

# Swindon Borough Council

## Equality Duty Publication Report

### January 2016

This document forms part of Swindon Borough Council's demonstration of its legal compliance against the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which is part of the Equality Act (2010).

A range of documents are referred to within this report. Unless otherwise identified, these are available at [www.swindon.gov.uk](http://www.swindon.gov.uk)

This information about Swindon Borough Council's response to the Public Sector Equality Duty can be made available in arrange of formats and languages by contacting e mail [equality@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:equality@swindon.gov.uk) or phone 01793 445500

Swindon Borough Council is committed to working with our communities and partners to deliver a high standard of accessible service to all parts of the community, and to encourage all sectors of our community to participate to make Swindon a better place in which to live and work.

The Council's Equality and Diversity vision is that **Swindon Borough will be a place which protects and promotes equality and diversity through**

- **Opportunity**
- **Access**
- **Fair treatment**

**whilst understanding and reducing the costs of inequality for Swindon's diverse population.**

**So that everyone can flourish, Swindon will be an equal society which recognises and respects people's different needs, situations and goals, establishing real freedom by removing the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.**

This means we want to make services and opportunities as accessible as possible to as many people as possible at the first attempt (avoiding inefficient, delaying, embarrassing or costly adjustments)

Swindon Borough Council is a Unitary Authority bordered by Wiltshire to the south and west and Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire to the north and east. It has superb transport connections as the M4 and London to Bristol railway run through the borough.

Swindon Borough is also growing and developing at one of the fastest rates in England. Between 2001 and 2011 our population expanded by 17% to 210,000. In 2016 we estimate that our population numbers 216,000. We have a very diverse community with 117 languages being spoken in Swindon Schools.

Despite the fact that Swindon, the largest town in the area, has around 87% of the population, about 75% of the area of the borough is rural. The rural areas, including the villages of Wroughton, Blunsdon and the market town of Highworth, have also seen an increase in population over the last 10 years.

This document identifies some of the key pieces of information we have about our diverse community and the staff who serve them, and sets out how we intend to build on this information in the coming year.

## 2. The council's working ethos and priority areas

Like every other local authority we want to secure the best possible outcomes for our residents.

However, demand for services to the vulnerable is increasing. Care is becoming more complex as people are living longer with complicated medical conditions. The population of Swindon is ageing and changing, which drives an associated demand for services.

Public services have historically been designed in a way that sustains a culture of dependency and does not effectively support the capability in each of us to remain independent for longer.

The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) has resulted in a major reduction in the Council's financial resources which makes it impossible to sustain the same level and variety of services we currently offer to Swindon residents.

To support a re-focus for our work to meet this changing need a vision for Swindon has been agreed:

**By 2030, Swindon will have all of the positive characteristics of a British city with one of the UK's most successful economies; a low-carbon environment with compelling cultural, retail and leisure opportunities and excellent infrastructure. It will be a model of well managed housing growth which supports and improves new and existing communities.**

**Swindon will be physically transformed with existing heritage and landmarks complemented by new ones that people who live, work and visit here will recognise and admire. It will remain, at heart, a place of fairness and opportunity where people can aspire to and achieve prosperity, supported by strong civic and community leadership.**

This vision is underpinned by four priorities:

1. Improve infrastructure and housing to support a growing, low-carbon economy.
2. Offer education opportunities that lead to the right skills and right jobs in the right places.
3. Ensure clean and safe streets and improve our public spaces and local culture.
4. Help people to help themselves while always protecting our most vulnerable children and adults.

Specific work programmes have been identified to deliver these priorities and they are each underpinned by a wealth of information - including equality information, which has helped to shape context, understanding, decision making and implementation plans.

