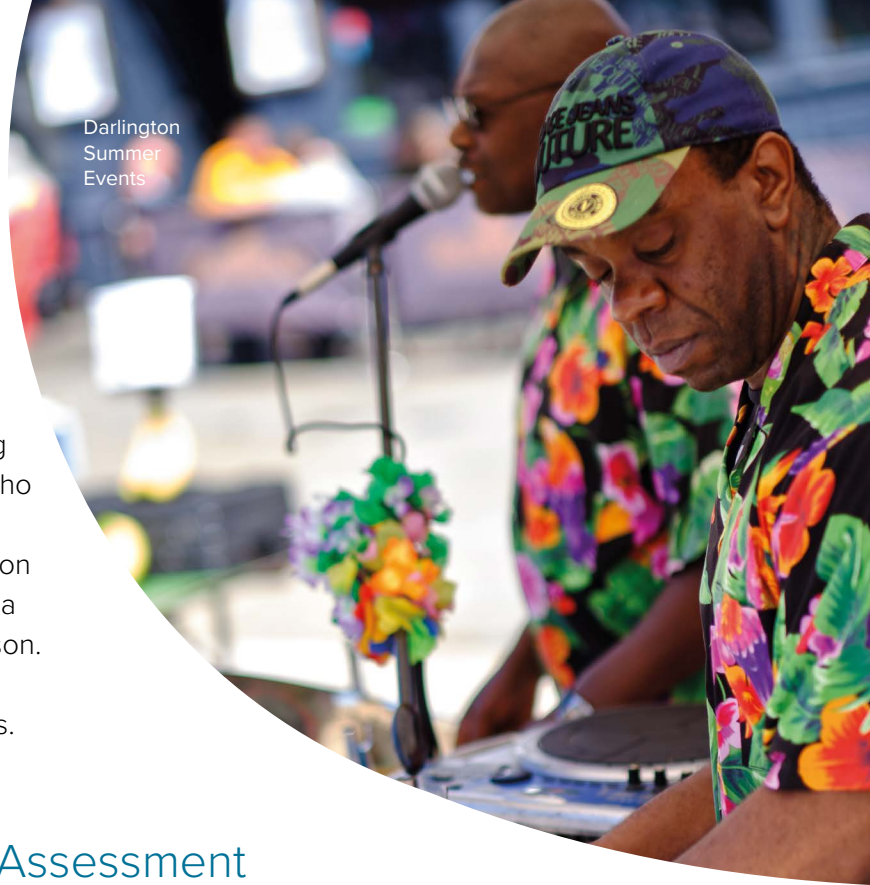


Equality Impact Assessment

24. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is the principal tool we have available to help the Council fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty to have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate harassment and discrimination and foster good relations.
 25. The general Equality Duty does not set out a particular process for assessing impact on equality that public authorities are expected to follow. Having due regard to the aims of the general equality duty is about informed decision-making, not about carrying out particular processes or producing particular documents.
 26. All Council reports and recommendations on any proposal or action, whether to chief officers or Cabinet and from feasibility to final report, should include current equalities thinking, even where a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. All Council reports submitted for consideration by Members at Cabinet or
- Council therefore include a checklist, where officers are required to evidence what advice they have taken with regards to equalities considerations and summarise what impacts, if any, the report will have on groups in the borough.
27. Where it is considered that an EIA may be required, the Council records its assessments of the impact on equality in an Initial Screening form and, if required, an EIA Record form. The Council's EIA forms assess the impact of a policy, service or function on all protected characteristics, as well as other vulnerable groups. Outcomes for community cohesion and assessment of whether the policy, service or function does or could promote good relationships within and between communities are also required.
 28. The Council uses EIA to help it manage and review services to achieve the fairest possible outcomes.

EIA and Disability

29. Section 149(4) of the Equality Act explicitly recognises that disabled people's needs may be different from those of non-disabled people. The law specifically requires that the needs of disabled people with different impairments should be taken into account in discharging the Public Sector Equality Duty. A person who has a particular visual impairment will have different needs and impacts even to a person with a different visual impairment, let alone a wheelchair user or a learning disabled person. The Council will take account of disabled people's disabilities when making decisions.



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Carrying Out Equality Impact Assessment

30. **Annex 3** provides guidance on the Council's approach to carrying out EIA. It should be read in conjunction with the Initial Screening form and EIA Record Form, attached as **Annex 4**.
31. The principles and thinking underlying the EIA process are relevant to everything from the development of major new policy initiatives to the day-to-day actions of an individual. EIA should be carried out when revising or introducing new:
- a. Policies
 - b. Strategies
 - c. Budget proposals
 - d. Procedures
 - e. Service (re)design and commissioning
 - f. Capital and transformation projects
 - g. EIA can also be used to assess existing services or activities for fair access and fair outcomes for everyone in the community.
32. For the sake of simplicity these are all referred to as **activities** in the guidance and forms.

