

What is equality about?

We are all of equal value as human beings and are all entitled to equal opportunity to enjoy our lives and fulfil our potential.

Equality of opportunity will be achieved when we are able to secure fairness by removing the factors that lead to less favourable treatment of one individual compared to another. We aspire to a fair and just society where everyone is able to live his or her life free from discrimination and oppression.

As people may face discrimination or disadvantage, the Council needs to adjust what it does in terms of policy- making, employment practices and service provision to achieve equality of opportunity for everyone.

Our right to an equal chance in life is balanced by our personal obligation to extend equality of opportunity to others, and by our responsibilities to the community as a whole.

What is diversity about?

Everyone is different from one another; each of us is a unique blend of diverse qualities, skills, experiences, background, heritage, beliefs and many other characteristics.

Because we differ, our needs and wishes also differ. That is why it is essential to:
Recognise that people differ
Understand why these differences exist
Respect and value these differences as long as they do not unfairly affect the interests of others.

Diversity refers to differences between people. It does not directly refer to discrimination and the impact that this has on individuals and communities.

It is therefore not the same thing as “equal opportunities”.

What is community cohesion about?

Community cohesion is a measure of the ability of communities in society to function and grow in harmony with each other rather than in conflict. Communities may define themselves by neighbourhood, ethnic origin, age group, faith and other characteristics or interests.

Cohesion will grow and develop when the conditions are right, for example when society as a whole recognises the right to equality and has respect for diversity.

What is social inclusion about?

In a socially inclusive society everyone has dignity, equality of opportunity, and access to the resources they need to enjoy a quality of life considered reasonable by that society.

At present, many people are excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities by a combination of linked factors, for example:
unemployment, learning difficulties or limited access to learning

How do these concepts interact?

The Council has developed a model to show how these concepts come together. Whilst the concepts mean different things they are all interdependent.

This can be shown like this:

opportunities, inadequate or poor quality housing, vulnerability to high crime levels, ill health and other physical and attitudinal barriers.

These factors interact and make life hard enough but when poverty exists they are compounded and opportunities to escape them are more severely restricted .

Poverty is not random. Figures from the New Policy Institute and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation show that it disproportionately affects certain groups in society, for example, older people and black and minority ethnic households.

The Council recognises the need to focus on the processes that exclude people, as well as being aware of which groups and areas are more vulnerable to exclusion, and delivering services as appropriate.

The Council's approach to promoting social inclusion has five strands:
Maximising people's income

- Promoting and ensuring equality for all
- Increasing access to services
- Tackling inequalities in health
- Promoting sustainability and cohesion within communities and in the environment