

Dignity and respect towards staff across settings
Shropshire Council guidance on tackling racism and discrimination
October 2025

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A. The local context in which we operate

A partnership approach across the ICS

The ICS, or Integrated Care System, comprises all the organisations enabling, commissioning or delivering health and social care functions across Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. It therefore includes the two local authorities plus NHS organisations, primary care, and healthcare providers.

The workforce across the Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin area is diverse, with a range of different ethnic minorities represented. Staff may unfortunately encounter racist or discriminatory abuse or threatening behaviour from those they care for, or for whom they are arranging or delivering a service.

Tackling racism has been agreed as a priority area for action across the ICS, with further actions to follow around all manifestations of discrimination towards staff. This includes against those who have disabilities, and those experiencing misogyny, religious hatred, and other forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The joint agreement is for impactful and measurable communication and ongoing engagement across the ICS that will enable the public to more fully understand, accept and respect the diversity of health and care teams. This then will help to build an ICS that celebrates diversity across health and care colleagues and those with whom they work, and that models the respectful behaviours we expect to see within the communities we serve and the partner organisations with whom we work.

This will also help to deepen understanding about the diversity of employees in the two local authorities, recognising that colleagues across various service areas, as they diligently carry out their duties, may also encounter racism and discrimination.

Three national equality aims to which we all adhere

These equality aims are set out in the Equality Act 2010 and listed below.

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advancing equality of opportunity;
- Fostering good relations.

Tackling racism as a priority area across the ICS

- All anti-racism work is seen in the context of providing **quality of care**.
- Proposed solutions and ongoing engagement reflect existing best practices.
- The focus is upon unified messaging for staff and for the public.
- Clear pathways and processes will be in place so that people know what will happen if they report discrimination of any kind.
- ICB will receive regular reports detailing number of incidents of racism across the System, with prevalence of issues identified and reviewed.

Consistency in application across the ICS

This involves communicating the existing guidelines, encouraging greater reporting and consistently monitoring reports and outcomes from incidents

Local strategic actions for us as a local authority

Our local strategic actions to tackle and seek to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, across all nine of the Protected Characteristic groupings set out in the Equality Act 2010, are set out in the Strategic Equality Objectives Action Plan for 2024-2028, which is available from our website.

This applies to a range of audiences: communities; people who use services; partner organisations including those from whom we commission services; staff employed through such organisations; elected councillors; and employees.

As such, this statement of commitment and associated guidance aligns with the Council's Workforce Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy, which is readily available on request or can be downloaded from the Council's intranet pages.

The Council's stance seeks to create a safe and respectful environment not only for health and social care staff and care providers, but also for all staff members, within a robust framework to protect everyone, and to foster an inclusive and supportive workplace for all employees.

B. The commitments that we make to employees to tackle racism and discrimination

Identifying and redressing inequality within the workplace

We recognise that individuals continue to experience discrimination and inequality in our society. This impacts the physical, mental, emotional, economic, social and spiritual health of our workforce. As an employer, we take a pro-active approach to identifying and redressing inequality within the workplace.

We seek to cultivate an open and fair environment where employees are engaged and feel empowered to speak up and raise concerns when faced with inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour. Alongside this, our aim is also to celebrate the rich and diverse heritages of our employees, fostering good relations in so doing.

We will not tolerate bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation of any kind and will regard this behaviour as misconduct which may lead to disciplinary action, including dismissal as appropriate where breaches amount to gross misconduct. We will use policies and processes already in place in so doing, mindful always of the approaches that an individual may wish to take, and the mechanisms they may wish to use. with support from their line managers.

This will help to ensure that the Council fulfils its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010).

It is also in line with updates made to SC policy in regard to Bullying and Harassment, after policy in that regard was renamed the Bullying Harassment Discrimination and/or Victimisation Policy in 2024. This gives a greater emphasis on every colleague's right to be treated with dignity and respect at work, including information to support employees when faced with unreasonably persistent and vexatious behaviour.

