

Equalities Policy and Objective Pre-Consultation Findings

Pre-consultation engagement with local equalities stakeholders on the content of the draft equality policy and the new equality objective has been undertaken to in order to:

- (a) secure support and buy-in to the development of a new equality policy and objective(s) and, eventually, the ongoing implementation of the policy
- (b) review and strengthen the proposed objective.

In total, 65 separate issues were identified by stakeholders, relating from very specific service-level matters, to amends to the wording of the draft policy and general principles that stakeholders would like the council to adopt.

A joint mapping and scoping exercise has subsequently been undertaken by officers in order to identify:

1. those actions which are already undertaken by the council but which could perhaps be better publicised
2. those actions which the council undertakes to an extent but could potentially improve or extend, and those which are not currently undertaken but which, given resource and capacity constraints, could be considered by officers and Members
3. those actions which the council lacks the resource and capacity to be able to undertake but which it may be able to support as a partner organisation.

Of the sixty five issues identified:

- One, pertaining to the rollout of 'Prep', is not a council responsibility.
- Four were straightforward changes to the proposed Policy, which have now been actioned. (**Appendix A**)
- Twenty seven are already undertaken by the council (**Appendix B**), and these will be publicised via:
 1. The equality pages of the council website
 2. Direct feedback to those stakeholders who gave their views
 3. The equality policy and objective(s) public consultation.
- Thirty three are either already undertaken by the council but could perhaps be improved or extended, or are not currently undertaken. This list has been consolidated into a list of equality-related principles which, it is proposed, will be championed by the new proposed equalities group, should this be implemented following public consultation on the draft equality policy (**Appendix C**)

Equality Policy Amends Following Pre-Consultation with Stakeholders

The following requests were given during a stakeholder engagement exercise with representatives of protected characteristics across the borough, on the draft Darlington Borough Council Equality Policy, which has now been updated to reflect this feedback.

1. Ensure the definition of the Social Model of Disability is included in the policy
2. Change the title from “Equality Scheme” to “Equality Policy”
3. Move the paragraph outlining the council’s vision for equalities to the beginning of the policy
4. Make it clear in the policy that equality refers to equality of opportunity, rather than everyone being the same.

Suggestions from Equality Stakeholders which are Already Undertaken by the Council

The following suggestions put forward by stakeholders during the draft equality policy and objective(s) pre-consultation have been identified as already undertaken within the organisation. Work will be undertaken to ensure these actions are publicised more widely so stakeholders are aware of the council's achievements:

1. Commit to increasing the proportion of council employees from black and minority ethnic (BAME) to 1 per cent of total

The proportion of council employees from a BAME background is currently 2.2 per cent, which is higher than the proportion of the borough's population which is BAME (2 per cent).

2. Engage in positive action in relation to recruitment practices to ensure the council workforce is more reflective of Darlington's general diversity

A significant amount of work is undertaken by the council to encourage residents with protected characteristics to apply for vacancies, any further initiatives would be subject to resource constraints.

3. A train the trainer approach should be adopted

The council is currently in the process of rolling this out. The tools are in place and it is intended to be cascaded out via team meetings.

4. The potential for recruitment of people with a disability should be assessed and incentivised

A significant amount of work is undertaken by the council to encourage residents with protected characteristics to apply for vacancies, any further initiatives would be subject to resource constraints.

5. The council should support the networking of organisations representing protected characteristic groups

The council provide administrative support to the local Strategic Implementation Group, a network of local VCS and community organisations, and are happy to signpost new groups if requested.

6. The council should provide somewhere for employees who are new mothers to express

The council offers a number of options for breastfeeding employees, and these are all communicated as part of the new mothers' return to work process.

7. The council should support minority groups to seek resources to host events (already signposted to group to SIG and Events team)

The council pays for website (http://www.idoxopen4community.co.uk/darlington_com) which is available for all community groups and residents to use to help find funding for local projects and events.

8. All council policies should be equality-proofed, with it made clear who and how this was done

The council's process for developing and implementing policy include steps to ensure equality considerations are taken into account; with all policies and meeting papers checked internally by our Legal team before consideration by Members.

