



ISLINGTON

# Tips on equalities and diversity for suppliers

## One Vision

Dear Supplier,

We value the cultural diversity that exists within the Islington community. To provide high quality services to our community we need to recognise that diversity. Our aim is to make sure that everyone has the same opportunity regardless of age, disability, faith, gender, race or sexuality. This applies to how we provide our services directly or when we procure them from elsewhere. We expect high standards from suppliers who provide goods, works and services to the Council.

Islington Council supports equalities and diversity through our 'One Islington' vision and 'Dignity for All' policies. All our community, whatever their background, has the right to expect that money is spent on local services that meet their needs and that money is spent in a way which promotes equality of opportunity and delivers high quality results.

This booklet explains the Council's expectations of suppliers regarding equality and provides information about where suppliers can get further advice and information. We seek to promote awareness of equalities and diversity issues and challenge traditional behaviour. At Islington we recognise that everyone has a responsibility to remove barriers to our services wherever possible, which includes a role from our suppliers. We welcome and support all antidiscrimination legislation and we want to ensure that we follow it in all aspects of our work as an employer and service provider.

We hope you can help support us in our One Vision for the Council.

**Strategic Procurement Team**

## Delivering equality in service provision

The Council has a duty under law to promote equality of opportunity in all that we do, including procurement.

Procurement is the process of acquiring the goods, works and services to fulfil the needs of our residents. Equality is one of the most important values in the way we treat one another in the Council. Equality has an important role to play in procurement. As one of our suppliers you represent the Council when you are visiting our residents and sometimes this is the only contact the Council may have with that resident.

The Strategic Procurement Team at Islington Council sets the standards, provides the templates and walks officers through the procurement process. We also provide the guidelines to help our officers and suppliers to work better with each other, our partners and our residents.

It is the Council's policy that everyone should be treated fairly and with respect and dignity. The basic principles of how this could be applied to our suppliers are outlined in this booklet. Having a keen understanding of diversity yourself can improve your organisation's ability to respond to and better serve a diverse range of customers, potentially providing you with an advantage over other suppliers.

Our procurement processes demonstrate our commitment to equality that we extend to you as our suppliers. We demonstrate this in the advice we provide, through the questions we ask and by making sure that contractual arrangements actively endorse, enforce and promote equality.

The booklet is designed to give you some hints that will help you support our One Islington Vision in a practical way and we hope you will find it helpful.

## The legal bit...

The law is often very confusing and some of it applies to you and some of it applies to us.

We have a legal duty to promote race equality, disability equality and gender equality and legal obligations not to discriminate against people on the basis of their religion or belief (including non-belief), age or sexual orientation in service delivery or employment.

Under the law we are required to ensure that those who supply our services and act on our behalf as contractors act in accordance with our legal obligations

Further information can be gained from the Useful Contacts in this booklet, but below are what we think are the key things you need to be aware of:

### **Equal Pay (Amendment) Act 1984**

Men and women shall receive equal pay for equal work.

### **Sex Discrimination Act 1975 as amended by the Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999**

With specific exceptions, direct or indirect discrimination is illegal for either perceived gender of the person (by either the person or others) or persons undergoing gender reassignment, further enforced by the Gender Recognition Act 2004. It is also illegal to discriminate on terms of relationship following the Civil Partnership Act 2004.

### **Race Relations Act 1976 as amended 2000 (RRA)**

Your firm, like all organisations in the public, private, and voluntary sectors, is covered by the RRA in that you must not discriminate on racial grounds in employment, education, and housing, in the provision of goods, facilities, and services, and in carrying out public functions.

### **Human Rights Act 1998, Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003**

Makes it illegal discrimination directly or indirectly on grounds of belief (assumed or actual), sexuality (assumed or actual) sex, race, colour, language, religion, political belief, place of origin or association.

**Age Discrimination 2006**

Outlaws discrimination on the grounds of age.

