



Public Sector Equality Duty

Performance Report

December 2011



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Aylesbury Vale District Council
Meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty
Performance report to October 2011

Introduction

This report is published to meet the requirements of Regulation 2 of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011. These state that, as prescribed body, the District Council must by 31 January 2012, and annually thereafter, publish information to demonstrate its compliance with the general Equality Duty and this information must include:

- information relating to persons who share relevant protected characteristic who are its employees and other persons affected by our policies and practices (such as service users)

The Council must publish information in such a manner that it is accessible to the public, including within another published document.

The assessment of the Council's performance is based on the information provided for consideration and includes a range of corporate documents as well as self assessments by the following service areas:

- Finance, audit, risk and performance management
- Information technology
- Revenues & Benefits
- Leisure Services
- Community Engagement
- Housing
- Customer Services
- Planning
- Environmental Health & Licensing
- Engineering
- People & Payroll
- Administration

Background

Under the Equality Act 2010 people should not be discriminated against, because of a relevant protected characteristic(s), when using, or seeking to use, any service provided publicly or privately, whether that service is paid for or not. Neither should they be discriminated against in employment, when seeking employment, or when engaged in occupations or activities related to work because of a relevant protected characteristic(s).

Employee protected characteristics

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Pregnancy & maternity status
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Service user protected characteristics

- Age (18+ only and in force from 2012)
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy & maternity status
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

In addition to the above, Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, imposes a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on prescribed bodies which came into force on 5 April 2011. The objective behind the duty is to ensure that consideration of equality issues forms part of the routine, day-to-day decision making and operational delivery of public authorities. In summary, it requires that the District Council, as a prescribed body, must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not by:
 - Removing or minimising disadvantage that people in the protected groups suffer because its connected to that protected characteristic
 - Take steps to meet the needs of people from the protected groups where these differ to those of other people
 - Encourage participation from protected groups in public life or other activity where their participation is disproportionately low
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not by:
 - Tackling prejudice
 - Promoting understanding

Why equalities is relevant to Aylesbury Vale

The Council publishes an annual profile of local residents entitled “Life in Aylesbury Vale”. It sets out the latest data and information on life in the district and is intended to provide information that will assist elected members and employees in developing policies and reviewing the design and delivery of services.

The data shows that the local population projections have increased and this is due to several factors including the continued development of new housing in the Vale which is bringing in new people both from within and outside of the United Kingdom. In addition, there are increases in life expectancy at birth, including amongst some

who, because of their disability or medical condition would not have been expected to survive for long. Improvements in diet and medical practice are seeing both sexes living longer and the traditional gap in mortality rates between men and women appears to have halved. There is, therefore, the likelihood that one result of this will be a gradual increase in the number of people who develop sensory and physical impairments and dementia.

Population projection data also suggests that there has been an increase in the ethnic diversity of residents, particularly amongst the younger population. It is estimated that the black and ethnic minority communities (BME) account for approximately 14% of the local population. Within this, the largest minority groups are those who classify themselves as “White Other” (2.43%), “Asian or Asian British: Pakistani” (2.21%), “White: Irish (1.13%) and “Black or Black British: Caribbean” (0.70%).

The profile data identifies that about a quarter of people with a long term limiting illness have no access to private transport, and although the majority live within areas that are comparatively well served by local services, increasingly those who live in rural areas will find their access even more constrained as subsidised transport is reduced or possibly withdrawn in some places.

The precise impact of the economic situation on local residents is unclear, however, there continues to be a small increase in people claiming job seekers allowance and those claiming pension credit. It is likely the increases in energy and food costs will have an adverse impact the health and wellbeing of some residents, particularly those who are defined by the Acorn profile data as being “hard-pressed”, “moderate means” and “prudent pensioners”. The employment rate of the local population is generally very high when compared with the national situation. However, local data shows that approximately 27% of residents are employed in the public administration, health and education sector. These are all areas that are seeing and are likely to continue to see significant job losses over the next few years.

Analysis of the residents survey data published in 2009 showed that there was good performance on those indicators that have particular relevance to equalities, diversity and community cohesion as set out in Table 1 below.

| Indicator | AVDC Score % | County average district score % | South East average score % | England average score % |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Percentage who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area | 82 | 80 | 79 | 76 |
| Percentage who feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood | 65 | 63 | 58 | 59 |
| Civic participation in the local area | 17.5 | 17 | 14 | 14 |
| Percentage who feel they can influence decisions in their local area | 33 | 30 | 28 | 29 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|
| Overall/general satisfaction with the local area | 87 | 86 | 83 | 80 |
| Participation in regular volunteering | 30 | 30 | 25 | 23 |
| Perception that there is a problem in the area of people treating one another with respect | 21 | 23 | 28 | 31 |
| Perception that people are treated fairly by local services | 78 | 77 | 76 | 72 |

Despite the good performance when benchmarked against other local, regional and national data, the trend data for a strong feeling of belonging to their immediate neighbourhood showed an 8% drop compared to the results in 2006 and seems to be largely a reflection of the views of people live in the urban areas of the Vale, particularly Aylesbury Town, those who identified their ethnicity as “White: other” and those respondents living in the private rented sector. However, conversely, the levels of community cohesion increased by 12% when compared with results in 2006.

The report provided some demographic analysis, particularly in relation to age, but there was little analysis in relation to gender or ethnicity and nothing in relation to disability. Unfortunately, not providing commentary on disaggregated data means that the Council is missing the opportunity to provide positive evidence of how services and policies are being delivered and perceived in practice.

The analysis report stressed the need to treat the survey results with some caution as it is recognised that the methodology of self-completion postal questionnaires tend to result in responses from people who are, in the main, white, female, older, homeowners and middle class, and therefore, not reflective of the local population. Consequently, the council has worked to develop other ways to get behind the headline data presented, including through its own household satisfaction survey.

All this information should influence how the council develops the future provision of services, the way employment is structured and the way it communicates with local residents.