### 3. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The Equality Act 2010 established a general duty which the Council must demonstrate. This duty means that, in the exercise of our functions, we must 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.**

Protected characteristics are the areas or groups where we are required to apply the duties. They are

- **age** (young or old),
- **race** (including nationality and ethnicity),
- **sex** (male or female),
- **Disability** (including learning disability and mental health),
- **gender reassignment** (transgender),
- **religion or belief** (or not having a religion),
- **sexual orientation** (lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual ),
- **marital/civil partnership status,**
- **pregnancy or maternity.**

There are two 'Specific Duties' that are part of the PSED legal requirements.

The first requirement (starting 31st January 2012 for most public bodies) is to publish on an annual basis, relevant, proportionate information about our staff and people who are affected by our policies and practices who share protected characteristics (for example, service users)

The council understands that producing, using and reviewing this information is beneficial because it:

- Confirms the variety of data and information we hold
- Identifies how this information is being used to make decisions or plan services
- Identifies how this information is being used to address disadvantage or inequality in life chances or outcomes
- Identifies the gaps in information we hold and whether we need to plan to fill those gaps in order to be better informed in our decision making
- Enables us to become more transparent and accessible with our information

## 4. Swindon Borough Council Equality Objectives

The second 'specific duty' requirement is to prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives which will help them to further the three General Duties. SBC has 4 equality objectives which are:

**1 Equality data.** Our objective is that SBC policy, strategy, plans, commissioning and service delivery are informed by and take account of appropriate evidence based equality data and information.

**2 Workforce.** Our objective is to ensure our employment and recruitment processes promote fairness and equality for all.

**3 Community Engagement.** Our objective is to work with local people to ensure that diverse communities within Swindon are included in a fair and equitable way in all of our work, services and development.

**4 Analysing the equality impact.** Our objective is that we robustly analyse the equality impact of our decisions and service developments to ensure that all new strategic developments support the delivery of the Council's equality vision and statutory duties.

These objectives are supported by an action plan which can be found on the Council's website.

Delivery of the action plan lies with the Equality Task Group which is over seen by the Strategic Equality Board and reports to Corporate Board.

During 2014 SBC reviewed the equality objectives and action plan that were established in 2012.

An update on the 2012 action plan can be found on the Council's website and some examples of the good practice that has been delivered through this work can be found in later in this document.

The provision of equality information referred to in this document, and subsequent on-going analysis, helps us to meet objectives on equality data, workforce and community engagement as well as providing valuable support to meeting objectives on analysing equality need and strategic inclusion.

Swindon Borough Council's website is available at [www.swindon.gov.uk](http://www.swindon.gov.uk)

## 5. Equality Information

We use headline equality information provided by the Census (2011) to give an indicator about the equality demographic of the Swindon population. This has some limitations – not least the length of time since the census and the fact that it did not ask questions about all equality protected characteristics.

All census information can be plotted geographically to areas of approximately 500 households. This helps officers understand the potential need of small areas when developing or reviewing services. Where possible additional information is identified or more detailed analysis of the census is undertaken to support specific developments and commissioning.

All SBC staff are asked to complete equality monitoring when they apply for employment in the council. This profile has shown limited change over the past 5 years: we hold good information about employees' sex and age, some information about disability and race, then poor information about the remaining protected characteristics.

We recognise that some individuals may feel that answering equality questions when applying for a job may put them at a disadvantage, so we are implementing ways of improving the knowledge we have of our staff during the time they work for us.

