



DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE EQUALITY STRATEGY 2006 – 2009

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Associated Documents			

Committing to Excellence	Promoting Civic Pride & An Active Community	Creating a Clean, Tidy & Safe Environment	Providing Affordable Housing while Protecting Green Space	Ensuring a Sustainable Local Economy & Jobs
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1. Foreword

The Council welcomes the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRAA), and the Equality Standard for Local Government. Both are catalysts for change and present challenges for the future. Each will assist the Council to ensure that it provides appropriate and accessible services and employment opportunities for all. We believe that equality of opportunity should be a natural part of everything that the Council does as a service provider and employer.

This Corporate Equality Strategy (CES) sets out the Council's aims and objectives to meet the requirements of the RRAA, the Equality Standard for Local Government and other equality legislation. The Equality Standard provides the Council with a framework through which equality policy and practice can be integrated, monitored, and reviewed.

The development and publication of a Race Equality Scheme (RES), is a specific requirement of the RRAA. The Council recognises that race equality cannot and should not be considered in isolation of other equality issues and has therefore set out its commitment to working towards and eliminating discrimination and disadvantage with regard to all aspects of equality and diversity within the CES.

The equality and diversity agenda and associated requirements provide the Council with the opportunity to consolidate current equality practice and develop appropriate initiatives aimed at ensuring that:

- *All types of unlawful discrimination and unfair treatment are eliminated.*
- *All aspects of equality are addressed (i.e. gender, race, disability, sexuality and age).*
- *Equality and diversity are mainstreamed into all aspects of policy and practice.*

The Council recognises the need for equality and the importance of valuing diversity, to ensure that both are “mainstreamed” – in other words – considered in relation to policies, procedures, day to day practices and the delivery of services. It is committed to ensuring that all services are accessible and appropriate for all. It will develop robust monitoring and evaluation arrangements to ensure that it is accountable, and it will review the process to identify progress made and areas for improvement.

The Council will work with and consult individuals in the community, local organisations, groups, partners, and stakeholders on our equality aims, objectives, and performance. It will report annually on the progress made and update the CES including the RES, every three years.



Danny Zammit
Chief Executive

2. Our vision

To achieve equity, fairness, and diversity in all our undertakings and develop and maintain a skilled and diverse workforce that is competent in key customer care skills and is sensitive to the needs of all sections of the community at every level of the council.

To secure a fairer society, where regardless of disability, ethnic, racial or national origin, gender, religion, sexuality or age, individuals have equitable access to our services and the opportunity to develop and attain their full potential.

The Council aspires to create a community where barriers to social and economic inclusion are tackled and removed. The principles guiding the Council's vision are: -

- ❑ Equality of access to local services
- ❑ Equality of opportunity in employment
- ❑ Equality of access to facilities and resources
- ❑ Eliminating all forms of discrimination and unfair treatment.

3. Our commitment to equality and diversity

The Council has an unequivocal commitment to equality, diversity and opportunity in service delivery, contracting/procurement, consultation and participation and employment practices. It will work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination and disadvantage to ensure that the full benefits of diversity are realised and appreciated by all. The key components of our commitment are: -

- Developing and implementing a common framework to address all aspects of equality.
- Ensuring that the promotion of equality and diversity is mainstreamed and integral to all that we do.

The Corporate Equality Strategy (CES) is central to our commitment to combating discrimination, disadvantage and exclusion. The Council acknowledges the existence of institutional discrimination, which can unwittingly disadvantage individuals and groups. We accept that all organisations can be susceptible to institutional discrimination, which is defined as *“the collective failure to provide an appropriate and professional service or to deny opportunities to groups or individuals because of disability, their colour, culture or ethnic origin, gender, age, religion or sexuality”*.

Through the CES the Council will act to eliminate discrimination and incidents of harassment and bullying. It will promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with existing and future statutory requirements and good practice.

The ethos of equality and diversity is reflected in essential corporate, directorate and service strategies and extends to the Council's responsibilities as an employer, provider of services and community partner. The Council's equal opportunities policies in service delivery and employment are regularly reviewed in line with statutory duties and guidance.

