

South Northamptonshire Council



Comprehensive Equality Policy

April 2007

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Introduction

We are pleased to publish South Northamptonshire Council's first ever Comprehensive Equality Policy, which sets out how we will ensure that everyone within our district can have fair and equal access to our services, and how we can ensure that our employees and potential employees enjoy a positive working environment where they are respected and can maximise their potential.

Ensuring equality might mean taking our services out into isolated rural areas so that older members of our communities, parents with young children, and some disabled people can more easily find out what we can offer. It can mean providing information about our services in different formats, for example in Braille, on tape, or in a different language, or it might mean training our managers to make sure that we recruit the best possible staff, whilst also ensuring that we have a workforce which reflects our community.

We recognise the need to consult with our community to ensure that we are aware of the wide range of needs that exist so that we can better target our resources to meet these needs. We value the diversity within our community and want to ensure that no-one is excluded.

The policy is intended to ensure fairness and equality for all members of the public, our employees, our elected members and our partners and contractors

This policy is a good starting point, but without action we will not achieve what we want to achieve. We are therefore developing a Comprehensive Equality Plan. This will identify the concrete actions which we need to take to ensure equality and fairness in all that we do. We consulted on this policy by means of discussion at the Local Joint Committee, which is a consultative body comprising of trade union representatives and councillors. We would be delighted to have further feedback on the policy. This can be sent to Nicola Capewell, Head of Personnel & Executive Support, or Jessica Goodall, Policy Officer.



Councillor Sandra Barnes
Leader of the Council



Jean Morgan
Chief Executive

1. Why we have a Comprehensive Equalities Policy

1.1 Recognising our local community and promoting equality for all

We recognise and value the diversity within our community and embrace this diversity as a source of strength.

In order to ensure equality in all that we do, we need to recognise that some members of our community are more likely to experience unequal or unfair treatment or encounter barriers in accessing our services.

We recognise that this can occur in relation to ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability and socio-economic status. This list is not exhaustive, and we will remove barriers and promote equality for all members of our community.

We also know that the rural nature of our district can present barriers, especially relating to accessing services.

Appendix 1 provides an overall breakdown of our community.

Some key facts

- More than 75 % of our population is based within a dispersed network of villages and hamlets, and several villages fall within the 5 per cent most deprived in the country.
- 1.6 % of the district's population is from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background. Although this is relatively small percentage, we currently estimate that there are more than 1,500 BME people, who are often without a collective voice.
- 12.9% of the population of South Northants had a limiting long-term illness in 2001 and 26.2% of households had one or more person with such an illness.
- National estimates suggest that lesbian, gay and bisexual people make up about 5–7 % of the population. This means an estimated 4,000–5,500 residents in our district.
- 77.8% of our community define their belief as Christian, but we also have followers of the Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh religions in our community. We also have people who have no religious affiliation, although they will have a wide range of other values and beliefs.

- We have fewer 20–29 year olds and far more 35–59 year olds within our district than the national average, and generally an older population.

1.2 Recognising links to our Vision and Aims

The Council has a Vision and Aims, which can be found in our Performance Plan (available on the Council’s website and on request from Caroline Neale, Policy & Performance Manager).

The Council’s Vision

‘The Council will through its community leadership preserve, enhance, improve and develop the quality of life of all residents and businesses in the district.’

Our Vision is supported by eight aims. Equality lies at the heart of all of them, but some are particularly relevant:

Community Leadership and Partnership Working

Champion on behalf of our communities and work with others to ensure the provision of appropriate services

Social Inclusion

Promote, encourage and deliver access to services and help local networks and agencies to support all sections of the community

Quality of Life

Contribute to a safer community by seeking to reduce crime and the fear of crime by working with our key partners, and promote leisure and cultural activities to improve people’s physical, social, mental and emotional well-being

Community Development

Encourage vital and cohesive communities by understanding their diverse needs and encouraging democratic participation in what we do

Organisational development

Be recognised as an excellent organisation that people are proud to work for and be associated with

1.3 Recognising our legal obligations and becoming a best practice organisation

We have legal obligations to promote equality and we take these seriously, as a way of ensuring that we meet the diverse needs of our staff and service users. Appendix 2 lists the relevant laws.

