

Our equality and diversity scheme 2008-2011

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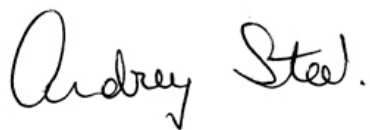
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It gives me great pleasure to present our equality and diversity scheme 2008-11. It has been a very interesting journey for us to get to this point and not without a few surprises and frustrations along the way.

Once again, it remains a priority for us to address the issues of equality and diversity in the workplace and within our communities in general.

We must ensure that we continue this good work by every means at our disposal especially throughout all of our customer contact. By developing this single scheme I hope we can build on our achievements to date and continue to develop a coherent and meaningful approach to our equality and diversity work.

It is only by driving the equality and diversity agenda forward that we can ensure our services are meeting the diverse needs of all of our residents and we can develop strong, inclusive and cohesive communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Audrey Steel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Mrs Audrey Steel
Executive Board Member for Equalities and Rural Affairs

1. Introduction

This is the first time that we have produced a single equalities scheme. The aim of this is to provide a more comprehensive approach to our equality and diversity work whilst meeting our legislative duties. This scheme replaces our previous race, gender and disability schemes and diversity policy and follows the national trend to move towards a single equalities framework.

The scheme intends to:

- highlight the various strands of equalities that exist
- show how these are inter-linked and how we need to consider a wide variety of factors in order to understand the issues and barriers facing our communities
- identify equality issues in Wychavon and what we mean by diversity
- set out our corporate approach to equalities and how we are working towards the Equality Standard
- consider how we are working towards gaining a better understanding of the needs of all of our customers.

The equality agenda now has six distinct strands: age, disability, ethnicity, gender (including gender identity), religion and belief, sexual orientation. At the same time, many of these issues are often inter-related and it is important to consider how the combination of these factors can lead to social exclusion.

By having a combined scheme the main risk is that any one strand becomes distilled and is not given enough attention and this is something we are aware of. We do however feel that the benefits of a single scheme far outweigh the risks here.

The benefits of developing a single scheme are:

- All of our equalities policies are in one place, rather than currently having separate race, gender and disability schemes alongside a corporate diversity policy
- The single scheme aims to make the equality and diversity agenda easier to understand, especially for officers and members and will create more buy-in to the agenda
- The new scheme will help continue to raise the profile of impact assessments and the range of issues they need to address rather than just focusing on single aspects
- The scheme will also highlight the overlapping issues in relation to the six strands of diversity and provides us with a more flexible approach to our work
- There are also more opportunities for the scheme to pick up on wider issues such as community cohesion, integration and social inclusion, community engagement and participation.

2. Setting the context

We are keen to ensure that our equality and diversity work is a key part of our overall council strategy. This is why we have priorities and goals set out in our five-year strategy that reflect this and each year new actions are set to work towards these.

Our corporate priority in relation to equality and diversity is **'Stronger – Vibrant and inclusive communities with a strong economy'**. Within this we have a specific goal to 'Build vibrant and tolerant communities where people get on well together'.

This scheme also links into wider council policies such as our pay and workforce strategy which includes the aim to drive equality and inclusion and sets out a subsequent set of equality actions. We are aware that no scheme on its own can address the wide variety of equality issues that exist, instead we recognise equality and diversity as a key theme that runs throughout our policies, plans and strategies.

All local authorities are required to have equality schemes in place to meet their duties with regard to race, gender and disability. As more authorities are now moving towards a single approach it is still crucial to consider the specific legislation that exists. A summary of the legislation surrounding each of the strands is set out below in order to set the context of the scheme. There is no requirement to have a single scheme; however, many authorities are now moving towards this particularly in light of the new integrated Commission for Equalities and Human Rights.

2.1 The Disability Equality Duty

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a duty on everyone working in the public sector to demonstrate what they are doing to promote equality for disabled people. In order to understand the duty we need to consider what does promoting equality for people with disabilities actually mean?

"It's about weaving equality for disabled people into the culture of public authorities in practical and demonstrated ways."