**Disability Discrimination (Amendment) Act 2005 (DDA)**

Under DDA all contractors must eliminate the unlawful discrimination of disabled people in their employment practices. This covers areas such as recruitment, training, promotion, benefits, dismissal, etc. They must also consider making reasonable adjustments to the services they provide. This is to ensure that there are no barriers that may prevent or make it unreasonably difficult for disabled people to access them.

Additionally, when contractors are providing public services on behalf of Islington Council they must also meet an additional set of requirements, known as the general duty to promote disability equality. Contractors must:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act
- eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons
- encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and
- take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons.

An example of a public services delivered on behalf of Islington Council by a contractor would be highway repairs.

**Equality Act 2006**

Made discrimination on grounds of faith, sexual orientation and sex discrimination illegal and amended the Disability Discrimination Act.

**Single Equality Bill 2007 (Proposed)**

Proposes bringing all the above acts into one act and further extends some of their provisions

## Advertisements

Having open, fair and competitive procedures for procuring contracts is important for the Council. It helps the Council get best value for money on what is being spent on services delivered through suppliers. This area is also regulated by European Union law designed to ensure fair competition.

The rules on operating fair, open and competitive processes when procuring a contract are contained in the Council's Procurement Rules. These Rules also set out the requirements for advertising.

It is the Council's policy to attract as wide a range of suppliers as possible. Islington promotes equality of opportunity and will consider applications from persons of all backgrounds.

## Short-listing applications

The Council uses a Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) which is an application pack similar in idea to the one you may complete for a job application. The PQQ contains a number of equalities related questions:

- Is it your policy as an employer to comply with the Race Relations Act 1976 which applies in Great Britain, or equivalent legislation that applies in the countries in which your firm employs staff? And is it your practice not to treat one group of people less favourably than others because of their age, disability, religion or belief or lack of belief, gender, race or sexual orientation in relation to decisions to recruit, select, remunerate, train, transfer or promote employees?
- Is it your policy as an employer to comply with your statutory obligations under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, as amended, the Equal Pay Act 1970, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 – all of which apply in Great Britain – or equivalent legislation in the countries in which you employ staff?
- Is it your policy to comply with the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003 and the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003?
- Are staff who have managerial responsibilities required to receive training on equal opportunities?
- In the last three years, has any finding of unlawful racial, sex or disability discrimination in the employment field been made against your organisation by the employment tribunal, the employment appeal

tribunal, or any court, or in comparable proceedings in any other jurisdiction?

- In the last three years, has your organisation been the subject of a formal investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (E&HRC) because of a claim of unlawful discrimination?
- If the answer to the any of the two previous questions (or both) is ‘**Yes**’, what steps did your organisation take as a result of that finding or investigation?
- Is your policy on equality set out:
  - in instructions to those employees concerned with recruitment, training and promotion?
  - in documents available to employees, recognised trade unions or other representative groups of employees?
  - in recruitment advertisements or other literature?
- If we asked, could you provide relevant examples of the instructions, documents, recruitment advertisements or other literature?
- Can you provide other evidence to show how you promote race equality in employment?
- Do you follow as far as possible the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s (E&HRC) Code of Practice for Employment as approved by Parliament in 2005, which gives practical guidance to employers and others on preventing racial discrimination and promoting equal opportunities in employment, including the steps that can be taken to encourage members of ethnic-minority groups to apply for jobs or take up training opportunities?
- Do you have a complaints system that is accessible to all your customers and do you monitor complaints on the basis of age, disability, religion or belief or lack of belief, gender, race or sexual orientation?
- If you are not currently subject to UK legislation, please supply details of your experience in complying with equivalent legislation that is designed to eliminate discrimination (especially racial discrimination) and to promote equality of opportunity.

We may also ask you specific questions related to the tender at either pre qualification questionnaire or tender stages but all these will be relevant and proportional to the contract which demonstrate you understand your obligations and act with due regard to legislation.

We will make reasonable adjustments to ensure access should you need to provide an interview and/or presentation as part of the short-listing process. Further details will be included in the tender communications.

