

Equalities Strategy





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Introduction

South Norfolk Council continues its commitment to equality of opportunity and the elimination of discrimination for all people regardless of age, race or ethnic origin, disability, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and geographical location. We are committed to promoting equality in respect of our role as a service provider, our role as an employer, and our role as community leaders. We are committed to equal life chances for all.

We believe that equality for all is a basic human right and actively oppose all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination. We celebrate the diversity of our district and are striving to promote and reflect this diversity within the council's own structure.

The Equalities Strategy is an overarching strategy that brings together the overall equality aims of South Norfolk Council.

Vision

South Norfolk is a mainly rural area covering around 350 square miles of East Anglia. It has a population of over 117,000. About 35% live in rural locations and the rest live in the main market towns of Diss, Harleston, Loddon and Wymondham or close to Norwich, at Costessey. South Norfolk has 119 parishes.

Due to its rural location we recognise the issues that people face in access to services such as information and transport. We are committed to supporting facilities within communities to ensure equality of access. We are also committed to supporting employment opportunities in the local area.

South Norfolk Council is firmly committed to providing and promoting equality for the wider community and all its employees. This Equalities Strategy should ensure equality influences the way we provide services and the way we employ and develop staff. To achieve this we will create an environment in which there is respect for every individual and recognition that no employee, potential employee, resident or potential resident is unfairly discriminated against.

South Norfolk Council is committed to the Social Model of Disability which, in simple terms, is the fact that it is environment around us which is disabling and not an individual's impairment. Therefore if we remove barriers we allow those with impairments to be involved.

Statement of Commitment to Equality

We have produced a short version to make the statement easy to recognise and understand.

“In all its activities South Norfolk Council will ensure equality of provision by treating all people fairly”

The full statement is:

1. South Norfolk Council is committed to ensuring that all individuals and groups are treated with respect and are valued equally
2. We believe that no one should be disadvantaged in their contact with the Council or by the way services are provided
3. We will actively promote equality and will encourage the reporting of discriminatory incidents so that we can take action to support anyone experiencing discrimination on any grounds
4. We will make all our services accessible to everyone; irrespective of geographical barriers, age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, faith or religious belief
5. We will actively include relevant people and groups in our public engagement
6. We will ensure that our staff and members are trained in equality matters
7. We will conduct impact assessments on all of our functions and policies to ensure that they comply with legislation and do not discriminate
8. We will collect information about our customers to determine whether all sections of the population have equal access to all of our services
9. In line with our procurement policy, we will treat everyone fairly
10. Our good practice will be an example to others in employment and service delivery

Revised July 2007

Legislation

As well as accepting its responsibilities under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976, the Equal Pay Act 1970, and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, together with all related legislation, South Norfolk Council is committed to the broad principles of social justice. The Council confirms that equality extends to all the services it provides as well as its employment policies and practices

This strategy applies to potential employees as well as existing staff. It relates to all aspects of employment including recruitment, pay, terms and conditions of service, training, transfer, grievance, disciplinary and capability procedures, and to all arrangements made for working for South Norfolk Council.

All sections of the population will have equal access to jobs and services offered by the Council, and no person will receive less favourable treatment than others because of age, race or ethnic origin, disability, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and geographical location.

The Chief Executive is responsible for the overall monitoring and implementation of this policy. Directors are responsible for making sure this policy is put into practice in their service areas.

The Aim of this Strategy

This Strategy was developed to:

- Eliminate unlawful direct and indirect discrimination;
- Promote equality of opportunity;
- Celebrate and value diversity;
- Promote community cohesion for both residents and Council employees.

The Council's commitment

- To ensure equality of access to services for all residents
- To ensure the Council's workforce is representative of the District's population
- To eliminate unlawful discrimination on grounds of age, race or ethnic origin, disability, faith or belief, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and geographical location for both residents and Council employees.
- To promote good relations and equality opportunity for all sectors of the community
- To ensure all our equality schemes, current and emerging, meet the objectives of this overarching Equalities Strategy
- Meet our statutory requirements
- Ensure resources are earmarked for equality work identified in the action plan.

General Standards

The Council will:

- treat everyone who comes into contact with the Council in an open and respectful manner.
- deliver our services without discrimination, prejudice or bias.
- ensure information about services is made available to the public in a form in which they can understand. This includes providing material in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language where requested.
- ensure that everyone who receives our services is encouraged to comment on the delivery of services.
- ensure all complaints go through the Council's complaints procedure. If anything we do gives rise to complaints of unfair treatment, discrimination or lack of accessibility, we will aim to change and improve the service.
- ensure complaints of unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment and bullying within employment are dealt with through the grievance procedure. We endeavor to deal effectively with any such instances that are reported to us.
- seek to promote an open atmosphere where any member of staff who feels that they are being discriminated against, victimised, harassed or bullied should feel free to either discuss the problem with Human Resources Officers or make a formal complaint. All staff have the right to make a complaint and to know that it will be dealt with promptly and fairly and that confidentiality will be observed as far as is possible.

