



Equality policy and action plan consultation results 2021

Natasha Radovanovic
CUSTOMER INSIGHT OFFICER

Equality Policy and Action Plan consultation results 2021

Background and Methodology

The council consulted local people and community groups on what impact its proposed Equalities and Diversity policy and action plan will have on people in Gedling.

The policy sets out the council's commitment, to provide its services to the public fairly and promote equality and diversity. The views were sought by conducting an online consultation for a period of 8 weeks from June 2021 to July 2021, to help shape the policy and the proposed action plan.

There were 80 responses to this consultation.

90% of respondents were individual residents' responses and 10% were representatives of the local community groups and partners, such as:

- Citizens Advice Nottingham and District
- Friends of Gedling Country Park
- Healthwatch Nottingham & Nottinghamshire
- Framework
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Burton Joyce & Bulcote WI
- Interfaith Council
- Local Baha'I group

Main findings:

- 52% of respondents agree that the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and Action Plan will have a positive impact on the lives of people of Gedling, 27% disagree that it will have a positive impact and 23% are neutral.
- Positive feedback relates to the Policy and Action Plan and is seen by some as 'a sign that making equality and diversity a focus will have a positive impact on the people of Gedling'.
- Actions should be more tangible and measurable (SMART), there should be robust and periodic reporting on the completion of those actions (e.g. to be

reported to Cabinet), and these actions should focus more on the needs of the protected characteristic groups, for example old people, age discrimination, disability, domestic violence.

- Further work is needed to create a more diverse workforce within the council, including more non-white and disabled members of staff and a higher representation of women in higher positions. This will inspire residents of the borough and give them reassurance that the council is committed to the work relating to equalities and equal opportunities in the local communities as well.
- Common concerns expressed by respondents are that a lot of meetings and training don't lead to any real achievements or actions within the community, and that actions must be put into practice; that minority groups are seen and treated as homogenous without any specifically identified needs to a particular group and that the equalities-related work becomes a tick box exercise.

Results analysis

In this report the responses to this consultation were categorised within the **S** (Strengths), **W** (Weakness), **O** (Opportunities) and **T** (Threats) matrix. By using the residents', community groups' and partners' views within this matrix, the council can establish the following:

- Strengths and Weaknesses analysis that allow a clear distinction between the views on what aspects of the policy and action plan are considered to be positive and what aspects would need further improvements.
- Opportunities and Threats analysis that allow the council to consider suggestions on how to continue and shape work in this area and also raises awareness of the risk associated with this work, which can be identified in advance and therefore avoided.

1. Strengths

52% of respondents agreed that the council's proposed policy and action plan would have a positive impact on the lives of people of Gedling.

It was mentioned that the policy sounded very thorough and encompassing and that the proposed policy was a step in the right direction.

The policy was also, according to some feedback, a sign that making equality and diversity a focus will have a positive impact on the people of Gedling.

2. Weaknesses

The following comments have been extracted from the consultation:

Actions

- SMART objectives need to be defined in the action plan
- Metrics need to be used to inform decision making rather the reporting being an end in itself.
- Services need to own and drive this agenda and explain how that will happen.

Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness-related issues were also a common topic in the feedback about the policy and action plan. It was mentioned that as it stands, the documents look 'more like a celebration of youth rather than a fully representative slice of the population of the Borough'.

This statement was reinforced by other comments such as:

- There were not enough positive imagers of older people.
- Disability was mentioned but no details, including any actions relating to it were including in the documents.

Accuracy

There was a comment that the plan makes no reference at all to the protected characteristic of sex. There are 10 references to gender. Gender is not a protected characteristic (gender reassignment is, and this has a specific definition in law).

In the documents Equality was being defined as equality of outcomes. This is a grey area I would like the council to expand on this: Defined by Oxford languages, equality is the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, or opportunities.

Accessibility

The documents were produced with pale, red writing against dark background, which makes it difficult to read.

3. Opportunities

Embedding equities

A lot of emphasis was put on the importance of demonstrating equities in relation to the council's workforce profile. Respondents that highlighted this issue felt that this will provide reassurance to the local community and demonstrate that the council is committed to serve, and treat all parts of the community fairly.

