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# Equality Strategy

## 2016-2020

# Consultation Report

31 May 2016

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## Introduction

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### Background

The period covered by the Equality Strategy 2013 - 2016 is coming to an end.

The council has a legal and moral duty to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the delivery of our services, support to communities and developing our workforce. The council is required to produce an equality strategy to demonstrate how it is meeting its statutory duties regarding equality and diversity. The county council is also required by law to publish one or more priority equality objectives at least every four years.

It is also good practice to have an up to date equality strategy. We are committed to improving the lives of all people in Leicestershire and ensuring that everyone is treated fairly, with respect and they can and do have the opportunity to get on better together.

There are increasing financial pressures on local government. The county council has saved more than £100 million over the last five years and is having to save a further £78 million over the next four. We have to make savings across all areas of the council's work. This makes it more important than ever that we continue to promote and achieve equality and diversity, but we will need to do this with fewer resources.

The draft strategy outlines the council's intention to deploy resources where the risk to equalities is at its highest and the extent of disadvantage could be the greatest e.g. in delivering services direct to the public. This approach will ensure a positive impact where it matters most.

The council developed a draft strategy which outlines how the organisation aims to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the delivery of services, and to provide support to communities and workforce. It has been developed in response to evidence from research and data, as well as engagement with staff, workers groups, service users and partners.

The draft strategy sets out the council's aims and objectives, and how we will measure the impact of what we do. It is supported by a more detailed draft equality action plan which lays out what we intend to do, who will do it, when it will be done by and how we intend to measure success for specific actions. The action plan provides the detail that supports the aims and objectives of the overarching strategy.

All of our work around equality, diversity, community cohesion and human rights will sit under the three aims outlined in the draft Strategy.

- To develop and support a diverse work force
- To develop, commission and deliver inclusive and responsive services
- To foster good relations with and within the community

The consultation was aimed at anyone with an interest or involvement in the council's work related to equality, diversity, human rights and uniting communities. The questionnaire was designed to establish whether respondents agreed or disagreed with the three aims listed above, whether respondents agreed or disagreed with our ideas for achieving each aim, whether respondents agreed or disagreed that our ideas would help us to meet our equalities duties and whether there was anything else that respondents felt should be considered.

### Methodology

The questionnaire was available to respondents online on the county council's 'Have Your Say' consultation pages for five weeks from Friday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2016 to Friday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016. The questionnaire was accompanied by the draft Equality Strategy 2016-2020 document, the draft Equality Action Plan 2016-2017 document and an easy read version of the draft Equality Strategy 2016-2020 and consultation questionnaire. There was also a link on the county council's 'Have Your Say' consultation pages to a British Sign Language Video explaining the main aims of the draft Equality Strategy 2016-2020. All the documents (draft Strategy, draft Action Plan and consultation questionnaire) were available in different formats and languages upon request.

The main part of the questionnaire consisted of a range of multiple-choice and open-ended questions.

The questionnaire also included a range of equalities and demographic questions.

### Communication

The County Council promoted the Equality Strategy Consultation via:

#### External

- The 'Have Your Say' section on the County Council website
- Press releases
- Social Media
- Email to external stakeholders, including the Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group, Leicestershire Equalities Forum and the Equality and Human Rights Commission
- Meetings with the Leicester Deaf Forum, Leicester Deaf Action group and over 50s group.

#### Internal

- Email to all staff members from directors
- Two internal staff drop-in sessions

- Articles on the staff intranet – consultation launch, promoting staff sessions and consultation reminder
- Staff Matters article
- Managers' Digest promoting staff sessions
- Engagement with each of the Council's Workers' Groups
  
- Members News in Brief
- All Member Briefing Session

The consultation was open to anyone who wanted to comment on the draft Equality Strategy 2016-2020 and the draft Equality Action Plan 2016-2017.

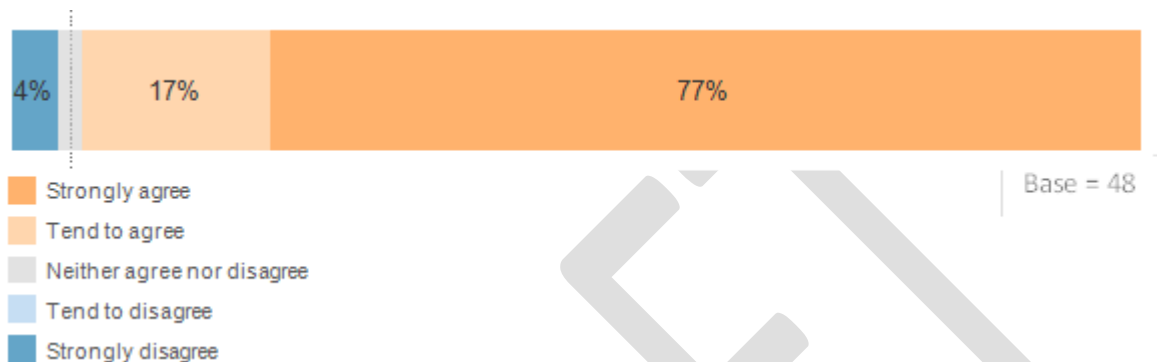
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## Results

This report includes the combined results for all **50** respondents.

### **Strategic Aim 1 – To develop and support a diverse workforce**

**Q3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following aim: ‘To develop and support a diverse workforce’**



The vast majority of respondents (94%) agreed with the aim, only 4% disagreed.

**Q3a: Why do you say this? Is there anything else that you think we should consider?**

- **Positives/ benefits of the aim**

The majority of respondents agreed with the aim to develop and support a diverse work force. Many comments highlighted the benefits a diverse work force has on service provision for the communities that Leicestershire County Council serves. There were also positive comments to say that the aim would promote fairness, dignity and respect at work and the opportunity for staff to learn from each other’s experiences, methods of working, views and opinions.

