

Equality Strategy

2016-20



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Welcome to our Equality Strategy

Welcome to the Council's Equality Strategy for 2016 to 2020. This replaces the Equality Strategy for 2012-2016 and sets out how the Council intends to meet its requirements under the Equality Act 2010 and associated Public Sector Equality Duty.

We take our responsibilities under the Act very seriously, but more than that, we feel it is only right to treat everyone with fairness and respect, and to offer equality of opportunity to all people. Bury Council is working 'to lead, shape and maintain a prosperous, sustainable Bury that is fit for the future'. We aim to have due regard for the needs of all our employees, visitors and residents, regardless of their background or circumstances. Therefore, mainstreamed throughout everything we do to achieve our vision are the principles of equality, diversity and human rights.

The Council provides leadership in the community and services to all people who live and work in the borough. We are also the largest and most significant employer in Bury. As such we are committed to providing fair and accessible services to meet the needs of all our diverse communities, and to being an employer of choice for everyone.

This not only meets our moral and legal obligations, but managed positively it helps us to be more efficient, effective and equitable. We also aim, by valuing and championing diversity and inclusion, to lead the way in good practice and set an example for others to emulate.

This Equality Strategy, supported by a range of further documents, provides a framework to help us achieve our equality vision, both by improving our equality performance and by responding to the needs of all the people of Bury.

The Council does however recognise that this strategy may not be applicable in all schools, particularly where Governing Bodies have overall responsibility and may have different procedures in place. However, we recommend and encourage schools to follow this strategy, where appropriate, or to adapt it to suit the needs of their individual school.



At Bury Council, we want to enable all our customers, residents and employees to flourish and reach their potential. By celebrating diversity, tackling all forms of discrimination, fostering good relations between communities and working to advance equality of opportunity, we are determined to make Bury a fairer place for all to live, work and prosper.

Tracy Murphy, Assistant Director for Resources and Regulation

Bury is home to a diverse range of people. This is a strength, to be valued and celebrated, but we need to recognise that some people in the Borough still face disadvantage as a result of who they are and the attitudes of others. As a Council, we will address disadvantage and discrimination, wherever it is found, to make Bury a fairer and more inclusive place for all.

Sandra Walmsley, Cabinet Member for Resources and Regulation



Where are we now?

The Council is subject to equalities legislation, and a number of other influencing factors:

Legislative Context

The **Equality Act 2010** sets out the **Public Sector Equality Duty** which all public bodies must comply with. Under the general duty, Bury Council must therefore have due regard to the need to:-

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

There are also specific duties, which require us to publish equality objectives and equality information.

National Context

In October 2015 the Equality and Human Rights Commission published its statutory five year report on equality and human rights progress in England, Scotland and Wales. The report concludes that there has been progress in many areas, but highlights 8 key challenges that public bodies need to address:

1. Improve the evidence and the ability to assess how fair society is
2. Raise standards and close attainment gaps in education
3. Encourage fair recruitment, development and reward in employment
4. Support improved living conditions in cohesive communities
5. Encourage democratic participation and ensure access to justice
6. Improve access to mental health services and support for those experiencing (or at risk of experiencing) poor mental health
7. Prevent abuse, neglect and ill-treatment in care and detention
8. Tackle targeted harassment and abuse of people who share particular protected characteristics

Local Context

The Council's **Vision, Purpose and Values 2015-2020** sets out how it is going to support **Team Bury's priorities**, which are:

- stronger economy
- stronger, safer community
- health and wellbeing

This will be achieved by fulfilling our **vision** to 'lead, shape and maintain a prosperous, sustainable Bury that is fit for the future' and by delivering our **strategic priorities** of:

1. Drive forward, through effective marketing and information, proactive engagement with *the people of Bury to take ownership of their own health and wellbeing*
2. Continue to *develop business friendly policies to attract inward investment* and new jobs so that Bury retains its position as a premier destination for retail, leisure, tourism and culture

3. *Ensure new and affordable housing is developed* to support growth in the Bury and Greater Manchester economy
4. Build on the culture of efficiency and effectiveness, through new, progressive and integrated partnership working models *to drive forward the Council's and Greater Manchester Public Service growth and reform agenda*
5. *Ensure staff have the right skills to embrace significant organisational change*, through embedding a culture of ownership, empowerment and decision making at all levels of the organisation
6. *Work toward reducing reliance on government funding* by developing new models of delivery that are affordable, add value and based on need

Reviewing this Equality Strategy is a key part of the Council's Vision, Purpose and Values document, and we are also proud to have signed up to the **Team Bury Equality Charter** and aim to mainstream its principles and commitments throughout everything we do (see Appendix 2)

Where we want to be

We know that the Council is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and the associated Public Sector Equality Duty. However...

Bury Council's equality vision is of 'an inclusive society which values and embraces people's different needs, abilities, situations and goals, and promotes fair opportunities for people to live and flourish in the way that they would choose'.

How we will get there

The Council aims to comply with the Equality Act and work towards its 'equality vision' by:

1. Operating within the **Equality Policy** and **Equality Framework**
2. Publishing and then delivering against the Council's **Equality Objectives**

Information about all of the above is set out on the following pages.

Our Equality Policy

Bury Council values all diverse communities within the borough, and understands that people can face very real discrimination and prejudice in their lives. We particularly recognise the following equality characteristics:-

- Race
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender Reassignment
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion or Belief
- Caring Responsibilities
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

Full definitions of these characteristics can be found in Appendix 1. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive and we are willing to consider others in the future. We are also aware that people can experience multiple forms of discrimination, for example discrimination in respect of a person's race and disability.