Annual Review and Policy Action Plan

33. The policy is supported by a number of processes and arrangements, some of which are reviewed and updated annually.

These are:

- a. Equality analysis & Equality Objective(s)
- b. Leadership and co-ordination roles and responsibilities
- c. Training provision
- d. Engagement framework
- e. Performance management framework
- f. Action plan

Equality Analysis

34. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 came into force on 10th September 2011. These set deadlines for the Council to carry out two specific tasks. The first of these was the requirement to publish information (the Equality Analysis) showing how the Council is complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty by 31st January 2012. The Council published its first Equality Analysis in January 2012; the latest version is available on the Council website through this link:
<http://www.darlington.gov.uk/your-council/communities/equality-information/#facts>
35. The annual review and publication of the Equality Analysis, as required by law, enables equality information and improvement actions contained within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and service plans to be highlighted for the benefit of stakeholders. The Council will also continue to publish Equality Impact Assessments.

Equality Objective

36. The other specific task required by the 2011 regulations was the publication of Equality Objective(s) by 6th April 2012. The Council published its first set of Objectives at the beginning of April 2012.
37. The Objective(s) set out specific and measurable tasks to improve equality. They are not intended to reflect the full scope of the Council's commitment to equality, but to set out steps that can be taken to make progress in particular areas of activity highlighted for improvement in the Equality Analysis. Actions to deliver the objectives will be included in the annual Action Plan that forms part of this policy.
38. The Equality Objective for 2018-2022 has been reviewed and further developed during the preparation of this policy.
39. The regulations require the objective(s) to be reviewed at least every four years (the life cycle of this policy is aligned to that four year review period).
40. The Council's Equality Objective for the period 2023-2027 is:
"To provide ongoing training and support for staff and members to help them meet their duties under the Equality Act of 2010, raise awareness of the Equality Policy and ensure residents of Darlington are treated with dignity and respect, and continue to report on progress."
41. This objective addresses the council's most important priorities in respect of meeting the PSED, as identified by local stakeholders, and demonstrates its commitment to continuing to embed the equality agenda in a measurable way.



Leadership and Co-ordination Roles and Responsibilities

42. In Darlington, equality is an integral part of mainstream work rather than a separate function carried out by specialists. Senior managers (Assistant Directors, Heads of Service and Service Managers) are responsible for implementing the Equality Principles and meeting the requirements of the Equality Duty within their service areas.
43. One of the key principles underlying the policy is that testing the fairness of activities, proposals and decisions as an integral process within mainstream work helps managers and Members to carry out their roles effectively, leads to better and more sustainable services, and is the most cost-effective way of meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty.
44. However, appropriate support is needed to help staff to do this, and to provide a planned and co-ordinated approach to equalities across all Council functions. Such arrangements have been in place for a number of years. These have been reviewed under this policy, and the following key roles identified:
 - a. A Cabinet Member lead (the Stronger Communities Portfolio Holder) has overall accountability.
 - b. The Chief Executive has overall officer accountability for the Policy at Chief Officer Executive (COE) level.
 - c. Chief Officer Board (COB) raise any performance issues with COE.
 - d. A manager with responsibility for leading the development and implementation of the policy chairs the Council Equalities Group and reports any equality-related issues escalated by the Group to COB on a quarterly basis.
 - e. Equality Advisors in each service area support and advise officers, from Director-level to frontline staff, on equality-related matters. Equality Advisors are senior officers to ensure they can effectively support their service area.
 - f. The Corporate Equalities Group, chaired by the equality lead and comprised of the Equality Advisors, meet on a quarterly basis and provide a forum for co-ordinating and supporting equality work across the Council including:
 - i. Advising on draft policy and work programmes,
 - ii. discussing issues (current, emerging and potential),
 - iii. recommending actions to Chief Officers' Board and/re specific Assistant Directors,
 - iv. sharing learning from EIAs,
 - v. advising on equalities training requirements,
 - vi. liaising with relevant internal and partnership groups to share information and intelligence.
 - g. The Equalities Reference Group oversee and support progress of the Equality Policy, by providing feedback to the Corporate Equalities Group and wider organisation, following receipt of an annual status report. This group is comprised of self-nominated staff members from protected characteristic groups who have an interest in equalities and are willing to share their knowledge and experiences to help the Council fulfil the PSED. This group act as a consultation platform, helping the council to develop inclusive policies, action plans and corporate objectives, by feeding back their views using their expertise and experience. This group also support delivery of the policy by providing advice and support on how to target and involve particular groups in the community.

