



STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

www.stroud.gov.uk

CORPORATE EQUALITY POLICY AND SCHEME

FOREWORD

Age, disability, race, gender, sexual orientation, religion and belief help define our communities. Stroud District Council has produced this Equality Scheme, which aims to define how we help maintain and enhance diversity and fairness 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, and use our influence to encourage others to behave in a similar way.

We are using the Equality Framework for Local Government to help us consider equalities in all aspects of our work. Additionally, the 'systems thinking' 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. Listening to and engaging with our customers has already led to considerable improvements in our Benefits and Housing Advice services.

In the last national government survey asking whether people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area, Stroud District attained one of the highest satisfaction ratings in the Country - 88%. This is in part due to some of the work we have been doing with our partners in the public, voluntary and private sectors.

However, we do not want to be complacent. This important document will help us maintain and build on our work in this area. It is therefore a working document, which will be subject to review and revision as progress is made. Your views about this scheme are very much welcomed; as are your thoughts about the priorities we have set for action and review.

Cllr Frances Roden
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; Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and Equality Act 2006
- Provides the overall policy framework for our action to tackle discrimination and promote equality.
- 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:

- creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and have the opportunity to fulfil their potential – creating a level playing field.
- removing or reducing all forms of unfair discrimination and has been underpinned by legislation.
- 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:

- including everyone and 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.

The [Equalities Review](#) uses a wider definition of equality, based on the idea of equal life chances.

“An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and opportunity to live in the way people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish.

An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be.”

This definition is more aspirational than the formal legal definitions of equality. It is about what we can do to create a fairer society and recognises that:

- equality is an issue for us all
- we don’t all start from the same place
- to create a fairer society we need to recognise different needs.

2. The Legal Framework For Equalities

There are a number of pieces of legislation which outlaw discrimination and some of these (in respect of equal pay, race and sex discrimination) were enacted in the 1970s. In order to give impetus to the elimination of discrimination the government has amended acts and/or brought new ones into being with very specific requirements for public sector organisations. These require us to work to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in all our activities. Although there are common themes (which are outlined below), the legislation has been passed at different times and there are subtle differences between requirements. All of these commonalities and differences need to be taken into account when we identify how to ensure equality of opportunity.

There are three areas in particular (with respect to Race, Disability and Gender) where we are expected to produce a policy or scheme and a corresponding action plan.

2.1 Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000) (RR(A)A)

The original Race Relations Act (1976) outlawed discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins and covers employment, education, and the provision of facilities or services. The RR(A)A amends this legislation and requires us to take a more proactive approach to:

- eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity
- promote good race relations between people of different racial groups

In addition we need to comply with a number of other conditions – we must:

- State functions and policies, or proposed policies, which have been assessed as relevant to its performance of the general duty.

Set out arrangements for:

- Assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies on the promotion of race equality
- Monitoring policies for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality
- Publishing the results of such assessments and consultation
- Ensuring public access to information and services provided
- Training staff in connection with the duties
- Within a period of three years review the assessment of functions and policies

2.2 Disability Discrimination Act (2005) (DDA)

The DDA amends the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) which laid out the original definition of disability as “a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities”.

The 2005 Act has widened this definition in that it includes some conditions such as cancer from the day of diagnosis and removes the requirement for a mental impairment to be “clinically well recognised”. The Act defines “substantial” as being more than minor or trivial and “normal day to day activities” includes obvious

activities but also includes mobility, manual dexterity, lifting, hearing, eyesight, speech, memory and the ability to concentrate, learn, or understand. In general, however, for a condition to be treated as a disability it has to last or be expected to last for twelve months or longer.

The DDA requires us to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons

In order to achieve the aims above we must produce and publish a Disability Equality Scheme, implement it, report on it, and review and revise it at least once every three years. In doing so, there is a very specific requirement on us to involve disabled people in drawing up the Scheme.