Providing a safe work environment

As a Council, and in commonality of purpose with Telford and Wrekin Council, we are committed to treating customers with dignity and respect whilst striving to deliver excellent services.

In return, we expect people who use our services to also treat Council employees with dignity and respect.

We are committed to providing a safe and secure and respectful environment, as are providers commissioned by us to deliver care. Acts or threats of physical violence intimidation, harassment, any form of discrimination, verbal abuse or coercion to which an employee is subjected during the course of their duties will not be tolerated.

We will deal with all instances of violence or abuse, impacting on employees, in a robust and pro-active manner, taking an approach which centres on and supports the employee.

Where necessary and appropriate, further measures will be taken such as reporting incidents directly to the Police through established hate crime reporting processes. These processes have also been identified and agreed by the Council as an area of further joint action with partners, including encouragement to use third-party reporting.

It may also be the case that we have recourse to and would use the Council's Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious (UP&V) Customers Procedure (2023), depending on the circumstances.

C. The framework that we will use

The framework that we will use in Shropshire is set out below

- Listening
- Supporting
- Acting
- Reporting
- Reviewing

Listening

- Identifying, challenging, and stopping unacceptable behaviour, including racism and other forms of discrimination.
- Encouraging our workforce to stand up and speak out against racism and discrimination, whether they experience it or whether they are acting as allies or third-party support on behalf of someone who has experienced it.
- Publishing our commitments on our external website in joint action with ICS colleagues, as well as through internal staff briefings and bulletins.
- Publishing actions taken as a result of reporting and/or whistleblowing.
- Helping council employees, and staff working in provider services, to understand their responsibilities and the actions they can take to maintain a healthy working environment.

Whistleblowing

The Whistleblowing "Speaking up about Wrongdoing" process forms a key element of the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements. The Council whistleblowing process provides an effective route to enable employees, elected members, contractors and others to raise concerns about fraud, corruption, adult/child protection or harassment and bullying allegations. A report is then taken on an annual basis to the Audit Committee.

Supporting

- Recognising the lived experience of colleagues from ethnic minorities.
- Providing learning opportunities, from regular discussions in 1:1s and team meetings and opportunities to talk, as well as training and briefings specifically

around racism and discrimination such as misogyny and around the support that line managers and all employees can and should provide to colleagues.

- Building a workforce that is representative of the diverse population we serve.
- Ensuring we engage with and support staff as individuals.
- Ensuring that we benefit from shared experiences and learning that may be gained through the Shropshire Council Anti Racism Forum (SCARF), through the employee engagement forum, and via opportunities arranged or available through the ICS, through neighbouring local authorities in the West Midlands, or through national research findings.
- Acknowledging that racism and discrimination can range from unintentional misunderstandings and lack of awareness to deliberate and malicious acts.
- Tailoring responses to individuals and to their circumstances, including the actions that individuals who experience, encounter or witness racism or other discrimination may wish to see taken.

Acting

Staff experiencing or witnessing abuse or discrimination should always:

- Make a note of the incident or concern - when it occurred, what was said or done, and by whom
- Report it to their line supervisor at the earliest opportunity

Some individuals to whom we provide services, or for whom we arrange services, may lack mental capacity due to health conditions, cognitive impairments, communication barriers, or temporary factors like medication, illness, or trauma. This can affect their ability to understand, retain, or weigh up information, or to communicate decisions.

Capacity can vary over time and may differ depending on the decision. If someone lacking capacity expresses racist or discriminatory views, these may stem from confusion, impairments, or learned behaviour. Staff should respond calmly, avoid confrontation, and aim to educate while preserving everyone's dignity. Where appropriate, family, carers, or advocates should be involved in supporting communication.

Equally, where racism or other discrimination, harassment or victimisation, in all its forms, has been experienced or encountered in the workplace from other colleagues or from partner organisations, decisions will need to be taken as to whether it comes from a place of ignorance or from a place of intent. Actions taken will therefore need to be appropriate to the circumstances and to the resolution or restitution that is sought.

