



ISLINGTON

Diversity Charter

Our commitment to our employees, and our clients is:

- Giving everyone equal opportunities - recruiting on talent not background
- Independent checks - to make sure that we comply with the Council's required diversity standards
- Telling you how we're doing - publishing the profile of our employees
- Asking what you think - and acting on what you say
- Striving for the highest standards

DIVERSITY CHARTER FOR ISLINGTON COUNCIL – Guidance Notes

INTRODUCTION

Objective:

To ensure that the Council's contract workforce increasingly reflects the diverse community from which it is drawn.

To introduce a Diversity Charter to be used by all Contractors

In so doing, to support the Council's wider Equality and Diversity Programme.

Definition – Equality and Diversity:

An equal opportunities approach focuses on fair employment practices by endeavouring to remove barriers to employment on grounds such as colour, race, nationality, creed, gender, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation and religious belief. It is about focusing on talent not background.

Diversity goes further than just ensuring equal opportunities. It is about establishing a business culture that recognises diversity in the community and sees the benefit of reflecting that in the work place. It is based on an understanding that all businesses now operate across an increasingly diverse community and customer base. It, therefore, makes good business sense to harness the potential of those from all community groups and for businesses to embrace that potential across their organisational culture, systems and practices.

Aim:

Islington Council is committed to the principles of equality and diversity. Therefore, we are introducing a Diversity Charter available to all contractors. The Charter sets out a basic commitment to diversity and a number of minimum standards that participating contractors will be expected to meet in order to maintain their Charter status. The ultimate aim of the Charter is to eliminate all bias from the recruitment process.

Adherence to the Charter and its associated guidance notes will be taken seriously and form part of the contract management.

THE CHARTER:

Abbreviated Version

- Giving everyone the same opportunities - recruiting on talent not background
- Independent checks - to make sure that we comply with the Council's required diversity standards
- Telling you how we're doing - publishing the profile of candidates we put forward
- Asking what you think - and acting on what you say
- Striving for the highest standards

Full Version

- Giving all candidates the same opportunities regardless of their age, religion, gender, race, sexual orientation or whether they have a disability – so that the profile of candidates put forward broadly matches that of Greater London.
- Audit of business processes and policies to ensure compliance with the Diversity Charter and Guidance.
- Routinely capturing and publicising information on the profile of our employees.
- Providing appropriate channels for candidates to feedback views on the effectiveness of the Commitment to diversity.
- Demonstrate improvements that have been made as the result of customer feedback and the desire to achieve best practice.

GUIDANCE:

It is intended that the Commitment to Equality and Diversity should permeate all aspects of the contractor's recruitment process. The basic areas of expected good practices are outlined below to provide initial guidance. This guidance should not be taken as exhaustive but the bare minimum necessary to retain your status as an Islington Council Contractor.

1. Office Premises and Policies

- ✓ All contractors are required to have active equal opportunities policies and to operate their businesses in accordance with the relevant law.
- ✓ Under the amended Disability Discrimination Act 1998 (DDA) (amendments in force from 1 October 2004) contractors, whatever their size, are required to both observe the provisions of the DDA, both in relation to their own employees and to those to whom they are providing a service. In the context of providing services this means that contractors must ensure that they have made their services accessible to disabled people. It is worth noting that the majority of people with disabilities are not wheelchair bound. For example, people with hearing or sight impairments make up over a quarter of disabled people in this country.
- ✓ Under the DDA you are required to make reasonable adjustments to your services to make them accessible to disabled people. For example, this may involve you considering whether it would be reasonable (usually on financial grounds) to provide wheelchair access onto your premises, to ensure that your registration forms can be made available in Braille or in a font size and style that would make them accessible to people with sight impairments and to provide interpreters for people with hearing disabilities where necessary.
- ✓ As well as the other established areas of unlawful discrimination, namely gender, race and trade union activity, it is also now unlawful to discriminate against a person on the grounds of their age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, religious or political belief or gender reassignment. Furthermore, in an era where demographically the working population is getting older or where relatively young work seekers may have outstanding skill sets, discrimination on this basis makes little commercial sense. When deciding whether or not a work-seeker is suitable for a position, therefore, it is vital that the criteria concentrated upon is that relating to their skills, experience and working history and any other information relating to their ability.