We are committed to fulfilling our duties and responsibilities under the **Equality Act 2010** and related equality and human rights legislation and codes of practice. In particular, we are committed to achieving equality in employment and service delivery by always striving to:-

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a characteristic and those who do not

Further to this, Bury Council aims to always protect and preserve the rights and freedoms that belong to all individuals regardless of their nationality and citizenship. We believe that human rights are fundamentally important in maintaining a fair and civilized society. This is in line with the **Human Rights Act 1998**, and the 16 rights and freedoms it upholds.

To help us achieve all of this, and also to help us meet our equality objectives, **we will**:-

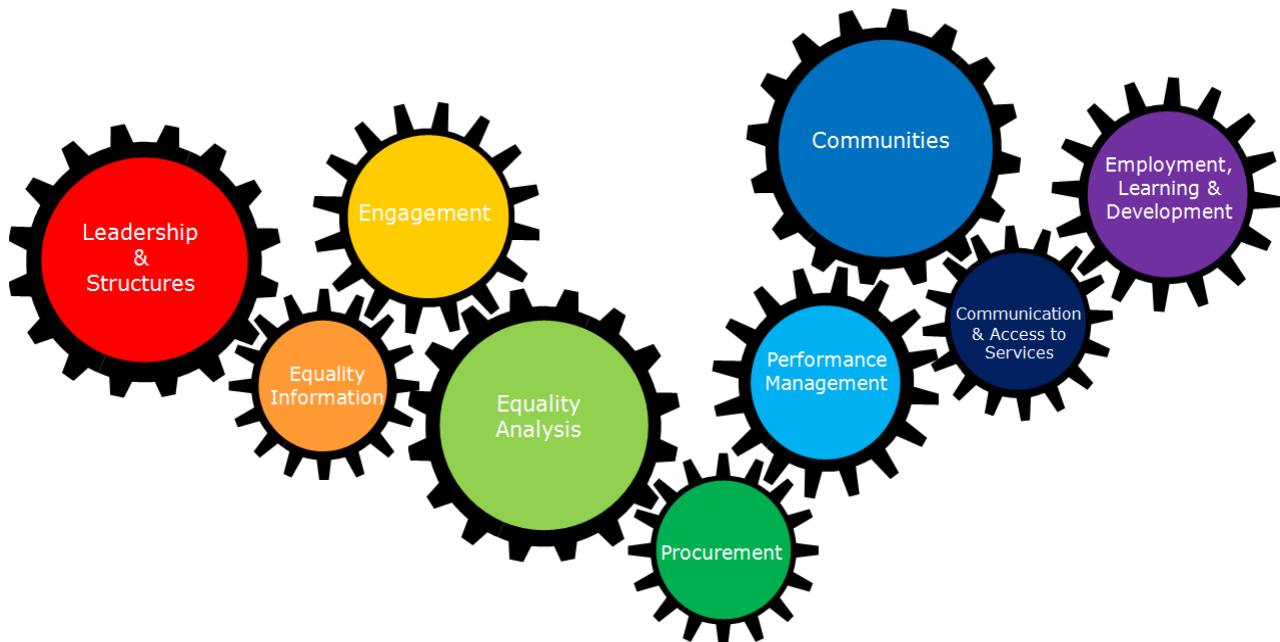
- Work within the equality framework set out in this Equality Strategy.
- Carry out equality analysis on our functions and policies to avoid wherever possible adverse impacts upon protected groups.
- Challenge and address any incidences of unfair or unlawful discrimination (including by association or perception), harassment, victimisation, or equality related hate crime.
- Mainstream equality processes and considerations throughout our work, particularly in terms of policy development, service delivery and employment.
- Ensure that service users, members of the public, employees, job applicants or external service providers are not treated less favourably due to a protected characteristic.
- Recognise the importance of engaging with people who have an interest in our equality performance, and work towards developing and strengthening their participation and involvement in decision making processes.
- Expect our partners, contractors, agencies and suppliers to adhere to the spirit of this Equality Strategy.

- Work towards a workforce which reflects all of the different communities within Bury at all levels. We will take positive action where appropriate to address any under-representation or occupational segregation.
- Utilise and further develop information and training programmes for staff to raise awareness of equality issues, encourage changes in individuals' attitudes and behaviours, and to make staff aware of their rights and responsibilities.
- Ensure all services and employment policies/opportunities are accessible to, and inclusive of, all people.
- Create an environment where employees feel able to be open about their background, identity and characteristics, if they choose to do so.
- Create an environment where employees feel able to be themselves and share any needs and concerns relating to their equality characteristics, and not be disadvantaged by doing so.
- Make reasonable adjustments where appropriate to make full use of an individual's abilities.
- Create a flexible working environment where work and home balance requirements are recognised and supported in all areas and at all levels.
- Work together with other agencies to reduce domestic violence in Bury, and to increase the safety of those experiencing domestic violence.
- Support employees and service users with pregnancy and maternity-related issues, for example pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers in the workplace and public places.
- Work to ensure that all managers are aware of the need to understand the religious requirements and wherever possible to allow people to pursue their religious and philosophical beliefs.
- Respect other people's rights, and work to ensure that we do not lose sight of people and their individual needs. This is particularly important for some of the more vulnerable or less powerful in our society, such as people in care, young children or people with learning difficulties.
- Aim to strike a balance between protecting individual rights and the rights of the wider community.
- Take account in our strategic decision making of the fact that inequality does not just come from a person's equality characteristic, but also from the overarching and interwoven persistent inequality of social class – in other words a person's family background or place of birth. We understand that social class still holds a powerful grip over people's lives, and that we have a role to play in narrowing gaps in outcomes resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.

Failure by an employee to comply with this Equality Policy could result in action being taken in line with the Council's Disciplinary, Capability or Grievance Procedures.