45. The Darlington Partnership Executive act as the main forum for and lead on strategic engagement and multiagency activity by the Council and partners with protected characteristic groups. The Executive work with partners to identify priorities and opportunities for joint working, share best practice and, where required, host assemblies with relevant partners and protected characteristic groups to address specific issues and coordinate activity.
46. The allocation of the above roles will be reviewed annually to ensure that the arrangements are working effectively and in response to staffing and workload changes.

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Equality Training

47. Equality training is provided to support the roles and responsibilities outlined above, and is reviewed annually to make sure that it is delivering the skills necessary to implement the policy.
48. Front-line staff who interact with the public and service users are also a training priority, to ensure that they have the skills and awareness to respond appropriately to the diverse range of people with whom they come into contact.
49. It is also important to ensure that a general understanding of the Public Sector Equality Duty and of the Equality Policy is maintained across the Council, particularly amongst Chief Officers, Heads of Service and Council Members in their decision-making role.
50. The Council's current equalities training provision will be reviewed in the context of this policy and Equality Objective and the most effective use of available resources. Equality Advisors and the Equalities Reference Group will be consulted with throughout the design, development and testing of any new training to ensure it supports delivery of the Equality Policy and Objective.

External Engagement Arrangements

51. Securing the involvement of representatives of people who share Protected Characteristics will be important for the effectiveness of the Equality Policy.
52. It is proposed that the purpose of such engagement will include involvement of representatives in the provision of expertise, on a case by case basis, to:
 - a. advise on equality impact assessments;
 - b. provide a perspective on local issues to inform the Equality Analysis;
 - c. reflect on regional and national guidance and good practice and its application in Darlington;
 - d. facilitate early, informal discussion about views on emerging equalities issues.

Performance Management

53. Performance management of the policy will be the responsibility of the Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications. These arrangements will be incorporated into the corporate performance management framework and embed equalities into all areas of service planning. There are several broad components that require performance management:
 - a. Progress in carrying out the actions focused on delivering the Equality Objective
 - b. The effectiveness of the Equality Policy in guiding work across the Council towards fair outcomes - is it making a difference?
54. Progress towards delivery of the policy and objective will be measured in a number of ways:
 - a. A number of selected indicators **(Annex 5)** will be added to the corporate performance management framework. These indicators will be regularly reviewed and, where new priorities are identified or emerge, new indicators may be added.
 - b. Questions to determine staff perceptions of how well they understand equalities and their responsibilities have been added to the staff survey, in order to establish a baseline for monitoring going forward as training is delivered.
- c. Equality information relating to Darlington Borough Council's workforce and the wider borough will continue to be published on the website.
- d. The Corporate Equalities Group will produce an annual status report on how progress towards the objective is being achieved, outlining key actions taken over the previous 12 months and any equality-related measures which have shown significant change.
- e. Service areas will be tasked with ensuring equalities is embedded within their own performance monitoring arrangements.
55. Whilst performance management of the policy and objective will sit with the Head of Strategy, Performance and Communications, delivery of the Equality Objective will require sufficient budget and commitment from Assistant Directors and management to release staff for training and embed an equalities culture within their service, as per the equality governance arrangements.
56. Information gathered as a result of performance monitoring will be used to inform learning and future action plans.

Action Plan

57. Action plans will identify actions and responsibilities for delivering:
 - a. Equality Analysis which needs to be reviewed annually;
 - b. Equality Objectives which need to be reviewed at least every four years;
 - c. Improvement plans, where required, to address performance issues.

Communication of the Equality Policy

58. The updated Equality Policy and Objective will be communicated to staff through staff briefings, the corporate induction and equality training. Councillors will receive information about the Equality Policy and Objective as part of their induction programme and in Member Briefings. The Equality Policy and Objective will also be published on our website for members of the public to view. Alternative formats of this information will be available on request.

ANNEX 1 - Definitions of Legally Protected Characteristics

Equality and Human Rights Commission definitions

Age: where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).

Note: It is lawful to treat people differently because of their age in circumstances where the law allows, or requires, people to be treated differently because of their age.

Disability: a person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Note: In Darlington we use the definition above but have previously found it helpful to place this in the context of a social model approach to disability. We will continue to do so. See paragraph 25.

Gender reassignment: Where a person undergoes, or proposes to undergo, a process for the purpose of reassigning their sex.

