

Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Policy (2026/27)

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1. Policy Statement

Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service (WFALS) is committed to creating a culture in which equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are embedded in every aspect of our work. We believe that all learners, staff, volunteers, partners, employers and members of the wider community have the right to be treated with dignity, fairness and respect, and to access opportunities that enable them to achieve their full potential.

As a service operating within one of London's most diverse boroughs, we recognise and value the rich range of backgrounds, identities, experiences, cultures and perspectives that our learners and staff bring. We believe that diversity strengthens our learning communities, enriches the educational experience and contributes positively to individual achievement, community cohesion and economic prosperity.

We are committed to providing an inclusive learning environment in which every individual feels welcomed, respected, represented and able to participate fully. We recognise that equality is not achieved simply by treating everyone the same. Some learners may face barriers that affect their access, participation, achievement, progression or wellbeing. We are therefore committed to identifying and addressing barriers, making reasonable adjustments where required, and providing appropriate support to ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes.

Our approach is underpinned by the principles of equity, inclusion and belonging. We want every learner to feel that they matter, that their voice is heard, and that they are valued as an integral part of the Adult Learning Service. We are committed to fostering a culture where differences are celebrated, individuality is respected and everyone can engage with confidence in a safe and supportive environment.

The Service will not tolerate discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation, hate incidents or any other behaviour that undermines the dignity, safety or wellbeing of others. We expect all members of our learning and working communities to contribute positively to an environment based on mutual respect, understanding and civility.

In delivering our provision, we will meet our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty and other relevant legislation. We will actively work to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people from different backgrounds and experiences.

We are committed to ensuring that equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are not viewed as standalone activities, but as fundamental principles that inform strategic planning, curriculum design, teaching, learning, learner support, safeguarding, quality improvement and decision-making across the Service.

Through this policy, Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service reaffirms its commitment to creating opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, removing barriers to success and enabling every learner to participate, achieve, progress and thrive.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a clear framework through which Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service (WFALS) promotes equality, values diversity, advances inclusion and fosters a genuine sense of belonging for all learners, staff, volunteers, partners and stakeholders.

This policy establishes the principles, commitments and responsibilities that guide our approach to creating an equitable and inclusive learning environment. It demonstrates how the Service will meet its legal and ethical obligations while ensuring that equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are embedded within strategic planning, curriculum delivery, learner support, quality improvement and organisational decision-making.

The policy seeks to:

- promote a culture in which all individuals are treated with dignity, fairness, respect and consideration
- ensure that no individual is disadvantaged, excluded or treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic or any other personal circumstance
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation and hate-related behaviour
- advance equality of opportunity by identifying and reducing barriers that may prevent individuals from accessing, participating in or benefiting from learning
- foster positive relationships, mutual respect and understanding between people from different backgrounds, experiences and communities
- support the development of inclusive learning environments where all learners feel welcomed, valued, represented and able to participate fully
- promote equitable access to learning, support services, progression opportunities and positive outcomes
- ensure that the needs of learners facing barriers to participation, achievement or progression are identified and addressed appropriately
- support staff to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence required to implement inclusive and accessible practice
- establish clear accountability for the promotion, monitoring and evaluation of equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging across the Service
- contribute to the wider strategic aims of Waltham Forest Council by tackling inequalities, improving life chances and supporting stronger, more inclusive communities.

This policy also provides the foundation for the Service's Inclusion and Belonging Strategy, Equality Objectives and associated action plans. Together, these documents support a continuous cycle of improvement through which WFALS evaluates its impact, listens to learner voices, responds to emerging needs and strives to achieve positive and equitable outcomes for all.

Through this policy, Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service affirms its commitment to ensuring that equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are not viewed as separate initiatives, but as fundamental principles that shape the culture, values and everyday practice of the organisation.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all individuals who engage with, work for, represent or receive services from WFALS. It sets out the standards and expectations that support the creation and maintenance of an inclusive, respectful and equitable learning and working environment.

The policy applies to all aspects of the Service's activities, including curriculum planning and delivery, learner recruitment and enrolment, learner support, teaching and learning, assessment, quality improvement, partnership working, employment practices and community engagement.

The policy applies to:

- all learners enrolled on, participating in or seeking access to Adult Learning Service provision
- prospective learners and applicants
- employees, including permanent, temporary, fixed-term and casual staff
- tutors, lecturers, assessors and sessional workers
- volunteers and work experience placements
- contractors, consultants and agency staff working on behalf of the Service
- employers and workplace partners engaged with WFALS programmes
- subcontractors and commissioned delivery partners, where applicable
- visitors, stakeholders and individuals participating in WFALS activities or events.