Our Equality Framework

The following priority areas enable us to ensure that equality is mainstreamed throughout everything the Council does, and supports our efforts to achieve our equality objectives:-



1. Leadership and Structures

Having an Equality Strategy and equality framework in itself will not mean anything unless acted upon. In order for us to show leadership and commitment in promoting equality, and challenging inequality all elected members and officers have a responsibility for learning, understanding and acting in the spirit of this strategy, and setting a good standard for others to follow.

Roles and Responsibilities

Elected Members have a community leadership role, and should:

- provide leadership and support
- ensure the Council pays due regard to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty
- consider the outcomes of any Equality Analysis before making decisions on new or changed policies, procedures, strategies or working practices. (An equality analysis must be submitted with all reports.)
- ensure that equality is appropriately covered by members' portfolios
- engage with the local community and promote equality and diversity to enable us to be an inclusive borough
- provide a scrutiny role to ensure that we are making progress in achieving our stated objectives
- undertake some form of learning or training to increase their knowledge and understanding on equality and diversity

Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) is the Council's most senior officer management group and provides leadership and direction. The Chief Executive and Executive Directors who sit on SLT have responsibilities to pay due regard to equality considerations in all their decision making, to demonstrate the Council's commitment to equalities, and to set a good example for employees.

Managers must:

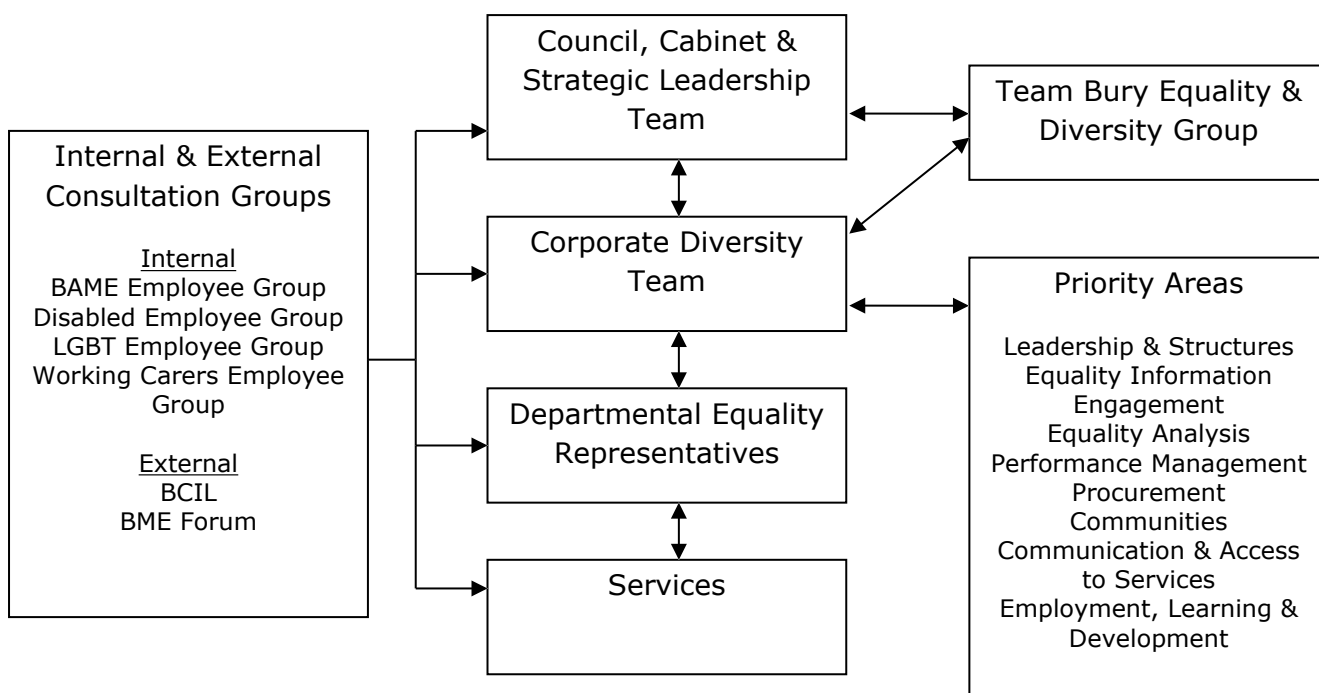
- ensure that staff and customers are treated fairly and with respect
- be open and inclusive in the way that they manage both employees and services
- engage with people who have an interest in our equality performance whenever they propose new or changed policies, procedures or working practices
- carry out equality analysis on service plans and any new or changed policy, procedure or working practice
- where relevant, monitor service provision and publish equality information annually to ensure transparency
- challenge discrimination, harassment or any other assumptions or behaviour which go against the principles of equality, fairness and respect for all
- undertake some form of learning or training to increase their knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity, and ensure that any staff for whom they are responsible do so as well

Individual Employees must:

- ensure that staff and customers are treated fairly and with respect
- contribute to developing an environment where everyone feels valued and respected, and is treated fairly
- undertake some form of learning or training to increase their knowledge and understanding, and apply the principles of equality and diversity in everyday work and life
- familiarise themselves with, and follow, this Strategy and any associated policies/ guidance
- inform their line manager of any apparent discrimination, harassment or other equality concern in relation to employment or service provision

Structures

The following structures support the equality and diversity agenda:-



The **Team Bury Equality and Diversity Group**'s role is to share best practice across the local strategic partnership, and to support the mainstreaming of the principles and

commitments set out in the Team Bury Equality Charter throughout everything the partners do. It is a task and finish group, so only meets when required.

