



# **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

**Document Version History:**

Version 1.0

Agreed: 25 July 2024

Significant version changes made:

- 
- 

Changes completed by:

- 

**Next Full Review Date:**

24 July 2026 (minimum every two years)

DRAFT

## **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

### **Contents:**

1. Introduction and Vision
2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statements
3. Our Commitments
4. Roles and Responsibilities
5. Putting Commitments into Practice
6. Righting Wrongs

### **Appendices:**

- Appendix A – Types of Discrimination
- Appendix B – Protected Characteristics
- Appendix C – Our Values (in full)

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND VISION

- 1.1 The New Forest National Park Authority is committed to championing and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion in everything that we do; eliminating discrimination (as defined in Appendix A), victimisation and harassment; advancing fairness and equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different people and groups. This applies both to our role as an employer, and to the delivery of public services by us.

- 1.2 Our organisation understands that equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are linked but distinct issues that may need approaching in different ways:

‘Equality’ means that everybody has equal access to the same opportunities (equity) and is treated with respect.

‘Diversity’ means valuing individuals for the different perspectives they have to offer. Those differences are seen as a benefit and, when shared, lead to better outcomes.

‘Inclusion’ means that everybody has a voice, feels accepted, has a sense of belonging and a means to participate, which may involve making reasonable adjustments to our usual processes.

- 1.3 The New Forest National Park Partnership Plan has one of its five core pillars delivering ‘An Inclusive National Park’. This is our joint vision that our National Park is a friendly, open and welcoming place, with outstanding opportunities to enjoy its special qualities, where we respect and understand nature and each other. This commitment extends to all people, including in particular those with the characteristics recognised by legislation (see Appendix B), which relate to age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage/civil partnership; pregnancy/maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; or sexual orientation.

- 1.4 We take EDI work forward internally through our ‘New Forest Voices’ programme with these objectives:

**Our vision:** a National Park that embraces and benefits from the diversity of thoughts, ideas and ways of working that people from different communities, backgrounds, experiences and identities offer.

**Our mission:** Strengthening ‘Team New Forest’ by growing our understanding of each other, our audiences and embedding diversity and inclusion into our culture and work and practises.

**Our goal:** An open, proactive and inclusive culture which recognises and values people’s differences as part of a strong team to improve the National Park and the Authority.

## **2. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STATEMENTS**

### **Summary:**

- 2.1 The Authority is committed to equality of opportunity in the delivery of services and aims to ensure that services are accessible and appropriate to the differing needs of all people, whilst paying due regard to our purposes and duty and the resources available.
- 2.2 The Authority will fully comply with the Equality Act 2010 and, through its Inclusive National Park theme within the Partnership Plan, aims to go beyond that in working to promote opportunities for all the public to understand and enjoy the special qualities of the National Park.
- 2.3 We will aim to pro-actively highlight and address all forms of discrimination wherever we see it or where it is reported to us. Our culture, delivered through our People Plan, will promote inclusivity to ensure all ideas, beliefs and opinions are both welcomed and recognised.
- 2.4 The Equality Act 2010 contains an integrated Public Sector Equality Duty which requires us to consider how our policies and decisions might impact people with protected characteristics. Taking steps to:
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
  - advance equal opportunities for all
  - foster good relations between all individuals.

### **General Aspects:**

- 2.5 We want to be recognised as an inclusive organisation, where diversity is respected, valued and championed. It is our objective that everyone is treated equitably, with dignity and has fair access to resources and opportunities. We will address discrimination or disadvantage to ensure no group or individual is directly or indirectly discriminated against when accessing our services or employment opportunities.
- 2.6 As an employer and a service provider, we will meet all legal duties in respect of equality and diversity. The key piece of legislation is the Equality Act 2010, which protects people from discrimination on the basis of nine protected characteristics. In addition, although not part of legislation, we consider that people excluded due to their actual or perceived background, social/financial position, neurodiversity and rural isolation are also communities and individuals that require specific attention.
- 2.7 We aim to do so in a manner which is transparent, without assumptions and in line with our core values (which can be seen in full in Appendix C) and we expect all who are associated with the Authority – members, staff and volunteers, as well as partners and contractors who work with us – to uphold the policy and actively promote it when representing the Authority.