The following suggestions were found in the feedback in this consultation:

- To increased representation of minorities in the Council, that will inspire all residents
- To put in place surrounding recruitment and selection to be cross examined against the equality act 2010 sections 158 and 159 on positive discrimination and positive action. Conditions must be met to ensure the process is not discriminating illegally.
- Organisational cultural changes to be introduced and not only a policy which is a statement of intent
- To examine where the power lies, look at who is currently employed and at what level and who you talk/listen to against each protected characteristic
- Within the council's workforce, the majority of people are white and this needs to be discusses and considered
- To recruit more disabled people and more non-white people
- Having a more diverse work force with more female people being employed to more senior roles
- Pay attention to the specific needs of women within the community and within your workforce. This should start with accurate data collection.

Including other protected characteristics

- It is commendable and very welcome that Young People have been singled out for special attention. Will equal consideration be given to older people?
- There is no mention of age discrimination nor International Older People's Day. If you would like to see a good example of an equality and diversity policy on age

- Single mothers should be considered.
- Commitment to work towards becoming Dementia Friendly (an Alzheimer's Society initiative).
- Where does a pledge to 'reduce poverty and inequality' and 'improve social mobility' come into the management of a local authority? How will it be assessed?
- International men's day.
- Racism is very much prevalent in the Gedling area. What are you doing to tackle this?
- Access to Internet to residents of the borough to be evaluated.

Improving facilities within the borough

- Parks to have facilities for children in wheelchairs
- There have been thousands of houses built in Rivendell, Chase Farm etc. but where are the bungalows for less able people?

Language, publications and promotion

- Make sure all departments use words that the ordinary person in Gedling understands and avoid any acronyms.
- Positive images of older people can be found on the Centre for Ageing Better website. They are free for councils to download and use.
- To make sure that printed material is black on white rather than any other combination; font to be at least 12.
- To fly the Progress Pride flag, which is more inclusive than the Pride flag currently flown of LGBTQ
- As other public bodies are striving to do, replace the acronym BAME an offensive, catch-all and inaccurate way of herding together different peoples and diminishing their rights to be respected and treated with dignity
- It would be good if you were able to name the kinds of behaviour that will not be tolerated, e.g. homophobia, transphobia. You could also be explicit in saying that you aim to be anti-racist in your practice and in service delivery, e.g. by challenging inappropriate comments or actions where you come across these.

Transparency

- Make a commitment to offer easy routes to report equalities issues and to regularly ascertain public views are necessarily a part of this approach.
- Updating the Cabinet annually on progress against the plan is really important to ensuring that the policy is being followed. Can it be done more regularly at a more department/management level to ensure that it is embedded in everything the council does?

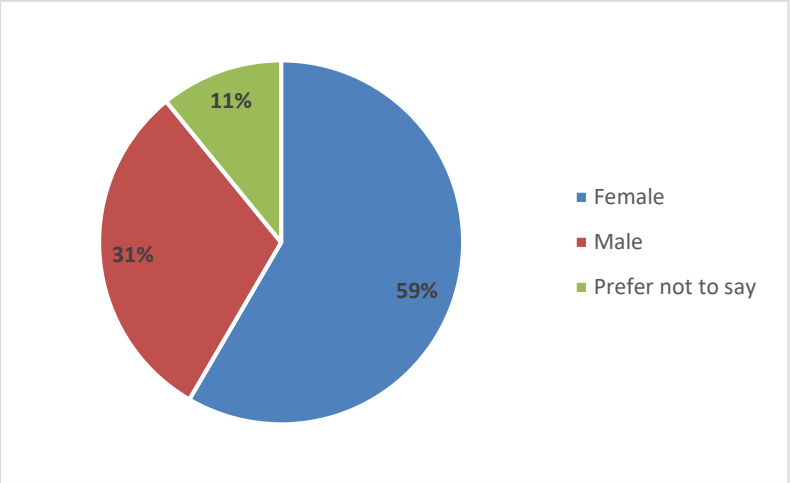
4. Threats

The following comments have been extracted from the consultation:

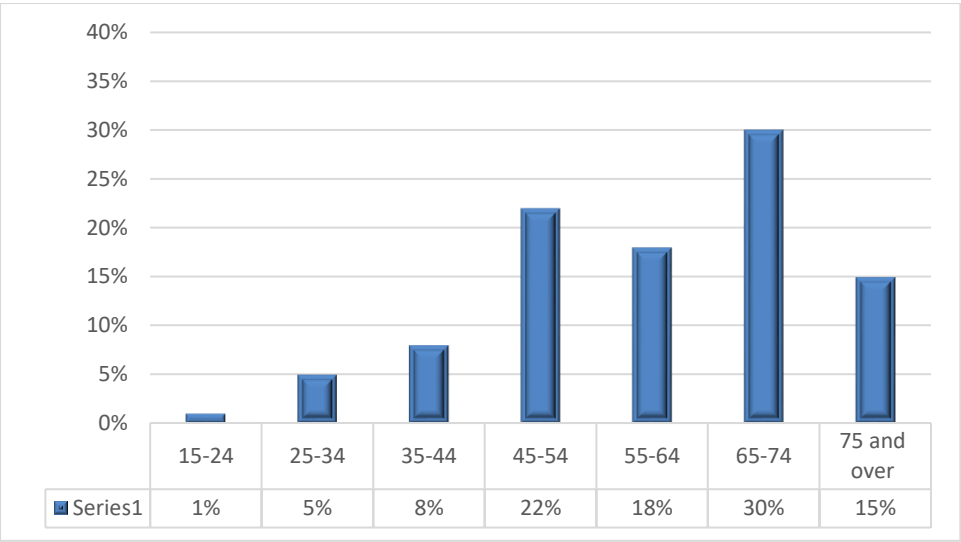
- There are a lot of words, which will lead to a lot of meetings, some training but no evidence of any real action within the community.
- Whilst Equality Impact Assessments are meant to be carried out, are they actually reviewed by either peers or senior management? All too easy to under estimate the impact of a decision on a protected group to avoid difficult work to address it.
- Actions not just words are the key.
- Minority groups are seen and treated as homogenous.
- Look at yourselves - look at the senior leadership team, managers, directors etc. Where's the ethnic diversity and equality in the board and structures? Do you feel this is representative?
- Not to be sitting as a separate policy
- Fine in principle, but lets people off the hook too easily.
- It feels like you are all being trained and there are going to be lots of meetings to discuss things but I have no confidence that anything will be translated into actual action in the next few years given the lack of thought just in the new housing estates and parks recently built.
- Make sure be aware of tick box approaches
- The document as it stands looks more like a celebration of youth rather than a fully representative slice of the population of the Borough.