Our obligations include producing a Race Equality Scheme and a Disability Equality Scheme every three years and a **Gender Equality Scheme from 2007 every three years.**

We are committed to demonstrating best practice in the promotion of equalities. We are using the Local Government Equality Standard, which offers a framework for best practice in local government to assess our progress. Our initial target is to achieve level 1 and then review progress with cabinet.

2. Our commitment to Equality

We are committed to equality and will:

- recognise and value diversity;
- take steps to ensure that all barriers to fair access, treatment and outcomes for our service users are removed;
- promote our commitment to equalities within the local community and influence our partners and contractors to adhere to good practice;
- engage and involve our local communities in order to continually improve the fairness and accessibility of all of the services we provide;
- ensure that our policies and practice take into account the nature and make-up of our district, and the interests and requirements;
- ensure that all employment practices are fair and that all potential and existing members of staff are treated in a fair and consistent manner;
- engage and involve our staff in development of best practice and seek their views on how to meet a diverse range of needs.
- Ensure that all of our elected members are treated fairly and consistently as they carry out duties, and ensure that we welcome diversity within our elected member group.

Section 4 sets out how we will ensure that we meet our overall commitment. Carrying out reviews of our policies and practice (equality impact assessments), developing appropriate equality objectives and targets and developing relevant consultation will all be an integral part of the plan which supports this policy.

3. Responsibility for the policy

All members of South Northamptonshire Council have a duty to promote equality, value diversity and ensure the implementation of this policy.

The Cabinet and the Portfolio holder for Social Inclusion have overall responsibility for the implementation and scrutiny of the policy.

The Chief Executive and Senior Management Team have overall responsibility for the development of the strategy for Equalities.

Managers and staff have a responsibility to implement the policy and to challenge any failure to uphold the policy.

The Corporate Equalities Group will be involved in monitoring the policy and will agree terms of reference for its responsibilities regarding this and other equalities issues.

Partners and Contractors have a responsibility to respect the Council's policies and to adhere to them in delivering services in conjunction with or on behalf of the Council.

Members of the public have a responsibility to respect the policies of the council and to behave in a way which is respectful and free from harassment with our staff and other members of the public.

Further details of responsibilities can be found in Appendix 2.

4. Delivering on our commitment

4.1 Employment

Our overall aim is to treat all our employees with respect, and to enable them to develop their full potential and contribute to the success of the Council. In order to achieve this aim we have a series of policies, which are outlined below.

Key responsibility for equalities in employment belongs to the Head of Personnel and Executive Support.

The Head of Personnel and Executive Support will report on equalities in employment to the Appointments & Personnel Committee on an annual basis.

We consult with our staff and the trade unions on issues relating to equalities in employment.

We outline below the key actions we will take in each employment area.

Recruitment & Selection

We have a Recruitment and Selection policy and good practice guide which ensures consistency and fairness in our R & S processes.

Key actions

- We advertise all posts publicly in order to recruit from the widest possible field. Exceptions to this occur from time to time, and permission from the Head of Personnel and Executive support will need to be given.
- We may choose to target our advertising to journals etc to attract certain groups who may be under- represented in these posts to ensure we have a diverse and representative workforce reflective of the communities we serve.
- We train all those involved in recruitment to ensure that they understand how to conduct the process in a fair and effective manner.

- We monitor the ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexuality and disability of candidates at application, shortlisting and appointment stage.
- We review a sample of the recruitment episodes every year to assess whether any groups are less likely to be successful in our processes.

Workforce profiling

Equalities monitoring of our workforce will form part of our overall Comprehensive Equality Plan.

Key actions

- We will continue to collect data on the age, gender, ethnicity and disability of our workforce.
- We will consider establishing a profile of our workforce. We will consult on this with relevant groups in the community and the workforce.
- We will review on an annual basis the data we collect. As we expect the workforce to broadly reflect the local community, if this is not the case, we will explore the reasons for this and take action to redress any imbalance if possible.

