

Equality Scheme and Plan 2017 - 2020



Wyre Forest
District Council

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Introduction

This Equality Scheme and Plan builds on the excellent work achieved through the Single Equality Scheme (2014 -2017) and helps us to continue to provide services which meet the different needs of our many communities and become an employer of choice. It also demonstrates how we will promote equality of opportunity across the eight protected characteristics, defined by the 2010 Equality Act as grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful: age; disability; gender; gender reassignment (transgender); pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; and sexual orientation. As a public body we also need to have due regard to marriage or civil partnership.

The 2010 Equality Act brings together for the first time all the legal requirements on equality that the private, public and voluntary sectors need to follow and places the following Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) on Local Authorities to have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Promote good relations between persons of different backgrounds
- Encourage participation in public life for people of different backgrounds

However, regardless of our legal obligations we also have a moral obligation to:

- Treat people fairly, justly and with respect in both service provision and employment
- Find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded
- Promote inclusion and celebrate diversity

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty we are required to publish at least one equality objective annually which will continue to support improvements in our inclusion, equality and diversity programme of work set out in this plan. In response, we have adopted and published the following objective for 2017/18.

Our Equality Objective - Wyre Forest District is an inclusive place for its communities

Partnership working is a key element to progressing the equality and diversity, community cohesion and human rights agenda. The

Council works closely with a number of other agencies, community and voluntary sector groups. A key partnership for the council is the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership Team, who work with the local community and monitors areas of concern. They hold awareness events throughout the District focusing on areas such as hate crime.

Delivery of the Objective will be supported by a number of actions as part of the overall Programme as set out in **Appendix 1**.

Our Achievements since 2010

The Council has made significant improvements in its approach to equality and diversity since 2010. Every aspect of the Council's service delivery has been assessed to ensure that services are provided in a way which enables equal access to all members of our communities. Practical and realistic areas for improvement were identified and subsequently implemented to improve service provision. As part of this work, information held within the Council was used to ensure that we reflected residents and customers' views about the way services were provided.

In addition to this, other specific achievements are:

- Member and Officer Training on equality and diversity
- Increasing the number and variety of entries for the Annual No Barriers Awards
- Supporting the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership and its Hate Incident Partnership to support victims of hate crime and to run the annual national hate crime awareness week at a local level
- Ensuring our new Council website and ongoing improvements make it more accessible and easy to use so customers who use assisted technology can now successfully navigate the site
- Carry out detailed equality impact assessments for Council policies, procedures and key decisions to support our corporate planning policy processes
- Ensuring our physical assets e.g. car parks, Wyre Forest House and Wyre Forest Leisure Centre have suitable provision for disabled people
- Ensuring our budgets have taken into account the equality impact of any changes in service delivery
- Gaining a better understanding of our communities to ensure we spend money in the right way, on the right things
- Supporting ethnic and disability groups in leisure and community development
- Community safety/Hate Crime Partnership work

A key part of delivering the right services in the right way to our communities is understanding what our communities look like. Through the Council's Geographical Information Systems, we are able to identify detailed information about the profile of our communities and their preferences in terms of accessing services. In addition to this, we make use of a range of other sources to provide information about Wyre Forest the District.

The District

The area takes its name from The Forest of Wyre, once a medieval hunting forest, now a popular visitor attraction. The three main towns of Kidderminster, Bewdley and Stourport-on-Severn and several surrounding villages like Arley, Rock, Chaddesley Corbett and Wolverley make up the district. The area is both rural and urban and there are pockets of wealth and deprivation throughout the district. The area has some of the best attractions in the Midlands from an exciting safari and leisure park to Britain's premier steam railway.

Our Communities

The total population of Wyre Forest is 99,500 of which 16.9% are aged under 16 years, 59.1% are aged 16-64 and 24% are aged over 65 years. The average gross weekly earnings in Wyre Forest in 2015 were £337. This compares to gross weekly earnings for Worcestershire of £405 and £503 in England.

Figures from the 2011 Census show that 94.7% of people in Wyre Forest are White British. This compares to 92.4% in Worcestershire and 79.8% in the whole of England. 97.2% of people in Wyre Forest are from all White ethnic groups. This compares to 95.7% in Worcestershire, and 85.4% in England

According to the 2011 Census 9.2% of people in Wyre Forest have long-term health problems or disabilities such that their day to activities are affected a lot, compared to 8.1% in Worcestershire and 8.3% in England. 1.4% of people in Wyre Forest defined their health as "very bad". This compares to average figures of 1.2% in Worcestershire, and 1.2% in England.