The **Corporate Diversity Team** consists of the corporate equality lead officers, Departmental Equality Representatives, elected members, Employee Group Chairs, Unison's equality officer and representatives from priority areas within this Strategy. The group works to ensure that this strategy is implemented and actions monitored across the Council.

Each department has a **Departmental Equality Representative**, whose role is to communicate with all service areas within their Department in order to mainstream and implement this strategy and other equality and diversity related policies and guidance They also provide evidence of achievement for any appropriate equality- related awards.

The Council, in partnership with UNISON, supports a number of internal and external consultation groups. The four internal equality related Employee Groups include:-

- **Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Employee Group**
- **Disabled Employees Group**
- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Employee Group**
- **Working Carers Employee Group**

All include gender within their remit, and have terms of reference which include them being available for consultation, providing a scrutiny function for Council services, helping to promote various equality perspectives, acting as support networks for employees and providing advice and guidance to Council services.

Our external groups include:-

- **BME Forum** – this is the principal involvement group on Council policies/practices that impact on BME people in Bury. The membership is currently Asian in the main, but efforts are underway to involve more people of the Jewish faith. Their aims are to:
 - influence and help shape the policies of government, public, voluntary, private sector and other organisations and agencies that impact on BME people in Bury; and
 - co-ordinate services more effectively to meet the expressed needs and aspirations of the BME population in Bury.
- **Bury Coalition for Independent Living (BCIL)** which aims to create access, to support and represent local disabled people, and to raise disabled awareness. Membership is open to anyone in Bury with a disability, representatives from various local disability groups, Councillors, and Council officers.

2. Equality Information

Where relevant, all services must publish equality information annually on the Council's website. This information should be sufficient to demonstrate that we comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The publishing of equality information must be reviewed whenever an equality analysis of a service plan is carried out.

Further information is available on the Council's website in the **Equality Information** document, which is supported by **Corporate Equality Information Forms** for both services and employment.

The Council is committed to using the equality information it collects to identify areas for improvement and ensure equality of access to both service provision and employment opportunities.

The different types of equality information that we publish include:-

Employment Information

Workforce monitoring involves looking at our recruitment practices and the make-up of our workforce and comparing this with our economically-active local population. We can then work to ensure that our workforce reflects the local community we serve. It also enables us to analyse how human resource policies, practices and procedures affect different groups, so that we can address any inequalities/barriers and ensure our compliance with legislative requirements.

We collect information on the main equality characteristics at all stages in the employee lifecycle using the Council's **Corporate Equality Information Form for Employment**.

All our workforce information is held on our computerized human resources system (iTrent), and monitored quarterly. We publish two annual reports which show the following:-

1. **Employment Equality Report**, which includes information disaggregated by protected group on:-
 - Make up of the workforce
 - Application, interview and appointment stages of the recruitment process
 - Take up of Work-Life Balance Initiatives
 - Grievances and disciplinaries
 - Reasons for leaving
 - Take up of training opportunities
 - Return to work rates after maternity leave
2. **Equal Pay Audit Report**, which includes pay gap information (for gender as a minimum) plus details of length of service/time on pay grade.

Service Information

The Council is committed to gathering equality information in order to:-

- Establish profiles of our service users
- Compare these profiles to the make-up of the borough of Bury in order to identify issues in relation to:-
 - service provision
 - the take up of services
 - equality of opportunity
 - satisfaction with services
 - barriers to accessing services
 - compliments and complaints
- Identify discrimination and inequalities
- Discover where service changes need to be made, then set improvement targets from benchmark data
- Be able to identify where progress is being made
- Monitor our performance and outcomes related to furthering the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty

Services specify details of what equality information they collect and publish in the Equality Analyses that they carry out on service plans. Information is collected on the main equality characteristics wherever appropriate, using the Council's **Corporate Equality Information Form for Services**.

3. Engagement and Empowerment

The Council's vision is driven forward by the ethos of consulting and engaging with all local residents, taking into special consideration those who are from another background, culture,

race, disability, gender, sexuality, religion or belief, age, carers and those with differences in skills and abilities.

To ensure that our research and consultation process is representative of all communities living within Bury it is necessary to engage with those who, for a variety of reasons, do not tend to take part in consultation activity. This means focussing on especially hard to reach groups, disadvantaged groups and disengaged groups; to actively engage in effective consultation exercises.

With this belief at the forefront of our practice, we are committed to creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the opportunity to be consulted and part of the decision-making process. Making consultation inclusive lies within our desire for local people to be involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes from consultation. By engaging local people and communities we can plan more effectively and provide the services that local residents want and need; to foster a positive dialogue between citizens and the Council, our actions will support participation in the democratic process and the quality of community governance and in addition will develop skills and knowledge in local communities.

To enable fair and inclusive consultation we are dedicated to regularly reviewing how we approach and encourage local people's involvement in planning and provision of services, so that any group can feel that they are consulted in a fair, sensitive and responsive manner. There can be no equality of opportunity if difference is not recognised and valued. Therefore it is the utmost concern that consultation needs to be carried out effectively and inclusively; so the Council can use the information to balance the needs and aspirations of local people.

The Council is committed to understanding its communities and the services they want and need. All services are expected to understand and tackle any barriers that may be in place for members of the community in taking up services. The Council is currently piloting the use of Customer Insight tools to enable more sophisticated understanding of the communities it serves and how best to communicate and deliver services.

Full details of our approach regarding equality are set out in our **Engagement Guidance**.

Our variety of involvement, participation and data mapping mechanisms include:

- Employee surveys
- User surveys
- Non-user surveys
- Customer Insight Project

4. Equality Analysis

The Council operates an Equality Analysis process. This supports our commitment to providing fair and inclusive services and employment opportunities by providing a comprehensive and consistent approach for analysing the effect upon equality and cohesion of all our services, policies and practices.