*“Diversity provides different views/ opinions and methods of working which can positively impact upon service delivery.”*

*“This is reflective of Leicester and Leicestershire and adds value to the services we provide.”*

*“A representative work force is better placed to provide services to a diverse community.”*

*“...a diverse, representative workforce is a good thing, as it helps to ensure that various groups that make up the population of Leicestershire are all represented within the Council that serves them...”*

- **Negatives/ disadvantages of the aim**

Some respondents expressed concerns about the use of work force targets.

*“Work force should be recruited based solely on merit, not on the need to conform to diversity targets.”*

*“As a differently abled person, I know I would only want to be hired to do a job because I am honestly better than all the other candidates, not to fill some council ‘diversity quota’.”*

- **Suggestions**

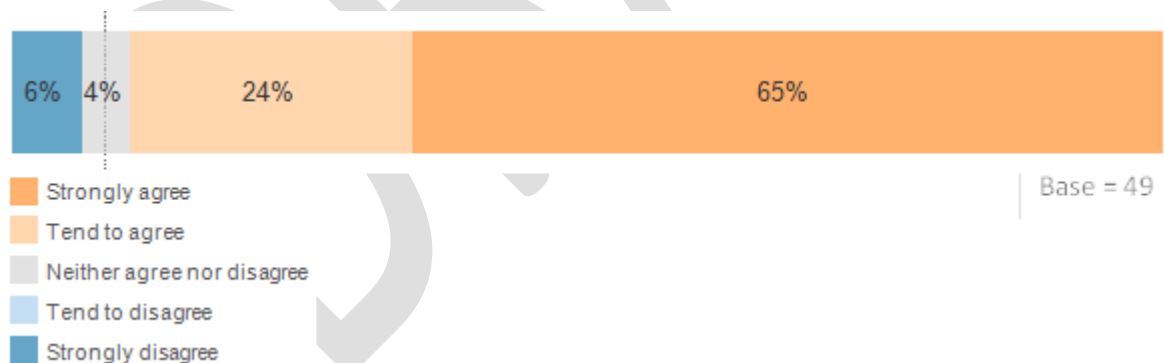
A number of suggestions were put forward.

For example, one respondent who agreed with the aim to develop and support a diverse work force suggested that there needed to be an approach around encouraging staff members to feel comfortable about disclosing equalities information so that informed decisions about how to develop and support a diverse work force could be made.

Another suggestion was that an approach to recruiting and retaining people who have a disability would be of great importance in developing and supporting a diverse work force.

*“Retaining and recruiting disabled people is paramount to this end.”*

**Q4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our ideas for developing and supporting a diverse work force?**



Overall, 89% of respondents agreed with the aim, only 6% disagreed.

**Q4a: Why do you say this? Is there anything else that you think we should consider?**

- **Positives/ benefits of the ideas**

The majority of respondents agreed with the ideas for developing and supporting a diverse work force. A number of respondents supported the suggested actions

because it would ensure that the council would have the “best people, doing the best job that they can and they would feel supported doing so”.

*“It is important for all staff to feel valued and supported in order to achieve their full potential”.*

- **Negatives/ disadvantages of the ideas**

Although most respondents said that they agreed generally with the ideas and actions for developing a diverse work force, some disagreed with the objective to “Maintain or improve the council’s work force representation in line with targets for gender, disability, sexual orientation and race”.

This is a theme which was also visible within the responses to Q3.

*“Maintaining or improving the council’s work force representation in line with targets for gender, disability, sexual orientation and race – this should be about ABILITY nothing else. Discrimination works both ways and both are equally as damaging.”*

*“In line with targets’ sounds like we’re doing this because of a number written on a piece of paper”*

Four respondents raised questions about whether and how the ideas for developing and supporting a diverse workforce will be translated into practise.

*“I think what is needed is clear statements about how these things will actually be done”*

*“It’s all very well having a policy, but in my experience team managers find a way around this”*

{I agree} *“As long as you keep to the plan”*

*“The issue really is making sure these things really happen...training is mandatory, but that doesn’t mean – in practise – that everyone does it”.*

- **Suggestions**

Although some respondents disagreed with the use of work force targets there was also one person who advocated a re-wording of the objective in order to clarify the reasons for using work force representation targets.

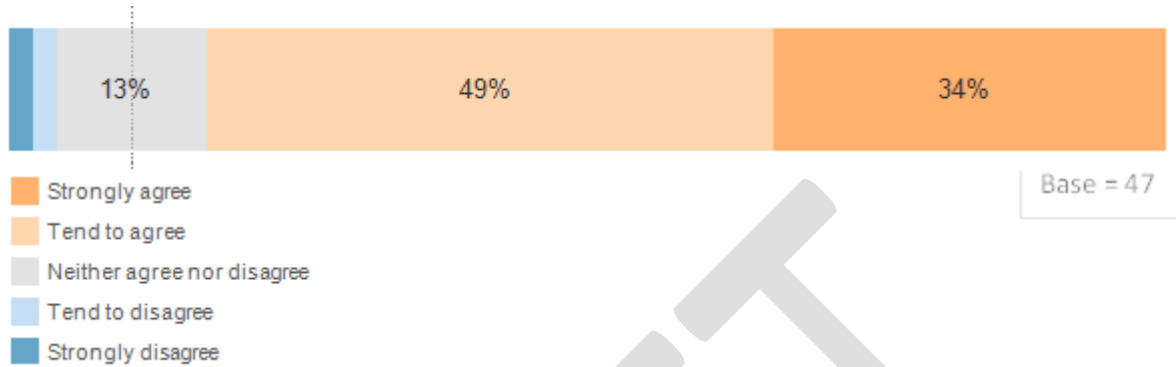
*“The wording within the aim suggests that we should employ people based on their ‘traits’ to hit targets.....I believe this aim needs to be re-worded to eliminate the suggestion that if an area is lacking in a particular group of people, management cannot justify this as a job requirement”*

Conversely, there was a view that equality targets should not be limited to gender, disability, sexual orientation and race but should be extended to other protected



characteristics. One respondent stated that they would be particularly keen to see a work force representation target for young people aged 25 and below.

