

London Borough of Lambeth
Equal Opportunity Employment Policy

Statement of policy

1.1 The Council accepts that in society, groups or individuals may have been disadvantaged in the past and, as a result, as a major employer in a multi-racial area, is committed to taking positive steps to redress the balance. The Council, therefore, commits itself to the task of establishing and developing an equal opportunity employment policy for members of disadvantaged groups. The Council believes it is essential to eliminate discrimination and to promote good relations and equality of opportunity. In addition to its moral responsibility, the Council accepts the statutory requirements laid down in the Race Relations Act (particularly Section 71), the Sex Discrimination Act, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. It will also ensure that all individuals connected with the provision of services by the Council will not hinder this policy. The Council will ensure this by making known its commitment to equal opportunity.

1.2 The purpose of this document is to clarify the Council's commitment to preventing discrimination and stimulating equal opportunity. Although this document concentrates on equal opportunity in employment, the Council is fully committed to the broader principles of social justice and the active promotion of equal opportunity in the provision of all its services to the community.

This statement outlines the main disadvantaged groups towards whom the policy will be directed. Specific initiatives and codes of practice will be subsequently developed to put the policy into effect.

The Council, as a major employer in the area, recognises the need for an equal opportunity policy. The policy concerns all matters related to employment affecting individuals and groups whether they are actual or potential employees. The active promotion of this policy is specifically directed at members of disadvantaged groups.

Disadvantaged groups can be identified according to race, colour, creed, ethnic or national origin, disabilities, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status or class. The Council is convinced that it is morally wrong to hinder equality of opportunity on such grounds and further, recognises that passive policies will not in themselves provide equality of opportunity. Consequently the Council will actively promote equality of opportunity within the following framework.

2. Implementation

2.1 This policy applies to all potential and actual employees. The Council will ensure employment opportunities are available to all by actively enforcing the policy in strategic areas. In implementing this policy it is recognised that certain disadvantaged groups may encounter particular difficulties in employment. The policy is designed to be effective in terms of:

a) **ethnic minorities:** the policy will aim to reduce the effects of racial discrimination in employment generally and to combat the problem of high unemployment amongst ethnic minority groups particularly in the inner city. Equality of opportunity regardless of race is vital, both to give individuals a fair and equal chance of developing their abilities and realising their expectations and also for the Council to make full and effective use of its staff. Moreover, members of ethnic minority groups may have a special knowledge and experience which may be of particular value to the services which the Council provides for Lambeth's multi-racial community.

b) **sex discrimination:** an increasing number of women wish to work and many more no longer wish to give up their careers as a result of having children. Social attitudes may deprive women of opportunities to realise their abilities and thereby lead many women to lower their expectations. The aim of the policy is to improve the opportunities available to women through providing (where possible) opportunities for job share and paid maternity leave. Again it is also in the Council's and the community's interest that the services of trained and experienced staff are retained. Men and women will be encouraged to apply for posts which hitherto have been staffed almost exclusively by a single sex. However there may be some instances in which race or gender may be deemed to be a Genuine Occupational Qualification as defined by the Race Relations Act and the Sex Discrimination Act.

c) **disability:** often disabled people are denied a fair chance at work because of preconceived opinions or judgements about what they are and are not capable of doing. Equally, it makes good sense to re-employ newly disabled employees after rehabilitation or training. There may be a need for physical modifications to office equipment or even the restructuring of jobs if this is to be achieved. The aim of the policy will be to attempt to overcome these problems where practicable and so to enhance the opportunities available to disabled people, whether or not they were formerly Council employees.

2.1.1 Recruitment and Selection

The intention of the recruitment procedure is to ensure the widest response to any employment vacancies in the Council. The Council wishes to ensure the highest quality of candidates and will take positive steps to advise disadvantaged

groups of appropriate Council vacancies and of its equal opportunity policy. The Council recognises the advantages of recruiting individuals with specialist knowledge and experience of local needs.

The selection process is of crucial importance in this policy and must therefore be carried out according to objective, job related criteria. The effectiveness of the policy will be determined to a great extent by this aspect of the employment procedure. The Council will endeavour, through appropriate training, to ensure that employees making selection decisions will not discriminate, whether consciously or unconsciously, in making those decisions.

2.1.2 Staff Development and Training

Training is an important factor leading to opportunities at work. In the first instance, induction is particularly important to give all new employees an understanding of the organisation. Managers are required to ensure that all new starters receive an appropriate induction into the expectations of the new role and where it fits in wider service delivery. Redeployees, internal transferees and internally recruited staff should receive an appropriate introduction into the duties and requirements of the new post. When needs are identified, training opportunities will be available to employees, this will include management training and development for managers. In addition to the priorities of normal job training, encouragement will be given to minority groups or individuals, with special training needs, to undertake additional training e.g. the Council will make use of the provisions of paragraphs 35 and 38 of the Race Relations Act, 1976. Employees involved in implementing this aspect of the policy will be trained, if necessary, in identifying and meeting the special training needs of disadvantaged groups or individuals.

It is in the Council's interest to provide equal opportunities for promotion to all employees. Management must continually assess the promotion potential of all employees, having regard to special training needs, and all promotion decisions must be made in accordance with the objective selection criteria.

2.1.3 Conditions of Service

National and local conditions of service do not in themselves discriminate against disadvantaged groups. Their implementation and the resultant working arrangements must be applied fairly to all employees. The Council will seek to agree and maintain Conditions of Service which will redress disadvantage.

2.1.4 Organisational Arrangements

This policy applies to all Directorates and all employees of the Council, particularly those in a position of responsibility with control over other employees. Whilst the Chief Executive will be responsible for the policy, the implementation and monitoring of the operational effectiveness of the policy will be through the Executive Directors. Management must ensure the full implementation of this policy by introducing specific initiatives in the areas under their control. In addition, each employee has a duty, morally, contractually and legally not to discriminate against individuals or disadvantaged groups and not to collude with such discrimination. The Council will not tolerate discrimination by any of its employees. Any such acts of discrimination will be dealt with using disciplinary procedure.

3. Monitoring

3.1 The success of any policy depends on the degree of commitment of all employees but particularly of senior management in the Council. The effectiveness of meeting the aims and objectives of the policy can only be judged using feedback on how the policy operates. It will be necessary therefore to introduce a monitoring system which will be manageable and acceptable to all employees. This system will collect relevant data and allow assessment to be made by management and the trade unions, on the progress of developing a truly effective equal opportunity policy at Lambeth.

4. Resources

4.1 The Council will make available any resources appropriate to ensure the full and effective implementation of this policy.

5. Grievances

5.1 Any actual or potential employee who perceives a problem on recruitment, selection, training, promotion or the application of conditions of service should raise it in the first instance with the appointing manager. Any grievances or disciplinary matters arising from the equal opportunity policy will be dealt with using the appropriate procedures. The local and national negotiating bodies also have machinery to investigate such matters. The intention of this policy is to prevent discrimination and to actively promote equal opportunity. Individuals have legal rights which they may wish to pursue.

The Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission are both available to give advice, information and assistance on employment matters. Lambeth Council intends to be an equal opportunity employer and wishes this to be known publicly to the community and to other employers in Lambeth.