Profile of the respondents

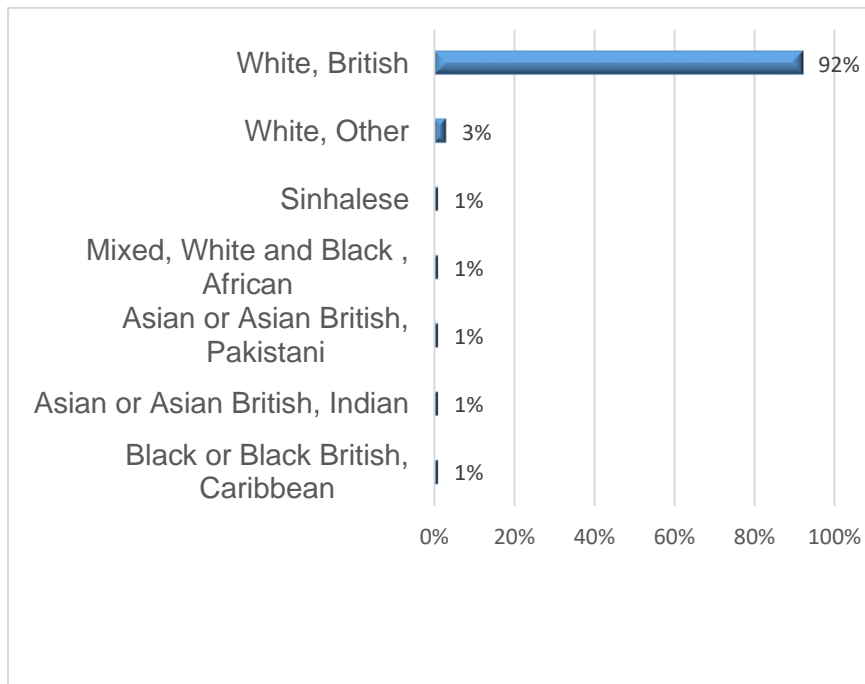
Gender identity



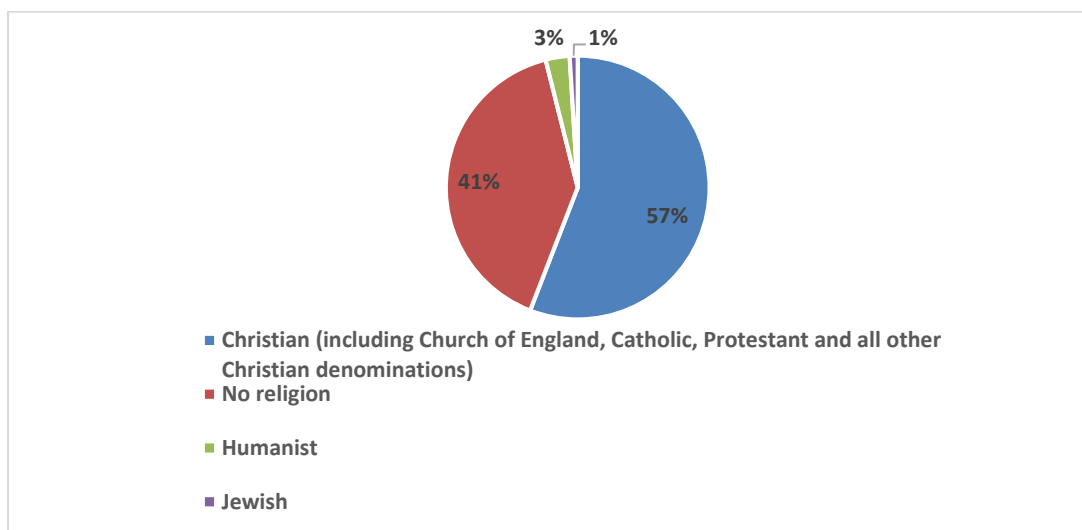
Age



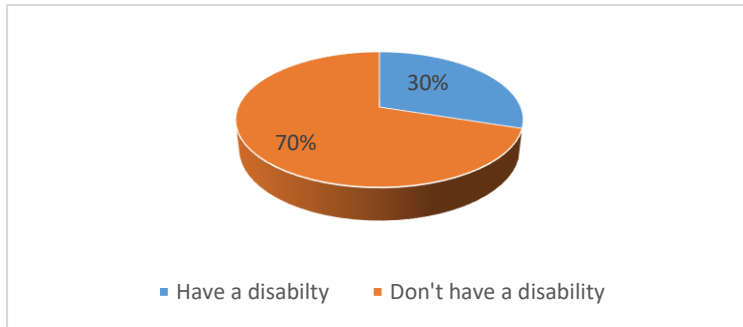
Ethnicity



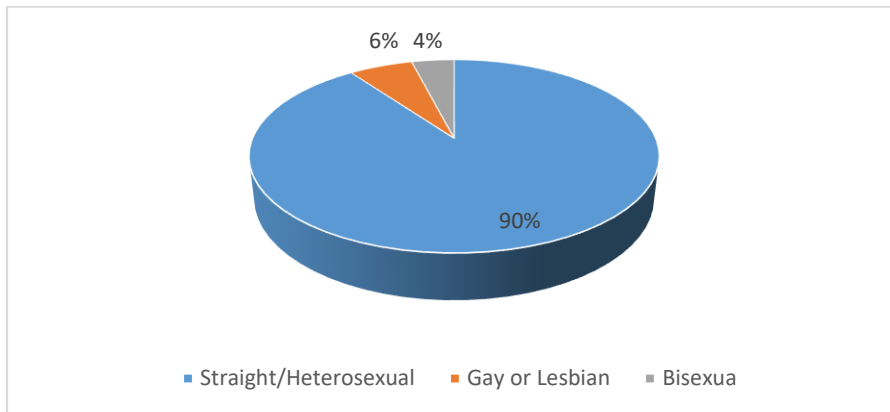
Religion



Respondents who have and don't have a disability



Sexual orientation



Summary comparison table of the profile of responders to the Equality Policy against statistics for the whole of Gedling Borough Council and GBC workforce