2.3 Gender Equality Duty (2007)

The original Sex Discrimination Act (1975) outlawed discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status, or gender reassignment and covers employment, education, and the provision of facilities or services. The Equality Act (2006) (which amends the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) introduced the Gender Equality Duty – requiring us to pay “due regard” to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination and harassment that is unlawful under the Sex Discrimination Act and
- discrimination which is unlawful under the Equal Pay Act and
- promote equality of opportunity between men and women

In addition we need to comply with a number of other conditions – we must:

- prepare a written scheme on gender equality, including an action plan with gender equality objectives
- formulate the gender equality objectives, considering the need to have objectives to address the causes of any gender pay gap
- gather and use information on how policies and practices affect gender equality
- consult employees, service users and others
- assess the impact of current and proposed policies and practices on gender equality
- implement the actions set out in the written scheme and review progress at least once every three years

The term “sex” is used to describe biological differences between women and men. The term “gender” refers to the wider social roles and relationships which structure men’s and women’s lives. The gender equality duty covers men, women and transgender individuals. Transgenderism or transsexualism is a recognised

medical condition where an individual believes he or she was born in a body of the wrong sex.

2.4 OTHER LEGISLATION

In addition to the Acts noted above there are other relevant pieces of legislation which impact on our work on equality and diversity.

2.4.1 Age Discrimination

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 outlaw age discrimination against employees (including applicants for jobs) and people applying to be students. We cannot discriminate against someone, therefore, on the grounds of their age in relation to admission, progression and graduation/non-graduation. Similarly, we cannot discriminate against people in relation to recruitment and selection, access to training and development, promotion opportunities, and retirement. Staff are entitled to request to work beyond their normal retirement date and this request will be considered. Retirement Guidelines which outline the process to be followed are available from the Human Resources website.

2.4.2 Sexual Orientation

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 outlaw discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in employment. Sexual orientation is defined as an orientation to the same sex, the opposite sex, or the same and opposite sex. The Equality Act 2006 widened the scope of the Regulations to cover the provision of goods, facilities, services and education. The law also covers discrimination against someone because of a perception about their sexual orientation, even if that perception is not correct. The Civil Partnership Act 2004 gave same-sex couples the same rights as married heterosexual couples.

Legislation recognises both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. A person who is a civil partner in a registered civil partnership of a same-sex couple should not be treated less favourably than a married person in similar circumstances. If a civil partner is treated less favourably, they may be able to bring a claim for sexual orientation discrimination under the Sexual Orientation Regulations or a claim for sex discrimination.

The Regulations outlaw direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of sexual orientation. It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass someone after the working relationship has ended. The definitions of discrimination includes discriminating against someone because of their perceived sexual orientation (even if this turns out not to be the case) or because he/she is friendly with others of particular sexual orientations.

In very limited circumstances it will be lawful for an employer to treat people differently if it is a genuine occupational requirement that the job holder must be of a particular sexual orientation. For example, an organisation advising on and promoting gay rights may be able to show that it is essential to the credibility of its chief executive who will be the public face of the organisation that s/he should be

gay. The sexual orientation of the holder of that post may therefore be a genuine occupational requirement.

2.4.3 Religion or Belief

The Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 outlaw discrimination on the grounds of a person's religion or belief, in employment. Religion or belief is defined as being "any religion, religious belief, or philosophical belief". In general, three criteria are used to determine a religion:

- a belief in a supreme being
- worship of that supreme being; and
- a group or following of people who observe the beliefs, values, customs and traditions as set down by that supreme being.

However, philosophical beliefs are much less well defined and political beliefs are explicitly excluded from the legislation. The Equality Act 2006 extended the scope of these Regulations to cover the provision for goods, facilities, services and education.

The legislation covers discrimination on the grounds of perceived as well as actual religion or belief and the religion or belief of someone with whom the person associates.

The Regulations outlaw direct discrimination, indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the grounds of religion or belief. It is also unlawful to discriminate against or harass someone after the working relationship has ended. The definitions of discrimination includes discriminating against someone because of their perceived religion or belief (even if this turns out not to be the case) or because he/she is friendly with others of particular religions or beliefs.

In very limited circumstances it will be lawful for an employer to treat people differently if it is a genuine occupational requirement that the job holder must be of a particular religion or belief. For example, some organisations, such as faith schools, have an ethos based on a religion or belief. They may be able to apply a genuine occupational requirement to some of their posts (but possibly not all) and each case would need to be justified.

2.5 FUTURE EQUALITIES LEGISLATION

Equalities legislation has developed over more than 40 years, and the law is set out in many different places, in Acts of Parliament, regulations and orders. The government has acknowledged that everyone who needs to understand discrimination law would benefit from having it in a single Equality Act which simplifies the law as far as this can be done.

In October 2007 it brought together a number of equality commissions (Disability Rights Commission, Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality) into a single commission, the **Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)**.

