



Blackburn with Darwen

ADULT LEARNING

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy Statement

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is committed to treating all employees fairly and promoting equality of opportunity and providing clear performance and behavioural expectations to recognise and promote diversity and continually monitor and evaluate equality analysis. There is a zero tolerance approach to any form of discrimination, victimisation, bullying and harassment.

Prejudice and discrimination can affect anyone, but some groups are affected more than others. This could be because of their religious beliefs, culture, heritage, appearance, abilities, age, gender, or sexual orientation – diverse identities that are intrinsic to them. This means that individuals may not be provided with the same opportunities as others, or are not treated with dignity and respect because of who they are.

Equality of opportunity, inclusive practice and promoting the value of diversity are central to everything we do in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. In the Adult Learning Service our purpose is to engage people in learning programmes to improve their work prospects and wellbeing. We recognise the local context provides challenges when building inclusion. Blackburn is ranked the 14th most deprived area in England (based on the proportion of small neighbourhoods/LSOA's which fall within the 10% most deprived in England). The borough has four designated neighbourhood areas and 17 wards.

The main aims of this statement are:

1. To ensure we engage with residents of BwDBC by improving equal opportunities and diversity for the Adult Learning Service's learning programmes
2. To embed equality and diversity
3. To embed inclusivity
4. To specify the actions required to promote equality of opportunity
5. To ensure we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

We respect and understand that everyone is different and we will focus on creating opportunity and progression pathways for all our adult learners. We are committed to equal opportunities, meaning that everyone has the same chance to learn with us, to decide what they want to learn and to get the most out of their learning. We expect our staff to show respect to learners, and learners in turn to show respect to each other and to staff. We ask our tutors to challenge anyone in learning sessions who does not show respect to others. We will:

- understand, recognise, respect and value differences and
- manage differences so that everyone has equality of opportunity through a fair and consistent approach to the application of our rules, policies and procedures.

1. Engaging with residents by promoting equal opportunities and diversity for learning programmes

Before enrolment we will:

- Distribute accurate, relevant and inclusive information by a variety of means including promotional literature, the bwdlearning.org website, presentations and events
- Take positive action to enable potential learners with specific needs to engage in learning
- Work in partnership with support organisations and other Council services to share good practice and find solutions for barriers to learning.

During programmes/courses we will:

- Employ well-qualified tutors that map equality and diversity details/activities into their Schemes of Work and Lesson Plans and who consistently challenge stereotypical and prejudiced views, in order to create a positive learning environment for all involved
- Actively promote continuous professional development focused on equality and diversity
- Monitor data and share this with tutors and partners in order to narrow the gap between numbers that enrol and numbers that achieve
- Adhere to fair assessment practices
- Practice teaching strategies that appeal to all learning styles
- Implement the Council's safeguarding policy when circumstances require.

At the end of programmes/courses we will:

- Signpost learners to the "next step" in their learning journey
- Provide comprehensive information, advice and guidance about further opportunities in conjunction with our staff from the National Careers Service.

2. Embedding Equality and Diversity

The Adult Learning Service delivers several contracts funded by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). Contractual requirements mean that equality and diversity is monitored, in part by the SFA, but also by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). We deliver accredited and non-accredited courses in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework. We monitor achievement against Equality and Diversity Impact Measures. Data is analysed in our annual self-assessment reports for the whole of the Service and for each curriculum area to check that we continue to close the achievement gap between different groups.

We will continue to widen access and ensure that everyone is treated fairly, effectively and is supported to benefit the opportunities we offer by:

- Developing a curriculum offer that meets local flexibility needs and interests
- Promoting services to hard to reach groups of learners
- Encourage the development of non-paper based recording of progress and achievement for RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited adult learning)
- Use curriculum network meetings to support and develop best practice
- Using and developing individual learning plans in all areas of delivery to put learners at the heart of learning programmes to develop work prospects and wellbeing.

We value diversity and recognise that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences bring fresh ideas, views and perceptions. We aim to encourage and promote the value of differences and to ensure that learning is always relevant and appropriate to the widest possible range of views and experiences.

3. Embedding inclusivity

At operational level we will continue to embed inclusivity by:

- Monitoring achievements against Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMS)
- Analysing data and communicating findings to managers and partners so that they can improve
- Communicate everything in plain language
- Support learners who may have English and maths support needs
- Embed English and maths into lessons (and evidence this in lesson plans and schemes of work)
- Offer learning support to those who need it
- Involve learners in understanding inclusivity through their own learning
- Design/use promotional materials to reflect a diverse society and make all resources available, where appropriate, in different formats
- Encourage self-assessment to focus on Equality and Diversity
- Monitor the success of embedding inclusivity through quality monitoring visits such as observations of teaching, learning and assessment
- Ensure all continuous professional development incorporates Equality and Diversity knowledge, information and advice
- Review as appropriate all policies, procedures, strategies and implementation plans on an ongoing basis and conduct Equality Impact Assessments to check compliance
- Continue to share good practice
- Strive to widen participation and respond to the changing needs of the community.

4. Actions Required to Promote Equality of Opportunity

- Everyone should be treated fairly and with respect and should be encouraged to reach their full potential. This will mean using different approaches in different circumstances to ensure that there is equality of opportunity
- Staff must tackle bullying and discrimination so that all learners and potential learners have equal and fair access to our services
- The Service is committed to eliminating unlawful or unfair discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation and/or race, nationality and culture, including religion or the right to have no religion
- The Council recognises that promoting equality and inclusion will improve public services.

5. The Equality Act 2010

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, we will support learners at each stage of the learning process. The separate, full Council statement, policy and procedures are available on the website.

This includes the impact on policy formation and review as the Council is required to provide evidence of impact assessments linked to the nine protected characteristics.

6. Access to Fair Assessment

We aim to provide a variety of qualifications which provide all learners with the opportunity to achieve their full potential by the most appropriate and direct route. Our Assessment Policy is based on the concepts of equality, diversity, clarity, consistency and openness. We will endeavour to ensure that the assessment processes are implemented in a way which is fair and non-discriminatory. Tutors must consider the follow points when determining suitable access arrangements:

- What arrangements are suitable for the qualification?
- The learners normal way of working (eg support normally given in lessons or the workplace)
- The details of how specific access arrangements would work in an assessment
- Whether evidence or an application to the Awarding Organisation is required
- Any assistance from the Awarding Organisation that may be required to put the arrangements in place.

We aim to ensure that all assessment of work is carried out fairly and in keeping with the awarding body's requirements. All portfolio-based work will be assessed fairly against the qualification standards and tutors involved will be fully trained. Internal assessments will be carried out fairly and according to awarding body instructions. Externally marked tests and exams will be according to the requirements of the awarding body.