9. The council must stipulate that all providers receive equality training

All contracts with providers includes an Equality Clause which stipulates the provider must *'comply with all legislative requirements relating to equality together with the additional requirements of the current Darlington Borough Council's Equality Scheme. As such, the Contractor will not discriminate on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership.'*

10. The council should recognise employee issues to do with parenting i.e. mental health / stress / accessibility

The council's Human Resources (HR) policies include provision in regard to issues employees may face relating to parenting and general caregiving.

11. The council should ensure adjustments are made for employees with hidden impairments i.e. chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) or the after effects of long-term conditions (LTCs)

Again, the council's HR policies include provision for employees suffering from a wide range of health and disability-related conditions, including CFS and recovery from LTCs.

12. The council should allow its employees the freedom to practice religion and offer appropriate support to ensure this

The council's HR policies include support and adjustments to allow employees to practice their religion, including the provision of a dedicated prayer room in the town hall. No requests for this provision have been made to date.

13. The council should support job applications from minority groups and advertise posts more widely so people with protected characteristics have more chance of seeing them.

The council's vacancy bulletin, Job Scene, is circulated widely, both in and outside of the borough. Further circulation might be feasible but subject to resource constraints. If groups would like to be added to email list they can sign up to receive Job Scene and circulate.

14. The council should encourage and support employees to stick up for colleagues and challenge inappropriate language, hate crime etc.

Significant work has been undertaken by the council to support this objective, including the commissioning of specialist training and a report from Alliance Counselling.

15. The council should provide a quiet/reflection room for prayer which includes a comment box for anonymous equality issues to be raised and a contact list of equality champions

There is a prayer room in the Town Hall and a list of equality champions' contact details will be made available to all staff should the proposed model outlined in the updated Equality Policy be implemented following consultation.

16. The council should have ongoing involvement with relevant groups during the implementation of the Equality Policy

It is intended that engagement with relevant groups will continue be undertaken during the development and implementation of the policy, as evidenced by the stakeholder engagement exercise.

17. The council should undertake unannounced inspections of care homes with GOLD and/or CQC

We do at times undertake unannounced inspections with CQC or as part of ongoing monitoring we share this function. In addition, it is part of Healthwatch's role, as part of the Council contract, to help the Council meet the requirements of the Health and Social Care Act 2010, for example by undertaking enter and View inspections and working with CQC. In general, however, GOLD would need to discuss this with CQC who are regulator of services, and who engage with 'experts by experience' in their inspection process. The standards of quality CQC use are set nationally and they use their own set of criteria to inspect. The council has its own agreements for Older People Residential Care which include a Quality Standards monitoring visit carried out annually by officers. This has its own set of criteria agreed with the care homes, and the outcome of this assessment determines the fee level paid to the homes for that particular year. The process is such that written feedback is given and there is an appeals process.

18. The council should increase dementia awareness among staff

Significant work has been taken by the council's HR department to improve dementia awareness amongst the workforce, led by a Scrutiny Task and Finish group. Training in dementia awareness by a dementia friend is now statutory for frontline staff and is currently being rolled-out.

19. Mental health first aid should be included in staff training

This started in September 2017.

20. Impact assessments should be completed whenever a care package is changed

The likely impact of any change to care packages is included in the care and support needs assessment and meets the legal requirements as laid out in the Care Act 2014.

21. The council should support employees with caring responsibilities

The council's HR policies include provision for employees with caring responsibilities.

22. The council should fly different flags to promote diversity

Local community groups are welcome to request that the council fly a particular flag, however this is subject to several terms and conditions, such as:

- whether the requested day falls on a weekend,
- whether the council already has the flag being requested – if not the group will have to provide one that is the right size
- whether another flag is due to be flown that day

23. The council should require providers to have an equality policy and contribute to equality impact assessments

All contracts with providers include the following equality clause: 'The Contractor shall have in place an equal opportunities policy that will apply to those who currently receive services from the Contractor, or on behalf of the Contractor, potential users of the Services; their carers; other agencies and professionals; employees; job applicants and the general public.'

24. The council should publish equality impact assessments, i.e. in One Darlington

The council no longer has the resource to be able to collate all equality impact assessments onto one webpage on the website, however all impact assessments are published online under the Democracy area of the website and can be found by searching for the meeting where the proposed change was discussed.