This policy applies across all forms of delivery, including:

- classroom-based learning
- community and outreach provision
- online and blended learning
- workplace and employer-based learning
- information, advice and guidance activities
- learner support services
- all other activities delivered by, or on behalf of, Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service.

The principles contained within this policy apply throughout the learner journey, from initial enquiry and enrolment through to participation, achievement, progression and destination outcomes. They also apply throughout the employee lifecycle, including recruitment, induction, training, development and professional practice.

All individuals covered by this policy are expected to uphold its principles and contribute to a culture in which equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are actively promoted. Everyone has a responsibility to treat others with dignity and respect, to challenge discrimination where appropriate and to contribute positively to an environment where people feel safe, valued and able to participate fully.

Where services are delivered in partnership with other organisations, WFALS will seek to ensure that partners share our commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging and operate in a manner that is consistent with the principles set out in this policy.

This policy should be read alongside other relevant Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service and London Borough of Waltham Forest policies, including those relating to safeguarding, learner

support, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), health and safety, complaints, staff conduct and quality assurance.

4. Our Vision

At Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service, our vision is to create learning opportunities that empower individuals, strengthen communities and improve life chances. We aspire to be an inclusive, learner-centred service where every individual feels welcomed, respected, valued and able to achieve their ambitions, regardless of their background, identity, circumstances or previous experiences.

Adult learning can open doors to new opportunities and for people to develop new skills, increase their confidence, build social connections and achieve goals that are important to them. We recognise that every learner's journey is unique and that some individuals may require additional support to overcome barriers. We are committed to ensuring that all learners feel welcomed, valued and able to engage fully in learning and progress in ways that are meaningful to them.

Our vision is to foster a culture where equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are understood not simply as principles, but as lived experiences. We want every learner and member of staff to feel that they are seen, heard and respected, and that their unique experiences and perspectives are recognised as valuable contributions to our learning community.

We are committed to creating learning environments that:

- promote dignity, respect and mutual understanding
- celebrate diversity in all its forms
- encourage participation, collaboration and learner voice
- remove barriers that may prevent individuals from accessing or benefiting from learning
- support aspiration, achievement and progression
- value the contribution of every individual
- promote positive wellbeing, confidence and resilience
- foster a genuine sense of belonging for all.

We recognise that achieving this vision requires continuous reflection, learning and improvement. We use evidence, learner feedback and performance information to understand the experiences of different learner groups, identify inequalities and take meaningful action to improve outcomes.

Through strong leadership, inclusive practice and partnership working, we aim to create a service where all learners can develop the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to participate fully in society, contribute to their communities and realise their potential.

Ultimately, our ambition is that every learner who engages with Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service can say:

“I felt welcome, I was supported, I belonged, and I achieved my goals.”

This vision underpins all aspects of our work and informs the decisions we make, the services we provide and the culture we seek to create.

5. Legislative and Regulatory Framework

Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service is committed to promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging in accordance with relevant legislation, statutory guidance and regulatory expectations. This policy provides the framework through which the Service fulfils its legal responsibilities and demonstrates its commitment to creating an environment in which all learners, staff and stakeholders are treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

The Service recognises that equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are fundamental to effective adult learning provision and form an integral part of learner recruitment, curriculum design, teaching and learning, learner support, safeguarding, quality improvement and organisational decision-making.

In implementing this policy, WFALS will have due regard to all relevant legislation and guidance (see Appendix F), including but not limited to:

5.1 Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 provides the principal legal framework for protecting individuals from discrimination, harassment and victimisation. The Act identifies nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

WFALS is committed to ensuring that discrimination on the basis of any protected characteristic is not tolerated and that all individuals are able to participate in learning and employment free from prejudice, discrimination and unfair treatment.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

As part of the London Borough of Waltham Forest, the Adult Learning Service is required to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. In exercising its functions, the Service will have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The principles of the Public Sector Equality Duty inform strategic planning, service delivery, decision-making and quality improvement activities across the Service.

Human Rights Act 1998

WFALS recognises the importance of protecting the rights and freedoms of all individuals and is committed to promoting respect, dignity, fairness and equality in accordance with the principles of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Legislation

The Service is committed to supporting learners with special educational needs and disabilities and will fulfil its responsibilities under relevant SEND legislation and guidance. We will work to identify barriers to participation and provide reasonable adjustments and appropriate support to enable learners to access learning and achieve their goals.

Care Act 2014

In delivering services to adults, WFALS recognises its responsibilities in supporting wellbeing, independence and participation, and will work collaboratively with relevant agencies where appropriate to support vulnerable adults and learners with additional needs.