Bert Massie, Chairman, Disability Rights Commission

This means that equality is considered and planned for from the start rather than trying to add it at the end. The duty acts as a tool for us to promote disability equality. It focuses on the social model of disability recognising that the 'problems' faced by disabled people are a direct result of oppressive social structures and attitudes. And that other people's attitudes and behaviours are the biggest barriers that disabled people face.

The Disability Discrimination Act states that when carrying out their functions public authorities must have due regard to do the following:

- ◆ Promote positive attitudes towards Disabled Persons
- ◆ Encourage participation by Disabled Persons in public life
- ◆ Promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people
- ◆ Eliminate disability related harassment
- ◆ Eliminate unlawful discrimination

- ◆ Take steps to meet disabled peoples needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

This applies to all of our functions and activities including employment, service delivery, budget setting, procurement and regulatory functions.

Defining disability

As part of this scheme it is important to consider what we mean by the term ‘people with disabilities’. The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 defines a disabled person as

“Anyone who has or has had a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.”

- for example, where mobility, manual dexterity, physical co-ordination, continence, ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects, speech, hearing or eyesight, memory or ability to learn and understand; ability to concentrate; perception of risk or physical danger is impaired. This is not an exhaustive list, though is intended to provide a guide to what the DDA defines as a disability.

The social model

In developing this document we have followed guidance from the DRC and focused on the social model of disability. This shifts the focus away from a person’s impairment(s) and towards removing the barriers that people with disabilities face in every day life.

This contrasts with the medical model that views the impairment as the problem when in fact it is society’s failure to take into account people’s diverse needs. Discrimination and lack of equality of opportunity can then emerge as a result. The new legislation on disability equality means that organisations must recognise the social model of disability and work to overcome social barriers. We have adopted this model and used it to help prepare this scheme. As well as informing our staff about the importance of understanding the model to help promote disability equality.

2.2 The Gender Equality duty

The Equality Act 2006 has created a Gender Equality Duty for the public sector. The duty has both a general duty and also specific duties. In accordance with the general duty we have to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between men, women and people undergoing gender re-assignment and eliminate sex discrimination
- Have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment against men, women and people undergoing gender re-assignment, in the fields of employment, vocational training and by the end of 2007, in the provision of goods and services.

In addition to the positive duty that was placed on us the equality act also:

- made unlawful discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education, the use and disposal of premises and the exercise of public functions; and
- enabled provision to be made for discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities and services, education, the use and disposal of premises and the exercise of public functions.

In addition to the general duty we also have more specific duties which include:

- The requirement to produce a Gender Equality Scheme and set out gender equality objectives and actions to meet them
- Monitor and review our progress
- Review the scheme every three years
- Develop publish and regularly review an equal pay policy
- Conduct and publish gender equality impact assessments

Gender discrimination

The Sex Discrimination Act and the Gender Re-assignment Regulations 2004 prohibit discrimination against men, women and transgender individuals in terms of:

- Direct discrimination – less favourable treatment because of a persons' gender
- Indirect discrimination – where the rules apply to everyone but disproportionately affect a certain group
- Victimisation – of someone who has complained of gender discrimination
- Harassment related to gender
- Sexual harassment

In order to eliminate these different types of discrimination it is essential that we promote equality between men and women and work towards changing any discriminatory attitudes or practices that exist.

2.3 The Race Equality Duty

Following the Macpherson enquiry into the case of Stephen Lawrence, the Government introduced the Race Relations (Amendment) Act in 2000. This new Act strengthens previous legislation and places new duties on all public authorities. These new duties are designed to make sure that public authorities promote race equality and that employment and services (including those services that are provided for them through other organisations) are fair and accessible for everyone.

The Act places three general duties on us, to:

- ◆ Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- ◆ Promote equality of opportunity, and
- ◆ Promote good race relations between people of different racial groups.

It also gives us a number of specific duties:

- Identifying functions and policies
- Monitoring existing policies
- Assessment and consultation

- Publication of monitoring results
- Equality of access to information and services
- Training
- Employment Issues.