The Equalities Working Group will monitor these standards to ensure equality in the provision of services, and revise them when appropriate.

Service Delivery and Customer Care

The Council will:

- Incorporate equalities principles into communication and consultation policies and ways to assess community needs
- Use systematic reviews to ensure that potential or actual discrimination is removed from its policies and practices
- Ensure that our policy development and planning processes recognise the vital importance of equalities.
- Seek to ensure that all appropriate council public buildings provide suitable disabled access and comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Ensure that translation and interpretation will be available for all services as required.
- Contribute to the achievement of the Local Area Agreement (LAA)
- Ensure we focus on outcomes for our residents in line with the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)

- Work with partners, businesses and the community to ensure these values are taken into the ethos of our communities.
- Work towards comprehensive equalities monitoring to ensure that our services are being delivered in line with our equalities commitments.
- Involve disabled people in decisions about how our services are run.

Employment and Training Objectives

The Council as an employer will:

- Take positive steps to eliminate discrimination in the workforce
- Ensure that all employees are treated fairly
- Advertise vacancies in appropriate media
- Ensure recruitment meets equalities standards including guaranteeing an interview to disabled persons who meet the criteria for the post
- Provide all existing and new staff and applicants with the Equal Opportunities Policy Statement
- Maintain and develop equality monitoring taking appropriate action as necessary
- Monitor employee development to ensure equality in training and opportunity
- Ensure an equal pay structure.
- Provide equalities awareness training including awareness of our legal duties.
- Include equalities training in all staff induction and ensure ongoing training, including awareness of our legal duties.
- Recognise the role of trade unions in working for equality in employment and services

Consultation, Community Development and Scrutiny

The Council will:

- Support the development of strong, secure, self reliant, self-confident communities free from unlawful discrimination.
- Involve minority and disadvantaged groups, such as disabled people in our consultation, community development and scrutiny.
- Ensure corporate strategies, service plans and policies reflect the needs and views of all communities.
- Work with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to encourage reporting of harassment and subsequent action.
- Promote the Equality Strategy and Equalities Schemes.
- Ensure proper feedback both externally and internally using appropriate media.
- Engage with representative groups such as the Equalities Group for advice and information regarding barriers to services and best practice.

- Ensure that all partners, contractors, agents and suppliers are aware of and adhere to the Council's Equalities Strategies.
- Ensure all Impact Assessments address equality issues and evaluate contribution towards equality objectives.
- Set target dates for and monitor any actions required to ensure implementation of equality.
- Use equality self-assessment, scrutiny and audit to ensure achievement of the Local Government Equality Framework levels.
- Consult relevant organisations on current policies and actions required to implement those policies effectively.
- Undertake a project in conjunction with partners to consult with our Faith and Humanist Groups, LGB people and transgender people.

Our Approach to Equality - Members

The Council has a portfolio holder responsible for equality & diversity and he/she will act as the political interface for the strategy.

The Equalities Group is responsible for making proposals to Cabinet to implement this Strategy. Cabinet is also responsible for reviewing equality reports and approving equalities action plans.

It is the responsibility of all members to address inequality and promote diversity. Members play an integral role in promoting equality; where they believe unfair discrimination or harassment has taken place they should report it. The Council will take action against members who breach equality policies.

All hate incidents should be reported in accordance with the Multi-Agency Protocol (MAP).

Our Approach to Equality - Managers

The Council has established the Equalities Group. The Group is responsible for formulating corporate equalities policies and providing corporate advice and guidance to members, Management Team and staff on all aspects of equality.

Directors are responsible for ensuring that their services comply with the legislation and standards set by the Council.

All managers are responsible for implementing this strategy and ensuring equalities are mainstreamed into their services.

All managers are expected to take positive measures to address inequality and promote fairness. Diversity, for all managers, should be integral to carrying out their duties. The Council will take action against managers who breach equality policies.

All hate incidents should be reported in accordance with the Multi-Agency Protocol (MAP).

Our Approach to Equality – Employees

All employees play an integral role in promoting equality; where they believe unfair discrimination or harassment has taken place they should report it to their manager. Employees who work directly with the public are the Council's ambassadors and as such, the Council will be judged by them.