Safeguarding and Prevent Duties

The Service is committed to creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for all learners. Equality, diversity, inclusion and safeguarding are closely linked, and the Service recognises that individuals who experience discrimination, exclusion or marginalisation may be at greater risk of harm.

WFALS will fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities and meet its duties under the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty), ensuring that learners are supported to feel safe, respected and able to express their views within an environment that promotes mutual respect and democratic values.

Further Education and Skills Regulatory Expectations

The Service will ensure that equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are embedded throughout all aspects of provision and reflected within learner outcomes, quality assurance processes, self-assessment, improvement planning and leadership decision-making. We will continually review our practice to ensure that learners from all backgrounds are able to participate, achieve, progress and feel a sense of belonging within the Service.

Commitment to Compliance and Continuous Improvement

Compliance with legislation alone is not sufficient to achieve our vision. Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service is committed to going beyond minimum legal requirements by promoting a culture in which equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are actively championed and continuously improved.

The Service will regularly review its policies, procedures and practices to ensure they remain current, effective and responsive to changing legislation, local needs, sector developments and emerging good practice.

6. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Equality

Equality is about ensuring that individuals are treated fairly and have access to the same opportunities, regardless of their background, identity or personal circumstances. Equality recognises that some people may face barriers or disadvantages and may require different forms of support to achieve equitable outcomes.

Within the Adult Learning Service, equality means creating fair opportunities for all learners and staff to participate, achieve and progress, while actively addressing discrimination and disadvantage where they exist.

Diversity

Diversity refers to the range of differences that exist between individuals and communities. These differences may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, ethnicity, cultural background, gender, gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, lived experience, education, language and personal perspectives.

WFALS values diversity and recognises that a diverse learning community enriches the learning experience, promotes understanding and strengthens communities.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the practice of creating environments in which all individuals feel welcomed, respected, supported and able to participate fully. Inclusion goes beyond access and focuses on ensuring that everyone can contribute, engage and benefit from learning and related activities.

An inclusive service identifies and removes barriers to participation and ensures that individuals have the support they need to achieve their goals.

Belonging

Belonging is the experience of feeling accepted, valued, respected and connected within a community or environment. It is achieved when individuals feel that they can be their authentic selves, that their voices are heard and that they are recognised as important members of the learning community.

For WFALS, belonging is an important outcome of inclusive practice and contributes positively to learner engagement, wellbeing, achievement and progression.

Equity

Equity recognises that people have different starting points, experiences, needs and circumstances. Rather than treating everyone in exactly the same way, equity involves providing appropriate levels of support, resource or adjustment to ensure that individuals have a fair opportunity to succeed.

An equitable approach acknowledges that fairness may require different responses for different individuals.

Protected Characteristics

Protected characteristics are the personal characteristics that are protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. These are:

- Age

- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

WFALS is committed to ensuring that no learner, employee or stakeholder experiences discrimination, harassment or victimisation because of a protected characteristic.

Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes or adaptations made to remove or reduce disadvantages experienced by disabled individuals. These may relate to learning environments, teaching methods, assessment arrangements, resources, communication methods or support services.

WFALS is committed to identifying and implementing reasonable adjustments to support equitable access, participation and achievement.

Discrimination

Discrimination occurs when an individual is treated unfairly or less favourably because of a protected characteristic or another aspect of their identity. Discrimination may be direct or indirect and may occur intentionally or unintentionally.

WFALS will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when an individual is treated unfairly because they have made, supported or raised a complaint or concern relating to discrimination, harassment or equality matters.

Learners Facing Barriers

Learners facing barriers are individuals who may experience challenges that affect their ability to access, participate in, achieve or progress within learning. Barriers may be temporary or long-term and may relate to disability, health, mental health, caring responsibilities, financial hardship, digital exclusion, language needs, previous educational experiences, social isolation or other personal circumstances.

WFALS is committed to identifying and addressing barriers wherever possible to support equitable participation and outcomes for all learners.

Inclusive Practice

Inclusive practice refers to the approaches, behaviours and actions that actively promote participation, engagement, accessibility and belonging for all individuals. Inclusive practice is the responsibility of all staff and should be reflected in teaching, learner support, communication, leadership and decision-making throughout the Service.

7. Public Sector Equality Duty

As part of the London Borough of Waltham Forest, Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service supports the Council in meeting its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) contained within the Equality Act 2010.

The Service will ensure that equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are considered throughout service planning, curriculum development, learner support, workforce development and decision-making. We will use learner data, learner voice and quality assurance processes to identify barriers, understand the experiences of different learner groups and improve outcomes.