2.4 Age

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 apply to employment and vocational training, and prohibit unjustified direct and indirect age discrimination, as well as harassment and victimisation on grounds of age.

In addition to such legislation that we address through our personnel policies we also need to particularly consider how age is a fundamental factor that affects peoples life experiences. In Wychavon we have an ageing population and also a higher than average number of older people. This means there is not only a demand for services to meet the needs of these groups but due to the rural nature of the district many older people face social isolation and can feel cut off from the wider community.

Age as a strand of diversity also needs to consider young people who can often feel socially excluded and marginalised within their communities. This means that we need to engage with young people to empower them to participate in their local communities.

2.5 Sexual orientation

This strand of equalities considers gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender as factors than can influence the ways individuals are treated in society. Nationally the government estimate that around 5% the population* are lesbian, gay or bisexual. We do not have any local figures regarding this for the district as no national census has requested data on sexual orientation. It is acknowledged that people who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender are the most reluctant group of people to disclose their sexual orientation to others as they fear harassment or discrimination. Although we have very limited information about these groups in Wychavon it is vital to consider such issues, particularly in a sensitive manner.

*Government estimates as referenced by Stonewall

2.6 Faith and belief

As a result of the Employment Equality (Religion or belief) Regulations 2003, it is unlawful to discriminate against an employee on grounds of their religion or belief. These regulations prevent the indirect and direct discrimination as well as harassment and victimisation of an individual.

In the wider community we need to consider faith and often its relation to race as an important aspect of our equalities work. It is also important to promote the positive impact that faith groups can have on local communities. This includes opportunities to create face to face dialogue which supports a greater understanding of shared values, appreciation of distinctiveness and for side by side collaborative social action.*

*Face to Face and Side by Side Publication 2008

2.7 Human Rights Issues

The Human Rights Act came into force in October 2000 and its main intention is to create a human rights culture in public services. Section 6 of the Human Rights Act makes it unlawful for a public authority to act in a way that is incompatible with a Convention right. This means that we must ensure everyone can enjoy their basic human rights (such as right to life and not being treated in a degrading or inhuman manner) and ensure our policies or services do not have a negative impact in this way.

Human rights is about recognising that every person is of equal value and that we all have basic human rights that must be upheld. Human Rights is therefore about ensuring fairness, respect, equality, dignity and autonomy for everyone.

2.8 The Equality Standard

The Equality Standard is an improvement tool which local authorities use to put a framework in place to progress their work on diversity. The main themes of the current standard are covered within this scheme. We are currently at level 2 of the existing standard whereby we are involved in 'assessment and consultation'.

We review and develop our work against the Equality standard criteria in relation to:

- Leadership and commitment
- Equal access to services
- Consultation, community development and scrutiny
- Equality in employment and pay

3. Diversity in Wychavon

Diversity is all about recognising and valuing difference so it is important to ask what makes Wychavon unique? Although we don't have a large number of different ethnic minority communities (currently 1.2% of the population) in Wychavon, there are many other factors that make our communities diverse. These include:

- a **growing population** - A total population* of 117'100 people, 50.6% are female and 49.4% are male and there are a **large number of families**** who settle here
- an **ageing population** and the higher than average number of **elderly people** in the district – 19.2% of the population are 65 and over compared to the UK average of 16%
- issues surrounding **employment and the economy** – although we have a higher than average economic activity rate (82.5% compared to 78.6% nationally), worklessness is still an issue for 22% of residents, unemployment still exists (around 1.5%), and young people may not plan to stay in the area due to perceived lack of work opportunities.
- the general **affluence of the area** and the **hotspots of deprivation** that exist such as the Westlands area in Droitwich
- the presence of **Gypsies and Travellers** - our Scrutiny review in 2006 highlighted that there are around 700-800 Gypsy and Travellers in the district. We also have the highest number of public sites in the county within Wychavon. Our review also highlighted the vast amount of prejudice still exists towards this social group and how they are misunderstood by the wider community.
- **issues regarding casual labour and migrant workers** - migrant workers play an important role in the local economy and many migrant workers and their families are now settling in the area. Our electoral registration canvas shows that there are now over 800 Polish residents settled in the area, an increase by of over 200 since 2007.
- **lack of transport, rural isolation and social exclusion of community groups** due to the geographical size of the area and the distinct contrast between rural and urban settlements, access to services can be a real issue for residents and young people can particularly feel cut off from the wider community
- **people with disabilities** - Health Surveys estimate that there are 15,007 – 16,922 adults with disabilities in the district, which is around 14% of our residents', 5% of residents claim incapacity benefit.