## Equalities in the contract

All of our contracts include equalities clauses/specifications that are relevant and proportionate to the contract. You can expect to be monitored on these clauses, general equalities legislation and any specifics added to the monitoring performance you have been advised of.

## It's all in the policy

You may be asked to provide either a policy statement or policy. A policy statement is a single page summary whereas a policy goes into more detail about how you may deliver some of the agenda.

A good policy statement will confirm your commitment, a commitment to review the agenda and be signed and dated by a senior person in your organisation. It will show you provide training and roughly outline your process. It will nominate someone to be responsible for equalities. A very strong policy statement will commit to complete impact assessments.

## Islington residents

When dealing with Islington's residents it is as important to consider equalities in the way you communicate and behave. There are six equality strands for which the Council is under legal obligation to have due regard. These are: Age, Disability, Faith, Gender, Race and Sexuality. Many residents may consider themselves to be covered by more than one strand.

When dealing with residents as a supplier you should be aware that Islington has residents of each and often several of the equalities strands:

Islington has residents of all ages in their properties and you cannot assume the age of the resident because of where they live.

Islington has residents with a variety of impairments. There are many different types of disability and it may not always be obvious that a person has a disability. Impairments may be learning, physical, sight, hearing, mental or social. Be ready to accommodate any form of impairment and be prepared to adapt your services accordingly.

The 2001 Census shows that just over half the residents of Islington declare themselves to be adherents of the Christian religion, while just over one third claim either no religious belief (23%) or make no statement regarding religion (10%). After Christianity, the next most common religion in terms of number of believers is Islam with 8% of the resident population. Some religious communities suffer discrimination and prejudice due to their beliefs and appearance.

A residents' gender will be either male or female. Gender is very important to some people and may be different to someone's sex. Gender is whether you consider yourself to be male or female, whereas sex is the biological sex you have. There will be some residents who may appear female, but consider themselves to be male and vice versa. There will also be some residents who are reassigning their sex to be the gender they perceive themselves to be.

A quarter of Islington's residents are from black, minority or ethnic backgrounds. It is possible that you will come into contact with residents whose first language is not English. The Council has a number of support networks to assist with communicating with residents with differing language needs.

Islington has good social networks within the borough for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community. The result is that we are likely to have towards the higher end of national estimates of the community within the borough. Estimates of the LGBT community vary between 5 and 10%. Sexual orientation particularly difficult to ascertain and people are often not open about it for fear of prejudice or ridicule.

Each resident deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. However you also deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. If at any time you feel you are not be treated appropriately by a resident you are visiting and cannot resolve it yourself the Council will investigate and intervene.

We want to celebrate diversity, utilise its challenges, combat constructively discrimination and develop an ethos of mutual understanding and respect.

## Why home visits...

We will sometimes need you to make a home visit in order to better meet the needs of a resident. There are a lot of reasons why a resident may need a home visit from a Council supplier. The Council may need to send a supplier to repair or maintain a broken piece of equipment. We may need to advise the resident of a matter of importance. We may have social care reasons to supply a service within the resident's home.

As the supplier we may not always be able to tell you the particular reason the damage has occurred within the home or why the resident has been offered a home visit. Please do not ask the resident for this information as damage can be due to a variety of reasons including domestic violence.

Try to avoid making assumptions about the resident, especially about their age, disability, faith, gender, race or sexuality. A resident who is elderly does not necessarily have a home visit because they are elderly. Often home visits are down to a need to inspect everyone with a particular make of equipment such as a boiler. A resident may well not need the visit because they cannot care for a piece of equipment or indeed that they do not or cannot look after that equipment or themselves.

## Booking the appointment

Most appointments are made by telephone to residents. It is always good practice to introduce yourself and explain why you are coming. It sounds obvious but try to speak clearly at an easily audible volume but without shouting. If you have an accent it may be easier to speak slower to facilitate communication. Be confident with yourself when on the telephone and smile. If you do not understand then ask the resident to explain to you. Not having the confidence to ask and making assumptions can come across as being prejudice. Some disabled residents may have difficulty using the phone if they have a hearing impairment. In this case you may need to use a text phone.