In fulfilling our responsibilities, we will work in alignment with the London Borough of Waltham Forest's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and associated policies, contributing to the Council's wider ambition to reduce inequalities, improve life chances and create fairer opportunities for residents.

7.1 Equality of Opportunity

We are committed to ensuring that learners and staff have equitable access to opportunities, support and services. Where barriers are identified, we will take reasonable and proportionate steps to remove or reduce them and support positive outcomes for all.

7.2 Fostering Inclusion and Belonging

We create learning environments that promote respect, participation and positive relationships. Through our curriculum, learner support and community engagement activities, we celebrate diversity, encourage learner voice and foster a strong sense of belonging for all learners.

8. Our Commitment to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging

Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service is committed to creating an environment where equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are embedded within our culture, values and day-to-day practice. We believe that everyone should be treated with dignity, fairness and respect, regardless of their background, identity, circumstances or personal characteristics.

We recognise that inclusion is not achieved simply by providing access to learning opportunities. It also requires us to identify and address barriers that may prevent individuals from participating fully, achieving their goals or feeling a sense of belonging within our learning community. We are therefore committed to creating environments in which learners, staff, volunteers and partners feel welcomed, valued, represented and able to contribute.

We recognise that individuals may experience different opportunities, challenges and barriers throughout their lives. Our approach is therefore based on the principles of equity and fairness, ensuring that support, resources and reasonable adjustments are available where required to enable individuals to participate successfully and achieve positive outcomes.

To support this commitment, we:

- Promote a culture of dignity, respect, inclusion and belonging across all aspects of our work.
- Value and celebrate the diversity of our learners, staff and communities.
- Provide equitable access to learning opportunities, support services and progression pathways.
- Actively identify and remove barriers that may affect participation, achievement or progression.
- Make reasonable adjustments for learners, staff and visitors where required.
- Challenge and respond appropriately to discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation and hate-related behaviour.
- Promote learner voice and ensure that individuals have opportunities to influence decisions that affect their experience.
- Foster positive relationships and mutual understanding between people from different backgrounds and experiences.
- Support staff to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence required to implement inclusive practice.
- Use evidence, learner feedback and quality improvement processes to evaluate our effectiveness and drive continuous improvement.

We recognise that creating an inclusive culture is a shared responsibility. All staff, learners, volunteers, partners and stakeholders are expected to contribute positively to an environment in which people feel safe, respected and able to achieve their potential.

8.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Practice

Equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are embedded throughout the learner journey and within all aspects of service delivery. This includes curriculum design, teaching and learning, learner support, safeguarding, quality improvement, recruitment, staff development and partnership working.

8.2 Belonging and Learner Experience

We are committed to creating learning environments where individuals not only have access to opportunities, but also feel that they are accepted, supported and valued. We recognise that belonging contributes positively to learner engagement, wellbeing, confidence, attendance, achievement and progression, and will seek to ensure that all learners experience a genuine sense of connection to the service and their learning community.

9. Learners facing Barriers to Participation and Achievement

9.1 Our Approach

WFALS recognises that some learners may experience barriers that affect their ability to access, participate in, achieve or progress in learning. These barriers may arise from personal circumstances, health needs, disability, previous educational experiences, caring responsibilities, financial hardship, language and communication needs, digital exclusion, social isolation or other factors beyond an individual's control.

We recognise that barriers can be temporary, long-term or complex, and that learners may experience multiple barriers at the same time. We are committed to creating an environment where learners feel confident to discuss their needs and where support is available to help them participate fully and achieve their goals.

Our approach focuses on early identification, personalised support and collaborative working. We work collaboratively with learners to understand their circumstances, identify appropriate interventions and make reasonable adjustments where required. We also regularly review the effectiveness of support to ensure that it continues to meet learners' needs and contributes to positive outcomes.

Particular attention is given to learners and groups who may experience disadvantage, underrepresentation or lower outcomes, ensuring that our provision remains responsive to the needs of the communities we serve.

9.2 Supporting Learners to Succeed

To support learners facing barriers to participation and achievement, we:

- Promote early identification of support needs through enrolment, induction and ongoing learner discussions.
- Implement reasonable adjustments and personalised support where appropriate.
- Support learners to access additional learning support, wellbeing services and external agencies where required.
- Promote accessible learning environments, resources and communication.
- Monitor participation, attendance, achievement and progression to identify and address potential barriers.
- Encourage learner voice and involve learners in decisions about their support and learning experience.
- Work collaboratively with partners and support services to improve outcomes for learners with additional needs.
- Review the impact of support and interventions through learner feedback, quality assurance processes and performance information.

