

The Stockport Partnership

Diversity and Equality Policy

June 2006



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If you would like a copy of this document in an alternative format, for example, Braille, large print or audio tape please contact:

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Foreword

We are proud of Stockport's diverse population. The Stockport Partnership shares a commitment to provide the community leadership needed to improve the quality of life for people in the borough. Promoting equality of opportunity and demonstrating the value we place on our diverse community is an important expression of this commitment.

This document sets out our vision and objectives for promoting diversity and equality. The Policy will ensure a clear and consistent approach to promoting diversity and equality across the family of partnerships. Our Diversity & Equality Vision states:

“We want to be recognised and known as an inclusive partnership that represents and serves people as equals. We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances.”

The partnership involves public authorities such as the Council, the NHS and the Police that have an increasing number of legal duties to promote equal opportunities for employees, citizens and customers. Although many partners from the voluntary, community and business sectors are not directly covered by these legal duties, listed public bodies still have a legal responsibility to make sure that the functions of a partnership do not discriminate, do promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different groups. Our vision extends beyond these legal duties to supporting the development of Stockport as a vibrant borough with a diverse social, cultural and economic life.

Brian J. Millard

Brian J Millard, Chair of the Stockport Partnership and Leader of the Council

Diversity & Equality Policy

Our Vision

The Stockport Partnership wants to be recognised and known as an inclusive partnership that represents and serves people as equals. We value people as individuals with diverse opinions, cultures, lifestyles and circumstances.

Our Objectives

1. To champion equality of opportunity and challenge all forms of discrimination in the borough and so contribute to Stockport being a place where people want to live, work and visit;
2. Where services are provided in partnership, to provide the services that meet the individual needs of our customers and communities;
3. Where individuals are employed by the partnership, to have a workforce that is representative of the communities we serve and to promote the benefits of having a diverse workforce; and
4. Where services are purchased or commissioned by the partnership, to use our spending power to influence others to promote equality of opportunity.

The Policy Context

The needs and aspirations of people in the borough set the context for this policy. Appendix 1 sets out the partnership's Equal Opportunity Policy Statements and our overall aim to promote equality irrespective of race, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, caring responsibilities, offending past, social class or age.

The law and good practice elsewhere influences the way we pursue our objectives. The public authorities that are involved in the Stockport Partnership are committed to meeting our obligations under the laws set out in Appendix 2. However the partnership regards these as minimum requirements. Our policy goes beyond them to include some groups of people whom the law does not currently protect, such as older and younger people, bisexual people, lesbians, gay men and trans gendered people. We will update our policy as and when necessary to meet new laws and their codes of practice.

Institutional discrimination

We know that institutions as well as individuals can unlawfully and unfairly discriminate. An established partnership can operate as an institution and so institutional discrimination is relevant. We define institutional discrimination as:

- The collective failure to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of who they are;
- Processes, attitudes and behaviour, which amount to discrimination through ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping;
- Not just actions taken by a person, organisation or partnership, but also actions **not** taken. This includes neglect, or services provided which do not meet the needs of different groups of people.

Institutional discrimination can be unwitting through lack of thought, knowledge or planning. It can exist regardless of the good intentions of a partnership's individual employees or decision-makers.

Roles and Responsibilities

Our role as a Community Leader

We will use our community leadership role to:

- Promote Diversity
- Promote equality of opportunity through our work with other organisations
- Build Community Cohesion

Our Role as an Employer

Although at the time of writing no individuals are directly employed by the Stockport Partnership, it is the case that individuals are employed as partnership officers within the family of partnerships via different organisations.

To cover circumstances where individuals are employed within partnerships, the following statement has been adopted:

“We reaffirm our opposition to unfair discrimination in recruitment, employment or pay. We will ensure that the selection, training and promotion of employees is based solely on the criteria of merit and ability. No job applicant, employee or ex employee will receive less favourable

treatment¹ on the grounds of race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, offending past², caring responsibilities, status as a refugee, social class or age.”

The principle behind this statement is intended to cover discrimination in employment occurring on any other unjustified grounds.

More detailed explanations of recruitment, selection and retention policies and procedures are available from the relevant employing organisations.

