

Annual Report on Equality and Diversity

2008

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Foreword

Welcome to our second Annual Report on Equality and Diversity

Welcome to our second Annual Report on Equality and Diversity.

The report is intended to demonstrate how the Council is progressing against its aims and priorities in this area. It includes not just our aspirations but also the things the Council have done and actions we intend to take. It also provides an opportunity for both members and officers to renew their commitment to achieving equality of opportunity and fairness for the Council's workforce and the diverse community it serves.

The Council knows that it will take a long time to remedy the inequalities and injustices experienced by many in our society. However, the Council has a responsibility to do what we can now to make a difference and to make real improvements in people's life experiences in the long term.

We have a major challenge to create a caring, fair and inclusive Council; a Council where everyone feels valued; and a Council in which opportunities exist for all to fulfil their aspirations as citizens or employees.

Our Equality Scheme underlines the importance that the District Council places on equality and full inclusion for everyone in our community.



Eric Seward
Portfolio holder for
Equalities



Philip Burton
Chief Executive

Introduction

This report is designed to tell you about the improvements we have made in the last 12 months to make our services more accessible, improve community relations and improve equality for all living, working and visiting North Norfolk.

Our Equality Strategy will enable us to develop a culture whereby we consider the impact of all our functions, policies and practices on equalities and make the changes required to achieve equitable outcomes in community engagement, employment and service delivery, and will also enable us to fulfil our legal duties under equalities legislation. It will also enable us to guard against and tackle institutional discrimination in its various manifestations.

As we make progress in realising the objectives stated in the strategy, public confidence in us as an equal opportunities employer and service provider can only be enhanced.

We, therefore, call on all our local communities, elected members, employees of the Council and our partner agencies to join us in working together to promote, pursue, achieve and protect equality.

Improving our services

To identify difficulties people may have in using our services we carry out Equality Impact Assessment. This involves consulting residents, looking at any complaints we've received, statistics and performance indicators. Last year we assessed our Benefits and Revenues service, Property service and Communications function. Improvements have been implemented during 2008 in response to the difficulties they identified. The table below shows you the problems identified and what we have done to fix things.

Issues	Improvement
Poor communication with people who experience disadvantages due to learning difficulties and disabilities	We now provide appropriate support including: signing, lip speaking and audio translations to improve access and communication to meet the needs of our residents
Poor communication with people whose first language isn't English	We now offer face-to-face and telephone interpreting and written translations
Low awareness of benefits among harder to reach groups	We now attend and actively participate at community events and are working with Voluntary Norfolk to improve publicity and to establish outreach surgeries with voluntary and community groups.
Lack of information about the effectiveness of existing channels and the relevance of content information for Black and ethnic minority groups, including Travellers and Gypsies, younger people and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay Bisexual and Transgender) people	Contact to ensure with appropriate representatives and inclusion of diversity in representation of the demographic profile of our area of is being actively established to enable effective consultation to take place to bring about more practical and effective communication, engagement and participation in the future
Lack of information regarding the effectiveness of existing channels for Staff and Members	Focus groups of staff and Members were consulted and improved channels of communication have been incorporated within the Council's Communication Strategy and Action Plan for 2008/10

This year we have assessed Economic Development Service, Housing, Leisure & Cultural Services and Emergency Planning. The table below shows you the issues they have identified and what they plan to do about it during 2009.

Issues	Planned Improvement
Lack of understanding of equality issues	Organise equality training of all Leisure and Community staff to address many of the issues raised in impact assessment, increasing staff awareness of equality and diversity issues surrounding our work Ensure equality and diversity is an agenda item at all individual 1:1 meetings with line managers
Lack of research into why people from under represented groups do not access our facilities/service	Arrange to meet and talk with disability group to better understand their needs with regards to Cultural Services
Limited access to beaches by wheelchair users	Review access to beaches and investigate installation of beach wheelchair at Cromer
Lack of use to facilities by people with a disability	Promote free use of facilities by carers to all
Lack of understanding by service of needs of various religious groups/people	Arrange to meet and talk with religious groups to better understand their needs and how we engage with them
Lack of understanding of needs of transgender participants and barriers to exercise or participate in other activities	Raise awareness of sexual orientation issues (transgender) to all L&C staff at monthly team meeting
Lack of understanding of the needs of people with disabilities when using our service and any barriers that may exist	Use mystery shopper/surveys at all venues throughout the year to aid in decision making/monitoring. Especially different disability groups – sensory disabilities, learning difficulties

Improving community relations

Part of our legal responsibilities require us to work to improve community relations between residents. We know from consulting with residents and using statistics like hate crime figures that some people are more likely than others to experience prejudice and discrimination than others. For example Black and Minority Ethnic residents such as Gypsies and Travellers, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees and residents who are gay or bisexual.