We believe that all learners should have equitable opportunities to achieve their ambitions, and we are committed to removing barriers wherever possible so that every learner can participate, progress and succeed.

10. Inclusive Curriculum and Learning Environment

10.1 Inclusive Curriculum

WFALS is committed to providing a curriculum that is ambitious, accessible and responsive to the diverse needs, aspirations and starting points of our learners. We believe that all learners should have the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to achieve their personal, social and employment goals.

Our curriculum is designed to promote participation, achievement and progression while recognising that learners may require different approaches, resources or levels of support to succeed. We are committed to creating learning experiences that are engaging, relevant and inclusive, ensuring that learners can participate fully and make meaningful progress.

We:

- Promote equitable access to learning opportunities for all learners.
- Design learning programmes that reflect the needs and interests of the communities we serve.
- Embed equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging within curriculum planning and delivery.
- Use a range of teaching, learning and assessment approaches to support diverse learner needs.
- Provide appropriate support, reasonable adjustments and accessible resources where required.
- Promote learners' personal development, confidence, wellbeing and independence.
- Encourage aspiration, progression and lifelong learning.

10.2 Inclusive Learning Environments

We recognise that learners are most likely to succeed when they learn in environments where they feel safe, respected, supported and valued. Creating a culture of inclusion and belonging is therefore central to the learner experience.

We are committed to ensuring that our learning environments, whether face-to-face, online or community-based, are welcoming, accessible and free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation. We want all learners to feel that they can participate confidently, contribute their views and be themselves without fear of prejudice or exclusion.

To support this, we:

- Promote a culture based on dignity, respect and mutual understanding.
- Provide accessible learning environments and make reasonable adjustments where required.
- Encourage positive relationships between learners, staff and partners.
- Celebrate diversity and promote understanding of different cultures, backgrounds and perspectives.
- Ensure learners know how to raise concerns, seek support and report inappropriate behaviour.
- Foster a strong sense of belonging through learner participation, learner voice and community engagement.
- Take appropriate action to address behaviours that undermine inclusion, safety or wellbeing.

Through our curriculum and learning environments, we aim to ensure that every learner feels welcomed, supported and able to participate fully, achieve their goals and realise their potential.

11. Learner Voice and Participation

11.1 Valuing Learner Voice

WFALS believes that learners should play an active role in shaping their learning experience and contributing to the development of the Service. We recognise that learners are experts in their own experiences and that their views provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of our provision, support arrangements and learning environment.

Learner voice is a key component of an inclusive culture. By listening to learners and involving them in decisions that affect them, we can better understand their needs, identify barriers to participation and improve the quality and accessibility of our services.

We are committed to creating a culture in which learners feel confident to express their views, share their experiences and contribute to the continuous improvement of the Service. We want learners to feel heard, respected and valued as active members of our learning community.

11.2 Participation and Engagement

We provide a range of opportunities for learners to share their views and participate in the life of the Service. This may include learner surveys, learner forums, focus groups, course reviews, learner representation and informal feedback mechanisms.

Through learner voice activities, we:

- Encourage learners to influence decisions that affect their learning experience.
- Seek feedback on teaching, learning, support services and the wider learner experience.
- Identify and address barriers to participation, achievement and progression.
- Gather feedback from learners from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Promote participation, representation and inclusion across all areas of the Service.
- Use learner feedback to inform service planning, quality improvement and curriculum development.
- Communicate actions taken in response to learner feedback wherever possible.

We recognise that meaningful participation contributes to learner confidence, wellbeing, engagement and a sense of belonging. By working collaboratively with learners, we continue to develop a service that is responsive, inclusive and reflective of the communities we serve.

12. Responsibilities

Creating and maintaining an inclusive, respectful and equitable environment is a shared responsibility. All individuals associated with Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service have a role to play in promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging and in ensuring that the principles of this policy are reflected in everyday practice.

12.1 Leadership Responsibilities

The Head of Adult Learning and Service Leadership Team are responsible for:

- Promoting a culture that values equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging.
- Ensuring compliance with relevant legislation, Council policies and regulatory requirements.
- Embedding equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging within strategic planning, service development and quality improvement activities.
- Monitoring learner participation, achievement and progression to identify and address inequalities.
- Ensuring appropriate resources are available to support inclusive practice.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of this policy and associated procedures.

