

# Valuing Diversity, Promoting Equality



## Being flexible and responsive

We aim to deliver services that are flexible and responsive to different needs. **We have:**

- considered equality issues when making important decisions to help us consider the needs of everyone
- reviewed 15 of our services and identified equality improvements we can make in all of them
- provided more flexible, accessible and comfortable working conditions for staff
- reached out to all schools and colleges in the district, with staff volunteering to deliver talks and work on projects with young people

## We plan to

- restructure our services to make them more accessible and easier to use
- make more services and information available online
- develop scrutiny of how we are doing on equalities by councillors and residents,
- review our approach to considering equalities, known as equalities analysis, to make it simpler and more focused on identifying improvements
- develop stronger links with the community and voluntary sector and extend our staff volunteering scheme to include work with them

## Your new One-Stop reception

Our new 'one-stop' reception at Southover House provides a single point of contact for all services, making it simpler for people to access information and advice.

Opened in October 2013, it is fully accessible, with hearing loops, contrasting colours, level access and disabled-access toilets. Customers can speak to staff face-to-face, call our advisers on dedicated phone lines and look services up online. Staff are at hand to help out, and there are some toys to keep our younger visitors entertained.



We made good progress last year, completing nearly 90% of the improvements we said we'd make under our Equalities Action Plan. Our new plan for 2014-2015 includes reviewing our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion work.

## Tell us what you think

We would welcome your views on what is important, what improvements we could make and what you think we should be doing to promote equality.

Contact our Equalities Officer, Lisa Tiller  
01273 471600  
equalities@lewes.gov.uk  
or by mail or in person at Southover House,  
Southover Road, Lewes BN7 1AB.

For more information visit  
Equalities | Lewes District Council.  
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**If you need this leaflet in large print, braille, audio format, or in another language, please contact 01273 471600 or e-mail equalities@lewes.gov.uk**



# Valuing Diversity Promoting Equality

A summary of what we've done to promote equality, diversity and inclusion in 2013-14

One District, One Council

DRAFT



## Councillor Elayne Merry, Lead Member for Equality and Diversity

“We want all residents, staff and visitors to Lewes district to feel welcome, safe, valued, included, and respected. We value the fresh ideas, perspectives, skills, and energy that diversity can bring. Everybody should have the opportunity to fulfil their potential, take part in public life, and be free from the fear of discrimination. We are committed to fulfilling, and exceeding, our legal duties under the

Equality Act and Human Rights Act, and so we actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Here are some of the things we have been doing during 2013-14 and our priorities for the year ahead.”



## Our community

### Ours is a diverse community.

The 97,500 residents of the district include people from many different religious, ethnic and economic backgrounds, of all ages, abilities and living in many different situations and family groups.

There are more people with disabilities and older people than the national averages. 7.5% of residents are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds, which is less than the national average of about 20% but the number and diversity of people from these backgrounds is increasing. By national standards the district is well off, but some coastal towns have higher levels of poverty, unemployment and poor health.

Between 5 to 7% of people in the UK are lesbian, gay or bisexual, which is about 6000 in our community.

It's important to us to know who are residents are so we can shape our services to meet diverse needs.



## Raising awareness and understanding

One of our aims is to raise the awareness and understanding of our staff and the local community about equality and diversity issues. Over the last year we have:

- provided refresher training for longstanding staff and training sessions for councillors
- 14 staff who completed an NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Equality and Diversity last year
- devised a Cultural Calendar for staff to highlight important faith dates, and
- developed guidance on human rights.

During 2013 we introduced **Celebrating Diversity** themes. These focus on equality and diversity issues to raise awareness and highlight relevant activities and services within the district. So far, we have focused on disability, age and gender, and in March we celebrated International Women's Day.

### We plan to

- Train our staff on how to collect and use equality information and consider equality issues to improve services, and develop the training methods we use to include e-learning and podcasts.
- Review how we use equalities data and develop our knowledge about the needs of communities within the district.
- Continue to celebrate diversity, with themes on sexuality, ethnicity and religion.

## Fair and accessible services

We want our services to be accessible to everyone.

### We have:

- introduced 'BrowseAloud' to make our website more accessible. Visitors can listen to the site and change colour contrasts and the size of text
- given our contractors a postcard highlighting equalities issues to think about when visiting people's homes
- supported the Sompriti project, a bi-lingual advocacy and outreach service for black and minority residents, which helped over 30 people access our services

### We plan to

- Consider different people's needs as we restructuring services
- Develop a shared, accessible new service centre with the police and fire service in the heart of Newhaven
- Use the Equality Framework for Local Government to check how we are doing
- Review and develop our approach to community grants

## Supporting our young people

Young people with learning disabilities are twice as likely as others not to be in education, employment or training. So we gave five such youngsters the chance to experience the world of work, by taking them on as interns through Plumpton College's Supported Internship Programme.

They had to apply for and be interviewed for the roles and worked with us for six months in office roles and our waste & recycling team. We also gave talks and hands-on careers sessions at the college and students visited our waste and recycling depots, horticultural teams and offices to see work-in-practice and hear about what a council does.

Plumpton's course leader said, "thank you for giving them all the chance to show you what they can do. You have grasped the chance to make a real difference in their lives."

Pics show Jess Smith in the executive office; Mikey Barton, street sweeping.



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