**Q5: To what extent do you agree or disagree that our ideas for developing and supporting a diverse work force will help us to meet our equalities duties?**



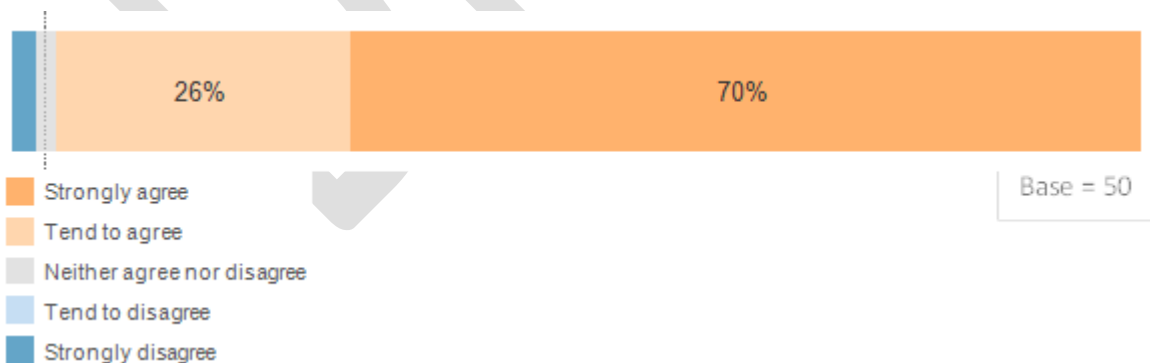
The majority of respondents (83%) agreed with the aim. A relatively large proportion (13%) neither agreed nor disagreed.

**Q5a: Why do you say this? Is there anything else that you think we should consider?**

Fewer respondents answered this question compared to questions 3 and 4 and the majority of responses to this question reiterated the views expressed in the answers to questions 3 and 4.

**Strategic Aim 2 – To develop, commission and deliver inclusive and responsive services**

**Q6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following aim: To develop, commission and deliver inclusive and responsive services**



The vast majority of respondents agreed with the aim (96%).

**Q6a: Why do you say this? Is there anything else that you think we should consider?**

- **Positives/ benefits of the aim**

There was overall support for the aim to develop, commission and deliver inclusive and responsive services.

*“We should be offering a good strong service as a government body”.*

*“This is a must and it is unacceptable to be doing anything other”.*

- **Negatives/ disadvantages of the aim**

One respondent expressed that they agreed with the aim but felt that it would be difficult to achieve, as a result of budget cuts and service reductions.

**Q7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our ideas for developing, commissioning and delivering inclusive and responsive services?**



The vast majority of the respondents (92%) agreed with the ideas proposed.

**Q7a: Why do you say this? Is there anything else that you think we should consider?**

- **Positives/ benefits of the ideas**

There was an overwhelming support within the comments to this question around providing information that can be easily understood, in an accessible way, and actively and effectively engaging with stakeholders.

*“I think the council could be active in sharing more information not just putting it on the website.”*

*“Providing information is key and using appropriate sources to disseminate information too – not relying always on people coming to mainstream forums.”*

*“It is important to mitigate any issues from decommissioning services and to engage all stakeholders as sometimes stakeholders have a greater understanding of requirements.”*

*“Understanding the people that are accessing services is key to this aim”.*

*“...need to ensure different protected characteristic voices are heard in responses and consultations.”*

- **Negatives/ disadvantages of the ideas**

One respondent expressed concern about the ideas proposed as the individual felt that they were a way of increasing tax and diverting funds away from areas where they are needed most.

- **Suggestions**

There were a number of suggestions in support of providing accessible information and actively engaging with service users as detailed above.

There was also a suggestion that there needs to be training and support for volunteers who run services which were previously run by the Council to make sure that they have a good understanding of what their equalities duties are. This issue was raised in the responses to Q9, specifically in relation to ensuring that community groups understand the needs of dispersed (not geographically close) communities such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community.

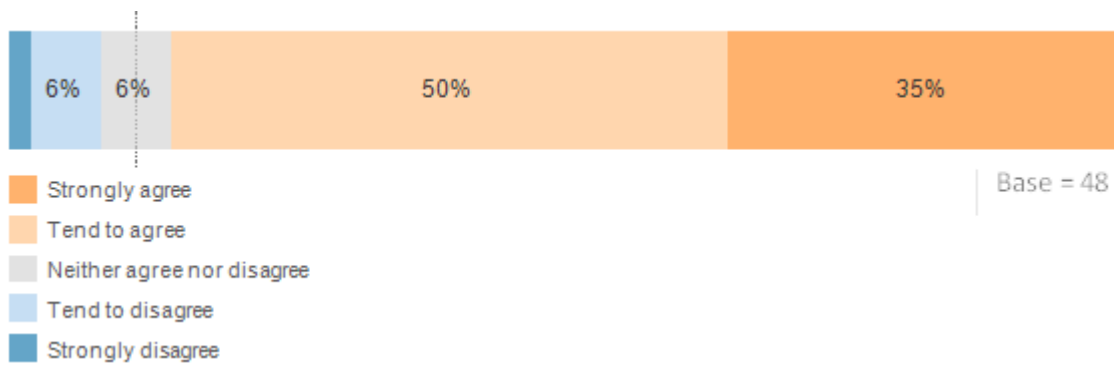
Comments about the importance of equalities considerations in the commissioning of services were made in response to all of the questions in the survey about ‘developing, commissioning and delivering inclusive and responsive services’. Respondents felt that it was very important to ensure that there are clear expectations from providers in terms of how they will demonstrate their commitment to equalities.

*“Has consideration been given to what equalities activities/ information we would expect from commissioned services?”*

*“Your commissioning needs to be based on the needs of vulnerable people.”*

*“With the shift to commissioning services rather than providing them it is vital that commissioners and providers are fully aware of expectations”*

**Q8: To what extent do you agree or disagree that our ideas for developing, commissioning and delivering inclusive and responsive services will help us to meet our equalities duties?**



Overall, 85% of respondents agreed that the ideas would help the council to meet its equalities duties.

#### **Q8a: Why do you say this? Is there anything else that you think we should consider?**

- **Positives/ benefits**

The majority of respondents agreed that the ideas for developing, commissioning and delivering inclusive and responsive services would help the council to meet the equalities duties. Positively, there was feedback that it is morally the right thing to do, in addition to a legal responsibility.