The Council’s performance as a service provider

The Equality Act says that people should not be discriminated against because of a relevant protected characteristic(s) when using, or seeking to use, any service provided publically or privately. The Equality & Human Rights Commission Code of Practice gives examples of how such discrimination can manifest itself in day to day service delivery:

- Refusing to provide that person with a service
- Providing the service to a different quality than would normally be provided to the public or section of the public that includes the person
- Not providing the services in the manner or on the terms usually provided to the public or section of the public that includes the person
- Terminating the service to the person

- Subjecting the person to any detriment
- Charging more for goods or services, or imposing extra conditions for using a service or facility
- Knowingly aiding someone else to discriminate
- Instructing, causing or inducing discrimination

The Council's legislative duty applies in relation to both its role as an employer as well as a provider/procurer of services to the public and, as with many other large organisations, it has a range of corporate policies and processes that are designed to ensure that people's individual differences are not used to systematically treat them unfairly or deny them their rights as citizens.

The Council's commitment to equalities is reflected in the **Corporate Plan** priorities:

- Improving our communications and interaction with our customers
- Protecting and improving the living experience of the Vale
- Delivering efficient and economic services
- Growing the economy of the Vale

These priorities are underpinned by two central principles;

- We put customers at the centre of everything we do
- Motivated staff delivering great services

The commitment is also similarly reflected within the **organisational values**:

- Treat people as individuals and with respect
- Provide a great service every time
- Be open and trustworthy
- Find better ways of doing things at less cost
- Plan for the future

The Council's **Equality Strategy** and **Combined Equality Scheme** (2007) is structured around a former Best Value Performance Indicator, sets out the organisation's explicit commitment to achieving equality of opportunity, access and treatment in relation to:

- Services
- Consultation and scrutiny
- Equal employment and pay

It sets out the Council's aim *"... to ensure fair and reasonable treatment and opportunities for all, whether part of a minority or majority group."*

It also identifies that in delivering the commitments within the strategy, the Council will particularly consider the needs of people on the grounds of their race, religious belief, disability, gender, sexual orientation (including transgender groups) and age.

One of the key tools developed to support the organisation in meeting its legislative duties and the delivery of the Equality Strategy was the equality impact assessment which enables services and policy makers to consider whether their service/policy is, or could, impact differently on particular groups of people, assess whether that constituted illegal discrimination and consider what remedial action or mitigation would be necessary. This tool was reviewed and revised in 2011.

The Strategy requires all services to complete an equality impact assessment as part of their annual service planning process and ensure that any actions arising were incorporated into the final service plan.

The Strategy set out the Council's commitment to achieving a workforce that is "*fully representative of the community the council serves*" and in compliance with legislation to monitor its workforce on the grounds of race, gender and disability in relation to:

- Grievances
- Disciplinary Action
- Employees leaving the organisation

In addition, there is a commitment to identify and address any pay gap identified on the grounds of race, gender and disability.

The Council has several corporate tools which support the delivery of the Equality Strategy and Scheme. In terms the day to day delivery of its services, the Council's **Customer Care Standards** (2010), set out what is expected of staff in dealing with residents over the telephone, in writing and face to face. The document sets out clearly what satisfactory performance looks like and requires that employees "*treat people as individuals and with respect*". The document also includes a section on "*Equal access and opportunities policy*" which briefly sets out what is required and the consequences of failing to meet the required behaviour standards. It also identifies where employees can access further information about ensuring equal access to services and information.

The Council's **Comments, compliments and complaints procedures** also sets out clear guidance for employees on how to meet some of the different needs that customers have as a result of a communication barrier or mobility difficulties. There is also more detailed guidance in "**Helping customers with different needs**" and again, the focus is on removing communication barriers. The council is registered to Complaints Management Standard (BS ISO 10002:2004) and is audited annually by the British Standards Institute.

The **annual monitoring report for comments, compliments and complaints 2010/11** shows an increase in the number of complaints received on the previous year, bringing the total to 296 but this is largely a reflection of improved recording practices across the organisation. In addition the organisation recorded 600 compliments and demonstrates that many customers greatly value the services they receive. The overall conclusion drawn is that the Council's performance in relation to the process, is that the system continues to work well, staff are embracing it, and that there are no major issues or concerns to be reported. The report comments that

an equality analysis is created on a quarterly basis and included within all Service Liaison Officers reports, and although we continue to see an improvement in the return of equality monitoring forms, the data available is still relatively small. Therefore, there are no particular issues or trends to report at this time. It is not clear from the report, however, whether there is any examination of the individual complaints or compliments to identify relevance to the council's Equality Duty. For example, a person who is British Sign Language user being unable to access Customer Services. Again this is information which could be used as positive evidence of accessible services or identify improvements.

The guidance on **Equalities Monitoring** sets out the reasons for carrying out the monitoring for service users, how to monitor race and disability, how to deal with some people's reluctance to respond and how to use the information gathered.

The **Corporate Procurement Strategy** also includes a section setting out the Council's aims in relation to equality and identifies the equality groups as set out in the Equality Strategy. It also makes references to ensuring all contracts are awarded fairly and are consistent with the Equality Standard for Local Government, the Council's own equality framework and the former Commission for Racial Equality's guidance on procurement.

The council is also in the delivery of its equality commitments by its Equalities Steering Group, comprising representatives from its services, whose role is support the delivery within their services and facilitate the sharing of ideas, learning and good practice across the organisation.

In addition to reviewing the corporate policies and procedures, individual services were asked to complete a self assessment which asked the following questions:

1. How do you know that people are able to use the services they are entitled to? Are there particular groups of people you would expect to be using your service, but aren't? Why is this and how are you tackling it?
2. What do you know about how different demographic groups experience your service?
3. What changes, if any, have been made to service provision to improve access or service users' satisfaction? What are the barriers you have identified that need to be removed or mitigated?
4. In what ways do you endeavour to ensure your workforce reflects the local population? How reflective is it across all pay grades?
5. How do service users and employees know that the service is positive about equality and diversity?
6. In what ways has your service proactively ensured that employees, service users or other people are not unlawfully harassed on the grounds of a protected characteristic?

7. In what ways does your service ensure that employees, service users or other people are not victimised if they exercise their rights, for example, through the complaints process or contacting their ward councillor; or through the grievance process?
8. What further information do you need about particular groups of people and how will this be addressed?

