



# **East Herts Council**

## **Race Equality Scheme**

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## **Race Equality Action Plan**

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### **Race Equality Scheme**

#### **Legal Obligations to Race Equality.**

Local Authorities have a statutory duty to produce a Race Equality Scheme, which can be part of a wider equalities scheme.

The Race Relations Act 1976 as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a general duty on a wide range of authorities to promote race equality. This duty means that in everything they do authorities should have a due regard to the need to:

- ◆ Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
- ◆ Promote equality of opportunity; and
- ◆ Promote good race relations between people of different racial groups.

Publishing a Race Equality Scheme shows that the public authority is accountable for its proposal for meeting the duty. This is also an opportunity for the authority to explain the values, principles and standards that guide its approach to race equality.

The duty aims to make the promotion of race equality central to the way public authorities work and promoting race equality will improve the delivery of public services for everyone.

Public authorities should consider the following four steps to meet the general duty:

- ◆ Identify which of their functions are relevant to the duty.
- ◆ Set priorities for these functions, based on their relevance to race equality.
- ◆ Assess how these functions and any related policies affect race equality.
- ◆ Consider how the policies might be changed where necessary to meet the general duty and make the changes.

If a public authority does not meet any of its specific duties, it could face enforcement action by the Commission for Racial Equality (C.R.E) under section 71D of the amended Race Relations Act.

## Background to East Herts Council

East Herts is situated in the diverse County of Hertfordshire within the South East of England. Within Hertfordshire the 2001 Census cited 6.3% of the total population of just over 1 million was from an minority ethnic group. In East Herts this figure is just 2.9%.

ETHNIC POPULATION				
White	Mixed	Asian	Black	Chinese/Other
125,199	1,178	1,193	494	855
97.1%	0.9%	0.9%	0.4%	0.7%

Source: 2001 Census

## East Herts Council Race Equality Values.

East Herts is predominantly rural, and this can lead to particular communities and individuals becoming isolated and disadvantaged as a result of where they live. That isolation can doubly disadvantage racial groups who may already face social and institutional discrimination.

East Herts Council has key corporate priorities and objectives:

- 1) Provide leadership to our work with others aimed at reducing people's fear of crime.
- 2) Improve standards of neighbourhood management in our towns and villages.
- 3) Protect and provide support to the most vulnerable, in partnership with others.
- 4) Protect our natural assets through recycling and other initiatives that achieve economic and environmental balance.

- 5) Create opportunities for improving access to services and public involvement in Council business
- 6) Preserve the unique mix of rural and urban communities, ensuring economic opportunities are generated for the benefit of all.
- 7) Improve the health and sustainability of the organisation.

The Council's Diversity and Equalities Policy sets out its commitment to equality of opportunity, including to racial groups as follows:

"East Herts Council is firmly committed to providing and promoting equality for all its employees and the wider community. The inclusion of all individuals and the equality of opportunity are key objectives of the Council's Corporate Priorities and Objectives. The Council has adopted an equalities strategy that will ensure equality influences the way we provide services and the employment of staff. To achieve this we will endeavour to create an environment in which there is respect for every individual and recognition that no member of the public, employee, potential employee, service user and councillor will be discriminated against irrespective of their gender, race, ethnicity, colour, marital status, disability, age, sexuality, family responsibilities, religion, trade union involvement or political beliefs. Neither shall they be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justifiable for health and safety or legal reasons. This is not an exhaustive list and the Council recognises that there are other groups who may face unlawful discrimination."

### **Moving race equality duties and obligations forward.**

The Council has 50 Members, 6 of which make up the Executive with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council having responsibility for Diversity. The Council has 2 Executive Directors and 7 Assistant Directors. The Assistant Director (Human Resources) is the lead Director for Diversity.

Internally at East Herts Council a group has been set up to carry forward corporate cross cutting and countywide developments in equality and race relations policy. The group includes

representatives from various service areas, Directors board and Unison. Members of the group endeavour to attend and participate in any countywide networks with a focus on equality, for example the Hertfordshire Equality Forum.

East Herts Council is responsible for the delivery of many services within the district including:

- Planning/Development Control
- Environmental Health
- Benefits
- Revenues
- Housing
- Democratic Services
- Leisure Services

All services should include race and equalities targets within their Service Plans. Each Head of Service is responsible for ensuring that this happens. The targets set should be integrated into policy and best value reviews.

### **Consultation with community**

As part of the Race Equality Scheme the Council will undertake an assessment of its policies and functions, as well as other community consultation.

It will also support the needs / impact assessment required by the Equalities Standard as part of its commitment to achieving its objectives, and all services will be required to set clear service standards and targets, including those for cross-cutting issues like equalities.