- 2.8 We fully recognise that there are many types of discrimination, as described in Appendix A, and that it can take place in multiple ways and forms – including to an individual, group or community and through written, oral, online or offline means. This policy must be considered and implemented alongside many other Authority policies and vice versa.

#### Employment Aspects:

- 2.9 Equality, diversity and inclusion in the workplace is good management practice and makes sound business sense. We want a workforce that is truly representative of, and can deliver for, all sections of our society. We want each member of staff to feel respected and able to give their best.
- 2.10 All employees and volunteers, whether part-time, full-time or temporary, will be treated fairly and with respect. Selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability and reasonable adjustments will be considered whenever necessary to ensure fairness and equity. All employees and volunteers will be helped and encouraged to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency of the Authority.
- 2.11 There are various types of discrimination and other unlawful conduct set out in the Equality Act 2010 that apply to most (and in some cases all) of the protected characteristics. There is also protection against discrimination where someone is perceived to have one of the protected characteristics or where they are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic.
- 2.12 Within the workplace our policies and practices will promote equality, diversity and inclusion and therefore we oppose and avoid all forms of unlawful discrimination, including in:
- terms and conditions of employment including pay and benefits
  - selection for employment, promotion, training or other developmental opportunities
  - requests for flexible working
  - leave for parents/carers
  - redundancy
  - dealing with grievances and discipline
  - dismissal.
- 2.13 Line managers, in particular, are required to think about equality and fairness in all circumstances, including:
- Day to day management of the team
    - Deciding employee pay and benefits
    - Providing training opportunities
    - Setting a dress code
    - Giving everyone fair access to the facilities at work
  - People starting and leaving

- Recruiting new people; including advertising vacancies, conducting interviews and selecting the right person for the job and feeding back to unsuccessful candidates
- Using positive action in recruitment
- Promoting and developing people
- Managing dismissals, redundancy and retirement
- Other areas of employment
  - Maternity, paternity and parental leave
  - Determining requests from employees to work flexibly
  - Making decisions on time off, e.g. annual leave and sick leave.

### 3. OUR COMMITMENTS

- 3.1 To welcome all ideas, comments, and suggestions which are aimed at helping us to deliver policies and services which are accessible to all and meet different people's needs.
- 3.2 To build the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion into our policies, decision-making and processes. We welcome comments and suggestions to help us to do this and will seek to base our decisions on relevant evidence; where necessary we will obtain this through consultation and engagement.
- 3.3 To carry out equality impact assessments (EIAs) of proposed new policies, as part of reviewing existing policies, and in relation to key decisions (e.g. use of resources). EIAs **[links to guidance and template to be added]** will be carried out with rigour and with an open mind, as part of the decision-making process, and not as an add-on at the end of it.
- 3.4 To adopt and publish targets relevant to equality, diversity and inclusion, and to publish our performance in meeting them. To ensure that they are not seen as a sideline or a special interest, this will be done through our Executive Board, RAPC Committee and Full Authority.
- 3.5 To require contractors, and all other third parties we deal with, to take all reasonable steps to meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and prohibit them from unlawfully discriminating.
- 3.6 To create an environment which is diverse and inclusive, in which individual differences and the contributions of all people, including employees, members, volunteers and stakeholders are recognised and valued.
- 3.7 As an employer, to provide a working environment that promotes dignity and respect for all. No form of intimidation, bullying or harassment will be tolerated; and employment practices and procedures will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure fairness for all.
- 3.8 Learning, development and progression opportunities will be available to all employees, members and volunteers.