Programme, Curriculum Managers, Curriculum Leads and other managers are responsible for:

- Implementing this policy within their areas of responsibility.
- Promoting inclusive teaching, learning and support practices.
- Supporting staff to understand and fulfil their responsibilities.
- Addressing concerns relating to discrimination, harassment, bullying or exclusion promptly and appropriately.
- Monitoring learner experiences and outcomes and taking action where required.

12.2 Responsibilities of Staff, Learners and Partners

All staff are responsible for:

- Treating learners, colleagues and stakeholders with dignity, fairness and respect.
- Promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging through their professional practice.
- Identifying and responding appropriately to barriers that may affect participation, achievement or wellbeing.
- Implementing reasonable adjustments and inclusive approaches where required.
- Challenging inappropriate behaviour and reporting concerns in accordance with Service procedures.
- Contributing to a safe, welcoming and inclusive learning environment.

Learners are expected to:

- Treat others with dignity, respect and consideration.
- Contribute positively to an inclusive learning environment.
- Refrain from behaviour that may constitute discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation or hate-related incidents.
- Raise concerns appropriately where they experience or witness behaviour that conflicts with the principles of this policy.

Partners, contractors, volunteers and visitors are expected to:

- Act in a manner consistent with the principles of this policy.
- Treat all individuals with dignity, fairness and respect.
- Support the Service's commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging when engaging with learners, staff and the wider community.

Everyone associated with Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service shares responsibility for creating an environment where people feel welcomed, valued, respected and able to participate fully.

13. Safeguarding, Wellbeing and Inclusion

13.1 Our Approach

WFALS recognises that safeguarding, wellbeing and inclusion are closely connected. Learners are most likely to participate, achieve and progress when they feel safe, supported, respected and able to be themselves within a positive learning environment.

We are committed to creating a culture where learners feel valued and where their physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing is promoted. We recognise that some learners may experience circumstances that increase their vulnerability or create barriers to participation, including discrimination, social isolation, poor mental health, financial hardship, abuse, neglect or exploitation. In some cases, these factors may impact on attendance, engagement, achievement and progression.

We believe that effective safeguarding and inclusive practice work together to support positive learner experiences and outcomes. By promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging, we aim to create learning environments where learners feel confident to seek support, raise concerns and participate fully in learning and community life.

13.2 Our Commitment

To support the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all learners, we:

- Promote a safe, welcoming and inclusive learning environment for all.
- Maintain effective safeguarding arrangements in line with statutory requirements and Council policies.
- Ensure learners know how to access support, guidance and advice when needed.
- Promote positive mental health, wellbeing and resilience through our learning environment and learner support arrangements.
- Respond appropriately to concerns relating to safeguarding, discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation or hate incidents.
- Support learners who may be experiencing barriers to participation or additional vulnerabilities.
- Provide training and guidance to staff so they can recognise concerns and respond appropriately.
- Work collaboratively with internal and external partners to support learner safety, wellbeing and inclusion.
- Promote respectful relationships, mutual understanding and a culture of dignity and respect.

We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that creating an inclusive culture is a vital part of keeping learners safe, supporting wellbeing and enabling all individuals to achieve their potential.

14. Monitoring, Quality Improvement and Accountability

14.1 Monitoring and Review

WFALS is committed to ensuring that the principles of equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging are embedded throughout the Service and reflected in the experiences and outcomes of learners and staff.

The implementation of this policy will be monitored through existing service quality assurance and improvement, learner support, safeguarding and performance management processes. Information from learner feedback, staff feedback, complaints, compliments, participation and performance data may be used to identify areas of good practice and opportunities for improvement.

14.2 Continuous Improvement and Accountability

Responsibility for overseeing the implementation of this policy rests with the Head of Adult Learning and the Service Leadership Team.

The Service will regularly review its policies, procedures and practices to ensure they remain compliant with legislation, aligned with Council priorities and responsive to the needs of learners and communities.

Findings from monitoring activities will inform service planning, quality improvement and the ongoing development of inclusive practice across the Adult Learning Service.

15. Complaints, Concerns and Reporting

15.1 Raising Concerns

WFALS is committed to creating an environment in which individuals feel safe, respected and able to raise concerns without fear of disadvantage or retaliation.

Learners, staff, volunteers, partners and visitors are encouraged to report any concerns relating to discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation, hate incidents, exclusionary behaviour or any action that conflicts with the principles of this policy.

Concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity so that they can be addressed promptly, fairly and appropriately. The Service will take all concerns seriously and will investigate matters in accordance with relevant policies and procedures.