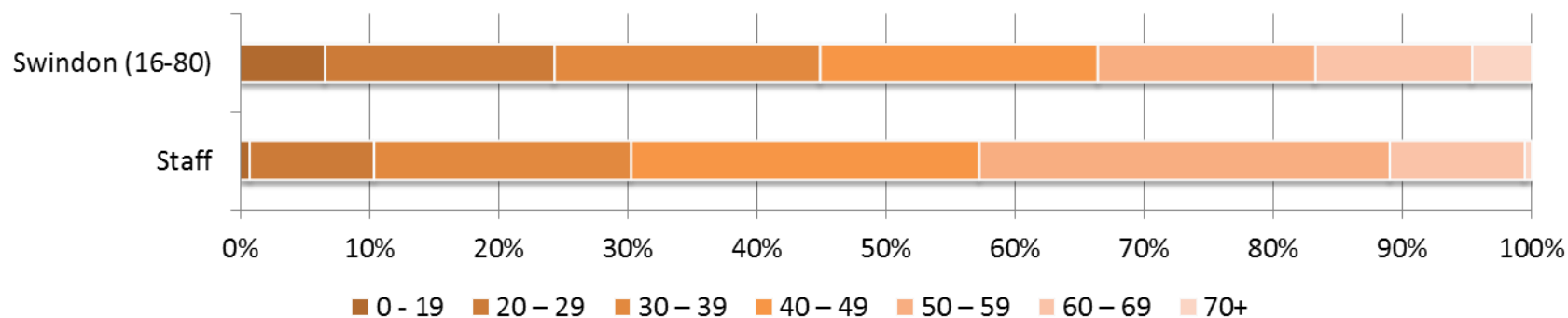
Council staff are now able to update personal equality information which is held on our systems. A communications campaign encouraging staff to update this information will be undertaken in 2016.

The following pages summarise the equality profile of working age people in Swindon against our staff profile as at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

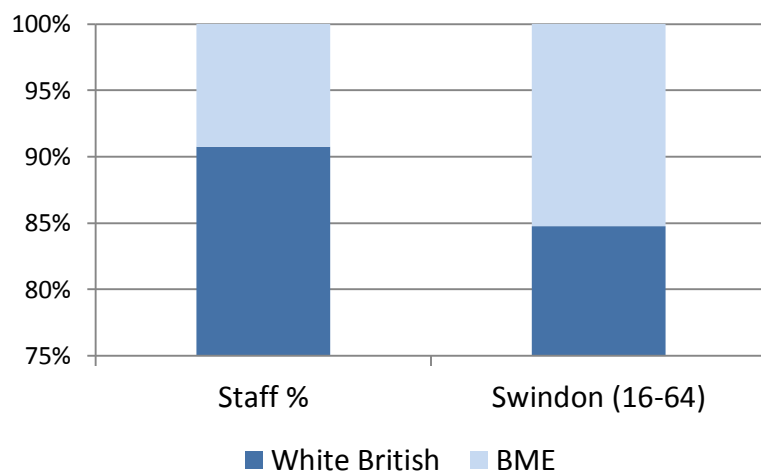
Further information about Swindon's population, staff and customers can be found on our website [www.swindon.gov.uk](http://www.swindon.gov.uk)