Equality Analysis is carried out on all service plans, and new or changed policies and practices as a way of considering the effect of them on different groups protected from discrimination by the Equality Act. The reasons for doing this are:-

- to consider if there are any unintended consequences for some groups
- to consider if the policy or practice will be fully effective for all target groups.

It involves using equality information and the results of engagement with protected groups and others, to understand the actual or potential effect of our services, policies and practices.

The process helps us to identify practical steps to tackle any negative effects or discrimination, to advance equality and to foster good relations.

We aim to always take a proportionate approach to equality analysis, which relates to the relevance of the service, policy or practice to equality.

Where appropriate, actions arising from the equality analysis are taken within service plans or alternatively, outcomes may be monitored and published as annual equality information if it is appropriate to do so.

Full details of this process can be found in the **Equality Analysis Guidance** document.

5. Performance Management

Corporate Equality Actions

Organisation wide equality actions are monitored and reported on by the Organisational Development Team. They include:

- progress against the equality objectives set out in this strategy, which are reported upon annually to the Corporate Diversity Team. The reports are also published on the Council's website.
- progress against employment related targets. These targets are set annually and are monitored quarterly using the Council's internal performance monitoring system.

Equality Analysis of Service Plans

All service plans are subject to the Equality Analysis process, and actions from these are fed directly into Service and Departmental Action Plans.

Corporate Performance Management

The Council's Planning and Performance Framework sets out what we do, as a Council, to ensure we can answer the following questions?

- How do we know what outcomes we want to achieve?
- What do we need to do to achieve it?
- How will we know if we have achieved it?
- How can we do even better?

It explains how the Council and its partners agree their ambitions and priorities for the future based on clear intelligence and assessment of the needs of its communities. Equality considerations are mainstreamed throughout everything we do.

Bury Council's 'Vision, Purpose and Values' sets the tone and direction for the Council and outlines the major priorities for the Council over the five years from 2015 to 2020.

Departmental and service plans convert these priorities into practical actions to deliver better outcomes on the ground. Equality Analyses are completed on all departmental and services plans.

Indicators and measures are performance managed across the organisation, with clear lines of accountability, to show the impact of Council activity in terms of the difference it makes for the people of the Borough in terms of delivering our outcomes. Management and scrutiny is provided through departmental management teams, Senior Leadership Team, Cabinet and the Council's Internal Scrutiny Committee.

6. Procurement

Effective procurement is key to the successful operation of the Council and is a valuable tool in supporting the delivery of wider social value within the local community. Equality, diversity and community cohesion are at the core of our values and are important considerations in supplier selection, contract award and supplier performance management.

Equality and diversity are integrated into the procurement process through our corporate and contractor guidance **Integrating Equality and Diversity into Procurement** and **Procurement – Guidance for Contractors**.

Our developing social value in commissioning and procurement policy will encourage our suppliers and service providers to recognise how equality, diversity and community cohesion can be supported through their actions. The impact for the Council will be:-

- Improved value for money;
- Improvements in the quality, responsiveness and appropriateness of our services;
- Confidence that public money is not spent on practices which lead to unfair discrimination to sections of the borough;
- The creation of a diverse and flexible workforce;
- More responsive and flexible services in combating social exclusion and building stronger and cohesive communities; and
- Other organisations promoting and practicing the Council's policies on equality

7. Communities

Partnerships

Through our community leadership role, we work with partners via the 'Team Bury' partnership to ensure Bury continues to be a borough where diversity is valued and celebrated.

Team Bury is an inclusive partnership that embraces representatives from the statutory, voluntary, community and business sectors. All partners work co-operatively to deliver the borough's vision to 'lead, shape and maintain a prosperous, sustainable Bury that is fit for the future' outlined in the Bury Vision, Purpose and Values document 2015. Equality forms an integral part of this work. This is supported by the work of the Team Bury 'Equality and Diversity Group' and 'Equality Charter'.

Our commitment across the Team Bury partnership is to promote all aspects of equality. Systematically building the aims and principles of equality into the work of our partnership helps it to:

- Meet the needs of all the communities it serves or hopes to benefit.
- Improve the way public services are delivered
- Contribute to a culture of inclusion, based on mutual respect
- Prevent discrimination, both in the way the partnership works and in the outcomes it is working towards.
- Improve public confidence in local services

Community Cohesion

Community cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A cohesive community is based on developing a shared future, vision and sense of belonging, focusing on what new and existing communities have in common whilst recognising the value of diversity, and fostering strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

To deliver community cohesion in Bury, we are addressing a wide range of cross-cutting issues simultaneously. We are committed to delivering this approach under eight strategic themes: leadership and engagement, equality of opportunity, promoting shared values and belonging, involving young people, community safety and tension monitoring, interfaith, inter-generational and communication and information.

Community cohesion cuts across the work of all departments and partners, including voluntary, community and faith sector partners. For this reason, it is essential we recognise that community cohesion cannot be achieved through the work of one organisation alone. 'Team Bury' reflects our effort to work in partnership to promote community cohesion. The partnership works co-operatively to deliver agreed objectives in the areas of community safety, employment, skills, health and housing. Building community resilience and strong communities underpins the work of the partnership.

The 'Community Cohesion' and 'Equality and Diversity' agendas are inter-linked, and within Bury we will:

- Continue our commitment to the values outlined in the Bury Vision, Purpose and Values document: putting all residents first, empowering and supporting our communities, supporting people in severe need and ensuring openness and transparency.
- Work in partnership to reduce inequalities including poverty and promote our successes.
- Ensure that services are co-designed with local people, using up to date community intelligence.
- Continue to work in partnership with representatives from the statutory, voluntary, community and business sectors through the inclusive partnership body of 'Team Bury'.
- Strong community engagement and empowerment underpins community cohesion. As a partnership we will continue to strengthen our engagement with communities, ensuring that residents feel they can shape the area in which they live. We will continue to work alongside communities to build community resilience and self help, harnessing existing community assets through the Bury Directory. We will build integrated locality working approaches that facilitate this approach, starting in the townships of Radcliffe and Bury East.

