

Runnymede Borough Council

Equality Policy

Date March 2021

This Policy

The purpose of this policy is to set out the duties and responsibilities that Runnymede Borough Council (the Council) has in relation to Equality Act 2010 (the Act), to identify the types of behaviour which the Council would view as unacceptable under the Act and the actions it will continue to undertake to comply with the Act.

The provisions of the Act seek to address discrimination and unlawful behaviour.

The Council recognises that there are definitions that could be of assistance when considering whether any provisions of the Act have been breached.

The Council has included the following definitions of unacceptable behaviour within this Policy but accepts that there may be other definitions that could have equal value when addressing unlawful behaviour covered by the Act. The definitions stated below are not considered to be a definitive list.

- **Age Discrimination:**
Occurs when someone is treated differently because of their age. (Equality and Human Rights Commission: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/age-discrimination>)
- **Race Discrimination:**
where someone is treated differently because of their race (Equality and Human Rights Commission: <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/race-discrimination>)
- **Sexism:**
Any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline, with the purpose or effect of:
 - i. violating the inherent dignity or rights of a person or a group of persons; or
 - ii. resulting in physical, sexual, psychological or socio-economic harm or suffering to a person or a group of persons; or
 - iii. creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment; or
 - iv. constituting a barrier to the autonomy and full realisation of human rights by a person or a group of persons; or
 - v. maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes
- **Antisemitism:**
“Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.” (International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance [What is antisemitism? | IHRA \(holocaustremembrance.com\)](https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/what-is-antisemitism/))
- **Islamophobia:**
Islamophobia is any distinction, exclusion, or restriction towards, or preference against, Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) that has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.
[617bfd6cf1456219c2c4bc5c_islamophobia.pdf \(website-files.com\)](#)

- **Disability Discrimination:**
Where a person is treated less well or put at a disadvantage for a reason that relates to their disability in one of the situations covered by the Equality Act 2010 (Equality and Human Rights Commission <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/disability-discrimination>)
- **Gender Re-assignment:**
A person is treated differently because they identify as someone who is Transsexual. (Equality and Human Rights Commission <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/gender-reassignment-discrimination>).
- **Sexual Orientation:**
Discrimination occurs where due to the persons sexual orientation they are treated less favourably than someone who does not share that sexual orientation
- **Marriage and Civic Partnership:**
where a person because they are married or in a civil partnership is treated differently to someone who is single, engaged or is engaged to be married.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity:**
Discrimination here can occur during labour and while on maternity leave (or as a result of being in labour or on maternity leave where the person against whom the discrimination occurred has since returned to work) and as an example could be include a situation where a woman is not given the opportunity to return to the job she held prior to going on maternity leave.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) came into force on 8th April 2010 and brought together a number of enactments in force at that time relating to Discrimination, including, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Equality Act 2006 and Regulations that addressed equality in employment.

Since the Act came into force, a number of requirements have been placed on public bodies which include workforce monitoring and publishing data regarding the Gender Pay Gap.

[Gender pay gap for Runnymede Borough Council - GOV.UK - GOV.UK \(gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/gender-pay-gap-for-runnymede-borough-council)

The Act makes it illegal to discriminate against another person based on that person's age, disability, sex, race (which includes a person's colour, ethnicity or nationality), religion or beliefs and sexual orientation. In addition, it is illegal to discriminate on the basis that a person is married or in a civil partnership, is pregnant or on maternity leave or has undergone or seeking to undergo gender reassignment. Discrimination under the Act includes both direct and indirect discrimination.

Direct Discrimination exists where one person with a protected characteristic is treated less favourably than another person who does not share that protected characteristic, and that unfavourable treatment is based on the protected characteristic they have.

Indirect Discrimination occurs when either actions of a person or body or the implementation of policy has an unintended or indirect consequence of treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than someone who does not share that protected characteristic.

There are situations where both direct and indirect discrimination are not considered to be unlawful under the Act. Less favourable treatment may be undertaken where it can be objectively justified, that treating a person with a protected characteristic less favourable than someone without a protected characteristic is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The Act identifies certain qualities or features individuals may have and states that it is unlawful to discriminate against a person if they have one of these qualities or features. The nine qualities or features referred to are known under the Act as the “Protected Characteristics” and different consideration may apply to each Characteristic concerned.

For example, where the protected characteristic of disability is engaged, the body/organisation to which the duty applies, must consider whether reasonable adjustments are required to be made in order to mitigate any inequality that exists. Reasonable adjustments may take the form of widening a doorway to allow for wheelchair access, or the provision of a ramp where the only access to a building is via stairs.

Guidance has been published by the Government to assist in interpreting the Act including guidance relating to the Public Sector Equality Duty. The guidance can be accessed on the Equalities and Human Rights Commission’s Website;
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com>

The Public Sector Equality Duties

The Act also imposes a ‘general duty’ and two ‘specific duties’ upon all public authorities, including the Council.

The general duty requires that wherever the Council exercises any of its public functions, it must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;
- Advance equality of opportunity; and
- Foster good relations between people of different backgrounds.

In order to ensure that it properly adheres to this general duty, the Council and its various business centers have adopted a practice of carrying out equality screening and/or equality impact assessments prior to the relevant service department undertaking any particular action or decision which will potentially have a disproportionate impact on a particular group or sector of the community or employees of the Council. Accordingly, the Council has incorporated its duties under the Act into its relevant services areas and will continue to ensure it discharges its duties in accordance with the Act.

