

# Race Equality Scheme

## Updated 2005-8

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If you require a large print copy please contact Rob Mace on 01386 565517.

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## **1. Introduction**

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

The Act places three general duties on us, to:

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

It also gives us a number of specific duties.

This is the updated version of our first Race Equality Scheme that was published in 2002. It is one element of our overall diversity policy called 'Reaching out to everyone' and sets out how we not only meeting our duties under the Race Relations Amendment Act but also how we are working to improve quality of life for everyone in our communities.

## **2. Our approach to equality & diversity**

Our commitment to the equality agenda is set out within our third corporate priority 'Reaching out to everyone'. It is also an intrinsic part of our overall aim "to deliver excellent services and work with partners to improve quality of life in Wychavon for everyone".

We have 45 District Councillors, who are elected every four years. The next ordinary election of Councillors will be in May 2007. We employ around 300 staff and are the lowest staffed council per head of population in the West Midlands.

For more information about our political structure, organisational structure and decision-making processes as well as our vision, main objectives and corporate priorities please refer to our Annual Report and on our website.

Our first RES was formed following an independent audit of our equalities work in 2000. The actions put in place included setting up our in house equalities team and publishing our first equalities action plan. Since then our Equalities Working Group has been driving the work forward and we have made substantial progress.

This scheme forms a distinct strand of our overall approach to equality and diversity. More information about this can be found in our diversity policy called 'reaching out to everyone'. This sets out the many ways in which we are continuing to mainstream diversity issues into our

work. As we have a specific duty to prepare a race equality scheme this document aims to set out our specific duty regarding race equality and how we are working to meet this.

### 3. Diversity in the district

The District has a very small ethnic minority population of only 1.2%. But we wish to make sure we have an understanding of the needs and aspirations of all of our community groups. This means we are working alongside other bodies such as Worcestershire County Council, West Mercia Constabulary and Worcestershire Racial Equality Council to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination.

Wychavon covers 260 square miles and is the largest of the Worcestershire Districts. It has a population of 113,400 split between the three towns of Droitwich Spa, Evesham and Pershore, more than 100 villages and other smaller rural communities. This diversity adds much to the character of the area and also means that we need to make sure that our services are fair and accessible for everyone, including people from minority ethnic communities who may experience greater isolation. We wish to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

The 2001 census showed that 1.2% of residents in Wychavon are from ethnic minority communities. A breakdown of the census data is shown in appendix A.

A distinct ethnic minority group within Wychavon is **Gypsies and Travellers**. Despite the fact that Gypsies are not included as a distinct ethnic group in the ten-yearly census, another way of obtaining some information on the level of accommodation need is by looking at the number of caravans that make up the total household spaces. This is, however, likely to be an underestimate due to the practicalities of sending Gypsies and Travellers forms in the first place and low levels of literacy. According to the 2001 census of the population of 46, 819 occupied household spaces in Wychavon 469 are caravans or other mobile or temporary dwellings.<sup>1</sup> According to the census, Wychavon's non-white ethnic population (which does not include Gypsies) is 1.2%, around 1300 individuals. According to collected data for the bi-annual count of Gypsy caravans, Wychavon's Gypsy population is around 540 individuals. If these statistics are taken together (an admittedly inexact science), Gypsies make up around 29% of Wychavon's overall ethnic population. In data collected from the census, Wychavon's largest ethnic group was found to be Mixed White and Black Caribbean (210 individuals). Wychavon's Gypsy population is, clearly, more than double this. However, this data should be treated extremely cautiously as Gypsies and Travellers are a truly hidden population in this census exercise. Members of these communities may have a) not filled in a form, b) ticked the White Other or White Irish box or c) ticked the Other Ethnic Group box. Nevertheless, other local authorities have combined census and count data and openly quote Gypsies and Travellers as the largest ethnic group in their area on websites and in policies. It would not be inaccurate for Wychavon to say the same, albeit without mentioning specific statistics.

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<sup>1</sup> 2001 census <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/home/census2001.asp>

## 4. What we've done since our last Race Equality Scheme

Here's a summary of some of the things we have done since our first Race Equality Scheme was produced.