Our work in this area is supported by the following documents:

- Bury Vision, Purpose and Values document (2015 to 2020), which includes our commitment to a set of values which provide the foundation for community cohesion in Bury
- Team Bury priorities: Stronger Economy, Stronger, Safer Communities and the promotion of Health and Wellbeing.
- Community Cohesion Plan
- Township Plans
- Communities of Bury: a Demographic Profile
- National policy and strategy including the national 'Prevent Strategy' (2011) and associated (updated) Guidance (2015)

Hate Crime, Domestic Violence and Community Safety

The Council is committed to tackling hate crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic violence, and to preventing violent extremism. We will do this by continuing to work closely with other agencies, especially through the Community Safety Partnership.

Hate Crime

Hate crime is when an individual or group of people are subjected to verbal or written intimidation, or physical violence on the person, family or property on the grounds of

perceived or actual difference. It is often motivated by the offender's prejudice, hatred or dislike of individuals or groups of people based on personal characteristics such as:

- Race, Colour, Ethnic Origin, Nationality or National Origins
- Religion or Belief
- Gender
- Gender Identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Age
- Alternative sub culture

To address hate crimes in the borough, the Council will continue to play a leading role in the Community Safety Partnership, and contribute to a borough-wide approach of recording and monitoring hate crime incidents, identifying and promoting best practice, taking action against perpetrators, and improving services for victims of the various forms of hate crime.

We will continue to work with partners to increase the reporting and recognition of incidents. By monitoring and analyzing findings we will work to reduce the incidences of hate crimes and harassment and appropriately develop and support a local network of third party hate crime reporting centres. We will also continue to support schools in tackling harassment, social exclusion and bullying.

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence and abuse (DVA) can happen to anyone at any stage of their life, regardless of age, gender, social status, religion, sexuality or ethnicity. We know that one in four women and one in six men will be affected by domestic abuse at some point in their lives whilst two people lose their lives each and every week

It is defined as *"any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality (this definition includes honour based violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage)"*.

Bury's 'Domestic Violence Strategy' (2015 to 2018) aims to reduce repeat incidents through work with partners in relation to four key areas:

- Improving prevention and early intervention
- Changing behaviors and attitudes
- Strong leadership and management
- Reducing repeat victimisation

We will work closely with members of the Bury Domestic Violence Steering Group and Community Safety Partnership to develop a rigorous performance management framework in relation to the Strategy. This work will seek to reduce repeat incidents and work towards breaking cycles of abuse. Emphasis will be given to prevention – tackling the issue at an early stage to divert more people away from the risk of harm and high cost, statutory interventions.

8. Communications and Access to Services

Communications

Bury Council are committed to actively communicating, both internally and externally, to ensure that all employees, service users and members of the general public have easy access to Council information and services.

Involving people from all our diverse communities in consultation and decision making processes, and sharing the results of assessments and monitoring is essential for continuous improvement throughout the Council. We want to be inclusive and transparent in everything that we do. We are therefore committed to enabling people access to the Council in the way that they wish, and are working to ensure that no-one is excluded due to a lack of technology, poor literacy, language barriers or physical access.

Our comprehensive **Communications Toolkit** and Protocols ensure high standards of communications are maintained by providing advice and guidance for Council officers in terms of improving communication with the range of people which may need to access Council services. This includes advice on plain English, inclusive language, translation and interpretation into other languages and the most accessible formats for Council publications. It clearly identifies how to make our information and services accessible to everyone.

We are working hard to ensure our website is accessible to all and are continuing to work towards AA status.

Internally, we are continuing to communicate through the Team Talk newsletter and the quarterly Diversity Matters newsletter to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues.

We will continue to produce information in a range of formats upon request; for example in large print, Braille, or on audio tape or disc.

We subscribe to Language Line, which provides instant interpretation services to non-English speakers over the telephone, to ensure access to all Council services for everyone.

Our accurate and up to date equality and diversity internet and intranet pages include information on this Equality Strategy, other equality related policies and our employment related equality information (Annual Equalities Monitoring Report and Equal Pay Audit Report). Other equality information is published by service specific web pages.

We make the results of our equality analyses available upon request, whenever it is appropriate to do so.

We hold regular public meetings (Township Forums) open to all members of the community within each of the Borough's six township areas. They provide an opportunity to involve and consult local people on local priorities, Council and Team Bury matters, and to give people the opportunity to raise any concerns they may have, as well as meeting their local Councillors. Accessibility issues are considered at each meeting and a loop system is always available.

Township Forums provide an important tool to communicate with and engage local people. However, they are not the only instrument available. There are a wide range of other methods which we also use to share information, engage and empower people. These include tenant and resident groups, Youth Cabinet, Older People Forum, Customer Task Force, Patient Cabinet, Health Watch and Councillor surgeries.

Significant advances in digital technology and social media also mean that increasing numbers of people prefer to share their views online rather than attend formal meetings e.g. through Facebook or Twitter. During the next year, we will explore opportunities to harness this technology to test approaches to online meetings in relation to key topic areas. Other changes such as the refresh of the Council's website to make it easier to contact and access services – and the Bury Directory providing a wide range of information on local services, groups and assets – are strengthening on-line communication with a wide range of our communities. With the technology making access available 24/7 at times that matter to local people, more people are being nudged towards electronic rather than personal interaction.

