

How is Norfolk County Council meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty?

Introduction

Each year, from 31 January 2012, local authorities must publish information for residents and employees setting out what they are doing to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This document gives you information about what Norfolk County Council is doing to meet the PSED.

The PSED is part of the [Equality Act 2010](#). It places a duty on local authorities to pay due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a '[protected characteristic](#)' and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

How we are meeting the public sector equality duty

In all the decisions we take and services we deliver, we take proper account of equality issues and where necessary, put actions in place to address any barriers faced by protected groups.

Norfolk County Council provides or pays for many different services for Norfolk residents – from child protection to road maintenance, the care of older people and library services. When we plan and commission services, or propose changes to services, we conduct an evidence-based assessment to consider the impact on people with protected characteristics. The findings of equality assessments are reported to Cabinet and overview and scrutiny panel Members, to ensure they inform decision-making. Copies of completed assessments are always available for public scrutiny.

We have put residents and tax payers in control of assessing our performance information, and working with us to identify the top priorities to be tackled to promote equality over the next four years, based on firm evidence.

To do this we consulted hundreds of residents from across Norfolk who identified as disabled, Black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME), lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), or who have different faiths or beliefs.

We are running a range of projects to promote equality across the different services we pay for and deliver, based on what service users and tax payers told us will make the most difference.

~~1~~ We are undertaking a range of actions to promote equality for disabled people, focussing particularly on access to public transport and the built environment and on developing the Olympic and Paralympic legacy.

- We are undertaking a range of actions to promote equality for BAME people, focussing on enabling staff to become confident to work with BAME communities, ensuring that BAME interests are appropriately addressed in our commissioning process, tackling racism and discrimination and empowering young BAME residents.

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~~2~~ We are working with young people who identify as BAME, disabled, Muslim or LGBT to strengthen practice across all our children's services, especially in relation to safeguarding and looked after children. We want to make sure that every young person in our care has the support they need to be happy, safe and achieve their potential.

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~~3~~ We are working with schools to improve how hate-related bullying is recorded, and the support we give to both pupils and teachers.

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~~4~~ Work to tackle hate incidents is a priority for statutory agencies in Norfolk who have signed-up to a [Norfolk Protocol on hate incidents](#). The Protocol is managed by Norfolk Constabulary and supported in different ways by member agencies. We are taking a leadership role in responding to learning from the Fiona Pilkington tragedy to tackle hate incidents against potentially vulnerable people, who may already be in our care or known to us in some way, for example through adult social care services. As part of this work, we are training our staff, such as social workers to recognise and report hate incidents, and working with partners and voluntary agencies to support different communities to report unacceptable behaviour and abuse and run a major awareness campaign. As a result of this activity, there has been an increase in the number of reports made through the Protocol. This is considered positive, because local and national data suggests that around 90 per cent of hate incidents go unreported.

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~~5~~ We have listened to what young people who identify as LGBT have told us, and are working with them to develop resources for other young people, their families and practitioners on how best to support young people who are questioning their gender or sexual identity.

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- We are working with Stonewall as an 'Education Champion', to assess how effective we are in challenging homophobia in schools and find ways to improve the support we give to young people who identify as LGBT.

~~10~~ We have worked with communities across Norfolk to identify and raise awareness of Black role models from the past to present day, to inspire young BAME people, and celebrate the contribution of Norfolk's Black community volunteers.

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- Together with residents who use Adult Care services, we have been working on a new Community Services Internet portal to enable service users to access a variety of information and be more in control of services they receive.

~~10~~ We have been a lead partner in supporting Norfolk's Black History Month activities and worked with local community and voluntary groups to promote awareness and understanding between communities.

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~~10~~ We have worked with LGBT residents to support Norwich Pride and LGBT History Month and celebrate local inspirational LGBT role models and community volunteers.

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~~10~~ We have worked jointly with faith communities in Norfolk – Christian denominations, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh communities – to mark Holocaust memorial, and encourage people to speak up against hate and prejudice if ever they witness it.

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We are transparent about our progress on tackling inequality – and report publicly on our performance.

The County Council's Cabinet and overview and scrutiny panels regularly monitor and scrutinise performance on a wide range of subjects including equality. Progress updates on equality are reported to Cabinet every three months – this includes development of a new equality strategy, and the reported number of hate incidents in Norfolk. The Council also operates a Strategic Equality Group which enables Members and Officers to work together to support equality activity across the organisation.

The Council commissions a regular independent postal survey across a sample of Norfolk residents, which includes face-to-face surveys with BAME residents, on a set of questions to help us track how residents think and feel about the way the Council operates and the services delivered. From the findings, we can see that BAME residents tend to report high levels of satisfaction with services.

We are finding ways to change how we plan, tender and commission services - we call our new approach 'co-production'. This means we are looking to improve how we involve communities right from the start, rather than coming up with ideas ourselves and asking the community about them afterwards.

We have strong partnership and commissioning arrangements in place with the Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People and other voluntary and community groups and

stakeholders, to enable us to work closely with disabled and older people to design the services that they use.

We engage protected groups such as disabled and older people and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities in major service transformation projects – for example developing an approach to providing information, advice and advocacy services in Norfolk.

We are working with Black, Asian and minority ethnic residents who are disabled, to ensure that our services are relevant and respond to community needs.