15.2 Complaints and Reporting Procedures

Individuals who believe they have experienced or witnessed behaviour that breaches this policy may report their concerns through established Adult Learning Service or London Borough of Waltham Forest procedures, including:

- Informal resolution where appropriate.
- Learner complaints procedures.
- Staff grievance procedures.
- Safeguarding reporting arrangements.
- Whistleblowing procedures.
- Other relevant organisational reporting mechanisms.

The Service will ensure that concerns are handled sensitively, confidentially and fairly, taking appropriate action where necessary. No individual will be treated less favourably for raising a genuine concern or supporting a complaint made in good faith.

The Service will use information arising from complaints, concerns and reporting activity to inform learning, continuous improvement and the development of inclusive practice across the organisation.

16. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier where required, to ensure it remains compliant with legislation, aligned with Council priorities and responsive to the needs of learners, staff and communities.

Responsibility for reviewing this policy rests with the Head of Adult Learning or their nominated representative.

Any revisions will be approved through the appropriate governance and management arrangements of Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service and the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

Appendices

Appendix A: Protected Characteristics

Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful to discriminate against an individual because of a protected characteristic.

WFALS is committed to ensuring that learners, staff, volunteers, partners and visitors are treated fairly, with dignity and respect, regardless of their protected characteristics.

The nine protected characteristics are:

1. Age

Protection against discrimination because of a person's age or age group.

2. Disability

A person may be considered disabled if they have a physical or mental health condition, learning difference, neurodivergent condition, sensory difference or other long-term condition that can affect their daily life or access to opportunities.

WFALS adopts a social model approach to disability, recognising that barriers are often created by environments, systems and attitudes rather than by an individual's condition or difference. We are committed to identifying and removing barriers and providing appropriate support and reasonable adjustments to enable equitable participation, achievement and progression.

3. Gender Reassignment

Protection for people who are proposing to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone a process to reassign their gender.

4. Marriage and Civil Partnership

Protection against discrimination because a person is married or in a civil partnership.

5. Pregnancy and Maternity

Protection during pregnancy and maternity, including protection against unfavourable treatment related to pregnancy, childbirth or maternity leave.

6. Race

Includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

7. Religion or Belief

Includes any religion, religious belief, philosophical belief, or lack of religion or belief.

8. Sex

Protection against discrimination because a person is male or female.

9. Sexual Orientation

Protection against discrimination because of a person's sexual orientation, including how they identify and who they are emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to.

Our Commitment

Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service is committed to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying.
- Advancing equality of opportunity for all learners and staff.
- Promoting respect and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.
- Creating an inclusive environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued and able to participate fully.

The Service recognises that individuals may also experience disadvantage due to factors not specifically covered by the Equality Act 2010, such as socio-economic circumstances, caring responsibilities, mental health needs, language barriers or digital exclusion. We will seek to identify and remove barriers wherever possible to support equitable participation and outcomes for all.

Appendix B: Forms of Discrimination

Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service is committed to creating an environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and bullying. Understanding the different forms that discrimination can take helps us to identify, challenge and prevent unfair treatment.

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably because of a protected characteristic.

Examples may include:

- Refusing a learner access to an opportunity because of their disability.
- Treating a learner unfairly because of their race, religion, age or sexual orientation.
- Excluding an individual because they are pregnant or on maternity leave.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs when a policy, practice or rule is applied equally to everyone but disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic.

Examples may include:

- Scheduling activities at times that unintentionally exclude individuals with caring responsibilities or certain religious observances.
- Using communication methods that are inaccessible to some learners without considering alternatives.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted behaviour related to a protected characteristic that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

Harassment can be verbal, non-verbal, written, online or physical.

Examples may include:

- Offensive jokes or comments.
- Derogatory language.
- Mocking a person's disability, accent, culture, religion or identity.
- Displaying offensive material.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a person is treated unfairly because they have:

- Made a complaint about discrimination or harassment.
- Supported someone else's complaint.
- Raised concerns about equality or inclusion issues.
- Given evidence during an investigation.

No individual should suffer disadvantage for raising concerns in good faith.

Bullying

Bullying is behaviour that intentionally hurts, intimidates, undermines or humiliates another person. It may be a one-off incident or a pattern of behaviour.

Bullying can occur face-to-face, online or through other forms of communication.

Examples may include:

- Personal insults or name-calling.
- Deliberately excluding someone.
- Misuse of social media or online platforms.
- Intimidating or threatening behaviour.

Hate Incidents and Hate Crime

A hate incident is any incident perceived by the victim or another person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards a person's identity or protected characteristic.

A hate crime is a criminal offence motivated by hostility or prejudice relating to a protected characteristic.

WFALS will take all reports of hate incidents seriously and will respond appropriately in line with safeguarding, learner support and Council procedures.

