

# Overview of Norfolk County Council's work to promote equality and tackle unfair discrimination across services 2014-2015

## Overview

1. This report provides an overview of the County Council's work to promote equality and tackle unfair discrimination across services during 2014-2015.
2. The Council has a statutory duty to publish this information online on 31<sup>st</sup> January, as part of its duties under the Equality Act 2010 (see below).

## Background

3. Each year, on 31 January, local authorities must publish information for residents and employees setting out what they are doing to promote equality and tackle unfair discrimination.
4. This duty, called the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), is part of the [Equality Act 2010](#). The PSED 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 (the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation);
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
5. The Equality Act 2010 explains that having due regard to the need to advance equality means activities like: removing or minimizing disadvantages suffered by people with a protected characteristic; taking steps to meet the needs of people with a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of others; encouraging people who share a protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is low.
6. Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between people and communities involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

## Overview of activities 2014-2015

7. The section below summarises key activities undertaken in 2014-15:

**When planning and commissioning services, we take full account of equality issues and where necessary, put actions in place to address any barriers faced by protected groups.**

8. 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 equality assessment to consider the impact on people with protected characteristics.

Where necessary, the findings of equality impact assessments are reported to decision-making committees, to ensure they inform decision-making.

9. The County Council continues to manage unprecedented financial challenges. The Council always undertakes equality assessments of budget proposals that may impact on the public. These are published on the Council's website, [www.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk) for inspection by members of the public. Where an assessment identifies the possibility of adverse impact, actions are agreed to try to mitigate this impact.

#### **Promoting equality across children's services in Norfolk**

10. During 2013, shortcomings in the Council's arrangements to ensure the effective protection of children, the provision of services for children in care and school improvement services were identified by Ofsted. This included shortcomings in work to appropriately consider the diversity of children and their families.
11. An improvement strategy is now well established to tackle these inadequacies. Work has taken place during 2014-2015 to develop an equality strategy for children's services. This was agreed by Children's Services Committee on 20 November 2014. Key actions include:
  - Improve our knowledge of the different issues faced by young people in Norfolk with different protected characteristics;
  - Strengthen the voice of children – promote a film produced by children from different groups in Norfolk, improve quality of practice;
  - Promote leadership in relation to equalities issues - hold a Children's Services equality symposium to inspire, inform and promote a collective understanding of the issues;
  - Focus on development of managers – their management of diverse teams and having the knowledge and tools to challenge attitudes, behaviour and language and monitor quality. Deliver a targeted learning and development package.
12. Work is now taking place to implement the strategy.

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

13. The Council has a Member-led Strategic Equality Group, which enables members to closely consider equality issues and make recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee on potential priorities. Policy & Resources Committee makes decisions about priorities and scrutinises performance on a wide range of subjects including equality. Progress updates on equality are recorded in committee reports and reported publically – this includes activities to promote equality and the reported number of hate incidents in Norfolk.

#### **We are finding ways to change how we plan, tender and commission services - we call this '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.**

14. We have contracts with voluntary organisations to provide a range of support services. We work with service users and carers involved with services on an ongoing basis to re-commission these services. We have had positive feedback from service users and some of our work on co-production has been nationally recognised as good practice.
15. In 2013 we worked 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 on the highway. As a result of this work, in 2014, we published new guidance for streetworks, including requirements around consulting with disabled residents.

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

16. We are currently developing a set of accessibility standards for the County Council that will enable us to take a more holistic and evidence-led approach to delivering accessibility improvements, for both service users and staff, 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.
17. We have worked hard to integrate accessibility into the ongoing refurbishment of County hall. We have incorporated new levels of accessibility within all office accommodation as well as the entrance, reception and public meeting rooms. The aim is to make good levels of accessibility the 'norm' within our buildings. This approach is now become a County Council standard and is being used with other office refurbishment projects in Norfolk.
18. We are working with Stonewall as an education champion to improve the support available to young people in schools who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB). We are currently ranked 8th nationally in the Stonewall equality index for addressing equality issues and challenging homophobic bullying in schools. Alongside this, we are working with schools, education services and transport in tackling all forms of hate-related bullying towards young people.
19. We are committed to tackling hate incidents and hate crime against potentially vulnerable people, and encouraging effective reporting. Over the last year a programme of training with service providers supporting vulnerable people has continued to be rolled out, to help residents recognise hate incidents. We have also worked to establish more places where people will feel safe reporting hate incidents.
20. We have continued to develop our partnership working on hate incidents and safeguarding, and have established a newly formed County Council hate crime group that for the first time brings together all of the Council's service areas, including schools, together with key external partners. The aim of the group is to take a holistic approach in tackling hate incidents, while ensuring that all services have appropriate processes and safeguards in place to support people who access our services. As part of this, we are working to ensure that training for staff and providers incorporates both safeguarding and identifying and reporting hate incidents
21. We support community events across Norfolk that promote positive community relations, such as Black History Month, Norwich PRIDE, Refugee week, Holocaust Memorial and Disability History Week. We find ways to recognise the contribution of diverse communities to Norfolk - for example, at the Ancient House Museum in Thetford collections are displayed relating to the museum's benefactor Prince Frederick Duleep Singh whose father was the last Maharajah of the Punjab.
22. As a key partner in the Norfolk Community Relations and Equality Board, we work with partners to better understand emerging issues on equality in Norfolk, and find ways to address these in the most efficient and effective way possible.