- In 2003 we conducted a social exclusion review to identify new actions to take our work forward. This involved us working with an independent consultant (Link Support Services) and also advice from the Audit Commission. Race equality emerged as a key theme and this has also been highlighted in research by the Social Exclusion Unit that found "racial discrimination plays an important role in the disproportionate social exclusion experienced by people from minority ethnic communities".
- We made a formal commitment to the equalities agenda by achieving level 1 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in January 2005. This means we are now working to progress our work each year and achieve the next levels of the Standard.
- Formed an Agriculture and Food Labour panel to review issues regarding casual labour and migrant workers in the district and put an action plan in place
- Provided equalities training and also raised awareness about social inclusion issues with staff and members
- Received positive feedback on our equalities and diversity work by the Audit Commission in 2004 and also as part of our Housing inspection report
- Increased our involvement with the Worcestershire Equalities Group to work collaboratively on key issues facing the county.
- Worked with partners to help set up the Rural Network for Community Cohesion
- Continued to run our annual Eastern Arts Festival in Evesham to celebrate diversity in the district
- Housing Services 'excellent' CPA rating awarded on twenty key areas. One of these was 'a good understanding and response to the needs of traveller and gypsy communities'.
- Community Safety – as part of the South Worcestershire Crime and Disorder Partnership it had been agreed with West Mercia Police that officers would visit Gypsy sites on Wychavon's behalf to find out how safe the inhabitants feel and whether they have been the victims of crime. Anecdotally, the Community Safety Co-ordinator has helped residents who defined themselves as Gypsies (settled) but no records are kept as to the ethnicity of customers.

- All caravans in the district are counted twice a year as part of the ODPM national count. Since 2004 this does not include information on individuals (e.g. how many children, adults and families on each site).
- Produced a detailed map of all the public, private, and unauthorised Gypsy sites in the district (enables service provision if officers know where customers live).
- 2004/2005 conducted research into the national and local context of Wychavon's work with Gypsies and Travellers and assessed the efficacy of the biannual count as well as looking at best practice in other local councils. (Not yet published).
- 2002, Wychavon, Worcestershire County Council, Rural Media Company, *You Don't Know Me*, Gypsies and Travellers in conversation with people whose jobs affect them.
- Two editions of *Equal Rights for Everyone* newsletter intended for readers in both the settled community and in Gypsy and Traveller communities. Designed to dispel some of the myths that increase tensions between the two groups.
- Interpretation services available on all of our publications and documents contain Ethnic Access Link information.
- Published a new 'Making a Real Difference' Housing Strategy Action Plan 2005-2008, and p.116 'Identify housing need amongst the migrant and traveller communities' by March 2006.

## **5. Meeting our Race Equality Duties**

### **▪ Identifying functions and policies**

As part of updating our RES we have conducted a preliminary assessment of our functions and policies that are key to race equality. Our diversity policy sets out how assessments are made at the time when new policies are formed. And also how impact assessments take place through a process of annual improvement sessions. Further assessment of functions and policies in relation to our general duty is part of this process.

The results of this assessment will feed into our annual diversity action plan so that departmental actions are put in place to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good race relations.

The progress of the Race Equality Scheme will be reviewed as part of our annual diversity update. Action and Priorities will be reviewed annually by the Working Group, with any substantial changes being reported to the Senior Management Team and the Executive Board for decision.

In addition to the new general duties introduced by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, there are a number of specific duties, as set out below.

▪ **Monitoring existing policies**

All existing policies relating to external service delivery to customers need to be reviewed in relation to their impact on different sections of the community, with a view to ensuring equal access for all. Obtaining information about community perceptions, the uptake of services and the impact of policies on different groups will be of assistance in assessing the progress towards our general duties.

Monitoring helps us to assess whether our policies are discriminating against some racial groups, while ethnic monitoring data should provide a source of information on whether discrimination is taking place. Monitoring data will be used to inform service planning and the future procedures for the delivery of services and to trigger, where appropriate (i.e. where unjustifiable discrimination is identified), changes to relevant policies, procedures or methods of service delivery.

▪ **Assessment and consultation**

We conduct assessments of the impact of proposed policies on equality of service provision. In order to increase consideration of race equality in the policy-making process all policies are screened before they are agreed.

The approach involves identifying in the implications section of the report, what the impact assessment is i.e. the potential impact of the policy/service to all sections of the community.

Our assessment is based on evidence from various sources including:

- ◆ Demographic data and other statistics
- ◆ Research findings
- ◆ Survey data
- ◆ Complaints and compliments
- ◆ Community views arising from our Partnership's work and community planning
- ◆ Ethnic monitoring data
- ◆ Data including qualitative casework data from groups and agencies directly in touch with residents from minority ethnic communities
- ◆ Consideration of policies in relation to our aims and priorities

The data obtained will be used to inform service planning and future procedures for the delivery of services and to trigger where appropriate, changes to policy, procedure, or service delivery.

