



Harborough District Council Equality Plan 2017/20

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Introduction

This Equality Plan explains how Harborough District Council aims to advance equality and good relationships and challenge discrimination and harassment over the next 3 years.

As a Local Authority, Harborough District Council has both a legal and a moral duty to show fairness and equality to our residents, our service users and our employees. We know that the population of our District is becoming more diverse and that people have very different backgrounds and life experiences. As a result of this we want to make sure that we continue to provide services and facilities that meet the varying needs of our residents and that, as an employer, we achieve fair recruitment and provide a work environment that is free from discrimination.

The Council's continued commitment to equality and inclusion ensures that we design and deliver services that are appropriate and accessible to all sectors of our community and will also lead to greater employee productivity, creativity, innovation and flexibility. This will create economic benefits that will positively impact all residents of the District.

This plan explains our statutory responsibilities and explains how these duties will be delivered. We, at Harborough District Council, want to make sure that people from different groups are not discriminated against or disadvantaged by our actions and want to encourage participation and engagement with all groups and individuals within our community.

This plan aims to promote long-term, continuous improvement, and the responsibility for implementing it lies with everyone at Harborough District Council whether they are elected members or staff. Our plan recognises the importance of ensuring that the principles of equality and diversity inform key decision-making at every level and builds on the consultation, action plans and previous equality schemes we have produced.

What does Equality mean?

Equality

Equality does not mean treating everyone in the same way; it means treating everyone with fairness and respect, and recognising the needs of individuals. It is about recognising that some people may need to be treated differently to give them the same opportunities and ensure that they are able to reach their full potential.

Diversity

Diversity is recognising and valuing that individuals are unique with their own values, beliefs, attitudes, cultures, racial backgrounds, sexuality, skills and life experiences. A successful organisation respects and values these differences and understands how these differences can be developed for the good of the individual, an organisation and society as a whole.

Human Rights

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world. Human rights are based on basic values such as dignity, fairness, equality, respect and independence. They are relevant to day-to-day life and protect people's freedom to control their own lives, take part in decisions made by public authorities which impact upon their rights, and get fair and equal services from public authorities.

Inclusion

An inclusive community can be described as one in which strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances. Successful and lasting inclusion involves a shared vision, values and a sense of belonging for all communities, where the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated, respected and positively valued.

The Law

The Equality Act 2010 and associated Public Sector Equality Duty are the main parts of equalities legislation which focus on the right of people not to be discriminated against because of who or what makes them different from other people.

Equality Act 2010

There are nine 'protected characteristics' covered by the Equality Act 2010 and it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of any one of these 'characteristics'. This applies whether the discrimination is actual or perceived and if it occurs directly or by association. The nine 'protected characteristics' are explained below:

- **Age**, relates to a person belonging to a particular age group (for example 32 year olds) or being within an age group (for example 18 - 30 year olds).
- **Disability**, is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long term' negative impact on a person's ability to do normal daily activities.
- **Gender Reassignment**, is the process of transitioning from one gender to another. This 'characteristic' covers a person who is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their gender by changing physiological or other attributes of gender.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership**, Marriage can either be between a man and a woman or between partners of the same sex. Same sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

- **Pregnancy and Maternity**, pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and, for employees, is linked to maternity leave provision. For our customers, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- **Race**, refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.
- **Religion or Belief**, religion refers to any religion or no religion. Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including no belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
- **Sex (Gender)**, covers the 'characteristic' of being a man or of being a woman.
- **Sexual Orientation**, relates to whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Public Sector Equality Duty

As a Local Authority we have additional responsibilities relating to the Equality Act 2010 and this is known as The Public Sector Equality Duty. The Public Sector Equality Duty is a general duty which requires us to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

We aim to meet our Public Sector Equality Duty by:

- Paying 'due regard' and considering equality impacts before we make decisions directly affecting residents, service users or employees. We may carry out Equality Analysis to demonstrate 'due regard' or we may show it through other activities or assessment.
- Monitoring whether or not our decisions and actions do in fact reduce inequality.
- Not tolerating discrimination or harassment of any member of staff by ensuring fair and respectful treatment in the workplace and in staff training, development and career progression.
- Not tolerating discrimination or harassment of any service users by ensuring they receive fair and respectful treatment from our staff and policies.
- Working with communities, partners and agencies across the District to promote good relations, and where there is discrimination to challenge it.

