



CORPORATE EQUALITY POLICY AND SCHEME

*(Incorporating the
Council's Race Equality Scheme)*

FOREWORD

Race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion and belief help define who we are and what we do. The Council has produced this Equality Scheme that seeks to define how we help maintain and enhance this diversity locally through our role as policy maker, employer and service provider. We want to ensure that any barriers that may prevent equal access to our services and employment are identified and removed.

Stroud District Council has adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government as a framework for mainstreaming equalities into all aspects of this authority's work. In our view the review of our services and ensuing action will not only help us to embed equality as part of our core business, but make it a reality for everyone. To demonstrate our commitment we have invested in diversity awareness training for all elected Members and employees. We have also set up an Equalities Advisory Panel from representative community and voluntary groups to ensure that we are engaging and consulting with all sections of the community when delivering services.

This is a working document, which will be subject to review and revision as progress is made. Your views about our Scheme are very much welcomed; as are your thoughts about the priorities we have set for action and review.

Cllr Chas Fellows
Leader of Council

SECTION ONE: CORPORATE EQUALITY POLICY

1. Introduction

This is a written statement showing that Stroud District Council actively opposes discrimination. It demonstrates our commitment to making the Council a fully accessible and inclusive organisation that welcomes and respects the diversity of its customers, elected members, staff and visitors to the district.

It also

- Meets the mandatory requirements of the Race Relations Act;
- Provides the overall policy framework for our action to tackle discrimination and promote equality.
- Complements our Disability and Gender Equality Schemes
- Responds positively to other equality areas relating to religion, belief, age, marital/family status; sexual orientation and gender reassignment;

1.2 What is equality and how does it relate to diversity?

Equality is:

- About creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential – creating a level playing field.
- About removing or reducing all forms of unfair discrimination and has been underpinned by legislation.
- About breaking down barriers for people in particular groups such as black & minority ethnic communities, disabled people, gay men/ lesbians/bisexuals/ transgender people, younger and older people, people from different religious & faith backgrounds, and men and women.

Diversity is:

- About including everyone.
- Valuing differences.
- Harnessing differences in individuals to the benefit of both the organisation and the individual, by allowing people with different perspectives and views to use their unique blend of skills and character to improve the quality and performance of the Council.
- Having a better understanding of the diverse needs of our customers.

2. Stroud District Council's overall commitment to progressing Equality

We will:

- enhance local democracy and accountability to ensure we understand people's needs and they are encouraged to engage in the democratic process.
- strive to ensure that no one is disadvantaged by negative attitudes.
- do our best to not discriminate against any group community or individual because of their cultures, backgrounds, interests or lifestyles.
- not apply conditions or requirements that cannot be justified.
- ensure that for all significant policy and service developments all relevant sectors of the community have a reasonable opportunity to express their views.
- monitor our policies, functions, services and practices to ensure that they are fair.
- carry out impact assessments and equality audits to assess the effects of what we plan to do.
- develop and implement realistic and relevant equality actions and monitor progress regularly.
- develop and train employees and members to ensure everyone understands why equality is important, the policies and practices we apply and their individual rights and responsibilities.
- seek to promote a positive attitude towards equality in our delivery of services.
- seek to positively influence partner organisations.

3. The Legal Framework For Equalities

Our commitment to securing genuine equality of opportunity is underpinned by the following legislation designed to eliminate unfair discrimination:

- Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 and 2005
- Disability Rights Commission Act 1999
- Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended)
- Sex Discrimination Act 1986
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- Sex Discrimination (Indirect Discrimination and Burden of Proof) Regulations 1999
- Race Relations Act 1976
- Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Code of Practice on Age Diversity in Employment 1999
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004
- The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Local Government Housing Act 1989

(See <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelId=5145524> for more detailed information regarding equalities legislation.)

4. The Stroud District

The Stroud District is a rural shire district with a population of approximately 110,00. The population is relatively affluent with low unemployment, above average educational attainment, relatively good health and low crime levels. Key local issues include the high levels of out-commuting and car use by residents, affordable housing, and an ageing population.

The Stroud Story provides a full profile of the district from data obtained from various agencies across the county and nationally.

5. The Council's Vision and Principles

The Council plays a vital role in many aspects of peoples' lives - how people live, work, spend their leisure time and look after the environment. Stroud District Council's overriding purpose is *"leading a community that is making Stroud District a better place to live, work and visit for everyone"*.

To be successful we know that our community leadership and decision-making will have to be underpinned by 3 principles, which are to:

- **Ensure a strong, healthy and just society:** To meet the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal well-being, social cohesion and inclusion and creating equal opportunity for all.
- **Respect the environment:** To improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life remain available for future generations.
- **Promote good governance:** Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society – engaging people's creativity, energy and diversity.

See http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/bvpp_2008.pdf for full details of our **Corporate Delivery Plan**.

