

# Halton Borough Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy June 2025





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## 1.0 Introduction

This Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy, sets out how Halton Borough Council meets its duties and responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

**Equality** – Equality means ensuring people are treated fairly, giving them equitable access to information, opportunities, services, and employment.

**Diversity** – Diversity is about recognising, acknowledging, and respecting differences within our community and our workforce, and that people have different needs based on protected characteristics, some of which they share with others.

**Inclusion** – Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and valued, especially those who might otherwise be excluded or marginalised.

## 2.0 Our Vision and Commitments

At Halton Borough Council (HBC), our vision is simply to do all within our power to create, promote and sustain an equitable society and environment that fosters positive interactive relationships where people are treated with respect, dignity and fairness.

The Council seeks to create and promote a culture where people of all backgrounds and experience feel appreciated and valued. At HBC we are all accountable for upholding an environment that is accessible and welcoming to all, as well as doing our bit to continue to work towards achieving our [EDI Objectives](#).

We are committed to seeking to employ a workforce that reflects the diverse community that we serve and are part of, as well as providing equality of opportunity. We will work to ensure that our employees, Elected Members, and service users are treated fairly and are not subjected to unlawful discrimination by the Council on the basis of their Protected Characteristic.



### 3.0 Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Officers
- Council Members
- Organisations HBC has procured
- Contract workers
- Volunteers
- Students

This policy covers **all** of Halton Borough Council's **functions** and **policies**.

### 4.0 Equality Act 2010 and the General Public Sector Equality Duty

As a public sector body, HBC has specific equality duties that require us to, in the exercise of our functions and decisions, have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

The [Equality Act 2010](#) and the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) provide a legal framework to protect people from bullying, discrimination, harassment, and victimisation in the workplace and wider society.

### 5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is the responsibility of all HBC employees. We are all accountable for upholding an environment that is accessible and welcoming to all, as well as doing our bit to continue to work towards achieving our EDI Objectives.



## **5.1 Employees' and Elected Members' Responsibilities:**

- Read, understand and practically apply this policy alongside the relevant Dignity at Work, and the Code of Conduct documents.
- Challenge and report unacceptable behaviour in a safe manner via one of the outlined routes and in accordance with the Dignity at Work, and the Code of Conduct documents. Both formal and informal routes are covered in these policies and procedures.

## **5.2 Managers' Responsibilities:**

- Set a good example by treating all members of the Council with dignity and respect and challenging unacceptable behaviours
- Ensure all employees are aware of this Policy and know how to report discrimination, harassment or bullying, and that reporting incidents does not result in victimisation;
- Present their employees with information (or knowledge about where to find such information) about employee rights as defined within the scope of the Council's policies
- Deal with complaints fairly, equitably, thoroughly, confidentially and within the agreed timescales.

## **6.0 Protected Characteristics**

Protected characteristics are specific traits or characteristics that are safeguarded by law to ensure equitable treatment for all individuals.

The nine protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 are:

- Age
- Disability, which includes neurodiversity
- Gender Reassignment, which includes gender identity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity/Paternity



- Race, which includes colour and nationality – citizenship, ethnic or national origins
- Religious Belief, which includes not having one
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation



At HBC, we also recognise three extra Protected Characteristics, and they are:

- Carers – those with unpaid caring responsibilities for another person(s), outside of a standard parental role
- Socio-economic status
- Care Leavers – this includes people who have left the care system and/or who have experience of the care system, whether that be recent or earlier in their lives.

These Characteristics are not legally recognised, and therefore not legally protected, under the Equality Act 2010. However, HBC recognising these three characteristics ensures the groups of people within the Borough of Halton, and within the Council's workforce are taken into consideration during any decision making processes. This includes Recruitment, the completion of Equality Impact Assessments and other practices the Council undertakes while considering the impact on all the Protected Characteristics.



## **6.1 How HBC supports the Protected Characteristics:**

**Age** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody based on their age.

**Disability, which includes neurodiversity** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody based on their disability and/or their neurodiversity.

- The Council has been recognised as a Level 3 Disability Confident Leader.
- The Council understands and acknowledges that employees with disabilities and neurodiversity may require reasonable adjustments to allow them to achieve their full potential. Where practically possible in relation to delivery of council services and functions, managers are expected to work with employees to accommodate the reasonable adjustment(s) needed.

**Gender Reassignment** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody in regards to gender reassignment. This includes those considering going through reassignment, those in the process of undergoing reassignment, or those who have already gone through reassignment, whether that was before or during their employment at HBC. The Non-Binary gender identity is also protected under Gender Reassignment.

- HBC will work towards enabling employees at all levels in the workforce to feel safe in being open about their gender identity if they wish to do so.

**Marriage and Civil Partnership** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody based on their marital status or whether or not they are in a civil partnership with another person.

**Pregnancy and Maternity/Paternity** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody in regards to pregnancy or their maternal/paternal status.

- Unfavourable treatment of a woman because of her pregnancy or maternity leave during ‘the protected period’ is unlawful pregnancy and maternity discrimination.





