

Freedom of Information Team
Oxford City Council
Email: freedomofinformation@oxford.gov.uk

www.oxford.gov.uk



28 November 2024

Freedom of Information Request, Oxford City Council – Reference: **FOI2024/01274**

Further to our acknowledgement, we can confirm that Oxford City Council can advise as follows in response to your Freedom of Information Request received on 13 November:

Request

To whom it may concern,

We are helping a charity on a pro bono basis. On behalf of our client, we would like to request the information below.

Our client is gathering information on council compliance with the public sector equality duty in England and Wales, in particular with regards the 3 aims of the public sector equality duty, namely:

1. Aim 1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
2. Aim 2) Advance equality of opportunity between Disabled people and non-Disabled people
3. Aim 3) Foster good relations between Disabled people and non-Disabled people

Our client aims to understand to what extent local authorities providing housing advice and homelessness support have measures in place with regard to digital exclusion disability discrimination. Our client is particularly focused on what support (if any) is provided by local authorities to people who cannot access digital services without support (this could be due to a variety of reasons e.g. Physical accessibility issues: People with physical, visual, or hearing impairments may have difficulty accessing websites; Communication difficulties: People with learning and behavioural impairments may find it hard to read, write or otherwise to communicate and be understood online ; Lack of training: Some people may not have the skills or confidence to use digital devices; Cost of equipment: The cost of equipment may be a barrier to those on a low wage or reliant on state social security).

In accordance with s.149 Equality Act 2010, we request that you provide us with a copy of:

1. your most recent and your historical written compliance record;

Regarding the aims under the public sector equality duty:

1. *Aim 1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation*
2. *Aim 2) Advance equality of opportunity between Disabled people and non-Disabled people*
3. *Aim 3) Foster good relations between Disabled people and non-Disabled people*

OCC seeks to help all customers in housing need and fully supports the aims of the elimination of (1) and the advancing of (2) and (3).

Regarding evidence of compliance:

The Council's *Oxford Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy* (approved by the Council in March 22) sets out the key commitments, priorities and actions within this area and is available on the Council website (and is also attached):

<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/equality-diversity-inclusion/oxford-equality-diversity-inclusion-edl-strategy/6>

As part of the process an Equality Impact Assessment was completed (attached together with the approved report).

The Council Housing, Homeless and Rough Sleeping Strategy 23 to 28 (also available on the website and attached too) provides details of the key priorities to help the homeless and other households in housing need and includes a commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Specific reference is made to the EDI Strategy and our commitments around this including Equality Impact Assessments for any relevant reviews to take place in the future – including the Allocations Scheme (currently underway). The strategy has a clear priority around “Improving the Accessibility of Services” and makes specific reference to:

“accessing our range of services online or via the phone is not the best option at all times, and for many people, it will never be the best option. While embracing new technologies, we will therefore also reaffirm our commitment to continue to offer a face-to-face service for people who need our assistance, including our tenants, those who are worried about their housing situation, and those who are facing homelessness.”

These strategies, contribute to support the Council's Corporate Strategic Objectives:

<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/policies-plans-strategies/strategy>

2. any other information you have recorded / hold about the impact of requiring Disabled people and non-Disabled people applying for housing and homeless assistance under either Part 6 or Part 7 Housing Act 1996 to complete application forms (or otherwise communicate) online.

As outlined above the Council is committed to providing a range of services that suit the needs of the individual needs of customers approaching OCC including those with a disability.

The Council will accept part 6 and part 7 housing application in different formats – not just on-line and is committed to providing a face to face service for customers, when required to offer advice and assistance with housing (not just on-line) – including undertaking home visits to customers who require this to seek the best outcomes for our customers including those with a disability. The Council also commissions services to provide Rough Sleeping Services and helps with funding for advice centres across the City who also provide support to customers requiring housing assistance.

The Council has also updated the website to make this more accessible for those can and want to use this and access services.

[Accessibility statement | Website accessibility statement | Oxford City Council](#)

And provided details of accessibility features.

<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/council/website-accessibility-statement/2>

If you disagree with any part of the response to your request, you are entitled to ask the Council for an internal review of the decision(s) made. You may do this by writing to the Monitoring Officer, by either email monitoringofficer@oxford.gov.uk – or by post to Monitoring Officer, Oxford City Council, Town Hall, St Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1BX. After the result of the internal review, if you remain dissatisfied, you may ask the Information Commissioner to intervene on your behalf. You may do this by writing to the Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely,

Freedom of Information Officer

| Freedom of Information Team | Law & Governance | Oxford City Council | Town Hall | St Aldate's
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