- **Negatives/ disadvantages**

The majority of respondents agreed that the ideas for developing, commissioning and delivering inclusive and responsive services would help the council to meet its equalities duties. However, there were concerns raised about how effectively the actions could be implemented.

*“Unless you are serious and there is middle management buy in it will not happen”.*  
*“...these ideas will only work if those who implement them genuinely believe in their importance and necessity.”*

*“The proof is in any changes that are made”.*

There was one strongly dissenting voice who expressed concern that money is being spent on an agenda which the majority of tax payers would not benefit from.

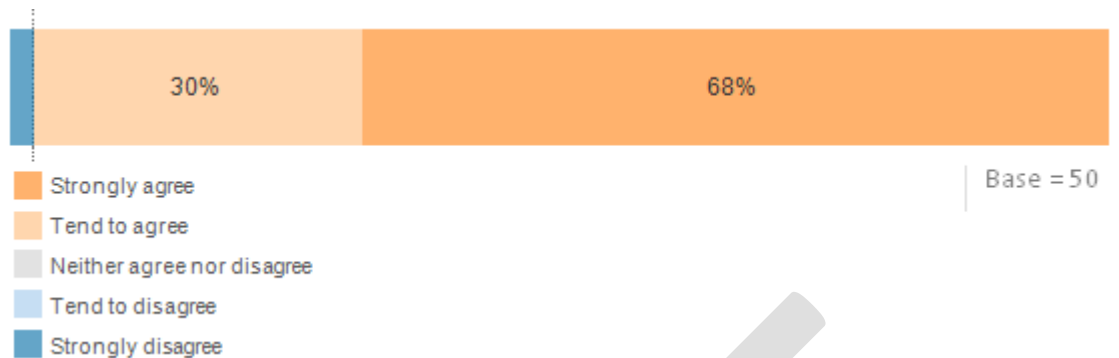
- **Suggestions**

There was a suggestion that staff involved in considering changes to services would benefit from advice and support to enable them to better understand the process.

There was also a recommendation that published material on religion and belief should include non-religious beliefs which are covered by equalities legislation, such as humanism and veganism.

#### **Strategic Aim 3 – To foster good relations with and within the community**

**Q9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following aim: To foster good relations with and within the community**



Nearly all respondents (98%) agreed with the aim.

**Q9a: Why do you say this? Is there anything else that you think we should consider?**

- **Positives/ benefits of the aim**

Respondents agreed with the aim to foster good relations with and within the community. A number of respondents commented that representing the public and their interests is a significant part of fostering good relations between the council and communities.

*“...for the public to feel that the Council represents them and their interests whilst providing a good quality service”.*

*“...we work with our communities to provide services for service users, by having good relations with them we can communicate better to create more services that meet the direct needs of service users”.*

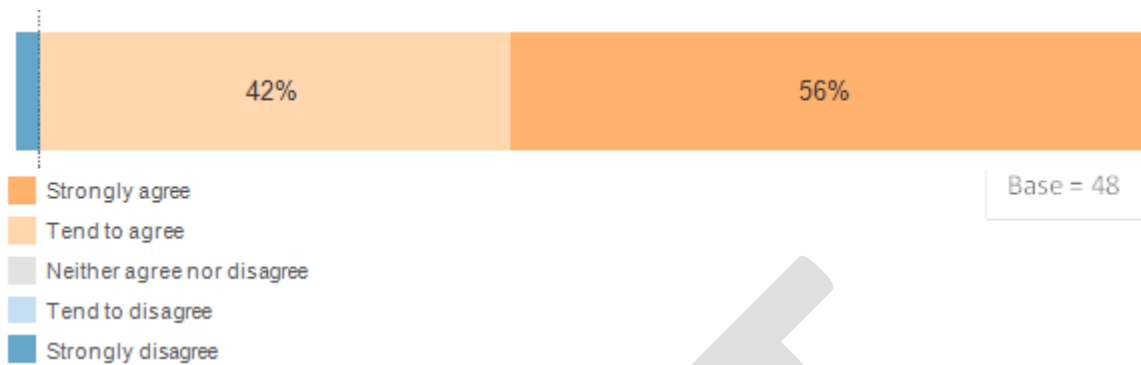
- **Negatives/ disadvantages of the aim**

Although there was agreement with the aim, some respondents commented that, in practise, it is difficult to ensure that all communities are represented and that it would take a lot more work to strengthen relationships between different people.

- **Suggestions**

One respondent commented that it was important to consider the needs of dispersed and virtual (not geographically close) communities, such as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community, particularly as some may not feel that a community led service meets their needs in the way that a more universal service would as universal services generally take LGBT issues into account. This respondent suggested training for community groups to increase awareness and understanding.

**Q10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with our ideas for fostering good relations with and within the community?**



Nearly all respondents (98%) agreed with the proposed ideas.

**Q10a: Why do you say this? Is there anything else that you think we should consider?**

- **Positives/ benefits of the ideas**

There was overall support for the ideas for fostering good relations with and within the community.

*“I agree strongly with these aims”*

*“Excellent ideas...”*

- **Negatives/ disadvantages of the ideas**

Although the majority of respondents agreed with the ideas for fostering good relations within the community, respondents felt that commitment to the ideas was essential in ensuring success. There were also some concerns raised around practical implementation.

*“Do ordinary people buy into these things?”*

*“Excellent ideas but need buy in from all LCC staff.”*

*“I feel I need more information to know how you will do these things and monitor impact.”*

*“How we do it is key – bearing in mind financial constraints”.*

There was one dissenting voice who expressed concern, as a tax payer, that money is being spent on some of the ideas for fostering good relations with and within the community rather than on providing services.

- **Suggestions**

One respondent commented that there needs to be consideration of the effect of a number of different service reductions in relation to one another and the impact that this might have on the resilience of communities. A reduction in support for the third sector can prevent them from being able to plug the gaps that appear when statutory bodies reduce funding. The inequalities that this can cause can have an impact on community cohesion.