Our Expectations

Everyone who learns, works, volunteers or engages with Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service is expected to:

- Treat others with dignity, respect and fairness.
- Contribute to an inclusive and welcoming environment.
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour where appropriate.
- Report discrimination, harassment, bullying, victimisation or hate-related incidents through the appropriate procedures.

WFALS will not tolerate behaviour that undermines the dignity, safety, wellbeing or inclusion of others and will take appropriate action where concerns are identified.

Appendix C: Roles and Responsibilities Matrix

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB)

Role	Key Responsibilities
Head of Adult Learning	Provides strategic leadership for EDIB; ensures compliance with legislation and Council policy; monitors implementation of this policy; promotes continuous improvement.
Service Leadership Team	Embeds EDIB within service planning, curriculum development and quality improvement; monitors equality-related data and learner outcomes; allocates appropriate resources.
Programme, Curriculum Managers and Curriculum Leads	Promote inclusive practice within curriculum areas; support staff to implement this policy; monitor learner participation, achievement and progression; address barriers and concerns appropriately.
Lecturers, Tutors and Learning Support Staff	Create inclusive learning environments; identify and respond to learner needs; implement reasonable adjustments; promote respect, participation and belonging; challenge inappropriate behaviour.
Business Support and Administrative Staff	Ensure equitable access to information, enrolment and support processes; promote accessibility and inclusive communication; handle learner information appropriately and confidentially.
Designated Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Team	Support learners who may be vulnerable or at risk; respond to safeguarding concerns; promote learner wellbeing and safety; work collaboratively with relevant agencies where appropriate.
Learners	Treat others with dignity and respect; contribute positively to an inclusive learning environment; report concerns where appropriate; engage with support and learner voice opportunities.
Volunteers, Contractors and Partners	Act in accordance with this policy; support inclusive practice; treat learners, staff and visitors fairly and respectfully.
London Borough of Waltham Forest	Provides the wider strategic and policy framework for equality, diversity and inclusion; supports compliance with statutory duties and corporate objectives.

Shared Responsibility

Promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging is the responsibility of everyone who learns, works, volunteers or engages with Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service. All individuals are expected to contribute to a culture where people feel welcomed, respected, safe and able to participate fully.

Appendix D: Equality Monitoring Framework

Purpose

Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service is committed to understanding the experiences and outcomes of different learner groups to identify barriers, reduce inequalities and improve inclusion.

Equality monitoring helps the Service to evaluate whether learners can access, participate in, achieve and progress in learning on an equitable basis. It also supports compliance with the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty and the London Borough of Waltham Forest's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion commitments.

What We Monitor

Where data is available and appropriate, the Service may monitor:

Learner Profile Information

- Age
- Sex
- Ethnicity
- Disability and learning support needs
- First language and ESOL status
- Employment status
- Other relevant learner characteristics identified through service planning

Learner Experience and Outcomes

- Participation and enrolment
- Attendance
- Retention
- Achievement
- Progression and destination outcomes
- Learner satisfaction
- Learner voice and feedback
- Complaints, concerns and compliments

Using Equality Monitoring Information

Equality monitoring information will be used to:

- Identify underrepresented learner groups.
- Understand barriers to participation and achievement.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of learner support and reasonable adjustments.
- Inform curriculum planning and service development.
- Support quality improvement activities.
- Improve learner experiences and outcomes.
- Meet statutory and regulatory responsibilities.

Review and Reporting

Equality monitoring findings will be considered through existing quality assurance, self-assessment and service improvement processes. Information may be used to inform strategic planning, equality objectives, learner support arrangements and inclusion priorities.

The Service will ensure that all monitoring activities are undertaken in accordance with data protection legislation and Council policies relating to the collection, storage and use of personal information.

Appendix F: Key Legislation, Statutory Guidance and Related Policies

Relevant Legislation and Guidance

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following legislation, statutory guidance and related policies:

Equality Act 2010

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

Human Rights Act 1998

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

Care Act 2014

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents>

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/contents>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance#full-publication-update-history>

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/student-protection-and-choice/counter-terrorism-the-prevent-duty/>

<https://www.educateagainsthate.com/prevent-duty/>

Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR)

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents>

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 Years

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Keeping Children Safe in Education (where applicable to provision involving learners under 18 years of age)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education>

Working Together to Safeguard Children (where applicable to provision involving learners under 18 years of age)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children>

London Borough of Waltham Forest Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

London Borough of Waltham Forest Safeguarding Policies and Procedures

Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service Inclusion and Belonging Strategy

Waltham Forest Adult Learning Service Safeguarding Policy

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