



# Equality and Diversity Strategy

## Our Approach to Equalities 2012-15 (2014 refresh)

### What is this document about?

This document shows what Northampton Borough Council will do to make Northampton a place where people are treated with fairness, dignity and respect. It shows how the councillors and people who work for the Council, together with services we commission and provide with others, will make Northampton a place where everyone can access high quality services that have been designed to meet their needs.

It explains how we will promote equality of opportunity, tackle discrimination and foster good relationships between different community groups. It also covers what we will do to support equality of opportunity within our workforce.

### Who is this document for?

**It is for everyone in Northampton** - to show what we will do to make Northampton a fairer place for everyone.

**It is for Northampton Borough Council councillors and employees** – to communicate that the equalities agenda is a priority of the Council and that it is **everyone's business**.

If you need further information, require a summary of this information in an alternative version or if you need help please contact us on: [www.northampton.gov.uk/equality](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/equality)  
Telephone: 0300 330 7000 or Write to us at: The Guildhall, St Giles Square, Northampton NN1 1DE



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Management Board: July 2014

## Foreword

At Northampton Borough Council we recognise that equality and diversity is a fundamental requirement in the delivery of the best services that meet the needs of individuals.

This strategy sets out what the Council will do between 2012-15 to make Northampton a place where people get along with each other and treat each other with dignity and respect.

This strategy highlights the approach that Northampton Borough Council will take in relation to addressing inequalities in the provision of services and as an employer as well as its role in promoting the equality and diversity agenda. We recognise that everyone has a part to play – our councillors, employees, partners, contractors, local organisations and citizens - in making Northampton a place where people get along well with each other, where difference is valued and where everyone treats each other with fairness and respect.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us to develop this strategy. We have talked with a wide range of people to hear their views on what we should be focusing our efforts on. We will continue to use what people have said to develop our priorities for action.

## Equal opportunities

Northampton Borough Council is committed to promoting diversity and equality in everything we do, to improve the quality of life for everyone living, working and visiting the borough.

As an employer and service provider we are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination in terms of:

- age
- disability
- ethnicity
- gender
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- religion/belief
- sexual orientation
- human rights

## About the people of Northampton

Northampton is a distinctive market town strategically situated at the centre of England. Spread over an area of 80.51 sq. km. Northampton has a population of 212,100<sup>1</sup>, making it one of the largest towns and the largest district in the country. By 2020 the population of Northampton is projected to increase to 242,900 and by 2033, to 273,100.<sup>2</sup>

Deprivation is lower than the national average with 1 in 5 residents (nearly 44,000 people)<sup>3</sup> living in the twenty percent most deprived areas nationally and although historically the area suffered as shoe manufacturing closed, now it has become a warehousing/distribution hub because of its excellent road and rail links.

Northampton has a larger proportion of the working age population compared to the county average. Unemployment levels have remained continuously higher than the county average.<sup>4</sup> Around one quarter of residents in age groups 16 to 74 are classified as being economically inactive.<sup>5</sup> In Northampton, the proportion of the population aged 60 and over has increased from 17.7% in 2001 to 18.8 % in 2011, an increase over 5,000 people to nearly 40,000. It is projected that by 2026 there will be an additional 16,000 people aged 65 and over, including an extra 1,700 aged over 90. Nationally, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over has increased from 15% in 1985 to 17% in 2010, an increase of 1.7 million people. By 2035 it is projected that those aged 65 and over will account for 23% of the total population. The fastest population increase has been those aged 85 and over to over 1.4 million. By 2035, it is projected that the number of people aged 85 and over will be almost 2.5 times larger than in 2010 reaching 3.5 million, accounting for 5% of the total UK population.