Ensuring dignity at work

We have a policy on Dignity at Work which upholds the basic principle that all employees should be treated with dignity, courtesy and respect at work and outlines the Council's commitment to preventing and addressing all forms of bullying and harassment at work.

Key actions

- We promote the policy, values and principles of this policy.
- We train managers and staff on dignity at work and the investigation and prevention of bullying and harassment.
- We take very seriously any complaints we receive and investigate these thoroughly.
- We offer support to those who feel they have been bullied and harassed.
- We monitor the complaints we receive (formal and informal) and report on this to Corporate Management Team on a quarterly basis.

Training & Development

We have a People Management Strategy which provides an explanation of our ethos as an employer and sets out how we will enable employees to develop their full potential and to maximise their contribution to the success of the Council. We also have an Employee Development and Appraisal Scheme.

Key actions

- We ensure that each employee has an annual discussion with their line manager to review development needs, recent achievements and objectives for the future.
- We monitor to ensure that these discussions take place, and review the monitoring to identify whether any particular group of employees does not have access to the review.
- We encourage the career progression of our employees, including facilitating those employees who wish to leave our employment, for whatever reason, and at whatever stage in their career, to find appropriate alternative employment.
- In order to meet our legal obligations, where we identify that groups are under-represented groups within our organisation, we will consider the use of Positive Action schemes to ensure that at all levels we have a diverse mix of employees.

Equal Pay

We have undertaken an initial review of Equal Pay and we have a working group on the issue of Equal Pay.

Key actions

- We will develop a robust policy on equal pay.
- We will continue to monitor women and men at all levels of the organisation to ensure that there is no pay differential which cannot be justified.
- We will take action to decrease the gender pay gap between men and women.

Ensuring a work life balance

We are developing a policy on work life balance. We act as a family friendly employer and actively promote a work life balance.

Key actions

- We encourage applications for flexible working and facilitate these wherever the business of the Council can support it.
- We monitor requests for flexible working by age, gender, ethnicity and disability, including reasons for refusal.
- In principal, all new or revised posts can be offered on a part time/job share basis.
- We publicise our work life balance policy widely.
- We train managers on promoting a good work life balance.

4.2 Service provision

Our central aim is to deliver excellent services to all residents. In order to succeed in this, we need to ensure that all residents are able to access our services, and know how to do so; that they are treated fairly and with respect by our staff and contractors, and that service provision is high quality and effective in meeting local needs.

We will only achieve this if we are proactive in considering the different needs which our residents may have as a result of their gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religion, and sexual orientation. We also need to take account of the ways in which needs, access requirements and experiences might be different for those living in rural areas.

Key responsibility for equalities in service provision belongs to the Executive Director.

Heads of Service will report on equalities in service provision to the Improvement Planning Group annually.

Access to our services

Our *Access Strategy and Service Model (2005–10)* aims to maximise the use of available technology to ensure that customers are able to access services in a way that suits their needs and preferences.

Key actions

- We ensure that our services are accessible with key technologies and services such as language line, Browse-aloud, hearing loops and mini-com.
- We have and continue to develop outreach services, including home visits and/or surgeries, so that those with reduced mobility or no private transport can have face-to-face contact with our officers and partner organisations.
- We provide a website containing information about our services and the opportunity to access some of these online. The site is accessible to people with visual impairments via Browse-aloud and can be navigated using access keys.

- We have undertaken an audit of physical access to Council buildings in consultation with the Disability Group and are working towards full compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- We monitor the take-up of our services and of different access routes wherever possible by gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexuality and disability to evaluate effectiveness and to identify any differences.

Being treated fairly and with respect

It is the responsibility of all our staff, contractors and councillors to treat service users and members of the public with dignity and respect.

Key actions

- We respond positively to different needs and access requirements.
- We inform service users of their rights, including access to the Complaints Procedure.
- We use appropriate language which is inclusive and does not cause offence.
- We challenge the use of discriminatory language and behaviours by others.
- We train our staff to understand the behaviours we expect at work – and how they can be expect to be treated.