When you are booking the appointment offer a spread of appointments across the week and at different times of day. If you are booking appointments on behalf of the Council then you will need to consider the time and variety of appointments available. This is particularly important on equalities grounds. The age of the resident may result in preferred times so the resident can have someone with them or book child care facilities. Disabled residents may prefer to have a carer with them to help with specific or individual needs, which could be anything from writing to mobility. Certain faiths will avoid times of day like devout Jewish people. This faith will pray three times a day for about half an hour and do not like to be disturbed, particularly during morning prayer.

## Preparing for the appointment

Allow enough time to complete a job and tell person how long that time will be. The person may have other commitments like prayer, carers or child provision to consider. Make sure you are aware of where you are going. Overrunning due to lateness may affect the resident and require them to do a lot of rescheduling.

The way you dress to meet a resident can be very important, particularly if you are entering their home. For example: you should never attend a house without wearing a top even at the height of summer. You may be expected to wear a hat or cover your arms or legs. Always be culturally aware and respect individual's customs when they request this.

You should not dress in a manner that puts you at risk on health and safety grounds. If there is an issue speak to your Council liaison officer about this.

Look at your instructions and make sure they are sensible. This is particularly important when the resident may see the information. For example you cannot have a disabled toilet only a disabled person, so therefore "repair light in disabled toilet" should read, "repair light in accessible toilet".

## Arriving for the appointment

You should never turn up at a resident unannounced. You will need to ensure an appointment has been arranged. Several faiths such as Hindus prefer not to book appointments with women on their own and they will accommodate this. The elderly often prefer a relative to be present.

You should always arrive on time. Apart from general courtesy, not arriving at the scheduled time either too early or too late can mean you interfere with people's faith observations. If you cannot arrive at the correct time you should advise the resident at the earliest opportunity. People with young families or dependent relatives may be adjusting their schedules around you that may be losing them income.

You should never bring visitors with you. It is a big intrusion into a resident's life to have you there, so think about this. If you can advise the resident in advance of how many people are coming and avoid coming in too larger numbers. Large numbers are known to intimidate people.

It is good practice to knock clearly or ring the doorbell and wait a good five minutes before re-knocking. Some of the disabled or elderly particularly can take some time to get to the door and may feel pressured to be rushed by consistent knocking.

## Introductions upon arrival

You should introduce yourself using your first name and explain why you are there. You should then show your identity card to the resident before entering their property. The young or old living alone can feel isolated and will be worried about who they let in their home. Carrying your identity card will reassure them who you are. If you have forgotten it offer to allow them the opportunity to telephone your office or the Council to verify who you are.

You should always speak to the home owner/main resident first. Elderly and disabled people often find someone with them like a carer is addressed instead of them or younger people find older relatives are addressed. You should aim to speak face to face.

You should not launch into a handshake with a resident. Instead you should wait to see how the resident responds. Several cultures find the handshake greeting offensive. Physical contact may be acceptable between the same sex, but not to members of the opposite sex. Be aware that too much comforting, such as an arm round someone who is upset, may cause upset, embarrassment or offence.

## Entering the home

Be aware that different faiths may have different customs. You may be asked to take your shoes off or, if you are a woman, to cover your hair and this should be respected wherever practical.

You have only just met the resident you are entering the home of and therefore you are unlikely to be in a position to be able to make reasoned judgements about them. Certain behaviours can come across as over familiar. For example do not lean on a wheelchair or move it away. In the event the resident appears to be struggling you can offer polite assistance.

If the resident has a person of the same or opposite sex in the house with them do not assume they are either a carer or their partner without having been told. Making assumptions about the current relationship that someone is in often leads to embarrassment.

Generally there will be no need to comment on gender or sexuality issues and you should certainly avoid making rude or impertinent questions.

## Moving around someone's home

Always check you can enter a room before doing so. Some rooms may be places or sanctuaries of worship and you may be asked to behave differently in them and this should not offend you.

Pensioners are often very near poverty levels, so be considerate when dealing with the elderly and never comment on the way someone is living. If you are really concerned you should contact the Council directly.

