

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

1. Introduction

Each year 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.

In 2012 we published our equality objectives and actions to meet these. Our objectives and action plan can be found [here](#). In section two of this report we outline how we are progressing against each of the objectives in bold.

2. How are we 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 impact assessments are reported to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Panel Members, to ensure they inform decision-making.

Norfolk County Council is facing a budget gap of £189 million over the next three years. To meet this budget gap, during 2013 we proposed 43 changes and cuts to service provision and 20 proposals that relate to cutting the authorities own costs. To ensure that decision makers have a full understanding of the impacts these proposals will have, we undertook a comprehensive impact assessment process. This included a high level assessment of proposals, published in September 2013; a large consultation exercise to seek people's views on proposals; an individual assessment of each proposal; and a final impact assessment which draws together the key findings and cumulative impacts. A number of significant mitigating actions were recommended to address the impacts on protected groups. For example, on a proposal to reduce funding for personal budgets, one of the mitigating measures was to ensure all individuals affected will have a face to face review of their allocation based on their own personal needs.

Copies of impact assessments completed for the 2014-17 budget, along with all other completed assessments, are available for public scrutiny. Equality Impact Assessments undertaken for the budget are available [here](#).

During 2013 shortcomings in the Council's arrangements to ensure the effective protection of children, the provision of services for children in our care, and school improvement services were identified by Ofsted. This included shortcomings in our ability to appropriately consider the diversity of children and their families. An improvement board is now well established to tackle these inadequacies, and activity is underway to get the basics right, improve partnership working, improve leadership and governance, and tackle performance. This includes a programme of workforce training to ensure effective consideration of equality and identity by social workers. We have also developed a suite of age and stage needs assessments, including for children aged 0-10 and 11-19, which provide an in depth evidence base of children, family, school life and influences in their communities. These are now being used to inform commissioning decisions.

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.

- We are working with Stonewall as an education champion to improve the support to young people who identify as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB) in schools. Over the last year we have worked with 85 schools (68 primary schools, 13 high schools and 4 special schools), training over 300 people. We are currently ranked 14th nationally in the Stonewall equality index for addressing equality issues and challenging homophobic bullying.
- We are committed to tackling hate incidents and hate crime, and encouraging effective reporting. Over the last year a programme of training with providers of services that support vulnerable people has taken place, enabling them to better recognise hate incidents and have a follow up conversation with people. Five sessions were undertaken with 60 people attending. We have also worked to establish more places where people will feel safe reporting hate incidents.
- As a key partner in the Norfolk Community Relations and Equality Board, we have sought to bring about more effective partnership working on hate crime, and are in the process of reviewing the Multi-Agency Protocol on Hate Crime and creating the Hate Crime Pledge. The Pledge is a set of seven commitments that organisations or individuals can sign up to in order to work together for a hate free Norfolk. It will officially be launched in March 2014.
- We have worked with Great Yarmouth and Waveney Mind to develop an exhibition that features the poignant and personal stories of Norfolk people living with mental health problems more than a century ago. The exhibition at the Time and Tide museum in Great Yarmouth helps to raise awareness of mental health issues and demonstrate how textiles can be used as creative therapy to help people manage or live with their condition.
- We have worked with GPs in Norfolk to run a book prescription scheme aimed at people with mental health problems – which means that people with low level mental health issues could be prescribed a relevant book to read, rather than being given drugs.
- After positive feedback we are continuing to deliver our Surfs Up initiative in libraries, which helps older people get to grips with digital technology. We have many younger volunteers involved in the project – so there have also been intergenerational benefits.
- We continue to work with GYROS, an organisation that supports newcomers and migrant communities in the Great Yarmouth area. They run a number of initiatives from Great Yarmouth Library, including the Books and Beans Café, which is staffed by volunteers.
- Staff at the Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse have worked with the Gypsy and Traveller community to co-deliver sessions for school groups and the public to encourage an understanding between the traveller and settled communities.

