



# **Mansfield District Council**

*Creating a District where People can Succeed*

## **Equality and Diversity Position Statement**

**April 2012**

| <b>Contents</b>             | <b>Page</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Introduction                | 3           |
| The Equality Act            | 3           |
| Workforce                   | 4           |
| Service Delivery            | 4           |
| Case Studies                | 4           |
| Customer Services           | 12          |
| Setting Equality Objectives | 13          |

## Introduction

Welcome to Mansfield District Council's Annual Equality and Diversity Position Statement.

Mansfield District Council is committed to eliminating inequality on the basis of the protected characteristics. The council recognises that there are equality differences in the life chances available to people within the community with the services they gain access to and the job and careers they are able to pursue.

Equality is about ensuring that all people are treated equally, this does not mean treating everyone the same, but recognising the differences in life situations and experiences and ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all people taking into account their individual needs.

## The Equality Act

The Equality Act 2010 puts all of our equality law into one place and sets out to give people from different groups, identified as protected characteristics, consistent rights and protection.

The protected characteristics covered under the duty are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The public sector Equality Duty is made up of a General Equality duty which is supported by Specific Duties. The General Duty requires public authorities, such as local councils to:

- Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually, and
- Set and publish equality objectives at least every four years

The information published must evidence that the authority has considered the following three aims of the duty and that due regard has been given to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not.

- **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

## **Workforce**

This means that by the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2012 public bodies must publish information about employees and must consider how their activities as employers affect people who share protected characteristics. For example this could include:

- The overall make up of the workforce.
- The gender pay gap and pay equality issues.
- Recruitment and retention rates for staff with different protected characteristics.
- Applications for flexible working.
- Applications for learning and development.
- Grievances and disciplinary issues for staff with protected characteristics.

In order to meet this part of the Specific Duty the organisation has produced an Annual Workforce Report. The report identifies the current status of the organisation with regard to its workforce and will be used to support the continued development and improvement in this service area. The report is published on the council's website.

## **Service Delivery**

Public bodies are also required to consider the services they deliver and how these affect people with different characteristics. The council has been undertaking Equality Impact Assessments for a number of years to ensure that members of the community who are representative of the protected characteristic are not experiencing any negative impact due to the services we provide.

As a service provider, we make decisions that affect people's lives and we must ensure that we are fair and transparent in our decision making, providing information that people need in an accessible way. We must ensure that we treat people with dignity and respect, ensuring that we are aware of and acknowledge their human rights.

## **Case Studies**

The following case studies are examples of how the organisation has tailored the services it provides to meet the needs of individuals and the community and how services have developed to be more inclusive to people representative of the protected characteristics.

### **European Social Fund for Students**

The council hosted a student work experience for a basic skills constructions course within the Housing Repairs Department. This project was funded by the European Social Fund and taught by West Nottinghamshire College based in Mansfield.

Young people involved in this project benefited from an increased knowledge of the specific processes and trade skills used to repair and maintain property within the district as well as gain experience and encouragement from working with professionals within their work place.

Mansfield District Council values this type of activity as it allows the Council to promote itself as an employer of choice for young people which is essential as the authority has an aging workforce.

### **Learning and Development shortlisted for National Award**

The Learning and Development Team were shortlisted for a prestigious national award for their work on the Summer Job Shop project. This initiative was entered into the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards for 2012, which is awarded to the very best in local government organisations.

The project was held over a three week period during the school summer holidays in 2011 and supported 60 young people through career workshops.

The aim of the project was to break the cycle of unemployment, raise the expectations and aspirations of the participants and prepare them for employment.

Funded by Mansfield District council's Working Neighbourhood Fund and delivered in partnership with Vision West Notts, local employers and Unions the Job Shop had fantastic results.

Of the 58 young people taking part, half have gone on to secure employment opportunities and others have pursued alternative educational routes.

Five of the participants have secured apprenticeships with the council, working within the housing maintenance team.

### **Work Experience**

Mansfield District Council is a partner in the Mansfield Learning Partnership and actively seeks to support and integrate Diploma lines within working practices where appropriate.