Complaints

Complaints and other feedback from our customers, staff and partners form an invaluable part of developing and improving our services. The Chief Executive has overall accountability for Council complaints. Complaints made specifically about this Equality Strategy will be received by the Council's Organisational Development Team and will be monitored by the Corporate Diversity Team.

The Council has a Corporate Complaints Procedure in place and is committed to ensuring that people know they have a right to complain about any Council Service. Adults and Children's Social Care Complaints are dealt with by mandatory care procedures and are not part of the corporate complaints process.

A complainant can complain verbally to any member of staff either face to face or over the telephone, write in, send an e-mail or go on-line www.bury.gov.uk, where the complaints policy and procedures are available for investigation.

The Council's 'Your Voice Counts' booklet covers how to comment on, complain about or make suggestions on our services. It explains the Corporate Complaints Procedure and how to get help if you wish to make a complaint. A copy can be obtained from any Council reception area or Library and can also be viewed on-line as above.

When making a complaint the Council requests, whenever possible, confidential monitoring information. This data allows the Council to monitor its commitment in providing services fairly across all parts of the community, identifying and rectifying any areas of inequality

Designated Complaints Officers log all complaints on the Corporate Complaints Manager System, which allows for the monitoring of complaints across all service areas. This system allows the monitoring of complaints to identify trends on services or specific sections of the community.

Access to Services

We recognise the term 'accessibility' in its widest sense; i.e. access to the environment, buildings, information, employment, services and facilities. First and foremost Bury Council is a public service provider and so we need to provide information and services which are accessible to all sections of our community.

9. Employment, Learning and Development

The Council is committed to being an employer of choice for people from all communities. We take a zero tolerance stance towards discrimination or harassment of any kind, and strive to offer equality of opportunity in employment, learning and development to ensure that all employees are able to flourish and give of their best.

Our approach to this is set out in detail in the **Equality Policy for Employment, People Strategy** and **Dignity at Work Policy**, but can be summarised as follows:-

- We will recognise and value the differences, skills, abilities and experiences that people bring into the workplace.
- We are committed to having a workplace being free of harassment, bullying and discrimination, where people are treated with fairness and respect.
- We are committed to having a workforce which is reflective of the local population.
- We will provide all staff with the training and development they need to enable us to achieve our equality objectives, and ensure that all staff complete mandatory equality and diversity training.
- We will monitor and act upon adverse trends or inequalities in employment, for example through Backing Young Bury initiatives.

- We will ensure that equal pay is fully implemented.
- We will strive to achieve and maintain high levels of employee engagement across all staff groups.
- We will develop and monitor innovative employment practices, to support employees to work flexibly and effectively – for example work life balance initiatives and family friendly policies.
- We will support our employees to improve their emotional and physical health and wellbeing.

Equality Objectives

To support our 'equality vision', we have developed the following strategic equality objectives. Each is supported by a number of measures, and our progress against these will be monitored and reported upon annually:-

1. We will take action to tackle and reduce unwanted behaviour in both our workplace and our schools
 - a) We will take action to improve the following indicators, which are questions in the employee survey:
 - a. I have suffered bullying or harassment at work within the last 18 months (currently 10% - 2015 survey)
 - b. I am treated with fairness and respect in this organisation (currently 69% - 2015 survey)
 - c. I think it is safe to stand up and challenge the way things are done (currently 50% - 2015 survey)
 - b) Work with external partners to deliver events and launch a strategy to tackle discrimination in schools in order to:
 - a. Improve the awareness of reporting routes for pupils
 - b. Raise awareness of the consequences of hate crime
 - c. Support schools to monitor the progress of the strategy
2. We will reduce the proportion of 'unknown' equality data we hold on our employees
 - a) We will reduce the proportion of unknown data held on employees by equality characteristic which was reported in the annual Employment Equality Report 2015 as being:
 - Race – 31.11%
 - Disability – 34.86%
 - Gender identity – currently unknown
 - Sexual Orientation – 43.52%
 - Religion or belief – 42.09%
 - Caring responsibilities – 66.96%
 - Marital status – 33.09%
3. We will work to digitally include more of our employees
 - a) We will investigate other opportunities to deliver information digitally to employees via the self service iTrent system and/or an extranet solution
 - b) We will increase the number of employees who have asked to receive work related emails on their private email addresses (this is currently 150 employees – November 2015)

Monitoring, Review and Further Information

The equality and diversity policy, framework and objectives set out in this Equality Strategy are designed to be flexible, so that they can be refined as we progress in improving our organisation and our services.

We expect to update them as a result of changes to legislation or to our own policies and practices.

Progress against our equality objectives will be monitored and reported upon annually. A copy of this document and any progress reports can be found on our website:

www.bury.gov.uk/equality

If you have any comments or feedback that you would like us to take into account in respect of this strategy, or if you require a copy of this document in an alternative format, you can contact us at:

Organisational Development
Bury Council
Town Hall
Knowsley Street
Bury
BL9 0SW

Email: equality@bury.gov.uk

Telephone: 0161 253 6371

Appendix 1: Equality Characteristic Definitions

Bury Council bases its definitions of equality characteristics, wherever possible, upon those used in the Equality Act 2010:-