We have supported the establishment of a group of disabled residents who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, who can provide advice about delivering accessible services.

With partners, we host [Norfolk Insight](#), a website which brings together all the latest demographic information and research reports on Norfolk's population, which includes information about ethnicity, age, disability, religion and belief and gender. We are working to develop this information, so that it provides the latest profiles on all protected groups, including sexual orientation and transgender, to support excellent service planning and commissioning.

We are working hard to be a good employer of people from protected groups, especially those people who find it particularly difficult to get into and stay in work.

The Norfolk Work Style Programme continues to transform the way we work to improve efficiency - more flexible working arrangements for staff, utilising new technologies, rationalising and improving accommodation, maximising the use of space and reducing the need to travel. This offers increased flexibility over where and how work is done, and broader consideration of requirements for disabled people.

Each year we have reported on how we are doing as an employer to monitor how representative our workforce is of the wider working-age population. In addition, every two years we conduct an independent staff survey, which provides a rich picture of the views of our workforce. We also analyse the findings to ensure that there are no significant disparities between employees from different groups. We are now publishing more detailed workforce data as a separate Excel spreadsheet. The data has been extended to include sexual orientation, age and religion and belief for the first time. Additional information on returners from maternity and adoption leave, length of service, starters and leavers is also included. Where historic data is available, upward or downward trends are identified below, however as the majority of this data has not been previously reported, or has been analysed in a different way, comparative data is not yet available but will be refreshed in July 2013.

Currently, this monitoring highlights:

- Norfolk County Council is the largest employer in Norfolk employing around 22,000 employees, of which 15,000 are employed in schools.
- The workforce remains predominantly female and 45.92% of the top 5% of earners were women, slightly down from the position at the end of the 2010/11 financial year .
- Employees declaring a disability comprise 3.48% of the non-schools workforce and 0.82% of the schools workforce. However, we know that on average 30% of employees prefer not to declare their disability status therefore it is likely that this figure under-represents the actual number of disabled people employed. 3.46% of the top 5% of earners declared that they considered themselves to have a disability (NB the actual number of employees remains unchanged, however there has been an increase in the representation of disabled employees in the top 5% due to a reduction in the overall workforce numbers) .
- BAME employees make up 2.02% of the non-schools workforce, and 0.76% of the schools workforce. 0.39% of the top 5% of earners were from a BAME background, unchanged from 2010/11. NB around 10% of employees have not declared their BAME status.
- The age profile of the organisation remains consistent with previous years, with 51% aged over 45. The number of employees aged under 25 continues to be low at 4.4%, considerably below the labour market average but marginally higher than in 2010/11. An analysis of the starters and leavers data by age highlights that this may be a retention issue.
- We are now able to report on the number of LGB employees, and employees of faith or no faith for the first time. Whilst a significant proportion of the workforce remain undeclared (over 90%), 1.15% of the non schools workforce disclosed their LGB status and 5.29% disclosed their religious status (up from 0.35% and 2.45% respectively in March 2012)

Despite the fact that turnover across Norfolk County Council remained high for the second year in a row, mainly as a result of organisational change to achieve efficiency savings and schools transferring to Academy status, this has not had a disproportionate impact on the representation of protected characteristic groups in the workforce.

To supplement the quantitative data we have about the workforce we engage regularly with union colleagues in a range of forums across the organisation to help us improve our employment practice and address any potential issues. A number of activities have taken place in the last 12 months, for example:

- As a result of the scale of organisational change since the beginning of 2010 an analysis of redundant employees by protected characteristic is undertaken on a six monthly basis, to ensure that our redundancy selection procedures are implemented in an objective manner. To date, no concerns have been highlighted.
- Established the “Get Britain Working” work experience programme with the aim of recruiting 50 recent graduates to the scheme, to help them start their careers and encourage the recruitment and retention of a younger workforce. Our data shows that of 555 new starters during 2012, 28 (5.05%) were aged between 15 and 19, and a further 61 (10.99%) were aged between 20 and 24. This compares to the workforce profile of 0.28% and 2.37% respectively.
- Employed 11 apprentices into ICT, Business Administration and Health and Social Care apprentices and we are working proactively with schools to offer apprenticeships, also to support the retention of a younger workforce.
- Introduced Occupational Adoption Pay at the same rate as Occupational Maternity Pay to ensure that employees taking on responsibility for a child are paid on a consistent basis.
- Implemented employee self service, which allows employees to update information about their protected characteristic status

Looking ahead, we will be:

- Carrying out an equal pay audit during 2013/14, to include all protected characteristics where sufficient data allows meaningful analysis
- Recruiting a further cohort of apprentices in early 2013
- Carrying out research with prospective BAME or disabled job applicants to better understand perceptions of Norfolk County Council as an employer and the barriers they may face in our recruitment process. We will then work with disabled and BAME individuals to identify possible solutions.
- Develop a range of ways to increase employee awareness and understanding of equality issues, including improving and expanding the content of the HR web pages, communicating with managers and employees about relevant issues, developing HR expertise to ensure that managers and employees can access expert advice at an early stage.
- Continue to encourage improved employee declaration rates through employee self service
- Completing the review of flexible working and home working policies as part of Fit for the Future and Norfolk Workstyle to further increase flexibility in the

workplace for employees

- Further extend the reporting of equality data to include disciplinary and grievance cases

Further information

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