The Council’s document templates for the equality screening and equality impact assessment exercises can be viewed on the Council’s website here:

[Equality Assessment Form Template \(runnymede.gov.uk\)](#)
[Completed Equality Assessment Exercises](#)

The specific duties require the Council to:

- (i) publish equality data/statistics relating to both, its employees and the people it serves (residents of the Borough of Runnymede); and
- (ii) publish ‘Equality Objectives’.

The Council's published statistics of its staff and residents can be viewed here:

[Home | Surrey-i \(surreyi.gov.uk\)](http://surreyi.gov.uk)

[Workforce Monitoring Report \(runnymede.gov.uk\)](http://runnymede.gov.uk)

The Council's current Equality Objectives can be viewed here:

[Current Equality Objectives](#)

Vision and Review

The Council is conscious that individuals and groups can experience a range of barriers or disadvantages that prevent them from enjoying the same quality of life as others. The Council is committed to ensuring that its services are available to and accessible by, all members and sectors of the community and its employees.

The Council will continue to monitor its conformity with the Act and performance generally in respect of equality issues on an ongoing basis through the following measures:

- by measuring its success in meeting its published Equality Objectives;
- through feedback, comments and complaints received by its residents / service users; and
- by endeavoring to undertake its own regular reviews of its services.

The Council's Duty under the Act also extends to its employees. The Council will;

- promote equal opportunities in employment which will include an equal opportunity approach to recruitment and retention of staff.
- fairness in the interview and selection process, including selection for promotion, redundancy and other changes to employment status.
- a commitment to remuneration of staff based on equal pay/ equal pay for work of equal value
- ensuring the working environment is free from harassment and bullying and everyone is treated with dignity.
- make reasonable adjustments where required.
- where members of staff interact with the public, measures are put in place to ensure staff are not harassed, bullied or treated unfairly when providing the service on behalf of the Council.

The Protected Characteristics in more detail.

Each protected characteristic is defined within the Act and may require a different action or consideration based on the function the Council is exercising at that time.

The nine protected characteristics (including a brief explanation) are;

1. Sex- which relates to either a man or a woman or someone who identifies as non-binary.

2. Disability- under the Act disability includes both mental and physical impairment. However, it does require that the impairment is substantial and long term and must affect that person's ability to carry out normal day to day functions. Substantial is interpreted as meaning, not trivial or minor in its effect. "Long term" is interpreted lasting either 12 months or longer or is likely to last for 12 months or longer. Reasonable Adjustments may be made in order to facilitate access to Council facilities for anyone who has a disability, or to ensure employees are able to carry out their duties.
3. Race and Ethnicity- the Act makes clear that discrimination relating to this protected characteristic does not just relate to colour and relates to nationality and ethnic or national background. Any discrimination would relate to a person belonging to an ethnic group. Romany Gypsies and Irish Travellers are considered ethnic groups under the Act as would someone because of their Country of birth.
4. Religion and Belief- includes someone who has a religious belief and someone who does not have a religious belief. Belief is defined as a religion or a philosophy. Therefore, atheism is a "belief" for the purposes of the Act.
5. Sexual Orientation- refers to someone's sexual orientation to a person of the same sex or of the opposite sex or both sexes.
6. Age- refers to someone who is within a particular age group which may be of school age, 5 to 17, young adults of between 18 to 25 or the elderly from 65 onwards. The relevant age group that applies will depend on the policy or function concerned.
7. Gender Reassignment- refers to a person who identifies as a transsexual person and who is proposing to, has or is undergoing "a process for the purpose of reassigning that person's sex".
8. Marriage or Civil Partnership relates to someone who is married or in a civil partnership.
9. Pregnancy and Maternity is a protected characteristic for the period where a person is pregnant or considered to be on maternity leave, which is taken to start from childbirth. Discrimination here relates both to someone who is pregnant and where that discrimination relates to the time that person was pregnant.

A person may have more than one protected characteristic and an act of discrimination may affect one or more protected characteristics.

The Council also aims to address harassment and victimisation through its policies and actions.

The Council recognises that its duties under the Act are ongoing and evolving.

In order to ensure it continues to comply with its duties under the Act the Council will continue to monitor and update its policies in line with its equality duty and where possible liaise with appropriate groups to ensure any relevant feedback is taken into account.

The Council is committed to creating cohesive communities that are strong, fair and inclusive. The Council wants Runnymede to be a place where people have equal access to opportunities and where inequality is actively tackled. The Council recognises that it can only do this by working with its partners to advance equality, promote good community relations and tackle discrimination.

The Council knows the diversity of Runnymede's communities is one of its greatest strengths and assets. The Council value the strength that comes with difference and the positive contribution that diversity brings to the community. The Council will build upon this by working with its partners to provide accessible and responsive services that enable everyone to take part in the social, cultural and economic wealth of the borough. The Council is committed to using its leadership role to understand and meet the needs the community.

The Council recognise and accept that discrimination means some people may have not had equal access to services or employment or fair chances in life. Therefore, the Council supports the view that it may be necessary to develop or create some services or opportunities to specifically meet different needs. The Council knows that discrimination can be institutionalised and are committed to combating any unintended institutional discrimination by developing an anti-discriminatory culture, placing equality at the center of everything it does.

For all information contained within this document contact:

Runnymede Borough Council
The Civic Centre
Station Road
Addlestone
Surrey KT15 2AH

Tel 01932 425640

email: mario.leo@runnymede.gov.uk

www.runnymede.gov.uk

Further copies of this publication,
or copies in large print other
formats or languages
can be obtained via the
above contact details.



Search: Runnymede Borough Council