6. The Council's Duty and the Race Relations Act

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 passed in response to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report places a general statutory duty upon Stroud District Council. This duty means that, in everything the Council does, the Council should have due regard to:

- ❑ eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- ❑ promote equality of opportunity; and
- ❑ promote good relations between people of different racial groups

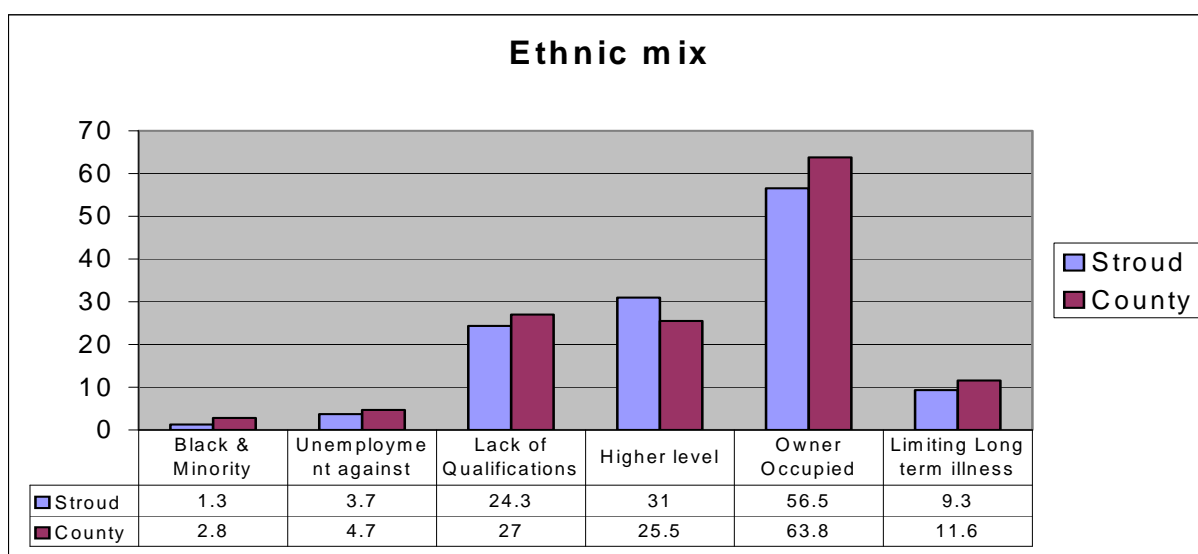
The aim of the duty is to make racial equality central to everything a local authority does. This means that authorities must take account of racial equality in the day-to-day work of policy making, service delivery, employment practice and other functions.

Race Equality

We recognise that people may be discriminated against because of their colour, race, ethnicity or nationality. Black people and people from other minority ethnic communities, including migrants, refugees, gypsies and travellers, may face discrimination in all areas of their lives. They are particularly vulnerable to racism, harassment, and hate crime. This can have a powerful effect on their ability to find a job and to use a variety of services and facilities.

Since we believe that racism is a problem for all, our policies and procedures to tackle racism and promote race equality are for both the majority white population and for the minorities in the District.

There are a small number of black and minority ethnic residents in Stroud (totalling 1.3% of the population). Because of this, we may be more at risk of not taking their needs and views into account. Also, we may have less understanding about their lives and cultures because they are not in the majority.



Source: 2001 Census, Office of National Statistics © Crown Copyright

- The Stroud District has a very small Black and Ethnic Minority population (BME), numbering under 1,500.
- Although the BME level of unemployment is lower than that at a county or national level, it is still twice the “white” level.
- Nevertheless, the BME population appears to be relatively well educated compared to the white population.
- Dependent children in BME families in the Stroud District are twice as likely to live in a household: without a car (9.6%), without an adult in employment (17.4%), in overcrowded accommodation (13.6%), without central heating (6%) or live above the first floor of a building (5.6%).

We are committed to eliminating unlawful racial discrimination and promoting race equality in Stroud. We want all the people of Stroud to be able to participate fully in the social and economic life of the district, without fear of unfair discrimination.

Combating misinformation about migrants and minority ethnic groups

Myths, rumours and misinformation surrounding the arrival of new migrants and minority ethnic groups such as Gypsies and Travellers can be hard to rebut and a great deal of incorrect information surrounds controversial issues to do with employment, Housing, health and Immigration.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have produced a series of fact sheets providing accurate and impartial information:

- [Facts about new migrants to the United Kingdom and employment](#)
- [Facts about the allocation of social housing given to new migrants.](#)
- [Facts about immigration into the United Kingdom](#)
- [Facts about Gypsies and Travellers](#)

SECTION TWO of this Scheme sets out how Stroud District Council is meeting the specific requirements of the Race Relations Act.

7. Other Equality Strands

Age

We recognise that age discrimination can occur against both younger and older people. Ageism is discrimination against people based on false stereotypes about their age in relation to their ability and potential. For example some people mistakenly regard those over 50 as being less likely to adapt to new learning, challenges and changes. Likewise some people mistakenly treat young people as though their views are unimportant due to lack of experience, maturity or commitment.

Younger and older people can suffer harassment ranging from mild verbal abuse through to violence. They are also likely to be subjected to multiple discrimination about their age as well as the other identities they have.

For further information:

Young people: http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/young_people.asp?did=youngpeople

Older people: http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/older_people.asp?did=olderpeople

Disability

We recognise that disabled people have historically faced discrimination because of their disabilities. This includes people with physical and sensory disabilities, learning difficulties and people who experience mental/emotional stress. Disabled people may face discrimination in all areas of their lives, particularly when they are trying to access education, training and jobs, and receiving all kinds of services. There is legislation to tackle this, which councils and other service providers must put into practice.

*See our **Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan***

http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/disability_scheme.pdf

Gender

We recognise that discrimination against both men and women can occur which may result in inequality of access to services, employment, unequal pay, and development opportunities. However, women mainly experience sexism or sex discrimination, which stems from the idea that men and women have narrowly defined roles.

Women may be discriminated against as a result of caring responsibilities, marital status or general prejudice while men may be discriminated against in certain types of employment and services.

*See our **Gender Equality Scheme***

http://www.stroud.gov.uk/info/gender_equality_scheme.pdf?did=Gender

Religion

We recognise that people may be discriminated against because of their religion or beliefs and we uphold and respect the rights of our employees, and individuals within the community, to practise their religious or non-religious beliefs. People can suffer harassment and hate crime because of their religion or beliefs.