Where necessary and appropriate, further measures will be taken such as reporting incidents to the Police through established hate crime reporting processes. These processes have also been identified and agreed by the Council as an area of further joint action with partners, including encouragement to use third-party reporting. Police reported incidents should also be recorded on ERP using the incident form.

In regard to customers of our services, action may involve use of a three stage process utilising the football process of yellow cards and red cards. This links to our ongoing actions to Show Racism the Red Card and utilising an approach that will have familiarity across a range of audiences.

- Stage One: Verbal Conversation
- Stage Two: Written Warning (yellow card)
- Stage Three: Formal Letter (red card)

A formal letter would confirm any restrictions imposed on services provided to the customer, the reasons for these restrictions and the time period for these restrictions to be reviewed.

The yellow card should in no way be seen as indicative of a minor offence; it is intended to show our own intention to act to support staff if the behaviour of the customer does not improve. If it is necessary, due to the severity of an offence, the decision may be taken to issue a straight red card.

If a customer wishes to challenge the Council's decisions to apply sanctions or restrictions or the way they have been treated by council employees they can raise these concerns through the Council's Corporate Complaints Process. Further information is available on the Council's website.

It is seen as important to act in the first instance in ways that will increase understanding and be positive, rather than ways that are directive and potentially punitive.

Reporting

- Providing a safe reporting system and responding to all reports of racism and discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Ensuring there is a clear process in place for employees to report all incidents of discrimination, with the whistleblowing and bullying and harassment policy also signposted for staff
- Encouraging staff to discuss with their line manager how they would like incidents to be reported and what mechanisms they may wish to use eg Hate Crime reporting to police eg the Council's UP&V Customers Procedure
- Promoting how and where to report incidents, using staff communications mechanisms
- Shropshire Council Leadership Board to receive updates on reported racist incidents (quarterly)

Reviewing

- Measuring and monitoring the outcomes of our actions in order to assess how they reduce the impact of racism and other forms of discrimination, harassment and victimisation. This includes drawing upon regional and national data, research and best practice, and sharing our own learning and approaches

- Our commitment will be demonstrated through regular sharing of data and analysis with Cabinet. Data and analysis will also be reported at Cabinet in our Annual Health and Safety Performance Report and at Audit Committee in the Annual Whistleblowing Report.

Leading ICS Indicators:

formally reported at every ICB meeting, prevalent issues reviewed quarterly / bi-annually.

Lagging ICS Indicators:

number of incidents reported (increase in reports), staff survey results.

Appendix One: Types of inappropriate behaviour

These include, but are not limited to:

Verbal Abuse: any verbal abuse issued with the intent of creating distress, fear or intimidation to another individual, or group of individuals.

Physical Abuse: any intentional movement of the body which may include touching, gesturing, pushing, striking, stalking, spitting, any unwanted intrusion of “reasonable space” of an employee or an intentional use of any object towards an individual.

Sexual Harassment: any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or the effect of violating the person’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Creating a Hostile Working Environment: any intentional non-physical action that can be considered intimidating or harassing or which involves the explicit or implicit challenge to the safety, well-being or health of an individual.

A Hate Crime: any criminal offence perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by hostility or prejudice based upon the victim’s age, disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity. This could include verbal abuse, physical assault, damage to property, threats, intimidation or harassment.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work-related violence as:

“Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted in circumstances relating to their work”

Whilst it is not possible to give an exhaustive list of abusive behaviour, some examples include:

- Offensive language, verbal abuse and swearing
- Racist comments
- Unwanted or abusive remarks
- Negative, malicious or stereotypical comments
- Physical aggression
- Brandishing of objects or weapons

- Threats or risk of injury to staff
- Intimidation
- Stalking
- Unreasonable behaviour

Appendix Two: Three Stage Process for staff working with customers in home care and community care settings

This is specifically for staff working with customers who are in their homes and/or in community settings. Staff may be employed directly by the Council or through external providers

Stage 1: verbal; conversation

Initially we would conduct further investigation and consider the following actions:

- Have a conversation with the person who is being cared for to attempt to address the concern:
 - inform the individual and/or their family of our expectations regarding behaviour and that their behaviour is unacceptable (share a copy of relevant policies or this dignity and respect statement where appropriate)
 - discuss the incident to try and get an understanding of the individual's perspective
 - where appropriate, request an apology on behalf of the member of staff (please be aware that the staff member may not feel confident to request an apology at the time or may be too upset to do so)
 - advise that if there is a repeat incident, a "yellow card" warning letter will be sent to the individual and/or their family, from the senior manager
- Where hate speech or other potential hate crime has been committed the incident will be reported to the police by calling 101 or via the [hate crime reporting website](#).
- In order for the police to investigate the incident, the member of staff affected would have to be prepared to press charges. However, even where this is not the case and prosecution will not be pursued, the incident should still be reported in order for it to be logged, as this may evidence a pattern of behaviour if the abuse continues.
- Support the staff member/s (or personal assistant/s) who have been subject to harassment and abuse. This may include, where necessary, removing them from a potentially abusive situation without delay, and supporting them to feel confident to make a report to the police about serious incidents, press charges and participate in any police investigation and/or attend court.
- Acceptable behaviour agreement templates are a further option that will be shared at this time.

Stage 2: written; yellow card letter

Where the concern has not been successfully resolved, or a similar incident occurs again in future, we will take the following additional actions as necessary:

- Write to the individual to issue a “yellow card” warning letter outlining why their behaviour is unacceptable. Offer a further telephone or face to face meeting to explain why this behaviour is not acceptable.
- If necessary and appropriate request the individual signs a ‘behaviour agreement’ (template example attached), outlining what behaviours need to change and how the Council and/or the provider delivering care on our behalf, will support the person to make these changes.
- Put arrangements in place to review the individual’s compliance with the terms of their behaviour agreement. To monitor progress and consider all options to prevent and manage repeat incidents.
- Advise the individual that any further racist or discriminatory incidents, to any member of staff, will result in issuing a “red card” letter and it may no longer be considered possible for the care to be provided in the same way or by the same provider.

Stage 3: written; red card letter

Where the “yellow card” letter and/or “behavioural agreement” has not resolved the concern, or where the unacceptable or improper behaviour is of a very serious nature, we will:

- Write to the individual to issue a final “red card” letter outlining previous actions and next steps.
- Offer a further telephone or face to face meeting to explain what the next steps will be which may include starting to consider alternative possibilities where the care being provided may need to change.

If necessary and appropriate, when all other meaningful options to address the area of concern have failed, alternative ways of providing care may be considered if that may remove the potential for further incidents, and this may consist of the withdrawal of access to certain services.

Wherever possible the Council will aim to meet our statutory duties and the needs of the individual in another way (e.g. a direct payment, virtual care, use of equipment and technology etc.) to be agreed with the individual and/or their family.

Appendix Three: Signposting and Resources

The **equality, diversity and social inclusion pages** on the website include published documents as required by legislation, along with other resources and contextual information, and a link to report hate crime.

<https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/equality-diversity-and-social-inclusion/equality-diversity-and-social-inclusion/>

The **hate crime** link is also available direct via the following link:

<https://next.shropshire.gov.uk/crime-and-anti-social-behaviour/hate-crime/report-a-hate-crime/>

These pages include the following information: [The Shropshire Community Safety Partnership](#) wants to encourage people to report hate crime or hate incidents either by directly contacting the police or through other organisations and agencies. In Shropshire, agencies and organisations tackle hate crime and hate incidents through partnership working. People can report hate incidents either by directly contacting the police or by completing the reporting form. This is part of a countywide approach that supports third party reporting. This is when a victim of a hate crime or hate incident, or a witness to one, prefers not to report it directly to the police, but still wants action to be taken and reports it to a non-police organisation.

The **Whistleblowing Policy** is available to all staff via the Intranet pages and is also available to them, along with elected members, contractors, partners and the public, via the Council website; allowing it to be accessed from any computer. This is particularly important as it allows staff to access the policy outside of a work environment, where they may be reluctant to be seen accessing the Whistleblowing policy.