#### 4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ALL EMPLOYEES	<p>All employees are responsible for ensuring that this policy is followed as directed in the Staff Code of Conduct. They are also responsible for taking advantage of opportunities to improve their awareness of the barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion in service provision and employment, for working towards the elimination of these barriers and for performing their duties in accordance with the equality principles and standards that underpin the Authority's activities.</p> <p>All employees must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be open to new ways of implementing good practice on equality, diversity and inclusion through awareness of Inclusive National Park and New Forest Voices work.</li><li>• Report any suspected discriminatory acts or practices (usually direct to their line manager, but to HR and/or a member of ELT if necessary).</li><li>• Not practice or encourage unlawful discrimination, nor tolerate it if witnessed, and consider intervening if safe to do so. This could mean calling out inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour in a non-confrontational way or showing support to the person who has experienced it and reporting it to a manager or HR.</li><li>• Not victimise anyone as a result of them having reported or provided evidence of discrimination.</li><li>• Not make unwelcome comments, gestures or actions based on personal or protected characteristics.</li><li>• Proactively engage in any EDI learning and development opportunities offered.</li><li>• Accept feedback on their own actions/behaviours as a means to increase awareness and confidence.</li></ul>
MANAGERS	<p>All managers are responsible for implementing equality, diversity and inclusion in service provision and employment and for implementing, monitoring and promoting this policy.</p> <p>They are expected to proactively seek opportunities to develop their EDI knowledge and apply learning to everyday management of their team, promoting an inclusive culture.</p> <p>Managers play an important role in setting the standards of behaviours for their teams. They are expected to lead their teams with dignity and integrity, ensuring every individual has a sense of belonging.</p>



STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM	<p>The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) is responsible for providing leadership in the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that we incorporate specific equality objectives/considerations in terms of service delivery and employment.</p> <p>It is responsible for ensuring that employees are adequately informed, trained and supported so that their duties are carried out in accordance with this policy.</p>
MEMBERS	<p>The principles in this policy apply to Members and by adhering to this policy, Members will also be complying with their general obligations under the Members Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Members have overall responsibility for the direction and scrutiny of this policy and will ensure that the principles of fairness and equality underpin their decision-making process. Members, like officers, will be provided with adequate training to ensure understanding of, and engagement with, EDI issues.</p>
VOLUNTEERS	<p>All volunteers will be expected to abide by the principles in the policy and will be provided with adequate training to ensure understanding of, and engagement with, EDI issues.</p>
EXTERNAL PARTNERS / CONTRACTORS	<p>All external partners, including contractors, will be expected to abide by underlying principles similar to, and having the same impact as, those in this policy.</p>
TRADE UNIONS	<p>The Authority believes that Trade Unions are key partners in promoting and helping to ensure adherence to this policy and that the involvement, support and participation of employees and their Trade Unions is essential. UNISON is the trade union recognised by the New Forest National Park Authority.</p>

## 5. PUTTING COMMITMENTS INTO PRACTICE

- 5.1 The statutory purposes and duty of National Park Authorities should be read in conjunction with, and delivered alongside, our EDI obligations; this is clearly set out in the Re:New People 'An Inclusive National Park' theme of our Partnership Plan.
- 5.2 Our 'New Forest Voices' (NFV) is a cross-Authority staff working group which meets at least four times a year to discuss and progress action on equality, diversity and inclusion issues. The group will ensure that the Authority meets its obligation to publish information about its compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, as well as publishing specific targets, and performance in relation to them. The group is chaired by the Authority's Access and Learning Manager, who will ensure that the Strategic Leadership Team receives regular reports in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion matters.

5.3 The role of New Forest Voices is to review and develop Authority policies and procedures and make recommendations to SLT to ensure that the Authority provides a fair and equally accessible service to all. It is responsible for:

- Providing a focus for equality, diversity and inclusion issues within the Authority and raising awareness amongst officers and members
- Challenging existing cultures and traditions, where required in connection with the above
- Having oversight of the services and practices operated by the Authority in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion awareness, and best practice elsewhere
- Considering relevant changes in legislation and recommending changes to policies accordingly.