As is to be expected, responses varied between services and partly reflected the nature of the services being provided, for example, whether they were a back room or front of house service, how relevant the Public Sector Equality Duty was perceived to be to their area of work and the degree of understanding about equalities, diverse groups and community cohesion.

Service data, information and communication

Those services for whom PSED would be highly relevant, namely, Housing, Leisure, Customer Services, Community Engagement, Environmental Health & Licensing, Electoral Services and Contract Services demonstrated a good understanding of their service users. These services demonstrated use of a variety of quantitative and qualitative data to understand service up take, for example, Housing Service's equalities monitoring report, data collection by Leisure at events and activities, Place Survey data and through regular interaction with particular clients, e.g. market traders and taxi drivers.

In addition, examples were given of the data was used to improve services for particular groups, for example, through the mapping of targeted groups and services. This included Community Engagement's work with older and BME communities and the work of Environmental Health and Licensing in relation to the Staying Put Service for aids and adaptations for disabled people and the security service for victims of domestic violence. Analysis of data by Leisure Services has meant that work is being undertaken to gain information from those groups who are not engaging in the activities and events being provided. Similarly analysis by Electoral Services has led to work targeting young people approaching voting age, the growing Polish community and geographic areas where registration or election turnout is comparatively low.

The Housing Service's equality monitoring report provides analysis of all applicants who approach it for assistance with housing and gives comparative data on ethnicity, age, disability. The report also examines current trends and compares them with the previous year to see if there are any significant differences that require further action. Where improvement actions are identified, a series of recommendations are put forward and, if agreed, their delivery is monitored by the Housing Management Team. The Housing Register Monitoring report is used to identify ethnicity and special needs and there is analysis of the Homelessness and Advice cases by ethnicity and homelessness prevention using reports from the Academy IT system. The report for 2010/11 concluded that "*BME and disabled groups are proportionately and fairly represented throughout most of the Council's housing services*". The report also identified several improvements in relation equalities monitoring data, for example, improving the capturing of data in relation to disability.

In trying to ensure that there is good access to information about the services available a range of methods are used. Printed materials are generally checked to ensure they meet the Plain English guidance and translations and large print options are made available on request. In addition to producing leaflets, Planning have focussed on increasing the amount of planning material that is available on the website to reduce the need for people to travel into the office and to enable people to use their own web based tools to access the information.

In addition to the on line access to service information, Housing provides face to face meetings, home visits, a court desk for debt advice services and produces approximately 125 personalised free sheets of available property every bidding cycle to help vulnerable clients. They also provide a dedicated housing surgery in Buckingham on a fortnightly basis. In addition, outgoing letters are periodically checked for quality control. The Housing Options team will follow up on those applicants who are not expressing an interest in bidding for advertised affordable homes to ascertain whether they are experiencing any barriers in the process. They also ensure that any properties that have been adapted for disabled residents are highlighted in the property adverts.

Leisure Services highlighted the use of press releases, posters around town centres and information into community centres to widen access to information and are currently working on a marketing strategy to target young people who are not in education or employment and those from black and minority communities. New play areas are promoted via local schools, press, our website, and all households within the play area catchment zone. This combined with the physical presence of the play areas increases awareness of these spaces to the communities they serve. Details of the location of all play areas are provided in the Leisure 'Do It' booking. Signs & notices in most play area signs are illustrative and contain contact details in the case of maintenance and Health and Safety concerns. Usage of play areas is monitored during school holidays and it is found that areas are well used by a wide range of the local community.

The nature of the work of the Electoral Services team requires an annual canvass of all residents both in writing and then door to door canvassing. Translation documents are provided to all canvassers, all of whom receive customer care and equalities guidance and training. They work in partnership with other services internally and externally, for example, Customer Services and housing associations, student halls of residence, nursing homes and the Multicultural Centre to ensure registration information and voter application forms are available. They are able, via the Electoral Commission's website to access the documents in a range of languages including Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Portuguese and Punjabi. During the elections, employees visited the homes of those blind voters who had requested assistance in completing their ballot papers. Premises used as polling stations are regularly reviewed for access and large print ballot papers and a device to help visually impaired people to vote unaided are available.

Capacity building to support services for older people uses information from bus pass applicants to target information for older people and activities are publicised in

local newsletters, venues, voluntary sector networks and through parish and district councillors.

Council grants are publicised on line and through local networks including via email and word of mouth. A leaflet advertising the Community Chest is widely distributed across the Vale and is advertised through the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust's newsletter and on line. Monitoring of enquiries and applications has highlighted the need to follow up on why some groups have not submitted applications.

Community Safety uses crime data to identify priorities for crime reduction activities, which includes information about victims with particular protected characteristics including age, race, sexual orientation, gender, gender reassignment, religion, disability. Activity can then be targeted appropriately to raise awareness about the risks and how to avoid becoming a victim of crime – for example; rogue callers tend to target older people; a recent spate of burglaries have targeted Asian families' gold. Information and support is provided directly to the community wherever possible through direct links with local community representatives and groups, and through the links made by local Police Community Support Officers. Publicity campaigns are used for the general public (ie: where there is no evidence that people with a particular protected characteristic are targeted). For these campaigns the local radio, newspapers, the residents' magazine, internet and door to door are used as the modes of communication. Information is also sent directly to all parish and town councils for publication in their local newsletters and on community notice boards.

The Planning Service is, for the most part, a statutory regulatory service whose users do not have an option about using it. It is also about "where" rather than "who" in making place-based decisions within the context of the framework of national and local planning policies and legislation. However there is a strong focus on how planning information is made available to ensure that there are no barriers to accessibility. As with other Services, Planning makes use of the Council-wide arrangements for translation and making documents available in other forms, such as large print or on tape, whenever needed. The leaflets are produced with a strong regard to being easily understood and both these and the web-pages are tested with non-specialists to make sure the Council avoids jargon and legal wording as far as we possibly can. The main focus of attention in recent years has been the development of a comprehensive on-line function so that virtually all of the material the Council holds in the public domain can be viewed by users without having to come into the offices during working hours. This also allows people to use their own web-based tools to aid viewing/translation in the convenience of their own home. Planning always welcome feedback from customers and will use this to improve material whenever possible.