Young people benefit from this activity as they are monitored against targeted learning outcomes therefore there is a higher level of support in place from the placement provider. There have been placements at a number of sections including: Parks, Leisure facilities, Palace Theatre, Housing repairs, planning, Customer Services, Engineering and Housing.

Within the council's commitment to the district the authority has not only taken on work experience placements from within the district boundaries but also accepted applications from 16 students outside the boundary, this has developed links with local universities.

Students from New College Nottingham engaged with the Palace theatre to work on a production project which supported students completing their degree in stage management.

Through this work the Theatre has widened its connections with the community and educational establishments at all levels, so that young people are able to gain real professional skills and knowledge as part of their study.

The council also attends careers fairs to showcase its services to young people and has been involved in mock interview days for this generation.

### **NVQ Business Administration**

For a number of years NVQ Business Administration students from West Nottinghamshire College have completed day release placements in council services.

This programme has seen particular success in attracting young applicants to job vacancies and showing the council as an employer of choice for those young people. Vacancies in HR and legal services have been filled by students on this scheme.

### **Palace Theatre**

The Palace Theatre has a number of initiatives in place to meet not only meet the needs of those people who represent the protected characteristics, but actively engage with these groups and individuals to fully experience the Theatre, these include:

The Youth Theatre has been running for over 18 years and has now six classes a week for up to 20 young people to attend each session between the ages of 5 and 18. These sessions have been very successful and participants experience Theatre productions and theatre skills and work towards staging a performance at the Theatre of the Old Library building that is next door.

The Theatre employees are keen to make reasonable adjustments to allow customers full access to the service when possible, this has included the removal of seats in the auditorium to allow customers with mobility difficulties to enter the auditorium on their mobile couch.

### **Mars Scheme**

A Multi Agency Rented Solutions (Mars) scheme introduced by Mansfield District Council was recognised by the East Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership for its exceptional achievements in benefiting those in greatest need. This innovative support service provides financial assistance and high quality accommodation to those who need it. The scheme also brings empty homes back into use, helping to house residents who find themselves homeless and also works with the private sector landlords to encourage acceptance of tenants on housing benefits.

### **Housing Needs**

The Council's Housing Needs service which provides a range of housing services to some of the most vulnerable people in the District, was selected as a pathfinder by the Cabinet Office after its innovative proposal on how its services would be provided in the future were put to the Government. Officers in the Housing Needs team developed the proposals themselves after the long term future of their current external Supporting People Fund was at risk.

### **The Green Team**

A Green Team made up of local people was created to support the work done by our Street Care Staff to improve the cleanliness of the District. Groundwork Cresswell, Ashfield and Mansfield manage the team to give them employable skills training whilst providing them with the opportunity to get hands on experience of treating and tidying the district.

The trainees have already made a big impact tackling long term problem areas which were not able to prioritise, as well as making the district cleaner. The scheme also provides young people with a great opportunity to get back to work, and gain relevant work experience which will help them gain employment in the future.

### **Skills for life**

The authority has been successful in engaging over 200 employees on the Skills for Life programme that covers both literacy and numeracy. This has been accessed through a number of different learning and development programmes including, dyslexia awareness, 1-1 training and apprenticeships. The learning and development team and the participants have produced a video and DVD to support and promote the programme. This training has led to some real life changing experiences for some of the participants', that are highlighted in the video.

### **Promoting Dyslexia awareness**

The authority is supporting employees with Dyslexia through a programme of Dyslexia assessments, awareness sessions and training packages working in partnership with the British Dyslexia Association and union representatives. Around 16 employees have undertaken the initial assessment which has then led to further support and training for these individuals. These participants have then been actively involved in setting up a Dyslexia network group that is a self supporting group for its members.

The group are currently working towards raising the standards of support and considering undertaking an assessment to achieve the registered mark The Dyslexia friendly quality mark for Organisations.

### **Action for learning**

The authority holds development days every two months that are an opportunity for the new apprentices and the authority to meet. These are aimed towards giving the participants the opportunity to discuss their development with members from the authority to consider their individual programme and any concerns that they may have within their work environment.

### **Employee Disability Network Group**

The authority established a Disability Employee Network group in 2010. This group has been successful in promoting disability awareness within the organisation and has been instrumental in changing policies and practices to improve experiences and opportunities for this protected characteristic group.

