



Oadby and Wigston Borough Council

Equality and Diversity Agenda

June 2013

**“Equality is not in regarding different things similarly;
equality is in regarding different things differently”.**
-Tom Robbins, American Author

www.thinkexist.com



**“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich
tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads
of the tapestry are equal in value
no matter what their color”**

- Maya Angelou, American Author and poet

www.goodreads.com

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1: Introduction

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council (the Council) recognises the diversity of its community in the borough. We value that diversity and we strive to understand the cultural and diverse needs of the individuals and groups that exist and live together in it so that our activities and service delivery can be tailored to those needs.

The Equality and Diversity Agenda (the Agenda), with a view to promoting equality and diversity will demonstrate this commitment in all that we do. It is the ethos of the Council and aims to be embedded in all of the services that we deliver.

This Agenda describes how the Council will fulfil its statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity and avoid discrimination with regards to its responsibilities as a provider of services.

The Agenda also focuses on the workforce within the Council and ensures that our business areas such as recruitment, training, safeguarding, retention and progression consider the differences of our workforce.

The Agenda is designed for all staff, service users, the public, stakeholders and partners. The Agenda is not produced in isolation but is supported by a range of policies, procedures and guidelines and will play its part in being a key contributor in the Council's Strategic Plan.

2. Our Vision

Our vision for equality and diversity in the Council is:

“To be an inclusive organisation with shared values, to reduce inequalities by tackling discrimination and building and fostering strong and good cohesive communities, and acknowledging that diversity brings an added value to the lives of all who live and work in the area”.

3: What is Equality and Diversity?

Although they are used interchangeably, the terms equality and diversity are not the same. **Equality** is about creating a fairer society where everyone can participate and has the same opportunity to fulfil their potential. It is the right of every human being to be treated with respect and consideration and to participate on an equal basis with others. Equality is not about treating everybody the same as people have different needs; it is necessary to treat people differently according to their different circumstances.

To understand how we can shape our services, as well as our employment practice, we need to understand the individual and group differences of our

communities and workforce, or their **Diversity** to ensure that everyone's needs and requirements are understood and responded to. Diversity is simply differences and placing positive value and embracing those differences for the benefit of everyone.

4: Background and Legislation

Equality and diversity and other core principles, including fairness, dignity and respect form the basis of people's human rights and are governed by the **Human Rights Act 1998**. Human rights protect individual's freedom to control their own lives and take part in decisions made by public authorities and get fair and equal services from public authorities.

The biggest piece of legislation covering equality and diversity is the **Equality Act 2010** (the Act). The Act repealed and replaced all former anti discriminatory laws such as the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 etc. It also promoted consistency and upheld the nine protected characteristics (section 5)

The Act places three general public sector equality duties (PSED) on all public sector bodies which is to ensure that we can demonstrate that we have paid "due regard" to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

To meet it effectively, the Act also imposed two specific duties under s153 for public bodies. These duties are to:

1. collectively formulate and agree and ongoing quadrennial measurable equality objectives every 4 years and
2. publish relevant equality data annually to demonstrate our compliance.

The Council is committed to its equality duties as defined by law. An action plan with quantifiable objectives will allow us to monitor progress of our equality priorities, illustrate the degree of activity being undertaken.

5: Discrimination and Protected Characteristics

Discrimination is the prejudicial or unjust treatment of an individual based on their actual or perceived membership in a certain group or category. The law through the Acts above protect people from unfair discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or maternity and transgender.

These are called '**protected characteristics**' and the law protects people from discrimination in employment and using public services.

Discrimination does not have to be deliberate and intentional. You can discriminate indirectly with working conditions or rules that disadvantage one group of people more than another. Awareness of individual differences and how to cater for them are therefore important in service delivery and employment.

6: Demographics of Oadby and Wigston

Leicester; full of different cultures, ethnicities and faiths, is one of the UK's most ethnically diverse cities. This is also evident in Oadby and Wigston where approximately 30% of the population in the borough has an ethnic minority background. The largest faith in the borough is Christianity although this has fallen from 64.8% in 2001 to 48.5 in 2011. In recent years the Muslim, Sikh and Hindu faiths have grown.

The borough also has a growing population of older people with 25% of residents aged over 60. Healthy life expectancy for people aged 65 and over is 14.4 years in Oadby and Wigston. This is the highest in Leicestershire and is 1.9 years above the national average.

While overall levels of deprivation are low; it being the third least deprived of the districts in Leicestershire, there are some pockets of deprivation in the borough. People living in those deprived areas of the district can expect to live 5.6 years less than the average for males and 3.6 years less for females.

The key for implementing this agenda is knowing and understanding the diversity of the community and the make up of the borough.

7: Equality Objectives

The council is committed to equality and it will inform all areas of our work and we will continue to:

- Comply with legislation in promoting equality and indeed, go beyond the expectations of what the law expects of us in the elimination of discrimination
- Ensure that service users are treated with dignity and respect
- Develop a zero tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- Take a positive approach to equality and diversity with our staff team, service users and stakeholders
- Work with all partners in achieving our aims

Our 5 equality objectives, which we will aim to work towards in the next 4 years are:

1. To create a skilled and confident workforce to enforce equality and diversity and to challenge negative behaviours
2. Continue to and improve engagement and communication with members of the community, ensuring all hard to reach or under-represented groups are given a voice
3. Ensure a representative workforce reflective of the community
4. Understand who our existing service users are with the aim to ensure that services are utilised by all community members
5. For relevant forums and boards to actively engage and contribute to the Equality and Diversity Forum.