In formulating Planning policies, consultation is undertaken with a very wide range of interest groups who have signed up to be on the Local Development Framework database. In this work and in the reviews of Conservation Areas Planning work with local communities and parish councils to make sure we are "on the ground" and that it is easier for local people to engage in the processes close to home. Assessing future needs for jobs and homes, including affordable housing and other specialist

housing requirements such as Gypsy & traveller pitches, is also part of Forward Planning work.

Building Control have a lead role for the Council on giving advice on access to buildings for the disabled, and as well as this advisory role they will ensure statutory requirements are met on all new development through the Building Regulations as well as advising Development Management colleagues on relevant planning applications .

Removing barriers and meeting need

Leisure Services ensures that users are able to attend our activities and events by ensuring that all venues are accessible. Recent refurbishment projects to Bedgrove and Southcourt Community Centres ensured hearing loops were fitted to help the hearing impaired. All Centres have also been fitted with “ flashing light” fire alarm points to assist the hearing impaired who would have difficulty hearing the fire alarm sounders. Community Centre employees have undertaken deaf awareness training to help them assist hearing impaired customers.

New play areas are designed to be inclusive with surfacing installed that all can access and a range of equipment that can be used by the majority of people. We are unable to provide equipment for some users that require more specialised equipment as this should only be used in supervised play areas that can be secured when not supervised. The service has identified the need to do more consultation with disabled user groups to establish if there is more that we can provide in our play areas.

The provision of ramps and equipment for disabled users of the Vale Park bowls green has seen an increase in the amount of disabled people and groups using this facility. And the ramped only access (no steps) into the Vale Park main entrance has provided a welcoming entry that is inclusive to all.

Women only swimming sessions, staffed entirely by women, are held at Booker Park School and Green Park.

Transport is an issue in the rural areas of the Vale and as a result activities are taken to rural areas, including projects such as On the Road, Play around the Parishes, Theatre in the Villages, and Music in Quiet Places. This gives residents the chance to attend affordable or free activities in their local area they might otherwise not be able to.

Contract Services liaised with the Imam at the Aylesbury Mosque and, as a result, have put in place arrangements to bury rather than cremate any Muslim who dies without anyone taking responsibility for the funeral arrangements. The waste collection service aims to mitigate accessibility barriers by providing assisted collections where requested and they offer a free clinical waste service for those who apply through local health services.

Information Technology Services support the council both in the delivery of services and as an employer, for example, through the introduction of Texbox, a text

telephone system which connects hard of hearing, deaf or speech impaired customers who use textphones (also known as minicoms), to almost anyone in the organisation by utilizing already networked PC's on an internal computer. It enables the textphone user direct one to one private communication, with the option to be transferred to any department throughout an organisation. They also provide remote or home working facilities for people who are on a phased return to work, for example as a result of illness or who returning from maternity leave. They have also implemented a Cisco telephone system which enables employees with hearing impairments to use the system without the need for a hearing loop. Whilst there have been no recent changes to the provision by Customers Services, they currently provide the following:

- Level access entry points
- Lower height counters at both reception and the cash desk
- Accessible toilets and baby changing facilities
- Hearing loops
- Textbox (including managing the switchboard on behalf of the organisation)
- Translation services through EITI

The Grants and Voluntary Sector Liaison service holds an annual Community Chest 'Working Together' event for all grant recipients. It ensures that an accessible venue is chosen, with parking reserved for anyone who needs it. A PA system is used so presenters can be heard, and when the Aylesbury Coffee Morning attended (a deaf adults social group), a signing interpreter joined the presenters so that the members present could participate in the presentations, question and answer sessions and in discussions with other applicants afterwards.

Fostering good relations

In addition to the legislative requirement, national reports by the Institute of Community Cohesion (ICoCo) and also by the Local Government association (LGA) recommend that each local authority determine what plans and strategies are necessary to promote community cohesion in their area, informed by a baseline assessment.

In 2008 AVDC, in partnership with the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust, Thames Valley Police and Buckinghamshire County Council, commissioned ICoCo to establish a baseline assessment of integration and cohesion within Aylesbury Vale from which a strategy could be developed.

A Community Cohesion Strategy for the district was adopted by the council in July 2010, having been considered by Scrutiny and Cabinet. The Aylesbury Vale Local Strategic Partnership adopted the strategy in June 2010. Partner agencies agreed to adopt the strategy or consider it in relation to their own organisational priorities.

The priorities identified in the strategy are listed below together with council's progress to date:

Priority 1: Building cohesion within and between new and existing communities to address projected population and housing growth.

Registered social landlords, the Community Safety Partnership and Residents' Associations continue to work together to develop initiatives aimed at addressing issues arising in new communities. This is being supplemented by research conducted by the Young Foundation, commissioned by this council, to examine cohesion in relation to new communities. These insights will allow us to respond in an informed way to the needs of residents in new communities and facilitate closer working relationships with partners

Priority 2: Tackling deprivation and disadvantage in the district particularly amongst the Black, Asian and ethnic minority (BAME) population who appear to be the most disadvantaged in terms on housing, education and employment.

A number of projects are underway which aim to address this priority, including:

A multi-ethnic Women's Forum has been established which held a successful event for International Women's day in March 2011. Other activities aimed at increasing knowledge and participation have included: visiting the local Police Station and meeting the neighbourhood policing teams and the domestic violence team; talks from the Primary Care Trust and Drug Action Team and a visit to the Houses of Parliament aimed at creating an understanding of the political system. A leadership programme has commenced aimed at encouraging the next generation of community leaders from under-represented groups.

A successful project was conducted in Haddenham and surrounding area, aimed at identifying isolated older people living in rural communities and providing information and access to services. 245 older people attended two advice and information fairs held in Haddenham and Brill supported by 30 external agencies. An information pack outlining services for older people was developed and sent to local group leaders in the area enabling them to sign-post older people to support as required. A total of 50 older people were individually visited and referred to a variety of local services support. This project is being replicated in the Buckingham area.

A partnership project continues in Quarrendon/Gatehouse area of Aylesbury with a 'save' event held in October 2010 aimed at income maximisation, a community safety film club initiative aimed at encouraging young people to engage with the crime prevention agenda, and recent road shows aimed at gathering the views of local residents.