To tackle any issues facing our communities we need to look at how we can address them through our service delivery and by working with others. In order to deliver quality services we need to ensure we are both efficient, by providing value for money and effective as we are looking at the needs of all of our community groups.

*National Statistics Mid 2007 population estimates ONS

** Based on higher than average number of households having two or more cars (Census data)

*** Indices of Deprivation 2006

4. What we have achieved since our last equality schemes

Considering and planning for the needs of diverse groups is nothing new to us and this is reflected in the services we provide. Some of these services include:

- ◆ 'Reaching out presentations' for diverse groups to provide information about our services
- ◆ Disabled Facilities grants for disabled adaptations in dwellings
- ◆ Assessment of council tax reduction for people with disabilities
- ◆ Welfare and benefits advice
- ◆ Involving young people in consultation and democracy
- ◆ Housing advice and assistance
- ◆ Providing security equipment to vulnerable residents including those with physical and mental disabilities and elderly residents through our safe and sound security scheme.
- ◆ Training in sign language for Customer Contact Centre staff
- ◆ Use the two tick symbol to be positively encourage job applications from people with disabilities
- ◆ Wychavon Community Grants scheme to support a wide range of community projects
- ◆ Assisted waste and recycling collection service for people with disabilities

Over the last year some of our equality and diversity initiatives include:

- ◆ Diversity impact assessment training sessions for managers across a wide range of service areas
- ◆ Produced a corporate impact assessment timetable
- ◆ Progress through retrospective assessments of policies, projects and services
- ◆ Two focus groups with Polish residents in Evesham and taking part in the I&DeA migration Excellence Programme
- ◆ A communications strategy regarding migrant workers
- ◆ Food safety events to provide information to and send positive messages out about migrant workers.
- ◆ Supporting the production of the Vine Magazine, the first Black and Minority Ethnic publication for Worcestershire
- ◆ Actively working with partners working on county wide equality projects
- ◆ Carried out a Training Needs survey with staff in relation to equality and diversity and included equality and diversity as a key theme within our corporate governance training
- ◆ Launch of a Polish version of our website
- ◆ Expanded distribution coverage of the Travellers Times magazine to raise awareness about Gypsy and Traveller lifestyle and culture
- ◆ Consideration of health inequalities in relation to our communities as part of an I&DeA healthy communities peer review
- ◆ Launched a new website for partnership working on equalities projects
- ◆ Provided work experience opportunities in relation to equality and diversity
- ◆ Supporting the V Wychavon project aimed at providing volunteer based projects for young people from diverse backgrounds

5. Our equality and diversity statement and objectives

This single scheme is part of our continuing approach to address equality and diversity in Wychavon.

We want to continue to mainstream our approach to equality and diversity into our service planning and delivery activities. And most importantly to recognise and value the diversity of our communities in our work.

Not only do we aim to carry out all of our legislative duties but we also want to go beyond what is required of us. **This does mean that we will not discriminate in any way according to ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion or belief. We recognise that everyone is different but this doesn't mean that people should be disadvantaged as a result.** We will also work towards our equality objectives so that we can actively promote equality for all of our residents and address any issues that exist.

Diversity is about recognising and embracing differences. People are not the same and by recognising this we can start to look at the specific needs of individuals and social groups. This scheme is about **treating people fairly and recognising their differences**. This works at three levels:

- Internally - how we work throughout all of our personnel policies and our attitudes and differences in the work place
- Community relations - how we engage with and understand the needs of our communities
- Service delivery – taking into account differences by providing a choice of services and responding to a range of needs.