If left to fester, community tensions such as these mean that people's experience of living in their community is poorer and at times it can spill over into violence such as the Oldbury and Thetford riots in 2001 and 2004 respectively.

Prejudice, which can lead to verbal and physical abuse or discrimination is based on mis-conceptions and stereotypes about people. In order to maintain good community relations, our role is to ensure that:

1. Inequalities such as unequal access to services, which can lead to tensions, are addressed through our Equality Impact Assessments.
2. Accurate information about different groups of community members is circulated.
3. We celebrate the contributions that a diverse community brings to all residents and visitors in North Norfolk.
4. Behaviour and language which is discriminatory is challenged and people who are victims of this treatment are supported properly.

This year we have celebrated Black History Month and International Women's day and are getting ready to celebrate Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender month in February 2009. Here are some snippets and photos from our celebrations.



Source: Keith Osborn/North Norfolk District Council

Alongside the celebrations of diversity in North Norfolk we have been working with our partners in other organisations such as the Police and other Council's to develop a procedure for residents to make reports of hate incidents and to develop a Community Cohesion Strategy which sets out how we plan to improve and maintain good relations between residents in the long term. The strategy includes things like, working to resolve the tension between young and old people and improving the accessibility of public transport.

For more information on the Community Cohesion Strategy, contact Claire Bailey (contact list at back of report) or download by copying and pasting the link below:

www.norfolkambition.gov.uk/norfolkambition-news/documents/Norfolk_Community_Cohesion

Branching Out in Your Community

Council's are providers of many services and facilities and are key decision makers within the community. We believe that one of the reasons not all people are able to access services is because service providers, like Councils, do not fully understand the needs of the range of people they provide service for.

Good planning and decision making requires an awareness of people's needs, aspirations and experiences of living in a community. One of the best ways to achieve this is by ensuring that Council's reflect the community they serve and that the people elected to represent their needs, Councillors, do so effectively. Branching Out In Your Communities is one of the projects we have underway to make this happen. The aim of the project is to increase the number and diversity of residents standing for election.

As part of this project we have:

1. Reviewed our charges to Town and Parish Council's to see if it has an affect on whether or not they hold elections.
2. Spent time consulting residents to understand what stops them from participating in community decision making and standing for election.
3. Worked with Holt Town Council and Ashmanhaugh Parish Council to understand how they can make it easier for people to stand for election and how as councillors they can be better representatives for the communities they serve.

Since the project started in Autumn 2007 there have been many positive changes.

1. Holt Town Council
 - a. Is developing a Youth Engagement Policy for inclusion in their standing orders and is actively starting to increase their engagement with young people in the Town.
 - b. Held an open evening for potential candidates so they could find out more about the role of town councillor, the election process and receive assistance completing the nomination form.
 - c. Ran an awareness campaign to attract people to stand for election.
2. Ashmanhaugh Parish Council:
 - a. Councillors have all completed Parish Councillor training to help them understand the role of being an elected representative.
 - b. Are meeting with residents more frequently. The village only has a church and village hall so opportunities to meet other residents and learn about their experience of living in the village in order to aid the Council's decision making is limited. This is being achieved through: the Parish Open Day, Cricket Club Fun Day, Village Fete and Door Knocking.
3. An Information campaign about the role of Town and Parish Council's has commenced. It aims to promote awareness about the; decisions made locally that effect our day to day lives, the contribution that Parish and Town Council's make to our community and to encourage people to become involved with their Parish and Town Council.



Consulting residents

Last year we told you about our plans to improve how we consult and engage with residents. This is so that we better understand people's needs and aspirations so we can make our services and employment opportunities more accessible. Here's an update on how things have been going over the last 12 months.