25. The council should encourage men to use health services

The council's Public Health team frequently undertake targeted campaigns to encourage the use of health services by those groups who traditionally are least likely to use them, including men.

26. The council should deliver specialist training to different staff members

Specialist training is delivered to staff in a number of different council teams and service areas.

27. Training for council staff should include a protocol between DAD and DBC regarding capital projects, highways etc.

A number of measures are undertaken by the council's capital projects and highways teams to ensure that any work undertaken considers the likely impact, if any, on residents with protected characteristics, particularly those with disabilities. These measures include:

- Consulting with DAD on any new highways and capital projects, and any related planning applications

- Accommodating feedback from DAD where possible
- Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments whenever a policy or strategy is amended or developed which may affect local protected characteristics groups
- Working with protected characteristic group representatives to address related issues e.g. the Pavements for People document developed with DAD to address generic issues with pavements
- Publicising current highway schemes and public utility works via a real-time tool on the website

APPENDIX C

Equality Stakeholder Feedback to be shared with the Proposed DBC Equality Champion Group

Engagement with local stakeholders on in the draft equality policy and objective has resulted in a significant number of suggestions for the council which are already undertaken by the council, but could be extended or improved upon, or are not currently undertaken. Given that many of the suggestions are specific to a single service area, they are not suitable for inclusion in the draft equality policy and/or objective(s), which aim to outline how the organisation as a whole aims to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty and embed the equalities agenda across the council. The suggestions have therefore been consolidated into some key equality principles that stakeholders feel the council should abide by. As a result, the council is proposing to establish a new internal group of equality champions, comprised of officers from each service area, who will: provide support and guidance to colleagues on equality issues; communicate issues and legislative changes; and generally champions and raise awareness of principles identified from local stakeholders' feedback.

1. Treating People with Respect

Feedback received relating to this principle requested equal treatment for service users with age-related disabilities, and, generally, more respect, understanding and empathy by officers when engaging with residents from Protected Characteristic groups

All council staff currently undertake an equality and diversity training module, and frontline staff in many service areas also receive specialist training on working with different protected characteristics groups, particularly in our adults and children's services including, where appropriate, empathy with service users with a particular protected characteristic, which is a feature for the Community Safety Partnership, for the Adults Safeguarding Board, and will be a topic for further discussion in terms of engaging with communities. Resource constraints mean that it is not possible to roll out this training to all staff, however the new model

outlined in the draft equality policy will, if implemented, allow for officers in each service area to champion the need for and value of treating people from protected characteristic groups with respect.

2. Maximising opportunities for joint-working with Protected Characteristic groups

Feedback received relating to this principle requested regular engagement with service users and protected characteristic groups during the development and delivery of policy and services.

The council does try to involve residents and representatives of protected characteristic groups in the design and development of policy and strategy as far as possible, subject to resource constraints. There are many current examples of council officers working with relevant local VCS organisations, including providers, and service users to develop, deliver and review services and policies including:

- a. the Strategic Implementation Group, which is supported by council officers
- b. a number of networks - Learning Impairment, Mental Health and DAWN (Darlington Ageing Well Network) – which are attended and used by officers, including the council’s commissioning team, to consult with Experts by Experience
- c. consultation with service users during all service reviews
- d. Experts by Experience taking a role in all CQC service inspections.

Going forward, the draft equality policy proposes an annual assembly organised by Darlington Partnership will provide a forum for senior representatives of the Council and relevant partners, including Health, the Police, Fire and Rescue and the local Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), to meet with residents from local protected characteristic groups to celebrate Darlington’s diversity and jointly consider equality-related issues raised by different protected characteristic groups. In addition, the proposed equality group will ensure that officers in each service area recognise the importance of engaging with residents from protected characteristic groups whenever policies and/or services likely to impact on them are being designed, developed or reviewed.

3. Ensuring council services and information are accessible

Feedback received relating to this principle requested all information published by the council to be accessible, where possible, including mail-outs and the website

The Care Act 2014 makes it a legal requirement for the council to ensure information about services is accessible and clear. A number of work streams to ensure this is the case are currently underway, including the development of a comprehensive directory of local services and recording mail-out requirements of service users to be recorded. majority of documents on the website are currently uploaded in PDF format after the council received advice that this format is more accessible in many instances, however if this is not the case it is something we

would be keen to amend, subject to more detailed conversations with stakeholders.