All employees are expected to take positive measures to address inequality and promote fairness. Diversity, for all employees, should be integral to carrying out their duties. The Council will take action against employees who breach equality policies.

All hate incidents should be reported in accordance with the Multi-Agency Protocol (MAP).

Equality Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments are a way of assessing whether an existing or proposed policy, procedure, practice or service affects the various different groups in our communities in either a positive or negative way.

We will:

- automatically carry out impact assessments for any major changes in
- policies or procedures or where new services are being developed or where existing services are being substantially changed;
- systematically undertake impact assessments on all our current services;
- where there is a negative effect that is discriminatory take appropriate action to reduce or eliminate it.
- ensure that positive impacts are celebrated

South Norfolk – Equalities Profile

Background

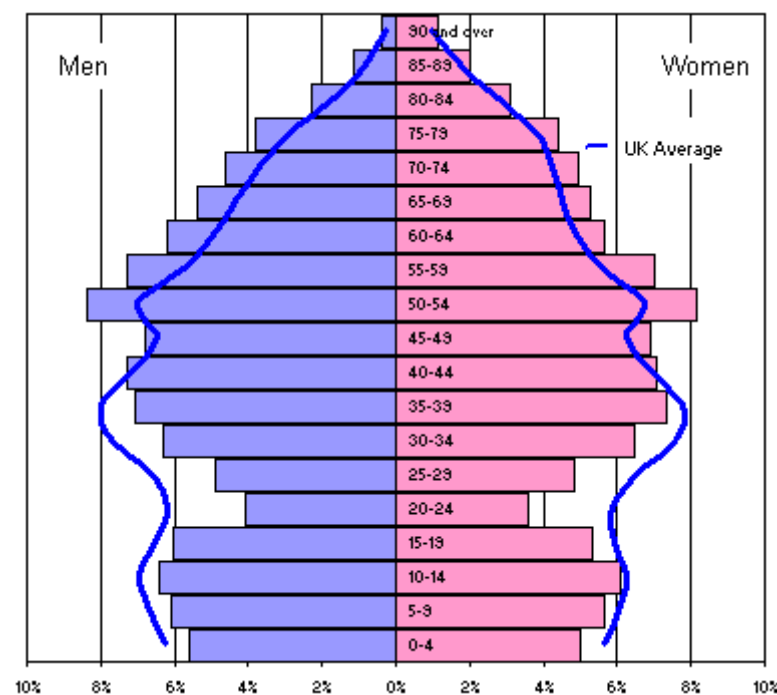
South Norfolk, located in the East of England, is a predominantly rural area covering 907 square kilometres (350 square miles): just over one sixth of the county. The mid-year population estimate in 2007 was 117,300 people (14% of the Norfolk population). This means that South Norfolk has an average density of only 1.25 people per hectare or 324 per square mile; a rank of 317 out of the 376 authorities nationally.

Gender

The gender split is 48.6% Males to 51.4% Females. (ONS - 2007 estimate)
We do not know how many transgender people live in South Norfolk.

Age Distribution of the Population

Age distribution of the population, 2001 Census



Source: 2001 Census – Population Pyramid, ONS: Crown Copyright.

Population by age group, 2007

Age Group	South Norfolk	Norfolk	Eastern	England
0 – 9	10%	10%	12%	12%
10 – 19	13%	12%	13%	13%
20 – 29	8%	12%	12%	13%
30 – 39	12%	12%	14%	14%
40 – 49	15%	14%	15%	15%
50 – 59	14%	13%	13%	12%
60 – 69	13%	13%	11%	10%
70 – 79	9%	9%	7%	7%
80 – 89	5%	5%	4%	4%
90+	1%	1%	1%	1%

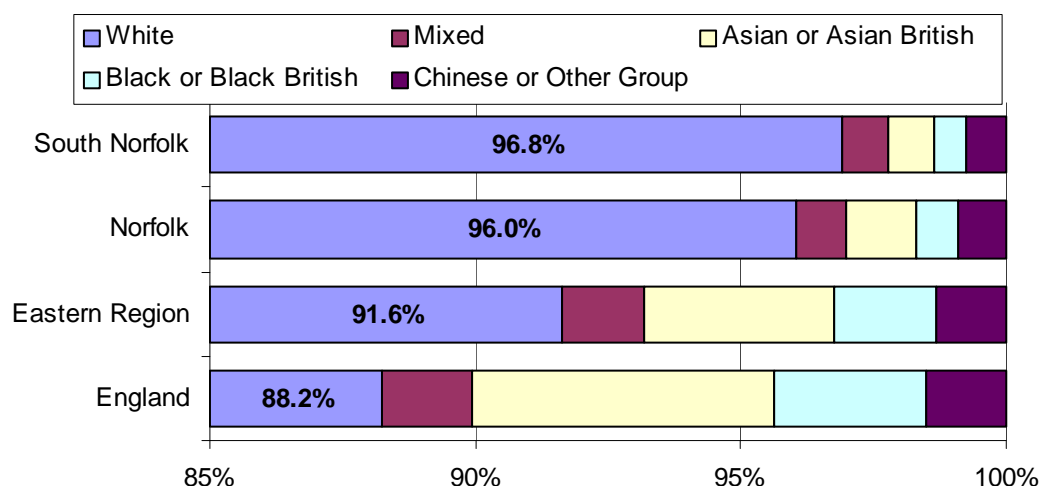
Source: Table 9 Mid-2007 Population Estimates: Quinary age groups and sex for local authorities in England and Wales; estimated resident population, Population Estimates Unit, ONS: Crown Copyright 2008.