Harassment based on religious principles can take many forms; however, there are two general categories of religious discrimination: a) coercion to participate or not participate in religious activities; and b) a hostile environment, for example a lack of sensitivity to people's religion or belief.

Visit <http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/community/worship.asp?did=worship>

Sexual Orientation

We recognise that lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people (LGBT) experience discrimination because of attitudes and practices. Employment procedures and services can often assume that everyone is or should be heterosexual. LGBT people who are open about their sexuality, and also those who chose not to be, (but are assumed to be lesbian, gay, bisexual) often face discrimination when trying to gain access to education, training, job opportunities and mainstream services.

In many areas there are no obvious LGBT 'communities'. This may be because they are geographically dispersed and do not have contact with others through social networks and commercial venues. However, it may also be that because of social and personal pressures they are not able to openly express their sexuality or fear hostility if they do. While some people may be content with this, for others it can be difficult and isolating.

Government figures suggest that about 6% of the population is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender. In rural areas it is often more difficult to meet other people or ask for help because they fear the reaction they will get. GAY-GLOS is the only organisation in the County which offers support services to the LGBT community. Visit www.gay-glos.org

The above is not an exhaustive list. The Council recognises that people can be discriminated against on any one or more of these issues. The aim of this Scheme is to ensure that discrimination is tackled wherever it may occur.

[Appendix B](#) gives a breakdown by District Ward for gender, age, marital status, ethnicity, and religious belief.

8. Implementing this Policy

The Council recognises that leadership, ownership and commitment by elected members and staff, with adequate resources allocated, are essential for this policy to be effective.

We will implement this policy by following the processes set out in the Equality Standard for Local Government. This process will lead to specific actions to address inequality and promote equality.

The Equality Standard for Local Government

The Council has adopted the Equality Standard for Local Government, which is designed to integrate equality and diversity aims into policy-making, service delivery and employment. The standard enables us to develop this policy based on evidence of the needs of the people it covers, the impact of our existing activities on those people, and the outcome of our actions to tackle unfair discrimination and promote equality. Further, by working through the standard, the Council will also address its obligations under equality law.

We will implement the standard to ensure that our policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all the community regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, and sexual orientation and that our employment practices are non-discriminatory. The Equality Standard contains five levels of achievement:

- Level 1: Commitment to a Comprehensive Equality Policy
- Level 2: Impact and Needs/Requirements Assessment and Consultation, to identify equality issues relevant to the Council
- Level 3: Setting Equality Objectives and Targets, using information identified at Level 2 to set objectives, actions and targets, and related performance indicators, to maximise the positive impact of our activities and to minimise or remove the negative impact.
- Level 4: Establish and Maintain Information Systems and Monitoring against Targets, so we know when we have reached the objectives and targets set at Level 3.
- Level 5: Achieving and Reviewing Outcomes, so that we know the Council's achievements and what we still have to do. At this level, we may need to change the objectives, targets and performance indicators set at Level 3.

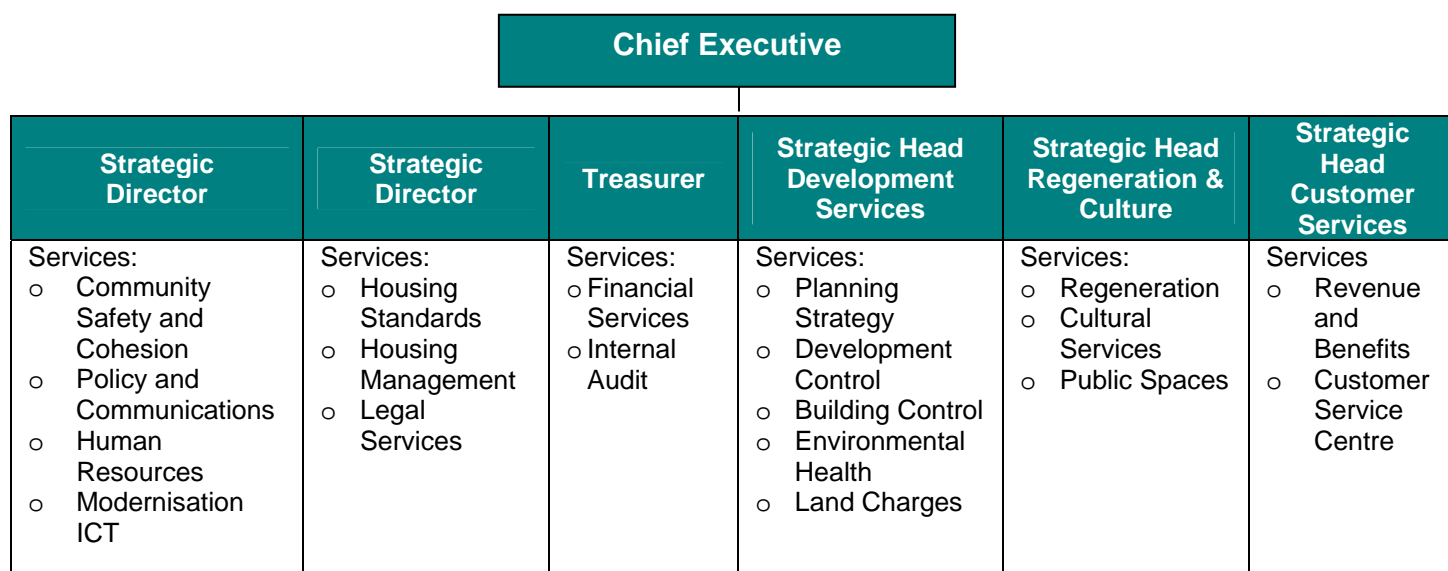
9. Our organisational structure and decision making processes

In response to Government legislation, the Council changed its political management arrangements from the traditional committee-based decision-making model, to one that features a Leader and Cabinet of elected members with responsibility for specific portfolios.