- To help celebrate Refugee Week in June we worked with residents and other organisations to deliver a range of events, which included building a refugee camp containing features like a medical and hygiene area, food distribution area and records keeping area. The camp was visited by school children and members of the public.
- We were a lead partner in supporting Norfolk's Black History Month in October, and worked with local community groups to promote awareness and understanding of black culture and breakdown the barriers that exist between communities through activities such as music, dance and film. In libraries we also encouraged people to read books written by black authors, and as part of our Village Read initiative encouraged whole communities to read the same book at the same time.
- Worked with others to support Disability History Month, running a series of talks about 'life in an asylum' and showing a 'hidden histories' display at libraries across the county.
- Inspired by International Women's Day a [Norfolk Women in History Timeline](#) has been developed to promote and celebrate the role Norfolk women have played in the history of our county and beyond.
- We supported Norfolk Federation of Women's Institutes and other local organisations to run Norfolk's 2013 International Women's day event. In particular we focused on encouraging a more diverse audience to attend and participate and were rewarded with several local disability groups getting involved in the day for the first time. We also encouraged and supported members of the youth parliament to attend.
- We promoted the One Billion Rising campaign with our own event at County Hall for staff and elected Members who could not attend the main event in Norwich. One Billion Rising for Justice is a global call to women survivors of violence and those who love them to gather safely in public places and share their stories.
- We have worked jointly with faith communities in Norfolk – Christian denominations, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh communities – to mark Holocaust memorial Day, and encourage people to speak up against hate and prejudice if ever they witness it.
- We have worked to foster good relationships with the Sikh community locally and nationally, and at the Ancient House Museum in Thetford we display collections relating to the museum's benefactor Prince Frederick Duleep Singh whose father was the last Maharajah of the Punjab.
- We are undertaking a range of actions to promote equality for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (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.

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 activities to promote equality and the reported number of hate incidents in Norfolk. The Council also has a Strategic Equality Group which enables Members and Officers to work together to support equality activity across the organisation.

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 around 20 contracts with voluntary organisations to provide a range of support services to carers. Over the last year we have worked with carers, including young carers, to re-commission these services. A group of carers have provided feedback on existing services, presented to prospective providers and help design the evaluation questions used to determine who we commission. We have had positive feedback from carers and the co-production project has been nationally recognised as good practice.

We've been working with disabled people and utility companies to improve the way accessibility issues are addressed as part of streetworks – which includes any works that are undertaken in the highway, including those by companies like Anglian Water. New guidance for streetworks, including requirements around consulting with disabled residents, is being co-produced and will be adopted in 2014.

In 2012 Members of Norfolk Youth Parliament (MYPs) encouraged over 2,700 young people to take part in the Make Your Mark ballot. The top issue selected by young people in Norfolk was improving public transport. As a result, we have worked with MYPs during 2013 to design and deliver a mystery shopping project of bus operators in Norfolk to explore young people's journey experiences. Twenty young people took part and will present their findings to bus operators in February 2014.

Following a consultation on the effectiveness of the Council's Pledge (setting out our statutory obligations and commitments) for children in or leaving our care, we have worked with a group of young people in care to develop 'the Promise', a new pledge that reflects young people's priorities, and is written in a language they understand. The Promise has since been presented Cabinet and is currently being made into a DVD, along with other formats, by young people.

As part of the Norwich Better Bus Area project we have been working with blind and visually impaired bus users to improve the accessibility of information, including trialling the RNIB React system. This is a talking sign system that links in with our real time information system, helping people to find out if they're at the right bus stop, and when the next bus is due.

In November 2013 Independence Matters, a new social enterprise for personal and community support services was established. The enterprise is a spin out from the Council, taking a range of services including day services at community hubs, personal assistant services, supported living, respite care, Norfolk Industries and Stepping Out, the mental health unit. Service users, their families and residents were involved in the development of this social enterprise. For example, community hub local advisory groups comprising service users as well as others from the wider community met and shared ideas to help shape and influence how hubs will be run in the future.

