

Equality, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy

This policy applies to all Directors, staff, members, apprentice or freelance workers and volunteers of Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

Our promise

In carrying out our functions as a statutory organisation we promise to ensure that the values of equality, diversity, equity and inclusion are embedded into everything we do. We are committed to creating the right culture, skills and priorities to ensure that no individual is discriminated against in the planning and delivery of any of our activities.

Our Contract 2019–2024 with Councils in Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire outline our research promise *“that we conduct proportionate Equality Assessments at project outset and continually review our processes in order to ensure our engagement is culturally aware and inclusive, and that our staff teams are sufficiently culturally competent to work closely with diverse populations. Assessments aim to identify hidden populations and form the basis of our plans to target particular groups to reflect demographic profiles. We aim to deliver parity in our work and equal access to all, including the 9 protected characteristic groups and assessing other disadvantaged groups who may find it difficult to access our work.”*

Our Vision: [Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire is a place where people’s experiences help to improve health and care](#)

Our mission: [By offering all people of Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire a strong voice we will improve the quality of health and social care.](#)

Our organization's recruitment, selection, and support practices, our communications and engagement processes ensure equal access and the promotion of equality of opportunity. This policy clarifies our commitment and practice around eliminating discrimination and encouraging and valuing diversity among staff, volunteers, trustees, freelancers, collaborating partners, members of the public and other stakeholders.

Our responsibilities

We recognise our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to tackle disadvantage and discrimination and are committed to meeting them in full.
We

believe that a culture that embraces equality and values diversity will ensure that everyone feels involved and included in our plans, programmes and activities.

We uphold the fundamental human rights of people in the UK embodied in the 1998 Human Rights Act, especially Article 14, the right to be protected from discrimination. Employees are protected by law around their terms and conditions, minimum wage, holidays, payslips, protection from whistleblowing, and discrimination due to part-time working or any other reason. Our employees handbook sets out rules around sick pay, parental leave, bereavement, maternity, paternity and adoption pay.

From 2021 the UK became no-longer bound to follow EU law in the field of employment, but has agreed not to reduce the level of existing social protection.

We aim to create an environment which respects and welcomes everyone, and in which processes are in place to address bullying, harassment, and disrespectful or discriminatory behaviour in all its direct and indirect forms. (see appendix) This particularly applies to those with 'protected characteristics' ; age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief (including lack of religion), sex and sexual orientation. (see appendix for more detail).

We also acknowledge that equality, diversity and inclusion is much bigger than this and we recognise that people face discrimination, marginalisation and reduced opportunities due to other factors e.g. homelessness, poverty, and social background.

All staff, volunteers, Trustees and partners ensure that their own language and actions are consistent with the spirit and the contents of this policy.

Overall responsibility for the implementation of this this policy lies with the Healthwatch Area Manager and Board of Trustees.

Our commitments

Healthwatch BNSSG as an organisation has embraced a set of values.

- Being inclusive
- Being transparent
- Being non-judgemental
- Being independent

- Working in co-production
- Following the Nolan Principles of public life
- Continually improving

Equality, Diversity and Discrimination is mandatory training for all staff, volunteers and trustees. Our trustees adhere to Healthwatch England's code of conduct and populate a 'rag rated' Quality Framework of prompt questions where we evidence our activities. Sections on 'leadership' 'people' 'engagement & reach' and 'collaboration' reflect our commitment to Equality Diversity and Inclusion across all levels of our organisation. We invest in continual improvement through outreach, training, and co-production.

Putting our policy into practice

We will ensure that all our volunteers, staff members, trustees, freelancers, collaboration partners, members of the public and contributors are aware of the inclusive values of the organisation. This is part of our communication strategy, is included in our staff handbook and is provided to our volunteers as part of the induction process. Staff and volunteers are actively consulted and involved in policy development.

Our Board of Trustees have an elected EDI champion who link into Healthwatch England's objectives in their EDI Roadmap via a Peer support network.