This structure is in line with the Local Government Act 2000 and is founded on democratic principles, which provide local people with opportunities to elect their own representatives. These representatives are required to sign a code of conduct, which specifically requires them to uphold the law and, as part of the Council gives them responsibility for promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different ethnic groups.

Important to this structure is the part played by the Scrutiny Committees, which seek to review, monitor and scrutinise the development of services and policies.

The Chief Executive, Strategic Directors, Treasurer and Strategic Heads form Strategic Team and act as the management board of the Council. The current structure is illustrated below:



Service Delivery and Partnerships

Together with partner organisations, we provide many of the basic services that keep our communities going. We have always aimed to ensure that these services are sensitive to the needs of our communities and accessed fairly by all people within those communities.

We have direct powers and responsibilities in local planning and land use, environmental health, community safety, waste management, housing, leisure, economic development, democratic services and elections.

Through our community leadership role, we will work to promote equality as a basis for partnership working and will encourage partners to adopt the principles of this Equality Scheme.

Where partnerships are involved in the contracting out of work, the Council will operate within the regulations to ensure that contracts meet equal opportunity criteria and are effectively monitored.

Service Planning

Each Service produces an annual service plan demonstrating how it is performing and its objectives for future service delivery. These service plans are monitored on a quarterly basis by the Performance and Audit Overview & Scrutiny Committee, as well as Strategic team.

SECTION TWO: CORPORATE EQUALITY SCHEME

1. Why an Equality Scheme is important for the Council

Public authorities reflect the society in which they operate and we need to ensure that Stroud District Council is free from unintended institutional discrimination. This Equality Scheme will assist the Council to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and good relations for everyone across all of its functions and policies. The Scheme, therefore, is an opportunity to 'institutionalise' equality in everything we do.

The Primary Objectives of the Equality Scheme are:

- to progress equalities in relation to improved access to services and facilities and in employment and career progression;
- to develop partnerships with other public bodies, local authorities and voluntary services to share and promote equality;
- to assist and advise services in putting together specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time-bound Equality Action Plans;
- to communicate equalities issues and policies to all staff and to raise awareness of equalities issues as required and necessary;

2. How we developed our Equality Scheme

To oversee compliance with legislation and to mainstream equalities throughout the Council, a corporate Equality Scheme Steering Group (ESSG) was established in 2002. Led by the Strategic Director and made up of officers from across the organisation the ESSG was given the remit to devise the Equality Scheme. In pursuing this objective ESSG members went through an in-depth training programme, led by an external consultant.

The ESSG developed a standard process for reviewing the functions, policies and practices of the Council and developing action plans in response. In the first instance the process focused on race, disability and gender. It has now been broadened to cover issues of religion, belief, age and sexual orientation.

The role of the Equality Steering Group:

- Agree the framework for self-assessment and audit within the authority
- Oversee the self-assessment and audit process
- Be responsible for reporting on the progress of self-assessment and audit
- Report on the outcome of self-assessment and audit

Councillors

The Council's Leader has lead responsibility for the Equality Scheme, which was formally adopted by the Council's Cabinet in September 2002. This involved the first round of consultation with key stakeholders including the Commission for Racial Equality and The Racial Equality Council for Gloucestershire. The

Council's Performance and Audit Overview and Scrutiny Committee also has responsibility for monitoring the Executive's performance in implementing the Scheme and associated improvement plans.

Managers/Staff

Each Head of Service is responsible for producing an annual Service Plan. All the Council's services have been through an initial equalities assessment and resulting actions are integrated into existing service plans.

All employees play an integral role in promoting equality, where they believe unfair discrimination has taken place they should report it to their manager.

3. Identifying functions, policies and practices

The Council has developed a standard self-assessment process for reviewing the functions, policies and practices of the Council and developing action plans in response. The process focuses on race, disability, gender, religion, belief, age and sexual orientation. The completed reviews and action plans for those services that have been through the process to date can be found in:

[Appendix C \(Relevance of Functions / Policies\)](#)

The process involves consideration of all aspects of our activities and the role they have in eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between different groups. The process is made up of the following steps:

- **Step one: the listing of all of our functions, policies and practices**
For each service a review of its functions, policies and practices is carried out.
- **Step two: assessing the relevance of functions, policies and practices**
Once all the functions, policies and practices are identified and listed an in-depth assessment is made to test the relevance. The ESSG and our external consultants will act as an 'independent' body to question, query and press on areas where little or no relevance is found.
- **Step three: assessing the degree of relevance**
This is used to prioritise the 'degree' of relevance of particular functions, policies and practices in order to determine where action should be taken. This is achieved by asking further questions:
 - Do we have evidence or is there any reason to believe that there are differential outcomes from our functions / policies / practices for different groups?
 - How much evidence do we have of differential outcomes and/or what is our own professional judgement?
 - Is there any public concern that certain functions / policies / practices operate in a discriminatory manner?

These steps generate evidence of possible discrimination or differential outcomes against each of our functions, policies and practices. This allows us to prioritise the order in which action needs to be taken. See the 'Action Planning' section below.

5. Assessing the impact of existing and new functions, policies and practices

The steps set out above seek to establish whether different groups are being differentially affected by individual functions, policy or practice. The process revealed that in many cases there is limited statistical data, customer satisfaction research and complaints data relating to Equalities matters. This makes it difficult to objectively judge the actual or potential impact that our functions, policies and practices are having on different groups.

