

Overview of Norfolk County Council's work to promote equality and tackle unfair discrimination across services,

31 January 2015 to 31 January 2016

Overview

1. This report provides an overview of Norfolk County Council's work to promote equality and tackle unfair discrimination between 31 January 2015 to 31 January 2016.
2. The Council has a statutory duty to publish this information online on 31 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 2015-2016

7. The section below summarises key activities undertaken in 2015-16:

<p>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.</p>
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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 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 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. In 2013, the Council's Ofsted findings raised issues about the extent to which culture, identity and ethnicity were taken into account in assessment and service planning.
11. Since then, Children's Service Committee has overseen a rigorous improvement strategy to address these and other issues. Part of this work included agreeing a range of actions to address immediate priorities for equality as well as a range of priorities to be addressed over the longer term. These were consolidated in an equality plan for 2015/18. In summary, these priorities included:
 - Strengthen the voice of children and young people in driving equality strategy in Children's Services.
 - Improve and extend the evidence base to improve analysis and highlight differences in relation to outcomes for particular groups
 - Promote leadership in relation to equalities issues - hold a Children's Services equality conference to inspire, inform and maintain a collective vision on equality.
 - 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 for staff.
12. The key priority for delivery between April and October 2015 was to work with 50 children and young people with protected characteristics across Norfolk, to identify the key issues that they felt were important. The purpose of this was to:
 - Ensure that young people themselves remain central to informing equality strategy in Children's Services
 - Assess to what extent issues have changed since a similar piece of research was undertaken with young people in 2012.
13. The findings of this research were captured in a film, which was launched to members and staff on 17 November 2015. The film is being implemented as a key training tool for staff, to ensure that all staff understand the issues young people would like them to incorporate into their day-to-day practice.

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

14. The Council has a Member-led Strategic Equality Group, which enables members to 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 address 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 service users right from the start, rather than coming up with ideas ourselves and asking the community about them afterwards.

Mental health

15. Over the last nine months we have been engaging with service users across South Norfolk Clinical Commissioning Group locality to better understand how individuals with mental health problems access and use services or community based initiatives to maintain their well-being or add value to their recovery and management of their mental health. We have engaged with and involved individuals with lived experience of mental health who have been part of the project. The co-production approach has involved individuals at all levels of operational and decision-making. The project has been monitored and evaluated by the National Development Team from regional NHS England for inclusion to ensure co-production has been achieved.

Older people and care at end of life

16. Over the last nine months the County Council has worked with partners and older people, their families and carers on plans to improve care at end of life. A plan has been developed through several consultation events. The aim is to support older people and others at end of life to have as good a death in the community as possible. The objective is to put patients at the centre of planning about their chosen place of dying and supporting their other preferences through the co-ordination of services around their needs.

Dementia

17. The County Council has worked with people with dementia (in collaboration with Healthwatch Norfolk) and their carers to better understand information and support needs. This has included talking with people with dementia and their families at dementia-friendly consultation events. The work has resulted in the development of a dementia pathway which gives clearer information about how people can access help and support to meet different needs. The Council has led on and collaborated on a range of activities including providing specialist dementia nursing, advice and support; grants to help people manage their physical environment; campaigns to challenge stigma and promote understanding such as the launch of dementia friendly towns and communities in Norfolk

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.

18. In 2015, following extensive work with Stonewall to improve the support available to young people in schools who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB), Norfolk was proud to come 4th out of 47 Local Authorities in the Stonewall Equality Index. This is a move up from 2014 rank of 8th and year before 14th place. This result was the result of tremendous efforts within Children's Services and our partners. 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 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 improvements. In 2016, these accessibility standards will inform an update of the Council's equality policy.
20. We have continued to work 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 accessibility the 'norm' within our buildings. This approach has now become a County Council standard and is being used with other office refurbishment projects in Norfolk.
21. The majority of refurbishment across office areas and reception is now completed at County Hall. We are now working on final areas such as the restaurant and lower ground floors and have also completed refurbishment of our Great Yarmouth Hub using the accessibility template and principles piloted within County Hall.
22. We are committed to tackling hate incidents and crime against potentially vulnerable people, and encouraging effective reporting. Over the last year we have undertaken a county-wide audit of hate incident reporting to identify what mechanisms are in place to support people who have been the victim of hate incidents. The actions from this audit will inform improvement over the next year
23. We have been working hard with our Safeguarding teams to ensure hate crime and Safeguarding are integrated effectively. This includes hate incidents being part of Safeguarding training, improved reporting within our client management system and hate incident experts being invited onto safeguarding boards.
24. We support community events across Norfolk that promote positive community relations, such as Black History Month, Norwich PRIDE and Holocaust Memorial Day. We find ways to recognise the contribution of diverse communities in Norfolk.

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.

25. The Digital Norfolk Ambition (DNA) 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 solutions for disabled customers and staff.
26. To support County Hall refurbishment, DNA and new ways of working that Norfolk County Council is introducing, we have now upgraded nearly 100 disabled staff members' ICT equipment to address people's accessibility needs. This included undertaking a range of testing between accessibility software and NCC systems to ensure that staff will not be disadvantaged as part of the upgrade.
27. We have purchased corporate solutions for two of our most used pieces of access software. The aim of this is to integrate access software into NCC systems as a norm rather than as an add-on. This will enhance our ICT infrastructure for staff and customers' generally.

28. We have included for the first time a set of accessibility criteria within ICT procurement. This will ensure disabled staff members and customers have a better experience using telephony and mobile solutions
29. We carried out an Employee Survey in September 2014. The findings indicated that disabled staff may be slightly less satisfied with the working environment and work resources than non-disabled staff. To address these findings, we held focus groups in 2015 with disabled staff to better understand opportunities for enhancing accessibility. The focus groups have informed measures to support the Council in improving managers' awareness and confidence in implementing reasonable adjustments.
30. A number of initiatives have been ongoing to support young people to 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 2 new internships starting in November 2015. All of the interns have been successful in securing employment in communications roles outside of NCC.
31. We have been working in partnership with Job Centre Plus on the Norwich for Jobs project which looks to support work experience placements for job seekers who are finding it hard to enter the labour market. A total of three placements have been supported, and work shadowing is also available. Training support has also been made available on our 'Preparing yourself for Interview' course and providing mock interviews.
32. We will conduct an Equal Pay Audit in 2016, now that an initial exploratory exercise to determine methodology is complete
33. 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:
 - Norfolk County Council (NCC) is the largest employer in Norfolk, employing just over 6,000 employees.
 - The workforce remains predominantly female; 71% of the workforce, of which 51% are part time, and 45.54% of the top 5% of earners are women, down from 47% in 2014/15.
 - Employees declaring a disability comprise 4.34% of the overall NCC workforce, marginally up from 4.30% in 2014/15. However, we know that on average 26% 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. 5.27% of top earners have a declared disability, up from 3.25%.
 - Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) employees make up 2.48% of the overall workforce, a small increase from 2.39% in 2014/15. 1.45% of the top 5% of earners were from a BAME background, up from 0.4% in 2014/15. It should be noted that around 17% of employees prefer not to indicate their ethnicity status.
 - The age profile of the organisation shows limited change with 51.33% of people aged 45 or over (up from 51.5% in 14/15). The number of employees aged 25 and under however has reduced at 3.39%, considerably below the labour market average (down from 4.48%).
 - Over the last three years we have also been monitoring the number of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) employees, and employees of faith or no faith. Whilst a significant proportion of the total workforce remain undeclared (69%), 2.34% of the workforce disclosed their LGB status and 15.7% have disclosed they have a religion.

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).