Migrant workers

- ▶ Last year we told you about a project called 'How Warm is Your Welcome' which aimed to find out about Migrant Workers experience of living in North Norfolk. The project found that Migrant Workers concerns and hopes for the North Norfolk area were broadly the same as other residents. However there were concerns about employment rights, access to English classes and communicating with health professionals.
- ▶ Since then our Community Team have been liaising with groups of migrant workers, dotted across the District, to help them build support networks in order to improve and enable access to: Information, Equal treatment, Education/ learning, Services and support at work and in the community

A dedicated member of the community team works with the migrant workers on the ground at local level to: establish trust and confidence, promote sharing of knowledge, skills, support, support groups to organise themselves and help informal groups become more formal.

Issues identified by the groups that we support are:

- Difficult to access information, advice and services
- Poor access to health care
- Housing conditions – overcrowding, accommodation for families, private landlords
- Access to English classes (ESOL)
- Availability of community support and cultural activities
- Poor pay – excessive charges for accommodation
- Risks of deception and exploitation
- Transport from/to rural employment locations

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Residents

- ▶ Over the course of the last 12 months we have been working to consult better with Black and Minority Ethnic residents, using adverts in the Council magazine Outlook, writing to BME community associations, adverts in newspaper and community newsletters and outreach work in various towns.
- ▶ We are at present consulting BME residents on the barriers to participating in community decision making through involvement with Town and Parish Council's and standing for election as part of the Branching Out In Your communities Project. This is an area of work we hope to strengthen and improve during 2009.
- ▶ We are part of the Norfolk Community Cohesion Network whose membership includes all Local Authorities, other Statutory Sector organisations including criminal justice and health, and the Voluntary and Community Sector. Working in partnership with Investing in Communities we have commissioned research to find out about how people in Norfolk feel about their community, and about relationships between people from different backgrounds. The research involves training Black and Minority Ethnic residents including Gypsies and Travellers and Migrant Workers to carry out interviews with their peers to examine their experiences of local community relations and their ability to access to public services. This work will complement consultations we have carried out, on this topic, with other members of the community."

Belief and Faith groups

- ▶ Feeling comfortable in our community is important to people. Part of that includes feeling able to practice either a religion, belief or, feeling comfortable in choosing not to practice a religion or belief. During 2007 we commenced a project to build relationships with faith and belief groups in North Norfolk to ascertain any difficulties people may have in accessing services or any tensions which exist in the community.
- ▶ We have completed our survey work, and whilst we are yet to hold an event with faith and belief groups, we have completed an in-depth review of national good practice in this area and plan to hold an event in early September 2009.

Young people

- ▶ North Norfolk Youth Voice - a forum for Young People. It is set up to give Young People a voice and make positive differences in their community. It also offers itself as a consultative body for agencies/committees making decisions affecting youth matters.
- ▶ The Council have employed a youth worker to support the group along side our own Development worker.
- ▶ During 2008 the forum has increased its membership and is represented by 15 young people from six of the seven high schools in our area. There are also two school leavers who are both currently in training. Age ranges from 13 to 24. We aim to attract and represent as many diverse communities as possible. At present we have representation from Carers, BME, Additional Needs group, the Volunteering sector, Looked After Children, UK Youth Parliament and are looking to spread the net further.
- ▶ The group has taken on a main project for the 2008/9. to tackle the high teenage pregnancy in our area. The young people are at present receiving Sex and Relationships Education (S.R.E.) training, with a view to delivering sessions to their peers- for example in youth clubs. A fully trained Sexual Health worker will support them in the delivery of this project.
- ▶ Other possible projects for the future are tackling negative influences by the media of young people. Drugs and Alcohol awareness and youth club support.



Older people

- ▶ We continue to support the North Norfolk Older People's Forum which has concentrated in the last year on raising the profile of the Forum, increasing membership and strengthening the Forum Executive Management Committee.
- ▶ An open public meeting was held in September 2008 for the Forum to identify some of the main concerns older people have which the Forum will then take forward.
- ▶ We will continue to support, consult and engage with the Forum as an effective method of reaching older people.