Recruitment

We have a transparent and fair recruitment practice that seeks a diverse Staff, Board and Volunteering team. Under-represented groups are encouraged to apply. Each year we collate anonymous demographic data, and data on protected characteristics of applicants for roles in the organisation. This information is assessed annually to inform future recruitment and give us a clear picture of representation.

Recruitment of staff uses a blind selection process to ensure there is no unconscious bias. We use values-based questions, and request candidates provide an anonymous diversity monitoring form. We seek to understand the needs of our candidates and provide reasonable adjustments and adhere to the accessible information standard.

Board and Volunteer role description is available in printed form and/or by speaking directly to a Volunteer Co-Ordinator. These role descriptions are regularly reviewed.

We will endeavor to recruit Board, staff, volunteers from diverse backgrounds through a range of newsletters, media outlets and targeted geographical advertising, sharing on social media with particular organisations or groups and via public engagement with diverse communities. Face-to-face engagement with the general public and co-production have been identified as good opportunities through which to recruit volunteers e.g. by identifying people with lived experience of health and social care services or people with a background where people are rarely given a voice.

Prospective volunteers are invited to take part in an informal interview to share their aspirations and experiences. This is not a competitive process. It ascertains whether a person is suitable for the role and whether Healthwatch is the right fit for them. During this conversation we discuss whether the volunteer has any particular needs, adaptations or support they'd need to carry out their role, as well as any personal interests or knowledge.

Induction and training

Board, Staff and Volunteers receive an introduction to equality, diversity and discrimination as part of their induction. This is an opportunity for volunteers and staff to discuss aspects of EDI and how the mission, aims and values of Healthwatch BNSSG relate to this.

We encourage Healthwatch staff, volunteers and trustees to have open conversations about equality, diversity, equity and inclusion and will raise awareness of this in meetings and communications. Healthwatch will continually self-assess our work programmes.

All Board, Staff and Volunteers are encouraged to develop and progress. We work actively to identify barriers faced by specific groups or individuals via informal chats, 1:1 Annual reviews, use of professional Development Plans, and internal training such as at Volunteer Connect meetings or other events, or through our annual volunteer survey. We will take action to address any issues.

We endeavour to provide professional development opportunities for networking including through the Healthwatch England Black Staff network. We encourage mentoring so that volunteers can support one-another.

Support

We are committed to building a diverse organisation that is responsive to the needs of all members of our local community. Volunteers, staff and trustees are

all responsible for treating people, including service users and Healthwatch staff with dignity and respect.

We will work with people to understand and remove barriers to volunteering by reviewing our volunteering involvement practices ensuring we are inclusive and that people from all sections of the community can volunteer. We make reasonable adjustments, to enable staff and volunteers to effectively carry out their roles. Our Complaints Policy outlines our zero tolerance towards any acts of discrimination or harassment by or against Board, staff or volunteers, or any other stakeholders including the public. Our complaints process aims to resolve disagreement and conflict informally where possible. We support a constructive giving and receiving feedback culture, at all levels, everywhere. Our *Investors in Volunteers* accreditation in 2022 is working with our volunteers to further inform and improve our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion practice.

Communicating

We commit to using accessible venues for events and meetings and offering where possible alternative means of communication e.g. by post, phone, face-to-face and online meetings, materials translated into languages other than English, in large type, with the benefit of a sign language interpreter, or other interpreter. We endeavour to record online meetings where possible and email a summary of what has been discussed.

We commit to using plain English, explaining acronyms and offering accessible forms of communication in our emails, letters, reports and publicity materials as far as it is within our means to do so.

Engagement and working with partners

Our engagement and project scoping with communities identifies relevant equalities groups and supports them to be involved in improving health and social care issues. By using Equality Impact Assessments and Theory of Change, we aim to make a difference to the outcomes for those who experience health inequalities.

It is important to us that our partners and any other individual or organisation we work with are aware of and agree to comply with our vision to improve outcomes by applying our equality and diversity policy.

