



MERSEYSIDE WASTE DISPOSAL AUTHORITY

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

The Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority has developed its Equality and Diversity Policy in line with the Equality Standard for Local Government. The Equality Standard for Local Government aim is to combat the institutional processes that lead to discrimination as part of the culture, administration and governance that can be found in many public organisations. Prevailing assumptions and practices can set up barriers that prevent fair access to services and equal employment opportunities, which in turn can discriminate against people on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Using five levels, local authorities were encouraged to introduce a comprehensive and systematic approach to dealing with equalities. These levels cover all aspects of policy-making, service delivery and employment.

### **The five levels are:**

- Level 1 : Commitment to a comprehensive equality policy
- Level 2 : Assessment and community engagement
- Level 3 : Setting equality objectives and targets
- Level 4 : Information systems and monitoring against targets
- Level 5 : Achieving and reviewing outcomes.

Legislation alone will not bring about the changes needed to eliminate discrimination. Therefore we must make equality practice an integral part of human resource processes, service planning, service delivery and other areas of local democratic activity. In other words, equality must become central to improving outcomes for the community and the quality of local government

Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority is committed to encouraging and promoting the richness brought to the Authority by the diverse nature of our staff and service users. We regard the fact that we are made up of people from different ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds, sexual orientation

and religious faiths as a positive strength which the Authority welcomes and values.

Our commitment to equality and diversity means that everyone involved with Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority has a duty to:

- ✓ promote equality and diversity in staff recruitment, retention and advancement
- ✓ promote equality and diversity in the delivery of the Authority's services
- ✓ promote an atmosphere in which people of all backgrounds feel welcome, valued and respected.

This new equality and diversity policy will form the basis of renewed efforts to make best practice in equality and diversity a reality throughout the Authority.

## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

The Authority values the diverse nature of its staff and of those using our services. We will ensure that this is reflected in all our practices, policies and services. Our commitment to equality involves much more than positive action to promote equal opportunities and eradicate discrimination. It means that we are actively committed to encouraging and promoting the richness brought to the organisation by the diverse nature of our staff and service users.

A commitment to this policy is required of all Authority staff and service users. Our vision is of a safer work environment and service delivery in which human rights and dignity are respected.

## **OUR COMMITMENTS**

**When we make plans and policies, we will:-**

- Ensure that our proposals for services, plans, procedures and policies are impact assessed
- Design our services to meet the diverse needs of all our communities
- Ensure that plans and policies do not negatively discriminate against particular groups, either directly or indirectly
- Make sure all staff, customers, contractors and community groups are aware of our equality policies
- Develop specific resources for improving equality practice
- Set any required equality targets with departments and service areas as part of the business planning process

**When we work in partnership we will:-**

- Ensure that all partners conform to the requirements placed upon the Authority by the legislation, and supporting legislation such as regulations covering disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief and gender equality and age.
- Publicise our Equality and Diversity Policy widely and positively.
- Encourage the involvement of Merseyside's diverse communities in decision making and developing services through partnerships at local and regional level
- Actively consult with all designated community, staff and stakeholder groups and where possible, un-constituted groups.
- Recognise and value the diverse experiences of Merseyside's communities, by continuing to build on all our structures and mechanisms that facilitate involvement in decision making.

**When we deliver services we will:-**

- Ensure that our services are relevant to the people of Merseyside and take into account different needs which can inform and improve equality and diversity
- Provide information about services that is clear, accurate and accessible to all
- Treat all customers positively, taking into account their gender, race, ethnic origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, nationality, religion, belief or any other individual characteristics
- Respond seriously, confidentially and promptly to and investigate, complaints of bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation
- Promote opportunities for all to comment upon our services – through the comments and complaints process.

**As an employer we will:**

- Recognise our general and specific duties under equalities legislation and ensure that we will be compliant.
- Recruit and retain a workforce that reflects the expertise, diversity, and potential of our community
- Welcome the special knowledge and skills that a diverse workforce contributes to the Authority.
- Provide equal access to training and development for all our staff
- Provide training and development on equality and diversity for all employees.