Our role as a Service Provider

Although at the time of writing no services are provided directly by the Stockport Partnership, it is the case that services are provided, purchased or commissioned by partnerships within the wider family of partnerships. Where this is the case, it is the partnership's aim to provide services to which all residents are entitled regardless of race, religion, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, offending past, caring responsibilities, social class or age.

We will make sure that our services are delivered equitably and meet the diverse needs of the borough's residents and customers by:

- **Assessing Diverse Needs**

When planning and reviewing services we will research customers' different needs to ensure that our services are able to reasonably cater for them;

When different service needs are identified we will respond in a positive way as it provides us with an opportunity to improve access to our services;

- **Meeting Diverse Needs**

We will take all reasonable, legal steps to ensure that our services are accessible to all customers;

- **Measuring and Reporting Performance**

Services identified as relevant to promoting equality will be monitored to ensure that different groups of people get equal access, outcomes and satisfaction.

¹ Except where there is a legally recognised Genuine Occupational Requirement

² Except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults.

Leadership and Responsibility for this Policy

It is crucial if we are to achieve our Diversity & Equality Vision that we have strong leadership throughout the family of partnerships. The main areas of responsibility are shown below:

- **The Stockport Partnership Board** – approves documents such as this one and has ultimate responsibility for them;
- **Thematic partnerships** – the Chairs of the thematic partnerships have responsibility for the implementation of this policy within their partnerships;
- **Partnership co-ordinators** – have responsibility for ensuring that their partnership's strategies and practices meet the objectives of this policy.

Breaches of this Policy

Breaches of this policy should be reported in the first instance to the partnership co-ordinator on **0161 474 3012** who will then refer the breach as appropriate on behalf of the Stockport Partnership Board. Where the breach involves a member of the partnership the procedure set out in the Code of Conduct should be followed.

Compliments, Comments or Complaints

Organisations involved in the family of partnerships have clear procedures that enable service users, candidates for jobs and employees to raise a grievance or make a complaint if they feel that they have been treated unfairly.

Where it is not clear which organisation is responsible, compliments, comments or complaints should be directed in the first instance to the partnership co-ordinator on **0161 474 3012** where appropriate action will be taken to refer the issue on to the relevant organisation.

Implementing and monitoring the Policy

The partnership co-ordinator has responsibility for overseeing the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

Appendix 1- Equal Opportunity Policy Statements

Gender

The partnership will challenge discriminatory assumptions about women and men, promote equal access for women and men to representation, services, employment, training, and pay and provide support to prevent discrimination against transsexual people who have or who are about to undergo gender reassignment.

Age

The partnership will work to ensure that people of all ages are treated with respect and dignity, challenge discriminatory assumptions related to age and promote equal access to employment, training and development opportunities.

Race

The partnership will actively promote race equality, challenge racism wherever it occurs and promote the swift and sensitive response to racist incidents amongst partners.

Ex Offenders

The partnership will work to prevent discrimination against employees or customers, regardless of their offending background (except where there is a known risk to children or vulnerable adults).

Disability

The partnership will challenge discriminatory assumptions about disabled people, encourage reasonable adjustments to ensure disabled people have access to services and employment opportunities and seek to continue improving access to information.

Sexual Orientation

The partnership will work to ensure that services take account of the needs of lesbians and gay men; and promote positive images of lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

Carers

The partnership will work to ensure that all carers know that they are entitled to an assessment of their needs and encourage the promotion of flexible employment practices to assist employees who are carers.

Belief & Religion

The partnership will work to ensure that beliefs and related observances are respected and accommodated wherever possible, and that groups of people are not excluded in any way due to their beliefs.

Asylum Seekers

The partnership will promote the successful integration of all asylum seekers and refugees and work to prevent discrimination against asylum seekers and refugees.

Appendix 2 – Relevant legislation

The following current and impending legislation influences our policy:

- Equal Pay Act 1970
- The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975 & 1986
- Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended in 2000)
- The Children's Act 1989
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended in 2005)
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Employment Relations Act 1999
- Sexual Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- The Employment Equality Regulations (Religion or Belief) 2003
- The Employment Equality Regulations (Sexual Orientation) 2003
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004
- The Equal Opportunities and Carers Act 2004
- The Employment Equality Regulations (Age) 2006
- The Equality Act 2006