Diversity Peer Challenge

Leicester City Council

8\textsuperscript{th}-10\textsuperscript{th} March 2011

Report
1. Background

This report is a summary of the findings of a Diversity Peer Challenge organised by Local Government Improvement and Development and carried out by its trained peers. The report satisfies the requirements of the Equality Framework for Local Government for an external assessment at the Excellent level. The Peer Challenge is designed to validate a council’s own self-assessment at the Excellent Level by considering documentary evidence and by carrying out a series of interviews and focus groups with employees and other stakeholders.

The basis for the Peer Challenge is a benchmark against five areas of performance. They are:

- Knowing your communities and equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A modern and diverse workforce

The Peer Challenge is not an inspection; rather it offers an external assessment of a council’s own judgement of itself against the Equality Framework benchmark, by critical friends who have experience of delivering an equality/diversity agenda in their own councils.

Peers were:

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<th>Peers</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cllr Alan Dean – Liverpool City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kirsty Hopkins – Newcastle City Council</td>
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<td>Lynn Sharkey – Cleveland Fire Brigade</td>
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<td>Carol Trachonitis – Herefordshire Council</td>
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The team appreciates the welcome and hospitality provided by the council and would like to thank everybody that they met during the process for their time and contributions.

2. Executive summary and recommendations

Following this Diversity Peer Challenge, we have reached the following conclusion:

**Leicester City Council has completed a self-assessment against the criteria for the Excellent level of the Equality Framework. However, the peers do not feel that this self-assessment and the supporting evidence meets the requirements of the Excellent level at this time.**

There are many examples of good and excellent practice across the council. However this is tempered by a number of key areas for improvement. The main conclusions and recommendations are as follows:
Conclusions:

1. There has been an emphasis on community cohesion, with successful outcomes in Leicester, but less on promoting equality of opportunity and providing equitable services.
2. Although there are a number of good examples of promoting race equality and tackling discrimination on grounds of race, this does not extend to all the other protected characteristics, particularly sexual orientation. There are some examples of good practice regarding disability, gender and age discrimination, but again, this is not across the whole authority.
3. There is a team of enthusiastic and knowledgeable equality officers embedded across the whole range of services. However, the current structures do not encourage these officers to work as a team with the Equality Manager, and there are few apparent mechanisms to ensure that their knowledge and enthusiasm feeds directly into policy design, delivery and improvement as well as in their own individual services. It was understood by the peers that the plan is to bring all of these officers into one service.
4. There is a lack of consistency across the authority. This relates to communications (externally and internally), knowledge of equalities, performance management, and use of customer service data. There are examples in some services of very good practice, but other services are not benefiting from their learning.
5. Workforce monitoring is weak, particularly regarding sexual orientation which is not currently monitored. There appears to be little use of existing data to address inequalities in the workforce. Long-established inequalities do not appear to be improving (e.g. large proportion of BME staff, but few BME staff at senior levels).
6. There is no apparent systematic corporate approach to communications, good practice sharing or performance management.
7. There is no apparent champion for equalities driving the agenda at a senior level. There are good Equality Officers embedded in services, but there is no corporate approach to bringing together this expertise.
8. There are a number of staff equality groups that also could be a valuable resource to help the authority improve, but they are currently disparate in nature, uncoordinated, and not systematically involved in policy development, improvement and monitoring.

Key recommendations:

1. Ensure you collect, use and share accurate up to date information. This includes across the authority, but also with partners. Ensure communication has a corporate approach.
2. Know where you are! And then understand where you are going. Know what you want to achieve, set SMART objectives with timescales and assign responsibility for achieving them. Communicate what you want to achieve and when you have achieved it.
3. Listen, feedback and learn from your communities. Include all communities of interest, not just faith and race. There are communities in Leicester that want to work with you that the council does not currently engage much with.
4. Learn from good practice and use across all services. Establish mechanisms to share the good practice that does exist so that all service areas can learn from them.

5. Listen to your staff. Staff have a good idea of what is happening, and practical ideas for how to address inequalities. Act on information that is provided, use the data from workforce monitoring and staff surveys to address inequalities that exist. Support and maximise the benefit of staff equality groups to help Leicester City Council improve its approach.

2. Detailed findings

2.1 Knowing your communities and equality mapping

- The authority use a variety of sources to know its communities, e.g. using the Place Survey (with the CRAVE survey being used as a proxy measure in the short term, and plans with partners to conduct other specific surveys), the BNP vote, and the census. This information is used to identify cohesion risks and work (for example, 16-24yr olds, and white people on edge of the city) but not necessarily used to change and improve universal service provision. A wide range of evidence was used to produce the EIA on the CSR. This is currently being reviewed by Cabinet as part of budget discussions.

