

Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership

Equality and Diversity Statement

May 2019

Creating opportunities in Devon, Plymouth, Somerset and Torbay

Heart of the South West LEP CIC, is a Community Interest Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered in England and Wales.

No. 8880546, Registered Office, PO Box 805, Exeter, Devon, EX1 9UU



Introduction

In order to deliver significant growth and productivity gains Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (HotSW LEP) aim to remove all barriers to achieving economic performance, resulting in tangible economic benefits to our businesses, residents, visitors, workforce and diverse communities. Our diverse communities will benefit from strong economic growth and no community will be excluded from full participation in economic life and progress.

The competitive advantage arising from local diversity will be harnessed to drive growth. We aim to integrate equality into all that we do, and the work that others do on behalf of the HotSW LEP.

What is Equality and Diversity?

Equality is ensuring individuals or groups of individuals are not treated differently or less favourably, on the basis of their specific protected characteristic, including race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and age.

Diversity aims to recognise, respect and value people's differences to contribute and realise their full potential by promoting an inclusive culture for all.

Diversity and equality issues impact everyone in the HotSW LEP area, so we are committed to removing barriers that might restrict people and continue to work towards positive change.

HotSW LEP's commitment

Heart of the SW LEP and Somerset County Council, in undertaking its role as the Accountable Body to the Heart of the SW LEP, shall comply with their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and will have regard to these requirements when apportioning funding.

HotSW LEP is dedicated to supporting a fully inclusive culture. We recognise that we have a role in promoting diversity and eliminating discrimination and seek to do this in the way we conduct ourselves and our business.

This policy reinforces our commitment to providing equality and fairness to all those who wish to work with or for us and will not act less favourably or tolerate unfair or unlawful treatment on the grounds of the following characteristics:

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- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity (including Paternity)
- Race (colour, ethnic or national background)
- Religion or Belief (including lack of belief)
- Sex
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

This policy sets out and reinforces our commitment to engaging in and promoting good quality practices, within our own business and with regard to all who wish to work with us.

Our priorities and objectives are focussed to deliver key outcomes for priority groups, key sectors and local communities. We aim to deliver a positive equality impact; for example, by targeting positive activity with key sectors, priority groups, and local communities

In delivering these priorities and objectives, HotSW LEP and Somerset County Council shall have due regard in the exercise of their roles and responsibilities to the need to:-

- eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimization and any other conduct prohibited under legislation;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

Heart of the SW LEP's equality objectives

The Public Sector Equality Duty is supported by a set of specific duties which are intended to help public bodies to carry out the above aims in a way that is tangible, transparent and accountable. A key specific duty is to:

- Prepare and publish one or more measurable and specific equality objective(s).

Heart of the SW LEP's objectives focus on two priority areas:

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- Workforce action: ensuring best practice in recruitment and inclusion, working with our Accountable Body.
- Board Recruitment: ensuring diverse representation at Board and sub-group level which is reflective of the local business community (including geographies and protected characteristics). Our Finance and Resources Committee will lead this work, providing regular reports to the Heart of the SW LEP Board.

Board composition

The Board is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity in the delivery and accessibility of its services. In particular, Heart of the SW LEP will look to ensure diverse representation at Board and sub-group level which is reflective of the local business community (including geographies and protected characteristics).

The HotSW LEP are committed to ensure that by 2020 at least one third of members of the LEP Board are women with an expectation for equal representation by 2023.

Our guiding principles are that we want our Boards and Sub-Boards:

- To be proactive, assertive and confident in our aspiration and ambition
- Attract the best talent
- Perform highly effectively and accountably to ensure that we deliver on our ambition

Recruitment and Appointments

The recruitment process will be overseen by the by the Finance & Resources Committee. Under this oversight, a nominations committee will be established to review and comment on applicants' levels of relevant business experience as part of the shortlisting. The nominations committee will typically comprise up to 10 members, who would usually be drawn from businesses or business organisations from across the area. It is the intention that across the membership of the committee a good level of geographical balance across the area will be secured and that the committee's composition will be diverse in order to further promote the LEP's commitment to diversity.

The selection of appointees should be delegated to a panel consisting of at least two private sector directors, one of whom should be the Chair, and the other(s) being LEP directors from the F&R Committee. Ultimate appointment confirmation will lie with the Board.

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All Board and Sub Board appointments will be made on merit, in the context of the skills and experience required by the Board and Sub-Boards as a whole to be effective. We will expect that Board members involved in recruitment and selection will have committed to and undergone unconscious bias training.

The HotSW LEP will endeavour to recruit openly from the community so that the Board reflects regional diversity.

The LEP will encourage actively Board and Sub Board applications from individuals with diverse backgrounds and;

- Will ensure recruitment literature does not contain barriers to economic inclusion;
- Will promote the LEP's commitment to equality and diversity in recruitment application packs and adverts;
- Will aim to reach the widest possible candidate pool by using a range of recruitment methods and positive action, for example targeting underrepresented groups through social media channels;
- Will define the selection criteria in terms of measurable skills, experience, knowledge and personal qualities;
- Will assess candidates against the role specification in a consistent way throughout the process.

Equality and Diversity Champion

The HotSW LEP will consider whether to appoint a Board member to act as its champion for Equality and Diversity. However, we will make explicit our expectation that equality and diversity is the responsibility of all Board and Sub-Board members and that the Chair of the Board will actively promote and lead on ensuring the LEP Board understands its role in promoting diversity and eliminating discrimination.

Partner Accountable Body

The HotSW LEP will work with Somerset County Council, as our Accountable body, to ensure that all commissioning and tendering processes pay due regard to the Equality Act 2010, general duties under the Public Sector Equality Duties and to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. In particular, we will ensure that the following principles are adhered to:

- Advancing equality of opportunity;
- Showing our commitment to support those with a protected characteristic into enterprise and employment;

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- Ensuring the elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Stakeholders

The LEP will engage with all stakeholders through events, newsletters, websites and at the AGM, striving to be inclusive and transparent in all communications, encouraging consultation and collaboration.

Training

The LEP will ensure that all members of the Board, through their induction process, undertake equality, diversity and unconscious bias training.

Safe Environment

Heart of the SW LEP is committed to providing a safe environment free from unlawful discrimination and harassment both in employment and service delivery.

Accountability

The LEP is responsible and accountable for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring diversity issues are addressed through the active promotion of this policy.

LEP Board members and Executive Team members have a responsibility to challenge any unfair discrimination for reasons covered by equalities legislation and good practice.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically in line with the review of the Assurance Framework as recommended by BEIS. Any changes will be approved by the LEP Board.