Whilst not specifically mentioned as individual protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010, our Equality Plan also covers other equality related characteristics which are equally significant in their own right. These include a persons' socio-economic status and also groups such as carers and asylum seekers. By considering people with all of these characteristics now, our plan will help us to meet the requirements of current and future equality and diversity related legislation.

The Vision and Values of Harborough District Council

Here at Harborough District Council we are determined to provide equality of opportunity, not just in relation to our staff but in ensuring everyone we serve is treated with respect and dignity and that our residents enjoy equality of opportunity to access services. Our ultimate aim is to ensure that living, working or visiting the district is the best possible experience. We strive to deliver excellent services through a strong focus on customer access and support and making sure local people and local communities are at the heart of our daily work.

We want to deliver important and lasting improvements for local people, by using and developing good equality and diversity practice and by showing high levels of corporate and social responsibility. This is supported by our values which are embedded in all aspects of our service delivery and partnership working:-

- We value and are valued
- We are open, honest and accountable
- We challenge and innovate
- We are the best we can be

The Council's commitment to equality

Harborough District Council is committed to equality of opportunity, elimination of discrimination and promotion of good relations between all people, regardless of age, disability, race, ethnic or national origin, gender, gender identity, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marital or civil partnership status, family commitments, trade union membership or political belief. We endeavour to treat everyone according to their individual needs and characteristics. We are committed to promoting equality in respect of everything we do in our various roles as:

- A service provider – by providing services and facilities that meet the diverse needs of our residents and people who work and visit our District.
- An employer – by being fair in our recruitment, promotion, training and development of our staff, by having a representative workforce that reflects the communities we serve and by providing a work environment that is safe, accessible and free from harassment and discrimination.
- A community leader – through our democratically elected Members working with communities and partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors to improve the quality of life for the people of our District.

We will make sure that the way we meet individual and community needs is fair, equitable and helps ensure that limited resources are targeted at those most in need and least able to have their needs met in other ways whether this is providing services, employing people, developing policies and communicating, consulting or involving people in our activities.

Open, honest and accountable

If someone feels that we, our services or our policies are discriminatory in any way we would like them to let us know. We will thoroughly investigate any complaint and be open and honest about our findings. If challenges are made, it is important that we seek to

address them so that we understand why people feel as they do. If lessons need to be learnt we will embrace them to ensure that we continuously improve.

Working with Partners

Harborough District Council works closely with many partners and agencies in the delivery of our functions and services. We also help to bring together and co-ordinate the work and contribution of local organisations and local community groups, through our partnerships, to improve quality of life in the District. These partnerships also have a responsibility for promoting equality and diversity.

Harborough District Council is a member of the LeicesterShire Equalities Forum (LSEF), which is a group consisting of equality officers from all of the statutory organisations in Leicestershire. The Forum meets regularly and focuses on tackling issues shared by all of its members.

The workforce of Harborough District Council

As a modern organisation, providing high quality services, we at Harborough District Council recognise the diversity of our customers and workforce. We seek to promote equality in our policies, the services we provide and in employment. It is our aim to ensure that no customer, elected member, potential or current employee, worker or contractor is treated less favourably on the grounds of any 'protected characteristic' included within the Equality Act 2010 or because of possible family commitments, political beliefs or Trade Union membership/non-membership. More than that we will seek to identify and eliminate barriers that create disadvantage.

Our aim is to encourage good practice on equality throughout our organisation and to emphasise its importance as an essential element of all aspects of the business we conduct internally as well as externally within the wider community.

We operate a pay and reward system which is transparent, based on objective criteria and free from bias. During 2010 we completed a pay review of all employment posts within the Council to ensure equal pay and since this time all new posts have gone through the same review process prior to being advertised. Any internal posts regraded as a result of departmental restructures or reviews are also reassessed through this process. Through these actions we aim to avoid unfair discrimination in our pay and reward system.

Each year we produce information in relation to the make-up of our workforce which, while being a legal requirement, is also useful for workforce planning. At the end of March 2017, Harborough District Council had a total of 202 employees and the following statistics were obtained from our 2017 annual voluntary employee monitoring survey, combined with human resources system information. A total of 128 Harborough District Council employees voluntarily completed this year's anonymous questionnaire, which represents just over 63% of our workforce.