Northampton is the most ethnically diverse district in the county. Ethnic minorities make up 15.5 per cent of the population. Nearly 5,000<sup>6</sup> people living in Northampton said that their main language was not English and they could not speak English well or at all. All major faiths co-exist in Northampton.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Census 2011-

<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadKeyFigures.do?a=3&b=6275190&c=northampton&d=13&e=62&g=6451666&i=1001x1003x1032x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1375102066246&enc=1>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.northamptonshireobservatory.org.uk/docs/docNorthampton%20Facts%20%20Figures%20combined%202010110308154441.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.northamptonshireobservatory.org.uk/publications/document.asp?documentid=2301&projectid=158>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.northamptonshireobservatory.org.uk/publications/document.asp?documentid=2290&projectid=156> Dec 2011

<sup>5</sup> <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=3&b=6275190&c=northampton&d=13&e=61&g=6451666&i=1001x1003x1032x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1375100915668&enc=1&dsFamilyId=2521>

<sup>6</sup> <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=3&b=6275190&c=northampton&d=13&e=61&g=6451666&i=1001x1003x1032x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1375100915668&enc=1&dsFamilyId=2500>

<sup>7</sup> <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadTableView.do?a=3&b=6275190&c=northampton&d=13&e=61&g=6451666&i=1001x1003x1032x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1375100915668&enc=1&dsFamilyId=2579> and 'Northampton's Faith Communities: A profile and Places of Worship Audit and Needs Assessment' [www.northampton.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/6195/faith\\_study\\_final\\_report\\_2013](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/6195/faith_study_final_report_2013)

## What do 'equality', 'diversity' and 'human rights' really mean?

**Equality:** is about creating a fairer society where everyone has the same chance to fulfil their potential, to participate fully in the community and have access to the services they need. Equality of opportunity is about equal access, treatment and outcomes that meet individual needs.

**Diversity:** is about recognising and valuing differences in their broadest sense: understanding people's differences and similarities to help the individual, the council and society as a whole.

**Human rights:** are basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world. Human rights are based on core principles like dignity, fairness, equality and respect. They affect your day-to-day life and protect your freedom to control your own life, to take part in elections and council decision-making, to get fair services from public authorities. They help you to be safe, be treated fairly and with dignity; live the life you choose; and take an active part in your community and wider society.

## Why are equality, diversity and human rights important?

**The moral case:** treating people fairly and well with respect for their diversity and human rights is a fundamental value of civilised societies.

**The business case:** investing in equality, diversity and human rights will result in the council designing and delivering more efficient and effective services that more people can use. It can lead to greater employee productivity, creativity, innovation and flexibility. This means more value for money for the taxpayers in Northampton.

**The legal case:** The law imposes duties on the council and others providing public functions. These seek to reduce bureaucracy, support improvement in services and accountability to local people. The duties include a 'general' duty to have regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups; and
- foster good relations between people from different groups.

Having 'due regard' means showing we think about the three aims of the general duty as part of the process of decision-making by services and the council as a whole. We will publish information as required by new regulations – to help everyone see how we are working to the equality duties.

## How do we measure our approach to equalities?

At Northampton Borough Council we have used the **Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG)** which is the national performance improvement and benchmarking tool for the sector to help us embed good equality and diversity practice.

Northampton Borough Council completed a satisfactory self-assessment against the criteria for level 3 of the Equality Standard in 2009. This equated to the Achieving level of the Equality Framework for local government for the purposes of external assessment. Since then the Council has continued on its journey to becoming an 'Excellent' authority in terms of equality. This was confirmed by an internal self-assessment undertaken in 2014.

## What the people we serve think our equality priorities should be

We consulted people between 2011 and 2012 about equalities. We also took into account the results of consultations and research by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, issues of concern to people raised at Forum meetings, and service and corporate planning information, to help identify corporate equality objectives.

Hate crime including bullying was an issue of concern identified from a number of different sources. These included the Community Safety Partnership Priorities Consultation in 2011, an Overview and Scrutiny Committee Panel's work on hate crime in response to public requests, and Forums' work such as Northampton Youth Forum's "Stamp out Hate Crime" campaign. National evidence has also been published about the need for more to be done by Councils to help people with hate crime. The council has public sector equality duties which require it to have due regard to issues related to hate crime such as discrimination, harassment and fostering good relations. The council has other legal duties in relation to crime and disorder which are also relevant to hate crime.