The Council is committed to working towards the following in service delivery:

- To recognise and respond to the needs of all sections of the community.
- To challenge all forms of discrimination and unfair treatment.
- To develop or adjust services to meet the different needs of the various sections of the community, ensuring that there is equality of access and opportunity.
- To comply with the requirements of equality legislation and good practice.
- To progress through the levels of the Equality Standard for Local Government.
- To continue to develop partnerships and networking with the diversity of local organisations and groups to promote equality and diversity.
- To consult all sections of the community about the accessibility of existing services and the development of future services.

The Council is committed to working towards the following in employment:

- To ensure employment opportunities are accessible and accessed by all individuals, irrespective of ethnic or racial origins.
- To monitor all recruitment and selection to identify any barriers.
- To consult ethnic minority employees on all aspects of racial equality within the workplace.
- To work towards creating a workplace that is free from harassment.
- To ensure that all employees and potential employees receive equal consideration and treatment and are not discriminated against.

To ensure that equality continues to be integrated into all Council policy and practice, the Council will:

- Review the equal opportunities policies in employment and service delivery to reflect new obligations and commitments.
- Work towards achieving Level III of the Equality Standard by 2007/8.

- Continue to develop corporate, directorate and service equality objectives and action plans.
- Ensure equality and diversity is integrated into the Value for Money service review process.
- Develop and deliver a programme of communication, training and development for all employees on the Corporate Equality Strategy, the Council's commitment and their responsibilities.
- Develop appropriate and effective arrangements to ensure that all duties are complied with and ensure that performance and progress can be monitored and reviewed.

Our employment objectives are:

- A workforce that reflects the community we serve at every level. We will develop appropriate targets concerning under-represented groups and individuals.
- To implement measures to monitor training and career development opportunities for all sections of the workforce.
- To continue monitoring and evaluating the recruitment and selection process to ensure equality of opportunity is paramount.
- To monitor and evaluate the reasons why employees leave the Council and implement actions where necessary.
- To monitor and evaluate the use of the grievance procedure and the application of the conduct and disciplinary procedures for all sections of the workforce.
- To develop positive action on career and personal development programmes for those groups of employees who are under-represented in designated occupations across the council.

Our service delivery objectives are:

- To actively involve all sections of the community in service planning and development.
- To ensure that services are accessible to all sections of the community.
- To act to remove all access barriers to services.
- To, where possible, monitor the take up of services to help ensure that there is equality of access.
- To develop measures to secure equality of opportunity in all contracts to deliver services for and on behalf of the Council.

4. Managing Equality

A Corporate Equality Working Group co-ordinates and oversees the implementation of equality. The objectives of the group are:

- ❑ To provide a forum for discussion and exploration of equality issues in relation to service delivery and employment.
- ❑ To provide clear focus and drive in relation to the equalities agenda, encouraging collaboration, communication and co-operation between services concerning the promotion of equality.
- ❑ To identify improvements that need to be made to current procedures and practices in order to meet the Corporate Equality Strategy.
- ❑ To identify appropriate resources to enable the Council to meet its obligations.

5. The Equality Standard for Local Government

In September 2002 the Council formally adopted the Race Equality Standard for Local Government. This was replaced in April 2003 by the Equality Standard for Local Government (the Standard), which includes gender and disability issues as well as race. The Standard provides the Council with a framework and tool to systematically integrate the different strands of equality and diversity into all aspects of its activities and functions.

The Standard consists of five progressive levels of achievement in the areas of:

- ❑ Leadership and corporate commitment
- ❑ Consultation, community development and scrutiny
- ❑ Service delivery and customer care
- ❑ Employment and training.

The Council has recently achieved Level II of the Standard, which required the Council to demonstrate commitment to a comprehensive equality policy and produce a Corporate Equality Strategy (CES) to translate the commitment into tangible outcomes. The Council is now working towards achieving Level III. Appendix II sets out the requirements of this level.