Impact review

We will monitor the impact of our equality, diversity, equity and inclusion policy and it's practical outcomes by

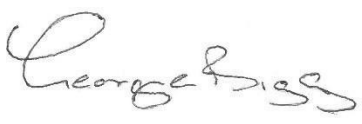
- Undertaking monitoring of the equality profile of our volunteers, staff and trustees and during engagement with the general public.
- Addressing this in our Annual Reports, Annual Volunteer Survey and I:I reviews
- Reviewing recruitment – looking at who joined Healthwatch as a staff member, freelancer or volunteer and where they find out about Healthwatch BNSSG
- Undertaking monitoring of the equality profile of the groups and individuals who have engaged with us or we have engaged with
- Exception reporting of any examples of particularly good or bad EDI practice and their outcomes and reviewing our complaints and problem- solving processes if issues occur.

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed on a 2 yearly basis by the Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Board of Trustees.

Date Approved: April 2022

Date for Review: April 2024

Signed.....

.....
(Chair of the Healthwatch Board of Directors)

I have read, and understand this Policy, and will adhere to its terms and conditions.

Signed by Healthwatch staff member or volunteer.....

Print name..... Date.....

Appendix:

Definitions of Protected Characteristics - Equality Act 2010

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/4>)

Age

Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).

Disability

A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment

The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and civil partnership

A person is legally married if the union is recognised as a marriage under UK law. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race

Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Religion and belief

Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex

A man or a woman.

Sexual Orientation

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

You are also protected if you are discriminated against because you are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic, for example, protecting carers from discrimination. The Equality Act will protect people who are, for example, caring for a disabled child or relative. They will be protected by virtue of their association to that person.

The Equality and Human Rights Act 1998

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights/human-rights-act>

The Human Rights Act 1998 sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that everyone in the UK is entitled to. It incorporates the rights set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into domestic British law. The Human Rights Act came into force in the UK in October 2000.

The Act sets out human rights in a series of 'Articles'. Each Article deals with a different right. These are all taken from the ECHR and are commonly known as 'the Convention Rights'. Article 14 is the right to protection from discrimination.

- [Article 2: Right to life](#)
- [Article 3: Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment](#)
- [Article 4: Freedom from slavery and forced labour](#)
- [Article 5: Right to liberty and security](#)
- [Article 6: Right to a fair trial](#)
- [Article 7: No punishment without law](#)
- [Article 8: Respect for your private and family life, home and correspondence](#)
- [Article 9: Freedom of thought, belief and religion](#)
- [Article 10: Freedom of expression](#)
- [Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association](#)
- [Article 12: Right to marry and start a family](#)
- [Article 14: Protection from discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms](#)
- [Protocol 1, Article 1: Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property](#)
- [Protocol 1, Article 2: Right to education](#)
- [Protocol 1, Article 3: Right to participate in free elections](#)
- [Protocol 13, Article 1: Abolition of the death penalty](#)

Forms of discrimination and the law

<https://www.acas.org.uk/discrimination-and-the-law/direct-and-indirect-discrimination>

The Health and Race Observatory

<https://www.nhsrho.org/>

Employers Forum on Disability

<http://www.efd.org.uk/>

Age Positive

<http://www.agepositive.gov.uk/>

Employers Forum on Religion and Belief

<http://www.efbelief.org.uk/>

Stonewall – Campaign Group for the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community