- Listen to and where appropriate act upon staff ideas and suggestions for improving services and ways of working.
- Develop fair employment and equal pay policies.
- Ensure that publicity for vacancies does not unfairly restrict the range of applications.
- Provide application forms and job descriptions that are clear and explicit, including summary copies of current equality and diversity policies, or in full on request.
- Develop appropriate personnel information monitoring systems to meet statutory monitoring duties.
- Ensure procedures are consistent with employment Codes of Practice.
- Respect the confidentiality of all staff and ensure that any and all equality issues are managed with discretion and sensitivity.

#### **HOW WE WILL MAKE SURE THIS HAPPENS:**

The Equality and Diversity Policy is a key corporate policy of the Authority. It is championed and supported by the Director who is responsible for implementing the mandate of all Elected Members, which demonstrates a firm leadership commitment.

We are committed to the development and delivery of a Corporate Equality and Diversity Plan which will translate our intentions into action.

- **Elected Members**

Our Elected Members are responsible for setting and agreeing policies that are non discriminatory and promote equality for employees and service users.

- **Policy development – Corporately led from the Director**

The Director will lead on the development and implementation of our Equality and Diversity Policy and will ensure that all corporate policies are developed and reviewed in line with current legislation.

- **Assistant Directors, managers and all employees**

All those who act on behalf of the Authority have a responsibility to work within the terms of the Equality and Diversity Policy and strive towards the elimination of discriminatory attitudes and practices in their working environment and in the services they provide.

- **The community, partnerships and stakeholders**

The views, ideas and opinions of our communities, partners and stakeholders and employees will be built into the decision making process via our existing consultation mechanisms. All of the equality and diversity standards we promote will also be expected to be shared and upheld by those who work with us.

- **Training**

Resources will be identified and made available to provide a range of ongoing equality and diversity training and awareness for staff and Elected Members. This is our process for ensuring that policies and procedures are understood and adhered to and besides facilitating the work of developing a culture which values and respects diversity will also govern the way we will behave towards each other.

## **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS/TARGETS**

In order to ensure that the Authority is achieving its equality and diversity agenda, targets will be set and monitored. We are committed to:

- Departmental and service area setting of equality targets.
- Corporate development of and engagement in setting equality objectives and targets
- Target setting with partners, contractors and all departments, linked to national indicators with appropriate publicity and resources attached
- Reporting on progress against targets – monitor, review and revise as appropriate
- Assessing levels of success in meeting targets and review/revise service objectives and targets as appropriate.

## CONSULTATION

The Authority is committed to improving the consultation process with community groups, partners and stakeholders. As a primary example, the trade unions are seen as a vital component of the Authority consultation processes.

Consultation is seen as a key element in our equality and diversity agenda as this ensures that the Authority is better informed to meet the needs of all people and communities of Merseyside.

We recognise that there are needs within the local community that are shaped and influenced by personalised situations such as race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religious belief, sexual orientation, marital status, age, nationality, political affiliation, or class, and that the 'one size for all' approach must be challenged.

The Authority also has a Communications Strategy which reflects corporate commitment to diversity and inclusiveness.

The Authority values the views of both service users and employees - especially with regard to any proposed changes to plans or methods of service delivery. For example, the Authority regularly consults through:

- ✓ Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy
- ✓ Senior Officers Working Group
- ✓ Trade unions
- ✓ Stakeholders Groups
- ✓ Committee meetings – public sessions open and made accessible to all Merseyside residents
- ✓ Waste Education Visitor Programme
- ✓ Information on the internet/intranet
- ✓ Newspapers and other media
- ✓ Communication methods which allow for inclusion commentary from people who may face barriers dealing with information in a written form.

## MONITORING

Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority is committed to ensuring that all policies, services and the organisational culture do not discriminate against any groups. It is only through monitoring and review of practice and policies that we can ensure whether discrimination might be taking place and whether the strategies we put in place to prevent or tackle it are working.

To this end, we will produce an Equality Monitoring Framework which is designed to ensure a consistent approach to equality monitoring and help us to make sure that everyone has fair and equal access to services. The only exceptions within this framework are likely to be monitoring which focuses on sexual orientation and gender identity, these are areas where individual confidentiality can be maintained on a personal level insofar as self identification is concerned.

Monitoring allows the Authority to test on an on-going basis:

- ❖ How minority groups are affected by our policies
- ❖ Whether people from all groups are equally satisfied with the way they are treated
- ❖ Whether services are provided effectively to all stakeholder and service users
- ❖ Whether service needs are suitable and designed to meet different needs.

