

York Equality Scheme



York Equality Scheme 2012-2016

A Fairer York

We are committed to fairness and equality in everything we do

York Equality Scheme – A Fairer York is our vision for an equal, inclusive, and welcoming council and city, as well as how we will go about making sure that everyone enjoys the excellent quality of life our city offers.

Contents

Foreword by Cllr Sonja Crisp	1
About the scheme	2
Why do we need a scheme?	2
How was the scheme put together?	2
Who does the scheme apply to?	3
Who is the scheme for?	4
Delivering the scheme	6
Making sure the scheme works	7
Reporting progress	7
Scheme objectives	8
A Fairer York - Narrowing the gaps	
Respecting and celebrating diversity	
An enabling, positive, and diverse council workforce	
Council vision for fairness	10
Equality Legislation and Public Sector Duties	12

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A FAIRER YORK

Foreword

At City of York Council we are committed to fairness and equality in everything we do.

City of York Council Equality Scheme – A Fairer York is our vision for an equal, inclusive, and welcoming council and city, as well as how we will go about making sure that everyone enjoys the excellent quality of life our city offers.

The aim of the scheme is to benefit everyone in the city who at some point in time may experience discrimination or disadvantage (which impacts on their quality of life and life opportunities). In putting the scheme together, we have talked to many community groups and partners. In summary they told us that the council (and its partners) should try to continuously improve life in the city for everyone, but that we should start with groups that face many difficulties and have had them for a long time.

The scheme includes details about what the council wants to achieve, how, and how we'll know that we have achieved it. It also covers how the council works as a community leader, in partnership with other organisations, how it commissions and delivers services through others, and how it treats its employees.

I hope you will find reading the scheme useful and that you will let us have your views about it by e-mailing evie.chandler@york.gov.uk or ringing (01904) 551704. You can do this at any time, as the scheme will be monitored and reviewed annually. It is my sincere intention that we will try our best to take what you tell us on board and improve the way we work every time we review this scheme.



Cllr Sonja Crisp
Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure,
Tourism and Social Inclusion

About the scheme

Why do we need a scheme?

The scheme will help councillors and officers manage council business so that residents, visitors, customers, and staff can all enjoy good life outcomes, regardless of who they are and the opportunities and challenges that they face.

The scheme also supports the general public to find out what the council is doing about equality and whether it meets the objectives it has set in this area.

Finally the scheme will help the council to meet the Duties it has under the Equality Act 2010. These are outlined on page 12.

How was the scheme put together?

The scheme was put together using statistics and other evidence - including the results of engagement with specific groups - that informed the following:

- **The One City Plan 2011-15** developed by York's local strategic partnership, a group of organisations working to improve the quality of life of local people.
- **The York Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) 2012** which provides a comprehensive local picture of the health and wellbeing needs of all the people who live in York.
- **The Fairness Commission report**, published in September 2012. The commission is an independent advisory body set up by City of York Council to recommend ways the council can increase fairness and reduce inequality in York in the six key areas that emerged from feedback: Health, Incomes and Work, Education, Housing, Diversity and Community Life.

The York Fairness Commission is a non-political, completely independent, and entirely voluntary advisory body.

- **The Big York Survey Results 2012** -The Big York Survey provides an opportunity for people to express their views, give feedback and ideas on city-wide services, and more importantly tell us how improvements could be made to deliver them across the city. The survey focuses on a range of topics including York's economy, communities, protecting vulnerable people, protecting the environment and travelling and transport in York. Results are broken down by equality strands. Over 2,800 residents considered the survey resulting in 1,117 replies.
- **Other Engagement Activity** including feedback from meetings and Help us to get it Right Days organised by the council's Equality Advisory Group (EAG)

Issues identified through the analysis of these sources are highlighted in depth in the **Scheme Objectives** document.

Each time this scheme is refreshed in the future, we shall use updates to these sources of evidence, as well as other material (such as customer and staff feedback, community impact assessments, complaints etc) as appropriate.

Who does the scheme apply to?

The scheme applies to:

- Council employees and elected members
- People on work placements with the council
- Volunteers working for the council
- Organisations and individuals commissioned by the council to provide services or facilities.

Who is the scheme for?

The scheme is for the benefit of everyone in the city, who at some point in time may experience discrimination or disadvantage which impacts on their quality of life and life opportunities.

In York we have defined those people who suffer disadvantage or discrimination because of particular characteristics as our **Communities of Identity**.

This scheme will be targeted at specific Communities of Identity;

- Those living in the most deprived wards in York
- Older People, Older People with disabilities
- Those with disabilities (learning and physical)
- Those with mental illness
- Families out of work
- Lone Parents, Pregnant women, Teenage mums
- 16-24 year olds
- Young People with mental health issues, learning difficulties, disabilities
- Young People Leaving Care
- Looked After Children, Children in Poverty on Free school meals, Children with Special Educational Needs, Gypsy and Traveller Children
- Gypsies and Travellers
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Community

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender community
- Carers

With the exception of someone's social and economic background these characteristics are protected under equality legislation – Equality Act 2010.

