

Equality Framework

2022



WORKING TOGETHER

Introduction

Policy overview

The **Equality Framework** establishes our responsibilities where it comes to equality, diversity, and inclusion and sets out how we meet these duties. It is as policy that is shared by Chorley Council and South Ribble Borough Council and includes the different mechanisms and processes that we have for embedding equality. These ensure that with every decision, service, and policy, equality is robustly considered.

The framework is supported by our **Equality Objectives**, which set out the actions we will be taking to actively promote equality and improve our equality performance. These objectives are unique to each authority to ensure that they are bespoke to the different needs and priorities of the diverse communities across both Councils.

The framework is a living document. This means that it can be changed according to the needs of our communities, best practice, and the most recent available data.

Our responsibilities

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 is the primary piece of equality legislation in the UK, which was created in order to simplify, harmonise, and strengthen existing equality laws and places legal equality duties on public authorities.

The Act can be considered in two parts:

a) Anti-discrimination framework

This sets out the basic legal framework which prohibits against unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation. This applies to the public, private and voluntary sectors.

b) Public Sector Equality Duty

This establishes legal duties for public bodies. This includes the duties of actively promoting equality, eliminating discrimination, advancing equal opportunities, and supporting community cohesion.

The Act establishes a set of protected characteristics. These include:

- Age,
- Disability,
- Gender reassignment,
- Race,
- Religion or belief,
- Sex,
- Sexual orientation,
- Pregnancy and maternity,
- Marriage and civil partnership

These groups may require additional support and consideration in service delivery, policy development, or recruitment. All the strands are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.

Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty obliges us as a local authority to show how our policies affect those groups who have protected characteristic as well as actively promote equality and inclusion in our communities.

The Public Sector Equality Duty can be considered in two parts:

a) General duties:

This requires us to show due regard when exercising our functions to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

b) Specific duties:

This obliges us to:

- Publish information on an annual basis to show compliance with the Equality Duty,
- Set and publish **Equality Objectives** at least every four years.

Meeting our responsibilities

Equality objectives

Every four years, we set out our **Equality Objectives**. These objectives are unique to each authority and outline what we are going to deliver and achieve in order to further equality as community leaders. The objectives have been developed based on data and self-assessment to determine priorities for action.

The **Equality Objectives** can be viewed on the Councils' websites along with the actions and timescale that will support their delivery, with progress reviews being conducted annually to ensure they remain effective and responsive to the needs of our community.

Information and data

Data forms an important part in how we understand our communities. It helps us understand whether our services are accessible, that our processes are fair and within the remits of legislation, that people from all backgrounds are represented and have equality of opportunity. It also supports evidence based decision making and policies.

All our consultations are accompanied by **Equality Monitoring Questions**. The questions cover each of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and are optional for participants to complete. These provide a useful indication of whether council activities are representative of the local population and can inform measures needed to tackle any underrepresentation.

Annually, we publish **Workforce Profiles** that outline the composition of our workforce according to their characteristics. These characteristics include gender, age, ethnicity, and disability. The profiles also present gender pay information and those involved in grievance and disciplinary procedures. This helps us understand our workforce and identify whether it is representative of the community it serves. Additionally, it helps us assess how our decisions and policies effect people as an employer.

A list of key sources of data is available on the staff intranet under the performance webpage.

Where do we source our data from?

Key sources of information include:

- Equality monitoring data from council consultations and surveys,
- Partners in line with data sharing agreements,
- Workforce composition and gender pay statistics,
- External datasets (i.e. Office for National Statistics),
- Neighbourhood Intelligence Profiles,
- HR grievance and disciplinary data.



Roles

All staff and members of the council have a role in ensuring that equality is embedded into our functions and service delivery:

Councillors:

Elected members are required to show due regard to equality and inclusion when exercising their duties and hold each Council accountable for their equality performance. This includes in all committee decisions as well as when conducting general member activities.

Senior Leadership:

The senior leadership has a key role in spearheading equality as a local equality leader. This includes making clear commitments to equality and inclusion, demonstrating role model practices and behaviours

Service Leads and Managers:

Managers are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of equality policies in their area and ensuring that staff have the support through which to develop professionally and have a working environment that accommodates their needs.

Employees:

Employees have a responsibility to maintain a positive and inclusive working environment, which includes recognising and challenging harassment, discrimination, victimisation, and bullying as well as being aware of additional needs that customers or colleagues may have.

Transformation and Partnerships:

This service is responsible for equality across the organisation and ensuring the implementation of the **Equality Framework** and objectives. They support staff, managers, senior leadership, and members with their equality duties and ensure that decision makers are provided with up-to-date data so that they can consider specific needs of our customers are accounted for when planning and delivering services

Assessment tools

Assessment tools are vital in how we measure our equality performance and monitor the effectiveness of our policies and strategy in furthering equality and whether they are making a difference in our communities.



What assessment tools do we use?

Some of the ways we measure our equality performance includes:

- Equality Framework for Local Government,
- Corporate and local performance indicators,
- Annual equality progress reporting,
- Business planning,
- Impact Assessments.

Equality considerations must be included at every part of the decision-making process. Some of the ways we do this include **Impact Assessments (IA)**, which is available at Appendix A. An **Impact Assessment** must be completed whenever designing, procuring, or changing a service or policy to ensure their impact on equality is fully addressed. The Assessment considers a number of factors including impact for those with protected characteristics, stage of life, environment and reputation. An action plan should be developed to address any negative impacts.

Committee and Council reports include a comment on equality implications of proposed recommendations so that elected Members are aware of concerns and mitigating actions when taking decisions.