Transsexual residents

- ▶ Transsexuals are people who live with Gender Dysphoria, a medical condition which is an overwhelming desire to live in the opposite gender to that assigned at birth. It is not about Sexual Orientation it is about gender identity.
- ▶ Last year the Council started a project with a local Transsexual support organisation to increase our knowledge of Transsexualism and identify changes we will need to make to our employment practice and services.
- ▶ During 2008 we are beginning to make changes such as awareness raising and training for staff working in our leisure centres to ensure that Transsexual residents can confidently use them without fear of discrimination. Our Staff Committee will also be looking at putting a procedure in place to guide the Council and employees should they wish to transition whilst in our employment and to assure them their employment rights will be respected.
- ▶ The Leisure and Cultural Services section is planning some training with all staff in increase their awareness of the needs of transsexual residents and remove any barriers that exist to its facilities/service.

Gypsies and travellers

In response to public concerns around unauthorised encampments by Gypsies and Travellers in parts of the district over many years, largely during the summer months, the District Council has developed proposals to provide two 10 pitch Short Stay Stopping Place facilities, one to serve the Cromer/Sheringham area adjacent to the North Norfolk District Council offices, Holt Road, Cromer and a second to the north east of Fakenham, a short distance to the east of the Fakenham Town Football Club.

These site locations were identified through a consultation forum mechanism made up of representatives of local Town and Parish Councils, business organisations and elected District and County Councillors. Detailed proposals were developed for the facilities with reference to Government guidance and an extensive programme of public consultation was taken forward before the submission of planning applications for the two facilities. A funding application made to the Government by the District Council has also been approved which meets the capital costs of site construction and provision for a 10 year period.

Planning consent for the two facilities was obtained during the autumn of 2008 and prices for construction of the facilities recently obtained. It is proposed that works to construct the two facilities will be taken forward during the summer of 2009 and once complete will provide a safe and good quality environment with basic facilities for the travelling community which will hopefully reduce future conflict between the travelling and settled communities through Gypsies and Travellers visiting the district occupying high profile roadside or environmentally sensitive sites.

Working at North Norfolk District Council

Top Earners

The top 5% of earners equates to 19 members of staff and there has been no change in the figures as the turn over of staff at this level is minimal. During the last year we carried out formal management training with 26 employees of which 18 were female). As well as training (on management activities) with 70 managers (36 female / 34 male). This programme of activity develops employees across the council to prepare them for more senior positions should they wish to apply when the posts become vacant.

In addition to training, the Council will be completing an equal pay audit during 2008/09 to ensure there are no equal pay issues within the organisation.

Employing disabled people

The figures are improving, showing a year on year increase. This is an area the Councils wishes to improve and during the next year will be requesting monitoring information for staff is completed to ensure it is up to date and exploring the use of the positive recruitment symbol (jobcentre plus) to demonstrate our commitment in this area.

Employing black and minority ethnic (BME) people

The figures have increased from 06/07 and show that the proportion of BME employees is greater than found amongst people who are economically active in the North Norfolk community.

STAFF SURVEY

This year we had a response rate of 87% which leads us to believe the results are representative of the views of the majority of staff in the Council. The results are very positive. The majority of staff (84%) see the Council as an equal opportunities employer and do not feel that they have been disadvantaged or discriminated against as a result of their age, gender, ethnicity and other demographic factors. This is a significant increase from 2006 and is also considerably higher than the local authority norm. The majority of staff also agreed that they are treated with fairness and respect, well above the norm for a Local Authority and our 2006 staff survey findings.

TRAINING

We are currently inviting tenders for training providers to deliver Equality and Diversity training to all Members and Staff.

The training will be delivered from May 2009 and will offer the participants an opportunity to understand the Councils equalities duties and responsibilities, and of their roles in providing high quality services to everyone, supporting those groups who are disadvantaged or excluded and in seeking to reduce all forms of discrimination through promoting inclusion and community cohesion

Our performance

The Council uses several measures to monitor the equality improvements it is making. This includes monitoring:

1. Our performance against the Local Government Equality Standard.
2. Best Value Performance Indicators.
3. Progress against our Equality Scheme action plans. (Our Equality Schemes set out the equality issues in North Norfolk and what we are doing to address them.)