### **Monitoring arrangements.**

The current monitoring arrangements are delivered primarily corporately, through performance management and the following Best Value Indicators, reported to quarterly to Performance Scrutiny Committee and published annually in the Best Value Performance plan

- ◆ BV2 – Equality Standard for Local Government adopted in 2003;
- ◆ BV 11b- The percentage of top 5% of earners from black and minority ethnic communities.
- ◆ BV 17- The percentage of local authority employees from minority ethnic communities compared with the percentage of the economically active minority community population in the authority area.

There are difficulties in collecting meaningful data in an area like East Herts that has a relatively small ethnic population. The adoption of the Equalities Standard will monitor progress with promotion of race equality, together with gender and disability and other equalities issues as appropriate. However, this Race Equality Scheme intends to identify those services and functions which will be subject to particular scrutiny in relation to issues of race promotion over the next four years.

Each Head of Service is responsible for monitoring its core services. East Herts along with the County Council, Police Authority and five other district councils have taken a contract through MORI for them to set up a selection of citizen's panels consisting of 2000 Hertfordshire residents that can be used as a consultation mechanism for a variety of issues.

### **East Herts Council Race Equality Promotion**

Success in the promotion of race equality will require leadership, commitment and resources from Members and senior officers. Councillors, Directors and Heads of Service will need to ensure that monitoring of developments in race relations, promotion and equality of access are implemented and monitored at service level.

Success will depend on the proactive development of activities, training, procedures and remedial action to meet ongoing needs, as well as ongoing monitoring. Each division within the authority will need to work towards establishing standards, targets and procedural guidance where necessary.

## **Targets**

This Race Equality Scheme will be linked into the Council's objective to work through the levels set within the Equality Standard for Local Government. Targets for progression through the Equality Standard are as follows:

- Level 1 requires that the authority has adopted a comprehensive equality policy including commitments to develop equality targets, commitment to consultation and impact assessment, and to monitoring, auditing and scrutiny.
- Level 2 requires that the authority has engaged in an impact and needs assessment, a consultation process and an equality action planning process for employment and service delivery.
- Level 3 requires that the authority has completed the equality action planning process, set objectives and targets and established information and monitoring systems to assess progress.
- Level 4 - authority has developed information and monitoring systems that enable it to assess progress towards achieving specific targets.
- Level 5 requires that the authority has achieved targets, reviewed them and reset new targets.

It is East Herts Council's objective to achieve level 2 by March 2005

### **Internal Targets for the Scheme**

- ◆ Self-assessment against the Equality Standard, Level 2 to be undertaken by 2004;
- ◆ Services identified, as having a high priority will deliver an approved Race Equality Action Plan as part of a wider Equalities Action Pla.
- ◆ Similarly services identifying medium and low priorities will deliver an approved Race Equality Action Plan as part of a wider Equalities Action Plan by April 2004 and 2005 respectively.

- ◆ The action plan should reflect the guidance set out in the “C.R.E Code of Practice” on the Duty to Promote Race Equality and the “ Equality Standard for local government”.
- ◆ From 2004 all services and proposed policies will take account of their likely impact on race relations.
- ◆ Development of a diversity panel for ongoing consultation, from 2004.
- ◆ Joint training for staff and equalities sector.



## Race Equality Action Plan

July 2003

<b>Objective/Targets/Actions</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
Reviewing Equalities Policy	Diversity Group HR	
Introducing monitoring in: - Recruitment & Selection - Employment - Training - Grievance & Discipline	HR	July 2003
Review of Employment Policies	HR	2003-2004
Improving race awareness amongst Employees and Members, with increased Diversity Awareness Training	HR Directors, Members	July 2003 onwards

<b>Objective/Targets/Actions</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>Timescales</b>
Consultation with Community – ensuring equal and fair access to all services for whole of community	Diversity Group Heads of Service	
Embedding race equality and other diversity issues into service plans and their delivery in practice – investigating service provision to eliminate any gaps in equality.	Heads of Service	2003-2004
Monitoring of Services	Heads of Service	2003-2004
Development of Racial Incident Reporting Procedure and form	Community Safety Officer Diversity Group	End 2003-2004

East Herts Race Equality Scheme is linked to the targets set within the Equality Standard. East Herts seeks to promote equal opportunities for all Community groups focusing on not only Race but Gender, Age, Disability Religion and Sexual Orientation. For this reason and because the Ethnic Minority numbers within East Herts are so low the Race Action Plan will in future be incorporated into the Equality Standard Action Plan, corporately, of the Diversity Steering Group and within Service Plans.

Nps\Local Joint Panel\11 Oct 2004\Race Relation Scheme final ljp Oct 2004