2. Advertising

- ✓ When placing advertisements, always ensure they are drafted in a way that makes it clear equal opportunities apply.
- ✓ Under the DDA you are required to make reasonable adjustments to your services to make them accessible to disabled people. This may involve you considering whether it would be reasonable (usually on financial grounds) to place advertising in publications printed in Braille or on local radio or in print large enough to be accessible to those with sight impairments.
- ✓ In addition, if a particular job is usually the preserve of a particular type of person because of the way it has traditionally been carried out, it may be necessary to consider advertising not only in media that would ordinarily be read by such a person but in media that will reach a diverse audience such as local radio, local or national newspapers or even media targeted at some of the groups of people protected by the anti-discrimination legislation.
- ✓ Never require English spoken and written as mother tongue in an advertisement. It is lawful and perfectly acceptable to require a fluent level of spoken and written English provided it is relevant to the position.

3. Choosing Relevant CVs

- ✓ When sifting CVs you have received, always ensure that you adopt an even hand and that your criteria for selecting individuals for registration or interview on the strength of their CVs is done on the basis of their skills and experience only.
- ✓ In addition, where you require a certain level of experience for a particular job, ensure that it is entirely relevant and not merely a means of ensuring that the vacancy is pitched at the traditional candidate for that role.

4. Registration Process

- ✓ Ensure that your registration process, including access to interview rooms and facilities is accessible to all work-seekers, including those with motor, visual, oral, or learning disabilities. This may mean making your premises accessible to wheelchair users if it is reasonable to do so or, if not, providing alternative premises where interviews and registration can take place. Alternatively, it may mean reasonably altering the registration environment in some way or the interview time in order to give a disabled person the necessary opportunity to successfully complete the process. In addition, it may be reasonable to provide modified facilities or equipment or other assistance such as interpreters for deaf work seekers in order to provide the necessary opportunity to register.

- ✓ Ensure your registration forms are presented in a readable format to all work seekers and that assistance is provided where it reasonably can be to those who need it. There will be very few circumstances where it would not be reasonable to provide such assistance.

6. Sitting Skills and Aptitude Tests

- ✓ There will be some jobs where it would not be possible, using current technology and facilities, to engage individuals with certain disabilities. For example, no reasonable adjustments would currently make a job as an HGV driver accessible to a blind person. However, there are many jobs that can be undertaken by people with disabilities to the same level of competence and efficiency that they would be undertaken by able-bodied people. It is, therefore, imperative that when you set and conduct skills and aptitude tests that you do so in a way that allows all those taking part to fulfil their potential.
- ✓ The use of any selection tests including psychometric or personality questionnaires should be relevant, properly validated and, where appropriate, conducted by trained or licensed personnel. When determining whether such tests have been appropriately pitched for someone with, say, a disability, it would be advisable to seek professional advice.
- ✓ Remember that it is not lawful, under the race discrimination legislation, to require English spoken as a mother tongue although it is perfectly lawful to require fluent English if it is necessary for the position in question. Ensure that where you do request this that it is indeed a necessary part of the job criteria. Never assume that a non-British accent is indicative that the person does not have the necessary level of language competence.

7. Attending Client Interviews

- ✓ Ensure that it is possible for a disabled work-seeker with a disabilities who has been selected for interview to actually get to that interview and that when they are there, reasonable adjustments have been made where necessary to provide the work-seeker with the support or facilities s/he requires in order to perform to his/her potential.
- ✓ Ensure that where expenses are being paid, additional expenses that might result from a disabled work-seeker attending.