Priority 3: Develop activities for young people, and address any territorial or intergenerational tensions.

Aylesbury Youth Action continues to deliver their successful Generate project – an intergenerational series of activities, and more recently we have worked with them to explore the possibility of establishing a local Intergenerational Forum.

A youth conference is being held in autumn 2011. Facilitated by the Council and Thames Valley Police and organised by Aylesbury College, it will have a Question Time style format to allow young people to raise a variety of issues of interest or concern to them.

Priority 4: Empower and modernise the voluntary and community sector.

The Council jointly funds the infrastructure support services provided to the voluntary and community sector by Community Impact Bucks. The council also provides support for the local voluntary sector in the form of training sessions aimed at building capacity within the sector and funding fairs to provide access to a variety of local and national funders. In 2010/11 eight training sessions were delivered and the annual funding fair was held in March 2011.

In looking at how community cohesion more generally is mainstreamed into the delivery of services, Leisure Services ensure that images in marketing publications reflect the local population. They are also working to actively promote the Paralympics through working with Stoke Mandeville Stadium, putting information on the Council's website, working in partnership on the legacy programme and the Bucks 2012 website. Customer Services is a hate crime reporting centre and domestic violence reporting centre and all employees have been trained in these areas.

Assessing performance as an employer

The council has a range of employment policies and procedures that are designed to ensure that the organisation is compliant with Equality employment legislation and that best practice is adopted to ensure the organisation recruits and retains a workforce capable of meeting its service needs. These policies include:

- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Maternity, Paternity and Adoption policies
- Bullying and Harassment policy
- Grievance Policy
- Flexible Working Policy including the right to request time off to care for dependents and others
- Career Break scheme
- Job Share Scheme
- Time Off for Public Duties
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy & guidance

All employment policies are accessible to all staff via the Council's intranet.

AVDC is the proud holder of the Two Ticks Disability standard, which is featured on all our literature including recruitment material.

AVDC also holds the Investor in People standard.

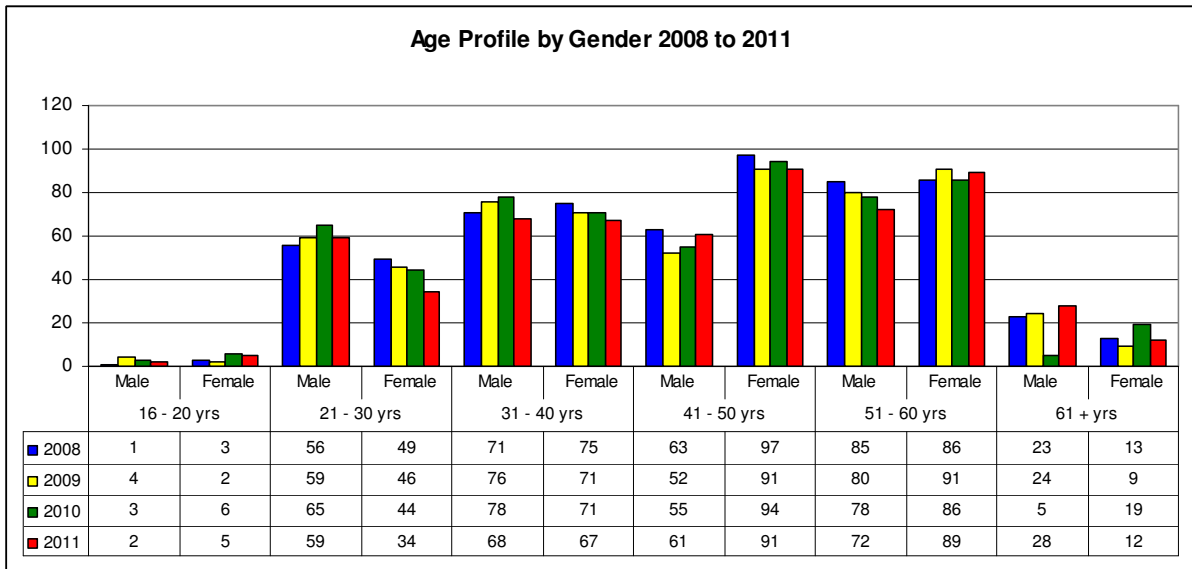
The Council has a Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Steering Group, chaired by a Director. The group meets regularly and outlines actions to maintain compliance and good practice in service delivery.

The self assessment returns from services all made reference to compliance with corporate policies and procedures in relation to personnel matters.

Analysing employee monitoring data enables the council to identify whether these policies, practices and procedures are, in the main, being applied fairly.

Age Profile

At the end of March 2011, 34.2% of the workforce was aged over 50 years (33.3% in 2008) and 17% were 30 years of age or younger (17.5% in 2008) with very small numbers of staff aged under 21 years, indicating a slight tendency towards an older workforce. The age group 31 to 50 years represented almost half of the workforce at 48.8%, but this was slightly lower than three years ago at 49.2%.