- The protected period starts when a woman becomes pregnant and continues until the end of her maternity leave, or until she returns to work if that is earlier.
- Pregnancy and maternity are not protected directly under the harassment provisions. However, pregnancy and maternity harassment would amount to harassment related to sex.
- Decisions on applications for Parental, Carer, or Adoption leave are based on clear, fair, and justifiable criteria set out within Halton Borough Council's Employment Policy.
- Parental, carer, and adoption leave decisions and arrangements are free from bias linked to sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
- All of HBC's policies regarding pregnancy, maternity and paternity can be found under the HR Policies section (9.0).

**Race** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody based on their race. This includes colour and nationality – citizenship, ethnic or national origins.

- HBC is a proud member of the Liverpool City Region Race Equality Hub. Building upon the City Region's reputation for social justice and equality, the Hub's primary purpose is to:
  - Tackle systemic injustice and inequality.
  - Drive forward positive and sustainable change for our Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic employees and residents.
  - Work in partnership with public, private and 3rd sector employers, to encourage and support them to do the same.

**Religious Belief(s)** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody based on their religious beliefs. This includes philosophical belief and not having a belief.

- HBC will work towards enabling employees at all levels in the workforce to feel safe in being open about their faith, religion, or belief systems if they wish to do so.
- The Council will address any issues raised by an employee regarding religious observance as soon as possible.
- The Council understands and acknowledges that there are times when employees' religious observances require fasting and prayer during





delivery of council services and functions, managers are expected to agree to employees' requests for time off for religious festivals and to pray at work.

- Employees are also encouraged to be respectful of individuals who are fasting during periods of religious observance such as Lent, Ramadan, or Yom Kippur.

**Sex** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody based on their sex.

- To see the Equality and Human Rights Commission interim update on the Supreme Court Ruling regarding the Protected Characteristic of Sex, please click [here](#).

**Sexual Orientation** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody based on their sexual orientation. This includes, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, and other sexual orientations not listed.

- HBC will work towards enabling employees at all levels in the workforce to feel safe in being open about their sexuality if they wish to do so.

**Carers** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody regarding their caring status. Carers are those with caring responsibilities for others, outside of a standard parental role.

**Socio-economic status** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody based on their socio-economic status.

**Care Leavers** – HBC does not discriminate against anybody based on their experience of the care system, including being a care leaver.

## 7.0 Work Attire

Halton Borough Council does not discriminate against any protected characteristics in relation to their attire, relating to religions, sexuality, gender or disability. The Council will address any issues of discrimination raised by an employee regarding attire as soon as possible.



## 8.0 Training and Development

Halton Borough Council uses training and development as a key element to integrate equality, diversity, and inclusion within the organisation.

As well as in-person training, delivered either in-house or by a reputable external training provider, HBC has 16 e-learning modules centred around EDI to give employees chance for continual learning, enrichment and growth. We review the modules regularly, and work with our Staff Network Groups to update and improve the learning.

[Click here](#) to see the modules.

Lunch and Learn sessions are held around matters regarding the Protected Characteristics, e.g. anti-racism, LGBTQIA+, etc. with guest speakers who have lived experience educating our workforce.

## 9.0 HR Policies

For Halton Borough Council's relevant Human Resources Policies, please click [here](#).

These include Bullying and Harassment, Flexible Working, and more, all of which work alongside and support this EDI Policy.