The Council's adoption and implementation of the Standard:

- *Provides a systematic framework for the mainstreaming of equality.*
- *Assists us to meet our obligations in relation to equality legislation.*
- *Provides a mechanism to integrate equality policies and objectives into the service development and review process.*

- *Facilitates the development of anti-discriminatory practice, which is appropriate and relevant to local circumstances.*
- *Provides the authority with a basis to tackle any form of institutional discrimination.*
- *Provides a framework for monitoring and evaluating performance.*

As part of its target to achieve Level III, the Council will develop comprehensive equality guidance for service delivery and employment. Monitoring will be constantly reviewed, with gaps and areas for improvement identified. Without monitoring information the Council will not be able to identify whether discrimination is taking place and what progress we are making in ensuring our services and opportunities are accessible to all.

6. Race Equality Scheme

The development and publication of a Race Equality Scheme is a specific requirement of the RRAA. The Act places a general duty on all public authorities to:

- *Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination.*
- *Promote equality of opportunity.*
- *Promote good race relations.*

The legislation also imposes specific duties, which require the Council to:

- *Assess and consult on the likely impact of proposed policies.*
- *Monitor and review existing policies and service delivery for adverse impact on race equality.*
- *Publish the results of monitoring, assessment and consultation.*
- *Ensure public access to information and services.*
- *Train staff on the general duty.*
- *Monitor a range of employment related issues.*

The aim of the duty is to ensure that the Council makes race equality integral to the way that it works, putting it at the centre of policy making, service delivery, regulation, enforcement and employment practice. The functions and policies, which are assessed as being relevant to the general duty, will be subject to equality impact assessments. The assessments will, where appropriate, be carried out with the involvement and participation of stakeholders, local agencies, partner organisations and local groups.

In order to facilitate the effective evaluation of all functions and policies the Council will:

- *Use existing information, research, and statistics on local communities.*
- *Commission new research to redress gaps in information.*
- *Undertake consultation with users and non-users.*
- *Undertake consultation with employees and services specifically involved in the application of the function or policy.*

The Council is committed to the elimination of racial discrimination and through the implementation of the Race Equality Scheme aims to:

- Achieve parity in treatment, satisfaction and take up of our services and opportunities across racial groups.
- Eliminate any adverse impact or unfair effects on racial groups that may exist in relation to any of our policies or practices.
- Achieve a representative workforce and customer profile.

The Specific Duties in Employment

The Council is required to monitor by racial group and annually publish information on the number of:

- *Staff in post.*
- *Applicants for employment, training and promotion.*
- *Staff who receive training.*
- *Staff who benefit or suffer as a result of performance appraisals.*
- *Staff who are subject to disciplinary action.*
- *Staff who cease employment with the authority.*

The Council already has a variety of employment monitoring systems in place, resulting in the production of an annual workforce survey. The workforce survey provides a breakdown of all job applicants and staff in post based on ethnic origin, gender, disability, age and responsibility for dependants.

7. The equalities assessment process

An equality impact assessment (EIA) toolkit has been developed to provide services with a framework to systematically review all relevant policies, activities and functions. The toolkit will ensure that all services comply with the

requirements of the general duty and develop appropriate equality objectives and targets.

The Council will continue to introduce, adapt and amend policies to reflect new legislative requirements, good practice and changing circumstances. It will continue to develop ways of integrating equality into the decision and policy making process, so that the likely impact of proposed policies on diverse communities and groups can be regularly assessed and reviewed.

Existing and proposed policies will be subject to an EIA, which will identify equality implications and issues. Where an assessment identifies the adverse impact of an existing policy or proposed policy, services will produce an appropriate action plan to address the situation. The action plan will be reported to Cabinet, the Corporate Management Team and the Corporate Equality Working Group and included in revisions to the Corporate Equality Strategy.

We will be considering some important questions, which will include:

- *Does this function or policy affect the public directly?*
- *Does this function or policy affect the public indirectly?*
- *Does this function or policy relate to purely technical matters?*
- *Could this policy affect some groups differently?*
- *Will it promote good race relations?*
- *Is there any public concern about possible discrimination?*

All assessments will be based on a variety of evidence and information, which will include the following:

- *Demographic data.*
- *Research information.*
- *Comparative information.*
- *Survey data.*
- *Consultation information.*
- *Complaints.*
- *Suggestions and comments.*
- *Community views.*

- *Ethnic monitoring information.*

(This is not an exhaustive list).