Young people have been involved in the re-commissioning of accommodation for young people. People from the In Care Council attended events with providers and those currently living in hostels helped review homes and provided input into what the service should look like.

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.

We are currently developing a set of accessibility standards for the authority that will enable us to take a more holistic and evidence led approach to delivering accessibility improvements, for both staff and service users, across our services, buildings and ICT systems. We will use these to identify where there are gaps in current levels of accessibility, and prioritise recommended improvements.

The Digital Norfolk Ambition and Work Style project continues to transform the way we work as an organisation, including how we use ICT to do our business, engage and understand our customers, and work with partners. We have established an accessibility group to ensure appropriate solutions for disabled people are embedded into changes for where and how work is done.

In January 2013 we launched three equality e-learning packages covering the Equality Act, Equality Impact Assessments and Equality in the Workplace, which are available to all staff and elected Members. To date 859 people have completed the courses.

A survey of 50 disabled and BAME staff was completed in 2013. The feedback identified that the majority of participants had a positive experience of working for the Council, however greater awareness and understanding of the issues faced by disabled and BAME staff was needed.

A review has been carried out of Equality Policies and Procedures, resulting in improved guidance for managers and employees being published on our HR intranet. In particular, more detailed guidance about reasonable adjustments and how to implement them has been developed, along with a new policy supporting transgender employees.

We continue to work closely with UNISON colleagues on equality issues arising in the workplace and in seeking to implement best practice.

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. Currently, this monitoring highlights:

- Norfolk County Council (NCC) is the largest employer in Norfolk employing just over 20,000 employees, of which 14,000 are employed in schools (as at 31 December 2013).
- The workforce remains predominantly female, 81% of the workforce, of which 57% are part time and 46% of the top 5% of earners are women.
- Employees declaring a disability comprise 2.21% of the overall NCC workforce, 4.15% in non-schools and 1.16% in schools. However, we know that on average 31% 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. The overall percentages represent a fractional increase from 2011/12 which was 2.14%. The distribution of disabled employees by salary band continues to show a concentration at lower salary scales. 3.51% of top earners have a declared disability.
- BAME employees make up 1.15% of the overall workforce, with 2.06% in non-schools and 0.73% in schools. The ethnicity profile of NCC employees has seen some marginal increases in some BAME employee groups when compared to 2011/12, but the overall BAME proportion remains the same. 0.4% of the top 5% of earners were from a BAME background, which is consistent with 2011/12. It should be noted that around 25% of employees prefer not to indicate their ethnicity status.
- The age profile of the organisation remains consistent with previous years, with 52% of people aged 45 or over. The number of employees aged 25 and under continues to be low at 4.3%, considerably below the labour market average but marginally higher than in 2011/12. An analysis of the starters and leavers data by age highlights the small increase may be due to recruitment of apprentices and a reduced attrition rate.
- Over the last two years we have also been monitoring the number of LGB employees, and employees of faith or no faith. Whilst a significant proportion of the total workforce remain undeclared (96%), 7.7% of the non-schools workforce disclosed their LGB status and 5.7% disclosed their religious status.

Looking ahead, we will be:

- Completing an equal pay audit during 2014/15, to include all protected characteristics.
- Reviewing our guidance to support staff affected by domestic violence.
- Developing an e-learning resource for managers and staff on identifying and implementing reasonable adjustments.
- Conducting an employee survey and analysing disaggregated results by protected characteristic group.
- Building on the success of the Apprenticeship and Get Britain Working schemes and considering how traineeships can be incorporated into the framework.
- Explore ways in which improved technology can support networks for protected groups.

3. Further Information

For further information please contact Norfolk County Council's Planning, Performance & Partnerships team:

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If you need this document in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language please contact Tim Pearson on 0344 800 8020 or 0344 800 8011 (Textphone).