

VALUING DIVERSITY: OUR POLICY STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY

Our commitment

Valuing diversity is one of the four core values of Tower Hamlets Council. We will promote diversity and equality in everything we do to improve the quality of life for everyone living, working and visiting Tower Hamlets. The borough's diversity is one of its greatest strengths and assets. We will build upon this by working with the Tower Hamlets Partnership to provide accessible and responsive services that enable everyone to take part in the social, cultural and economic wealth of the borough. Achieving this is central to delivering the Council's vision, is linked to our Strategic Plan priorities and objectives and forms a driving force within the Community Plan and key to creating a cohesive community.

Our aims and values

As a service provider we will:

- Promote equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination in the planning and delivery of our services in terms of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, health and income status
- Promote good relations between communities and address negative stereotyping of any groups
- Ensure that all residents have equal opportunity to participate in the democratic process
- Tackle harassment relating to a person's age, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief, health and income status

As an employer we will:

- Develop, review and promote policies and practices that ensure equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination for our workforce in all areas of employment (including recruitment, retention, learning and development, promotion, grievance, disciplinary and retirement)
- Ensure that our workforce reflects the diverse nature of the borough

We will comply with:

- the Equal Pay Act 1970
- the Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- the Race Relations Act 1976
- the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- the Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- the Human Rights Act 1998
- The 2004 Employment Regulations on Religion and Faith
- The 2004 Employment Regulations on Sexual Orientation
- Single Equality Act 2006

- Forthcoming Single Equality Bill 2007

We will recognise our community leadership role and use this to work towards a cohesive community reflecting local circumstances.

How we will continue to deliver our commitment

Achieving the highest level of the Equality Standard for Local Government is critical to delivering our commitment. This is a nationally recognised framework which we use to measure our progress to mainstreaming diversity and equality. We have now set ourselves the target of maintaining Level 5 recognition and will be re-assessed in 2009. Through the Tower Hamlets Partnership we are also committed to work towards becoming a Level 5 borough with our public, private and third sector partners as well as local residents.

Our commitment is supported by a number of legal duties that require us to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. These provide important tools to help further embed diversity and equality in the culture of the organisation. We believe we have a strong moral and social duty to recognise that discrimination takes place, that tensions can sometimes exist between different communities, and to do everything we can to challenge prejudice and discrimination and promote better understanding and respect.

We recognise that delivering this commitment can only be achieved through building sustainable partnerships. We will deliver our commitment by:

- building on our good practice
- involving all sectors of our community in the design, review and scrutiny of our service delivery and employment practices
- promoting information and access to our services in accessible ways
- carrying out Equality Impact Assessments of new and existing policies and practices to make sure that they will not discriminate against anyone
- delivering services which are appropriate, flexible and responsive to the needs of the community
- removing barriers which deny people access to our services
- using our powers to make sure that organisations providing services on our behalf work in line with this policy
- promoting an environment which gives all residents an equal chance to learn, work and live free of discrimination and prejudice
- developing a workforce which reflects at all levels the community we serve
- making sure that all employees and Councillors know the effects of this policy and are provided with appropriate training
- making sure that all employees (and the resident communities) know about their rights of protection from discrimination, harassment or bullying

- developing and promoting policies which give everyone equal access to employment and related opportunities
- setting performance targets so we can measure our progress.

Our Diversity and Equality Action Plan explains how we will deliver upon our commitment each year. We will regularly review, assess and evaluate our progress and address any areas of underperformance and weaknesses in policy and practice.