There were also comments that there needs to be a greater focus on engaging with communities who are under-represented or 'hard to reach'.

**Q11: To what extent do you agree or disagree that our ideas for fostering good relations with and within the community will help us to meet our equalities duties?**



The vast majority of respondents (90%) agreed that the proposed ideas will help the council to meet its equalities duties.

**Q11a: Why do you say this? Is there anything else that you think we should consider?**

There were fewer additional comments in response to this question than to Q9 and 10. The majority of comments reiterated what had been said in response to previous questions.

**Q12: Do you have any other comments on the draft Equality Strategy 2016-2020 or the draft Equality Action Plan 2016-17?**

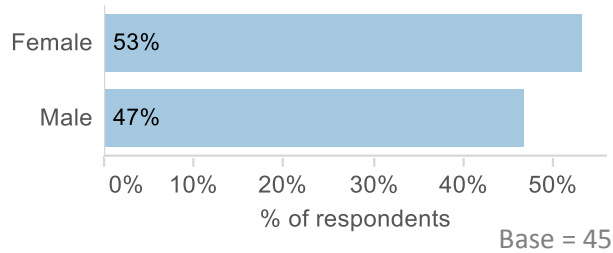
There were a varied range of different comments in response to this question. There were no themes emerging but all of the comments will be considered as part of the process.

## Respondents

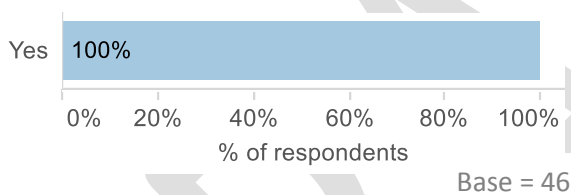
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This chapter aims to provide some insight into the profile of the **50** respondents to the consultation.

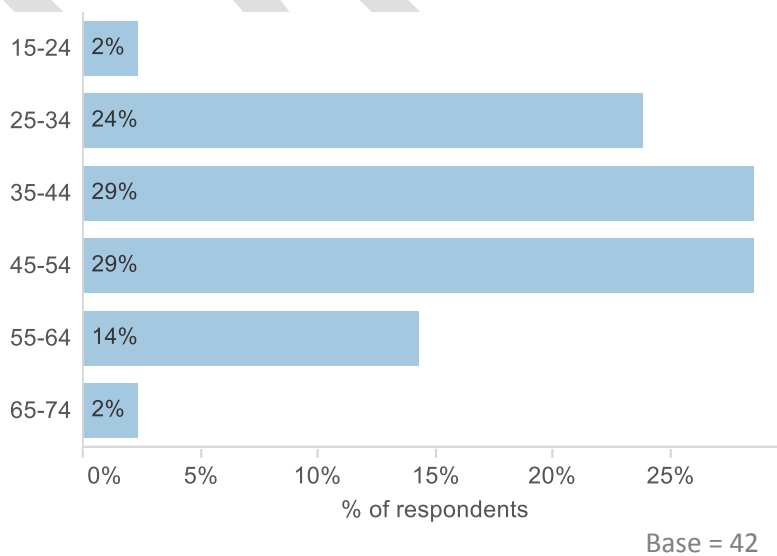
### Q13: Are you male or female?



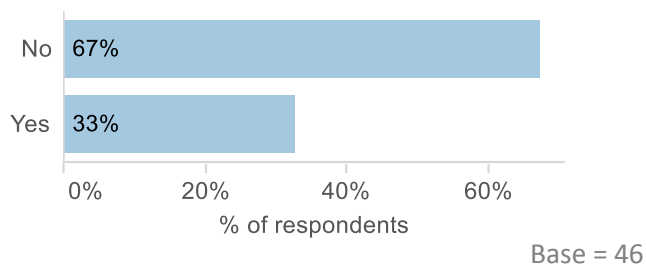
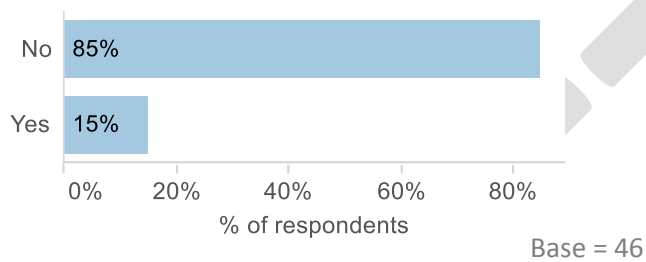
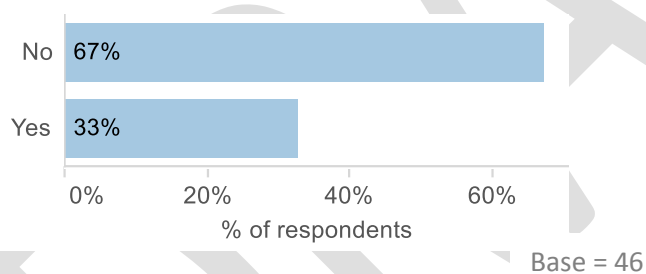
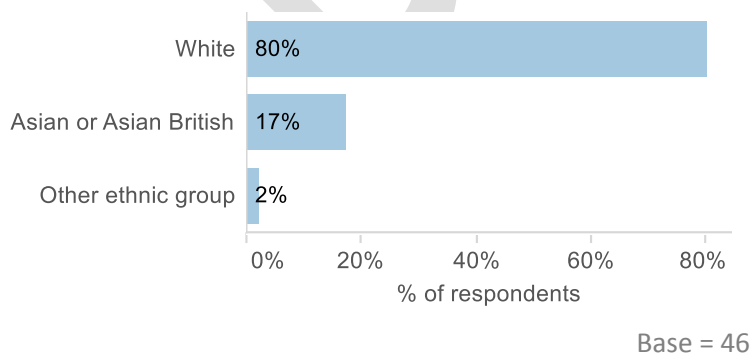
### Q14: Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

