



**SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING
DIRECTORATE**

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY
FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

AUTHOR: Mary Brimson
DATE: 17 June 2003

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

1. Statement of Intent

Children's Services is committed to good practice that recognises the need to respect, appreciate and acknowledge the unique differences among people.

Children's Services is committed to delivering services that are accessible and responsive and respectful of different faiths and cultural traditions and recognise the discrimination that many people face.

Children's Services is actively opposed to all forms of discrimination against children and families who use our services on the grounds of :

- Age
- Appearance
- Caring Responsibilities
- Class
- Gender
- HIV Status
- Marital Status
- Nationality
- Political Beliefs
- Religion
- Immigration Status
- Race / Ethnicity
- Sexual Identity
- Long Term Illness
- Unrelated Criminal Conviction
- Trade Union Activity
- Physical or Mental Ability

Children's Services are committed to combating all direct and indirect discrimination in our services and the workplace.

Children's Services will provide all staff with training in order to promote good social work practice within the context of race, poverty, disability, ageism, ethnicity, cultural diversity, HIV/Aids, sexual status and other oppressed groups.

Children's Services are committed to keeping performance under review through supervision, file audits, review of complaints, service user feedback and consultation.

Children's Services recognises and embraces the Isle of Wight Council Equality Standard that will mainstream equality into service delivery and employment and will identify disadvantage and barriers that create disadvantage.

2. The Strategy

Children's services have identified 4 key priorities for development :

- 2.1. To establish consistent ethnic monitoring to determine current use of services. Through data collection and analysis we will :
 - Identify gaps in provision
 - Assess needs
 - Improve quality
 - Evaluate changes
 - Achieve equal access
 - Provide a baseline for planning
 - Allocate resources more equitably
 - Measure improvements
- 2.2. To make services more accessible. We will do this by the provision of information in a variety of formats, languages as well as ensuring public areas are welcoming and accessible to service users with a physical disabilities.
- 2.3. To ensure staff are well trained :
 - To understand and implement anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive and anti- racist practice
 - To be aware and counteract ones own tendency to behave oppressively
 - To respect a service users dignity, privacy, autonomy and rights
 - To be able to manage complex ethical responsibilities and value conflicts
 - To be able to empower others
- 2.4. To promote social inclusion by ensuring that in the consultation process with partners, community stakeholders and the wider community, the needs and interests of minority groups are sought, understood and acted upon.
- 2.5. Children's Services will ensure that all contracted services conform to and promote equal opportunities by :
 - Ensuring equal opportunities are incorporated into the providers policy and procedures :
 - By use of the South East region 'Contract Toolkit' for all contracts
 - By collation of evidence indicating discriminatory practices to be undertaken by Service Manager (Joint commissioning & Looked After Children).

3. Leadership and Corporate Commitment

Children's Services endorses a whole service approach to ensure ownership across Children's Services.

All staff will commit to the target areas for improvement and progress will be monitored via supervision and Personal Performance Review.

The Service Manager (Quality) will oversee the development of information and monitoring systems by review of complaints, analysis of file audits and service user feedback

We will ensure the values and principles contained in this Equality Policy and the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy 2002 will be incorporated into all new service developments and policies within Children's Services.

Children's Services is committed to the corporate needs / requirements assessment process.

4. Consultation and Community Development

Children's Services will ensure continued commitment to the improvement and development of responsive services in consultation with partner agencies, community stakeholder groups and service users, in particular, seeking the views of minority groups. This will be done by ensuring all consultation approaches incorporate equality issues.

5. Service Delivery and Customer Care

Children's Services will commit to the development of an action plan and target setting approach regarding equality issues in the formulation of the Children's Service Plan and other strategic plans.

If anyone feels that Children's Services has failed to meet the values contained in our Statement of Intent, they will be encouraged to use our Complaints Procedure. Any complaint received as a result of a perceived discriminatory act will be dealt with and investigated as a complaint.

This statement will be displayed in the Children's Serve Centre and other Children's Services buildings and its existence made known in our information literature.

Children's Services will endeavour to ensure that its services are made known to those individuals most requiring our services. We shall endeavour to publish our relevant services to anyone who may have a query relating to children and young people who are vulnerable or at risk in the community.

6. Employment and Training

If a member of staff encounters any discriminatory comments or behaviour they have the authority from the Strategic Director of Social Services to inform the person that Children's Services has an Equal Opportunity Policy, which does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. If the individual does not refrain from such behaviour that person will be reported to a Team Manager or Service Manager. The Manager will point out to that person that it is our policy not to discriminate in any way. The Manager will also offer to send the individual a copy of the Equal Opportunity Policy for clarification. If the person refuses to cease their behaviour the Manager has the authority to ask the person to leave the premises. The Manager will report all such incidents to the Head of Children's Services.

Anyone who wishes to make a complaint if they feel Children's Services has not followed the Equal Opportunity Policy will be directed towards the Complaints Procedure.

Children's Services will conform to the Isle of Wight Council's current recruitment procedures and will ensure the recruitment and employment processes are equal and non discriminatory.

Children's Services recognise that harassment by an employee towards another staff member or a service user will be investigated with attempts towards a resolution. All reports and allegations will be taken seriously in the investigation of incidents and the resolution of conflicts.

7. Forms of Discrimination

Direct Discrimination

Where a person is less favourably treated because of race, background, ethnic or national origins, sex, pregnancy, marital status, disability or sexual identity.

Indirect Discrimination

Where a requirement or condition, which cannot be justified is applied equally to all groups but has a disproportionately adverse effect on one particular group.

Victimisation

Where someone is treated less favourably than others because he or she has taken action against Children's Services under one of the relevant Acts, whether or not such victimisation is unlawful.

Mary Brimson
Joint Commissioning and Looked After Children
17.06.03

MB/JEC/C/EQUALITY