Anyone who feels they have not been treated with dignity and respect whilst accessing or attempting to access our services should complain using our **Complaints Procedure**. The procedure, which sets timescales for responses, is set out clearly on the Council's web site and the procedure can be requested by telephone on 0845 230 0226

Reporting of incidents of discrimination and harassment

Racist, homophobic and 'disabilist' incidents are defined as any incidents that are perceived (by the complainant or any other person) to be racist/homophobic or based upon a disability or impairment. We also recognise that people can experience harassment based on religion or other belief, gender and age.

The Council is committed to eradicating such incidents by supporting victims and witnesses to report them and by taking prompt action when such reports are received.

Key actions

- Where someone has been a victim of or witness to an incident of harassment or discrimination involving our staff or councillors or whilst on our premises/in receipt of our services, we encourage them to make a complaint.
- We will develop and monitor a process for monitoring such incidents.
- We will monitor complaints by gender, ethnicity, age and disability wherever possible, to identify any patterns in the treatment of different groups and to ensure that possible cases of discrimination are identified and fully investigated.
- We fully support the anti-hate crime campaigns and strategies of Northamptonshire Police (*Stamp Out Racism/Homophobia/ Disabilism*).
- We will report, and encourage members of the public to report, any racist, homophobic or disabilist incidents to the police through the reporting routes outlined on their web site (www.northants.police.uk).

Providing high quality services that meet needs

We want to ensure that we tailor our services to local needs.

Key actions

- We draw on local statistics, consultation findings, user satisfaction surveys and service provision monitoring to maximise the effectiveness of our services in meeting local needs.
- We carry out equality impact assessments of our service to ensure that we are pro-active in considering diverse needs and preventing discrimination.
- **Wherever possible, we ask those who respond to user-satisfaction surveys for their gender, ethnicity, age group and disability in order to monitor for differences in response rate and in satisfaction levels.**

Consultation

One of the Council's corporate aims is 'to encourage vital and cohesive communities by understanding their diverse needs'.

Our Consultation & Community Engagement Strategy provides guidance and sets out actions relating to consultation.

Key actions and commitments

- We will establish and regularly update a community profile so that we can include all groups in our consultation and respond to changing demographics and needs.
- We are working to target overlooked groups in our consultation programme. Our prioritisation of target groups may vary with each consultation exercise, depending on the likely impact of the outcome on different equalities groups. In our corporate strategy, we are currently prioritising the inclusion of young people and Black and Minority Ethnic people in consultation.
- We will consider different methodologies and make alternative formats available to meet the specific needs of diverse groups and ensure their inclusion in consultation.
- We ask those participating in consultation exercises for their gender, ethnicity, age group, sexuality, religion and disability. We will, wherever possible, explore any differences in response between these groups.
- We recognise the risk of 'consultation fatigue', particularly for the small numbers of Black and Minority Ethnic people living in the district. Whilst it is vital that we work to consult in a meaningful way with these residents, we will also consider consulting and working in partnership with local, county-wide and national organisations which represent them
- We regularly consult with the Disability Group.
- We will consider the feasibility of developing similar consultation models with other equalities groups.

Ensuring our contractors promote best practice

We have a Procurement Policy which sets out a framework for acquiring goods and services, including how equalities will be taken into account.

Key actions

- We ensure that all contracts with partner organisations explicitly include the requirement to promote equality and value diversity in their provision of services and their employment of staff.
- We assess prospective providers on their approach to equality and include an obligation to take account of the issues and of our policy.
- We monitor compliance as part of the overall monitoring of the contracts.
- We provide advice to contractors and other organisations in helping them adhere to our policy.

5. How we will implement the policy

5.1 Action Planning for Equalities

We will produce action plans for each of our divisions which will include concrete objectives, targets and expected outcomes.

This will feed into the overall Council Corporate Action Plan.

We will review our plans an annual basis and report on our progress.

5.2 Equality Impact Assessments

One of the ways in which we can ensure fairness and equality is through regularly reviewing the way we carry out our work to ensure that there is no discrimination for our service users or staff.

Equality Impact Assessment is a structured way of carrying out this review which allows us to identify any problems and consult with interested parties about our solutions.