4. Equality training should be regularly updated and suited to specific service areas

Feedback received relating to this principle requested a number of elements, often very specific, to be included in council training for officers and Members, and emphasised a need for training to be regularly refreshed and shared with local VCS organisations

The draft equality policy and objective include a commitment to reviewing current training programmes, with a view to updating any that are not considered to be delivering the necessary skills to ensure delivery of the draft policy. Subject to review it is anticipated that a range of training methods will be commissioned in order to address both general and service-area specific issues. Feedback collected from both the pre-consultation and public consultation will be used to help inform this review, along with data analysis of equality-related measures to aid understanding of the make-up of the community. The council is also in the process of arranging refresher training for Members on equalities. Finally, the council's complaints procedures provide a route for any concerns to be raised and investigated.

5. EIAs should be completed correctly when appropriate

Feedback received relating to this principle requested the impact on an individual is measured, not just the number of individuals when undertaking equality impact assessments (EIAs), and that EIAs contain data sources and how progress will be measured and reported

The draft equality policy includes guidance for staff on how to complete EIAs, including a new screening form which has been designed to make it clearer for officers to know when an EIA is required. Once this guidance has been agreed, following consultation, it will be circulated to all officers.

6. Equality information should be readily available and regularly updated

Feedback received relating to this principle requested the council's webpage on equality information to be more comprehensive and regularly updated, and to include information for groups on how to contact one another and why the council uses certain languages for translated documents

The loss of a dedicated equality team – due to budget cuts – means that this information is not collected and updated as regularly although the council website does still include a significant amount of equality information, however given the feedback received the council may need to publicise this information more. Going forward, an analysis of equality-related indicators has been undertaken during the development of the new draft policy, which proposes that these indicators be collected and reported on regularly as part of the corporate performance monitoring framework. A review of the equality pages on the council's website will

also be undertaken to ensure it is as accessible and easy to find as possible, and include information for groups on how to contact other groups and why certain languages are used for translated documents.

7. Equality should be embedded throughout the Council's governance

Feedback received relating to this principle requested that equality be golden thread running through the council's strategy, policy and service delivery, performance and improvement planning, commissioning and engagement

The draft equality policy outlines the council's proposed new approach to equalities, which aims to ensure that it continues to be a golden thread embedded across the organisation, as outlined in the vision One Darlington Perfectly Placed to tackle inequality. While much good work is already undertaken internally to ensure this is the case, including regular use of Equality Impact Assessments and a requirement within all contracts for providers to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty, the council will be receptive to any ideas as to how further achieve this ambition during the public consultation on the draft policy and is already taking steps to ensure a consistent approach to equalities is adopted across the organisation, including:

- a. Developing a standardised list of equality and diversity questions.
- b. Exploring the feasibility of creating an online consultation system that will alert people to consultations that are of interest to them and provide an easy way for them to give their views.
- c. A free text box will be added to quarterly monitoring returns for any equality impact issues identified by providers to be included.

8. The Council should celebrate diversity

Feedback received relating to this principle requested the council to host events to celebrate diversity across the borough

The council's resources to host events are very limited, however it can offer some support to groups seeking to host an event and it can signpost organisations to funding opportunities via the Darlington Funding for Communities website, and publicise this more on the council website. In terms of the general principle however, that diversity across the borough should be celebrated, the proposed equality group would ensure that officers in each service area recognise the value of diversity and champion it across the authority where applicable.

9. The Council should be a welcoming employer for people from Protected Characteristic Groups

Feedback received relating to this principle requested the council improve recruitment of people with a protected characteristic, asked current employees

how happy they are to identify as having their protected characteristic and become a Diversity Champion.

The council's Human Resources department regularly review options to ensure the council is a friendly and welcoming employer and, subject to resources, undertake those initiatives which address the council's priorities. Suggestions raised by stakeholders during the pre-consultation have been fed back to HR for consideration. The proposed equality group will further ensure that officers in each service area are aware of the need to be a welcoming workplace and how to champion and ensure their service is welcoming and supportive of employees from a protected characteristic group.