In addition, it is planning for a single Equality Act which will bring together equality strands in one harmonised, modernised and simplified piece of legislation.

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

3. 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.

To date the Council has been using the Equality Standard for Local Government as a mechanism to mainstream equality into service delivery.

In April 2009, the Equality Framework for Local Government replaced the Equality Standard. The new framework will now focus on outcomes for the community rather than processes. It consists of three levels:

- Level 1 – Developing**
- Level 2 – Achieving**
- Level 3 – Excellent**

and is constructed around five areas of change management :

- a) Knowing Your Communities – Equality Mapping
- b) Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- c) Community engagement and satisfaction
- d) Responsive services and customer care
- e) A modern and diverse workforce

The Council has carried out a self-assessment against the 'Achieving' level criteria of the framework and produced a report which outlines our Equalities journey. We have also produced an Action Plan which address the areas for improvement that were identified through the process. The Plan is monitored via the council's performance management system.

4. The Stroud District

The Stroud District is a rural shire district with a population of approximately 111,000. 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 '[Knowing Your Community and Equality Mapping](#)' section of our equality self-assessment provides a full profile of the district from data obtained from various agencies across the county and nationally.

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

5. The Council's Vision and Key Priorities

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"*.

Each year we produce a Corporate Delivery Plan (CDP) which allows us to maintain a focus over the medium term and ensures that we plan financially and adapt what we do to the changing demands of local people and the Government.

This plan seeks to demonstrate how our vision will be achieved around four key priorities:

- **ECONOMY** - Help local people and businesses recover from the recession and grow the local economy
- **AFFORDABLE HOUSING** - Provide affordable and decent housing
- **CLIMATE CHANGE** - Help the community minimise its carbon footprint, adapt to climate change, recycle more and send as little waste to landfill as possible
- **RESOURCES** - Provide value for money to our taxpayers and high quality services to our customers

The CDP identifies a number of key actions which specifically contribute to the equality agenda.

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

We will:

- enhance local democracy and accountability to ensure that 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 equality impact assessments 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.

7. 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 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 Heads and Heads of Service form the Corporate Team, which is the management board of the Council.

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 Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

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(s)

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.

This group was renamed the Equality Working Group (EWG) in 2007.

Involving Disabled people

In Stroud District there are a number of long-established groups and organisations that provide physical activities, education and assistance to disabled people. There are issues, however, preventing many disabled people from leading as full a life as they would like and the Council recognised that it would be useful to have in Stroud District a group that would seek to tackle and resolve these issues and provide a central point of enquiry on disability matters.

To this end, Volunteer & Community Action (Stroud District) (VCASD), Stroud District Council (SDC) and Stroud & District Access Group have been working in

partnership to set up a new Disability Action Group (DAG) whose aim is to link up key disability development across the district.

Stroud & District Access Group was re-launched in March 2005 with support from SDC, to act as a mechanism to advise on disability and assess physical access issues across the district. The group comprises local disabled people, council officers and Councillors, and is instrumental in delivering a number of key projects to improve our service provision.

Additionally members of the Access Group have met with Heads of Service to specifically examine how services can better meet the needs of disabled people.

Councillors

The Council's Leader has lead responsibility for the Equality Scheme, which was first formally adopted by the Council's Cabinet in September 2002. The Council's Performance 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 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 assessments carried out to date are published on the Council's website.
http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/equality_impact_assessments.asp

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 and engagement with all of our communities of place and interest.

One of the early mechanisms we established was the Equalities Advisory Panel. This panel assisted us in examining our compliance on equalities and diversity, particularly within service provision. We continue to work closely with a number of groups, namely Stroud & District Access Group, Older Persons forum, Stroud Youth Council; GlosRec and GayGlos.

The Council is represented on the County Equality Group, comprising officers from the county and district councils, health and experts from the equality strands. More details can be found in our [‘Achieving’ self-assessment](#).

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

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 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. 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 the Big Word, 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.

10. 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.

Additionally, members of the Equality Working Group have undertaken the accredited Level 2 certificate in Equality & Diversity. From this they devised a programme which has been presented to all service areas.

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.

11. 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.

12. 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

13. Review of the Equality Scheme

The Equality Working Group will take responsibility for reviewing the Scheme in light of the outcomes from community consultation, the ongoing self-assessment process and performance against targets.

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

Further Information

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

Eka Nowakowska, Principal 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.