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

23. 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. The DNA project team is working to create appropriate solutions for disabled customers and staff.
24. To support the County Hall refurbishment, DNA and new ways of working that Norfolk County Council is introducing, in summer 2014 we undertook a survey of nearly 400 staff that are either disabled or have a long-term health condition that impacts on their working environment or the way they undertake their duties. The information gathered enabled us to think about people's access needs prior to making changes and has helped us ensure that potential changes are made in a person-centred way.
25. We are reviewing our existing equality e-learning packages to make sure that they are providing staff and elected members with the information and support they need. We are also checking to ensure that they incorporate full accessibility. In November 2014 we launched e-learning training on implementing reasonable adjustments for staff and customers. To date 86 people have accessed the course.
26. A review has been carried out of the Domestic Violence Guidance for managers and staff, identifying additional sources of support and guidance for managers who may have staff affected.
27. We continue to work closely with UNISON colleagues on equality issues arising in the workplace and in seeking to implement best practice.
28. We carried out an Employee Survey in September 2014. We also analyse the findings to ensure that there are no significant disparities between employees from different groups. The disaggregated results by protected characteristics identified that disabled staff in particular were less satisfied with the working environment and work resources. It is anticipated that the DNA and Work Style projects, currently rolling out across the organisation will address some of the issues being experienced.
29. A number of initiatives have been ongoing to support young people gain key work skills and increase their employability. The Customer Services and Communications Service has funded a number of paid internships, each lasting 11 months, with 4 new internships starting in September 2014. All of the interns have been successful in securing employment in communications roles outside of NCC. NCC also supports the 'Get Britain Working' initiative. The scheme offers recent, unemployed graduates aged between 21 and 25 6-8 weeks' work experience of between 25 and 30 hours a week. In total, 31 placements have been offered and feedback has been positive.
30. In 2014, NCC supported a total of 30 apprenticeships in IT, Health and Social Care or Business Administration. Just under 10% of the apprentices had declared a disability. Of those who had completed the apprenticeships, 3 secured permanent employment with NCC and a further 11 secured temporary work with NCC. In October 2014, 8 further apprenticeships started with NCC.
31. The range of workforce data reported annually as part of the PSED report has been extended to include recruitment data and disciplinary and grievance cases.
32. 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.

Currently, this monitoring highlights:

- 1.1 Norfolk County Council (NCC) is the largest employer in Norfolk employing just over 19,000 employees, of which 13,000 are employed in schools (as at 31 December 2014).
- 1.2 The workforce remains predominantly female; 78% of the workforce, of which 52% are part time, showing a slight decline since 2013/14 and 47% of the top 5% of earners are women, up from 46% in 2013/14.
- 1.3 Employees declaring a disability comprise 2.36% of the overall NCC workforce, 4.30% in non-schools and 1.24% in schools. However, we know that on average 35% 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 2013/14 which was 2.21%. The distribution of disabled employees by salary band continues to show a concentration at lower salary scales. 3.25% of top earners have a declared disability.
- 1.4 BAME employees make up 1.46% of the overall workforce, with 2.39% in non-schools and 0.90% in schools. The ethnicity profile of NCC employees has seen some marginal increases in BAME employee groups when compared to 2013/14. 0.4% of the top 5% of earners were from a BAME background, which is consistent with 2013/14. It should be noted that around 29% of employees prefer not to indicate their ethnicity status.
- 1.5 The age profile of the organisation remains broadly consistent with previous years, with 51.5% of people aged 45 or over. The number of employees aged 25 and under has increased marginally at 4.48%, considerably below the labour market average. The recruitment of apprentices and the Get Britain Working schemes have contributed to this small increase.
- 1.6 Over the last three 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 (92%), 0.22% of the workforce disclosed their LGB status and 4.07% disclosed their religious status.

Looking ahead, we will be:

2. Building on the success of the Apprenticeship and Get Britain Working schemes and considering how traineeships can be incorporated into the framework.
  3. Continuing to implement the Digital Norfolk Ambition and Work Style projects across NCC
  4. Conduct an Equal Pay Audit in 2015, following an initial exploratory exercise to determine methodology
  5. Engaging with the managers and leaders to improve how disability and accessibility is incorporated at an early stage in projects.
  6. We are reviewing our existing equality e-learning packages to make sure that they are providing staff and elected members with the information and support they need. We are also checking to ensure that they incorporate full accessibility. In November 2014 we launched e-learning training on implementing reasonable adjustments for staff and customers
- 7.

## Further Information

For further information please contact Norfolk County Council's Corporate Planning & 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).