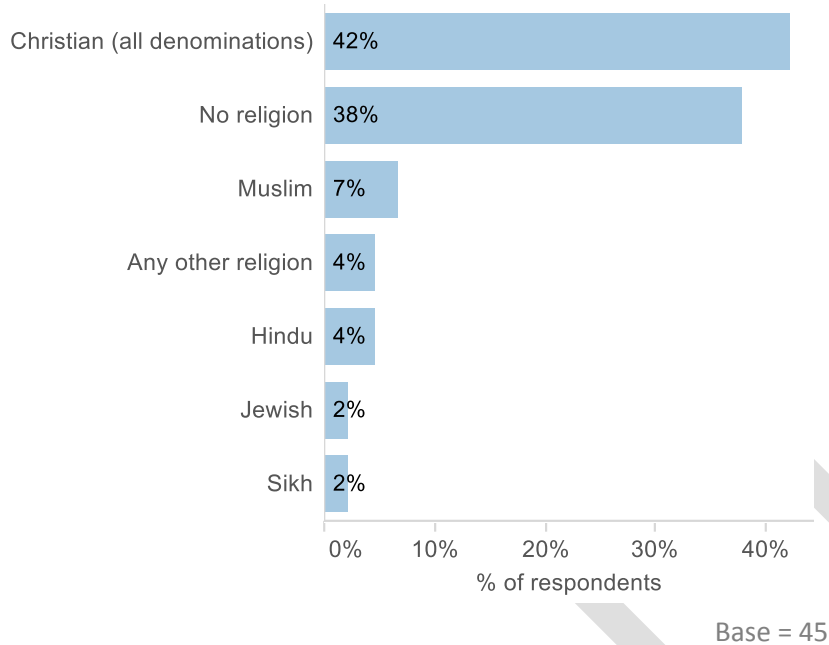
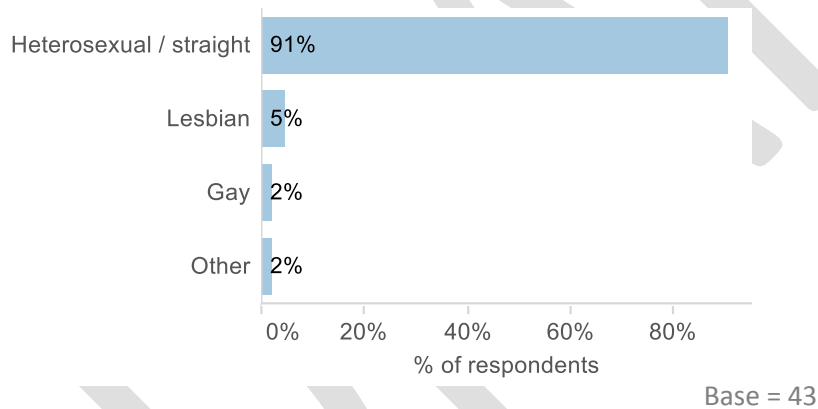
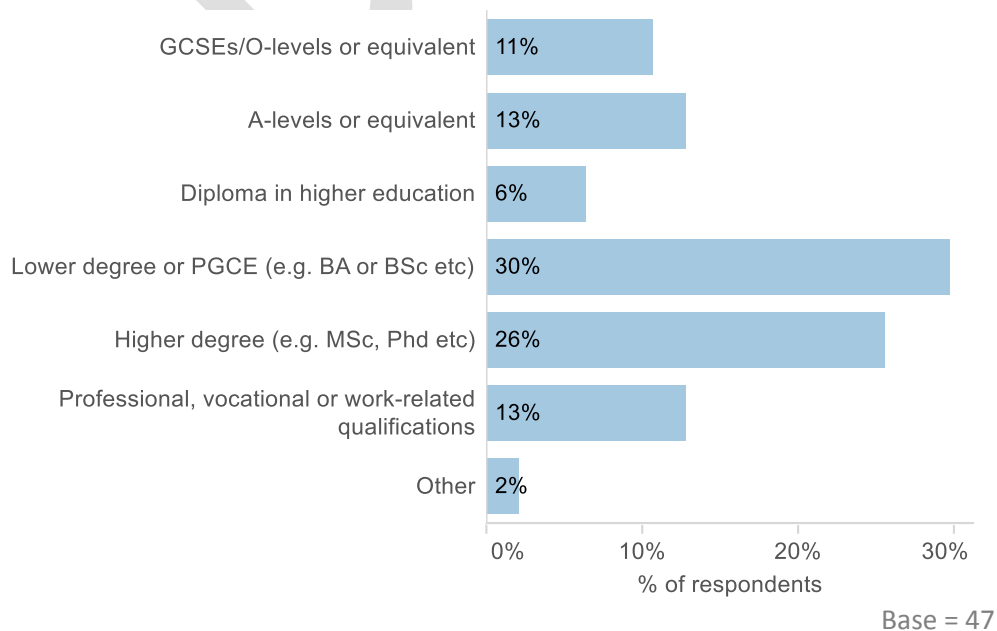