Workforce monitoring and transparency is a key requirement of the public sector equality duties. The council's employee opinion and Stonewall Workplace Index returns, along with other evidence available within the council about training needs, appraisals, grievances, recruitment etc, help to provide a picture of changing needs of the workforce. A key purpose of the equality duties is to ensure the workforce is treated fairly.

Helping people in vulnerable situations – whether due to disability, domestic violence, hate crime, homelessness, mental health or other need – is an important responsibility of the Council and one which it recognises the need to do more about.

### Areas we need to improve:

- **How we prevent and deal with hate crime including bullying.** A "hate crime" is any incident perceived by the victim or any other person to have happened because of hate or prejudice and which happens to be a criminal offence e.g. verbal abuse, assault, graffiti, damage to property, bullying, malicious phone calls and texts.
- **We need to monitor our workforce strategy** to make sure it is helping to maximise the potential of all staff and that staff feel supported and free from bullying at work

- **We need to improve how we help and support vulnerable people** in aspects of their housing and well-being.
- **We need to improve satisfaction about how we communicate and consult with people.** More people need to feel communication is accessible, consultation is meaningful and that they can influence decisions.
- **We need to improve our approach to equality impact assessments (EIAs)**, particularly publishing them and involving people from outside the council in their development.. We need to ensure that their quality and integration to service development continues to improve.
- **Partnership working and grants funding-** We need to ensure that organisations we work with, or fund, are able to identify how communities are changing and the impact this may have on equality priorities.
- **Continue on our journey to becoming an “Excellent authority” in terms of equality-** We want to improve in everything we do.

## **Our corporate equality objectives**

Based on the above factors, we have developed the following key objectives which we will work towards to help us along our equality journey.

- **We will improve the mechanisms available for local people to report incidents of Hate Crime and support individuals to feel confident that the Council will act appropriately on the information provided**
- **We will review the evidence we have, to ensure Council services identify the most efficient and effective ways to deliver services through a modern diverse workforce, reflective of the community we serve, equipped and maximising their use of the right skills and knowledge to serve the community efficiently well.**
- **We will further develop the Gateway Service to support those in most need**
- **We will use the Equality Framework for Local Government to guide equality improvement**
- **We will listen to the views of our residents and our communities and use their feedback when we design, change or withdraw services**
- **Support individuals affected by the Welfare and Housing Reform through effective communications of the changes and impacts upon them**

These high-level actions will be supported by appropriate and relevant action plans which will be service specific. To view our **Equality Self-Assessment Action Plan**, see **Appendix 1** (page 10).

## **What are we doing to ensure equality, diversity and human rights are considered in everything we do?**

### **Identifying which of our functions and policies are relevant to equality**

We need to identify everything we do that is relevant to the duty to promote equality. Whenever Services consider or implement changes or new approaches they need to make sure they consider equalities and accessibility aspects of what they do and need to improve.

### **Assessing how services and plans impact on people**

We need to be sure that what we do meets the needs of our communities and do not disadvantage a particular group of people. And we need to ensure that all of our services, in terms of their design and delivery, are fair and accessible to everyone and that there is equality of outcome for all.

We have developed a process that enables us to check everything that we do for its impact on equality and diversity. We have called this process an community/equality impact assessment.

An impact assessment should be undertaken, as appropriate and relevant, as follows:

- When new functions, policies, procedures and services are developed
- When we plan significant changes to functions, policies, procedures and services
- When we review existing functions and policies over time

Impact Assessments are published in our website. To view Key Equality/Community Impact Assessments, please view:

<http://www.northampton.gov.uk/homepage/493/equality-community-impact-assessments>

### **Consulting and talking with people**

The Council's Consultation Toolkit includes guidance on equality issues and the need to ensure a wide enough range of people is included in consultations: see [www.northampton.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.northampton.gov.uk/consultation).

The Council has a number of community forums. These help the council stay informed about the impacts ways it is working are having on people in different equality groups so that it can look to make changes as appropriate. The Council's Young Voices group and tenant participation mechanisms help it to keep informed and involve people it serves in considering ways it is working and improving them.

