# RIPON CITY COUNCIL

# Equality & Diversity Policy

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| Adopted by the Council on the meeting of Full Council on 28th July 2025 | |
| **Last updated** | 21st September 2026<br>Reviewed by HR Committee 12th October 2026 |
| **By** | Chief Officer |
| **Date of Review** | 2028 |

## Our Commitment

Ripon City Council is committed to providing equal opportunities in employment and service delivery and to avoiding unlawful discrimination. This policy is intended to assist the council to put this commitment into practice. Compliance with this policy should also ensure that employees do not commit unlawful acts of discrimination.

The Council complies with its statutory duty under the Employment Rights Act 2025 to take all reasonable steps to proactively prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. The Council maintains a zero-tolerance framework supported by mandatory risk assessments, robust reporting systems, and active workplace monitoring.

## Policy Statement

The policy aims to achieve the five core values, which embrace and provide a framework within which all members and employees can work:

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| Equality | Recognition that everyone is of equal value and should be respected according to individual needs and abilities. |
| Equity | To be fair, reasonable and just in all council's activities. |
| Empowerment | Helping individuals take on responsibility so that they can influence and participate in the decision making process. |
| Accessibility | Equal access for all in employment and service delivery. |
| Quality | Obtaining the highest standards in service delivery. |

## The Law

It is unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly in recruitment or employment because of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment (including people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process of reassigning their sex or gender), pregnancy, maternity, race (which includes colour, caste, nationality and ethnic or national origins), sexual orientation, religion or belief, or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. These are known as "protected characteristics".

Discrimination after employment may also be unlawful, e.g. refusing to give a reference for a reason related to one of the protected characteristics.

The council will not discriminate against or harass a member of the public in the provision of services. It is unlawful to fail to make reasonable adjustments to overcome barriers to using services caused by disability. The duty to make reasonable adjustments includes the removal, adaptation or alteration of physical features, if the physical features make it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to make use of services. In addition, service providers have an obligation to think ahead and address any barriers that may impede disabled people from accessing a service.

## Types of Unlawful Discrimination

Direct discrimination is where a person is treated less favourably than another because of a protected characteristic.

In limited circumstances, employers can directly discriminate against an individual for a reason related to any of the protected characteristics where there is an occupational requirement.

The occupational requirement must be crucial to the post and a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Indirect discrimination is where a provision, criterion or practice is applied that is discriminatory in relation to individuals who have a relevant protected characteristic such that it would be to the detriment of people who share that protected characteristic compared with people who do not, and it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Harassment is where there is unwanted conduct, related to one of the protected characteristics (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity) that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity; or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It does not matter whether or not this effect was intended by the person responsible for the conduct.

Associative discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed for association with another individual who has a protected characteristic (although it does not cover harassment because of marriage and civil partnership, and (according to guidance from the Government and ACAS) pregnancy and maternity).

Perceptive discrimination is where an individual is directly discriminated against or harassed based on a perception that he/she has a particular protected characteristic when he/she does not, in fact, have that protected characteristic (other than marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity).

Third-party harassment: The Council acknowledges its statutory liability for harassment directed at employees by third parties, including members of the public, residents, visitors, and contractors. The Council will take all reasonable steps to protect staff from third-party misconduct. Staff are required to report any such incidents immediately to management so swift, formal action can be enforced.

Victimisation occurs where an employee is subjected to a detriment, such as being denied a training opportunity or a promotion because he/she made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010, or because he/she is suspected of doing so. However, an employee is not protected from victimisation if he/she acted maliciously or made or supported an untrue complaint.

Failure to make reasonable adjustments is where a physical feature or a provision, criterion or practice puts a disabled person at a substantial disadvantage compared with someone who does not have that protected characteristic and the employer has failed to make reasonable adjustments to enable the disabled person to overcome the disadvantage.

**Equal Opportunities in Employment**

RCC will avoid unlawful discrimination in all aspects of employment including recruitment, promotion, opportunities for training, pay and benefits, discipline and selection for redundancy.

**Recruitment**

- Person and job specifications will be limited to those requirements that are necessary for the effective performance of the job.

- Candidates for employment or promotion will be assessed objectively against the requirements for the job, taking account of any reasonable adjustments that may be required for candidates with a disability.
- Disability and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary.