8: Equality Impact Assessments

An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy whether that policy is written or unwritten, formal or informal and irrespective of the scope of the policy. EIA's assess the likely equality implications either of implementing a new policy or initiative or of the operation of a current policy, function or service on different equality groups.

The primary function of the EIA should be to determine whether there is a negative impact on different equality groups. They can be applied to a policy, practice or service in order to:

- Eliminate direct and indirect discrimination
- Promote equality
- Act as an effective improvement tool

The process should not be looked on as an end in itself, what emerges through the process and the outcomes are what are most important. An EIA may be conducted when:

- Existing and new policies are being considered or there are any structural or physical changes to buildings/timetables.

- Service users or staff activity that may not necessarily be formally documented, e.g. social events (a range of activities should be available in order to ensure no service users or staff are unwittingly excluded)

Why conduct an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)?

- To ensure legislative compliance, improve customer services, aid decision-making, improve employment policy and improve public confidence through transparency.
- EIAs will save time, money and help avoid problems in the long term and as such ensuring effectiveness in all formal and informal activity Oadby and Wigston Borough Council undertake.
- To raise awareness of differences in an ever increasing diversity within the population of the Borough and use such awareness and knowledge to benefit the borough of Oadby & Wigston generally.

9: Equality Action Plan

Oadby and Wigston Borough Council Equality Objectives 2013 - 2017

Eliminate discrimination and harassment And Advance equality of opportunity			
Duty	What will we do and when	How measured	Outcomes
To create a skilled and confident workforce to enforce equality and diversity and to challenge negative behaviours	<p>Roll out training for all staff and members in equality and diversity and EIAs - June 2015</p> <p>Place equality and diversity in induction, on corporate website, intranet and all recruitment literature to raise awareness - June 2014</p> <p>Place zero tolerance on harassment, bullying and discrimination towards employees and customers. - ongoing</p> <p>Work with partners to raise awareness of hate crime in the borough and reporting procedures - ongoing</p> <p>Ensure widespread knowledge of all policies and entitlements and that staff know how to apply - ongoing</p>	<p>Conduct annual facilitated sessions or staff survey questionnaires and compare results</p> <p>Results from training evaluation sessions</p> <p>Number of discrimination cases dealt with and outcomes</p>	<p>The Council through its employees will be better able to address discrimination effectively</p> <p>Cases of discrimination, harassment, bullying and so forth should reduce</p> <p>Cases of hate crime in the borough should reduce</p>
Ensure that the workforce are representative of the community	<p>Annual data to be published on website of employee data and analysis. - annually</p> <p>Ensure that recruiting managers are up to date with recruitment and selection training. - ongoing</p> <p>Use positive action and different media when recruiting if necessary.</p>	<p>Analysis and comparison of annual data to look at trends and compare them to demographics of Oadby and Wigston</p>	<p>The Council will be better informed of its employees by their protected characteristics.</p> <p>The Council can take measures to ensure that discrimination is not occurring during the employee life cycle.</p>

	- ongoing Ensure that disability two ticks scheme is made aware of and followed. - ongoing		
Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not			
Duty	What will we do and when	How measured	Outcomes
Continue to and improve engagement and communication with members of the community, ensuring all hard to reach or under-represented groups are given a voice	Use the already existing multicultural group to bring all sections of the community together. - Ongoing Celebrate diversity by observing resident involvement in EIAs - ongoing Consultation with community groups - ongoing Make documents available in any other language or format as and when required - ongoing	Satisfaction surveys EIAs completed with resident input	Services are designed or redesigned to meet residents needs Residents feel satisfied with the council and will be better prepared to contribute to decision making Barriers are removed and services are accessible
Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not			
Duty	What will we do and when	How measured	Outcomes
Understand who our existing service users are with the aim to ensure that services are utilised by all community members	Capture and analyse customer data from all services. - June 2014 Raise awareness of services to those who are not utilising them via media, leaflets, consultation exercises - June 2015 Carry out an EIA on all new policies, as well as exiting policies when they are up for review. - ongoing	Analyse customer data by protected characteristics from services annually Residents survey Consultation with service users	The Council will understand its service users – who uses and doesn't use its services. Services are taken up by all members of the community.

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act And Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not			
Duty	What will we do and when	How measured	Outcomes
For relevant forums and boards to actively engage and contribute to the Equality and Diversity Forum	Ensure representation from boards and forums including the Health and Wellbeing Board, the three town resident's forums, Multicultural group, Children and Young Persons Forum and Senior Citizens Forum are made on the Equality and Diversity forum - ongoing	Attendance and input is made from the Forums into the Equality and Diversity Forum	All encompassing approach is taken to equality and diversity Awareness is raised throughout the council in all areas Knowledge is shared by the groups