Age - Using information contained within our human resources systems, the following is a breakdown of our workforce in terms of age group: 18 to 24 year age group – 5%, 25 to 44 age group – 43.1%, 45 to 59 age group – 47.5% and 60 and over age group – 4.5%.

Disability - Within the employee questionnaire 10.2% of our employees declared that their day to day activities are limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. 88.3% declared that they are not limited and 1.6% of respondents preferred not to say.

Race - At Harborough District Council 5.5% of employees, who responded to the questionnaire, are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds, 93% of employees are White and 1.6% of employees did not wish to declare their ethnic origin.

Religion and Belief - The questionnaire gave us the following information in relation to the religion and belief status of our employees: Christian – 55.5%, Hindu – 2.3%, Muslim 1.6%, Buddhist, Jewish, Sikh, Other Religion – 5.5%, No Religion – 32% and Prefers Not to State – 3.1%.

Sex (Gender) - Information contained within our human resources systems shows that 65% of our workforce are female and 35% male. A total of 98.4% of employee respondents to our questionnaire declared that their gender was the same as assigned at birth.

Sexual Orientation - Of the 63% of employees who completed our employee questionnaire 4.7% declared themselves to be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or other, 92.2% as heterosexual or straight and 3.1% of employees did not wish to declare their sexual orientation. Modest estimates suggest that at least 6% of the population are lesbian, gay or bisexual so Harborough District Council workforce figures are slightly low compared to this figure.

Recruitment Equality Statistics 2016/17

During the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017, 276 people applied for jobs with Harborough District Council. Of these, 83 people were shortlisted and 22 offered posts. From information completed at the time of recruitment:

Age – 14% of successful applicants were aged 18 to 24 years, 5% aged 25 to 29 years, 45% aged 30 to 44 years and 36% aged 45 to 59 years. No new starters declared that they were aged over 60.

Disability – 15% of successful applicants declared that their day to day activities are limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months, 85% stated that they were not limited.

Race – 91% of successful applicants were White, 9% Asian, Black or Mixed ethnic group.

Religion – 36% of successful applicants were Christian, 24% were Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or 'other' and 41% had no religion.

Sex (Gender) – 73% of successful applicants were female and 27% male. 100% stated that their gender identification was the same as that assigned at birth.

Sexual Orientation – 91% of successful applicants declared that they were heterosexual, 5% lesbian, gay or bisexual and 5% did not wish to declare their sexual orientation.

What have we done since our last plan?

2016 General Objectives – Update on progress

Objective 1. To support the implementation and development of the Council's Communications Strategy.

Measure of Success: 4 equality information sessions held at Strategic Communications meetings within the year. Completion of bi-monthly equality related work reports.

Outcome: Achieved. Sessions on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender awareness, accessible communications, unconscious bias and asylum seeker awareness completed.

Objective 2. Establish a timetable of key activities and through the Corporate Equality Group establish priorities with regard to the Council's objectives.

Measure of Success: A year of training and key activities. Ensuring future projects/objectives of the Council are on agendas for Corporate Equality Group meetings.

Outcome: Achieved.

Objective 3. Provide support to help departments with enabling customers to use online methods of accessing services if they would prefer to.

Measure of Success: Equality analyses completed and published.

Outcome: Ongoing. The Equality and Diversity Officer sits on the Channel Shift panel which aims to identify services suitable for shifting.

2016 Employment Objectives – Update on progress

Objective 1. Continue to analyse data in relation to employees aged over 60 to ensure that processes are free from age discrimination.

Measure of Success: Continued rise in the amount of employees aged 60 or over so that the percentage of employees in this group on 31st March 2017 is greater than 4.32%.

Outcome: Achieved. The percentage of employees aged 60 or over is now 4.5%.

Objective 2. Continue to monitor equality recruitment information to ensure fairness across all protected characteristics, particularly in relation to disability and gender.

Measure of Success: The personal characteristics of new starters are representative of local population figures.

Outcome: Partially Achieved. Recruitment equality figures have improved over the last year, particularly in relation to new starters who declared that they have a health problem or disability. Female new starters are still overrepresented; however, there has been an increase in the percentage of male starters from 15% to 27%.