This scheme applies to both our internal and external operations. It is comprehensive as it covers all aspects of our work and applies to officers, councillors, partner organisations, contractors and anyone we are working with. It states our position as an organisation and our high-level commitment to recognising and promoting equality and diversity.

In addition to this we also have the following specific objectives in relation to our main legislative duties:

Disability Equality objectives

- We will promote equality for people with disabilities
- We will tackle discrimination against people with disabilities
- We will support people with disabilities so they can achieve involvement in social life.

Gender Equality objectives

- We will achieve gender equality through service delivery and improve our understanding of our employee and customer needs in relation to gender
- We will achieve gender equality in employment practice
- We will eliminate discrimination and harassment on the grounds of gender.

Race Equality objectives (as defined in the Race Relations Act)

- We will eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- We will promote equality of opportunity, and
- We will promote good race relations between people of different ethnic and cultural groups

Equality Objectives in relation to age, religion and belief and sexual orientation

- We will ensure our services do not discriminate on the grounds of age, religion and belief and sexual orientation

6. How we will deliver our equality objectives

This section sets out our approach to incorporating equality and diversity as part of our work in order to meet our equality objectives. This builds on our legal requirements and also embraces all six strands of equalities.

▪ Diversity impact assessments

A diversity impact assessment is a way of assessing and consulting on the effect a policy, project or service is likely to have on community groups. This also includes monitoring a policy, project or service once it's been implemented or delivered to find out how well it is working.

We currently assess our policies, project and services in two different ways. Firstly, all reports are screened when they go to Executive Board or Full Council. This means that implications of the policy, project or service are considered in relation to our priorities and promises and the impact they will have on our communities. The outcome of this will show whether a full impact assessment is required. Our guidance on screening has been developed from the Commission for Race Equality (now Commission for Equalities and Human Rights) impact assessment toolkit. The second aspect of our assessment activities takes place through completing retrospective assessments of our policies, projects and services as set out in our corporate impact assessment timetable. This is a time where the impact of services is looked at including issues such as:

- Do we have adequate information about the impact of our services?
- What consultation have we conducted to ensure they are meeting residents needs?
- Have any complaints arisen where we can take action or learn from?
- How can we ensure our services are not having an adverse impact or resulting in any discrimination?
- How can the policy, project or service be developed so that it will help us to deliver our equality duties?

The actions arising from impact assessments will then be embedded in our annual service delivery plans and enable us to **develop service level equality objectives and targets.**

We are also keen to ensure our impact assessments take into account wider equality issues that are often inter-linked to the equality strands. For this reason our impact assessment pro-forma document contains additional non-statutory questions regarding wider factors including income and rural/urban issues.

The consultation element of impact assessments is something we already have a good track record of. Out of the 28 plans we currently produce, 70% of them were consulted on via external bodies. The need for targeted consultation with specific community groups may arise though as part of the assessment process. Our overall approach to consultation can be found on our website. This includes the current consultation methods we use to get feedback on our services and establish community priorities to direct our work. **By introducing new monitoring arrangements we will also have more information available to help us carry out impact assessments.**

▪ Identifying relevant policies, projects and services

In accordance with the legislation we have identified relevant policies, projects and services (also known as functions) of our organisation that are relevant to our diversity work and set these out within a corporate impact assessment timetable. Initially this was just in relation to race equality but now this also applies to all six strands. This process enables us to establish which ones are most relevant to our diversity work. And specifically which ones are key to ensure they do not discriminate and that they also promote equality of opportunity and diversity.

- **Member involvement and our equalities group**

In order to mainstream diversity through all service departments our in house equalities team is driving the process led by the Strategy and Communications Unit. In order to respond to new issues as they emerge our in house Equalities Working Group meets every four to six weeks to provide a springboard for equality issues. Cllr Mrs Audrey Steel is currently the chair of this group in her role as our Board member with responsibility for equality issues.