The group has been actively involved in reviewing appropriate Human Resources policies including: bullying and harassment, flexible working, the home working framework, maternity, paternity and adoption policy and the Corporate Learning and Development Policy. The group have also raised concerns over car parking for employees and visitors with mobility issues during periods of inclement weather. There are now considerations being made to the layout of the car park to support and improve access to this group.

### **Surplus Housing Properties**

The authority is currently supporting local veterans through a scheme known as TREES. This scheme aims to transfer surplus housing stock properties on Hillmoor Street and Chesterfield Road North to the scheme to allow veterans to reside in the properties whilst they carry out the renovation work. The ex-service personnel have received valuable training opportunities and experienced links to the local area that in some cases has resulted in further training and job opportunities.

## **Mansfield Pétanque Club**

The Mansfield Pétanque Club was originally founded in 2009 in Forest Town and is now based at Titchfield Park. In 2011, it received funding from MDC for a new Pétanque pitch and clubhouse. With 30+ members, the club is now the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in the country, meets three times a week and has a diverse range of members.

The Parks and Open Spaces team have a Service Plan Commitment to increase the number of minority groups who use their parks and open spaces. Positive community engagement is vital for this to be achieved and relationship building with local groups, regular users and visitors is a key element.

The Mansfield Pétanque Club was originally set up to attract people with mental health issues and chronic diseases such as Asthma and other breathing difficulties.

The club's Secretary, says "Some of our members just come to have a chat but the main reason is health because it's a gently sport. You can't expect people with heart conditions to play football or run around but there's plenty of walking involved and you have to bend down as well."

In 2010, MDC joined forces with the Mansfield Pétanque Club and transformed the existing boules green at Titchfield Park into a bespoke Pétanque pitch. The club have also moved from the old, run-down boules clubhouse into a larger room within the Titchfield Pavilion.

### Objectives and targets

- To increase the number of minority groups who use their Parks and Open Spaces (LPI POS 5).
- To raise awareness of Health and Well being benefits.
- To encourage members to be active.
- To encourage use of Parks facilities.
- To encourage and strengthen community engagement.

## **Sportivate New Mums**

A project funded by sportivate aimed at increasing physical activity participation levels for new mums aged 14-25. The project is a result of consultation with parent and toddler groups/sure start centres in the district which identified the need to deliver targeted sessions for new mums.

Sportivate is a £32 million Lottery programme that gives 14-25 year olds access to six-week courses in a range of sports. The programme is aimed at those who are not currently choosing to take part in sport in their own time, or are doing so for a very limited amount of time.

The New Mums project will provide opportunities for mums and their children to participate in Aqua Aerobics through four six week blocks of exercise for new parents (aged 14-25) and their babies at just 50p per session.

Despite Mansfield having high teenage pregnancy rates (Public Health Profiles, 2005), there are presently no activities aimed at increasing participation rates and physical activity levels amongst new mums.

Linked to the authorities Vulnerable people priority (new priority for 2012/2013): the project will provide opportunities for people who may otherwise be socially excluded to engage with their community, thereby reducing their feeling of isolation and will contribute to tackling low level mental health problems e.g. depression. The projects are primarily focused on targeted groups (e.g. females, disability). This will help to provide increased opportunities for these specific groups and enhance their levels of sport, physical activity and wellbeing. This in turn could lead to increased community cohesion and longer term health benefits.

## **Renewable Heating**

The first renewable heating scheme for residents of New England Way was a pilot with 54 households having their coal fired district heating system replaced with individual renewable heating systems for each of the residents.

Regular consultations with the residents raised a number of issues that were addressed as the scheme developed including: mobility concerns, mental health concerns, and access issues. These were addressed on an individual basis through 1-1 meetings and also through the Tennant Liaison Officer. There were a few technical issues that were of concern following the installation of the systems but overwhelmingly the tenants were satisfied with the service provided in that the system was more efficient and gave potential savings for the households.

The second scheme of a similar nature (although in this instance involves installing gas central heating to replace the district heating) will include 1100 households and will be approached in a similar way to the first, through consultation days with the residents to assess their individual needs.