### Q15: What was your age on your last birthday?

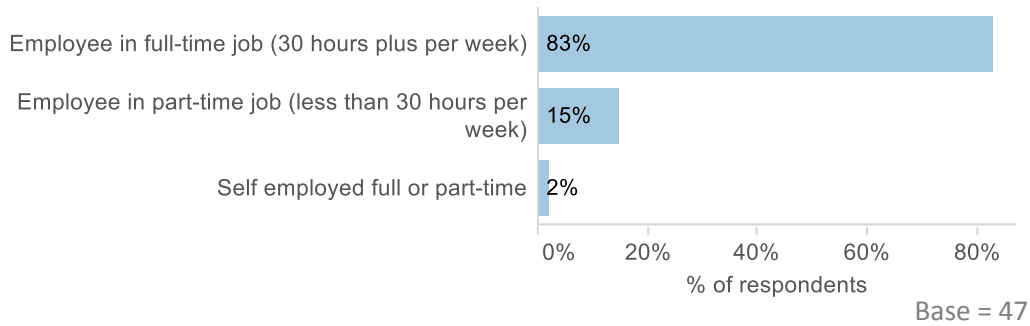




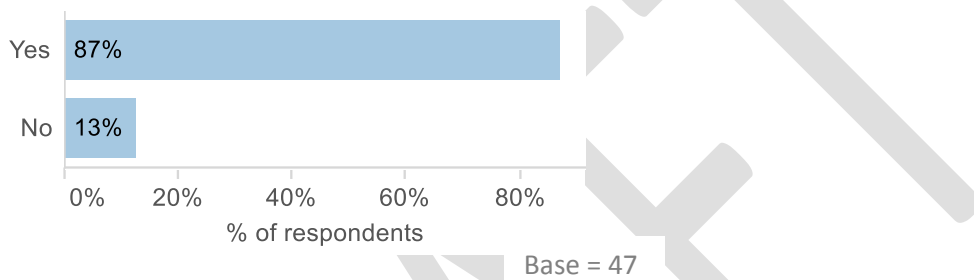
**Q17: Are you a parent or carer of a young person aged 17 or under?****Q19: Are you a carer of a person aged 18 or over?****Q20: Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?****Q21: What is your ethnic group?**

**Q22: What is your religion?****Q23: Sexual orientation****Q24: What is your highest level of qualification you have obtained?**

**Q25: Which of these activities best describes what you are doing at present?**

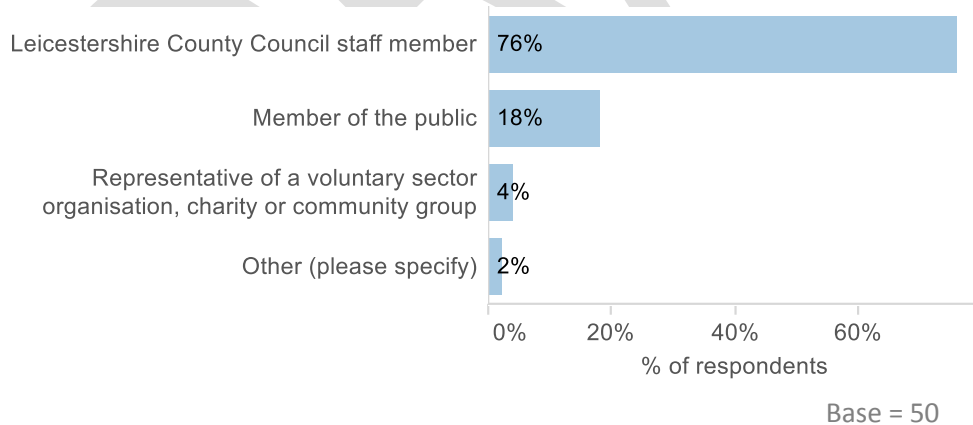


**Q26: Are you an employee of Leicestershire County Council?**



**Role/ capacity in which responding**

**Q1: In what role are you responding to this consultation?**



Tax payer

**Q2: Please provide the following information**

**Organisations:**

- The Bridge
- Melton Mowbray Community Care Centre

## **Appendix A: Other Consultation Responses**

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### **Email Response**

In addition to the survey responses, one email response was received. The views expressed in the email will be considered along with other survey responses.

### **Leicester/ shire Deaf Forum Meeting 19.05.16**

The Deaf Forum is made up of representatives from organisations who provide services and support for Deaf people in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. Policy Officer (Equalities) attended a meeting of the Deaf Forum in advance of attending local group meetings (over 50's group meeting and 'Open House' meeting) to find out how to most effectively engage at the meetings.

A range of consultation materials were taken to the meeting including a British Sign Language Video, copies of the draft Equality Strategy 2016-2020, copies of the draft Equality Action Plan 2016-2017, copies of the consultation questionnaire and copies of the easy read version of the draft Strategy and consultation questionnaire.

The focus of discussion was how to engage effectively with the Deaf community and British Sign Language users.

The British Sign Language Video developed for the consultation was played to the Forum. Feedback was as follows:

- The group were very pleased to see that a British Sign Language Video had been made.
- The group fed back that they were able to tell that the signing in the video had come from a written script, which had an impact on its clarity, due to British Sign Language being very different to the English Language – an example that was given was that harassment and discrimination are very academic and conceptual terms and that the sign used to convey this would be 'to bully'. British Sign Language uses different terminology to English.
- The Forum expressed that in the future they would be happy to be involved in the process of making a British Sign Language Video for a consultation or to provide information to British Sign Language users.
- Policy Officer (Equalities) asked for advice on how would be best to go about ensuring that the British Sign Language is as easy to understand as possible. For the video, a significant amount of time was spent translating a written script into British Sign Language with a British Sign Language user and an interpreter. In response to this, the Forum advised that the person guiding and moderating should be a Deaf person. They would avoid using a written script and would verbally explain (via an interpreter) the message that you wish to convey. They also advised having four or five Deaf people working on the

video and a person signing who is confident in conveying the messaging in a way that will be most accessible to British Sign Language users.

The Forum members suggested not playing the British Sign Language video at the upcoming group meetings (over 50s and Open House) to avoid confusion. Feedback on the Video that has already been gained from the Forum and further feedback on the video from the other groups would detract from what the council would like to consult on; the Equality Strategy.

The Forum looked at the materials and suggested using the Easy Read version of the Strategy as an introduction and then to complete the Easy Read questionnaire as a group. The Forum advised that this would be the best way to note a range of peoples' views and opinions.

Some ideas were also raised about future consultations and good experiences that the Forum have had previously with engagement processes. For example, there have been grants/ funding for different groups (such as Signing Network) to oversee engagement and consultation, including holding events.

### **Over 50's Group 25.05.16**

The Over 50's group is attended by both residents of Leicestershire County and Leicester City. Policy Officer (Equalities) explained the reason for attending which was to gain peoples' views, comments and opinions on the draft Equality Strategy 2016-2020. A group of approximately 15 Leicestershire County residents chose to engage in a discussion, after the three main aims of the Strategy had been introduced.

The easy read version of the Strategy and questionnaire was used to facilitate and provide some structure to the discussion.

#### **Q3. Do you agree that council staff should come from all different communities?**

The whole group agreed that council staff should come from all different communities. However, they expressed that the question was not very relevant to them, because most members of the group were retired. They did not have any further comments other than to say that it would be good to have more activities for retired people who live in the county.