**Working practices**

The council will consider any possible indirectly discriminatory effect of its standard working practices, including the number of hours to be worked, the times at which these are to be worked and the place at which work is to be done, when considering requests for variations to these standard working practices and will refuse such requests only if the council considers it has good reasons, unrelated to any protected characteristic, for doing so. RCC will comply with its obligations in relation to statutory requests for contract variations. The Council supports flexible working as a standard option from day one of employment. Statutory requests for contract variations will be reviewed under a presumption of accommodation, and will only be rejected if clear, statutorily defined business grounds apply following comprehensive consultation.

**Equal Opportunities Monitoring**

RCC will monitor the ethnic, gender and age composition of the existing workforce and of applicants for jobs (including promotion), and the number of people with disabilities within these groups, and will consider and take any appropriate action to address any problems that may be identified as a result of the monitoring process.

The council treats personal data collected for reviewing equality and diversity in accordance with the data protection policy. Information about how data is used and the basis for processing is provided in the council's privacy notices.

**Inclusion**

RCC respect and value staff as individuals, providing support and commitment so that everyone has a sense of belonging and is able to achieve their best.

All employees have a personal responsibility to treat colleagues, members, contractors and members of the public in accordance with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.

Councillors are expected to uphold the principles of this policy and comply with the Council's Code of Conduct when interacting with employees, residents, contractors and fellow councillors.

In our employment practices and in providing services, we expect all employees to:

- Support a working environment free of bullying, harassment, victimisation and unlawful discrimination, promoting dignity and respect for all, and where individual differences and the contributions of all staff are recognised and valued
- Act fairly and, provide equality of opportunity
- Recognise that everyone is different and that these differences must be equally respected
- Be aware that you must not treat people less favourably because of a protected

characteristic

- Challenge discrimination so that we demonstrate our commitment to equality and diversity and do not exclude people or make them feel isolated
- Not unlawfully discriminate, for example, as staff responsible for decisions on recruitment, selection, promotion or transfer
- Not induce or attempt to induce others to practice discrimination, nor yield to pressure from others to discriminate
- Not victimise or attempt to victimise individuals on the grounds that they have made complaints under the Equality Act or provided information about discrimination
- Not harass, abuse or intimidate other employees, member organisations, partners etc; where employees commit such action they will be liable to disciplinary action
- Draw to the attention of management apparent breaches of this Code of Practice
- Line Managers and supervisors have a particular responsibility for ensuring that staff act appropriately.

**People not employed by the council**

The council will not discriminate unlawfully against those using or seeking to use the services provided by the council.

You should report any bullying or harassment by suppliers, visitors or others to the council who will take appropriate action.

**Training**

The council will provide training in/raise awareness of equal opportunities to those likely to be involved in recruitment or other decision making where equal opportunities issues are likely to arise.

The council will provide training to/raise awareness of all staff engaged to work at the council to help them understand their rights and responsibilities under the dignity at work policy and what they can do to help create a working environment free of bullying and harassment. The council will provide additional training to managers to enable them to deal more effectively with complaints of bullying and harassment.

**Your responsibilities**

Every employee is required to assist the council to meet its commitment to provide equal opportunities in employment and avoid unlawful discrimination. Employees can be held personally liable as well as, or instead of, the council for any act of unlawful discrimination. Employees who commit serious acts of harassment may be guilty of a criminal offence.

Acts of discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation against employees or members of the public are disciplinary offences and will be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedure. Discrimination, harassment, bullying or victimisation may constitute gross misconduct and could lead to dismissal without notice.

**Grievances**

If you consider that you may have been unlawfully discriminated against, you should use the council's grievance procedure to make a complaint. If your complaint involves bullying or harassment, the grievance procedure is modified as set out in the dignity at work policy. The

council will take any complaint seriously and will seek to resolve any grievance that it upholds. You will not be penalised for raising a grievance, even if your grievance is not upheld, unless your complaint is both untrue and made in bad faith. In accordance with the Employment Rights Act 2025, no settlement agreement, confidentiality clause, or non-disclosure agreement (NDA) issued by the Council can legally restrict or void an employee's right to disclose, discuss, or allege workplace harassment, discrimination, or victimization.

**Monitoring and review**

This policy will be monitored periodically by the council to judge its effectiveness and will be updated in accordance with changes in the law. This is a non-contractual procedure which will be reviewed from time to time.