How will we meet their needs?

The demographics of York's population and council staff are changing rapidly.

According to the latest Centre for Cities Report, York ranks sixth out of the ten top UK cities with the lowest levels of inequality. We, and our partners, will focus on the following areas to maintain and improve this position:

- Reducing income inequalities across the city and minimising the impact of the Welfare Reform Act 2012.
- Providing opportunities for people to gain access to employment and training especially for people from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, women, lone parents, young people, young disabled people including those with learning difficulties, and people suffering from mental health issues.

- Reducing child poverty and fuel poverty.
- Increasing the number of good quality flexible child care provision.
- Increasing the number of new homes being built (particularly affordable homes) and increasing the housing provision for young parents, people with learning difficulties, those with mental health issues and people suffering from dementia.
- Finding ways for older and disabled people to remain in their homes for as long as possible.
- Improving housing conditions in the private sector.
- Meeting the housing need of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities including Gypsy and Traveller Communities.
- Providing more affordable and flexible transport opportunities so that disabled people and young people in particular can travel across the city to health appointments, training, employment, and social activities.
- Improving educational attainment for children on free school meals, children with special educational needs, children who are looked after and for children from the Gypsy and Traveller Community.
- Improving the health outcomes for people with mental health issues, looked after children, young people leaving care, the BAME community and the Gypsy and Traveller Community.
- Improving the Health and Wellbeing amongst young people, pregnant women and manual workers by reducing smoking.
- Reducing the reliance on drugs and alcohol especially for ex-offenders, young people, young parents and those living in care and for people suffering from mental health problems.
- Increasing support for carers so they can continue in their caring role and also maintain employment.
- Respecting and celebrating diversity and tackling hate crime.
- Diversifying the council workforce and enabling Communities of Identity to access council employment opportunities
- Strengthening our engagement and empowerment frameworks.
- Promoting equality and diversity through our procurement and commissioning activity and opening up market opportunities to the voluntary and community sector for delivery of inclusive services.

Delivering the scheme

The council's Cabinet will be responsible for the delivery of the scheme. The Cabinet is the most senior group of decision-makers in the council.

Within the Cabinet, the Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure, Tourism and Social Inclusion will oversee the delivery of the scheme.

They will be supported by the council **Equality Leadership Group**, who will manage the day to day delivery of the scheme, producing quarterly progress reports to be considered by the:

- Cabinet
- Corporate Leadership Group - the group of most senior council officers
- Staff Equalities Reference Group, and
- Equality Advisory Group.

The **Equality Leadership Group** (ELG) is a group of senior council managers. The group is chaired by the Director for Communities and Neighbourhoods who leads on Equality and Diversity issues within the officer body. The aim of ELG is:

- To promote and communicate the importance of fair and inclusive life-enhancing outcomes in the culture of the organisation.
- To oversee the implementation of agreed equality objectives and the council single equality scheme.

The **Staff Equality Reference Group** (SERG) is a group of council workers who come from Communities of Identity. The aim of the group is to:

- Act as in-house experts-by-experience who advise and support council managers who undertake Community Impact Assessments
- Use and share their personal expertise-by-experience with colleagues, to promote knowledge and understanding about equality and inclusion within council services
- Support fellow workers from Community of Identity backgrounds who are facing equality and diversity challenges whilst employed by the council.

Making sure the scheme works

The **Equality Advisory Group** (EAG) is made up of equality community representatives put forward by Community of Identity groups in York. They will meet regularly with the Cabinet Member and the Council Management Team (or delegated officers) to advise on the equality and diversity aspects of key council projects and initiatives as they are being designed and implemented.

The Equality Advisory Group will get regular progress reports about the scheme and also be one of the main ways through which people from Communities of Identity can raise issues (compliments, concerns, complaints etc) about the scheme.

In addition, EAG will hold regular **“Help us to get it Right”** days (about 3-4 per year). These are days when invited members of York’s Community of Identity groups meet with council officers in an informal way to:

- Consider together the impact of council policies and practices on Communities of Identity in York and
- Find solutions that both the council and the Communities of Identity can implement, to deal with any justifiable adverse effects.

In addition to EAG, the council Overview and Scrutiny Committee will check progress with aspects of the scheme each year.

Reporting progress

Every June, starting with June 2013, the council will aim to publish a report telling the public how well we have done with our objectives and targets in the previous financial year (i.e. from April to March).

Scheme objectives

During the scheme we will focus on the following areas of action;

Objective 1 A Fairer York - Narrowing the gaps

This will focus on:

- Income inequality
- Child Poverty
- Unemployment
- Affordable Childcare
- Fuel Poverty
- Housing and Homelessness
- Affordable and accessible transport
- Health and Wellbeing for all
- Improved access to information and services.