		GBC Equality Policy responders		Difference in GBC responders vs. whole of GBC		Whole of Gedling Borough Council		Difference in GBC workers vs. whole of GBC		GBC workforce	
		%	Number of people			%	Number of people			%	Number of people
1	Gender identity										
	Male	31.0%	23	↓	17.7%	48.7%	57,550	↑	2.3%	51.0%	227
	Female	59.0%	44	↑	7.7%	51.3%	60,689	↓	2.3%	49.0%	218
	Prefer not to say	11.0%	8	↑	11.0%	0.0%	0	=	0.0%	0.0%	0
2	Sexual Orientation										
	Straight/Heterosexual	90.0%	63			No data				No data	
	Gay/Lesbian	6.0%	4			No data				No data	
	Bisexual	4.0%	3			No data				No data	
3	Age groups										
	15 - 24	1.0%	1	↓	8.7%	9.7%	11,526	↓	5.5%	4.2%	19
	25 - 34	5.0%	4	↓	7.4%	12.4%	14,618	↓	1.5%	10.9%	48
	35 - 44	8.0%	6	↓	4.4%	12.4%	14,716	↑	9.8%	22.2%	99
	45 - 54	22.0%	17	↑	7.9%	14.1%	16,690	↑	17.3%	31.4%	140
	55 - 64	18.0%	14	↑	4.5%	13.5%	15,945	↑	11.2%	24.7%	110
	65 - 74	30.0%	23	↑	18.6%	11.4%	13,528	↓	4.9%	6.5%	29
	75+	15.0%	11	↑	5.3%	9.7%	11,428	↓	9.5%	0.2%	1

4	<i>Ethnicity</i>										
	White British	92.0%	68	↑	1.7%	90.3%	102,551	↑	1.7%	92.0%	409
	White Irish	0.0%	0	↓	0.8%	0.8%	891	↑	1.1%	1.9%	9
	White Other	3.0%	2	↑	1.1%	1.9%	2,182	=	0.0%	1.9%	9
	Black or Black British, Caribbean	1.0%	1	=	0.0%	1.0%	1,118	↑	0.3%	1.3%	6
	Black or Black British, African	0.0%	0	↓	0.3%	0.3%	370	=	0.0%	0.3%	1
	Asian or Asian British, Indian	1.0%	1	↓	0.2%	1.2%	1,366	↓	1.2%	0.0%	0
	Asian or Asian British, Pakistani	1.0%	1	↑	0.1%	0.9%	962	↓	0.3%	0.6%	3
	Asian or Asian British, Bangladeshi	0.0%	0	↓	0.1%	0.1%	67	↓	0.1%	0.0%	0
	Mixed, White and Black, Caribbean	0.0%	0	↓	1.3%	1.3%	1,500	↓	0.7%	0.6%	3
	Mixed, White and Black, African	1.0%	1	↑	0.8%	0.2%	240	↑	0.1%	0.3%	1
	Mixed, White and Asian	0.0%	0	↓	0.5%	0.5%	521	↓	0.5%	0.0%	0
	Chinese	0.0%	0	↓	0.4%	0.4%	411	↓	0.4%	0.0%	0
	Gypsy/Traveller	0.0%	0	=	0.0%	0.0%	32	=	0.0%	0.0%	0
	Other mixed ethnic groups	0.0%	0	↓	0.8%	0.8%	795	↑	0.2%	1.0%	4
5	<i>Religion</i>										
	Christian	57.0%	40	↓	0.1%	57.1%	64,830	↓	39.3%	17.8%	79
	Buddhist	0.0%	0	↓	0.3%	0.3%	308	↓	0.1%	0.2%	1
	Hindu	0.0%	0	↓	0.5%	0.5%	531	↓	0.5%	0.0%	0
	Jewish	1.0%	1	↑	0.9%	0.1%	92	↓	0.1%	0.0%	0
	Muslim	0.0%	0	↓	1.4%	1.4%	1,535	↓	1.4%	0.0%	0
	Sikh	0.0%	0	↓	0.6%	0.6%	724	↓	0.6%	0.0%	0
	Other religion	0.0%	0	↓	0.3%	0.3%	381	↑	0.9%	1.2%	5
	No religion	41.0%	40	↑	8.3%	32.7%	37,123	↓	8.3%	18.7%	83
	Religion not stated	0.0%	0	↓	7.1%	7.1%	8,019	↑	55.0%	62.1%	276
6	<i>Long-term activity-limiting illness or disability</i>										
	Yes	30.0%	22	↑	10.7%	19.3%	21,956	↓	16.5%	2.8%	12
	No	70.0%	52	↓	10.7%	80.7%	91,587	↑	16.5%	97.2%	433