## 5.1 Equality Information. Swindon and SBC staff. Age, Sex, and Race

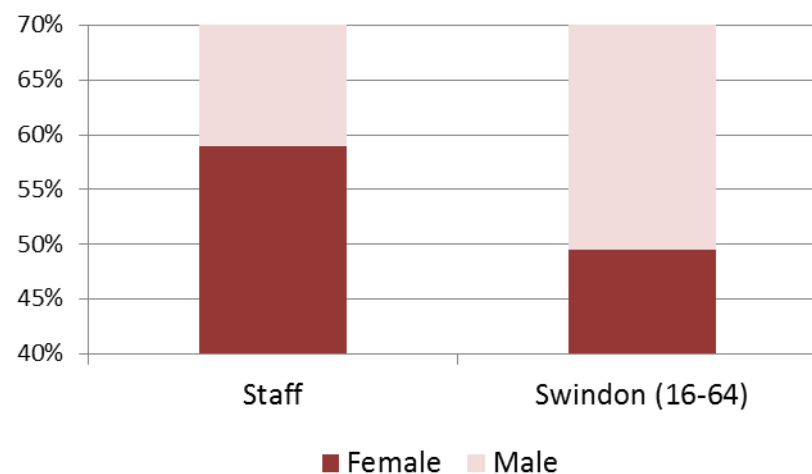
### Age



### Ethnic Group

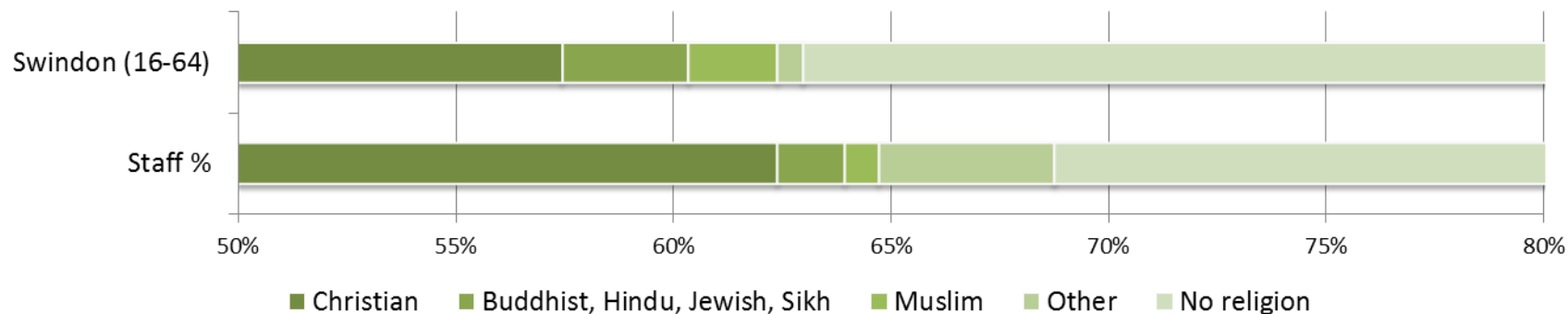


### Sex



## 5.2 Equality Information. Swindon and SBC staff. Religion, Disability and Sexual Orientation

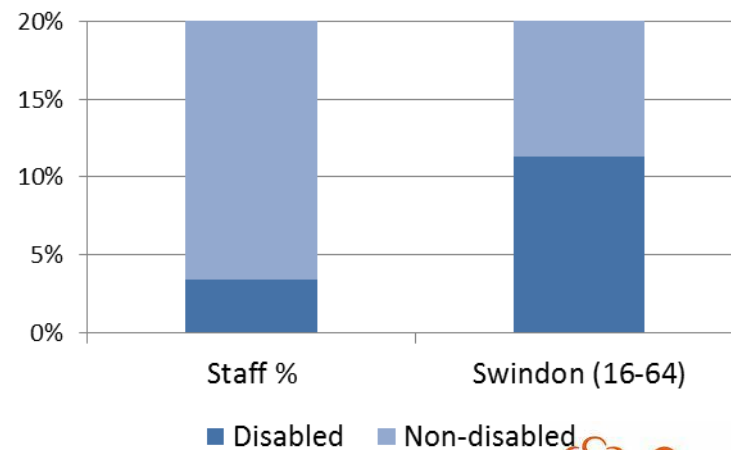
### Religion



### Sexual Orientation



### Disability





The objective “Equality data” has initiated a number of specific pieces of work around improving data collection, reliability and analysis.

Current work includes:

- Commissioning the Swindon Equality Coalition (supported by Voluntary Action Swindon) to actively involve people from all protected characteristics in this process and continues to build its representation.
- Linking with statutory partners (through the Wiltshire and Swindon Equality Lead Officer’s Group and the South West Equality Network) to establish best practice and shared models of working.
- Working with colleagues in Public Health to ensure that the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment offers a broad diversity view when considering the issue of health inequality and commissioning services in response. A specific Equality JSNA summary has now been adopted.
- Sponsorship of Swindon & Wiltshire Pride (since 2009) providing opportunities for Council services to engage with and hear the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

which are otherwise missed. This has produced qualitative feedback for the following services: youth participation, the register office, localities team, adoption and fostering services, leisure services, libraries, adult care and public health.