5.4 Summary of New Forest Voices

#### **Why have a New Forest Voices project?**

Everyone stands to benefit when we embrace and value the diversity of thoughts, ideas and ways of working that people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities bring to our Authority and to the National Park.

- Performance: research shows that organisations with more diverse teams outperform those with a more homogeneous staff team.
- Reputation: Organisations that lack diversity are being called out publicly and can tarnish their reputation, not to mention falling behind when it comes to recruitment.
- Duty: We are a public sector body, funded by society and should reflect and work for all sectors of the community.
- Legislation: Legally we're required to meet equality and diversity regulations.
- Ethics: Our work and our National Park will be richer if we take account of and include different ages, disabilities, races, religions, genders and sexual orientations (among others).

#### **Our approach:**

We're not expecting our culture and practises to change overnight. The New Forest Voices approach is about incremental relationship building - project by project, relationship by relationship, experience by experience. People often react with fear and distrust when their beliefs are challenged. While fear can be a powerful motivator, it also encourages people to narrow their perspective - the opposite desired effect for creating a more inclusive National Park and Authority.

We'll look at challenges through a lens of possibility, using shared experiences and storytelling to create greater potential for positive change.

We'll focus on creating moments that help us move towards our goal, pointing out where there's room for improvement, but also highlighting moments of success and celebrating them.

## **6. RIGHTING WRONGS**

- 6.1 No organisation, group or individual gets everything right all the time. We recognise that mistakes can and will be made, often from lack of thought or understanding. We will learn from any such mistakes and share our learning with each other in an open and transparent way.
- 6.2 We welcome all feedback to help us to improve, and this can be addressed to HR and/or a member of the New Forest Voices group. Better still, we strive to create an environment where we can challenge each other through informal dialogue and agreed learning and/or solutions, resolving issues at their source.
- 6.3 We recognise that sometimes people wish to use formal procedures to register a complaint or their dissatisfaction. We respect people's right to do that, and will ensure that all such communications are dealt with quickly and effectively under the correct policy, which may be:
- The Complaints Process, for general comments and complaints against the Authority itself, or staff of the Authority
  - The Grievance Policy, for complaints and concerns expressed by employees of the Authority
  - Our separate procedures for complaints about misconduct by a Member of the Authority.

Employees may wish to speak to their Union representative for advice.

Details of the complaints procedures are available via our website [www.newforestnpa.gov.uk](http://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk) (or via the Intranet for employees). Help can be provided to anyone who may have difficulty reading or understanding these documents.

- 6.4 The following documents are key tools used by the Authority to meet the commitments made in this Policy:


National Park Partnership (Management) Plan

Business Plan

People Plan (including Appraisals process)

Bribery and Corruption Policy

Capability Policy  
Complaints Process  
Disciplinary Policy and Procedures  
Grievance Policy and Procedures  
Government Guidance, such as 'the principles of good decision-making'  
Harassment and Bullying Policy  
IT User Policy  
Learning and Development Policy  
Members Code of Conduct  
Members Social Media Policy  
Recruitment Procedures and Guidance  
Safeguarding Policy  
Sickness Absence and Ill Health Policy  
Staff Code of Conduct  
Whistleblowing Policy



## **Appendix A – Types of Discrimination**

Discrimination may take seven main forms and is defined in law along with the protective characteristics associated with each provision as listed below:

**Direct Discrimination:** Occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic. For example, a manager does not select a pregnant woman for promotion even though they meet all of the competencies because they are pregnant. This is likely to be direct discrimination and cannot be justified.

**Associative Discrimination:** Occurs when someone discriminates against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic. An example of this is when a manager does not give a job-applicant the role, even though they have met all of the competencies for the role, just because the applicant tells the employer they have a disabled partner. This is likely to be associative discrimination because of disability by association.