- **Consultation and involvement**

Consultation is an invaluable resource to involve the community in our work and get feedback on our services. As well as specific research about key services we also have a variety of information about how our communities feel about their area and the services we provide. The majority of our plans and strategies and policy decisions are based on consultation including our MORI residents survey, general satisfaction surveys, Healthchecks, Simalto budget consultation, community plan consultation and fear of crime surveys to name but a few. We are also starting to use new customer insight tools so that we have a greater understanding of our communities and can tailor our services to their needs.

- **Partnerships and community development**

Our latest Community Strategy called 'shaping the future together' was published in 2007. Its overall approach to equalities is clearly set out within the vision of a '**safe green, healthy and beautiful district that is a vibrant and creative place for everyone to live, work and visit**'.

In order to tackle inequalities in the district, partnership working is essential. Our community strategy is action focused and has enabled partnership work to focus on the distinct needs of our three towns and surrounding villages by using three Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs).

- **Monitoring arrangements**

We will monitor progress as part of our Signals of Success (SoS) quarterly performance reports including both equality actions as well as performance indicators. **We will publish an annual equalities update to provide a snapshot of our work over a year and this will be made available on our website.** The policy will also be updated in light of our progress and any key organisational changes that occur. Actions arising from impact assessments will not only be embedded and monitored through service plans, key equality actions including those from this scheme will be also monitored by our Equalities Working Group.

▪ **Service delivery and customer care**

We are committed to providing **high standards of service delivery and customer care** and Chartermark provides a means by which this can be assessed. The criteria for this assessment also covers key diversity issues similar to those set out in the Equality Standard so this is an important part of our equalities framework. In 2008 we became one of the first few councils in the country to obtain Chartermark status for all of our services. This means that the level of customer care is assessed on standards set in relation to fairness, accessibility and choice.

We also have service charters available for each of our service units. These set out both the standards that customers can expect from us and how they will be treated in the process.

▪ **Reporting procedures**

Any incident of harassment or discrimination can be reported to us, as it's important for us to know if any incidents have taken place. If the incident is in relation to our services then we will respond to it. If it is not directly in relation to our services or our organisation we will try and offer advice to residents about how to deal with the incident. A list of useful contact organisations is available on our website or can be sent out on request.

Reports can be made via our Community Contact Centres, email, telephone or in writing to our legal services team. Any report will be treated sensitively and notification to other organisations and bodies will be made as necessary. The main organisation we pass on information to regarding any reported racial incident is the Worcestershire Racial Equality Council. With regard to wider issues of harassment (e.g. disability discrimination) we can advise and signpost you to the appropriate body to deal with the incident.

▪ **Employment and training**

We are committed to providing fair employment and equal opportunities.

Equality and diversity is an embedded theme within all of our personnel related matters. Our commitment to fair employment is set out within our recruitment and selection policy. Our equal pay policy is administered through a job evaluation scheme and we are currently working towards completing a workforce profile and an equal pay review.

Monitoring takes place as part of our overall recruitment processes. This involves monitoring information and statistics regarding the profile of applicants entering into the recruitment process.

We are committed to developing our employees and providing equal access to both training and development opportunities. The Investors in people (IiP) standard provides us with a framework for this. By developing our people this has a positive impact on our services and performance. And we are committed to the business case for diversity.

Training is a key part of our approach to diversity. **We will run an annual training programme** including diversity training for both our staff and councillors. This aims to address diversity issues and raise awareness. All of our diversity training incorporates links to our equality objectives and details set out in this policy.

As well as with our own staff it is important that we also consider diversity issues in relation to our partners and key contractors. All staff who are involved in procurement and contracting related activity are required to consider diversity issues. Similarly, all partners, contractors and consultants are required to comply in all respects with our policies, contract procedure rules and financial regulations where appropriate.

