**Equality and Diversity Policy**

**2023-24**

**Scope**

This policy statement reflects the wider Council’s Equality and Diversity Policy and its links to Adult Education In Cheshire West and Chester.

Equality of opportunity, inclusive practice and promoting the value of diversity are central to everything we do within the work of the Skills and Employment team from the way we commission, who we commission, the services and provision we provide and the support we give. Everyone is different and has something unique to offer. CW&C wants to respect and understand these differences and to make the most of everyone’s talents. We are fully focused on creating opportunity and progression pathways for all adults in Cheshire West and Chester to make effective choices about their learning and work options and achieve their goals through participation in our service offer.

**Aims of this Policy Statement**

1. To ensure equality of access to all Cheshire West and Chester’s adult learning and employment support services delivered by the Skills and Employment team.
2. To monitor learning outcomes against a background of inclusivity to ensure all learners are reaching their full potential.
3. To implement the Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Corporate Equality Plan (for the CW&C Skills and Employment service) in order to ensure that the council, its funded partners, stakeholders and communities embed equality and inclusivity within all their services.
4. To ensure we meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.
5. To ensure we take every opportunity to improve our inclusive practice and embed it within all our curriculum, support and information, advice and guidance.

**Definitions**

**Diversity** is about understanding, recognising, respecting and valuing differences.

**Equality** is about managing differences so that everyone has equality of opportunity through a fair and consistent approach to the application of rules, policies and procedures. We recognise that sometimes this will mean treating people differently.

In keeping with the Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Equality Framework we are committed to maintaining the requirements of the Excellent Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government achieved in 2014.

This commitment is relevant to all we do, how we manage ourselves and how we deliver our service.

**We are committed to:**

**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 equality of opportunity.
* We aim to actively promote equality and diversity and tackle bullying and discrimination so that all learners and potential learners have equal and fair access to our services.
* We are committed to eliminating unlawful or unfair discrimination in keeping with the nine protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation).
* We recognise that promoting equality and inclusion will improve public services for everyone. Our aim therefore, is to make equality an integral part of the way the Council works, by putting it at the centre of everything we do.
* We take proactive steps through targeting our resource to narrow gaps in opportunity and firmly believe a more equal society is better for everyone.

**Valuing Diversity**

* 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 accessible to our whole community and is relevant and appropriate to the widest possible range of views and experiences.

**How we embed Equality and Diversity**

All provision is delivered in accordance with the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and monitored both by Skills and Employment staff and Ofsted Inspectors.

All contracted provision and directly delivered services work within this framework, which is constantly seeking to improve services and widen access through a variety of tools and monitoring measures. Below are some of the ways we will strive to make certain that everything we do widens access and ensures that everyone is treated fairly and effectively:

* Carry out extensive consultation and respond appropriately to the changing demographics and needs of the community
* Plan a rich curriculum that meets needs and interests
* Promotion of services is available in accessible formats so that we can encourage those not accessing services currently to take advantage our offer
* Commission specific learning providers who specialise in supporting different target groups
* Design and pilot models of support to develop best practice

**What we will do to ensure inclusivity:**

* Implement safer recruitment processes when recruiting tutors and organisations
* Provide staff with access to Equality and Diversity training
* Encourage self-assessment to focus on Equality and Diversity
* Share good practice at events
* Actively promote continuous professional development focused on equality and diversity through our Quality Assurance and Improvement framework
* Monitor the success of embedding inclusivity through all quality monitoring visits
* Review as appropriate all policies, procedures, strategies and implementation plans on an ongoing basis and conduct Equality Impact Assessments to check compliance
* Involve the Council’s Equality and Diversity Team in Skills and Employment plans
* Create a safe learning environment underpinned by relevant policies e.g safeguarding

Furthermore, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010, we will support learners at each stage of their learning journey.

**Prior to enrolment, we will:**

* Ensure that plain English is used in all promotional materials and made accessible to all
* Take positive steps to encourage potential learners with specific needs to engage in learning
* Work in partnership with support organisations in order to share good practice and find solutions for barriers to learning
* Guaranty initial assessment that ensures all individual/support needs can be met and learners signposted to appropriate programmes

**During programme delivery, we will:**

* Set the needs of our learners first, using individualised learning plans (ILPs) in all areas of delivery
* Ensure plain English in all communications
* Support learners with English and maths support needs
* Offer additional learning support to those who need it
* Involve learners in understanding inclusivity through their own learning
* Design promotional materials to reflect a diverse society and make all resources available, where appropriate, in different formats
* Ensure well-qualified tutors consistently challenge stereotypical and prejudiced views in order to create a positive learning environment for all involved
* Adhere to fair assessment practices
* Practise teaching strategies that appeal to all learning styles
* Implement Safeguarding Policy when circumstances require
* Maintain a zero tolerance approach to discrimination and bullying in all forms
* Undertake activities to raise awareness on the importance of Equality and Diversity and the nine protected characteristics

**On completion of programme delivery, we will**:

* Work in partnership with other organisations to signpost learners appropriately to the “next step” in their learning journey
* Provide comprehensive information, advice and guidance about further opportunities
* Monitor achievements against EDIMS (Equality and Diversity Impact Measures) through data capture and analysis
* Monitor Equality and Diversity in progression surveys

**Conclusion**

A successful approach to equality and diversity as outlined above will support our learners to be happier and healthier, have better jobs, live longer and contribute to their communities.