The percentage of the population in South Norfolk aged 50 and over exceeds 41%. This is much higher than both the English average of 33.7% and Eastern Region average of 35.3%, and marginally more than the Norfolk average 40.7%. The other noticeable difference is in 20-29 year olds, with South Norfolk significantly lower than the rest of Norfolk.

In 2001, the average age of the population in South Norfolk was 41.9 years. This is higher than the average age for England & Wales, which stands at only 38.7 years.

Ethnic Groups

Ethnic Breakdown of Population, 2007 estimates from 2001 Census



Source: Office for National Statistics: Crown Copyright 2009.

Area	South Norfolk	Norfolk	Eastern Region	England
Population	117.3	840.6	5,661.0	51,092.0
White: British	110.5	777.0	4,920.4	42,736.0
White: Irish	0.6	5.1	60.6	570.5
White: Other White	2.5	24.9	206.1	1,776.3
White	113.6	807.0	5,187.1	45,082.8
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0.3	2.1	26.7	282.9
Mixed: White and Black African	0.2	1.2	11.7	114.3
Mixed: White and Asian	0.3	2.5	26.5	260.9
Mixed: Other Mixed	0.2	2.4	22.7	212.0
Mixed	1.0	8.2	87.6	870.1
Asian or Asian British: Indian	0.5	5.7	88.2	1,316.0
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	0.2	2.1	59.0	905.7
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	0.1	1.0	29.8	353.9
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	0.2	2.0	26.0	339.2
Asian or Asian British	1.0	10.8	203.0	2,914.8
Black or Black British: Black Caribbean	0.2	2.0	41.4	599.7
Black or Black British: Black African	0.4	3.7	56.8	730.6
Black or Black British: Other Black	0.1	1.0	10.6	117.6
Black or Black British	0.7	6.7	108.8	1,447.9
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese	0.5	3.6	39.5	400.3
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Other	0.4	4.1	35.0	376.1
Chinese or Other Group	0.9	7.7	74.5	776.4

Source: 2007 estimate from 2001 Census Data, ONS, Crown Copyright 2009

The largest minority ethnic group in South Norfolk is Asian or Asian British groups showing an increase in prevalence from 0.3% in 2001 to 0.9% in 2006 (a 200% increase).

Despite the growth of non-white ethnic minority groups, South Norfolk is still a slightly less diverse area than Norfolk as a whole, but significantly less diverse than the national picture.

Much of this growing diversity within South Norfolk, and Norfolk as a whole, is due to the local economy which is appealing to migrant workers.

In South Norfolk alone last year (2006/07) 32 different languages were requested via the interpretation and translation service used by public agencies across Norfolk. The top 10 foreign languages requested in the Southern area were (in descending order):

- Portuguese
- Polish
- Russian
- Lithuanian
- Turkish
- Hungarian
- Mandarin
- Spanish
- Sylheti
- French

Gypsy & Traveller Caravans, 2005 - 2007

The number of caravans within South Norfolk in 2007 was 146. These were on both authorised and unauthorised sites as the tables below show:

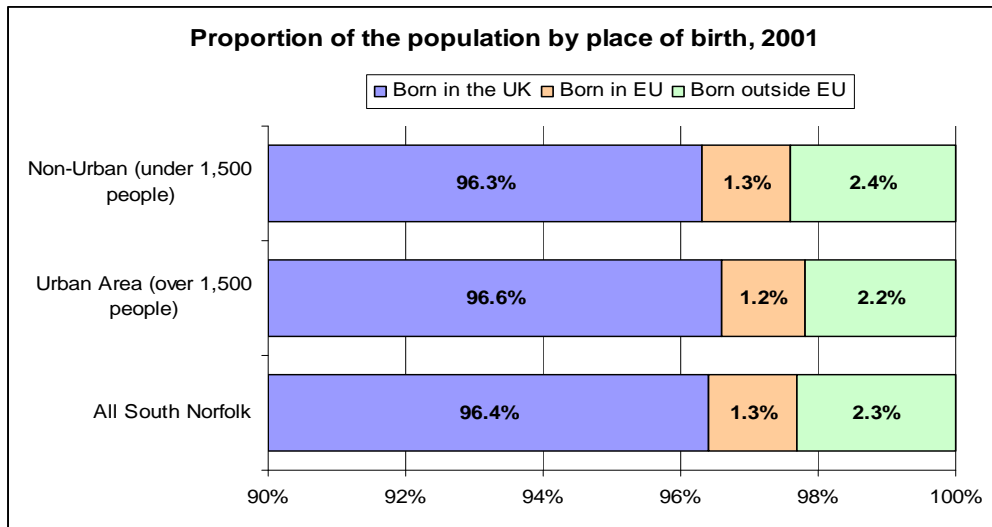
	Number of Caravans on Authorised Sites	
	Socially Rented	Private
Jan 2007	25	17
Jul 2006	0	13
Jan 2006	29	13
Jul 2005	33	12
Jan 2005	30	14

	Number of Caravans on Unauthorised sites				Total - All Caravans in South Norfolk
	They own the land		They do not own the land		
	"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	"Tolerated"	"Not tolerated"	
Jan 2007	10	9	48	37	146
Jul 2006	15	2	49	0	79
Jan 2006	0	12	39	0	93
Jul 2005	9	3	63	0	120
Jan 2005	0	10	15	12	81

Source: ODPM 2007 Gypsy & Traveller Caravan Count

The Gypsy and Traveller group represents one of the more significant ethnic minority groups within South Norfolk, although this group are identified as belonging to the 'White' category.

Country of Birth

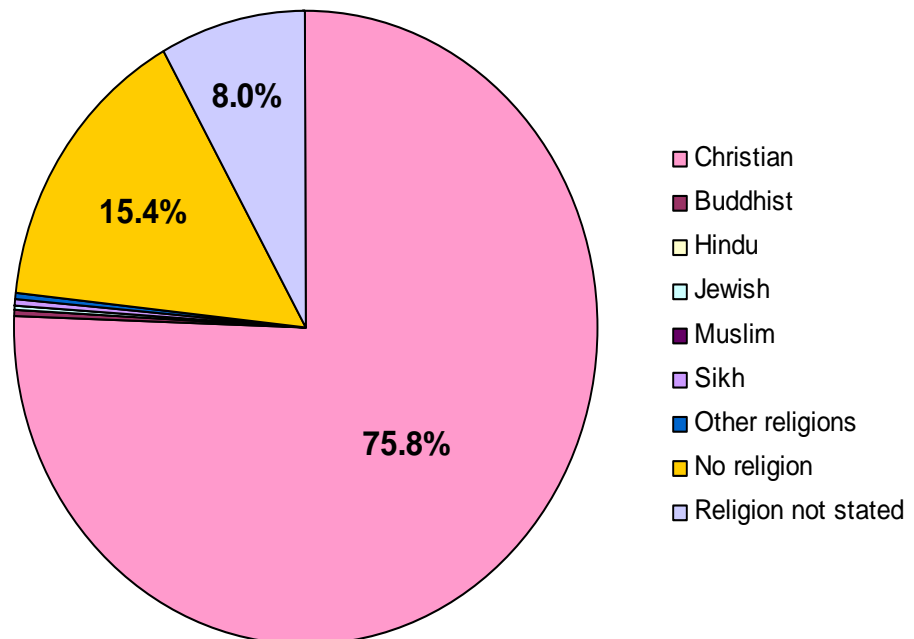


Source: 2001 Census – Table KS005 Country of Birth, ONS: Crown Copyright 2004

The proportion of the local population born outside the UK is relatively low.