Never act without consideration of what the resident is doing. For example, never just unplug something the resident is using. Equally avoid leaving any equipment out of your sight and the place you are working. Never allow a resident to use your tools.

## Addressing the resident

If you need to address someone ask how they would like to be addressed, they are unlikely to be offended and you will look less silly than if you don't. Don't speak to someone like they are a child 'aren't you brave'.

If you then need to need to ask someone's name on a formal basis, then you should ask for his or her title then first, personal or family name. You should not ask for a Christian name or surname, as these terms are offensive to several people. You should not naturally assume anyone's title as Mr, Ms etc as you may not be able to readily identify a number of trans people's titles particularly.

Endearment terms such as 'my love', 'my dear', 'sweetheart', should be avoided unless you are sure you know the resident and they are comfortable with that behaviour.

Age discrimination can be inadvertent but often offensive. Terms such as 'young girl' or 'old man' do not portray the Council well in the community. We want to ensure that no one in Islington is unreasonably disadvantaged due to his or her age. Avoid the use of terms that include age even if meant positively. 'Thank you young man' may be well meant, but may not be seen that way. Never patronise someone for being too old with comments like this is a bit technical or too young with comments like I am not sure you would understand.

## Language and culture

Someone's place of birth is not necessarily the same as their language and just because they live in England does not automatically make their first language English. If the resident is happy to speak in English as a second language allow them time to translate.

If the resident is struggling to communicate in English ask the Council who will find support services translators to help you. You cannot assume that because someone responds to you they fully understand what you have said to them.

Many cultures prefer not to make direct eye contact with people and this should not be taken as a sign of dishonesty. Listen to the tone of a voice as opposed to the volume of a voice to establish whether or not someone is shouting.

Many cultures can speak quite loudly at one another and be quite animated too, but they are not shouting or being aggressive. People who have difficulty speaking does not mean they have difficulty understanding or hearing. Avoid jokes, they often do not translate well.

## Keep the resident informed

Tell people what you are doing as clearly as you can. We are all guilty of trying to speak to people in technical language. You should avoid speaking in jargon or slang, as this will make true understanding more difficult.

Tell client what can and cannot do. Some residents will not necessarily understand what you are able to deliver and you may need to explain to them.

Avoid over socialising. Always be polite but becoming too friendly may interfere with you being able to do the job promptly.

Keep in mind that everything you say will effect how they view you and the Council. Talking about other people either from your organisation, the Council or other residents can provide a very negative view of us all.

When speaking to residents always make sure they know you are listening. Simple things like summarising what a resident has just said to you or responding by nodding will make them feel more consulted. Avoid finishing other people's sentences.

Ask the resident to repeat when you do not understand and be patient and re-explain using examples if they do not understand you. Lip reading is tiring and difficult be considerate when needing to communicate this way.

## Taking breaks

Needing to take a break on a long job is expected, but you do need to think about this before you do.

Wherever possible take breaks outside of the resident's property. You need to tell the resident before you leave.

If you need to leave things in a resident's property always check that is okay and anything harmful is out of the way.

Smoking is not acceptable in residents' homes even if they smoke.

Drinking alcohol is not acceptable when in residents' homes and you should never invite a resident for a drink even when you finish. Apart from the potential danger of being unprofessional or the effect it may have on your judgement many faiths such as Sikhism or Islam prohibit alcohol consumption.

## Food

You should never eat in an occupied property.

Avoid eating in the presence of residents for example on balconies, flat entrances etc, but even more particularly in the home.

Eating certain types of food or at different times can be offensive. For example Buddhists are frequently vegetarian and do not eat after noon on a fast day; some Christians not eat meat on Fridays, Ash Wednesday or Good Friday; Hindus are often vegetarian or vegan and some groups are offended by garlic and onions; Jews will only eat kosher food; Sikhs do not eat pork or beef.

You should never offer any food item to a resident. For example people of the Islam faith have Halal (allowed) and Haram (not allowed) food. They may find it embarrassing to ask whether it is Halal.