We recognise that we need to be better able to understand how our functions, policies and practices are affecting different groups if we are to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and good relations. To this end, as part of the service planning process a detailed equality impact assessment is carried out for all relevant functions and policies.

The checklist used by Managers is attached as [Appendix E](#).

6. Action Planning

In producing this Scheme, we understand that identifying and taking action is a key to mainstreaming equality. The process described above helps us to prioritise those areas where most urgent action is needed, and where we can have the greatest impact. Officers are given responsibility for each of the action points emerging from the Impact Assessment.

7. Consultation and Participation

We recognise the need to ensure comprehensive consultation with all of our communities of place and interest.

One of the mechanisms we have established is an [Equalities Advisory Panel](#). This panel assists us in examining our compliance on equalities and diversity, particularly within service provision. The Panel will meet quarterly and our Heads of service will present their service plans to the panel. The panellists will be able to question the Heads of service in detail, on for example, how the service is provided and how accessible it is to all potential service users.

Internal consultation is carried out with representatives of the Trade Union; employees and elected Members.

We will ensure that all our consultative processes are inclusive for people with disabilities and those whose first language is not English.

The Scheme will be consulted on annually to support its continual development.

8. Monitoring arrangements

The council recognises that monitoring is essential to form a picture of what is happening in terms of employment and service delivery and to evaluate how successful the Scheme is, in practice, in achieving its aims and objectives.

In order for monitoring to be carried out, records will need to be kept of ethnic origin, gender and any disabilities covering both existing employees and job applicants; for the take up of training opportunities; and for the number and nature of reported grievances and disciplinaries.

A longer term aim of the council will be to keep records covering the users of council services. Records will be kept for monitoring purposes only and will be analysed and reported to elected members as and when necessary. The council will adhere to the Data Protection Act.

As monitoring can be a sensitive issue, we will consult with interested parties as to the principles and practice to be adopted in the extension of record keeping to other service areas.

All services produce an annual 'service plan' and these are at the heart of the Council's resource planning and performance monitoring / reporting processes. The Equality Action Plans produced are integrated into these helping to ensure that mainstreaming takes place.

The Performance and Audit Overview and Scrutiny committee has responsibility for ensuring that the standard and targets are being met and receive a quarterly report on progress along with appropriate performance indicators. The Committee also has responsibility for monitoring the Executive's performance in implementing the Scheme and associated improvement plans.

9. Publication of the results of the assessment and monitoring

One of the strengths of the Equality Scheme is the transparency it brings to equality issues. By regularly publishing the results of our assessments, and our performance against targets, we will ensure that local communities are informed of and have opportunity to comment upon our progress.

We will publish our progress annually in our Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP). This is currently published by June 30th each year and is widely distributed.

This scheme is published on the Council's website (www.stroud.gov.uk/) and has been distributed to a wide range of other interested organisations. It has also been made available at library and information points throughout the District.

10. Ensuring public access to information and services

The Council produces a wide range of information about its operation and services. On request these are available in a wide range of formats to enable as many people as possible to access them.

- The Council subscribes to Language Line, which offers a comprehensive translation service.
- Details for people with disabilities and useful links can be found in the [Information for People with Disabilities](#) section of our website.

11. Training

The Council sees it as essential that all of its staff and elected members should have a good basic knowledge of equality and diversity issues and that they should be able to acquire the further additional knowledge they need to carry out their various functions.

To meet this duty all Council staff and elected members have undergone a training programme “*Respect for People*”, approved by the City and Guilds of London Institute. The programme covers the following subject areas:

- Why we should value diversity
- Increasing our knowledge of diversity
- How we can all make a difference
- The legal overview

This training has now been integrated into the Council’s induction process.

Further specific skills training will be provided for those who will be developing and implementing aspects of the Equality Scheme, or who are decision makers on policy.

The Council will also review all its current training and development programmes, to ensure that equality is mainstreamed as appropriate.

12. Complaints

The Council has a corporate system in place for dealing with complaints. These can be made to the Council in writing, through an e-mail address specifically set up for enquiries, through the customer service telephone line and through direct contact with individual officers. A general complaint form is also available from all Council offices.

Any complaints relating to the Equality Scheme or associated policies can be made through these channels. In the first instance they will be passed to the Strategic Director, as the senior management lead for the Equality Scheme, to carry out an initial assessment of the issue, redirecting or involving colleagues as necessary.

13. Hate Crime and Incident Action Group

The Cotswolds and Stroud Hate Crime and Incident Action Group was formed with local partners to provide an operational response to Hate Crime incidents within the Stroud and Cotswolds areas. The group is chaired by the Council's Head of Community Safety and is supported by a number of district council officers.

A **Hate Incident** is defined as;

'Any incident, which may or may not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate'.

To provide consistency in the recording of hate incidents, the Gloucestershire Constabulary and Gloucestershire Hate Crime & Incident Strategic Group have adopted the following categories by which to group and record incidents;

- Age; Disability (including mental health); Gender (including transphobia);
- Race (ethnicity); Religion (including faith & belief);
- Sexual Orientation (including lesbian, gay and bi-sexual);
- Any other group identity

A helpline for the victims of a hate crime or incident is available:

0800 077 8460

14. Review of the Equality Scheme

The ESSG will take responsibility for reviewing the Scheme in light of the outcomes from community consultation, the ongoing self-assessment process and performance against targets. The Resources and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee also has the remit to review the Council's overall performance in relation to the Scheme and related action plans.