Business Planning

Every year we produce **Business Plans** across the Councils, which outline the delivery for each service over a twelve-month period. These detail potential equality implications, ensuring equality is considered at every part of the service design and delivery process. During the business planning process, staff are invited to discuss and therefore influence the business plans for the year ahead, ensuring an inclusive approach to the design and delivery of our services and projects.

Recruitment and employment

We are committed to equality of opportunity at all stages of employment. This includes from the advertisement of jobs, the recruitment and selection process, and the professional development of our employees. Additionally, the Councils support the rights of all people to be treated with dignity and respect at work.

Some of the things we do as an employer to ensure equality is considered include:

Code of conduct:

This establishes our expected standards of behaviour for all staff as well as for Councillors. This includes the right of both customers and employees to be treated with fairness and equality, in accordance with the equality strands as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

Complaints procedure:

It is important to us that both our staff and customers feel safe. We have a robust grievance and disciplinary procedure, which ensures that all complaints or allegations are taken seriously and acted upon.

Equality training:

We regularly review and update our equality training to ensure that our staff have the skills necessary to deliver our equality objectives and support improved outcomes. Equality training also forms a key part of our e-learning induction package and is mandatory for all staff members, with bespoke training provided when required.

Reasonable adjustments:

We make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the diverse needs and circumstances of our staff and customers, such as in relation to parental responsibilities or a disability, in order to eliminate disadvantage. This can include from making information available in an accessible format, changing the physical environment of our office spaces, or flexible working arrangements.

Appendix A – Impact Assessment (IA)

Name of the project, policy, service, or strategy:			
Responsible officer:			
Service Lead:			
Date of assessment:		Date of review:	

Introduction

Overview

What is an Impact Assessment?

The Impact Assessment is a tool to ensure that any policy, project, strategy, or service is assessed to consider any positive or negative impacts for all our residents with regards to equalities, health and sustainability. It is important that this is done in a timely manner and ideally it should precede the start of the project, policy or strategy concerned at Chorley Council or South Ribble Borough Council.

Who is the Impact Assessment for?

The responsibility of conducting the Impact Assessment is with the leading officer of the policy that is being assessed, with service leads responsible for the final sign off of the assessment. Once complete and signed off, the Impact Assessments are submitted to Performance and Partnerships, who are responsible for storing, monitoring, and ensuring the quality of the assessments. The assessment tool covers both Chorley and South Ribble Borough Council.

Why do we need to do Impact Assessments?

As Councils, we are committed as community leaders, service providers, and employers. Therefore, we will work to ensure that everybody is afforded equality of opportunity and good life chances. The Impact Assessment is a tool we use to ensure that we fulfil these commitments and thus meet our legal duties.

Instructions

Quick steps for completion

Follow the quick steps below when completing the Impact Assessment:

1. Sections: There are three sections to the Impact Assessment. These include:

- Equality impact: the impact on the nine equality strands, which include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, race, religion, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. See the **Equality Framework**.
- Health and environmental impact: the impact on health and wellbeing as well as the environment.
- Reputational impact: the impact on the Councils' reputation and our ability to deliver our key priorities. Reference should be made to the Corporate Strategies.

2. Rating and evidence: Each section has a number of questions that should be given a rating and evidence given for why the rating has been selected. This allows us to quantify the impact. The rating key is outlined below:

Code	Description
P	Positive impact
N	Negative impact
NI	Neutral impact

3. Actions: Once a rating is given, actions should be identified to mitigate any negative impacts or maximise any positive impacts of the policy, project, or strategy that is being assessed.

4. Sign off: Once the assessment is completed, sign off is required by a Service Lead.

5. Submit: Once signed off, the Impact Assessment should be sent to the Performance and Partnerships Team, who will store the assessment securely and check for quality.

6. Follow up: Actions should be implemented and changes should be made to the policy, project, or strategy that has been assessed, with follow ups conducted annually to monitor progress.

Information and Support

Contact details

To submit your completed Impact Assessment or for guidance and support, please contact Performance and Partnerships at performance@chorley.gov.uk or performance@southribble.gov.uk

Equality Impact

Area for consideration	P	N	NI	Evidence	Further action required
What potential impact does this activity have upon:					
Those of different ages?					
Those with physical or mental disability?					
Those who have undergone or are undergoing gender reassignment?					
Those who are pregnant or are parents?					
Those of different races?					
Those of different religions or beliefs?					
Those of different sexes?					
Those of different sexual orientations?					
Those who are married or in a civil partnership?					
Socio-economic equality or social cohesion?					

Health and Environmental Impact

Area for consideration	P	N	NI	Evidence	Further action required
What potential impact does this activity have upon:					
Enabling residents to start well (pre-birth to 19)? <i>(Please consider childhood obesity, vulnerable families, and pregnancy care)</i>					
Enabling residents to live well (16 to 75 years)? <i>(Please consider mental and physical wellbeing, living environment, healthy lifestyles, and improving outcomes)</i>					
Enabling residents to age well (over 65 years)? <i>(Please consider social isolation, living independently, dementia, and supporting carers and families)</i>					
Natural environment? <i>(Please consider impact on habitation, ecosystems, and biodiversity)</i>					
Air quality and pollution? <i>(Please consider impact on climate change, waste generation, and health)</i>					
Natural resources? <i>(Please consider the use of materials and as well as transport methods and their sustainability)</i>					
Rurality? <i>(Please consider the impact of those who live in rural communities, their access to services/activities)</i>					

Strategic Impact

Area for consideration	P	N	NI	Evidence	Further action required
What potential impact does this activity make upon:					
The Councils' reputation? <i>(Please consider impact on trust, confidence, our role as community leaders, and providing value for money)</i>					
Our ability to deliver the Corporate Strategy? <i>(Please refer to the Strategic Objectives)</i>					