The proportion of residents aged 16 - plus with no qualifications in Wyre Forest is 27.8%. This compares to a Worcestershire average of 23.0% and an average across England of 22.5%. In Wyre Forest 22.1% of residents aged 16 - plus have achieved qualification Level 4 or over. This compares to a Worcestershire average of 27.2%, and an England average of 27.4%.

In Wyre Forest the proportion of households earning less than £10,000 a year is 15.6%. The proportion in Worcestershire is 13.4%.

In Wyre Forest there were 5,470 claimants of Out of Work benefits (November 2016), representing 9.3% of the population aged between 16 - 64 years. In November 2016 540 people were claiming Job Seekers Allowance, representing 0.9% of the population aged between 16 - 64 years.

According to the Census 2011, in Wyre Forest 68.7% of people aged 16-74 were economically active, compared with 71.3% in Worcestershire and the average across England of 69.9%. 37.4% of people worked full time, and 15.2% part time; this compares with 39.2% and 14.9% in Worcestershire. 18.5% of people in Wyre Forest aged 16-74 were retired compared with 16.0% in Worcestershire, and the figure for the whole of England of 13.7%.

Source: Worcestershire County Council Research and Intelligence Unit 2014, unless otherwise stated.

Our Employees and Members

Wyre Forest District Council has 33 Councillors, covering 12 wards. Twenty of the councillors are male and twelve are female (one vacancy). One councillor is BME = 3%. The Cabinet presently has two female members out of 6 (33%) which is broadly in line with the percentage of councillors who are women (36%). There are approximately 343 staff of which 227 are full time and 116 are part time. 52% of staff are female and 48% are male. This broadly reflects the Wyre Forest population; 50.70% are female and 49.30% are male. Four staff (1.13%) have declared a disability. The data suggests that our workforce comprises of a lower proportion of people with a disability than the population as a whole. It is difficult to assess how well it reflects the population as our own information relies on staff declaring that they have a disability.

As Table 1 shows, the majority of our workforce (98%) is of White British ethnicity. The ethnic mix of our workforce reflects that of the wider Wyre Forest population.

Table 1: Ethnicity of Wyre Forest Staff

Total White - British:	98%
Total White - Other:	0.88%
Total Indian:	0.56%
Total Bangladeshi:	0.56%

As at 31st December 2016

The Council has four Directorates:

Directorate	Services include:
Community Wellbeing and Environment	Community Safety, Leisure Services, Waste and Recycling Collection, Operational Services, Parks and Open Spaces, Communications, Web, Partnerships, Emergency Planning
Chief Executive's Unit	Legal Services, Human Resources, Elections, Committee administration, Wyre Forest Forward programme management, performance, information governance
Economic Prosperity and Place	Planning Policy, Economic Development and Regeneration, Development Control, Land Charges, Building Control, Strategic Housing, Environmental Health, Facilities & Asset Management, Licensing
Resources	Accountancy, Internal Audit, Procurement, Payroll, Customer Services, Revenues and Benefits, ICT

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA)

An EqIA is a tool for identifying the potential impact of our policies, services and functions on our residents and staff. It can help staff provide and deliver excellent services to residents by making sure that these reflect the needs of the community.

EqIAs offer an opportunity for all members of staff to think carefully about the impact of their work on local people and other members of staff. They can then take action that will promote equality for all.

Ownership and responsibility for an impact assessment lies at service level. Service managers and frontline staff are important in the assessment process. They will be involved in implementing actions and changes that the assessment identifies as necessary. It doesn't have to be an equalities officer who carries out the EqIA. When considering the equalities implications it is necessary to involve others who may offer challenge to views or some evidence of impact.

When carrying out equality impact assessments we will follow the process outlined below:

- Carry out a relevance test on the policy, function or service to establish whether there is likely to be any impact
- Identify whether internal and/or external consultation is necessary
- Gather data and evidence to ensure that sufficient information is available to inform decision making
- Assess and analyse the policy, function or service for positive or negative impact and any unlawful direct or indirect discrimination
- Amend or identify alternative policies where necessary
- Establish what actions might be necessary to reduce or remove any adverse or negative impact
- Publish the results
- Conduct regular evaluations of completed EqlAs

We are currently carrying out EqlAs on all our key functions and strategies and can be viewed at

<http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/community-wellbeing-and-environment/equality-and-diversity/equality-impact-assessments.aspx>

There is also a standard section in decision making reports for Cabinet and Council where the outcome of the equality impact assessment is reported.