Objective 2 Respecting and celebrating diversity

We aim to:

- Foster good relations between different communities living in York
- Promote mutual respect and understanding
- Celebrate our different cultures and histories.

Objective 3 An enabling, positive, diverse and inclusive council workforce

We will make sure that:

- People working for the council (both staff and whenever possible contractors) mirror the communities who live in our city
- Our workers (and people who work for us) understand and respect our different communities and support them to influence, design, and deliver public services where appropriate.

A full and detailed list of objectives, what we want to do and how we will do it for each of the areas we will focus on is available from council receptions, libraries and as a download from www.york.gov.uk/community/equality/ by calling (01904) 551832 or emailing: shapingneighbourhoods@york.gov.uk

Fairness Principles

- 1 Make reducing income inequalities a core value in decision making, for example by paying a living wage.**
- 2 Build social factors into procurement and contracting** to promote good employment practice, enhance local supply chains, reduce inequalities and heighten opportunities for unemployed people in York.
- Strive for **excellence in York's organisations and the way they work together** so that corporate social responsibility is the norm, services are delivered efficiently and effectively, and the city builds a reputation as a leader in tackling inequalities.
- Empower and extend opportunities for disadvantaged groups and individuals.**
- Adopt a long term view and a preventative approach** that acts now to prevent bigger problems in the future.
- Take decisions and run services in an open and transparent manner, **listening to and engaging with communities and customers**, including the most disadvantaged.
- Embed a creative and 'can do' culture** that strives for new solutions and opportunities, even when there are difficult challenges and limited resources.
- Exert influence outside York** to address external factors that drive inequalities or restrict local action within the city.
- Target investments and services to reduce inequalities** and improve life chances in the most disadvantaged areas.
- Promote and prioritise **sustainable economic growth that maximises opportunities and benefits to all people**, including the most disadvantaged (e.g. jobs, wages and wellbeing).

Council vision for fairness

The Cabinet and the council believe that everyone should enjoy the excellent quality of life our city offers.

This means enjoying long, healthy and fulfilling lives in good housing, with excellent opportunities in work, education, training, self-development and participation in public life, safety and security in family and social life, and the chance to enjoy diverse and inclusive culture and leisure opportunities.

To achieve this vision the City of York council will:

- Provide services that are flexible enough to meet the needs of our different communities,
- Employ, support and develop workers from these communities,
- Use the York Fairness Commission principles (see page 9) to guide what we do and how we do it, and
- Work with our partners to support and inspire our communities to continue to ensure that York is a fair, inclusive and a welcoming city.

Also we shall design our policies and practices to be inclusive from the start. For this to happen we shall:

- Carry out Community Impact Assessments (formerly called Equality Impact Assessments) of council policies, strategies, and services to ensure that no-one is being discriminated against (service users or staff) because of who they are.
- Give staff and councillors the necessary skills and training.
- Develop specific plans with each of the Communities of Identity on how we will work together to meet their needs (known as Community of Identity Plans).
- Encourage and support council partners to contribute to the council equality vision and objectives as set out in this scheme.

The Equality Scheme vision is rooted in the overall vision for the City of York set out in the Strategic Plan and the Council Plan 2011-2015.

York's Strategic Plan 2011-2015

The Strategy for York sets out a long term vision for the city and a new set of immediate priorities. It is the result of the efforts of those within the Without Walls Partnership and many other individuals and organisations.

The overall vision is set out in the Strategic Plan 'York, a city making history'. Making our mark by:

- Building confident, healthy and inclusive communities
- Being a leading environmentally-friendly city
- Being at the forefront of innovation with a diverse and thriving economy
- Being a world class centre for culture, education and learning for all
- Celebrating our historic past and creating a successful and ambitious future.

The Council Plan 2011-2015

'Delivering for the People of York excellent and sustainable services accessible to all'.

Our five priorities



Equality Legislation and Public Sector Duties

Equalities Act 2010

The Equalities Act 2010 introduced a public sector Equality Duty requiring public bodies when carrying out their day to day work (from policy to daily practice) to pay 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities, so that they make sure their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs.

By understanding the effect of their activities on different people, and how inclusive public services can support and open up people's opportunities, public bodies can be more efficient, effective and most importantly inclusive.

The legislative framework has two main components: the general duty and the specific duties.

Specific Duties of the Act require us to:

- Be transparent about how we are responding to the Act and to publish information annually to show how we have met the General Duty
- Prepare and publish one or more equality objectives to meet any aims of the General duty every four years.

Due Regard

The duties require public bodies to pay ‘due regard’ – which means in practice to prioritise action to address the most significant areas of inequality in their policies and service delivery and focus their efforts where they can have most impact.

The duty of ‘due regard’ recognises that sometimes as a local authority we have difficult choices to make especially in these times of budget restrictions which may cause disadvantage. However having ‘due regard’ also means that it is vital that decision makers have all the information about the impact a decision might have on York’s Communities of Identity. This scheme ensures that all relevant information is made available through our Community Impact Assessments.

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