The Authority is committed to publishing our results of our monitoring in an open manner indicating:

- Why the consultation took place
- How it was carried out
- A summary of the responses
- An assessment of the policy options
- How the Authority intends to respond

## **INFORMATION DISSEMINATION**

The Authority will strive to ensure our information and services are available to the entire community in accordance with the FOI Act. We will consider and ensure:-

- Access to information and a user friendly approach
- Whether a service is under-utilised due to inadequate information
- Information is in the appropriate media
- Steps are taken to improve information on a continual basis

## **COMPLAINTS**

The Authority has a formal complaints procedure for dealing with complaints from members of the public and data will also be collected and published in regard to equality issues.

## **Breaches of Policy**

The Authority views any form of discrimination as a serious act of misconduct. Any allegation of a breach in the policy will be investigated in accordance with the comments and complaints procedure. If substantiated this will result in disciplinary action being taken.

Equality complaints from employees will be dealt with in accordance with established internal procedures. These will be monitored and published in accordance with specific employment duties.

## **Code of Conduct**

The Authority's Code of Conduct states that employees must:

- ✓ Act in accordance with the equality and diversity policy and show respect and consideration for others at all times
- ✓ Deal with and record or report complaints in accordance with the complaints procedures
- ✓ Either challenge inappropriate behavior and practice or bring such behaviour to the attention of a manager
- ✓ Participate in agreed diversity training and development

## **LEGISLATION**

**The Authority recognises and complies with the following pieces of equality legislation, along with associated Codes of Practice: -**

- ❖ Employment equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- ❖ Race Relations Act 1976
- ❖ Race Relations [Amendment] Act 2000
- ❖ Equal Pay Act 1970
- ❖ Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- ❖ Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- ❖ Human Rights Act 1998
- ❖ Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- ❖ Gender Recognition Act 2004
- ❖ Sex Discrimination [Gender Reassignment] Regulations 1999
- ❖ Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998
- ❖ Employment Equality [Religion or Belief] Regulations 2003
- ❖ Employment Equality [Sexual Orientation] Regulations 2003



- ❖ Sex Discrimination [Indirect Discrimination and Burden of Proof] Regs 2001
- ❖ Fixed Term Employees [Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment] Regs 2002
- ❖ Employment Rights Act 1996
- ❖ Data Protection Act 1998
- ❖ Employment Relations Act 1999
- ❖ National Minimum Wage Regulations 1999
- ❖ Part-Time Workers [Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment] Regulations 2000
- ❖ Employment Act 2002
- ❖ Public Order Act 1986
- ❖ Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- ❖ Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- ❖ Treaty of Amsterdam 1997
- ❖ European Equal Treatment Directive 1976
- ❖ Equality Act 2006

**These will be amended and updated as new legislation and codes of practice come into force.**

#### **Linkages with other policies**

- ❖ HR Strategy
- ❖ Bullying and Harassment Policy
- ❖ Equal Opportunities Policy
- ❖ Employee Code of Conduct
- ❖ Members Code of Conduct
- ❖ Comment and Complaints Procedure
- ❖ Recruitment, Selection and Retention Policy
- ❖ Family Friendly Policy
- ❖ Staff Development Scheme
- ❖ Procurement Strategy
- ❖ Staff Suggestion Scheme
- ❖ Waste Education & Awareness Strategy

Policy Devised	By: Paula Pocock	Date: August 2009
Reviewed	By:	Date
Reviewed	By:	Date

**ACTION PLAN**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
Setting of Equality Targets	Sept 2009	Management Team
Issue Equality and Diversity Policy to all staff	Sept 2009	Assistant Corporate Services Manager
Review of all Corporate Policies to ensure they are in line with current legislation	Jan 2010	Director/Assistant Corporate Services Manager
Provide Equality and Diversity Training and awareness for all staff	Ongoing	Assistant Corporate Services Manager
Continue to improve our corporate consultation	Ongoing	Communications Team
Assess levels of success in meeting targets	Sept 2010	Director/Assistant Corporate Services Manager
Review/revise service objectives and targets as appropriate	Sept 2010	Management Team
Publish Equality and Diversity targets within Annual Plan	Annually	Communications Team