By Summer 2016

- we will review our Housing register application to include all protected characteristics ie. Adding sexual orientation, religious belief and transgender.
- Homebid officers will record where they have identified a possible vulnerability and where a client may need assistance with accessing our service. Our Housing Register application will be amended so that officers can record that an applicant is possibly vulnerable. This will also include a field box for text stating their needs and assistance provided so we can evidence what we have done. The recording will also detail if a preferred communication has been identified e.g. telephone or large print.

## 7. Comparing our performance

The opportunity is regularly available at a regional level to look at how Swindon Borough Council's performance compares with other local authorities in the southwest. This is be discussed on an on going basis with colleagues from the Wiltshire and Swindon Equality Lead Officer's Group (chaired by Swindon Borough Council) and at a South West (local authority) Equalities Network.

A major achievement of this work has been to develop a partnership Equality & Human Rights Charter which identifies shared principles, values and objectives. This was adopted by SBC in 2014.

Discussions to date have worked on gaps in knowledge and have indicated that the knowledge around the protected characteristics of sexual orientation and gender reassignment/transgender is poorer than many of the other protected characteristics. This is common to many local authorities and shared ways of meeting this information gap are being developed.

Regional work has also identified sources of information on these issues and this is now being used within SBC; using regional and partnership working to establish best practice and knowledge to improve Swindon Borough Council's own performance.

SBC is regularly called upon to provide information to central government about how its improves its practice. A recent example of this is a best practice case study hosted by the office for Disability Issues highlighting SBCs involvement in a Swindon partnership project called 'Let's Loop Swindon' a partnership approach to improving the use of hearing loops and the consequent benefits and increase in independence to people who have a hearing impairment. See [www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/improving-hearing-loop-systems-in-swindon](http://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/improving-hearing-loop-systems-in-swindon)

## 8.1 What difference has this made?

A Diversity Impact Assessment was undertaken prior to **commissioning a new Healthwatch provider**. This identified that different equality groups experience unequal access to health care provision. Because of this organisations bidding to provide Healthwatch in Swindon were required to show how they would both understand the needs of Swindon's diverse communities and make sure there was fair and accessible service provision.

The **Let's Loop Swindon** group audited use of **hearing loop systems** in Council premises. Whilst there was some good provision, there were also areas which could have been better, especially to maintain loops once installed and making sure staff know how to use them.

This has led to an improvement plan. Already all loop systems in the One Stop Shop have been improved and staff have received training in how to use them. Signage has been updated and is now accurate and informative. The loops are regularly tested to make sure they are working. Refurbishment of Committee Room 6 in the Civic Offices included provision of a state of art loop system.

In December 2015 these improvements were praised by Justin Tomlinson MP (Minister for Disabled People). Dr Lorraine Gailley (Chief Executive of the charity Hearing Link) identified this work as 'exemplary' and that Swindon was leading the country in the provision of hearing loops for public use.

Similar work is being undertaken in all Swindon libraries.

**Swindon Libraries** have a range of stock, services and activities which promote good equality practice. This includes a collection of books on prescription for mental health, dementia and autism, working in partnership with public health to support and promote this. We have a reading group for people with visual impairments, our Home Library Service for people who are housebound & also a range of stock to cover all kinds of needs including large print, audio books, new to reading + foreign language collections.

Running alongside this is our year round Universal Offers, which include Reading Ahead – encouraging reluctant adult readers into literacy, the Summer Reading Challenge & the Bookstart Bear Club. We also work with organisations such as the Harbour Project on our Arts Council funded Artswords project & are starting to work with housing, reaching vulnerable groups with the Book Bike

The **Swindon Equality Coalition** has an important role in holding SBC to account for equality decision making. The Coalition formally challenges the Council through the Equalities Advisory Forum.

**Joint working** between SEQOL OTs, SBC Housing/ Aids & Adaptations Project Team, Estates Management, and the Housing voids section have created adaptations to properties for Disabled Tenants enabling them to continue living in their family home. Tenant feedback says: "Family life is so much better and calmer" and "It has made life much more bearable".

