

Diversity Monitoring

Frequently Asked Questions for Service Users

This leaflet is intended to help you understand the principles of Diversity Monitoring, and explain to you why the Council might ask you to provide this kind of information from time to time.

What is Diversity Monitoring?

Diversity Monitoring is the process by which the Council requests and collates personal information from their customers, staff and service users. Requests for such information will include questions about your age, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, and whether or not you have a disability. We will always encourage you to self define - this means we will always ask you to choose which category you think best describes you, and you can refuse to give this information if you so wish.

Why we need this information?

Equality, diversity, integration and cohesion are integral to our work and core values. Also, there is some important legislation in place to ensure that we promote equality of opportunity and provide employment and services that are fair and accessible to all. The Equality and Human Rights Commission and the Government have made it clear that they will be closely assessing our performance on equality issues. When requested to do so, we would encourage you to provide personal data because Diversity Monitoring helps us to determine whether we are reaching the high standards expected of us, and whether we are continually improving our services to you. It helps us to:

- ❖ Identify if our equality policies are working effectively and prevent discrimination;
- ❖ Find out who is using our services and the level of their satisfaction;
- ❖ Determine whether we are reaching and listening to all groups within the community and treating them fairly;
- ❖ Ensure the needs of all community groups are taken into account when developing new policies and services;
- ❖ Enable the council to find solutions and make changes through targeted action in key areas;
- ❖ Improve our reputation as a good employer and create a workforce which represents the community we serve.

How and when will we collect this information?

Every local council will have its own method for collecting Diversity Monitoring information, and each council will decide how, when and where it is appropriate to do so. You will normally be asked for this type of information when you have contacted the council for a particular reason, such as applying for a job, or enquiring about a particular service. You might be asked for this information over the phone, in a face to face interview, or you might be asked to complete a questionnaire. You do not have to answer any of these questions if you don't want to. However, by answering the questions, you will help us to ensure that our services and employment practices are fair and accessible to all.

What happens to the information that I choose to provide?

Council officers will regularly analyse and question the data produced by monitoring, then follow up and tackle any concerns or failures highlighted. For example, monitoring who is applying for jobs might show us that too few women are being recruited into senior jobs, and the council will then be able to investigate why this might be the case. Diversity Monitoring is part of an ongoing process of analysis, reporting, asking questions, investigation and change.

We are committed to delivering excellent services, but we can only do this if we understand who are our customers and what particular needs they have.

We will use the monitoring information to:

- ❖ Establish who is using our services and how satisfied they are with them
- ❖ Consider ways of reaching underrepresented groups and ensure our services meet their needs
- ❖ Determine whether we are reaching out to and listening to all groups within the community and treating them fairly;
- ❖ Ensure the needs of all community groups are taken into account when developing new policies and services;
- ❖ Set targets and plan our services
- ❖ Reviewing our service delivery by comparing our performance over time
- ❖ Developing services and assist with making changes
- ❖ Make sure we provide services fairly. For example, if the information you give shows that a group of people is not accessing one of our services then we could find out why and remove any barriers
- ❖ Improve our reputation as a good employer and create a workforce which represents the community we serve

Confidentiality and Data Protection

We want you to feel positive about providing the information we have requested. However, it is important that you know why we are collecting personal information and that you are confident that any data we hold about you is stored confidentially and securely. The Data Protection Legislation exists to protect you against the misuse of personal information and all records whether manual or computerised must meet the requirements of the Data Protection Act. We will only collect data for lawful and specified purposes and will not publish data in any way that makes it possible to identify an individual without their permission. This means that in most cases, it will be necessary to obtain your explicit consent to hold and process any personal data that you are willing to provide. You can be assured that any data you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. If you have any doubts or concerns about providing the data, then please feel free to ask.

Where will the data be stored?

Any personal information you give us will be held securely on our database and will be used only for statistical and analysis purposes in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. In completing the equality monitoring form you are giving your consent for your details to be used for these purposes.

Finally ... having read this leaflet, we hope you will understand why it is important and valuable for the Council to collect diversity monitoring information. We also hope that you will feel willing and confident to provide this information on request.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding Diversity Monitoring, please contact the Policy Officer for Equalities and Diversity on 0208 424 1322 or email equalities@harrow.gov.uk