



DurhamDirections Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy

Version 2

Date originally created: September 2019

Date reviewed: January 2022

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Introduction:

The purpose of the DurhamDirections Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy and Implementation Plan is to embed 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty / Equality Act 2010 in DurhamDirections delivery; and help meet EU structural fund regulations to promote gender equality and equal opportunities. The policy and implementation plan are designed to support projects/providers to meet regulatory requirements and will be used as a tool to help provide a quality service to participants.

All Delivery Partners to the project, including private and voluntary sector organisations, including sub-contractors, come under the scope of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Policy Statement:

Durham County Council (DCC) as Lead Partner to the DurhamDirections project publicly affirms its commitment to promoting equality in-line with the Public Sector Equality Duty ([Equality Act 2010](#)). The project, led by the council, will carry out its activities in compliance with relevant legislation and is committed to continuous, measurable improvement in equality whilst delivering European Social Funded (ESF) activities.

DurhamDirections is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and ensuring discrimination, harassment or victimisation is not tolerated. Our policy is to treat people fairly, with respect and dignity. We also comply with legal requirements in relation to age, disability, gender, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

We believe that every young person in County Durham deserves excellent support which takes account of their needs and circumstances. DCC and all the Delivery Partners and subcontractors will ensure that all eligible groups and communities have opportunities to access DurhamDirections services.

Equality and diversity is more than just meeting our legal obligations, we will take action to improve our policies and everyday practice.

Our policy applies to every elected member, employee, volunteer and any other person or organisation employed by the council to work or to deliver services on its behalf as part of the DurhamDirections project. This includes contractual and commissioning arrangements. The policy applies to all work-related situations including social events and the use of electronic communications or social media.

It is the individual's responsibility to:

- treat others fairly, with dignity and respect,
- follow agreed policies and procedures,

- ensure documentation, information and activity is lawful,
- consider reasonable adjustments and other requirements relating to people with disabilities,
- challenge discrimination and unfair treatment, reporting it where appropriate, and
- attend relevant training and ask for advice where necessary.

All actions, which are intentionally contrary to this policy, will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedure and/or contract management procedure.

Our Commitment:

We know that some people face inequality and disadvantage, prejudice and discrimination and we are committed to tackling this and use a variety of methods to demonstrate and progress our commitment. To support our corporate policy and commitment, we will:

- Treat all individuals with dignity and respect.
- Value diversity.
- Encourage participation in decision making and take account of consultation responses.
- Take action on any form of discrimination or complaints of unfair treatment.
- Comply with equality law and learn from good practice in other organisations.
- Regularly monitor, assess and consult on the impact of our policies, services and functions to ensure they are fair and reflect people's varied needs.
- Monitor and review our equality objectives which are supported in the Council plan and in the Service plans of internal and external Delivery Partners.

We will ensure that relevant elected members, employees, Delivery Partners, strategic partners, subcontractors and participants are made aware of this policy through our induction, training, enrolment and corporate communications. We will take actions to advance equality in service delivery, employment and working with others.

Service Delivery:

We are committed to providing accessible and appropriate services to meet the needs of all DurhamDirections participants.

When we deliver or commission DurhamDirections services we will:

- Develop flexible and responsive services within the resources available.
- Adapt services and make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Improve access to delivery premises within the resources and timescales available.
- Make our information accessible by offering alternative formats, interpretation and sign language services where necessary.
- Monitor and review recruitment, participation & achievement and take appropriate action to eliminate barriers to participation and narrow gaps between groups.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other young people.

- Include equality actions in our Council plan and in the Service plans of internal and external Delivery Partners.
- Consult and involve all sections of the community to ensure their needs are considered in line with the DurhamDirections eligibility criteria.
- Ensure equal access to the complaints procedure.
- Evaluate and monitor the impact of our policies, services and functions on communities and relevant groups.

Employment:

We are committed to being a fair and supportive employer and we will monitor our employment practices to ensure fair representation and treatment. All recruitment practices in relation to DurhamDirections, including those of our Delivery Partners, must comply with the below principles:

- Treat all employees fairly, with dignity and respect at all times.
- Ensure fair recruitment processes which encourage applications from all groups in the community.
- Provide a safe and accessible working environment, creating a culture which is free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation.
- Provide fair and transparent pay, reward and employment conditions, including leave for parents/carers
- Promote work-life balance and opportunities to work flexibly.
- Make reasonable adjustments in line with our legal duties.
- Monitor employment procedures, including dealing with grievances, to avoid unlawful discrimination and ensure consistent treatment.
- Ensure that all employees have fair and equal access to learning and development opportunities to ensure that the workforce is equipped with the necessary skills.

Working with Others:

As a large public sector organisation, DCC as the lead body for DurhamDirections will use our influence and work together with other key partners and the local community to:

- Develop understanding of the communities and groups the project is designed to serve.
- Ensure effective communication with participants/eligible potential participants.
- Encourage participants and partners to participate in decision making.
- Use feedback from young people and delivery/strategic partners to help shape future plans, decisions and policies.
- Encourage, develop and participate in joint working.
- Share information, experience and examples of good practice on equality with other public, private, voluntary and community organisations.
- Use our influence and purchasing power to encourage good equality practice in other organisations.
- Provide opportunities for participants across communities and eligible groups to come together through cultural, sporting and other community activities.

Complaints Procedures:

There are a number of ways to report equality issues or complaints:

- Employees of DCC can raise issues informally with their line manager or Head of Service. Formal complaints should follow the grievance procedure. Similarly, employees of Delivery Partners and subcontractors should in the first instance follow their own internal processes. If they feel their concerns have not been met, then these can be further elevated through the DurhamDirections Formal complaints procedure through their Contract Officer.
- DurhamDirections participants, can use the DCC corporate and statutory complaints procedures or that of the relevant Delivery Partners or subcontractors depending on the nature of the complaint. If they feel their concerns have not been met through the Delivery Partners/subcontractor arrangements, these can be further elevated through the DCC corporate and statutory complaints procedures.
- Councillors can report issues through the Member Officer protocol or the code of conduct depending on the nature of the complaint.
- Members of the public, including DurhamDirections participants, can use the DCC corporate and statutory complaints procedures or that of the relevant Delivery Partners or subcontractors depending on the nature of the complaint. If they feel their concerns have not been met through the Delivery Partners/subcontractor arrangements, these can be further elevated through the DCC corporate and statutory complaints procedures.
- We will take prompt action to investigate any complaints. Anyone who has complained will not be treated unfavourably or victimised. However, if a complaint is found to be malicious, this will be dealt with under the appropriate disciplinary procedure.

Appendix 1

Delivery Partners

This DurhamDirections Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Policy covers all activity delivered through the DurhamDirections project either directly by Durham County Council or via Delivery Partners and subcontractors.

External Delivery Partners:
Cornforth Partnership
Groundwork NE and Yorkshire