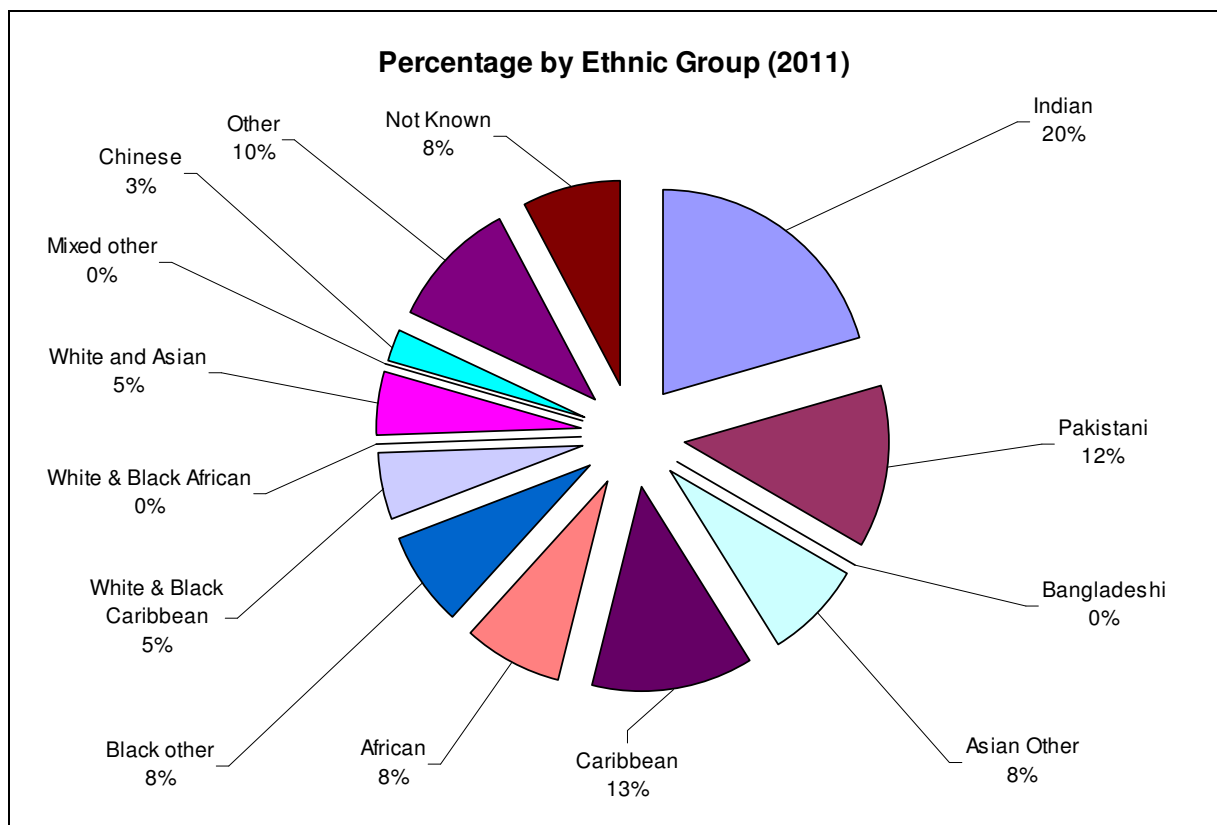
Data for the last four years indicates there are small year-on-year variations, but no major shift towards employing “older” people, the pension scheme may be impactful on the age at which individuals choose to leave the Council. Future years may prove different, with the removal of the normal retirement age from October 2011.

Recent changes in Regulations will see the removal of the Normal Retirement Age (NRA) at 65 years, from October 2011. It is no longer possible to project with certainty the age at which people will retire. It is speculative to suggest that people will continue to work in to their late 60’s and early 70’s, however data over the last four years indicates the numbers of people working for the Council in their 60’s has remained stable. The graph above indicates a sharp fall off from the age group 51 to 60 years, more detailed analysis suggests that there is a more gradual decline.

It is possible, however, that the removal of the NRA will encourage people to apply for work at AVDC or not to take retirement in their 50's and 60's. Future analysis is essential in understanding any possible change in demographics.

Ethnicity Profile

In March 2011, 585 employees had stated their ethnicity. This is an almost 100% return, which is a commendable achievement and enables the council to be confident of its data. Of these, 549 people (93.37%) had declared themselves to be "White", "White: Other" or "White: Irish". The remaining 6.12% (5.6% in 2009) have stated themselves to be from one or other of various recognised minority ethnic groups (there were 3 unknowns, representing 0.5%). The chart below provides more indepth analysis of the ethnic make up of these employees.



There was a slight increase in the number of employees from ethnic backgrounds (two people) since the last report, as well as a reduction of twenty people (3.5%) in the number of white, white other and Irish group.

2001 census figures state that minority ethnic groups account for 5.6% of the local population although, as previously mentioned, population projections estimate that the figure is actually closer to 14%. This suggests, therefore, that, whilst there has been some improvement on the previous year's position, the Council is not yet ethnically reflective of its local population. However, the economic recession is likely to reduce the numbers of employees leaving the Council to join other organisations

and where vacancies continue to occur, there is likely to be significant increases in the number of applicants, including those with relevant experience and expertise.

Disability Profile

There were 25 employees (28 in 2009) who considered they had a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010. This represents 4.25% of the workforce and is a figure that has remained fairly constant since 2006 as shown in the table below. Population estimates for disability suggests that about 15% of people are disabled.

| | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Percentage | 4.14% | 3.76% | 4.98% | 4.63% | 4.30% | 4.25% |

The data is gathered as part of staff joining the organisation and may, therefore, not take account of people who become disabled whilst working for the Council. Also, many people may not recognise their condition as falling within the definition of disability and may therefore, not disclose the information to the council. The council should consider undertaking an awareness raising campaign within the organisation and encourage people to update their personnel records. This information should also be used to inform the Council’s business continuity and emergency planning processes.

Gender Profile

At 31st March 2011, 298 (50.6%) employees were female and 290 (49.3%) were male. Three years earlier the proportion was 51.8% females and was 48% male.

Of the 502 people employed in grades SG1 to SG5, 52.8% were female and 47.2% were male and of the 86 people graded SG6 and above, 38.4% were women and 61.6% were men. This suggests that there are almost twice as many men in senior posts.

Of the 290 female employees, 88.9% were employed in the lower grades (SG1 to SG5) and just 11.1% of the women employed were graded SG6 or above. Of the 298 male employees, 81.7% were in the lower grades and 18.3% were SG6 or higher.

There is one female employee at Director or Chief Executive level (none in 2009) of a total of four and of the other members of Corporate Board, three are female and four are male. Overall, in the most senior positions 63.6% are men and 36.4% are women.

Five years ago the Council employed more people (604) and at that time 52% were female and 48% were male, however the overall gender profile in 2011 remains very similar to the situation in 2006.

Looking at charts for both 2006 and 2011 below, it is apparent that the historical gender gap is closing, but the most common grade for female employees remains SG2, SG3 & SG4. Although the number of male employees also peaks at SG2 there

is a noticeable difference at SG3 & SG4. At SG5 the number are essentially equal, but it is at the grades above SG5 that the greater number of male employees is apparent and this was the case in 2006.