Services will be using the toolkit to review all of their functions, policies and activities that are relevant to the general duty; namely those that could have a positive or negative impact on the promotion of equality. In circumstances where a function, policy or activity is assessed as having a negative impact on the promotion of equality, consideration will be given to what can be done to mitigate against or eliminate this. Those that are found to have a positive impact will be kept under review in order to ensure that this continues.

The Council has systematically identified all of its functions, policies and activities which are relevant to the general duty and their level of impact. These are set out in Appendix 1. Each has been assessed under the criteria of high, medium or low impact. Those assessed as high (H) will be reviewed in year 1 (i.e. by end March 2007); medium (M) in year 2 (i.e. by end March 2008) and low (L) in year 3 (i.e. by end March 2009). The criterion has been assigned using the definitions set out in the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) Guide for Public Authorities:

Further actions will include the preparation of annual equality action plans which:

- Improve access to information and services.
- Evaluate policy, procedures and practices with regard to equality and diversity.
- Challenge all forms of discrimination, disadvantage and unfair treatment.
- Develop and implement a social inclusion policy.
- Develop appropriate initiatives and actions to increase the representation of non-and under-represented groups.
- Comprehensive monitoring of the use of services and opportunities.

The Council is working towards achieving Level V of the Equality standard

The Council will develop and implement appropriate proactive measures to create fair and transparent processes and practices with accessible services and opportunities for all sections of the community.

8. Training and support

The Council will be developing a training programme for Members and employees that set out the requirements of equality and diversity legislation. The training will ensure that all staff and Members have the skills and knowledge to meet their responsibilities. Effective communication, learning and development of both staff and Members will play an essential role in the implementation of this strategy.

9. Consultation and participation

The Council is committed to effective consultation with all sections of the community, using diverse methods and arrangements. We endeavour to

proactively consult with all sections of the community, in particular individuals and groups that have been identified as being “hard to reach.” The Council will ensure that its consultation methods take into account the social, cultural, religious, language and access needs of all sections of the community. It will undertake regular reviews of the mechanisms used to ensure that they are appropriate and suitable. The Council is committed to developing a strategic approach to consultation, to ensure that it is undertaken in a planned and co-ordinated way and to a consistently high standard.

The Council will continue to work with local agencies, community and voluntary groups and others to remove any barriers to consultation. We will continue to implement our community leadership role by working closely with strategic partners and the community. We will ensure that we respond to requests to provide information in appropriate ways and in formats to meet specific needs.

10. Publishing Information

The Council will ensure that it complies with the duty of accountability by publishing the results of all monitoring, assessment and consultation activities. In line with our commitment to equality of access, we will ensure that we respond to requests to provide information in a variety of formats and in community languages. This document is available on the Council’s website www.dacorum.gov.uk.

11. Comments/Feedback

The Council positively welcomes comments and feedback on any aspect of our work and policies. The Council has a customer feedback form, which can be used to submit comments on any aspect of the Corporate Equality Strategy. This form is available on request at Council offices and on our website www.dacorum.gov.uk. Comments can also be submitted directly to the Corporate Equality Officer, Business Support Unit, Tel 01442 228258.

EQUALITY SCHEME – PROGRAMME OF ASSESSMENT

Service	Priority – High – H Medium – M Low - L	Year for review
Information Communication Technology (ICT). • Service Provision	L	2008/2009
Property and Asset Management • Valuation and Estates • Building Services • Facilities Management	M M H	2007/2008 2007/2008 2006/2007
Human Resources	H	2006/2007
Financial Services • Housing Benefits • Internal Audit • Revenues • Accountancy and Exchequer Services • Administration	M L L L L	2007/2008 2008/2009 2008/2009 2008/2009 2008/2009
Corporate Procurement • Procurement	M	2007/2008
Legal Services • Member Support • Legal Services	L M	2008/2009 2007/2008
Business Support Unit • Health and safety • Policy and Performance Management • Equality and diversity • External funding	M M M M	2007/2008 2007/2008 2007/2008 2007/2008