Faith & Belief

Religious breakdown of the population, 2001



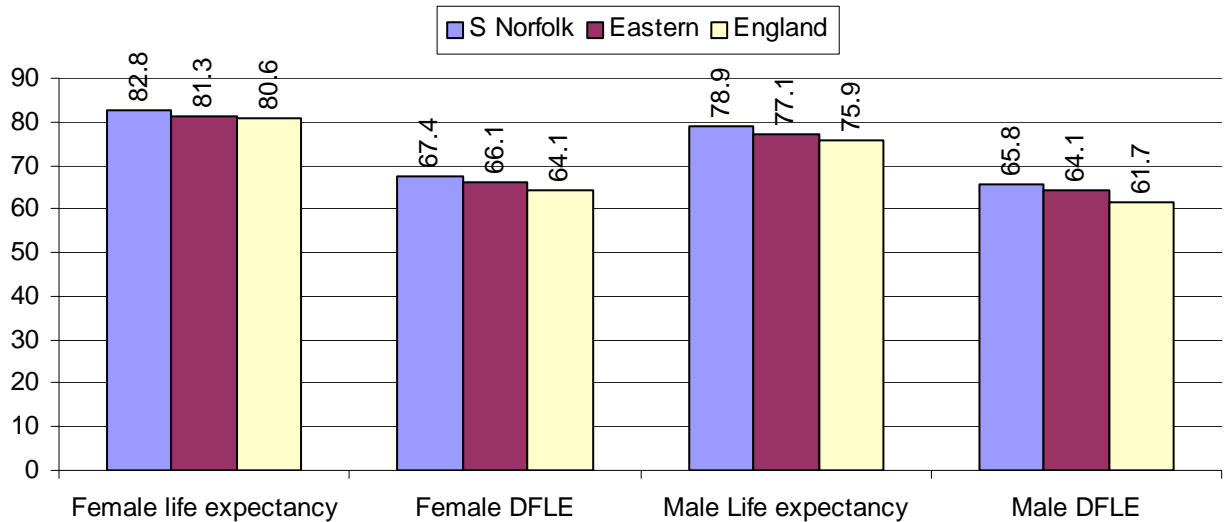
Source: 2001 Census – Table KS007 Religion, ONS: Crown Copyright

The majority of residents in South Norfolk, over three in four, state their religion as Christianity with the second largest group being those with no religion. Behind Christianity, there are very few people stating any other types of religion, with the next largest being Buddhism with only one in five hundred

residents stating they are of this faith. It is important that we consider both those with faith and those without.

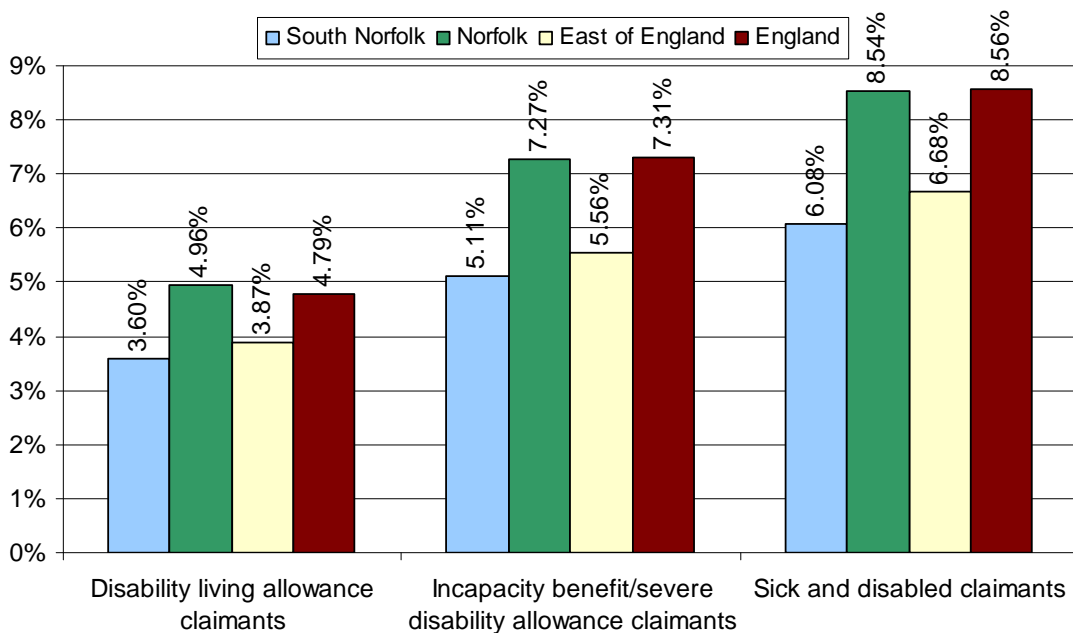
Disability

Disability free life expectancy (DFLE) (how long you can expect to live your life free from a disability), at birth in 2003 was 66.6 years, compared to a life expectancy of 80.9. There are differences by gender which are highlighted below:



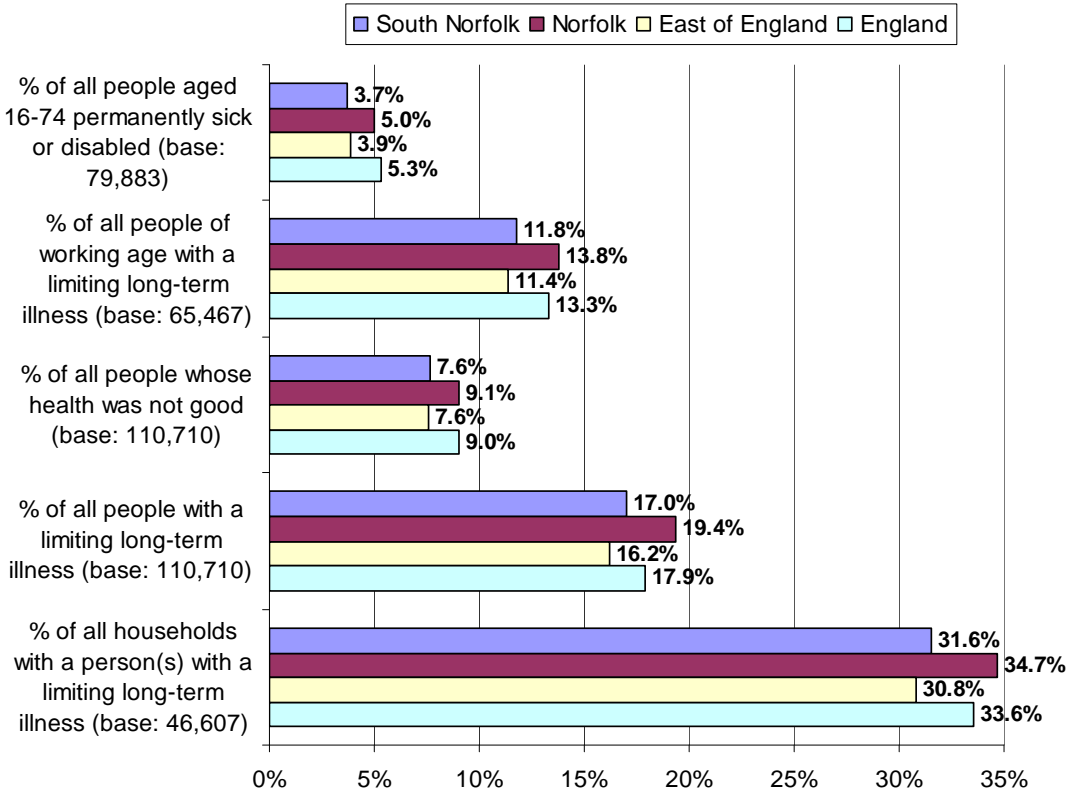
Source: Based on deaths in the period 1999-2003, mid-year population estimates from 2001 and health and disability rates from the 2001 Census, ONS: Crown Copyright 2006

The proportion of residents of working age claiming benefits linked to a disability are below:



Source: DWP Information Directorate (Aug 07)

There are fewer people living in South Norfolk who have a disability of limiting long-term illness than the rest of Norfolk or England.