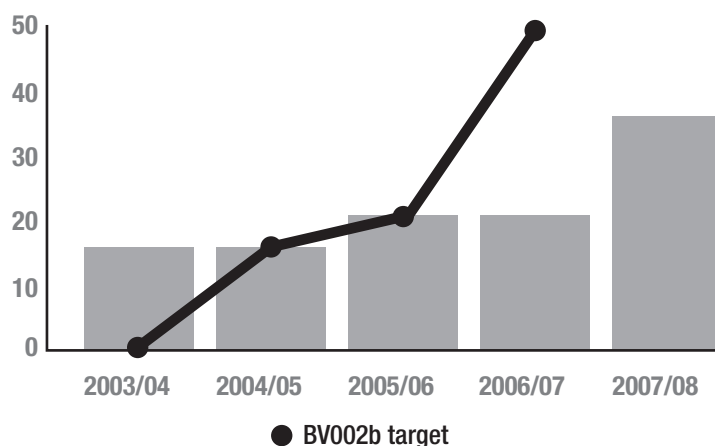
LOCAL GOVERNMENT EQUALITY STANDARD

The Equality Standard is a tool to combat the institutional processes that lead to discrimination as part of the culture, administration and governance that can be found in many public organisations. Prevailing assumptions and practices can set up barriers that prevent fair access to services and equal employment opportunities, which in turn can discriminate against people on the grounds of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation. Working with the Equality Standard enables local authorities to mainstream equality, ensuring that discriminatory barriers are identified and removed.

There are five levels to the standard and the Council has expressed a desire to reach level 2 by 2009 and Level 3 by 2010/11.

BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Chart 1: BV002b – Duty to promote race equality



This chart shows a gradual improvement in how we promote race equality within North Norfolk.

PROGRESS AGAINST EQUALITY ACTION PLANS

The Council has a series of Equality Schemes covering Disability, Gender and Race, which set out plans to improve equality for people living in and visiting North Norfolk. Table 1 shows how much progress we are making against the plans we have made.

Table 1: Progress against equality scheme action plans

Equality scheme action plans	Period action plans run from and to	Percentage of action plans complete as at October 2008	
		Year 1 2007/08	Year 2 2008-09 mid year estimate
Disability	Dec-Dec	81%	70%
Gender	Apr-Apr	45%	66%
Race	May-May	N/A*	59%

* The new Race Equality Scheme was adopted in May 2008

The areas of work outstanding from last year's action plans are being progressed and will be completed for September 2009. This includes:

1. Introduction of Exit Interviews and surveys for staff who leave our employment
2. Development of a staff equalities training programme
3. Publication of an Annual Report of progress against the partnership Disability Equality Scheme
4. Introduction of monitoring the accessibility and fairness of our services, including financial accessibility.
5. Review equalities monitoring in existing contracts.
6. Completion of further consultation with young people regarding inequalities they experience.
7. Introduction of equalities and community involvement in the Council's Scrutiny process.
8. Launch of the Dignity at Work policy.
9. The completion of a staff profile.

Other planned work for 2009/10 includes:

1. Producing North Norfolk District Council's Annual Report.
2. Raising resident's, staff and member's awareness of gender inequalities.
3. Celebration of Black History Month
4. Impact Assessments for Active Communities, Planning Policy, Democratic Services, Development Control, Human Resources and all policies rated as high priority
5. Adoption of a Policy Development Framework
6. Survey of Disabled Citizen Panel participant's perception of accessibility to services
7. Citizens Panel survey of residents attitudes towards disability
8. Review of employment procedures to ensure they are up to date with current legislation and best practice
9. Publication of a Consultation and Community Engagement Strategy
10. Publication of a Youth Inclusion Strategy

Looking ahead

North Norfolk District Council has had a busy year developing and taking forward the equality and diversity agenda. The Council is very pleased with what has been achieved so far but recognises that a lot more remains to be done to ensure equality in the work of the organisation at every level ranging

from policy development to service delivery. Areas we wish to focus on during 2009-2010 include:

- ▶ providing equality and diversity training for staff
- ▶ continuing to encourage and train staff to use the Equality Impact Assessment process
- ▶ looking at how we can find out more about who does, and who does not, use our services and how we can develop ways for more effective ongoing engagement with the local community;
- ▶ working closely with our partners to learn, develop and implement new ways that ensure our services are delivered fairly
- ▶ developing more staff networks and support systems
- ▶ continuing to develop the content of our website so we can use it as a way of communicating more effectively with staff and the public
- ▶ developing ways to make sure equality and diversity is central to the way the Council buys and provides services.