

Equality in Northumberland

January 2017



Easier Read Summary

Thank You

Northumberland County Council would like to thank everyone who has helped us produce this report by giving us their views and time.

If you need this information in Large Print; Braille; Audio or in another format or language please contact us:

Telephone: 0345 600 6400 (or see “contact us” on our website for local numbers)

NGT: 18001 0345 600 6400 (text relay service)

Email: Irene.Fisher@northumberland.gov.uk

For more information on contacting the council please see information on our website here

What's in this report?

1. What do we mean by Equality in Northumberland?..... 1
2. What issues might different people have when using our services? 2
3. What is the Council is doing to make things fair and equal for people who use its services?..... 5
4. What issues might our employees have when working for us? 6
5. What is the Council is doing to make things fair and equal for its employees? 8

1. What do we mean by Equality in Northumberland?

Northumberland County Council wants everyone in Northumberland to be able to use their services easily and make sure that people are treated fairly and equally.



Equality means that we want everyone in Northumberland to have the same chances to do what they can. Some people may need extra help or things done in a different way to get the same chances.



The Government has a law around Equality that sets out different things that organisations like the Council have to do. This law is called the **Equality Act**. It says that all people should be treated fairly and that it is against the law to treat anybody worse because of:



- A disability
- Their age
- Their gender
- Their race
- Their sexual orientation
- Their religion or belief
- Pregnancy or having very young children
- Gender reassignment (where a person was born as one sex and wants to live as the other sex).

The law says that the Council has to publish information to show that it understands the different ways its services can affect different people, and how its employment policies affect the people who work for the Council.

This is called our **Equality Information**.

To help us understand the way our services might affect different people, we have used lots of information from things like:



- Surveys – asking people for their views and how happy they are with different services
- Meetings with different groups – to talk about what people think of our services
- Research – done in Northumberland and in the UK
- Information – on the numbers and types of people who use our services
- Learning from complaints – when things have gone wrong.

2. What issues might different people have when using our services?

From what people have told us, and from all the information we have collected, we know that some people might have particular issues when using Council services.

These include:

Communication

Some disabled people or people who cannot speak or read English may need the Council to provide information in different ways so that they can understand it. This includes things like Braille for people who cannot see, or another language for someone who cannot understand English.



Getting into buildings or using services

Some people may have problems getting into some Council buildings because of a disability, or because they have problems moving around easily.



The opening times of services may also make it harder for some people to use services.

Understanding what people need

We know that the Council doesn't know as much about the needs of some groups of people as it does about others. It doesn't know as much about the needs of people from black and minority ethnic groups in Northumberland, or the needs of people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

The Council needs to do some more work to find out from these groups what their needs are and how the Council can help.



Giving people choice and control

We know that achieving equality may mean that services may need to be delivered differently to different people. So we need to make sure that people's own needs, likes and choices are listened to particularly in social care services and education.



Meeting cultural needs

Some groups of people with certain religious or cultural beliefs, may need services to be offered in different ways. For example, when using certain types of food.



Negative attitudes

Some groups of people are more likely to be bullied or have people being nasty to them or calling them names. The Council must do all it can to stop this from happening.



Looking after someone who is ill or disabled (carers)

In Northumberland there are lots of people who are carers. Women are more likely to be carers than men and this is something the Council services need to think of.



Social isolation

We know that some groups in Northumberland are more likely to feel isolated or lonely than others. This includes in particular disabled and older people, people new to the County and those who do not speak English. The Council needs to do what it can to support all people.



3. What is the Council doing to make things fair and equal for people who use its services?

The Council is already doing lots of things to help make sure its services are fair and equal. Some of the things the Council has in place are:

- Policies to make it clear what the Council thinks about equality
- Equality Objectives which are checked regularly by the Council
- Services to support disabled people and their carers
- Ways to get information in other formats and languages and to get interpreters
- Ways to talk to different groups of people to find out their views
- Activities to focus on improving things for particular groups of people
- Equality training for Council employees
- Involvement of Councillors in checking how well the Council is doing around equality
- Links with community and voluntary groups and networks
- Information on places that are easy to use for disabled people (disabled Go)
- Ways of checking how easy services are to use

- Personal budgets for disabled people
- Social Care and Health information points
- Arrangements to protect vulnerable people from harm (safeguarding)
- Ways of helping young disabled people move into adult services
- Making sure that organisations who provide services on behalf of the Council treat people fairly and equally.

4. What issues might our employees have when working for us?

The Council collects lots of information about its employees and about people who apply for jobs. This helps us know if we are treating all people fairly. We also ask our employees what they think about working for the Council.

This information tells us that some people may have particular needs at work.

This includes:

Applying for Jobs

Some people may need extra help to apply for jobs with the Council.

We need to be careful about how we advertise jobs, and make sure people know that help is available.



Policies and Procedures

We need to make sure our employment policies are fair and are used by managers in the same way.



Negative Attitudes

The Council needs to make sure that its employees feel comfortable and safe at work and that it tackles any negative attitudes held by others.



Making it possible to work

Extra support or 'reasonable adjustments' may need to be made in the workplace to make it possible for disabled employees to do their job.



Flexible Working

Flexible working is a way of giving employees more choice over the times they work or where they work from. This can make a big difference to some people, particularly people who are carers, or people with young children.



It can also help people with certain religious beliefs.

Changing Needs

Some jobs in the Council involve lots of physical work which can become harder as people get older. The Council needs to be aware of this and offer help to people in these types of jobs.



Practical Needs

Some employees may have particular needs at work. For example people with certain beliefs may have special needs around food, or employees who have come back to work after having a baby may still be breastfeeding and need somewhere private to express their milk during work time and somewhere to store it.



5. What is the Council doing to make things fair and equal for its employees?

The Council is already doing lots of things to help make sure its current and future employees are treated fairly and equally. Some of the things the Council has in place are:

- Guaranteed interview scheme – this means disabled people who apply for jobs who meet the ‘essential criteria’ for a job, get a guaranteed interview
- Reasonable Adjustments – which are changes to the workplace that make it easier for disabled employees to do their jobs
- Clear policies to make sure all employees are treated fairly and policies aimed at supporting particular groups of people

- Jobs in the Council designed for people with a learning disability
- Training in equality for all employees
- Occupational health team to help staff with issues at work
- Different ways of finding out what employees think about working for the Council
- A Staff Network Group to support lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees at work
- A Staff Network Disability Group to support disabled employees at work
- The Council operates a flexible working policy to enable staff to work around their needs