<http://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

Beaumont Trust – Registered Charity working for Transgender Equality

<http://www.beaumont-trust.org.uk/>

Gender Trust – Registered Charity working for those with gender identity issues

<http://www.gendertrust.org.uk/>

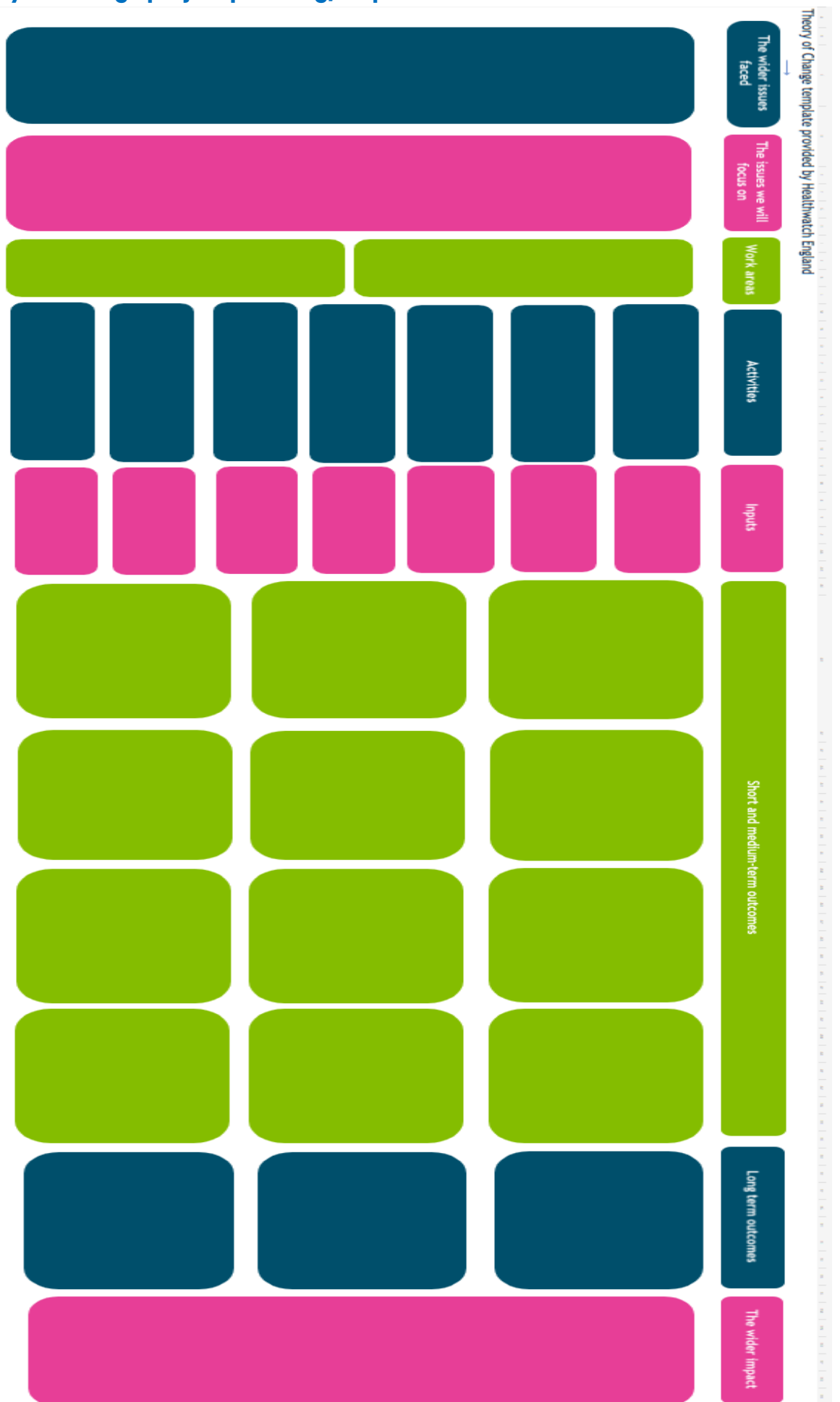
Fawcett Society – Working to eliminate discrimination between women and men

<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/>

The Diversity Trust

<https://www.diversitytrust.org.uk/>

Our Theory of Change project planning/ impact tool:



[Our Equality Impact Assessment template:](#)



Equality Impact Assessment

Project Name:

Project Description:

Project Justification *(with any details that relate to inequalities):*

Assessor:

Date of Assessment:

Undertaking an equality impact assessment helps us understand how the project issue is experienced by different groups of people. Firstly, ensuring we give people who find it hardest to be heard an opportunity to influence the design and delivery of health and care services and secondly so we can ensure the recommendations made do not discriminate against anyone and focus on improving outcomes for those who have the biggest health need.