Service	Priority – High – H Medium – M Low - L	Year for review
Communications Unit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications (Internal & External) • Community Consultation 	H H	2006/2007 2006/2007
Planning and Regeneration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Control • Development Plans • Land Charges • Building Control • Regeneration 	M M M M M	2007/2008 2007/2008 2007/2008 2007/2008 2007/2008
Customer services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call Centre Management • Customer service centre 	M M	2007/2008 2007/2008
Street Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape and Recreation • Parking Services 	M L	2007/2008 2008/2009
Public Protection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing • Emergency Planning • CCTV • Anti Social Behaviour • Community Safety 	H L M M M	2006/2007 2008/2009 2007/2008 2007/2008 2007/2008
Community and Cultural Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Buildings • Independent living • Arts and Entertainment • Cemeteries • Little Hay Golf Complex 	H H M M M	2006/2007 2006/2007 2007/2008 2007/2008 2007/2008
Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Advice and Homelessness • Special Needs Housing • Housing Repairs and Maintenance • Housing Management • Affordable Housing 	H H H H H	2006/2007 2006/2007 2006/2007 2006/2007 2006/2007

Service	Priority – High – H Medium – M Low - L	Year for review
Community and Partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary Sector Support • Town and Parish liaison • Moving People • LSP • Community Development Support 	H H H M M	2006/2007 2006/2007 2006/2007 2007/2008 2007/2008

THE EQUALITY STANDARD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

REQUIREMENTS OF LEVEL III

This document sets out the requirements of Level III of the Standard. The target is for all Council services to meet the requirements of Level III by December 2007.

To achieve Level III the Council needs to demonstrate:

- That it has completed a full and systematic consultation process with designated community, staff, and stakeholder groups.
- That it has set equality objectives for employment, pay and service delivery based on impact and needs /requirements assessment and consultation.
- That equality objectives have been translated into action plans with specific targets.
- That it is developing information and monitoring systems that allow it to assess progress in achieving targets.
- That action on achieving the targets has started.

These general activities translate into action in the four substantive areas of the Standard, which are:

1. Leadership and corporate commitment
2. Consultation and community development and scrutiny
3. Service delivery and customer care
4. Employment and training.

The Corporate Equalities Officer and the Corporate Equalities Working Group will develop and oversee the action plan for achievement.

Requirement
Leadership and corporate commitment
1. Ensure that all departments and service areas set targets based on equality objectives.
2. Establish corporate guidelines/ prescriptions for information gathering and equality monitoring.
3. Seek agreement on equality targets with partners in local partnerships.
4. Establish mechanisms for ensuring that contractors through contract management meet equality targets.
5. Ensure completion of equality action plans at department and service level incorporating performance indicators
6. Adopt where appropriate national targets and performance indicators as prescribed by Government departments or by the Audit Commission.
7. Implement systems for reviewing progress and revising the Corporate Equality Strategy (CES) and departmental action plans
8. Members and senior officers to endorse action plans as appropriate.
9. Link action planning into value for Money reviews
10. Ensure that action on achieving targets has started.
Consultation and community development and scrutiny.
1. Make public all service level and employment objectives and targets that are available for consultation and scrutiny
2. Make provision of language services appropriate to designated consultation and scrutiny groups
3. Make completion of a full and systematic consultation process with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups.
4. Consult on involving designated community, staff and stakeholder groups with scrutiny procedures.
5. Consultation on equality to be linked with the continuing development of the Corporate Equality Strategy.
6. Publicise how, where and when action on targets will start.
Service delivery and customer care
1. Complete service element of the Corporate Equality Strategy and ensure consistency with the Race Equality Scheme.
2. Equality objectives and targets are developed within each department and service area.