- There are good relationships with the Council of Faiths, with the Chief Executive involved regularly and information sharing as common place. However, there are less good relations with other equality groups or communities, e.g. the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) communities, older and younger people, and the gypsy and travelling communities.

- There appears to be an inconsistency in the support and funding available for people from different communities, for example the levels of funding for the Mela and the Carnival compared to the Pride celebrations. This has led to a belief by staff and partners that there is a hierarchy of equalities within the council – Race, Disability and Faith are at the top and LGBT at the bottom.

- There are significant gaps in knowledge about some communities, or demonstration of taking the needs of those communities (sometimes quite large communities) into account when planning and delivering services, for example:
  - LGBT communities – the local LGBT Centre and forum estimates are that 1 in 5 of the local population is lesbian, gay or bisexual and specific information was not included in the recent “One Leicester” guide.
  - gypsy and travelling communities - partners indicated that there are significant gypsy and traveller communities with much work going on. This includes GATE (Gypsy and Traveller Equality) group and MATU (Multi-Agency Traveller Unit) and Traveller Liaison Officers who are joint appointments between Police and Leicester City Council. The peer team were unable to meet with anyone from these projects.

- Customer service data is used by some services (e.g. Culture and Leisure) to change and improve service delivery, but this data is not routinely shared across the authority to enable all services to have a clearer understanding of the city’s changing demographics. Improved data sharing across partners would also help the authority to maintain an up to date picture of its demography. Data collected needs to be timely, useful, shared, and then analysed appropriately and quickly for services to use the information while it is still relevant. The new Research and Intelligence Team could...
drive this work forward and ensure that all areas of the council and all partners have accurate, useful up to date information to set equality objectives.

- Equality objectives should be clear, SMART, and tied in closely with the corporate business plan. Responsibility for achieving them needs to be clear, and individuals, services and partners should be held to account for delivery of them.

2.2. Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

“The council has a passion but may not be cutting edge now”

- Appropriate and imaginative training is seen as a priority for all partners. There are possibilities to share skills, knowledge and the cost of training with partners, using City Learning as the provider (the authority’s training and development department) as it is well respected.
- There are individual examples of good partnership working and leadership, such as the BOOST project, ensuring new and recent arrivals to the area understand the different services that are available to them and how to access them.
- Projects supporting people with learning difficulties into employment i.e. Project search, Jobs first, Rights to Control, Employment Champions. Each programme has a clear focus to tackle the barriers and multiple disadvantages that people with learning disabilities face when trying to enter the job market. More details are in section 3 “Examples of Innovative projects”.
- Both the RIEP and the LSEF value Leicester City Council’s partnership working. Particular success includes the Democratic Involvement project and officer and member training. Improved data sharing would ensure that the partnership is working together for the same goals. Many people we talked to referred to excellent partnership working. However, we did not see many partners. For example, an officer gave us a list of 23 partners attending regular meetings about and with the gypsy and travelling communities, but we were not invited to meet any of them.
- Community cohesion is clearly a priority for the authority. There is a Cabinet Lead for Community Cohesion, it is built into the core process for commissioning (including needs assessments). There is a ‘community cohesion fund’ for voluntary and community sector organisations to receive funding from for this work. The Library service demonstrates good examples of community cohesion work (see section 4). However, there is a less of an understanding of equality, and less evidence of equality issues being built into the commissioning and delivery process (e.g. LGBT, gypsy and travelling communities, gender, and age).
- The CSR EIA involved officers from across the council, but also partners and service users (e.g. members of BOOST). We understand that this is the first time that such a process has been used, and therefore it is not possible to say how well this approach has led to improved outcomes, or to be confident that this approach will continue to take place.
- Although there are staff equality forums within the authority, based in service areas, they have all only come together once, and there are no plans to repeat this event or bring the different service forums together. This could become very costly to support, and gives the impression of a lack of co-ordination, and no clear way for the forums to help shape services and improve EIAs. These are knowledgeable and enthusiastic groups of people that have a wealth of information that could be harnessed to improve service and policy planning and delivery.
There is no exit route for projects when RIEP money goes (Oct 2011).