In 2015 **every Cabinet decision** was supported by an appropriate Diversity Impact Assessment advising Councillors of the equality implications of their decisions.

## 8.2 What difference has this made?

**Staff Equality Groups** formed following the 2014 staff survey have been working to help Council leadership understand different views of SBC as an employer. The staff groups have identified that demonstrable use of equality monitoring, greater visible leadership and application to equality benchmarking schemes as future areas of work. Corporate Board members have each agreed to sponsor a staff group.

After a year of discourse, promotion, education and training, **Children Families and Community Health** have significantly improved the level of **ethnicity monitoring** for all open cases. This information is being used by the Senior Management Team and the Equality Working Group to understand how access to and services differs depending on ethnic group. Similar work is now being started on other equality areas.

Customer Services have supported two members of staff to start training in **British Sign Language** level 1. This will encourage greater levels of Deaf awareness and communication skill within the One Stop Shop.

**Central Business Support** provided a two week **work experience** placement for a candidate with Autism who has now successfully secured an Apprenticeship with Housing. We asked for feedback following the placement to understand what worked well and what not so well in order that we could do it better going forward. We received a letter of compliment from the father who appreciated the detailed preparation that was put in to make the work placement successful for this candidate. We provided the team with Autism Awareness training before the work placement started. We have also encouraged Managers/ Team Leaders to attend **Mindful Employer Network** events held in Swindon throughout the year to encourage/promote awareness of Mental Health issues in the workplace.

SBC received the country's first residential Local Development Order (in the Planning world this is quite exciting) to develop **assisted living bungalows**. This is a new way of dealing with Planning applications which allows for much more community input to the final design and included applicants with disabilities at the design stage to ensure that the properties do as much as possible to meet the needs of prospective residents. The Assisted living bungalow schemes being progressed at sites in Pinehurst and Parks in a collaboration between the **Borough Architect, and the Housing and Planning Teams**. The purpose of the scheme is to allow residents with special housing needs to have greater independence. The sites have been selected due to their location at the heart of their respective communities and due to their close proximity to local shops and facilities. The bungalows will be of modular construction, allowing each bungalow to be configured to the needs of the person living in it. A flexible planning consent will although modifications to the scheme to be made without the requirement to make a fresh planning application.

A programme of **improving access within our offices** – this is about enabling existing staff to work effectively regardless of any impairment. It also ensures that Swindon Borough Council is an employer of choice for Swindon communities. As part of this all managers have been reminded of their responsibilities to provide **reasonable adjustments**

## 9. What happens next?

### What happens next?

This document will inform the on-going work of the Council's Equality Objective action plan, and any future review of the objectives. Further work is being undertaken at the current time to increase levels of reporting and analysis – particularly with employment information. This information will be provided on our website as soon as it is available.

### Contact details:

The Equality Team, Swindon Borough Council, Civic Offices, Euclid St, Swindon SN1 2JH

[equality@swindon.gov.uk](mailto:equality@swindon.gov.uk)

**More information** is available on the SBC website

[www.swindon.gov.uk](http://www.swindon.gov.uk) including:

- Equality Action Plan
- Equality Act 2010 Summary
- Population estimate 2011
- Glossary of Equality and Diversity terminology
- Housing Register Equality Information 2015
- Language use in Swindon 2015
- Adult Services Equality Summary 2014 to 2015
- Children, Families and Community Health Equality Summary 2014-2015
- Swindon Borough Council Staff profile and information 2015
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Health and Wellbeing)

### Related Links

- Office for National Statistics  
[www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html)
- Equality & Human Rights Commission  
[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)
- Home Office Equality Pages  
[www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/equalities)
- Local Government Association equality pages  
[www.local.gov.uk/equality-frameworks](http://www.local.gov.uk/equality-frameworks)