Each year we will prioritise areas for this review and publish the results on our website, in the Comprehensive Equality Action Plan, and in our Race Equality Scheme and forthcoming Disability and Gender Equality Schemes and subsequent plans.

We will provide training and support to managers to ensure they understand how to carry out impact assessments.

5.3 Training

We will provide training which will support managers and staff in delivering this policy. We will review on an annual basis our training needs in relation to equality and diversity.

5.4 Equalities Monitoring

Equalities Monitoring is the process of collecting, storing and analysing information about people's gender, ethnicity, disability, age, religion, sexuality or socio economic background.

We will monitor in both employment and service provision.

Equalities monitoring in employment can help us to identify under-representation in our workforce and differences in progression and career development.

Equalities monitoring in service provision can help us to identify any differences in access, treatment or outcomes between equalities groups. Over time, it can help us to assess whether our actions to promote equality in these areas are working.

6. How we will monitor the effectiveness of the policy

This policy will only be effective if regularly updated and monitored.

We will report on this policy and the accompanying plan on an annual basis to Cabinet.

The policy will be reviewed every three years by the Corporate Management Team and Cabinet.

7. Making a complaint

Anyone who feels that they have a complaint in relation to the implementation of this policy can use the Council's complaints policy and procedure which can be found on our web site, or can be provided on request by calling 0845 230 0226.

8. Equality Schemes

This Comprehensive Equality Policy shows our overarching commitment to equality, and relates closely to our Disability, Gender & Race Equality Schemes which have been developed as part of our new commitments under the Disability, Gender & Race Equality duties, introduced to ensure that public bodies actively promote equality and prevent discrimination.

The combination of these schemes, together with the Comprehensive Equality Policy, aims to address the discrimination that can be experienced as a result of the compounding of disability, race and gender as well as age, religion and sexuality.

All three schemes are published on our website.

8.1 Disability Equality Scheme

Our Disability Equality Scheme was published in December 2006. The scheme forms part of our commitment under the Disability Discrimination Act (2005) which introduced the Disability Equality Duty, and the requirement to produce a scheme.

The scheme gives actions for change based on consultation with disabled people in South Northamptonshire and employees of the council

8.2 Gender Equality Scheme

The Gender Equality Scheme was approved by Cabinet in April 2007. The scheme forms part of our responsibility under the Equality Act (2006) and aims to acknowledge and address the gender difference in people's life chances that can affect their opportunity to access services, employment and education.

8.3 Race Equality Scheme

Our Race Equality Scheme has been in place since 2002. The scheme forms part of our duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act (2000), and aims to recognise and tackle the impact of race on a person's life chances and promote positive attitudes to diversity.

Appendix 1: Ethnicity and Diversity of South Northamptonshire

2001 Census statistics

Total population: 79, 293

Gender

50% Male; 50% Female

Age structure

In the 2001 Census, there were:

16,831 children and young people aged 0–15 (21.2%)

57,445 adults aged between 16–74 years (72.4%)

5, 017 adults aged 75 years and over (6.3%)

Ethnicity

Ethnic background	% of South Northants population	% of England & Wales population
White: British	95.7	87.5
White: Irish	0.7	1.2
White: Other	2.0	2.6
White: TOTAL	98.4	91.3
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0.2	0.5
Mixed: White and Black African	0.1	0.2
Mixed: White and Asian	0.3	0.4
Mixed: Other	0.2	0.3
Mixed: TOTAL	0.7	1.3

Asian or Asian British: Indian	0.3	2.0
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	0.0	1.4
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.1	0.5
Asian or Asian British: Other	0.1	0.5
Asian: TOTAL	0.5	4.4
Black or Black British: Caribbean	0.1	1.1
Black or Black British: African	0.1	0.9
Black or Black British: Other	0.1	0.2
Black: TOTAL	0.3	2.2
Chinese	0.1	0.4
Other Ethnic Group	0.1	0.4
Chinese/ Other: TOTAL	0.3	0.9

The percentages of Black and Minority (BME) groups are very small in South Northants and are significantly lower than the national percentages. However, it is useful to consider the approximate (since the above percentages have been rounded up) numbers of BME residents at the last census:

Ethnic group	Approx no of South Northants residents in this group in 2001
Mixed	555
Asian	396
Black	238
Chinese	238
Total BME	1,427

Given that the mid-2003 population estimates suggested a 4.17% increase in the South Northants overall population in the preceding two years, it is likely that this number has increased since the last census. We can predict with

reasonable confidence that there are over 1,500 BME people living in the district.