Marriage and Civil Partnership: Marriage is a 'union between two people'. Couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

Note: For public authorities, only the first aim of the general duty applies to this characteristic, and only in relation to employment matters.

Pregnancy and Maternity: Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race: A race is a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnicity or national origins. A racial group can be made up of more than one distinct racial group, such as Black British.

Religion and Belief: Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex: A man or a woman.

Sexual orientation: Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

ANNEX 2 - Reasonable Adjustments

1. The Council as a provider of services and also as an employer is required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees or service users.
2. As a provider of services we may need to make changes to help disabled customers or potential customers to use our services. The types of changes that will be reasonable will depend on the circumstances but could include making changes to the way things are done (for instance to a policy), to buildings (for instance to improve access or using a better venue) and by providing auxiliary aids and support (for instance providing information in an accessible format, an induction loop or additional staff support or home visits).
3. Reasonable adjustments are required wherever disabled customers or potential customers would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage compared with non-disabled people. A substantial disadvantage is more than a minor or trivial disadvantage. Service providers cannot charge disabled customers for reasonable adjustments.
4. The Equality Act 2010 requires that service providers forward plan and take steps to address barriers that impede disabled people. For instance considering the range of disabilities that actual or potential service users might have (and not waiting until a disabled person experiences difficulties using a service, as this may make it too late to make the necessary adjustment).
5. As an employer we may need to make changes to the recruitment to a particular role and for employees to any elements of a job that place a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people. What constitutes a reasonable adjustment will depend on the circumstances.
6. When recruiting consideration will need to be given to the types of questions that can be asked and the assessment process followed (for instance adjustments may be required to enable a candidate to sit a test, for instance by providing an auxiliary aid).
7. For existing employees adjustments may need to be made to enable an employee to be able to carry out their role without disadvantage. For instance providing accessible parking, better building access, auxiliary aids, or specialist equipment. What is reasonable will depend on the circumstances.
8. Officers should seek appropriate guidance from Human Resources or Legal Services as is appropriate when considering what adjustments may be reasonable to make.

ANNEX 3 - EIA Guidance Notes

Introduction

1. This guidance should be used alongside the Initial Officer Assessment form and Equality Impact Assessment Record Form.
2. EIA should be carried out when revising or introducing new:
 - a. Policies
 - b. Strategies
 - c. Budget proposals
 - d. Procedures
 - e. Service design and commissioning
 - f. Capital and transformation projects.
3. EIA can also be used to assess existing services or activities for fair access and fair outcomes for everyone in the community. For the sake of simplicity these are all referred to as activities in this guidance and in the EIA Record Form.
4. EIA will vary with the activity being assessed, and officers are encouraged to be creative, proportionate and sensible within the broad approach set out here to integrate EIA appropriately into their activities.
5. An EIA may be triggered by a range of factors, including the review or development of a policy or service plan; the instigation of a new action such as a capital project, commissioning activity or procurement of goods; significant changes to budgets; or an 'impact alert' by partners, stakeholders or the general public highlighting effects or impacts on people with Protected Characteristics of a Council service, activity or facility.
6. Where an officer is unclear as to whether an EIA should be undertaken they should seek support through the relevant pages of the intranet, their Equality Advisor and/or the Policy and Performance team.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

7. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires all public bodies to consider the needs of individuals in their day-to-day work - in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.
8. The Equality Duty has three aims. These require public bodies to have due regard to the need to:
 - a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a Protected Characteristic and people who do not share it; and
 - c. Foster good relations between people who share a Protected Characteristic and people who do not share it.
9. The legally Protected Characteristics are defined in Annex 1 of the Equality Policy. The policy provides more information on the Equality Duty and the Council's approach to meeting its requirements. In addition to the legally protected characteristics DBC also want to reduce negative impacts on residents in poverty or are young people who have left care.
10. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is the tool used to enable the Council to meet the duty and to demonstrate that it has done so. If due regard cannot be demonstrated, decisions may be challenged and proposals delayed by judicial review resulting in lost time, money and negative publicity.

11. EIA should be carried out as an integral part of the planning of an activity. It does not take place at one point in time, but should evolve

with the planning process, from concept to final product.

Effects and Impacts

12. The purpose of EIA is to identify, assess and seek to avoid, minimise or mitigate the negative impacts of the activity on people because of their Protected Characteristics. In doing this it is important to understand the distinction between effects and impacts. This can best be illustrated by an example. The loss of a bus service will affect all the people who use that service - the effect is that there is no bus to make the usual journey to work or the shops and everybody experiences the effect equally. The impact will be experienced differently by different people, depending on their circumstances. Some people may not be able to get out, and become

more isolated and perhaps depressed. Some will have to do their shopping at a local shop, spending more and being less able to afford other goods and services. For others, there may be positive impacts from teaming up with friends to car-share, or improving their health by walking or cycling.