**Discrimination by Perception:** Occurs when someone discriminates against an individual because they think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic. An example of this is when a manager selects a person for redundancy because they incorrectly think they have a progressive condition (i.e. that they are a disabled person). This is likely to be discrimination by perception because they believe the individual is disabled. The Lawrence enquiry defines discrimination further.

**Indirect Discrimination:** Occurs when a seemingly neutral provision, criterion or practice that applies to everyone places a group who share a characteristic e.g. type of disability at a particular disadvantage. An example of this is when an employer decides to apply a “no hats or headgear” rule to staff. If this rule is applied in exactly the same way to every member of staff, then staff who may cover their heads as part of their religion or cultural background (such as Sikhs, Jews, Muslims and Rastafarians) will not be able to meet this requirement of the dress code and may face disciplinary action as a result.

**Dual Discrimination:** Occurs when someone is treated less favourably because of a combination of two relevant protected characteristics. This means that it will be possible for an applicant to claim that they have been treated less favourably not just because of their race but also because of their gender. For example, because the individual is an Asian woman.

**Detriment arising from a Disability:** Arises when you treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability. An example of this when an employer imposes a “no beards” rule as part of a dress code and tells staff they will be disciplined if they do not comply. The employee is a disabled person who has a skin condition which makes shaving very painful. They have been treated unfavourably (threat of disciplinary action) because of something arising from their disability (their inability to shave).

**Victimisation:** Occurs when an employee is treated unfavourably, disadvantaged or subjected to a detriment because they have made or supported a complaint of discrimination or raised a grievance under the Equality Act, this policy or the Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination policy or because they are suspected of doing so.

**Third Party Harassment:** Occurs when an employee is harassed by someone who does not work for the employing organisation such as a customer, visitors, client, contractor or visitors from another organisation.

DRAFT

## **Appendix B - Protected Characteristics**

### **Age**

Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).

### **Disability**

A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

### **Gender reassignment**

The process of transitioning from one sex to another.

### **Marriage and civil partnership**

Marriage and civil partnership means someone who is legally married or in a civil partnership. Marriage and civil partnership can either be between a man and a woman or between partners of the same sex.

People do not have this characteristic if they are:

- single
- living with someone as a couple neither married nor civil partners
- engaged to be married but not married
- divorced or a person whose civil partnership has been dissolved.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

### **Race**

Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

### **Religion and belief**

Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

### **Sex**

A man or a woman.

### **Sexual orientation**

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

You can see a more in-depth definition of these protected characteristics on the Office of Public Sector Information website (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk>).

## **Appendix C – Our Values**

Summarised as PACT:

**Purpose** – We are dedicated in our work

**Achievement** – We innovate, inspire and deliver success

**Care** – We strive to be sustainable in all we do

**Teamwork** – We work together with openness, integrity and respect

In full:

1. We deeply respect the unique history of the New Forest, from ancient times to present day. We support the sense of continuity and longevity that all the guardians of the New Forest bring.
2. We look to the future every day. We understand that we need to lead thought in every conversation that we have, offering new ideas and perspectives on often familiar challenges.
3. We consider our responsibility for the New Forest to encompass the core, and the areas around it. We proactively consider the impact of adjacencies on the New Forest area.
4. We appraise every single application for man-made change solely on its individual merits, in the context of our statutory purpose. We will not countenance any attempt at undue influence on decision-making.
5. We are a part of the New Forest community. We engage with our community at every opportunity and we understand the need to communicate both clearly and often.
6. We meet with concerned individuals and groups wherever we possibly can, through forums, events and other outreach activities. We do not shy away from difficult conversations.
7. We work in partnership with other bodies and interest groups within the New Forest. We do not seek to impose our values on others and recognise the importance of varying perspectives.
8. We make full use of our statutory powers and act unambiguously in order to deliver against our two purposes and meet our organisational duty.
9. We act always with a sense of balance and proportionality, in everything that we do. Where we should act as deal-maker, we will do that openly and confidently.
10. We understand the need to be transparent, in everything we do.