Equality in action

As well as looking at the equality impacts of our policies and procedures, we have been working hard to help foster good relations between different communities within the District and tried to help educate and improve understanding of the challenges these communities face and positive ways of addressing them. Some of the ways we have been doing this include:



Hate Incidents – As well as supporting Leicestershire County’s ‘Communities Stand Together’ Hate awareness Campaign Week in October 2016. We used Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender History Month 2017 to help raise awareness of the importance of reporting hate incidents and to educate people about the impact hate incidents have on their victims.



Dementia Friends – Harborough District Council staff trained as Dementia Friends Champions have run a number of Dementia Friend sessions across the District over the last year to help the wider community understand how small actions can make a big difference to people living with Dementia.



Active Together – Targeted activities have been run by our Active Together team aimed at removing the barriers for people from underrepresented groups from getting active, to help improve their physical and mental health. These include ‘nifty at fifty’ for the over 50 age group, ‘JUST’ for women aged over 16 and ‘feel alive at 65’.



Disability Confident Employer – In September 2016 Harborough District Council was recognised by the Department of Work and Pensions as a Disability Confident (Level 2) Employer.



Waste Team – Our waste team have been developing ways of assisting residents who require additional support. Alongside the assisted collection service, the team have also provided larger bins for people who produce supplementary waste due to medical conditions. Residents with visual impairments can have bins placed in a set order by crews and residents living with dementia can have bins removed to make disposing of rubbish easier if required.



Starter Homes – Recognising the need for affordable housing within the District we have been working with a number of partners to turn our St Cuthbert’s garage site, in Great Glen, into new homes which will be available at low market value as part of the Government’s ‘Help To Buy’ scheme. The aim of this is to assist people finding it difficult to get onto the property ladder.

Supporting events – Throughout the year we have also supported initiatives and held events locally in recognition of weeks such as Autism Awareness Week and Mental Health Awareness Week. There have also been a number of internal staff events to raise awareness of equality and diversity. Examples of some of these events include collecting donations of food for the Harborough and Lutterworth Foodbanks, collecting toiletries for the ‘No Second Night Out’ project run by Action Homeless, cake sales for Macmillan cancer research amongst others.

The future

In order to continually develop equality within the District and further embed equality and diversity considerations throughout the organisation, we have set the following equality objectives as part of our Equality Plan 2017/20:

2017 General Equality Objectives

Objective 1. Equality and Diversity Officer to meet with service managers on a rotational basis to support them with equality related issues

Led by: J Clarke, Equality and Diversity Officer

By when: April 2018

Measure of Success: At least one meeting held with each individual service manager. Managers have a better understanding of how equality analyses assist with their decision making and how barriers make it difficult for some communities to access services.

Support Required: Commitment from service managers to attend the meetings.

Next Steps: Identify priority order for meeting with service managers. Contact service managers to arrange a suitable time/date for meeting.

Objective 2. Support the development of public consultations and Council campaigns

Led by: J Clarke, Equality and Diversity Officer

By when: April 2018

Measure of Success: Equality related accessibility is considered as part of all public consultations and Council campaigns. The numbers of responses to consultations from people from each protected characteristic group is representative of the District population.

Support Required: Consultation managers need to provide adequate notice and time for pre consultation engagement with target groups.

Next Steps: Discussions with communication team and service managers to remind them of the need to consider equality related issues at early stage of consultation planning.

Objective 3. Support the 'Channel Shift Project Team' to implement and roll-out any projects or work plans aimed at helping customers access services online

Led by: J Clarke, Equality and Diversity Officer

By when: April 2108

Measure of Success: Teams are able to assess and address equality accessibility issues at an early stage of any roll out.

Support Required: Teams need to ask for assistance at an early stage of the process.

Next Steps: Reminder at Corporate Equality Group and Channel Shift meetings to consider equality at an early stage.

2017 Employment Equality Objectives

Objective 1. Consider alternative locations of job vacancy advertisements to attract increased applications from those aged 60 and over

Led by: R Jenner, Human Resources Manager

By when: April 2018

Measure of success: Suitable locations identified

Support required: Assistance from equality and diversity officer to engage with people aged 60 and over.

Next steps: List of current sites/locations used for job vacancies identified.

Objective 2. Continue to assess the suitability of vacancies for full and part time positions.

Led by: R Jenner, Human Resources Manager

By when: April 2018

Measure of success: Percentage of male employees remains above 35%.

Support required: Managers need to provide evidence of need for vacant positions

Next steps: Human resources team to ensure opportunities for full and part time vacancies are allocated appropriately.