13. The role of EIA is to go beyond an understanding of the shared effects of an activity, to identify the varying impacts on individuals. Doing that may require engagement with the affected people, because only they know how they will be impacted.

Initial Screening

14. The first stage of EIA is for the officer(s) responsible for the activity to carry out an initial screening form to scope the EIA. This may be done by a single officer if the activity or proposal is minor, but for larger and more complex matters such as the development of a new strategy or policy a group of officers familiar with the area of work should be involved. The screening form will determine whether a full EIA is required, to inform the decision-making process.

15. When considering whether the activity is relevant to equality, you will need to ask yourself:
 - a. What information do I have to base my initial screening on? What does this information tell me?
 - b. Will the activity have an impact on service users, communities or employees? Consider this in terms of the numbers of people affected and the likely extent of

impact i.e. a service change may be likely to affect a number of individuals but the level of impact on those individuals will only be small or, conversely, a decision may only affect a small number of residents but the level of impact on each individual will be significant.

- c. Does it potentially affect different groups of people differently?
- d. Will the activity have an impact on one or more aim of the equality duty?
- e. Has previous engagement or assessment shown that the activity is relevant to equality?
- f. Does it have an effect on how other organisations operate in terms of equality (i.e. commissioned services)?
- g. Does the function relate to an area of established inequality?

16. In some cases like grant giving, commissioning, funding programmes or changes to service delivery (including new, reduced or closing services), it will be easy to show a relevance to equality. However some functions may be less straightforward to judge.
17. You should use the Initial Screening form to communicate whether the activity has demonstrated a relevance to equality or not.
18. Where the Initial Screening demonstrates that the activity is relevant to equality:
 - a. Briefly use the tick boxes to show which characteristics the activity is relevant to;
 - b. Ensure that the completed Initial Screening form is signed off at Assistant Director-level. Sign-off must be in the form of an actual signature and not an emailed authorisation.
 - c. Make sure a copy of the Initial Screening form is retained
 - d. You will then need to undertake a full EIA.
19. Where your Initial Screening form demonstrates that the function is not relevant to equality:
 - a. Provide a full narrative of how this conclusion was reached in the 'Reason for decision' box. Simply stating 'no relevance' or 'no information available' will not be sufficient; the Council must be able to show that its decisions are based on thorough analysis of robust data.
 - b. A copy of the Initial Screening form should be retained for future reference.
 - c. NB if the Initial Screening suggests that there will be no effect on people with Protected Characteristics, the activity should continue to be monitored for such effects as it develops.
 - d. Although poverty is not in itself a protected characteristic according to the Equality Act it is an issue that impacts on many people with protected characteristics. For example, many disabled people are on a low income or have higher expenditure costs for heating etc. For this reason the Council asks that Poverty is included in EIA scope.
 - e. Whilst individuals leaving care are not a legally defined protected characteristic group they face disadvantage as they do not have the same support networks that many other young people have. Activities should be screened through the EIA process to identify any specific impact on these individuals.



Carrying out a Full EIA

20. If the Initial Screening form has identified that the activity is relevant to equality then a full EIA should be undertaken using the Equality Impact Assessment Record.
21. The key issue in EIA is whether we need to engage with people who will be impacted by the activity, and when and how to engage. The key principle is that impacts can only be properly identified by the people who will experience them. Where the Initial Screening Form has identified that the activity is relevant to equality then it is likely that engagement/consultation will be required.
22. For complex activities it may be that the initial screening cannot identify the people likely to be affected or the level of impact because the required information is not available in the early stages of the activity. Nevertheless it may be apparent that impacts are likely in the future (for example with the implementation of detailed proposals that have not yet been specified or designed).
23. In this case, you should consider whether there is anything at the current stage of development (for example in the wording of draft policies) that could cause disadvantage to people with Protected Characteristics in future or which does not make the most of opportunities for positive impact in the future implementation of the activity.
24. If so, you will need to decide whether to make appropriate changes. These should be recorded in the action plan (Section 8 of the EIA Record Form) as part of the full documentation of the EIA.
25. As soon as it is apparent that people with particular Protected Characteristics are likely to be impacted by the activity, it is advisable to consult with the stakeholder/representative organisations for the relevant Protected Characteristics for guidance in identifying the groups of people with which to engage and how to engage with them. Officers should also ensure that impacts on anyone who is affected by poverty or care leavers should also be identified and negative impact should be mitigated and the positive impacts identified and maximised.
26. Further officer assessment should be carried out as the activity develops, to further identify affected people and any engagement required.