## **Customer Services**

The Equality duty requires public bodies to consider how the decisions that they make and the services they deliver affect people who share different protected characteristics. The specific duty requires public bodies to publish information to show how they do this. Published information could include customer satisfaction levels and informal feedback. The following examples show recent customer data and feedback collected that will be used to improve service delivery and customer experiences.

In August 2011 the authority installed a new Customer Record Management (CRM) system known as Ash Focus CRM. This new system will be able to identify all complaints/correspondence that have a link to equality issues to ensure that these are monitored and responded to appropriately.

Customers will also be given the opportunity to complete a monitoring form that will be used to identify any similarities with regard to the protected characteristics to improve services to these groups. Service provision is a dynamic process, with customers changing their access requirements and so there must be ongoing reviews of the effectiveness of customer access to the services we provide. We as a service provider must be consistent across all front facing services in ensuring that we remain customer focussed.

Employees within the Customer services team have undertaken British sign language training to improve their knowledge, understanding and service to this protected characteristic group.

The authority has promoted dyslexia training to employees to raise awareness of the barriers faced by people who have dyslexia. There is now a Dyslexia Policy in place and a Dyslexia support group within the council.

### Mystery Shoppers

As part of the authorities commitment to improving access and services to customers a Mystery Shop exercise was undertaken by a team of Mystery Shoppers (MS) on the Customer Care services at the Contact Centre through telephone calls. The MS were introduced to the contact Centre on site and were also given the Corporate Codes of Practice and Corporate Standards as well as information on policies and procedures within this section. To test standards a number of telephone calls were made to a number of staff at the Contact Centre during March 2011.

The conclusion was that the overall findings of the exercise show that the Contact Centre is providing an excellent service and that the majority of the advisors were friendly, efficient and helpful with one advisor in particular giving an excellent service.

Some of the MS even went on to say it was their best experience of a Contact Centre, another MS said that the staff in the Contact Centre were a credit to the Council and that they had experience with other councils that did not come up to Mansfield's high standards.

Another Mystery Shop was also conducted on 'Making a Complaint' during May 2011. The MS undertook a series of telephone 'mystery shops' using a variety of scenarios to assess levels of customer care when making a complaint. The group made the following recommendations regarding this service:

- List a way of making a complaint and then ask how they can help the customer.
- Perhaps all staff should have a card on their desk to inform them how to inform a customer on 'How to Complain'.
- The online Complaint form should also be in a download format, to print off if required.
- Respect the caller's reason for not wanting to give personal details.
- Staff not to get defensive.

Overall the results of the Mystery Shop concluded that it was a good service but that a few adjustments should be made to insure that the information is consistent across the department

## Setting Equality Objectives

The specific duty requires public bodies to prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objective which will help to further the three aims of the duty. This information must be published by 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012 and subsequent objectives to be published at least every four years.

Our objectives for Mansfield District Council are as follows:

- **To develop a modern and diverse workforce that is reflective of the local community and whose staff feel valued and treated fairly.**
- **To ensure community engagement and consultation is effective**
- **To ensure that vulnerable people have access to the services and support they need.**
- **To improve customer contact and access.**
- **To help make Mansfield a district where visitors and residents from all backgrounds feel safe and secure.**

The authority has focussed on setting objectives that are stretching and will deliver on the bigger equality challenges facing the authority that will have the greatest impact on promoting and improving the three aims of the duty.

In setting these objectives we have considered what evidence we have from both internal and external sources and what types of equality issues are raised by staff and customers. We have also identified how we will measure progress against these objectives and for each of the objectives there will be measurable targets set that can be monitored to show how the authority has improved. Performance against these targets will be monitored quarterly and reported on yearly.

The duty under the Equality Act required authorities to report on these objectives every four years however Mansfield District Council will review these objectives yearly to ensure that they are still current and relevant to local priorities and if necessary introduce additional measures to address the changing needs.

A number of people were involved in setting these objectives, including internal teams, Disability Network Group, Strategic Equality group, Corporate Equality group, Unions and local groups representative of the protected characteristics where possible.

The authority will continue to consult with employees and customers to enable them to be involved in the decision making process within the authority and are able to influence the way things are done.