A **Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Policy** was published in October 2024. This sets out the Council's commitment to creating a workplace that and promote an inclusive environment where everyone can develop their skills and talents.

The **Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and/or Victimisation Policy** is also available on these pages. Shropshire Council believes that every colleague has the right to be treated with consideration, dignity and respect at work and its aim is to provide a working environment that is free from bullying, harassment, discrimination, and victimisation.

This policy, as with the Workforce EDI Policy, applies to all Shropshire Council employees and volunteers (with the exception of employees employed directly by schools who should refer to the Schools Human Resources Handbook).

Please also see the Council's **Unreasonably Persistent & Vexatious Customers Procedure** for use where considered appropriate, and the Council's Complaints Procedure, in order that existing processes may be followed.

There is further information on the intranet pages in the section on Equality, which includes resources on a number of topic areas across the Protected Characteristic groupings set out in the Equality Act 2010, as well as guidance on carrying out Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIA's).



Acceptable Behaviour Agreement

This agreement is made on.....

Between

Name:	
Date of Birth:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

And

Organisation:	
Telephone:	
Email:	

I recognise that my behaviour has not been acceptable in the following areas:

1.	
2.	
3.	

**I understand that in order to continue to receive the same service from
I must follow the terms of this Acceptable Behaviour
Agreement, which are that:**

1. I will
2. I will
3. I will

4. I will not
5. I will not
6. I will not

**To help you complete the Acceptable Behaviour Agreement successfully,
we agree to provide the following help and support:**

1. We will
2. We will
3. We will

If _____ are unable to provide the support listed, they will discuss this with you as soon as possible, and work with you to provide suitable alternatives.

Review

This agreement will be monitored and reviewed during the period it is active (see below), a review may result in the terms of the agreement being:

- Extended
- Amended

- Further action taken
- Ended

BREACH OF THIS ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR AGREEMENT

I, and my parent/guardian/advocate (where applicable), have been made aware that this agreement is voluntary, but if I continue to behave in the unacceptable ways detailed on page 1, the Council, service provider and/or West Mercia Police may take further action against me. This may include:

-
-
-

DECLARATION

I can confirm that my parent / guardians and I understand the meaning of this Acceptable Behaviour Agreement and the consequences of a breaking the agreement have been explained to us.

I agree to the terms of this agreement for a period of _____ **months.**

Signed Date (Individual)

Signed..... Date (Parent / Guardian / Advocate)

WITNESSED

Signed..... Date

Signed..... Date

This behaviour is not acceptable and falls under actions that are highlighted as such in this documentation, which includes:

We would like to request a conversation with you and/or your family to address this matter. During this conversation, we aim to:

- Explain why this behaviour is unacceptable.
- Share relevant policies with you.
- Work towards understanding your perspective and, where appropriate, request an apology.

Please be advised that any further incidents of inappropriate behaviour may result in a 'red card' warning letter and could lead to changes in how your care services are delivered.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please contact us at

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

To:

Subject: Red Card Warning Letter

Dear

Re: Continuing Unacceptable Behaviour

I am writing to inform you that following previous warnings, including a 'yellow card' letter dated _____ your behaviour has not improved, and further incidents of unacceptable conduct have been reported.

It has been brought to our attention that on _____ the following behaviour occurred:

This behaviour is not acceptable under any circumstances.

Actions Taken:

1. We have previously issued a 'yellow card' warning letter and offered to engage in discussions to address your behaviour. Unfortunately, no meaningful resolution has been achieved.
2. As a result, this red card warning letter is now issued, reflecting the seriousness of the situation.

We will now begin to explore alternative care arrangements. This may include:

- Changes in how your care is provided.
- Withdrawal of access to certain services, where appropriate.
- Offering alternative solutions, such as virtual care, direct payments, or technology-enabled care services.

We are committed to meeting your care needs to the greatest extent possible while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our staff. However, further incidents of unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter further, please contact us at

Yours sincerely,