Two Key Questions on Engagement

27. Officers must ask two vital questions, depending on the nature and scale of the activity:
 - a. Have all the people who will be affected by the activity been identified, informed and invited to be involved via a suitable method?
 - b. Is the activity (proposal or action) framed in a lawful way (legal advice is recommended here) - can the Council do what it is proposing in the way it is proposing to do it? The answer to this question may change the view of the people who are affected and need to be involved.
28. Legal advice should be sought if there is any uncertainty on these questions; representative organisations may also offer views on them.
29. A further question to ask at this stage is whether it is possible or realistic to identify and seek to engage with all of the people who may be impacted by an activity. Whilst we have emphasised the best practice of engaging directly with affected people with Protected Characteristics this will not always be practical, particularly where the activity will impact directly on a wide population. Engagement may then need to involve focus groups or proxy groups such as the staff and members of representative organisations.

30. A record and commentary of the engagement/consultation carried out should be included in the engagement and consultation box of the EIA Record form, including details of the stakeholders/ groups who have been involved, together with the method and dates of engagement. Engagement might take place through a range of channels such as phone, email, social media, the Council website and post.
31. Experience shows that small group and one-to-one sessions work better than large consultation type forums or other channels for exploring impacts. Impacts are personal to the individual and often emotionally charged, and it takes time and effort to identify them. Officers need to listen and encourage, and record what people say.
32. Staff involved in engagement sessions should be good listeners and able to encourage and support people to express themselves. Staff may also need to be DBS-cleared.
33. Sometimes the emotive nature of discussions about impacts on individuals may mean that both members of the public and staff may need additional support during and/or immediately after these discussions. Lead officers for each activity will assess the need for additional support and details of how to access this.

Assessment

34. Once the engagement / consultation has been done then an analysis of the findings should be undertaken in section 3 of the EIA record form. Officers should include a detailed narrative of why any of the impacts identified will have this effect.
35. Whilst not Protected Characteristics, the EIA form includes an assessment of whether the activity might affect either those on low incomes, those living in rural locations, care leavers or those who are carers. This is so that Officers and Members are also able to consider service users from other social excluded groups in their decision-making.
36. Officers should also seek to identify any cumulative impacts from the activity in Section 4 of the EIA Record form. This involves an analysis of whether the activity will affect anyone more because of a combination of Protected Characteristics. Officers should include what they think the effect might be and why, providing evidence from engagement, consultation and/or service user data or demographic information, etc. Further, Officers should seek to identify whether there are any other Council activities of which they are aware which might also impact on the same protected characteristics.



Analysis

37. The following content relates to action following involvement and engagement, but it is vital that evolving equalities thinking and findings are documented and taken into account in any reporting/decisions as the activity develops. The officer(s) responsible for the activity should feed EIA findings into its planning/development. The EIA record document assists officers to do this, but the key questions at this stage are:
- a. To what extent does the activity result in a positive or negative impact for people with Protected Characteristics?
 - b. In relation to disabled people, does the activity affect people with different needs differently?
 - c. Is there evidence of unlawful discrimination, requiring the activity to be changed?
 - d. Will the activity increase equality of opportunity for people with Protected Characteristics?
 - e. Will the activity help to reduce harassment and victimisation, and foster good relations?
 - f. Does the evidence gathered through involvement and engagement show that the activity could be modified to avoid negative impacts on Protected Characteristics, or that such impacts could be minimised or mitigated?

When is the EIA Complete?

38. This is not quite as simple a question as it sounds. It is essential to maintain a clear separation between identifying and reporting impacts, and planning and recommending ways to manage (avoid, minimise or mitigate) those impacts. Therefore once the impacts have been identified through engagement it is recommended that a line be drawn under the equalities impact assessment and that it be signed-off by the responsible officers (Section 6 of EIA Record Form).
39. However, this is not the end of the overall process. EIA findings must be made available to decision-makers so that they can make decisions on the activity in the light of their full potential impact. Equalities findings and perspectives must also be taken into account in making recommendations to decision-makers, but these findings and perspectives will be balanced with all the other considerations that need to be taken into account - finance and funding, health and safety, staffing and capacity, the benefits and costs of the activity, and so on.
40. The recommendations (Section 7 EIA Record Form) may include proposals for managing the impacts. Ways of avoiding, minimising or mitigating impacts may have been identified during the EIA process, whether by officers or people engaged in the process. It is essential that the impacts of the activity are reported separately from and without being modified or 'softened' by proposals for managing them.
41. Any proposals for managing impacts included in the report and recommendations should then be fed back into the Action Plan and Performance Management arrangements (Section 8 of the EIA Record Form), so that their implementation can be managed and monitored.