Be sensitive to residents who may be fasting. Some people of the Islam faith will not even drink water at times during Ramadan. Some Christians are quite strict during Lent over what they eat.

## Getting it right

Different residents may need different amounts of time. Be patient and don't rush people. Some residents will take longer to respond to you through age or disability or maybe because they are looking after someone. You should not assume that because someone is at home they are automatically not working.

Be considerate about where you place tools and equipment including bags and coats. Avoid blocking corridors and hallways and creating nuisance.

Ask the resident where they would like things and try to accommodate them wherever possible.

If you have documents you need to complete ask the resident whether they would prefer fill out documents or you to. If they ask you to ensure that you ask them to spell out any names.

Try not to make unnecessary noise which will disturb the resident in their routine, for example playing loud music.

## Concluding your visit

Always clear and tidy up all the mess you have made and take rubbish away with you. You should then tell the resident you are leaving. This may be particularly important where the resident has sight impairment.

Before leaving it is important you:

- summarise what you have done;
- inform the resident of any information they need to know;
- provide the resident with any required feedback forms;
- reassure the resident their information will be treated confidentiality;
- provide contact details for any queries;
- advise whether a future visit is required.

You should never take or expect a tip.

It is at this point you need to close and say good-bye that most suppliers find difficulty. Be careful about backtracking if you say something you feel is inappropriate such as "I am going to run down the stairs" to a wheel chair user or "see you later" to a blind resident. It is often better to leave the comment than draw unnecessary attention to it.

Having left there is no need to wave from a vehicle or hoot and this can be dangerous. Always leave quietly and with consideration to other residents.

## Following your visit

Following your visit complete all necessary information in a timely manner. It is often useful to provide any evaluation material with the Council you may have identified. If there are matters you would like to bring to the Council's attention, such as someone who appears to be struggling, then please do so to your usual Council liaison officer.

## Equality works two ways

At all times remember you have a right to be treated with courtesy and dignity. You should remove yourself if you start to feel vulnerable. You will be listened to if you make a complaint to the Council.

## Equality standards

There are minimum equality standards which businesses are obliged to meet under the Code of Practice for Employment. These include a written equal opportunities policy, discrimination and disciplinary procedure, staff training and recruitment policies as well as equalities monitoring of job applications and your workforce. These policies and standards are linked to the size of your business. For more information contact the CRE from our useful contacts page.

## Acknowledgements

The Council's Strategic Procurement Team would like to thank the following for their support in preparation of this document:

- The Equalities and Diversity Unit,
- The Legal Contracts Team;
- The Performance Improvement Unit,
- Our partners and community groups.

Without the above providing help and support this booklet would not have been possible.

## Useful Contacts

You are not alone out there and there are plenty of organisations that can help you. Below we have included some of the ones we recommend:

### **Business Link and The Federation of Small Business**

Provide help support and networking for small businesses

[www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk)

[www.fsb.org.uk](http://www.fsb.org.uk)

### **Equality Direct**

Gives advice on a wide range of equality issues.

[www.equalitydirect.org.uk](http://www.equalitydirect.org.uk)

### **Commission for Equality and Human Rights**

A combination of the former Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). The three organisations merged in October 2007.

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### **DTI Social Enterprise Unit**

Addresses barriers to growth of social enterprises and identifies and spread good practice.

[www.dti.gov.uk/socialenterprise/index.htm](http://www.dti.gov.uk/socialenterprise/index.htm)

### **Direct Gov - Official Government portal.**

This can provide you with a lots of legal advice.

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/index.htm>

### **Age Positive**

Supporting businesses to tackle age discrimination

<http://www.agepositive.gov.uk/>

### **Office For Disability Issues**

Provides an overview of the Government agenda

<http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/>

### **Access to Work**

Government fund which provides financial support to businesses which employ disabled employees

<http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/Customers/HelpForDisabledPeople/AccessstoWork/>

**If you would like this document in large print or Braille, audiotape or in another language, please contact 020 7527 2000.**

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