Religion

	% of South Northamptonshire population	% of England and Wales population
Christian	77.8%	71.8%
No religion	14.5%	14.8%
Religion not stated	6.8%	7.7%
Other religions	0.2%	0.3%
Muslim	0.2%	3.0%
Sikh	0.1%	0.6%
Jewish	0.1%	0.5%
Buddhist	0.1%	0.3%
Hindu	0.2%	1.1%
Buddhist	0.1%	0.3%

Note: This table is in descending order of % of South Northamptonshire population

Disability and Health

The 2001 Census did not identify people who would be defined as disabled under the Disability Discrimination Act but rather used an alternative measure of 'limiting long-term illness'. The census found that 12.9% of the population of South Northants had a limiting long-term illness in 2001 and that 26.2% of households had one or more person with such an illness. These are significantly lower than the percentages for England and Wales as a whole (18.2% and 34.1% respectively).

Deprivation

South Northamptonshire is currently ranked 344 out of 354 local authorities according to the average Index of Multiple Deprivation of its component neighbourhoods. This makes it one of the least deprived areas in the country.

- 79% of households are owner occupiers
- 3722 (12%) of households do not have a car or van
- There were 1006 unemployed people in the area in the 2001 Census, representing an unemployment rate of 1.8% of all economically active people aged 16–74

Sexuality

The 2001 census did not include a question on sexuality, and so it is difficult to estimate the numbers of lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people in the area. However, national estimates suggest that lesbian, gay and bisexual people make up about 5–7 % of the population.

Appendix 2: Responsibilities in relation to Equality

Councillors

- To publicly promote the Council's policy and its commitment to equalities internally and externally;
- To understand and communicate at every opportunity both the 'business case' and the social justice arguments in favour of equalities;
- To set a policy framework in which equalities is a central consideration in all Council activities;
- To scrutinise reports and policies to ensure compliance with the CEP;
- To attend and positively participate in training which helps to develop skills and understanding in relation to equality and diversity.

Chief Executive and Senior Management Team

- To develop an overall strategy and action plan for equalities which results in concrete change and reduces disadvantage within the Council and throughout the district;
- To publicly promote the Council's commitment to equalities internally and externally;
- To model best practice in creating an environment and an organisational culture which is respectful and free from harassment (see members Code of Conduct and make sure this is explicitly included);
- To attend and positively participate in training which helps to develop skills and understanding in relation to equality and diversity.

Managers

- To integrate concrete objectives, targets and actions into service plans which will help to deliver effective and equitable services;
- To carry out Equality Impact Assessments as appropriate;
- To regularly review monitoring data and take action on the results;
- To ensure that the work environment is one which affords dignity and respect for all members of staff and members of the public;

- To carry out fair recruitment practices which result in opportunities for all potential and existing employees;
- To use the Council's employment policies to ensure that all colleagues are treated fairly in every aspect of their working lives;
- To attend and positively participate in training which helps to develop skills and understanding in relation to equality and diversity.

Staff

- To use their knowledge and experience of service users to enhance Council services;
- To value diversity and to treat colleague and service users with respect;
- To challenge harassment and discrimination and to support colleagues and service users who experience this;
- To use the proper channels to complain, or to draw to the attention of the Council practices which are not conducive to providing fair and equal services;
- To attend and positively participate in training which helps to develop skills and understanding in relation to equality and diversity.

Contractors and Partners

- To demonstrate a commitment to equalities in their work and to provide evidence of this to the Council if required;
- To raise with the Council any barriers to the promotion of equalities.

Appendix 3: Relevant legislation

We recognise our duties under these pieces of legislation and all associated codes of practice.