Services regularly seek feedback and consider what people have told them, including on equalities.

### **Employment monitoring**

The Council is committed to using the data collected to check whether any equality group is being disadvantaged by any of the Council's employment policies or procedures – and to addressing issues identified. You can find a copy of Workforce Monitoring Report at:

<http://www.northampton.gov.uk/downloads/download/1826/workforce-monitoring-report>

## Staff Development and Competency

**Investor In People standard:** The Council achieved this accreditation in 2010 and underwent a re-accreditation process in 2013.

**Managers' sessions:** In relation specifically to promoting understanding of equality and diversity, Managers sessions (which involve Directors, all managers and team leaders) receive appropriate updates on equalities and are used for development activities to ensure they are aware of the Council's, and their own, responsibilities.

**Employee Development:** A basic level of training is provided through the 'Valuing Diversity' course for all staff. E-learning includes material on safeguarding. Other courses e.g. on customer service have been reviewed and developed to integrate equalities content to build knowledge and skills of staff, adding value to training at no extra cost. Work continues to improve training available to staff.

**Performance-Related Pay:** The Council implemented performance-related pay. From 2012 this will impact on team leaders' and managers' pay; from 2013 on all employees. A revised scheme will be introduced in 2014. Staff at all levels will need to demonstrate achievement of behavioural competencies. The competencies integrate good practice on equalities and diversity into performance. Requirements for managers for example include to treat everyone 'equally and fairly', to have regard to language and behaviour which others might find offensive, to foster good relations, to involve customers in evaluating services and to recognise that valuing diversity can help to develop excellent customer service.

**Councillors** take their learning and development needs seriously. They have opportunities to take part in equality and diversity training and activity – for example through Open Day training sessions for newly-elected councillors, personal development plans for councillors and Councillor Development Training Sessions. Councillors receive email briefings on equality to keep them informed of changes to the law and best-practice guidance, such as that for financial decision-makers. Several councillors take an active role in our Forums for equality stakeholder engagement and have joined their mailing lists and/or Facebook pages.

**Evaluation and improvement:** Training sessions provided by the Employee Development Unit and other staff, for example as part of the Councillor Development Programme, are routinely evaluated as part of commitment to continuing improvement. In the event there are concerns about attitudes or issues mentioned in relation to equalities and diversity, these will be raised with line managers in order that appropriate action can be taken.

## Ensuring equality and diversity is considered in procurement and commissioning

The Council is committed to equal opportunities and expects its partners and suppliers to share this commitment. The Procurement function was transferred to the LGSS in July 2013. The role of procurement in this context is to influence and promote good equalities practice in those organisations that supply goods and services to the Council or to the citizens of the Borough. Our tender documents already require prospective suppliers to abide by equal opportunities legislation, and to provide documentary evidence of this.

**Safeguarding:** the Council is a member of the Local Safeguarding Board. It will have due regard to its safeguarding duties when commissioning services for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

## Measuring Performance and Improvement

We have identified a number of equality and diversity performance indicators which we have embedded into our corporate and service level performance management process. The indicators cover both employment and service delivery.