3. Service plans specifically address the importance of barriers, accessibility, and reasonable adjustments in the provision of services.
4. Allocation of appropriate resources to achieve targets.
5. Establish structures of responsibility at departmental and service levels to progress action plans.
6. Set timetables with action plans for creating/ adopting information and monitoring systems within service areas.
7. Agencies delivering services on behalf of the authority are required to deliver an effective and appropriate service, fairly and without unlawful discrimination.
8. Establish mechanisms for the monitoring of contracts to secure equal employment and equal service delivery targets.
9. Begin action on departmental and service area targets.
Employment and Training
1. Complete the employment section of the Corporate Equality Strategy (CES) and ensure consistency with the Race Equality Scheme.
2. Set employment equality targets for recruitment; staff retention and workforce profiles.
3. Conduct an equal pay review and plan for equal pay adjustments.
4. Ensure those policies and procedures associated with equal pay are part of the staff handbook and understood by all staff.
5. Provide training for managers on the implementation of the standard with contractors and partners.
6. Provide training for all staff involved in recruitment and selection on the Equality Standard, setting service objectives, action planning and monitoring consistent with the training arrangements set out in the Race Equality Scheme.
7. Provide training for all staff on the detailed implementation of the Standard including action plans and updates on legal and other developments.
8. Incorporate equality objectives into management appraisal mechanisms.
9. Provide information and appropriate training on action plans to support the scrutiny process.
10. Establish a system of guidance and training on relevant equality issues for those involved in recruitment and selection.
11. Begin action on all employment and pay targets.

THE EQUALITY STANDARD FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

REQUIREMENTS OF LEVEL IV

This document sets out the requirements of Level IV of the Standard. The target is for all Council services to meet the requirements of Level IV by December 2009.

Requirement
Leadership and corporate commitment
1. Use corporate information system to assess adequacy of departmental information and monitoring systems.
2. Set up system for review of service and employment monitoring reports by designated consultation and scrutiny groups.
3. Review targets against monitoring information and produce reports for corporate management team.
4. Prepare reports on progress against policy objectives for council executive/cabinet, scrutiny bodies and audit.
5. Take on board responses from designated consultation and scrutiny groups for revising policy objectives and targets.
6. The Authority has made arrangements for the external scrutiny of the progress of action plans.
Consultation and community development and scrutiny.
1. Consult with designated community, staff and stakeholder groups about what kind of information will be collected and the reasons for it.
2. Circulate monitoring reports to designated consultation and scrutiny groups.
3. Undertake a consultation process that demonstrably engages designated consultation and scrutiny groups in review process.
4. Review by designated consultation and scrutiny groups of progress against targets.
5. Feed back response on monitoring reports to corporate and departmental teams, to directorate, council committees, employee representatives and members and to 'Community Strategy' partners.
6. Require contractors to supply monitoring reports on service delivery and take-up.

Requirement
Service delivery and customer care
1. All departmental and service level units are using information systems and effective and adequate equality monitoring procedures.
2. Procedures are applied across contracts and partnerships.
3. Service delivery monitoring reports are produced at specific and regular intervals.
4. Service delivery monitoring reports are circulated to all designated consultation and scrutiny groups.
5. Report progress on employment targets to directorate members, council committees, members and consultation and scrutiny groups.
6. Use monitoring to assess achievements against targets set in action plans and fee back results into policy review, targeting and revised action plans.
7. Establish inter-departmental scrutiny process.
Employment and training
1. Use existing or adapted personnel information systems to provide equality data relating to human resource targets (recruitment, promotion, training, grievances, disciplinary action, appraisal, dismissal and other reasons for leaving, retention and equal pay).
2. Produce monitoring reports at regular and specified intervals and circulate to designated consultation and scrutiny groups.
3. Use equality data to monitor use of all personnel procedures.
4. Use equality data to monitor the number of staff leaving employment and their reasons for leaving.
5. Use monitoring reports to assess whether authority employment profiles more closely fit the profile of local labour market area.
6. Report progress on employment targets to directorate members, council committees, members and consultation and scrutiny groups.
7. Report on implementation of pay review recommendations.
8. Meet the training needs of staff appropriately.