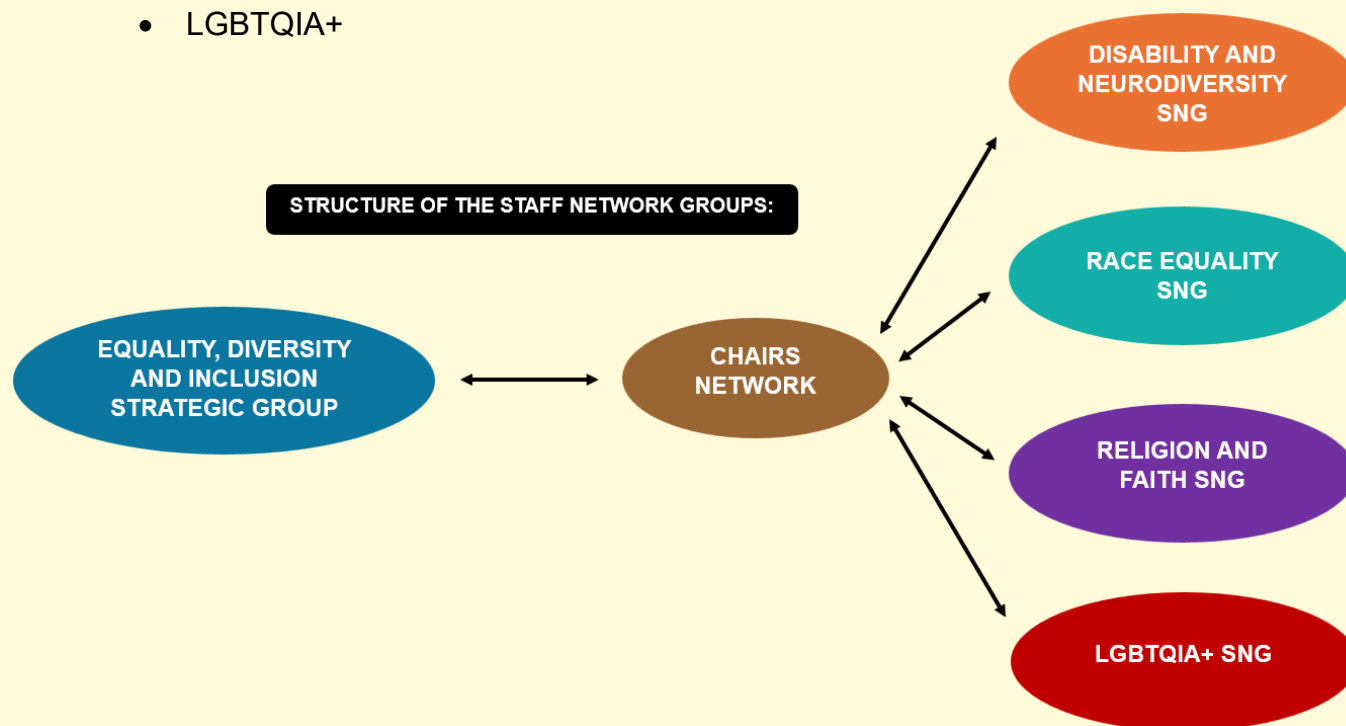
## 10.0 Staff Network Groups

The EDI Corporate Staff Network Groups (SNGs) have been created so that Halton Borough Council employees have a safe place to engage in a confidential and welcoming environment with others who share their Protected Characteristics. Members support, respect and encourage one another to share experiences and feel connected.



The current four SNGs at Halton Borough Council are:

- Disability and Neurodiversity
- Race Equality
- Religion and Faith
- LGBTQIA+



### 10.1 Purpose of the Staff Network Groups

### 10.2 Chairs' Network

The Chair of each of the SNGs form a Chairs' Network. The Chairs' Network is in place to discuss any intersectional trends and commonalities, as well as any independencies of each of the SNGs.

The members of the Chairs' Network sit on the EDI Strategic Group to relay any feedback and points the Group should know, including actions raised at the SNGs.

The Chairs then report back to the SNGs on matters discussed at the EDI Strategic Group.



## **10.3 EDI Strategic Group**

The Strategic Group provides confidence that, throughout the organisation, actions are being taken in relation to the improvement and promotion of EDI, both in respect of the workforce and the development of services.

The Group, and its members, are there to offer support and guidance to each of the SNGs as and when needed.

For any more information regarding the Strategic Group or the Staff Network Groups, please contact our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Liz Morton - [liz.morton@halton.gov.uk](mailto:liz.morton@halton.gov.uk)

## **11.0 Reverse Mentoring**

Reverse Mentoring enables people in senior positions to learn and understand issues from the perspective of employees from under-represented groups. At the same time, employees are exposed to new ideas, experiences, and networking opportunities. The key role of the mentor will be to provide an insight into the difficulties and barriers they may have faced and could still be facing within their roles.

Reverse Mentoring provides a safe space to allow under-represented groups to share their lived experiences whilst working for the Council. This is your opportunity to offer insights to our senior management team, and help enrich our workforce.

### **11.1 Reverse Mentoring Guide**

### **11.2 Reverse Mentoring Aims:**

- Help improve diverse mind-sets in middle and senior leaders
- Promote discussion on how staff feel about EDI
- Building and sharing on existing successes
- Help challenge engrained views on what talent looks like



### **11.3 Benefits for the Mentor (underrepresented colleagues):**

- Access to a wealth of experience for their self-development
- Increases confidence/personal profile
- Builds their relationships network
- Gains insight into our organisation
- It's an opportunity to be seen and heard

### **11.4 Benefits for the Mentee (senior colleagues):**

- Provides insight into potential cultural barriers for under-represented groups and to consider any necessary Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) improvements and support to employees
- Reflection on the impact of their own leadership style upon others
- Understanding and appreciation of the impact of Inclusive Leadership

## **12.0 Equality Impact Assessments**

We continue to undertake equality analysis and use our equality impact assessment process to inform the development of our policies, procedures and service provision.

Equality impact assessments are carried out when a new policy, procedure or service is being developed or significantly changed, and where a service review is taking place, or where a potential inequality has been identified.

Assessments include evidence-based analysis of equality impacts across the Protected Characteristics covered by the Equality Act and on carers and socio-economic status.

### **12.1 Equality Impact Assessment Guidance Note**



## **13.0 EDI Frequently Asked Questions**

To view the Frequently Asked Questions relating to EDI, please click [here](#).

These are to assist both Halton Borough Council's employees and its managers.

## **14.0 More Information**

For any queries regarding the contents of this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, please contact our Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Liz Morton –

[liz.morton@halton.gov.uk](mailto:liz.morton@halton.gov.uk)