SECTION THREE: EMPLOYMENT

The Council's aim is that the composition of its workforce reflects that of the community and follows the equality legislation and codes of practice.

1. Recruitment & Selection

- Wherever possible and appropriate, all vacancies will be advertised simultaneously internally and externally.
- All vacancy advertisements will include an appropriate short statement on the Council's commitment to equalities and diversity.
- Selection criteria for appointment, transfer, promotion and training should be strictly related to the job or training requirements and consistently applied to all applicants.
- Selection criteria (job description and person specification) will be reviewed to ensure that they are justifiable on non-discriminatory grounds as being essential for the effective performance of the job.
- More than one person must be involved in the recruitment and selection process, and all should have received appropriate training.
- Wherever possible, a diverse mix of staff will be involved in the shortlisting and interviewing processes.
- Reasons for selection or rejection of applicants at all stages of the recruitment process must be justified and recorded.

2. Genuine Occupational Qualifications

Race and sex discrimination in employment are not unlawful where a person's gender or race is a "genuine occupational qualification". Should this apply to any vacancy within the Council, wording, stating the section of the relevant Act that applies, will be included in the advertisement.

3. Conditions Of Employment

- Terms of employment, benefits, facilities and services are afforded equally to all employees in the same or similar circumstances.
- Complaints concerning victimisation and harassment are dealt with in accordance with the Council's Harassment Policy and will not subsequently result in the complainant receiving less favourable treatment than other employees in the same or similar circumstances.
- Behaviour or actions by employees against the spirit and the letter of the law and any Codes of Practice on which this Policy is based will be considered serious disciplinary matters and may, in some cases, lead to dismissal.

4. Positive Action – Training, Promotion And Conditions of Service

Encouragement will be given to underrepresented groups (and groups that find they may be at a disadvantage during the recruitment process) to apply for training and employment opportunities with the Council. Wherever possible, special training will be provided for such groups to prepare them to compete on genuinely equal terms for jobs and promotion. However, actual appointment to all jobs will be strictly on merit.

Wherever possible, efforts will also be made to identify and remove unnecessary/unjustifiable barriers and provide appropriate facilities and conditions of service to meet the special needs of potentially disadvantaged and/or underrepresented groups.

5. HR Records

In order to ensure the effective operation of the Policy (and for no other purpose) a record of all employees' and job applicants' gender, ethnic origin and disability will be kept. Where necessary, employees will be able to check/correct their own record of these details. Otherwise, access to this information will be strictly restricted as required by the Data Protection Act 1998.

6. Specific Duties On Employment

All public authorities have a legal duty to monitor and publish the results of staff joining, working for, or leaving the Council by their ethnic group. In cases where individuals can be identified, the results will not be published.

As the Council has more than 150 staff, the additional employment monitoring requirements we need to undertake are as follows;

The Council will monitor by ethnicity, disability and gender –

- ❑ Recruitment & Selection (applicants for jobs and promotion)
- ❑ The make up of our workforce (Staff in post)
- ❑ Training & Development opportunities (benefits/detriments from appraisals)
- ❑ Incidents of Harassment & Bullying
- ❑ Disciplinary & Grievance cases
- ❑ Employment Tribunal Cases
- ❑ Leavers and Reasons for Leaving

SECTION FOUR: CORPORATE EQUALITY ACTION PLAN

The action plan below sets out the main areas in which the Council will be focusing its efforts over the next 3 years and what has been achieved to date.

THEME	REF	ACTION	TIMESCALE	LEAD	PROGRESS to date
Equality Standard for Local Government	EQ1.	Self-assessment and audit of the council's achievement against Level 1 of the Equality Standard for local government	March 2004	Senior Policy Officer/ Heads of Service	Level 1 Achieved Feb 2004. Validated by Audit Commission.
	EQ2.	Self-assessment and audit of the council's achievement against Level 2 of the Equality Standard for local government	March 2006		Level 2 achieved March 2006. However the Standard has been revised and evidence will have to be reviewed to ensure full compliance with new requirements.
	EQ3.	Self-assessment and audit of the council's achievement against Level 3 of the Equality Standard for local government	December 2008		External accreditation now required
Legislative compliance	EQ4.	Produce a Disability Equality Scheme to illustrate how the council will respond to its general and specific duties under the Disability Discrimination Amendment Act 2005.	December 2006	Senior Policy Officer	DES published Dec 2006
	EQ5.	Produce a Gender Equality Scheme to illustrate how the council will respond to its general and specific duties under the Equality Act 2006.	April 2007	Senior Policy Officer	GES published April 2007
LAA and County-wide working	EQ6.	District and county councils to have shared with each other their equality, gender, race and disability schemes to identify good practice	June 2007	County Equality Network	Yes. Stroud DC is an active member of the County Equality Network and Equality South West network

THEME	REF	ACTION	TIMESCALE	LEAD	PROGRESS to date
	EQ7.	To develop a county wide equality network, with mutual support mechanisms re best practice, training and sharing of learning	September 2007	County Equality Network	Yes. As above.
	EQ8.	To have held discussions with all key partners the adoption of equality impact assessments by all LAA Partners and wider Third Sector Organisations for major projects and initiatives.	December 2008	County Equality Network	
	EQ9.	To have held discussions with all key partners adoption of a common set of standard equalities and demographic monitoring and evaluation procedures for all LAA Partners and wider Third Sector Organisations	December 2008	County Equality Network	
	EQ10.	All LAA Partners and the larger Third Sector Organisations to have adopted equality impact assessments for major projects and initiatives.	March 2009	County Equality Network	
	EQ11.	All LAA Partners and larger Third Sector Organisations to have adopted a common set of standard equalities and demographic monitoring and evaluation procedures.	March 2009	County Equality Network	
Committee Reports	EQ12.	Ensure all committee reports comply with Equalities legislation	April 2005	Head of Legal	Monitored through Legal Service Plan. LSP19: To ensure that all reports to Council, Cabinet and Committees comply with Equalities legislation where relevant.

