

# Equality

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## Introduction

1. Bolton is a diverse Borough, where people from many different backgrounds and cultures live, work and play. Providers of health and social care in Bolton have a longstanding commitment to celebrating this diversity, promoting good relations between our diverse communities, and ensuring that services are appropriate and accessible for everyone in the Bolton Family.
2. Partners in Bolton, including Bolton Cares, want the town to be a place where everyone is able to achieve their potential, regardless of their background, their circumstances, or where they live. The two main aims of Bolton's Community Strategy are, therefore, focused on reducing inequality in the Borough. They seek to:
  - Secure economic prosperity and maximise the local benefit
  - Narrow the gap in outcomes between the least and most well off in the borough
3. Bolton Cares is committed to contributing to these aims.

## The Legislative Context: The Equality Act 2010

4. The Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') sets out the law around equality matters in Great Britain.
5. The Act provides protection against discrimination for the following range of diversity groups (or 'protected characteristics'):
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Sex/Gender
  - Gender Reassignment
  - Race (including ethnic or national origins; colour; nationality)
  - Sexual orientation
  - Religion or belief
  - Pregnancy and maternity
  - Marriage and civil partnership
6. These protections are also afforded to the people who use the services provided by the Company.
7. In addition to the protected characteristics set out by the Act, the Company believes it is also important to consider caring status and socio-economic conditions as part of its work around equality.
8. Under the terms of the Equality Act the Company has a general duty to show that it has 'due regard' to:
  - Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
  - Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

9. In addition, as a wholly owned subsidiary of Bolton Council the Company is required to meet some specific public sector equality duties. These are to:
- Publish the equality objectives which the Company is seeking to deliver. These will be published by the Council at least every four years and the Council's published objectives will incorporate those of Bolton Cares.
  - Publish equality information to show how the Company is complying with the general equality duty, in relation to its workforce and its services. Information must be published at least annually and the Council's published information will incorporate those of Bolton Cares.

### **The Company's Response to the Equality Act 2010**

10. As set out in Section 1, the Company welcomes the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, and the emphasis which this places on local authorities as drivers of equality in their local areas. Below we describe our specific response to the terms of the Act.

#### Equality Objectives

11. Bolton Cares' organisational philosophy reflects entirely the duties under the Act, of preventing discrimination; fostering good relations; and advancing equality of opportunity. Specifically, we will work during the early part of the Company's life to define equality objectives according to the organisation's two roles as a major public service provider and employer.
- Our equality objectives as a major public service provider*
12. Identification of these will form a key element of the Company's first strategic planning cycle.
- Our equality objectives as an employer*
13. As an employer, we strive to create a culture where diversity is respected and celebrated. We aim to:
- Ensure that all of our policies and processes are fair and help to advance opportunity between staff from all groups.
  - Reaffirm that effective leadership and operational delivery on equalities matters is a core competency for senior managers.
  - Ensure that all senior managers are aware of and have the training and information they need to fulfil their obligations under equality legislation.
  - Ensure that all staff have the appropriate training to support and respect the differing needs of our diverse service users. This is particularly important as many of our service users are vulnerable people and those at risk of social exclusion.
  - Have a workforce which is broadly representative of the local population in the long-term.
  - Seek to ensure that our workforce is representative across all levels, including the highest tiers.
  - Create an environment in which employees from across the range of protected characteristics feel satisfied with and supported in their work

## The company's general equality duties

### Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation

14. The Company seeks to eliminate discrimination through the application of a robust policy framework that underpins our roles as employer and service provider.
15. *Eliminating discrimination in the workplace*

Our Human Resources (HR) policies are clear about eliminating discrimination in the workplace by ensuring that fair and equal opportunity is afforded to staff from all groups and that individuals have recourse to an objective Panel hearing, if necessary, to test any issue of fairness in relation to conduct, treatment or behaviour at work. Further, all matters relating to employment terms and conditions are determined in consultation with the recognised Trades' Unions through a system of collective bargaining, which ensures that matters of collective equity are addressed from inception.
16. In addition, the Company uses an equality proofed pay and grading structure for its staff. The grade of every post is determined through an analytical job evaluation exercise.
17. *Eliminating discrimination as a service provider*

Our services are based on a firm and objective understanding of individual needs and the recognition that, while we would expect our customers to receive an equitable standard of service, different service users will have differing needs and service requirements.
18. In accordance with the Act, the procurement of Company goods and services that interface directly with our service users and staff takes account of the compliance of the provider with the requirements of the Equality Act.

### Advancing equality of opportunity

19. As a significant employer in the Borough, the Company has a significant opportunity to advance equality of opportunity in employment - both as an individual employer; and as a member of the employer community in Bolton.
20. Within the workplace, we believe that having an organisational culture where diversity is respected and supported is essential. To achieve this, two central components to our response to the Act are:
  - An ongoing commitment to Bolton's long standing recognition and history of constructive engagement with the Trades' Unions. The Council engages with the Trades' Unions formally, informally and through collective bargaining on matters relating to workforce management and policy. One of the key objectives of our working relationship with the Trades' Unions is to test and moderate all our policies and processes, to ensure they are fair and help to advance opportunity between staff from all groups
  - The provision of a comprehensive package of training around equalities matters for all our staff, built into our package of essential skills and knowledge for those in management roles
21. We have extensive and well developed ways of engaging with our partners and with representatives from across our diverse communities and service users, to ensure that we understand the needs of different groups of people within Bolton.

22. Engaging effectively with our communities, families, carers and service users is central to the success of this work, since this helps us to understand the issues which are of importance to our communities. This is achieved in a variety of ways, within communities themselves and through more formal consultation arrangements, as set out in section 3.2.1.

### **Implementation and Review**

23. The policy will be stored and accessible to all staff on the Company's intranet site and within the service settings where there is limited access to IT. It will be communicated via the internal bulletin that this policy has been reviewed together with a link to access it from the intranet and a paper copy where required.
24. Managers should make it clear in team meetings and supervision that there is an Equality policy and direct staff to it.
25. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Operational Heads and Service Managers.
26. Competencies will be checked by managers through supervision, team meetings and PDRs.