The Council now almost has a 50/50 gender profile, but with still more females in the lower grades and slightly more males in the more senior roles. It is anticipated that the gap will continue to close but this will need to be monitored in light of the removal of the normal retirement age in Oct 2011.

Chart for 2011

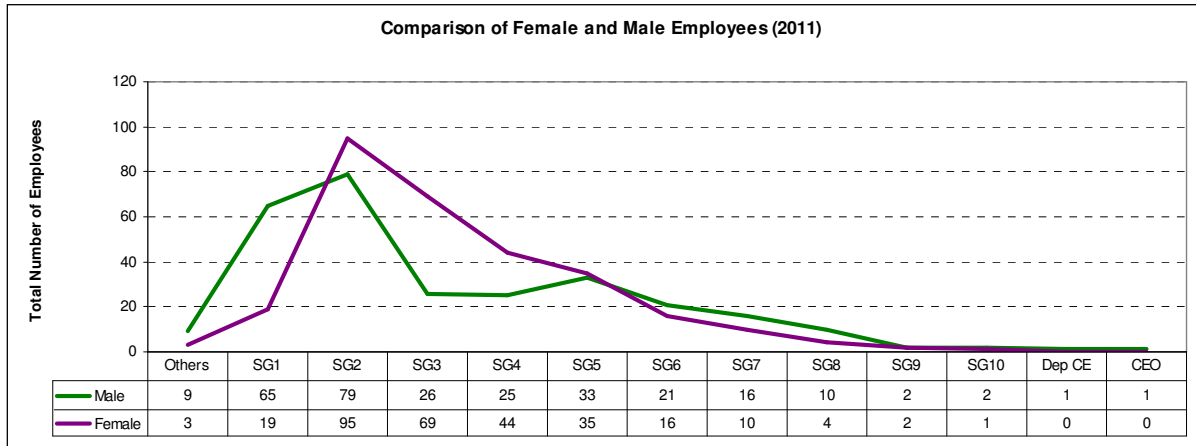
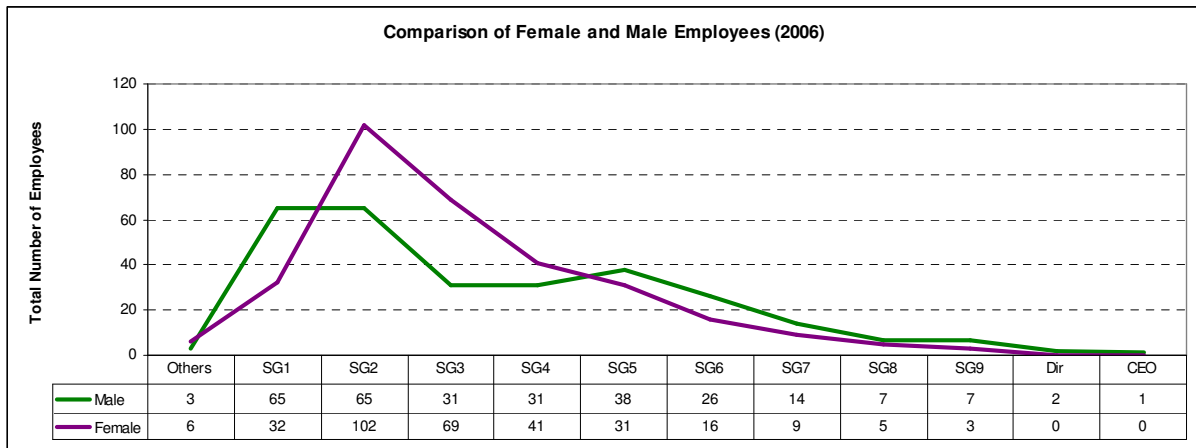


Chart for 2006



Starters & Leavers

People and Payroll recently enhanced its service by introducing an e-recruitment system, which gives potential applicants a wider choice of how they choose to apply for posts at AVDC. They can also register for job alerts, meaning a potentially wider pool of possible candidates, rather than restricted to readers of the local newspapers.

The service also offers recruitment materials in different formats – large format (partially sighted/no braille or audio service)/Minicom/Hearing Loop/Text Box/Translation. The Council is the proud holder of the Two Ticks Disability standard, and this is featured on all our literature including recruitment material.

The Council also includes a positive about equality statement on our adverts:

“The Council, being committed to equality of opportunity, welcomes applications from all sections of the community”.

The Service provides training in recruitment and selection and have robust policies and guidance on recruitment and selection which ensures that recruiters understand that they must use fair and lawful processes when recruiting staff.

Aggrieved applicants can submit complaints, which are always investigated, and a response made. In the last year 1 recruitment complaint was received.

The Service ensures that recruiting managers keep short-listing and interview records, so decisions are made based on how candidates meet the essential and desirable criteria rather than for other non-relevant reasons. It also provides advice and support on recruitment where it is sought.