Managing Equality and Diversity

- The **Leader and the Chief Executive** provide leadership and promotion of inclusion throughout the Council.
- The **Cabinet Member** for Health, Wellbeing and Housing has been designated as the lead member for inclusion and helps to raise the profile of this area of work among other elected members of the Council.
- **Corporate Leadership Team and Managers** implement EqlA's and support staff to contribute towards delivery of key objectives in the scheme.
- **Human Resources** - develop internal guidance, policies and procedures to ensure that all staff are treated fairly and that adjustments to work areas or procedures are made where appropriate
- **Customer Services** develop policies to ensure service users are treated fair

- **Staff** will uphold and put into operation the aims of the scheme and act as a 'consultative group'.
- **Unions** are consulted on inclusion issues and have responsibility of representing the views and concerns of staff on such issues supporting the continuous improvement of inclusion policies and procedures.
- **Community Groups and Partner Organisations** offer a means of consultation feedback to support the development of equality polices.

Monitoring

Wyre Forest District Council has a legal duty to ensure that its services and employment are provided fairly, but without effective monitoring the Council will not know whether its inclusion policy is working. Equality monitoring can help all services to ensure that they are reaching and offering equality of opportunity to all individuals and groups, and can help us to make changes based on facts and not assumptions.

Feedback

The Council is interested in hearing from you whether you have a compliment, a complaint, or would like to express your comments or views on any aspect of this Equality Scheme and Plan. Any complaints about the way the Council is meeting the duties under the 2010 Equality Act, or other equality complaints will be dealt with through the standard corporate complaints procedure. In the first instance these will be dealt with via the council's Let Us Know policy, and can be submitted at <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/the-council/contact-us/let-us-know.aspx> Alternatively, you can phone, write to, or visit our customer services centre (The Worcestershire Hub) as follows:

Phone 01562 732928

Write to The Worcestershire Hub, Kidderminster Town Hall, Vicar Street, Kidderminster, DY10 1DB

For more information on the services provided by Wyre Forest District Council you can visit www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk. If you require the Equality Scheme and Plan in an alternative format or language please contact The Worcestershire Hub on the details above.

Appendix 1 – Action Plan

Our Equality Objective - Wyre Forest District is an inclusive place for its communities

Area of work	Action	Measure	By Who	When
Foster good relations within the District	Continue to take an active role in raising awareness of hate crime through the North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership	Increased number of people reached as a result of awareness raising activities for example via national Hate Crime Awareness Week	Community Safety Team	Report annually
		Increased number of hate crimes reported and statistics published on North Worcestershire Community Safety Partnership website	Community Safety Team	Report annually
	Encourage entries for the annual No Barriers to reflect one or more of the nine protected characteristics	Increased number of entries reflecting the nine protected characteristics	Communications and Engagement Officer	Report annually
	Continue to provide out reach sport and physical activities in hard to reach communities	Increased number of participants across all age ranges.	Sports Development Officer	Report Annually

Other actions underpinning Equality Scheme

Area of Work	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Ensure that the council's commitment to inclusion is embedded in its strategies and policies	CLT to ensure that strategies and policies address equality issues where relevant.	CLT	Review every six months
Ensure that the council's complaints procedures work effectively responding to complaints from any protected grouping	Review complaints procedure to ensure compliance	Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Manager	By October 2017
Ensure managers are accountable and recognise their responsibility for promoting inclusion in all aspects of Council operations	Chief Executive to reinforce upon managers their responsibilities Appropriate training to be undertaken where necessary	Chief Executive/Managers/ Senior HR Advisor	Report Annually
Ensure that all employees and members are aware of their responsibility for promoting inclusion	Wyred Weekly and Members' Bulletin promote awareness and inclusion amongst staff and members from time to time.	Senior HR Advisor / Principal Committee Officer Managers ensure that all employees and new members are briefed at induction and are provided with training	Ongoing

Area of Work	Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Ensure appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with alleged breaches of discrimination	Ensure appropriate policies are in place	CLT / HR	Ongoing
Review Equality and Diversity Policy	Review and update	Senior HR Advisor	August 2017
Ensure that materials and policies promote and support inclusion	All new or changed policies to be Equality Impact assessed. Materials to demonstrate inclusive approach.	Service Managers	Ongoing
The Council will consult with external organisations on plans and new policies affecting the community.	Identify local representative groups using existing information and contacts.	Service Managers	Ongoing
Ensure that inclusion data is used to inform future strategic Plans and policies	Data should be intrinsic in the planning process using data collected by both WFDC and Worcestershire County Council as well as utilising external information sources.	Service Managers	Ongoing
The council will consider all elements of the local community when making decisions	The EqIA process will assist in doing this. All EqIAs will then be published via the Internet.	Service Managers	Ongoing

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Please find the Equality Impact Assessment Template on the council's website at <http://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/community-wellbeing-and-environment/equality-and-diversity/equality-impact-assessments.aspx>