

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out New Anglia's commitment to equality and diversity.

Equality is enabling opportunity, access, participation and contribution on a fair and equal footing and ensuring that different groups are not disadvantaged when accessing services, employment or participating in public life in the New Anglia area. Diversity is about the individual, understanding that each of us is different and making sure we respect and celebrate the variety of backgrounds, perspectives, values, and beliefs.

Diversity and equality issues impact everyone in the New Anglia area and we are committed to removing barriers that might restrict people and we are proactively working towards positive change.

Policy Aims

This policy aims to:

- ensure the LEP is clear about equal opportunity and that these are managed in a professional and lawful way
- set out the procedures the LEP will implement in relation to equal opportunities management.

Our Policy

Equality and diversity considerations underpin all activities within the LEP. This includes recruitment and selection, pay and benefits and training and development.

The core purpose of this policy is to eliminate discrimination (definitions appear later in this policy) in employment and to promote equality of opportunity in employment. In doing so, the LEP is respectful of differences and embracing of the opportunities that diversity offers.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a 'protected characteristic'. This extends to direct or indirect discrimination in terms of:

- age
- disability (including mental health)
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race (including ethnic origin, colour, nationality or national origin)
- religion or belief (including philosophical belief)
- sex
- sexual orientation
- trade union membership.

All employees at all levels are encouraged to act fairly and prevent discrimination. The LEP actively encourages the employment, promotion and training of employees and potential employees from all sectors of the community and values the different skills, ideas and opinions that a diverse workforce can offer.

Our Procedures

Recruitment and Promotion

Advertisements for posts will give sufficiently clear and accurate information to enable potential applicants to assess their own suitability for the post. Information about vacant posts will be provided in such a manner that does not restrict the audience to a particular sector of the community.

Recruitment literature will not imply a preference for one group of applicants unless there is a genuine occupational qualification which limits the post to this particular group, in which case this must be clearly stated.

Where appropriate, vacancies will be circulated internally. The LEP reserves the right to recognise merit and reward individuals with promotion in a fair manner. All descriptions and specifications for posts will include only requirements that are necessary and justifiable for the effective performance of the job.

All selection will be thorough, conducted against defined criteria and will deal only with the applicant's suitability for the job. Where it is necessary to ask questions relating to personal circumstances, these will be related purely to job requirements and asked of all candidates. No questions in relation to health will be asked of the applicant prior to a job offer being made.

Employment

The LEP will not discriminate on any basis in the allocation of duties between employees employed at any level with comparable job descriptions. The LEP will put in place any reasonable measures and/or adjustments within the workplace for those employees who become disabled during employment or for disabled appointees. All employees will be considered solely on their merits for career development and promotion with equal opportunities for all.

Training

Employees will be provided with appropriate training regardless of sex, race, marital status, disability, age, part-time or fixed term contract status, sexual orientation, gender status or religion. All employees are encouraged to discuss their career prospects and training needs with their manager.

Employee Rights and Responsibilities

Employees have the right not to experience unlawful discrimination in the workplace. They have a responsibility to understand this policy and help the LEP implement it. All employees have a duty not to discriminate against each other and not to help anyone else do so.

Board and Sub-Committees

New Anglia is committed to ensuring a diverse representation on its Board and Sub-Committees which reflects the local business community. Selection for the Board and any Sub-Committee will be in line with its Assurance Framework and Articles of Association. Board member vacancies are advertised widely and Board members are appointed on the basis of their skills / knowledge and their ability. Sub-Committee member selection is based on the skills required for the relevant role.

New Anglia is committed to equal representation across the organisation and aims for at least one third of its board members to be women by 2020. It also aims for equal representation at board level by 2023.

Visitors and Suppliers

Employees must not discriminate against any of visitors or suppliers. Equally, the LEP expects visitors and suppliers not to discriminate against employees and the LEP will take appropriate action against any visitor or supplier found to have done so.

Commissioning

The LEP will also meet its obligations under the Public Services Social Value Act 2012, which requires people who commission or buy public services to consider securing added economic, social, environmental and well-being benefits for their local area.

New Anglia and its Board will engage with all stakeholders and be inclusive and transparent in all communications and will actively work to ensure that all LEP service provision is accessible to all constituencies in the area.

The LEP will work with its partners to ensure that all project development, commissioning and tendering procedures support the following principles:

- advancing equality of opportunity between people in our target groups
- ensuring the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

When Discrimination Arises

If an employee believes they may have been discriminated against, they must advise the LEP. They can speak informally with their manager or with HR. If they want to make a more formal complaint, they are encouraged to raise the matter through the *Grievance Policy*. If an employee believes there has been any bullying or harassment they should raise the matter through the *Dignity at Work Policy*.

Allegations of potential breaches of this policy will be treated seriously. Employees who make such allegations in good faith will not be victimised or treated less favourably as a result. However, false allegations of a breach of this policy which are found to have been made in bad faith will be dealt with under the *Disciplinary Policy*.

Acting in a Discriminatory Way

If, after investigation, it is decided an employee has acted in breach of this policy they may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. This applies to the most senior levels of management as well as to all other employees.

Responsibilities

The New Anglia Chief Executive Officer is the lead officer and is responsible and accountable for the implementation of this policy and accompanying policies both inside and outside the organisation and for ensuring the LEP fulfils its role in addressing diversity issues by promotion of this policy and delivering equality of opportunity.

Definition of Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.

Associative discrimination is discrimination against a person because they have an association with someone with a particular protected characteristic.

Perceptive discrimination is discrimination against a person because the discriminator thinks the person possesses a protected characteristic, even if they do not in fact do so.

Indirect discrimination occurs where a policy, rule or procedure at work applies to everyone but has a disproportionate impact on people with a protected characteristic.

Records

Records of equal opportunities matters will be retained and kept confidential.