Race	<p>Race can include colour, caste, nationality (including citizenship) and ethnic or national origin.</p> <p>Being of an ethnic origin will depend upon whether a person belongs to an ethnic group. An ethnic group must have 2 essential characteristics – a long shared history and a cultural tradition of its own. Other relevant characteristics may be a common language, a common literature, religion or a common geographical origin or a sense of being a minority or an oppressed group. This is quite a wide definition, and has included Sikhs, Jews, Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers.</p> <p>National origin means that a person must come from a national group with identifiable elements, both historic and geographic, which at least at some point in time indicates the existence of a nation.</p> <p>National origin is distinct from nationality, but often the two will be the same. For example people of Chinese national origin may be citizens of both China and the UK.</p> <p>A racial group can be a group of people who share a colour, or ethnic or national origin or a group with the same nationality.</p>
Disability	<p>Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. A person has a disability if he/she has a physical or mental impairment (including sensory impairments) which has both a substantial <u>and</u> long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.</p> <p>A substantial adverse effect is something which is more than minor or trivial. It is a limitation which goes beyond the normal differences in ability which might exist among people.</p> <p>A long term effect is an impairment which:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has lasted at least 12 months, or • where the total period for which it lasts is likely to be at least 12 months, or • which is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected. <p>Normal day-to-day activities are those which most people carry out on a fairly regular and frequent basis, such as walking, driving, cooking, eating, lifting and carrying every day objects, writing, continence, taking part in normal social interaction and forming social relationships.</p> <p>Where a person is taking measures to treat or correct an impairment, and, but for those measures, the impairment would have a substantial adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, it is still to be treated as though it does have such an effect.</p> <p>“Hidden” impairments are also covered – for example, mental illness or mental health problems, and conditions such as diabetes and epilepsy. Cancer, HIV infection and multiple sclerosis are deemed disabilities under the Act. as is severe disfigurement.</p> <p>Progressive and recurring conditions will amount to disabilities in certain circumstances.</p>
Gender or Sex	Sex is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, and refers

	to a man or a woman of any age. It does not include gender reassignment or sexual orientation.
Gender Reassignment	<p>Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. It includes people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) to reassign their sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. This includes people who are referred to as transsexual.</p> <p>Under the Equality Act, gender reassignment is a personal process rather than a medicalised process. As soon as a person can show that they have reached a definitive point where they are 'proposing' to undergo gender reassignment, they are protected. Therefore it does not necessarily involve any medical treatment, and may just be that someone has made their intention known to someone or started to dress in a different way.</p>
Age	<p>Age is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, and is defined by reference to a person's age group.</p> <p>An age group can mean people of the same age or people of a range of ages. Age groups can be wide (e.g. people under 50), or relatively narrow (e.g. people in their mid 40s) or relative (e.g. older than me).</p> <p>The notion of age group is rooted in chronological age, but some age related terms can have different meanings depending upon the context (e.g. whether someone is seen as youthful can depend upon their role – compare a youthful bar tender with a youthful Chief Exec). Age groups can also be linked to physical appearance (eg. grey haired workers).</p>
Sexual Orientation	<p>Sexual orientation is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, and means a person's orientation towards:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persons of the same sex (i.e. the person is a gay man or a gay woman/lesbian) • persons of the opposite sex (i.e. the person is straight or heterosexual) • persons of either sex (i.e. the person is bisexual). <p>It does not include gender reassignment.</p>
Religion or Belief	<p>Religion or belief is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. It includes any religion and any religious or philosophical belief. It also includes any lack of such religion or belief.</p> <p>The meaning of religion or belief is broad, and is consistent under both the Equality Act and Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights.</p> <p>Religion means any religion and includes a lack of religion. A religion need not be mainstream, but it must be identifiable and have a clear structure and belief system. Denominations or sects within religions (e.g. Methodists within Christianity or Sunnis within Islam) may be considered a religion. Cults and new religious movements may also be religions.</p> <p>Belief means any religious or philosophical belief, and includes a lack of belief. It need not include faith or worship, but must affect how a person lives their life or perceives the world. For a belief to be protected under the Equality Act it must:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be genuinely held • be a belief and not an opinion or viewpoint based on information available at the moment • be a belief as to a weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour • attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be worthy of respect in a democratic society • be compatible with human dignity and not conflict with the fundamental rights of others. <p>Examples of people who follow beliefs are Humanists, Atheists and Vegans. Political beliefs are not included.</p>
Caring Responsibility	Caring responsibilities affect both men and women. They exist when someone – such as a child, a disabled child or adult, or an elderly relative - relies upon a person for care and attention, and assistance with their daily routine.
Marriage/Civil Partnership	<p>Marriage and civil partnership are protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>A marriage covers any formal union of a man and a woman which is legally recognised in the UK as a marriage.</p> <p>A civil partnership refers to a registered civil partnership under the Civil Partnership Act 2004.</p> <p>Unlike most other protected characteristics there is no protection under the Equality Act for discrimination based upon association or perception.</p>
Pregnancy/ Maternity	<p>In respect of employment, the Equality Act states that it is unlawful direct discrimination to treat a woman unfavourably because of her pregnancy or a related illness, or because she is exercising, has exercised or is seeking or has sought to exercise her right to maternity leave.</p> <p>This is not considered to be sex discrimination.</p>

Appendix 2: Team Bury Equality Charter

Building a Fairer Bury Together Team Bury Equality Charter

Team Bury are committed to the principles of equality, diversity and human rights, and will always strive to:-

- Recognise people's different needs, situations and goals, and remove the barriers that limit what people can do or be.
- Incorporate the principles of respect and equality into everything we do.
- Understand that every individual has a personality, abilities, beliefs, background and social responsibilities that make him or her unique.
- Build strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds, by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- Make judgements between competing demands and resources and ensure that decisions are fair, reasonable and reflect our legal obligations.
- Ensure our services are accessible to, and meet the needs of, all people.
- Show zero tolerance towards bullying, harassment and inappropriate language or behaviour, and encourage the reporting of all cases of discrimination or unfair treatment.
- Develop a workforce which reflects the diverse community of Bury, where all employees are treated fairly and with respect.

The principles and commitments of this Equality Charter have been agreed by the Team Bury Family:-

