



## The Council's Commitment

Lancaster City Council aims to be an Equal Opportunities organisation and has a legal and ethical responsibility to act fairly, as an employer, and in the provision and delivery of its services and in its duty to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of the communities of the District. This means that the Council will do everything possible to ensure that every client, customer, job applicant and employee has equal access to employment opportunities or the Council's services and is treated with dignity and respect.

Lancaster City Council aims to provide equality of opportunity and equal access for all. The Council, in both its employment practices and in the delivery of its services recognises the diversity of the people and the communities of the District and is committed to:

- Ensuring that clients, customers, job applicants and employees do not receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of race, colour, religion, nationality, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or age.
- Tackling areas of potential discrimination to ensure that services, employment arrangements and employee training and development opportunities are offered equitably and appropriately.
- Ensuring that all appropriate steps are taken to ensure that representation of minority groups within the workforce is maximised.
- Sustaining progress on the implementation of equal opportunities.
- Consulting with service users, employees, community groups and partner organisations about the development and implementation of equality objectives.
- Carrying out service audits and maintaining and improving monitoring arrangements designed to identify areas for development of action plans to bring about equality of opportunity.
- Securing the support of internal and external partners and contractors for its equality objectives.
- Complying with the Equality Standard for Local Government within the Council and other agreed external measurement models, including the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, to develop its equality plans and in order to demonstrate continuous improvement.

## Background to the Policy

Lancaster City Council has a unique position in the local community and has an important role to play in community leadership. The organisation provides an extensive range of services and is also a major source of employment opportunities. The Council recognises that it has the ability, and an ethical obligation, to influence positive change through its extensive contact with partners in the community and its grant aiding powers relating to community organisations.

The Council recognises the importance of legislative measures and seeks to ensure that equality of opportunity in employment and service provision is available for all sections of the community. The key legislation that has informed the development of this policy document is as follows:

- ◆ Equal Pay Act 1970
- ◆ Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- ◆ Employment Rights Act 1996
- ◆ Maternity and Parental Leave Regulations 1999
- Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000
- ◆ Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2000
- ◆ Flexible Working (Procedural Requirements) Regulations 2002
- ◆ Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations 2003
- ◆ Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- ◆ Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

In addition, the Council is mindful of future planned legislation that may have an impact on employment and service provision, for example, age discrimination legislation, which is expected to take effect in October 2006.

A wide-ranging programme of education and training is needed to achieve the necessary changes in attitudes and behaviour towards the access and employment of all disadvantaged groups if equality of opportunity is to be achieved.

## Equal Opportunities in Employment

### ***Recruitment***

This policy requires that:

- All recruitment and selection procedures comply in full with the Equal Opportunities Policy of the Council.
- All vacancy advertisements include the following statement: “The Council wants to promote a diverse workforce to maximise our ability to provide quality services to all our customers. We welcome applications from minority ethnic candidates and those with disabilities who are currently under-represented in our organisation”. This statement will be reviewed from time to time to ensure its relevance.
- Recruitment publicity avoids any stereotyping of roles and is used to positively encourage applications from ***all*** suitably qualified and experienced people, demonstrating that the Council offers opportunities at all levels to people of either sex, any colour and of all races and to those who are disabled.
- Wherever possible, all vacancies are advertised simultaneously internally and externally. Exceptions to this to include where an internal appointment needs to take place, (1) to achieve a budget saving, or (2) to redeploy an employee into a more suitable post.
- Steps are taken to ensure that information about Council vacancies reaches under-represented groups internally and externally. This will include notification of vacancies to the Job Centre network, the Careers Service, local colleges, universities and community groups. Wherever appropriate, this will extend to minority press/media organisations.

- ❑ “Word of mouth” recruitment and the maintenance of “waiting lists” along with personal recommendations and other unofficial means of recruitment are not permitted.
- ❑ The Council’s job application form includes questions that are necessary at the initial stage of the selection process. Only qualifications, skills and experience that are justifiable as essential or desirable for the job are to be established as selection criteria.
- ❑ Published selection criteria must not disproportionately disadvantage minority groups and it must not be assumed that overseas qualifications are somehow inferior or of a lower standard to U.K. equivalents.
- ❑ All recruitment processes are conducted in accordance with the Council’s *Recruitment and Selection Code of Practice*.
- ❑ Any deliberate act designed to breach any part of this policy will be considered a disciplinary offence falling within the scope of the Council’s *Disciplinary Policy and Procedure* and may result in dismissal.

### ***Learning and Development***

This policy requires that:

- ❑ All employees are afforded equal access to training, development and promotion opportunities.
- ❑ All employees have access to an Employee Development and Performance Appraisal interview and are encouraged to take full advantage of training opportunities within the constraints of training plans and budgets. The HR and Organisation Development Service will prepare the Corporate Training Plan in accordance with the requirements set out in this policy to ensure that there is no discrimination in the provision of training and development opportunities.
- ❑ Under the relevant legislation, positive action measures are considered for disadvantaged groups to enable them to acquire the skills needed to compete on genuinely equal terms for jobs of all types and at all levels within the organisation. Appointment to jobs will always be made strictly on merit.
- ❑ In cases where circumstances are such that an employee cannot prepare for a recognised qualification by attending day release classes or a formal training course, full consideration is given to alternative and more flexible means of study.
- ❑ In accordance with the Disability in Employment Policy, the Council consults fully with the Disability Employment Adviser (employed by JobCentre Plus) on the rehabilitation, retention and employment of disabled people.

<b>Service Provision</b>
--------------------------

The Council is committed to:

- ❑ Ensuring that each individual Service within the Council develops and publishes its own Corporate Equality Action Plan in accordance with the requirements of the Equality Standard for Local Government to ensure and encourage full access and opportunity for all members of the community to its services.
- ❑ Wherever practical, ensuring that all public buildings and premises owned or held by the Council have access and toilet facilities for use by all sections of the community.

Where access to buildings is not practical, Council Officers will take positive action to ensure that members of the community are not excluded from accessing services.

- ❑ Training all Council employees in equal opportunities awareness and customer care skills to enhance equality of treatment and access in service delivery.
- ❑ Wherever necessary, communicating its services to residents whose first language is not English by providing information in appropriate languages and formats. Likewise, wherever necessary the Council will communicate with hearing and sight impaired residents by providing information in alternative formats.
- ❑ Consulting with all sections of the community about the application of this policy.

### **Monitoring Equal Opportunities**

- ❑ The Council will maintain records of employees' and job applicants' ethnicity, gender, marital status, disability and age to ensure that this policy is operating effectively. In addition, this information will be used for the purpose of measuring the Council's performance against national and locally determined Performance Indicators. This information will be used for no reason other than those detailed above.
- ❑ Where necessary, employees will be able to check/correct their own record of these details, otherwise access to this information will be strictly restricted.
- ❑ The Head of HR and Organisation Development is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this policy in respect of existing Council employees and prospective employees.
- ❑ Each Director will ensure that his/her group of Services demonstrates their commitment to the provision of equal opportunities for the delivery of services.
- ❑ Effective monitoring systems will be established and maintained to support the publication of Equal Opportunities Monitoring Reports to appropriate Committees of the Council.
- ❑ Each Service will ensure the development of a procedure for dealing with complaints of discrimination or unfair treatment in relation to employment matters and the provision of services.

### **Further Information**

For further information regarding this policy, please contact the Head of HR and Organisation Development or the Principal HR Officer on (01524) 582076/582039