Reporting Findings

42. Reporting the findings of EIA to decision-makers may occur at several stages, depending on the complexity of the activity. Interim reports on feasibility studies or options appraisals, whether to executive boards or Cabinet, should include the latest equalities findings. Reports recommending final decisions on activities must await and include the findings of the full EIA process. Impacts must be reported separately from any proposals to manage those impacts, so that decision-makers have a clear understanding of the potential effects of their decision. The full EIA should be made available to decision-makers within the reporting/decision-making process.



Decision-Making

43. As noted above, reports and recommendations on any proposal or action, whether to chief officers or Cabinet and from feasibility to final report, should include current equalities thinking, even where a full Equality Impact Assessment has not been required.
44. The Equalities and Human Rights Commission's guidance for decision makers, 'Making Fair Financial Decisions', outlines what Members should be looking for in an EIA. This includes;
- a. A written record of equality considerations
 - b. Consideration of the actions that would help to avoid or mitigate impacts on particular protected groups
 - c. A clear evidence base for making decisions, with sources for all information clearly stated.
45. Members should seek to ensure that EIA and decisions are transparent, and that the process complies with the law. The guidance can be accessed at: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty-guidance>

After Completion

46. The completed EIA Record Form, including the Action Plan, should be retained. The completed EIA will also be posted on the Council website,
- to provide an up-to-date view of equalities activity for the benefit of stakeholders and the general public.

ANNEX 4 - EIA Screening Form and Record Form

Initial equality impact assessment screening form

This form is an equality screening process to determine the relevance of equality to an activity, and a decision whether or not a full EIA would be appropriate or proportionate.

| | |
|---|--|
| Directorate: | |
| Service area: | |
| Activity being screened: | |
| Officer(s) carrying out the screening: | |
| What are you proposing to do? | |
| Why are you proposing this? What are the desired outcomes? | |
| Does the activity involve a significant commitment or removal of resources? Please give details | |

Is there likely to be an adverse impact on people with any of the following protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, or any other socially excluded groups?

As part of this assessment, please consider the following questions:

- To what extent is this service used by particular groups of people with protected characteristics?
- Does the activity relate to functions that previous consultation has identified as important?
- Do different groups have different needs or experiences in the area the activity relates to?

If for any characteristic it is considered that there is likely to be a significant adverse impact or you have ticked 'Don't know/no info available', then a full EIA should be carried out where this is proportionate.

| Protected characteristic | Yes | No | Don't know/Info not available | |
|---|------------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|--|
| Age | | | | |
| Disability | | | | |
| Sex | | | | |
| Race | | | | |
| Sexual orientation | | | | |
| Religion or belief | | | | |
| Gender reassignment | | | | |
| Pregnancy or maternity | | | | |
| Marriage or civil partnership | | | | |
| Other | | | | |
| Carer (unpaid family or friend) | | | | |
| Low income | | | | |
| Rural location | | | | |
| Care experienced | | | | |
| Does the activity relate to an area where there are known inequalities/probable impacts (e.g. disabled people's access to public transport)? Please give details. | | | | |
| Will the activity have a significant effect on how other organisations operate? (e.g. partners, funding criteria, etc.) Do any of these organisations support people with protected characteristics? Please explain why you have reached this conclusion. | | | | |
| Decision (Please tick one option) | EIA not relevant or proportionate: | | Continue to full EIA: | |
| Reason for decision | | | | |
| Signed (Assistant Director) | | | | |
| Date | | | | |



Equality Impact Assessment Record Form

This form is to be used for recording the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of Council activities. It should be used in conjunction with the guidance on carrying out EIA in Annex 3 of the Equality Policy. The activities that may be subject to EIA are set out in the guidance.