THEME	REF	ACTION	TIMESCALE	LEAD	PROGRESS to date
Equality and Diversity Training	EQ13.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity awareness training for employees and Members • Impact assessment training for Managers • Introduce series of Drama-based training workshop to further develop awareness. • Procurement and Equality training • Refresher Impact Assessment training 	2003 ongoing January 2005 January 2007 September 2007 January 2008	Policy and HR	All staff and members have completed "Respect for People" diversity learning workbook and test. Now incorporated as part of induction process for all new staff and Members.
Encouraging greater diversity in the workplace	EQ14.	Set employment equality targets for recruitment, training, staff retention, work force profiles for race, gender and disability, sexual orientation, religion / belief and age according to available data	April 2008	Head of HR	BVPI Monitoring (see p10.)
Employment	EQ15.	Conduct an equal pay review and plan for equal pay adjustment.	November 2007	Head of HR	Job evaluation and restructure carried out June – December 2005. Consultation with staff and UNISON.
Procurement	EQ16.	Set equality criteria for external contractors	May 2006	Head of Accountancy and Audit	Procurement strategy
	EQ17.	Equality & Diversity issues are assessed when appraising potential suppliers to ensure that they meet our minimum standards	Ongoing	Procurement leads	E&D included in tender evaluation. Procurement and Equalities training offered to relevant officers.
Community Engagement	EQ18.	Maintain support for the Equalities Advisory Panel as the Council's key mechanism for engaging hard to reach groups in the external scrutiny of our services.	Ongoing	Senior Policy Officer	The EAP has operated since 2004 and has reviewed a range of Council services. Membership reviewed 2006-07.

THEME	REF	ACTION	TIMESCALE	LEAD	PROGRESS to date
	EQ19.	Work with partners to establish a County-wide Community Engagement Strategy	December 2007	Policy and Communication Manager	Working group established
Community Strategy – development	EQ20.	Ensure wide and varied consultation and engagement through a range of activities and fora to develop and implement the Stroud Sustainable Community Strategy.	June 2008	Policy and Communication Manager	Consultation draft circulated to all LSP members.
Service Delivery	EQ21.	Equality Impact assessments to be completed of all relevant policies, functions and procedures	December 2008	Heads of Service	
	EQ22.	All service plans to include Equality Action planning and where appropriate to develop Local Performance Indicators around equality issues	Ongoing	Heads of Service	Service plans have included an Equality section since 2003. Fair Access PIs developed by all services.
Development Control	EQ23.	Adopt “Good Practice Guide on Diversity and Equality in Planning” published by the ODPM, January 2005.	March 2007	Head of Planning	Guidance adopted. Statement of Community Involvement ensures involvement of Equality Groups. Engaged with Advisory Panel.
Partnerships	EQ24.	Encourage partnerships to consider equality issues and develop improvement plans that promote equality of opportunity for all.	April 2008	Policy and Communication Manager	Draft Partnership Governance framework and Policy in place
Promote community cohesion	EQ25.	Continue to lead, develop and promote the Hate Crime and Incidents Group	September 2007 and ongoing	Head of Community Safety	Two events held to raise awareness of hate crime in the Stroud and Cotswold Districts.
Promote good cultural / race relations	EQ26.	Support Annual event to promote understanding and awareness of different cultures, religions and faiths.	Annual	Policy / Head of Community Safety	Muslim awareness event held in Nailsworth 2003; Supported Holocaust Memorial day; Celebration of International Peace Day;

THEME	REF	ACTION	TIMESCALE	LEAD	PROGRESS to date
					Rurality and Minority groups event.
Ethnic monitoring	EQ27.	Carry out further research into Migrant workers in the Country through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer survey • Employee survey • Focus Groups with Migrant Workers 	2007 December	GCC research unit working group	Initial report published November 2006. Final Report "Migrant Workers in Gloucestershire 2007".

SEE ALSO DISABILITY AND GENDER EQUALITY ACTION PLANS

Further Information

Enquiries regarding the Equality Scheme should be directed in the first instance to:

Eka Nowakowska, Senior Policy Officer

Stroud District Council, Ebley Mill, Stroud, Glos GL5 4UB

Tel: 01453 754288

Email: eka.nowakowska@stroud.gov.uk

General information about the Council and its operation is available on the Council's website: www.stroud.gov.uk.

COMBATTING MISINFORMATION

Facts about new migrants to the United Kingdom and employment

- Migrants have contributed to a gradual rise in the UK population. However, UK born individuals still account for 90 per cent of the total working population in the UK.
- In fact the overall economic impact of migration from EU Member States has been modest but broadly positive, reflecting the flexibility and speed of adjustment of the UK labour market.
- The UK labour market has continued to perform strongly with the arrival of new migrant workers.
- Over the last 8 years employment has increased by over 2.5 million and the UK has the highest employment rate of the G8 economies.
- Despite recent increases in new migrants, unemployment remains close to its lowest level for 30 years, redundancies remain low and vacancies are at historically high levels.
- Data shows that migrants come to the UK to work, not to claim benefits. 99 per cent of applications for National Insurance numbers made by new migrants from May 2004 - Sept 05 were for employment purposes.
- There is no discernible statistical evidence that migrants from accession countries contribute to a rise in claims for benefits. In the same period only 4 per cent were allowed to claim Income support and Job Seekers Allowance benefits
- Migrants are only able to claim income related benefits once they have worked legally in the UK for a full year.
- Migrants seem to be predominately filling low skilled vacancies within the UK in jobs that local workers do not want to do in industries such as agriculture and fishing, catering and hospitality. They are working, paying taxes and helping the economy to grow.
- Far from acting as a drain on public services, often new migrants help to deliver vital services
 - 12,700 care workers
 - 1,500 teachers, classroom assistants
 - 2,000 doctors and nurses
 - 10,500 construction workers

Facts about the allocation of social housing given to new migrants.

