

The background of the page is filled with a dense pattern of colorful icons representing diverse people. These icons include various ethnicities, ages, and professions, such as a person in a hard hat, a person with glasses, and a person with a ponytail. A large, thick, curved graphic element in shades of blue and purple sweeps across the page from the top left towards the bottom right, partially overlapping the text.

# **Workforce Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy**

### Our Aims

We believe that diverse perspectives and experiences are the heartbeat of innovation and change, this is why we want to build a culture of belonging. Our commitment to a culture of equality. We believe our future workforce is an equal one, enabling change so everyone can contribute equally.

To drive reinvention, innovation must be at the forefront, which requires us to attract, recruit, develop and retain talent. As part of our Strategy ([add hyperlink to Strategy once uploaded onto intranet](#)) we aim to recruit and develop people who have different backgrounds, different perspectives, and different lived experiences. These differences ensure that we attract diversity to deliver a variety of perspectives, observations, and insights.

To help achieve this we will set objectives, collect data to measure progress and identify disproportionately, and hold ourselves to account.

Our intention is to foster a culture and a workplace in which all of our people feel a sense of belonging and are respected and empowered to do their best work and be the best version of themselves. To achieve this, our ambition is to build confidence in our workforce and leaders by:

- creating a workplace where you can be you,
- developing leaders so you can feel supported,
- empower our workforce with education and understanding, and
- utilise data to make informed decisions.

Our strategic approach, Thrive, has the ambition of making Gateshead a place where everyone can thrive. Our Thrive pledges include to tackle inequality so that everyone has a fair chance and to put people and families at the heart of everything we do.

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### 2.0 Scope of the Policy

The policy applies to all employees.

For schools where employees are appointed or employed by the governing body to work in a school, the responsibility for addressing cases of discriminatory/non inclusive behaviour lies with the governing body of the school.

The policy also applies to third parties who may undertake work activities on behalf of the Council.

### 3.0 Equality Statement

Gateshead Council are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion as we believe it is fundamental to ensuring that our people, the community we serve and our future workforce know that we respect and embrace a culture which is supportive, where everyone is treated equally and fairly and where our people are empowered to be the best version of themselves and truly respected.

We continue to build an inclusive environment where opportunities are open to all, diversity is valued, and where everybody can reach their full potential without fear of harassment, prejudice, or discrimination. Every person in our organisation has a responsibility for making it a safe and inclusive environment where our people feel welcome and are able and supported to be who they want to be.

We want to help all our employees to not just thrive, but to flourish, prosper and succeed by putting people at the heart of everything we do. We'll recognise great behaviours and challenge poor ones to ensure that we continually build a culture which we're proud of and others want to be like.

### 4.0 Our Workforce Commitments

The Council commits to:

- Understanding our workforce through data and analysis.
- Developing our workforce to create an inclusive culture.
- Creating transparency and scrutiny to enable service improvement.
- Providing a clear and consistent approach to supporting our workforce through the development of supportive frameworks.
- Outlining guidance in relation to action that may be taken if a Council employee is alleged to or is proven to have acted in a manner which makes any employee feel that they are not equal, not included, or different.

- Ensuring that any form of unlawful direct and indirect discrimination, victimisation or harassment in employment practice and service delivery is unacceptable.
- Supporting the fair and transparent application of employment policies and procedures.
- Meeting our statutory Public Sector Equality Duty, which is a duty on public authorities to consider how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

### 5.0 Definitions – Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I)

**Equality** is about fairness. A society where individuals or groups of people are not treated less favourably, and where everyone can participate and have the same opportunity to fulfil their potential.

However, we know that equality is not always enough. For some individuals we recognise there are difficulties to them being able to access opportunities fairly. In order to achieve **equity**, we must develop an equitable approach to do more and provide additional support to remove the barriers that some people face.

**Diversity** is about recognising and respecting the value of difference. It means considering and appreciating all the unique characteristics that make people who they are. This includes, but is not limited to, national origins, language, race or ethnicity, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, and family structure. Diversity also includes diversity of thought and life experiences.

**Inclusion** is about creating and maintaining a culture where people feel welcomed, respected, and valued for who they are as an individual or groups.

It is important to recognise that people inclusion challenges that go beyond the protected characteristics outlined within the Equality Act 2010. Sometimes these cannot be seen or heard but can have a substantial impact. For example, caring responsibilities.

### 6.0 Responsibilities

#### Council Responsibilities

- We will ensure senior leaders ownership for our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy
- We will set Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives and measures through consultation with our workforce.
- We will build a culture that values individual contribution, fairness, and transparency.
- We will review this policy on an on-going basis to reflect changes in law and learning outcomes identified.

#### Everyone's Responsibilities

- Treat others fairly and in a way, they wish to be treated.
- Drive positive workforce change through a culture of learning.
- Welcome ideas different from your own.
- Call out and/or report incidents or actions you see that are unacceptable
- Become an ally.
- Demonstrate and promote and Inclusive leadership values and behaviours.
- Support and encourage a working environment that is free from discrimination.
- Raise awareness of diversity and inclusion through learning and communications.
- Ask for help if you help if you are unsure about Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion within the workplace and contact the HR Advice team.

### 7.0 Raising awareness and learning

Gateshead Council provides all employees and managers with the opportunity raise their awareness and understand the law relating to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

This policy will be promoted regularly to raise employee awareness.

### 8.0 Unwanted behaviours

There may be occasion when an employee feels that they have been treated less favourably than a colleague(s) and would like to take action to stop this alleged behaviour and/or to prevent a recurrence.

Should any employee feel they are being treated differently, then they can contact their TU representative and/or a member of the HR team who will talk them through the support they can access, and the formal processes open to them.

### 9.0 Monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed every three years unless there is a requirement to review it earlier, for example, in line with changes in legislation to ensure that the most relevant and up to date policy can be relied upon by Council employees and is an effective tool for managers.

### 10.0 Associated Policies

- Bullying and Harassment
- Sickness Absence
- Disciplinary
- Whistleblowing

- Code of Conduct
- Corporate Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
- Leave of absence
- Capability

Gateshead Council’s HR and Workforce Development policies take into account current legislation, rules, regulations and best practice guidance from a range of professional and public bodies, including the following:

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<b>Author:</b> Michelle Brown	<b>Effective Date:</b> November 2023	<b>Review Date</b> November 2024
This policy and procedure do not form part of any employee's contract of employment and the Council may amend it at any time.		
<b>Sign off:</b>		
<b>Remember – Attached your Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)</b>		