2.3 Community engagement and satisfaction

- There is currently no consistent approach to consultation, engagement, involvement and empowerment. There are specific examples of engagement empowering residents and community representatives (e.g. the BOOST project, the Youth Council, design of the new library and the Big Mouth Forum). However, there are some communities where little engagement appears to take place, or where people feel either disempowered by the authority’s approach or that their needs are not respected or listened to (e.g. LGBT, gender and age). The new Research and Intelligence Unit could improve this situation if it is empowered to proactively seek and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data. It could co-ordinate and monitor all engagement activity, results and outcomes and ensure that this data is shared across the authority. This should help minimise ‘consultation fatigue’ by some communities and ensure that other issues and communities are not overlooked.

- There was some evidence of different methods of engagement being used, for example citizenseye.org to encourage members of the community to undertake voluntary work in libraries.

- Interpreters are not routinely used by services for people who cannot understand English. There tends to be an informal use of people that are known to speak different languages, rather than qualified, independent interpreters. This is on the grounds of cost. This approach could lead to misunderstandings and lack of customer confidentiality albeit that some are community members via the BOOST project.

- Customer satisfaction data is not routinely used and shared across all services in the authority. A corporate approach to data sharing is a matter of priority, again this could be led by the new Research and Information Unit.

2.4 Responsive services and customer care

- There are specific projects and individual services where good practice exists. But this good practice is not routinely shared and data about customer demography and need are not shared either. Although there are examples of positive impacts on individuals’ lives (e.g. support to people with learning difficulties into employment) or by individual services (e.g. Library volunteering projects), this does not appear to be across the range of services or improving the lives of all communities.

- Individual projects and services demonstrate good practice but this is not shared across the authority, e.g. the BOOST project: “Project Co-ordinator listened. Things changed and tweaked”. Those who completed the training through BOOST described it as “really wonderful” and “feel more confident” and “have a connection with services that we didn’t have before”. This project was externally funded and the funding has not continued. The council is continuing to support it through providing meeting space and up to date information about services.

- EIAs are not universally good quality and built into improvement and policy planning. The EIA on the CSR was the first EIA to involve people from across the whole authority and partners and service users in the process. Although officers understand the process and value of them now, they are not routinely challenged by colleagues and partners, nor action plans monitored or tied into Service Plans. Although the numbers of EIAs conducted has increased, there is little evidence (yet) to demonstrate how this
has led to improved outcomes. There does not appear to be a clear or consistent approach to monitoring EIA actions. Each directorate has a different approach and there does not seem to be any corporate overview. Progress with completing EIAs is monitored at DMTs but little information on monitoring actions to mitigate impacts was offered. Some Equality Forums and some Equality Officers were involved in the monitoring of actions. For some service areas, staff are overly reliant on equality officer support/input to complete EIAs.

- There are now female-only teams in the maintenance and construction teams. This is a result of the positive action project to increase the numbers of women into the construction industry. This project has been in place for over 20 years, and has expanded its remit to target other under-represented groups (such as care leavers) to consider becoming Council apprentices in the first instance.

2.5 A modern and diverse workforce

- BME staff are poorly represented at senior management level and there is recognition that this needs to be addressed. This has been a priority for many years for the authority and there seems to be no improvement, despite research into reasons why (by one of the BME workers’ forums) and a high proportion of BME staff at lower levels. There is a management development programme, but no information was provided to indicate that the take up by people from different equality strands was monitored, nor the programme promoted specifically at people from target groups (e.g. BME staff). Currently there are no formal career pathways targeting BME people at tier 3 and above, although there were some indications that the ‘Reaching Higher’ programme had some examples of success. A more holistic approach is planned but not yet in place.
- Equality training is provided in a variety of ways (e.g. as part of induction, disability and awareness training) but there is no apparent monitoring as to the success of these training sessions, and no consistency of how staff and managers fulfil their equality obligations as a result. The Big Mouth Forum DVD could be used to support training at all levels, especially in schools where challenging prejudice and bullying is seen as key.
- Training and development on equality needs to be proactive, not reactive. For example, there has not been any LGBT training for two years because of a “lack of demand”. However, there was evidence to show that there is inconsistent knowledge and approaches by managers regarding equality for people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Improved monitoring of the impact of training and on the consistency of managers would help the Learning and Development team to identify where there are knowledge and skills gaps, rather than just responding to requests for training. There are some examples of proactivity (i.e. bullying and harassment for young people), but these are generally for individual services, and provided as a result of a request by that service, rather than a universal proactive approach across the whole authority.
- Libraries removed professional qualifications from job descriptions where not strictly necessary as this had been seen as a barrier for applicants. This good practice needs to be shared and implemented where appropriate across the council.
- There are some great positive action initiatives (e.g. Reach Higher, BME Leadership, Women into Construction), but these are driven by individual service areas and there is
no overview or consistent approach and the outcomes are not measured. For example, the Disabled Access Officer has delivered training with Vista Group (for people with visual impairments) in relation to urban environment. There is no joined up way of recording nominations for this training, attendance or link to CPD. Evaluation forms are completed but there is no evidence that these are used to monitor the delivery of the training or tracking the impact of the training.

