

**Public Sector Equality Duty**

**Ward(s): All**

**Portfolios: Councillor B Chatta – Personnel and Business Support**

**1. Aim**

- 1.1 To inform the Scrutiny Overview Committee

**2. Report detail – know**

- 2.1 On 5 April 2011, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) came into force. Created under the Equality Act 2010, the PSED replaced the race, disability and gender equality duties, harmonising these duties to extend across the protected characteristics.
- 2.2 The PSED consists of general duties, supported by specific duties. Walsall Council is subject to the PSED. We must, in the exercise of our functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
  - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
  - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 2.3 The Equality Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:
- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
  - Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
  - Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.
- 2.4 The Act states that meeting different needs involves taking account of disabled people's disabilities and describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups. Compliance with the PSED may involve treating some people more favourably than others.
- 2.5 The PSED covers the nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual

orientation. (With the final characteristic, marriage or civil partnership, only the first aim of the PSED applies to this characteristic. The other aims do not apply).

- 2.6 The purpose of the PSED is to integrate equality considerations and good relations into the day-to-day business of our work. Walsall Council has a statutory duty to deliver specific services within Walsall for all communities. It requires equality considerations to be reflected into the design of policies and the delivery of services.
- 2.7 Compliance with the general duties is a legal obligation, but it also makes good business sense. It can lead to services that are more appropriate to the user, and services that are more effective and cost-effective. This can lead to increased satisfaction with public services.
- 2.8 The specific duties require public bodies to publish information to show how they meet the general duties. Published by 31 January every year, the PSED makes Walsall Council transparent about its decision making processes, and accountable to our service users. It gives them the information they need to hold us to account for our equality performance. Our objectives, approved by the Corporate Equality Group, are;

**Objective 1** - We will promote inclusion and commit to understanding the individual experience throughout our work;

**Objective 2** - We will engage and empower local communities to resolve equality issues;

**Objective 3** - We will strive to have a diverse workforce at all levels;

**Objective 4** - We will treat people and agencies that we work with, fairly, justly and with respect, by being open, inclusive and collaborative;

**Objective 5** - We will find ways to support those who are disadvantaged or excluded.

- 2.9 The PSED Report highlights progress against its equality objectives for 2020 through its services and workforce. It includes information on the Council's employees and service users, analysed by protected characteristics. It shows how the Council has sought to minimise disadvantage, meet the needs of protected groups and encouraged their participation in decision-making, both in service delivery and employment.
- 2.10 Some examples of the acknowledgement to have a diverse workforce include;
- Male workers are underrepresented in Adult Social Care (17.09%), although the split of female workers to male workers in each grade band remains relatively stable in comparison to the same period 12 months ago;
  - In Children's Services, the percentage of minority ethnic workers has increased slightly at 27.99% compared to 26.96% last year;
  - The Economy and Environment Directorate had 73 Apprentices in 2020. 45% of these Apprentices are from Black and ethnic minority groups;
  - The currently published gender pay gap (as at 31st March 2020) shows a reduced gender pay gap of 5.7% compared with 9.8% the previous year.
- 2.11 According to the 2011 Census, Walsall's population structure has an above average proportion of children and older people, and a correspondingly lower proportion of working age people. This is broadly represented in the current

Employment Monitoring Report (EMR), where the highest percentage of the workforce are in the 50 – 59 age range.

- 2.12 In addition, the 2011 Census highlighted a significant increase in the level of ethnic diversity in Walsall over the past decade. While ‘White British’ remains the largest single group at 76.9%, the number of residents from a minority ethnic group has risen to almost one in four, being 23.1%. The EMR demonstrates that the level of ethnic diversity in the current workforce is 22.41%, broadly similar to the 2011 Census.
- 2.13 The majority of Walsall people view themselves as Christian (59.0%), according to the 2011 Census. Whilst significantly below this figure, the EMR demonstrates that Christianity remains highest recorded religion or belief with the Council workforce, at 29.87%.
- 2.14 The work of the Council this year has been shaped by two global events: the Covid 19 pandemic and the death of George Floyd. These events have resulted in a re-focusing on how the Council addressed potential structural inequalities across its services, how it looked to make a difference in promoting inclusion and how it delivered key services as the national lockdown impacted on every area of work.
- 2.15 Some of the key work undertaken to support inclusion in the past year includes:
- The expansion of a network of Social Care telephone befriending services that social prescribers can connect people to. Those who are hearing impaired have been supported to access WhatsApp support groups. This has enabled the service to continue during the coronavirus pandemic;
  - The coordination and supply of nearly four million items of free PPE to all vulnerable groups during the pandemic;
  - The development of daily updates by Children’s Services’ Access and Inclusion Team, shared with over 500 school leaders, Designated Safeguarding Leads and Local Authority staff.in Access and Inclusion, to support schools which were closed but still required to ensure that their vulnerable pupils were safe;
  - A Children’s Services task group to look at the experience of children from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds in care with a focus on those living with carers from a different culture, ethnicity and/or language;
  - Working with local community organisations to identify local concerns and supporting local plans of action across Walsall Partnership, such as the Mossley Big Local, which taught its community members British Sign Language in order to engage with Deaf people;
  - The collaboration with Method in Motion and Walsall communities to produce two films to showcase the positive work happening across Walsall in bringing communities together;
  - The Black Country Impact programme addressing the barriers faced by unemployed individuals aged 15-29 years, supporting them to secure positive outcomes including employment, apprenticeships, training and further education.

- 2.16 This Report on the implementation of the PSED demonstrates that the Council is making good progress in mainstreaming equality into its functions. They are a routine part of the day-to-day work.

### **3. Financial information**

Not applicable.

### **4. Reducing Inequalities**

- 5.1 The PSED proudly establishes that equality and diversity is evident across the Council's core activities and goals as it strives to become embedded in the culture of Walsall Council.
- 5.2 In undertaking its responsibility around equality and diversity, the PSED Report highlights the excellent work that is being driven by Council services. There are numerous examples in the Report to demonstrate that the Marmot objectives are being achieved. Children, young people and adults can maximise their capabilities and Projects, such as Walsall For All, are providing volunteering and work opportunities, a healthy standard of living for all, and are making Walsall a healthy and sustainable borough for its diverse communities.
- 5.3 The work revealed in the PSED highlights that Council services are concentrating on equality outcomes, rather than just process and are placing equality and diversity at the heart of its activities.

### **6. Respond**

Plans are identified to support activities in relation to our Public Sector Equality Duty.

### **7. Review**

Progress on the Public Sector Equality Duty is subject to public scrutiny and is published on the Council's website.

## **Background papers**

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

#### **Author**

Paul Gordon  
Director of Resilient Communities  
☎ 07792 920257  
✉ [paul.gordon@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:paul.gordon@walsall.gov.uk)

Michelle Leith  
Interim Director of HR, OD and Administration  
✉ [michelle.Leith@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:michelle.Leith@walsall.gov.uk)