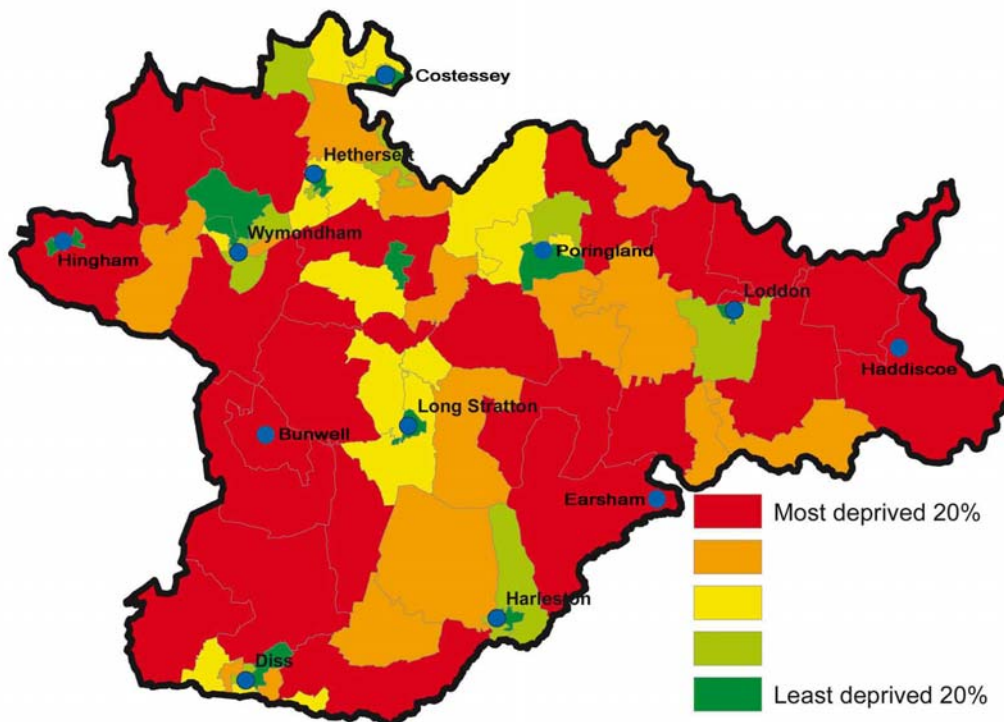
Source: 2001 Census

Sexual Orientation

It is not known how many Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual people (LGB) live in South Norfolk. However, based on government estimates between 5% and 7% of the population are LGB. In South Norfolk we estimate that we have a LGB population of between 5,900 and 8,300 (Based on the 2007 population estimate for South Norfolk of 117,300).

Geographical Barriers

One of the key challenges facing South Norfolk is making services as accessible as possible given the geographical barriers that we face in such a rural area. The map below highlights how these geographical barriers really affect some residents in outlying villages and hamlets more than those in the more urban towns and in the Norwich fringe. However, there are pockets of deprivation in all areas of South Norfolk (including those areas showing on this chart as least deprived).



Monitoring and Review of this Strategy

The Equalities Group will review this Strategy annually to ensure that it is consistent with current legislation.

Acknowledgements

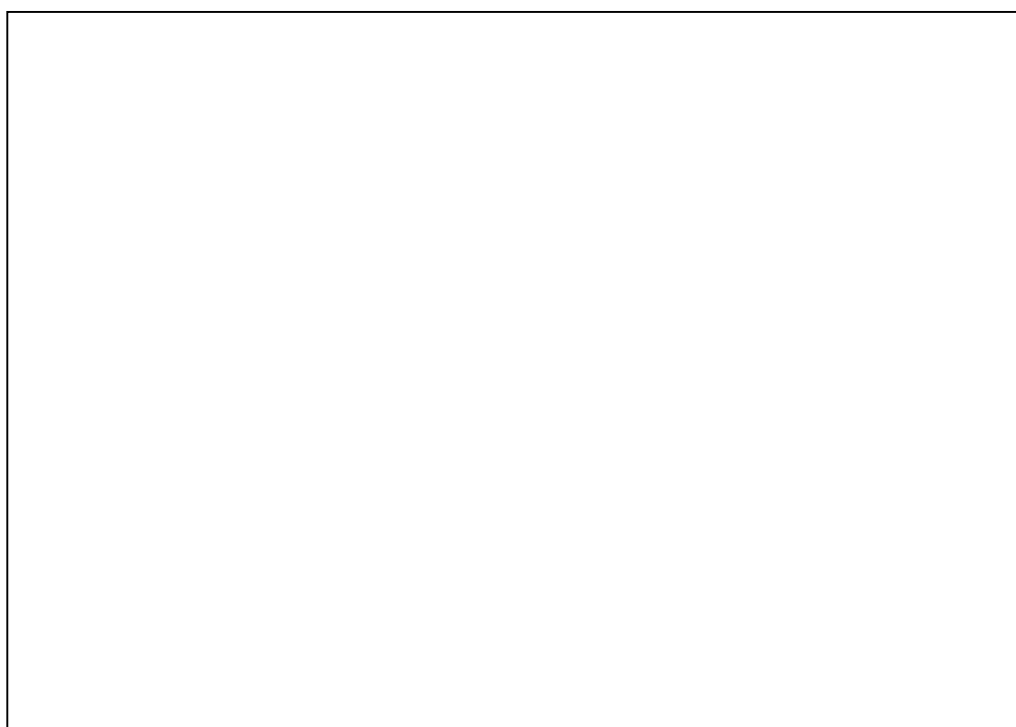
South Norfolk Council has a legal duty to consult, engage and inform. It would like to thank the following organisations for their contribution to this Equalities Strategy:

- Community Cohesion Network members
- East of England Faith's Council
- Forum for Lesbian and Gay Groups
- Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People
- Norfolk Probation Service
- Norwich and Norfolk Race Equality Council
- South Norfolk Disability Fund
- South Norfolk Older Peoples Forum
- South Norfolk Staff Forum
- South Norfolk Youth Action

This strategy was prepared by South Norfolk Equalities Working Group.

FEEDBACK FORM

South Norfolk Council would welcome your feedback on its Equality Strategy. Please use this feedback form to give us any comments and suggestions you have that would help us to improve the Equality Strategy.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to provide their feedback and suggestions.

To:
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