- The Workforce Plan will come out in the summer. This should help in joining up all the threads and initiatives regarding talent management. However, there is an assumption that changes in the demography of the workforce will not change because of a stop on recruitment. There is a wealth of experience in the existing diverse workforce, and more could be done to improve the chances for promotion etc for the existing workforce and improve development opportunities while there is no recruitment.
- There has been no staff satisfaction survey done for some time. There is inconsistency around appraisals, some people do them, and some don’t. There is no corporate overview or monitoring to track this.

3. Examples of innovative projects and initiatives

- Learning Disability (LD) employment initiatives – Innovative projects have been developed by the Learning Disability Partnership Board which has supported a number of projects to support employability: Project Search, Job First, Right Control and Travel training. LCC seems strongly committed to the employment agenda for people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions. Project search works with people in college and enables them to undertake work trails whilst still in full time education to improve their chance of employment.
- Other initiatives have included working with Highcross shopping centre and the local colleges to deliver training/course in retail, hospitality and develop a pool of local people that have attended the courses that have LD so that when jobs become available in retail or hospitality there is a cohort of people ready for interview
- Residential disabled children’s home – facilities there
- The BOOST project was established to develop ‘community leaders’ in the city. Training was provided to ensure that they were fully aware of services provided by LCC and their partners. The aim of this was to remove barriers to accessing services and information about them. BOOST has really empowered community representatives. They have a clearer understanding of and relationship with, all public services. They are better placed to provide their communities with advice and guidance and communities are now more confident to access services. Attendees gained a NOCN qualification in Information, Advice and Guidance. That has enabled the attendees to be more knowledgeable and confident in the services from LCC by knowing what to expect with the ability to feel free to ask questions. This has forged ‘connections’ both within the Council and the Communities ‘who are now speaking to each other’. In addition two people have gained employment and it is believed that this qualification has contributed towards their employability.
- There are excellent examples of by community cohesion work in Culture. Libraries provide a community space for activities to bring communities together, volunteering opportunities so people delivering services are not from ‘expected demographics’, removed ‘professional qualifications’ from job spec so there is more opportunity to apply for jobs. Arts and Museums recognised that many of their users were not from Leicester and a lot of activity has taken place to encourage local residents to use their
services (for example targets exhibitions on faiths). This was based on asking communities what they would like to use and see.

- There is an Inclusive Design Action Programme 2010 – 2011 (IDAP) chaired by a councillor. An example of a positive outcome from this programme is specific work with the Disability Action Group that changed proposals for an underpass to overground including textural contrast to the surface. The IDAP will be reviewed in the summer of 2011. Good practice should be shared across the Council.

4. **Signposting to areas of good practice from Local Government Improvement and Development**

- Information on new migrants - Herefordshire Language Network and the welcometoherefordshire.com web site
- Staff forum influencing strategic decisions - At Newcastle City Council, the co-chairs of the three staff forums (LGBT, BME and Disability) come together with the lead for equality and the Strategic Leadership Team Equality Champion on a quarterly basis. These meetings are used to formally raise issues from the staff groups and agree actions etc. The co-chairs are also invited to attend the Equalities Committee meetings.
- Monitoring sexual orientation - Use the guidance provided by Stonewall when looking to monitor sexual orientation of your workforce. Their ‘what has it go to do with you’ leaflet includes 10 frequently asked questions that could be used to help staff understand why this is being monitored. It is also a useful tool for answering service user questions on why we may ask them about their sexual orientation.
- Communications – Nottingham City Council
- Positive Action Schemes – Leeds City Council
- Rotherham, Nottingham, Barnsley, Newcastle and Leeds have all been validated at the “Excellent” level. Contact with their Equality Teams (via their websites) is recommended
- Equality responsibilities – Barnsley MBC has provided extensive equality training to its managers and staff to ensure a consistency of approach. Nottingham City provided specific Equality Impact Assessment Training to improve consistency and standards of their EIAs.
- Involving communities in EIAs – In Cumbria, there is a consortium of equalities organisations, which have a service level agreement with the six Districts and the County Councils. As part of this agreement, they play an active role in the EIAs for all seven authorities, as well as ongoing monitoring of performance and giving advice to individual authorities.

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