Race Relations Act 1976 (Race Relations Act)

The Act makes discrimination unlawful on the grounds of colour, race, nationality (including citizenship) or ethnic or national origin. It applies to employment and training and the provision of goods, facilities and services.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

The Act creates a general duty to promote race equality that requires public authorities to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups.

It is unlawful for any public authority to discriminate on racial grounds in carrying out any of its functions. There are additional specific duties) including the production of a Race Equality Scheme and employment of monitoring the ethnicity of job applicants and employees.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA)

This requires employers and providers of goods and services to eliminate discrimination against disabled people at all levels.

The employment measures make it unlawful to treat a person less favourably than a non-disabled person because of their impairment in terms of recruitment, training or dismissal, unless the employer can prove this is justified. In order to comply with the Act, an employer is required to look at changes in the work place or working practices and make any reasonable adjustments.

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations 2004

This increases existing legal protection and implements Part III of the DDA legislation which extends to providers of goods, facilities and services to the public.

This requires service providers to remove, alter and avoid physical features which prevent access to services by disabled people.

Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Sex Discrimination Act) – amended 1986

The Act outlaws discrimination in employment on the grounds of sex or marital status. The Sex Discrimination Act prohibits direct and indirect sex and marital status discrimination against men or women in respect of such matters as selection for appointment, promotion or training.

Sex Discrimination (Gender Re-assignment) Regulations 1999

These extend the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and prohibit direct discrimination if a person has had or is undergoing gender reassignment.

Equal Pay Act 1970 – amended 1983

The Equal Pay Act is designed to prevent discrimination between men and women in respect of their terms and conditions of employment, including pay. It applies to complaints that less favourable terms are being applied in situations where employees are doing the same or broadly similar work.

Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003

These extend the legislation to prohibit discrimination in employment on the grounds of sexuality.

Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003

These prohibit discrimination in employment on the grounds of religion or similar philosophical belief.

The Data Protection Act 1998

This Act sets out broad standards referred to as 'principles'. Local authorities need to be mindful of the principle of the DPA when collecting and storing data to comply with monitoring requirements contained within other equality related legislation.

Human Rights Act 1998

There are 16 basic rights in this Act which are taken from the European Convention on Human Rights. They can affect matters of life and death (e.g.

freedom from torture and killing). Rights in every day life (e.g. what you can say and do, your beliefs, your right to a fair trial) or Article 8, the right to respect for private and family life and many other similar basic entitlements.

The Crime & Disorder Act 1998

This Act is complemented by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 making specific offences of racist violence and harassment.

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

This legislation is predominantly aimed at 'stalking' but it has implications for employer and employee behaviour in the workplace. The Act states that a person must not pursue a course of conduct that amounts to harassment and which he or she knows or ought to know amounts to harassment. Injunctions can be issued under the Act to stop behaviour that alarms the person or has caused or may cause the person distress.

Freedom of Information Act

This Act introduces a general right of access to information held by a wide range of public bodies with the aim of ensuring that decision-making public organisations are open and accountable.

Civil Partnership Act 2004

This Act came into force on 5 December 2005 and allows same-sex couples to register as civil partners. The Act also provides that civil partners should be treated in the same or similar way to spouses in a number of areas, including many related to employment.

Gender Recognition Act 2004

A ruling by the European Court of Human Rights resulted in the United Kingdom Government making provision for transsexual people to be recognised in their acquired gender, and for them to be treated in accordance with those rights and responsibilities pertinent to that gender. As a consequence, the Gender Recognition Act 2004 (July 2004) came into effect on 4 April 2005. This allows transsexual people to legally change their recorded gender and to benefit from any rights and responsibilities that are associated with their acquired gender. From 4 January 2005 transsexuals are

able to submit an application to change their gender to the newly created Gender Recognition Panel.

Disability Discrimination Act 2005

From December 2005, new amendments to the DDA 1995 are introduced, and from December 2006, new laws will place a duty on public bodies to promote disability equality.

The Disability Equality Duty will require the Public Sector to actively promote disability equality and is similar to the duty to promote race equality under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act.

Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006

This Act will give legal protection against discrimination on the grounds of age.