7. Information and consultation to inform this scheme

A variety of information has been taken into account in order to form this scheme:

- **Consultation and information as part of our previous equality schemes** – As this scheme builds on our previous separate equality schemes we have drawn on the various consultation, data mapping and information gathering that enabled us to develop our equalities focus. This is also an on-going process so that when new customer information becomes available we can revisit our scheme.
- **Consultation with specific equality groups** – we carry out targeted consultation to get feedback on our services and find out what equality issues exist. A good example here is our recent focus groups with Polish residents.
- **Consultation through our reaching out initiative** - this initiative involves us taking information about our services out to community groups to keep them informed about our work. It also provides an opportunity for us to discuss issues with them and get feedback on our services. The reaching out to everyone initiative has helped to inform this scheme especially by having involvement from community groups for people with disabilities, men and women's groups, youth clubs and religious groups.
- **Involvement of staff and councillors** – has taken place through consultation on this scheme and involvement from our Equalities Working Group.
- **Involvement of young people through democracy events** – Every year we engage and consult with young people to get their views on our work and find out what more we can do to make life better for them. This happens both through in school sessions, democracy events such as our annual Youth Summit and also through direct consultation with young people.
- **Involvement from parishes** – we have kept parishes informed about the development of this scheme through the Parish Matters newsletter. We have invited them to give us comments and feedback on local equality and diversity issues and also to facilitate local equality discussion forums with our support.
- **Conducting reviews and specific projects regarding community groups** – over the last year we have been involved in a wide range of initiatives that have provided valuable information regarding equality issues. Examples here include our Healthy Communities Peer Review, Gypsy and Traveller scrutiny review and our current involvement in the Migration Excellence Programme.

- **Input from partners and sharing best practice** – many other councils and public organisations in Worcestershire have formed single equality schemes during 2008. Due to this we have offered support and feedback to others and they have also provided valuable input in developing this document. We have also researched examples of best practice in this field nationally and also received feedback from an external consultant in order to help us develop this scheme to ensure it will have a strong impact.

8. Monitoring our services

Monitoring is a central aspect of equality and diversity work and this is a vital section of this scheme as it sets out how and why we will monitor our services.

Legislation requires us to monitor services in relation to race, gender and disability. This is set out within the various duties we have under the Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination act and the Gender Equality Duty.

This legislation does not set out the specific ways in which we must monitor services but it requires us to ensure that no discrimination exists within the services we provide and that we must ensure equal access to our services. To establish this we need to be able to know more about the customers that are using our services to ensure there are no barriers to access.

The main purpose of monitoring is to assist with impact assessments and ensure no discrimination takes place. Monitoring provides us with more information about our customers so we can ensure our services are having the best possible impact. Monitoring information will also help us to plan future services as well as shaping existing ones.

Sometimes monitoring can seem to be an intrusive process for customers so we need to make it clear to them why we are asking personal questions. This is where communications play a key role, as customers need to be informed that we need the information to ensure they are being treated fairly. Case studies from other authorities show that monitoring can reveal services having an adverse impact e.g. a particular service isn't as good for one social group as another or one particular group may be less likely to use a particular service. Unless we have monitoring information we cannot take action to deal with any adverse impact of services.

We will use impact assessments to establish gaps in information we have about our customers and we will also build on existing monitoring systems we have in place and our developing customer insight tools. This will include identifying high-risk areas where additional monitoring is required.

Examples of current monitoring in services

- Customer consultation – examples include MORI surveys, waste consultation and the Place Survey, park consultation
- Feedback forms - evaluation of events and activities for young people
- Safe and Sound Security Scheme – we keep a record of residents who have used the scheme

- Reaching out initiative – using feedback forms to provide a profile of the community groups visited
- Application forms for jobs and starter forms when posts commence
- Planning services response form for the South Worcestershire Joint Core Strategy Preferred Options asks for information regarding ethnicity, race and gender

We will introduce further service monitoring in a number of service areas. These will mainly affect frontline services that have high levels of direct customer contact such as housing, planning, democratic services, shared services and environmental services. As a minimum level monitoring will be carried out in relation to age, gender, disability, and ethnicity. Additional categories such as sexual orientation will also be monitored where relevant to the service provision. An example of standard monitoring questions as used on the 2008 Place Survey are set out on the following page.

