



Policies and Procedures 2023-24

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Northumberland Skills

NS-P207 Equality and Diversity Policy

Northumberland Skills Vision and values

Northumberland Skills is committed to equality and diversity and dedicated to reducing barriers by offering fair opportunity to all learners and staff. We value, welcome and actively celebrate the benefits that diversity and difference bring to the service and our society. One of our core values is:

"We celebrate diversity and inclusion and the breaking down of barriers to success"

Northumberland Skills is committed to creating a safe environment for all learners and staff and we firmly believe that all forms of prejudice and unfair discrimination are unacceptable. We aspire to excellence and are committed to ensuring that staff integrate and embed equality and diversity in processes and practices across the organisation. We are dedicated to the active pursuit of equal opportunities that address the need and right of everyone in our service to be treated with respect and dignity.

Purpose

Northumberland Skills uses its Equality & Diversity Policy to aim to ensure all current and future employees, learners, employers and stakeholders are treated equally, regardless of age, disability, family responsibility, marital status, race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, sexual orientation, trade union activity or unrelated criminal convictions.

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear centre guidance regarding equality and to establish key principles, structures and monitoring arrangements.

Scope

The policy is applicable to all First for Apprenticeships employees, learners, employers, contractors and stakeholders.

Our aim is to create an environment where, without exception, people treat each other with mutual respect and we ensure that we are a provider where our difference becomes our strengths.

Tackling inequality through education is essential if we are to achieve a fairer and equal society. Northumberland Skills will raise awareness of equality and human rights; it will uphold and promote fundamental values to help prepare our learners for work and life in modern British society. We will underpin the key values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance. Our teaching, learning and assessment will promote equality and celebrate diversity; furthermore, we are committed to challenge and address discrimination, victimisation, harassment, stereotyping, radicalisation and bullying.

This Equality and Diversity Policy applies to all staff and learners of Northumberland Skills.

Legislation

The Equality Act 2010 provides the key legislative requirements relating to equality and diversity. Within this piece of legislation, nine protected characteristics are identified: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Act outlaws unfair discrimination against an individual because of a protected characteristic and includes the following types of discrimination:

- direct discrimination - when you treat a person less favourably than you treat another person because of a protected characteristic
- indirect discrimination - when a practice has the effect of putting people sharing a protected characteristic within the general group at a particular disadvantage
- harassment – when someone behaves in a way that creates an offensive, hostile, degrading, humiliating or intimidating environment for a person
- victimisation - if you treat someone badly because they have been involved in a claim or complaint about discrimination
- discrimination arising from disability - when you treat a disabled person unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and cannot justify such treatment
- failure to make reasonable adjustments – when an organisation fails to make reasonable adjustments for a person with disabilities to avoid the disabled person being placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to person without disabilities

The Public Sector Equality Duty was created as part of the Equality Act 2010; each year, as part of this duty, Northumberland Skills will revisit the policy and take into account the following:

- the extent to which the advancement of equality and diversity is evident within Northumberland Skills
- our strong commitment to a culture of fairness, tolerance and respect
- our pledge to provide inclusive educational provision that respects and responds to the diverse needs of our local community
- the progress we make towards our equality objectives

The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017

Northumberland County Council publishes gender pay gap information within its Equality and Diversity Annual Report.

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 and the Prevent Duty

This places a duty on Northumberland Skills to have "due regard for the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism" and to challenge vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

We recognise that we play a vital role in keeping our learners safe from harm, including

from the risks of extremism and radicalisation. Northumberland Skills staff are expected to exemplify key British values within their general behaviours.

Leadership and management.

Promoting key values of our society alongside building learners' confidence to both question and challenge extremist beliefs and ideologies will help to develop resilience.

All staff are required to undertake mandatory training linked to the Prevent Duty, Staying Safe and Northumberland Skills Safeguarding and Prevent policy.

Roles and responsibilities

Each member of Northumberland Skills staff is responsible for following and supporting this policy. The guidance applies to learners, apprentices, employees, contractors, volunteers and visitors. We expect all members of our service to follow our vision and values for equality, diversity and British values.

Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership Team has overall operational responsibility for equality and diversity and British values through:

- proactively championing equality, diversity and British values
- carrying primary responsibility for ensuring all aspects of this policy are carried out effectively
- ensuring that measurable equality targets are set to accomplish the duties of the legislation
- ensuring regular reports are made to service staff who will monitor progress and performance

Staff

Each member of staff is responsible for supporting this policy through:

- applying and embedding the vision and values of this policy in their work and roles
- undertaking relevant mandatory training
- supporting, encouraging and enabling learners to follow this policy
- taking appropriate and immediate action in the event of incidents of harassment, unfair discrimination or misbehaviour alerting or involving, if necessary, senior Northumberland Skills staff

Learners

Learners are expected to support and follow this policy through:

- treating everyone with respect, fairly and with understanding
- abiding by the law
- using language carefully, without swearing or inappropriate language, and not saying rude, hurtful or disrespectful things about other people
- reporting any concerns they have for themselves or others
- resolving differences and disagreements amicably

Complaints from learners may be raised through the complaints procedure.

For our apprentices who either work for Northumberland County Council or for other

employers we will ensure that all learners and potential learners are treated with equality and fairness by:

Ensuring that teaching and learning activity design and delivery is in keeping with individual educational need.

Establish support systems in keeping with the needs of both individuals and groups.

Offer flexibility in terms of modes of attendance.

Identifying and eliminating barriers to access. (Physical, Environmental and Curricular)

Where appropriate information leaflets will be translated into a range of community languages.

Employee rights - apprentices

Northumberland Skills will ensure that employers offer apprentices the same conditions as other employees working at similar grades or in similar roles. This includes:

- paid holidays
- sick pay
- sickness reporting
- Health and well-being support
- any benefits on offer, such as childcare voucher schemes
- coaching or mentoring

General Information

Northumberland Skills will monitor learner applications, enrolment, retention and achievement by gender, race, age and disability.

Ethnic group information will be recorded on the basis of each individual's self-identification. Such information will be treated as sensitive and confidential, its collection and use will comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and GDPR legislation. We recognise that some individuals may be reluctant to record their ethnic group and others may refuse to do so. No attempt will be made to encourage individuals to provide this data.

Our Commitment

Breaches of the policy will be dealt with in accordance with the disciplinary procedure set out in the relevant policy. If a learner or potential learner believes that they have not been treated fairly, due to prejudice or discrimination they should invoke the complaint's procedure.

If an employee believes they have not been treated fairly, due to prejudice or discrimination they should invoke the grievance/harassment procedure, as appropriate.

All staff are responsible for ensuring that incidents of discriminatory behaviour are recorded and referred to our curriculum lead for apprentices.

All staff have responsibilities for promoting equality and fostering good relations between different groups.

All staff have responsibilities to eliminate discrimination on grounds of race, gender, disability or any of the protected characteristics. Staff are responsible for ensuring that:

- They are aware of the statutory duties in relation to legislation
- Their schemes of work, lesson content and teaching resources demonstrate sensitivity to issues of equality
- They challenge inappropriate behaviour by either apprentices, work placement providers or other members of staff
- It is the responsibility of each individual members of staff to confront discrimination, whether witting or unwitting, whenever it occurs

Apprentices as key stakeholders also have a role and responsibility to comply with policies:

- apprentices should be made aware of Northumberland Skills policies at induction, through publicity and events, and through the embedding of Equality and Diversity in teaching and learning.
- apprentices should treat all other apprentices, staff, and visitors with respect and dignity.
- apprentices must show respect for other people's cultural traditions and religious beliefs and participate in initiatives designed to promote good relations.
- apprentices should report any incidents of discrimination, harassment, or bullying using anti-bullying and harassment and complaints procedures and report on our online portal Tootoot.

Northumberland Skills Marketing will ensure that all publicity materials present appropriate images that reflect our diversity and send out positive messages about different groups of people.

Monitoring and evaluation

Northumberland Skills will regularly measure, review and reinforce the effectiveness of the Policy through:

- Self-assessment and Quality Improvement reporting
Staff and learner surveys and data analysis
- Formal complaint monitoring
- Collecting and disseminating examples of good practice
Strategic Plan/Operational Plan monitoring activities
- Mandatory training through – Safeguarding, Equality & Diversity, Prevent

This policy sits alongside Northumberland Skills safeguarding policy and will be reviewed annually.

Brian Harrison August 2023