Please chose option **a** or **b** based on your project and the available data. For example, if your project is already clear it is looking at a specific group (i.e., young mothers from black and ethnic minorities) it might be hard to find exact data so option **a** might be more suitable. If your project is covering the whole population then option **b** might be more suitable to ensure you are properly representing the population.

a. **Specific Population**

Difference in experience or outcomes: *is there any indication or evidence (locally or nationally) that different groups will have unique needs, experiences, issues or priorities in relation to **perinatal care**?*

Group	Indication or evidence of unique needs or experiences regarding this project?	Indication or evidence of different participation levels, satisfaction levels or outcomes in relation this project?
Age		
Disability		
Gender reassignment		
Marriage and civil partnership		
Pregnancy and maternity		
Race		
Religion or belief		
Sex		
Sexual orientation		

b. **General Population**

A statistical breakdown of the protected characteristic populations in **Bristol/North Somerset/South Gloucestershire**.

Characteristic	Bristol Population 2021	North Somerset Population 2021	South Gloucestershire Population 2021	Project Participants

Our vision is that Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire is a place where people's experiences help improve health and care.

Female				
Male				
Disabled				
Non-disabled				
Bisexual				
Gay Man				
Gay Woman/Lesbian				
Heterosexual				
Other				
Under 45				
46 to 64				
Over 65				
White British				
Ethnic Minority				
Transgender Yes				
Transgender No				
Buddhist				
Christian				
Hindu				
Jewish				
Muslim				
Sikh				
Any other religion				
No Religion				
Not Stated				

Characteristic: <i>Nine as per The Equality Act¹ plus three extras Healthwatch BNSSG frequently encounter</i>	Literature review: <i>is there existing or ongoing research related to this characteristic and your project topic?</i>	Methodology: <i>does the projects method of engagement need to be adjusted based on characteristics?</i>		Outcome: <i>does the projects outcomes/recommendations need to consider characteristics?</i>	
		Yes, or No?	What adaptations would you need to make?	Yes, or No?	How will you do this?

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<p>Age</p> <p><i>A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18- to 30-year-olds).</i></p>					
<p>Disability</p> <p><i>A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment</i></p>					
<p><i>which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to conduct normal day-to-day activities.</i></p>					
<p>Gender Reassignment</p> <p><i>The process of transitioning from one sex to another.</i></p>					

<p>Marriage and Civil Partnership</p> <p><i>Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).</i></p>					
<p>Pregnancy and Maternity</p> <p><i>Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against</i></p>					

<p><i>maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.</i></p>					
<p>Race <i>Refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.</i></p>					
<p>Religion or Belief <i>Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. A belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.</i></p>					
<p>Sex <i>A man or a woman.</i></p>					

<p>Sexual Orientation</p> <p><i>Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.</i></p>					
<p>Carer</p> <p><i>A carer is anyone, including children and adults, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.</i></p>					
<p>Socio-economic Deprivation</p> <p><i>This covers seven different domains of deprivation:</i></p> <p><i>Income Deprivation, Employment Deprivation, Education, Skills and Training Deprivation, Health Deprivation and Disability, Crime, Barriers to Housing and Services, Living</i></p>					

<i>Environment Deprivation</i>					
Long Term Health Condition <i>These are conditions for which there is currently no cure, and which are managed with drugs and other treatment, for example. diabetes, chronic obstructive</i>					
<i>pulmonary disease, arthritis, and hypertension.</i>					

This guide may be helpful in terms of understanding the Equality Act and the three elements of the Public Sector Equality duty, our duties as providers of public functions and how this applies to each of the protected characteristics:
[Equality and Human Rights Commission Guide](#)