### Equality Performance Mapping

Equality Framework for Local Government - Performance Areas	Equality Goals	Equality Strategy objectives	Corporate Performance Indicators and Reporting
Knowing your communities	The Council maintains rich local information and uses it when making decisions and developing services		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Equality Impact Assessments (website)</li> <li>Intelligence (website)</li> <li>Outturn report (website)</li> </ul>
Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment	The Council works together and with partners on a common commitment to promote equality	<p>EFLG to guide equality improvement</p> <p>Improve the mechanisms available for local people to report incidents of Hate Crime and support individuals to feel confident that the Council will act appropriately on the information provided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corporate Plan</li> <li>TC001 Number of events delivered in partnership: Town Centre</li> <li>TC002 Number of events delivered in partnership: parks and open spaces</li> <li>PP15 Increase in hate crime reporting from base line</li> </ul>
Community engagement and satisfaction	The community is well informed, consulted and engaged with diversity represented	We will listen to the views of our residents and our communities and use their feedback when we design, change or withdraw services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CE01 % of community led projects and events delivered</li> <li>CS05 Percentage satisfied with the overall service provided by the Customer Service Officer</li> <li>CE03 Increase attendance at forums, including service providers and service users</li> <li>CE04 Increase of people regularly volunteering</li> <li>CE05 Increase in organisations offering volunteering placements</li> <li>ESC14 No. of justified complaints</li> <li>HI30 Percentage of tenants satisfied with the most recent repair</li> <li>Annual Consultation Report</li> <li>Customer Feedback Report</li> </ul>
Responsive services and customer care	The Council's services are accessible and responsive to all	<p>Develop Gateway to support those in most need</p> <p>Support individuals affected by Welfare and Housing Reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HMLS03 Successful prevention cases</li> <li>HMLS04 No of homeless applications made</li> <li>HMLS05 No of homeless applications accepted</li> <li>HI13 Tenant arrears</li> <li>Disabled Facilities Grants awarded</li> </ul>
Skilled and committed workforce	The workforce is diverse and feels empowered. It is well trained in respect of equality matters, it enjoys a fair workplace	Deliver services via a modern and diverse workforce reflective of our community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HR2 % Courses delivered</li> <li>BV012r Average no. of days/shifts lost to sickness for rolling 12 month figure</li> <li>HR05 % of Staff either Achieving or Exceeding standard</li> <li>Dignity at Work/Workforce Analysis</li> </ul>

## Reviewing progress against this strategy

This document will be reviewed annually.

## Appendix 1

## Equality Self-Assessment Action Plan/Areas for improvement 2014/15

What -areas for improvement	How-Potential solutions	When	How will we measure success
Accessible equality information- Demographic data is available but used inconsistently to inform CIA/EIAs	Data sources to be stored centrally with effective signposting for users and potential users	By September 2014-SK	Intelligence resources identified and in place. Quality Impact assessments inform decisions
Better use of stakeholder analysis to carry out consultations	Stakeholder template to be promoted	Ongoing-all	Stakeholder template in place-Reports to decision makers clearly identify who is/may be affected, who knows about the issue and who can influence decision making
Consultation feedback to be made transparent and timely - Findings/knowledge used to inform decision making	Use consultation portal to inform stakeholders and wider community on how views have been used to make decisions	Ongoing-all	Information available online and annual report published
Impact Assessment process to be strengthened	Introduce quality control	Ongoing-all	Improved evidence based decision making
Fair representation on the Panel for partnership grants should involve community and voluntary representation	Initiate a voting/nomination process through Northampton Community and Voluntary Sector Forum	For 2015 period-VR	Improved representation
Increase the attendance and representation at the community forums	Communications Plan, utilising the production of a leaflet and social media, direct contact made with service providers	Spring 2014 media promotion -VR	Increase attendance at forums, including service providers and service users (CE03)
Increase staff satisfaction (inc. across protected characteristics)	Staff survey	Ongoing-Corporate	Improve % satisfied
HR Policies are equality focused	Policy review plan in place	Ongoing-HR	Workforce Monitoring Report Stonewall Benchmarking
Staff equality networks and participation	Promote availability of Community Forums to staff	Ongoing-VR/HR	Staff satisfaction
Equality role models in particular in respect of LGBT	Use Straight Allies model	Ongoing-VR	Stonewall benchmarking
Training-identification of needs and availability of suitable courses	Better quality interim and annual appraisals to identify gaps	Ongoing-HR	Appraisal system Workforce Monitoring Report
An inclusive workplace supported by a fair recruitment and retention approach"	Improve monitoring of staff across protected characteristics	Annual-HR	Workforce Monitoring-Pathways identified for underrepresented groups
People feel views taken into consideration	Tenant Survey and others	Ongoing-Corporate	Perception of satisfaction with being heard increases

VR=Victoria Rockall SK=Silvina Katz