EIA is particularly important in supporting the Council to make fair decisions. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Using this form will help Council officers to carry out EIA in an effective and transparent way and provide decision-makers with full information on the potential impact of their decisions. EIAs are public documents, accompany reports going to Councillors for decisions and are published with committee papers on our website and are available in hard copy at the relevant meeting.

| | |
|---|--|
| Title of activity: | |
| Name of Directorate and Service Area: | |
| Lead Officer and contact details | |
| Assistant Director accountable for this EIA | |
| Who else will be involved in carrying out the EIA: | |
| When did the EIA process start? | |

Section 2 - The Activity and Supporting Information

| |
|--|
| Details of the activity (describe briefly - including the main purpose and aims) (e.g. are you starting a new service, changing how you do something, stopping doing something?) |
| |
| Why is this being proposed? What are the aims? What does the Council hope to achieve by it? (e.g. to save money, meet increased demand, do things more efficiently) |
| |
| What will change? What will be different for service users/ customers and/ or staff? |
| |
| What data, research and other evidence or information is available which is relevant to the EIA? |
| |
| Engagement and consultation (What engagement and consultation has been done regarding the proposal and what are the results? What consultation will be needed and how will it be done?) |
| |
| What impact will this activity have on the Council's budget? (e.g. cost neutral, increased costs or reduced costs? If so, by how much? Explain briefly why this is the case) |
| |

Section 3 - Assessment

| How will the activity affect people with protected characteristics? | No impact | Positive impact | Negative impact | Why will it have this effect? (refer to evidence from engagement, consultation and/or service user data or demographic information, etc) |
|---|-----------|-----------------|-----------------|---|
| Age | | | | |
| Disability (Mobility Impairment, Visual impairment, Hearing impairment, Learning Disability, Mental Health, Long Term Limiting Illness, Multiple Impairments, Other - Specify) | | | | |
| Sex | | | | |
| Race | | | | |
| Gender reassignment | | | | |
| Sexual orientation | | | | |
| Religion or belief | | | | |
| Pregnancy or maternity | | | | |
| Marriage or civil partnership | | | | |
| Live in a rural location? | | | | |
| Are carers? | | | | |
| Are on a low income? | | | | |
| Are care experienced? | | | | |

Section 4 - Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts - will the activity affect anyone more because of a combination of protected characteristics? (e.g. older women or young gay men - state what you think the effect might be and why, providing evidence from engagement, consultation and/or service user data or demographic information, etc)

Are there any other activities of which you are aware which might also impact on the same protected characteristics?

Section 5 - Analysis

a) How will the activity help to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation?

b) How will the activity help to advance equality of opportunity?

c) How will the activity help to foster good relations?

During the engagement/consultation process were there any suggestions on how to avoid, minimise or mitigate any negative impacts? If so, please give details.

Section 6 - Sign-off when assessment is completed

| Officer Completing the Form: | | |
|------------------------------|------------|--|
| Signed | Name: | |
| | Date: | |
| | Job Title: | |
| Assistant Director: | | |
| Signed | Name: | |
| | Date: | |
| | Service: | |

Section 7 - Reporting of Findings and Recommendations to Decision Makers

| |
|---|
| <p>Next steps to address the anticipated impact (Select one of the following options and explain why this has been chosen - remember we have a duty to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people can access services and work for us)</p> |
| <p>a) No negative impact on people because of their Protected Characteristics and therefore no major change is needed to the activity (There is no potential for discrimination or adverse impact identified)</p> |
| <p>b) Negative impact identified - recommend continuing with the activity (Clearly specify the people affected and the impacts, and providing reasons and supporting evidence for the decision to continue. The EIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. Officers will advise to change the proposal to reduce or remove these adverse impacts, or the Council will achieve its aim in another way which will not make things worse for people. There must be compelling reasons for continuing with the proposal which will have the most adverse impacts.)</p> |
| <p>c) Negative impact identified - adjust the activity in light of the identified impact to avoid, minimise or mitigate the impact (The EIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities. The Council will change the proposal to reduce or remove these adverse impacts, or it will achieve the aim in another way which will not make things worse for people)</p> |
| <p>d) Actual or potential unlawful discrimination - stop and remove the activity (The EIA identifies actual or potential unlawful discrimination. It should be stopped.)</p> |
| <p>Explanation of why the option above has been chosen (Including any advice given by legal services)</p> |
| |

| |
|---|
| <p>If the activity is to be implemented how will you find out how it is affecting people once it is in place? (How will you monitor and review the changes?)</p> |
| |

Section 8 - Action Plan and Performance Management

List any actions you need to take which have been identified in this EIA, including post implementation reviews to find out how the outcomes have been achieved in practice and what impacts there have actually been on people with protected characteristics.

| What is the negative impact? | Actions required to reduce/eliminate the negative impact (if applicable) | Who will lead on action | Target completion date |
|------------------------------|--|-------------------------|------------------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| Performance Management | |
|---|--|
| Date of the next review of the EIA | |
| How often will the EIA action plan be reviewed? | |
| Who will carry out this review? | |

ANNEX 5 - Performance Management

The following performance measures will be added to the corporate performance monitoring framework:

- Proportion of staff members who have completed basic equality training
- Workforce equality data
- Service access statistics



DARLINGTON
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