- **Publication of monitoring results**

As part of the duty we are required to publish the results of ethnic monitoring, equality impact assessments and consultations. All of the key documents relating to equalities will be available on our website and our annual diversity progress report will include progress on our race equality scheme will be considered by the Senior Management Team and our Executive Board.

- **Equality of access to information and services**

This part of the duty is about making sure that information about our organisation and services is available for everyone. This has been an on-going commitment for us and will remain so. We look for continuous improvement in this area, as we do in all aspects of our service delivery.

If people from ethnic minorities do not know about particular services we provide, are not confident about using them, or meet barriers when they try to use them we will be failing in our duty to make our services equally available to everyone. If we identify deficiencies in the quality of our information or barriers that prevent equal access to information, we must change the way it is presented.

We want all of our services to be fully accessible to all parts of the community. Equality impact assessments will help us to highlight any factors, which indirectly or directly discriminate by making a particular service less accessible to particular groups. These assessments will include patterns of use of services.

All of our information is available in a range of languages, on tape, in braille, large print and other formats. This does not mean that we will produce everything in these formats as a matter of course. What it does mean is that we make sure that we are able to make reasonable adjustments if there is a demand for information to be delivered in a different way.

- **Training**

This part of the duty aims to make sure that employees have the skills they need to ensure that we can meet our general duties and that employees understand their responsibilities under the act.

We want to maintain a committed, motivated, safe and healthy workforce with the necessary skills to achieve our objectives. We also recognise that effective communication, learning and development of both employees and Members will play a key role in the implementation of the Race Equality Scheme and will work towards addressing any institutional racism or discrimination.

The aim of awareness training is to enable people to respect the different needs of

customers and employees irrespective of cultural background.

We will set out the knowledge that people will need in terms of the general and specific duties, the promotion of equality, the nature of direct and indirect discrimination and the meaning of institutional racism.

We will promote equality of access to training and development opportunities across all service areas and for employees at all levels. Our performance development and review scheme links employees' personal objectives with the performance management framework and Service Plans. The performance management framework provides a basis for managing Corporate, Service and individual objectives. An annual appraisal of the degree to which objectives are met is undertaken. This then feeds into plans for the following year.

We will play close attention to the training and development opportunities undertaken by employees from minority groups. This will be done as part of the performance review and development process. As with all training that we carry out any future training will be evaluated to determine its effectiveness.

#### ▪ **Employment Issues**

This part of the duty requires us to set out how we will monitor employment on a continual basis with a view to setting specific targets covering all aspects of employment.

Monitoring is now required on:

- ◆ Employees in post
- ◆ Applicants for jobs
- ◆ Applicants for training
- ◆ Applicants for promotion
- ◆ Employees who receive training
- ◆ Results of performance appraisals
- ◆ Cases of grievance and discipline
- ◆ Leavers

Should this monitoring highlight any need for managerial action to be taken, this will be the subject of a formal report by the Personnel & Training Manager to the Senior Management Team.

However, it should be noted that much of this monitoring information will not be published, for reasons of data protection for information of a confidential nature. In view of the relatively small numbers that will be involved, it is very important to protect individuals' rights to privacy.

## 6. Your feedback

We welcome feedback and investigate complaints about any aspect of our services, and the information we collect from these sources is used to improve service delivery to all our customers. Details of our Complaints Procedure are available in leaflets at the Civic Centre and Council Shops and on the Website ([www.wychvon.gov.uk](http://www.wychvon.gov.uk)).

If any complaint appears to have a racial equality dimension, this will be referred to our Monitoring Officer who will report the matter to the Equalities Working Group and/or Worcestershire Race Equality Council. The matter will also be discussed with the relevant Head of Service.

If any customer remains dissatisfied having gone through our internal procedures we will advise them of their right to take the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman and/or the Worcestershire Racial Equality Council.

## 7. Key Implementation dates

Action	Date
Corporate Commitment to Level 1 of the Equality Standard	January 2005
RES reviewed	May 2005
Draft Diversity Policy produced	June 2005
Consultation period on policy	August 2005
Publish updated RES	September 2005
Executive Board to agree Diversity policy	September 2005
Run diversity Improvement sessions	September-October
Produce draft action plan	December 2005
Build actions into service plans	February 2006
First annual diversity update	August 2006

## 8. Comments, queries and further information

We welcome your comments on our updated Race Equality Scheme. If you would like to comment, have any questions or require this document in a range of languages, on tape, in braille, large print and other formats please contact:

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