



Light Driver Report

Leeds City Council

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Management summary

A strategic meeting was held on 8th January for Leeds City Council as part of the Fair Play Partnership Diversity Champion project. Elected members and officers attended.

The Diversity Driver instrument was used to examine systematically the extent to which a diversity-aware policy has been implemented to date in *Leeds City Council* and the priorities for further improvements. The Diversity Driver is based on the EFQM Excellence Model and covers the following subjects:

- A. Diversity Objectives- for the organisation and for individuals within it
- B. People – involving everyone within the organisation
- C. Support, innovation and innovation for diversity.
- D. Your organisation as an employer
- E. Your organisation within the community
- F. Your organisation and its customers/clients
- G. Making services accessible
- H. Feedback
- J. The broader picture

The results of the strategic meeting delivered a list of strengths and areas for improvement relating to consideration of the diversity factor in *Leeds City Council*. These strengths and areas for improvement are varied and have a range of weight in future planning.

Further to the areas for improvement that were highlighted, more discussion was held on the question of which should take priority and how to tackle them.

At the end of the strategic session it was agreed that the outcomes would be explored by the working group and an action plan drawn up.

1. Introduction

The goal of this meeting was to use a discussion to gain an understanding of the current state of diversity-awareness in Leeds City Council and possible follow-up activities. The Diversity Driver, an instrument for measuring performance in terms of age-aware policy and practices, was used for this.

This report describes the results of the strategic meeting.

1.1 The Diversity Driver

The Diversity Driver is aimed at measuring diversity within the organisation. This instrument facilitates a systematic examination of what has been done in the organisation to date in terms of diversity. It offers approaches for further improvements. The Driver is based on the EFQM Excellence Model, which is widely used in British and other European organisations as a method of comparing the organisation's own performance against international best practice.

The legal framework in the UK is formed by the Equality Regulations which prohibit discrimination on the basis of the six equality strands, but a diversity-aware policy goes further.

Measures must be taken not because they are prescribed by law but because they make sense, both in business terms and otherwise. The Driver is an aid to taking the most appropriate measures. The instrument contributes to a process of continuous improvement in diversity-aware policy. The idea of continuous improvement is not in itself new. Organisations are always looking for opportunities to improve their performance. The strategy of continuous improvement can be used to measure the organisation's own performance and highlight where a change in approach is required. In this way you can get the best from your employees. The approach of continuous improvement helps with the systematic examination of how successful the organisation is in achieving diversity goals and where there are opportunities for further improvement. Once that process is complete, you have a picture of the strengths. It is possible to continue to build on positive past experiences. It also gives a clear idea of what has still to be done.

2.1 The Diversity Driver - Introduction

The Driver helps with the evaluation of the progress of diversity in the organisation. The instrument is intended for organisations in the public and private sector who first want to know how they stand in terms of diversity before they develop new strategies and action plans. The instrument is also helpful for measuring progress in this area.

The Driver uses the following approach:

1. Define the current state of affairs using an assessment.
2. Define priorities: what are the strengths and weaknesses.
3. Define what needs to be improved: where must improvements be made and what is the priority.
4. Define how to make improvements: how do we approach it – learn from others, use manuals and good examples, carry out a study etc.
5. Approach: define responsibilities and prepare an action plan

2.2 Results of the Diversity Driver:

All participants have completed a Diversity Driver. They are asked to give their perceptions of how diversity appears to them in their role in the organisation. The results are then used to perform an analysis. The strengths and areas for improvement in the HR and organisational policy of Leeds City Council were ascertained in the meeting. The participants agree where the priority should lie in policy developments. The results are always discussed section by section. The discussion is then displayed. Areas for improvement and strengths are discussed and the reasons for the views are explored to clarify what the issues actually are.

2.3 Diversity Objectives

Strengths

- **We have data on the make up of our wards**

Areas for improvement

- **We have no clear overall picture (data, analysis) of the profile of the people city-wide though individual members do**

2.4 People – Involving everyone within the organisation

Strengths

- None identified

Areas for improvement

- Our selection process does not allow for acknowledgement of good staff who could transfer their skills to another department – progression routes
- We do not know what other skills and talents staff have
- We do not always use experienced members and staff to support the development of colleagues

2.5 Support, information and innovation for diversity

Strengths

- Elected members share ideas and concerns with colleagues

Areas for improvement

- The way councilors behave in the Council Chamber dose not always reflect the respect and good work shown in the corridors and committees
- There is a need for greater flexibility in working practices to support the needs of elected members

2.6 Your organisation as an employer

Strengths

- We have good examples of flexible and home working etc. to promote the needs of individuals
- We feel valued in our role as councillors

Areas for Improvement

- We do not always know why staff leave although some departments do - nor why elected members leave

2.7 Your organisation within the community

Strengths

- We work with community groups as far as possible

Areas for improvement

- We need to find creative ways of reaching people who are not the 'usual suspects' - who may not know how the system works – and ensure that policy decision are not skewed.
- The quality of consultation needs to be improved – not tokenistic

2.8 Your organisation and its customers and clients

Strengths

- None identified

Areas for improvement

- We need better communication between front line staff and senior officers who respond to members – reasonable timescales and a more robust audit trail
- Continuation of accountability across election years – issues fall into the gaps when members and committees change

2.9 Making services accessible

Strengths

- We are looking at ways of embedding diversity in our procurement practices
- We have an Equality Impact Assessment process which we are reviewing to strengthen it

Areas for improvement

- Our Equality Impact Assessment process would highlight disability access issues if it were used.
- Our access is not consistently addressed – buildings
- Sometimes the language and the way we work in the council can be a barrier to accessibility

2.10 Feedback

Strengths

- None identified

Areas for improvement

- We need to find more ways of letting people know what we have done about their feedback

2.11 The broader picture

Strengths

- We are committed to equality and diversity

Areas for improvement

- **We could do more to promote the benefits of diversity in real terms**

3 Priorities test

Once the participants have defined the strengths and areas for improvement in relation to consideration of the diversity factor in the strategic and operational policy of the organisation they have the opportunity to indicate the priority for tackling the areas for improvement.

3.1 Priorities test

The priorities agreed are these:

- **The way councilors behave in the Council Chamber does not always reflect the respect and good work shown in the corridors and committees**
3 votes
- **Sometimes the language we use and the way we work can be a barrier to accessibility**
2 votes
- **We need to find creative ways of reaching people who are not the 'usual suspects' – who may not know how the system works – to ensure that policy decisions are not skewed**
2 votes
- **Quality of consultation needs to be improved – not tokenistic**
1 vote
- **We need better communication between front line staff and senior officers who respond to members- reasonable timescales and a robust audit trail**
1 vote
- **We have no clear overall picture (data, analysis) of the profile of the people city-wide though individual members do**
1 vote
- **Our selection process does not allow for acknowledgement of good staff who could transfer their skills to another department – progression routes**
1 vote