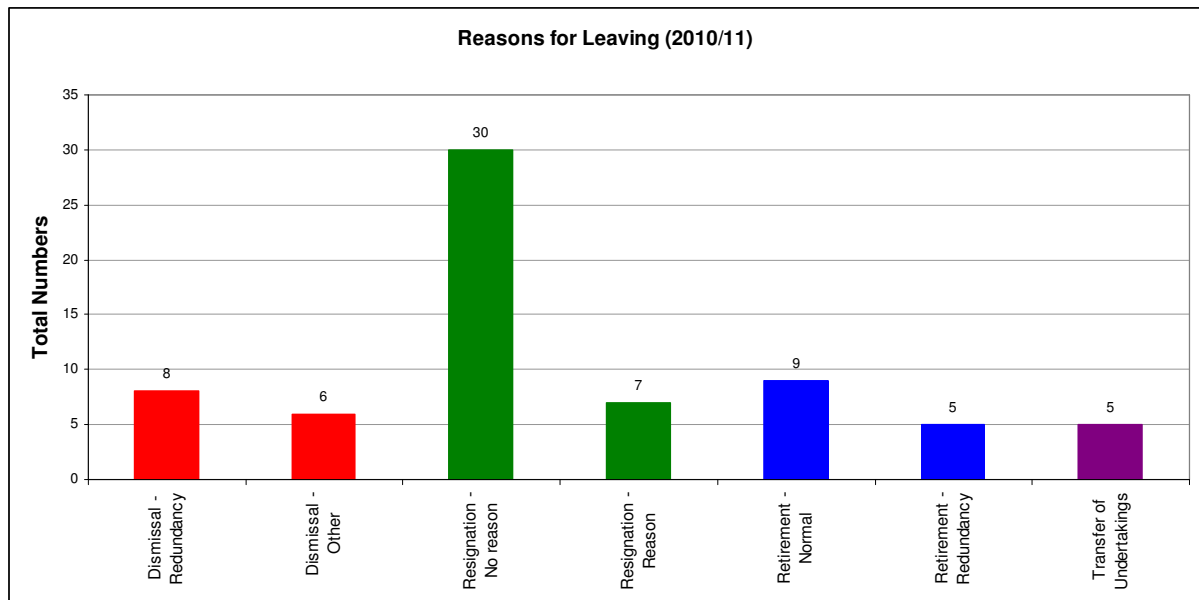
People and Payroll Services introduced a computerised survey in 2009/10 requesting feedback from both new starters with the Council and from people that had chosen to leave. The information and data for that period is summarised in the chart below and was based on the 22 new starters and 14 leavers who had completed the survey.

The main reasons employees chose to work at AVDC were pay & benefits and job location. The majority found the job advertised on AVDC’s website. Working hours, flexibility and good working environment were repeatedly cited as things that people liked most about working at AVDC. 18 of the 22 new starters (81.8%) would recommend AVDC as a good employer.

The main reason that people chose to leave was retirement, this was followed by career development, end of temporary contract and redundancy. High satisfaction was shown in the areas of relationship with colleagues, pay, work-life balance, flexible working and working hours and patterns.

Positive comments about working for AVDC included team work, flexitime and good working conditions and the negative points included increased workloads and stress, resistance to change, bureaucracy and office temperature. 7 of the 14 leavers (50%) would consider working for AVDC in the future.

During the year 2010/11, 70 people left AVDC for one or more reasons including dismissal, retirement and resignation.



The main recorded reason of leaving AVDC was through resignation (52.8%). The detail is not documented, except in a small number of cases and these were mostly for career progression. For the sake of simplicity resignations have been grouped together. Redundancies are technically dismissals, but for these purposes they are shown separately; as voluntary (associated with early retirement) and non-voluntary. 14 people were dismissed (8 for redundancy and 6 for other reasons e.g. conduct and capability).

The number of retirements was fairly small at only 14, although this was 20% of all leavers. It can be seen from the following chart that “normal retirements” centre around the mid-fifties and the mid-sixties. Whilst, retirement associated with redundancy is more common in late-fifties. There were no retirements allowed before aged 55 years (except ill-health) because of changes in pension rules and no retirements took place during the year for anyone aged over 65.

Training & Development

All services self assessment returns identified that employees had attended one or more of the following training provided by the council on equalities:

- Deaf Awareness & British Sign Language
- Visual Impairment Awareness
- Disability Equality for Front Line Staff
- Hidden Disabilities
- Difference Matters (Drama based)

Customer Services also makes use of a weekly training hour to invite external organisations, for example, Bucks Vision and Action on Hearing Loss, to come in

discuss the services they provide and identify issues that their service users may have in accessing the council's services.

All new employees attend a 1 day Equalities training workshop as part of their induction.

An Equalities training module is currently being developed for AVDC's elearning hub. Completion of this module will be mandatory for staff.

When the Equality Act was introduced in 2010 guidance was circulated to all managers and published on the intranet. Two briefing workshops were held in 2011 which trained 45 managers on aspects of the Equality Act (looking at misconduct regarding to discrimination and harassment).

Promoting community cohesion in the workplace

The Council used its Intranet– Mavis to publicise various dates that highlight different aspects of equality, for example:

- Holocaust Memorial Day
- Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans History Month
- International Women's Day
- Successful retaining the Two Ticks Standard
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Government Consultation on Civil Partnerships on religious premises
- Wear it Pink

The Council has also provided webcasts on Ramadan, disability and the Christian festival of Christmas.

In 2010, the Council held an Equality & Diversity conference and exhibition event which was attended by over 100 people, comprising a mixture of staff and external partners.

All the service self assessment made reference to how the Council demonstrates its commitment to equality and diversity through the use of by-lines on the intranet.

Recommendations for improving performance

1. The Equality Strategy and Combined Equalities Scheme are out of date and need to be refreshed. The Council has a duty to set out, by 6th April 2012, its equality objectives for the next four years and this does, therefore, present the Council with the opportunity to review and revise them.
2. The Council has published some disaggregated data about local residents but needs to demonstrate its understanding of the disadvantage and

barriers associated with all of the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. Where local data is not available, for example, in relation to disabled people, or people who are transgendered/transitioning, lesbian, gay or bisexual, national research data should be used.

3. It also needs to ensure that satisfaction data is analysed across all relevant protected characteristics and that complaints are reviewed to ensure that there are no breaches of the Equality Act 2010.
4. Other than the recently revised equality impact assessment process, the implementation of which is patchy, there are no other mechanisms in place to ensure that the council is paying due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty in exercising its functions. This presents a particular risk to the organisation in its decision making processes and could lead to legal challenges, for example, in relation to those decisions which see services significantly changed, reduced or even stopped completely. There have been several cases in other local authorities reported in the media.
5. Ensure the Equalities Steering Group is properly equipped and trained to be able to provide the necessary expertise and support to the organisation in mainstreaming equality, diversity and community cohesion into the day to day operations of the council.
6. The Council should explore in more detail the data in relation to the recruitment and selection process to establish who is applying for positions, who is shortlisted as well who is appointed. This will enable it to determine whether it needs to change its approach to attracting applicants and/or establish that short-listing and interviewing processes are being fairly applied.
7. Consider a disability awareness raising campaign to encourage employees to report any changes since joining the council.
8. Consider that in recognition of the inequality impact caused in parts of the District through poor transport links, the District would liaise with the County Council, as far as it practicably can, on how they might improve transport links to rural areas.