We are aware that good data collection and co-ordination is an issue for all local authorities. This is something which needs to be driven at a corporate level and used as a tool for developing better services.

SAMPLE – Example of monitoring on a survey

Section 9: About yourself

Please complete these questions which will help us to see if there are differences between the views of different residents. All the information you give will be kept completely confidential.

Q27 Are you male or female?
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY
 Male Female

Q28 What was your age on your last birthday?
PLEASE WRITE IN BOX OPPOSITE Years

Q29 How is your health in general? Would you say it is.....
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY
Very good Good Fair Bad Very bad

Q34 Do you have any long-standing illness, disability or infirmity? (Long-standing means anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time).
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY
 Yes (PLEASE CONTINUE TO Q35) No (PLEASE GO TO Q36)

Q35 Does this illness or disability limit your activities in any way?
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY
 Yes No

Q36 To which of these groups do you consider you belong?
PLEASE TICK ✓ ONE BOX ONLY

White

- British
- Irish
- Any other White background (✓ AND WRITE IN BELOW)

Black or Black British

- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black background (✓ AND WRITE IN BELOW)

Mixed

- White & Black Caribbean
- White & Black African
- White & Asian
- Any other Mixed background (✓ AND WRITE IN BELOW)

Asian or Asian British

- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Any other Asian background (✓ AND WRITE IN BELOW)

Chinese and Other ethnic groups

- Chinese

- Other ethnic group (✓ AND WRITE IN BELOW)

10. Corporate Equality and Diversity Action Plan

The action plan below sets out key actions for us in relation to equality and diversity over the next few years. In addition to this our service plans will contain more specific actions in relation to equality groups and our equality objectives. These will also incorporate new actions arising from the impact assessment process.

Action	Lead	When By
Review progress against the equality standard and aim to achieve level 3 (under existing standard)	Strategy & Comms	March 2009
Carry out our corporate impact assessment timetable and develop service level equality objectives	SMT/MM & EWG	March 2010
Conduct an annual impact assessment on our council budget and strategy	SMT	Dec/Jan 09
Conduct impact assessments on all Executive Board reports	SMT/ MMT	As required
Run impact assessment training for officers	Strategy & Comms	Annually
Implement an equalities training programme for all staff and councillors	Personnel/ Support Services	2009
Regularly involve diverse groups in service planning and review	All service units	Annually
Promote diversity issues through internal and external communications	Strategy & Comms	Annually
Produce annual diversity monitoring report and put on our website	Strategy & Comms	August 2009
Use equality data and customer insight tools to inform and improve our services	Housing & Democratic Services	2009
Embed specific equality and diversity actions in our annual service plans as well as actions from impact assessments and use to shape future promises	SMT/MM	2009
Continue to improve website to meet new requirements on equality	Strategy & Comms	2010
Review our Equalities Working group	Strategy & Comms/ EWG	2009
Review current monitoring in frontline services, identify gaps and introduce new monitoring as needed	SMT	2009

References

Copies of all key documents mentioned in this policy are available on request or can be found on our website at www.wychavon.gov.uk.

1. Audit of services for people with disabilities
2. Archive equality schemes - Race Equality Scheme – 2002 and the updated version in 2005, Gender and Disability Equality Scheme 2007.
3. Social Inclusion Review – conducted in 2003
4. Corporate Equalities Action Plan
5. Complaints, compliments and suggestions procedure
6. Reaching out to everyone – information about groups visited
7. Our strategy 2008-13
8. Gypsy and Traveller Scrutiny Review
9. Migration Excellence Programme – Mini-scenarios report
10. Healthy Communities Peer Review – final report
11. Shaping the future – Wychavon’s Community Plan 2007 - 2010

Thanks to Kilbride Smith Partnership for feedback and direction with this scheme. Thanks also to Peter Oteng, Manager, Worcestershire Racial Equality Council for continued support with our equalities work.

More information

If you wish to discuss this policy or have any questions please contact Rob Mace, Community Outreach Officer on 01386 565517 or email robin.mace@wychavon.gov.uk