- Myths, rumours and misinformation surround the arrival of new migrants and these can be hard to rebut. However, below are some facts about migrants and the allocation of social housing which can be used to discredit many of the more popular myths.
- Allocation policies do not discriminate on grounds of race or ethnicity. Priority for social housing is based solely on housing need. Those given 'reasonable preference' for social housing include those who are:
 - homeless;
 - living in overcrowded accommodation; and
 - people who need to move on medical, welfare and disability grounds.
- Nationality is **not** one of the factors that is taken into account in deciding whether someone falls within one of the reasonable preference categories.

Facts about immigration into the United Kingdom

- Myths, rumours and misinformation surround the arrival of new migrants and these can be hard to rebut. However, below are some facts about immigration into the United Kingdom which can be used to discredit many of the more popular myths.
- 427,000 workers from eight EU accession states successfully applied for work in the UK from May 2004 - June 2006. This may sound like a lot, but it represents less than one percent of the UK's population.
- The UK's population is getting older, meaning that more working age people are needed to prop up the world's fourth largest industrial economy. By 2026 pensioners will outnumber children by two million. Also as immigrants are on average younger than UK-born people, they are less likely to need to claim a pension and will contribute to the economy for a longer period.
- There is a current shortage of highly-skilled people in key sectors such as the NHS, public services and the IT industry which is being met by new migrants.
- As the UK's population becomes more highly skilled and educated, there will be more and more jobs that people do not want to do because they are viewed as demeaning. All of these factors have come together to create immigration demands.
- One study by the University of Swansea predicts that we need to increase immigration by a fifth to prevent a population decline caused by a shrinking birth rate and subsequent economic crisis.
- The belief that Britain has a particularly high rate of immigration is false. About 5 per cent of the UK population was born abroad. In Germany, the figure is 12.5 per cent; in France, 10 per cent; and in the Netherlands, 10.1 per cent.

Facts about Gypsies and Travellers

- Myths, rumours and misinformation surround the presence of minority ethnic groups such as Gypsies and Travellers and these can be hard to rebut. However, below are some facts about Gypsies and Travellers that can be used to discredit many of the more popular myths.
- Romany Gypsies have been in Great Britain for over 600 years, and Irish Travellers have also lived and travelled here for generations.
- Both groups are recognised ethnic minorities and are protected by Race Relations legislation.
- Out of around 16,000 Gypsy and Traveller caravans in England, about 12,000 are on authorised, legal sites.
- Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers have their own languages; Romany Gypsies particularly have very strict customs about hygiene and cleanliness, developed over many years to cope with living on the roads.
- Less than one square mile of land would be needed to accommodate every unauthorised caravan in England.
- 91 per cent of all local authorities in England and Wales have Gypsies and Travellers either living in them or passing through.

Facts about planning

- Gypsies and Travellers are subject to the planning system in the same way as any other person. Their developments are subject to policies and guidance like any others.
- Despite what you may have seen in the media, large unauthorised developments are actually very rare, and the average size of an authorised development is only 4 caravans.
- Local authorities are not required to build sites, but where they do the Government has grant funding available to cover the cost of this. The requirement on local authorities is to identify land that is suitable for sites, just as they identify land for businesses or for other types of housing.

Other facts

- Gypsies and Travellers are the most excluded ethnic minorities in this country. Studies suggest that nearly 18 per cent of Gypsy and Traveller mothers will experience the death of a child - compared with less than 1 per cent of mothers in the settled community.
- It is much cheaper to provide a site than to enforce against unauthorised encampment in areas that have no site provision - when Bristol City Council built a site they saw their enforcement costs drop from £200,000 a year to £5000 a year.

Performance Monitoring

The table below identifies the best value performance indicators relating to Equalities.

PI Ref	Description	Actual 2006	Actual 2007	Target 2008
BV2a	The level (if any) of the Equality Standard for Local Government to which the authority conforms.	2	2	3
BV2b	The duty to promote Race Equality (% achieved)	79	79	84
BV11a	% of top 5% earners that are women	32.32	32.5	32.75
BV11b	% of top 5% of earners that are from black and minority ethnic communities	4.75	4.75	4.95
BV11c	% of top 5% of earners that are disabled	0	0.2	0.5
BV16	Staff declaring meeting DDA disability definition as % of workforce compared with % of economically active disabled people in District	1.58	2	3
BV17	Minority ethnic staff as % of workforce compared with % of economically active minority ethnic population in District	1.81	1.95	2.25
BV164	Does the Authority follow the CRE Code of Practice in rented housing and follow the Good Practice Standards for social landlords on tackling harassment included in the Code of Practice for Social Landlords: Tackling Racial Harassment	Yes	Yes	Yes
BV156	The percentage of Authority Buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable and accessible for disabled people	62.5	100	100
BV174	The number of racial incidents recorded by the authority per 100,000 population	0		
BV175	The number of racial incidents that resulted in further action	N/A		
BV225	% Actions against Domestic Violence (Total of 11 Action points to be achieved)	72	81	81