#### **Q4. Do you agree with our plans?**

The group agreed with the plans to develop and support a diverse work force and had no further comments to add.

#### **Q6. The second part of our policy is to make sure we do not discriminate in any of our services. We want to provide services fairly to people from all backgrounds. Do you agree with this policy?**

The whole group agreed that it is very important to make sure that services are provided fairly to people from all backgrounds.

**Q7. Do you agree with our plans to make sure that we don't discriminate unfairly in the way that we provide services? Is there anything else you would like to say about this?**

The group agreed with the plans to look at how policies and services changes affect how people from all communities use the council's services. There were a couple of areas discussed where members of the group felt that the Deaf community do not have equal access to services or are more negatively affected by policies.

**Access to Information**

- **Interpreting**

There was general consensus amongst the group that Deaf people, particularly BSL users, have problems with being able to access information that is clear and easy to understand. Many of the group expressed that it can be confusing knowing who to contact or how to book an interpreter. They fed back that there were sometimes problems when interpreters did not attend meetings as planned or cancelled at the last minute. There was some feedback that related to interpretation for hospital appointments and other health care related needs, which highlighted some uncertainty in the group about who should provide interpretation for which service. This posed problems with access as some members of the group had been unsure of whose responsibility it was to organise interpretation and who to contact. The group expressed that they would find an information event about the roles of different organisations and how to access an interpreter for each organisation helpful.

- **Accessible materials**

In terms of accessible materials, the majority of the groups' preference is to receive information in British Sign Language (BSL) as BSL was many peoples' first language. Most members of the group expressed that they find it difficult to understand written information from the Council, as English is quite different in structure to BSL. The group said that there is often a misunderstanding that written communications can be easily understood by BSL users. People in the group also said that they find it difficult to use and understand the website and easy read documents. Some people in the group said that they were unable to use a computer or mobile phone and one person commented that not everybody can afford a computer.

The preferred method of receiving information was in a visual format (BSL) online with copies made onto a DVD so that it could be played on a television or laptop.

The key areas that the group felt that they needed further information on were as follows:

**Council tax** (district councils)

## **Benefits**

### **Public and community transport/ concessions**

The group said that they required information which is brief and to the point. Some people said that they found it difficult to understand forms from the council and would prefer forms to be in easy read. Others said that they find it difficult to understand easy read and would prefer the form to be explained in BSL.

- **Deaf awareness training**

The group said that Deaf Awareness training for council staff would help to improve communication and an understanding of how to provide accessible information. For example, it would raise awareness that many BSL users find it difficult to understand written communications in English.

### **Public Transport**

The group fed back that using public transport can be difficult and expensive for members of the Deaf community and older people. There were a number of points made about the availability/ times of free or discounted travel which have been noted and will be fed back to the relevant service.

### **Leisure**

One group member asked whether there are concessionary rates for use of the gym and swimming pool at council leisure centres. There were examples of inconsistencies in the way in which people are charged. The points raised were taken noted and will be raised with the relevant service at the District Councils who have responsibility for leisure and recreation.

### **Q9. Do you agree that we should help all groups of people living in Leicestershire to get on well with each other? Is there anything you would like to say about this?**

All members of the group agreed that the council should help all groups of people living in Leicestershire to get on well with each other and that the council should build good relationships with different groups of people.

### **Q10. Do you agree with our plans to help communities in Leicestershire to get on better together? Is there anything you would like to say about this?**

The group agreed with the plans to help communities in Leicestershire to get on better together. One person commented that there are a number of groups of people in Leicestershire who co-exist but don't necessarily integrate. The group did not have any further comments.

### **Open House 27.05.16**

The Leicester Deaf Action Group (LDAG) is a user-led organisation providing an alternative choice for Deaf people in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. LDAG

run 'Open House' sessions which are an opportunity for Deaf people and hearing friends to get together.

Policy Officer (Equalities) attended a meeting on 27.05.16. Policy Officer (Equalities) explained the reason for attending which was to gain peoples' views, comments and opinions on the draft Equality Strategy 2016-2020. The main aims of the draft Strategy were explained.

The easy read version of the Strategy and questionnaire was used to facilitate and provide some structure to the discussion.

**Q3. Do you agree that council staff should come from all different communities?**

The whole group agreed that council staff should come from all different communities. The group felt that it was important to make sure that there is a broad and diverse mix of staff to reflect the community.

**Q4. Do you agree with our plans?**

The group agreed with the plans to develop and support a diverse work force and had some other ideas about how a diverse work force could be developed and supported. Some people had ideas about how this could be achieved. For example, by ensuring that staff members who recruit understand reasonable adjustments, making sure that staff members on the interview panel are aware of support available should the applicant be successful, for example access to work. The group said that deafness is a hidden disability and is not always as visibly obvious as other disabilities and there needs to be a greater awareness of how to communicate with Deaf people.

**Q6. The second part of our policy is to make sure we do not discriminate in any of our services. We want to provide services fairly to people from all backgrounds. Do you agree with this policy?**

The whole group agreed with this policy.

**Q7. Do you agree with our plans to make sure that we don't discriminate unfairly in the way that we provide services? Is there anything else you would like to say about this?**

The group agreed with the plans to look at how policies and services changes affect how people from all communities use the council's services. The group raised the same issues as the Over 50's group in terms of access to information, interpreting, Deaf awareness training and information about benefits, public transport and leisure. The group said that Deaf people are very excluded from knowing about service changes and said that an interpreter or British Sign Language information should be provided so that Deaf people are able to access services or find out about service changes. The group said that there is a range of ways to share information for example, to provide information to people from organisations to share with the communities by word of mouth, as well as more formal provision of information. The group said that the Leicester/ shire Deaf Forum could play a role in this.



**Q8. Do you think that our plans to make services more fair will help us to do what the law says we must do?**

The group said that the plans should be made after you have consulted. They also said that different people have different needs, for example the needs of someone who is hard of hearing and the needs of a Deaf person might be different. People have different views on what is fair and then the law must also be considered. It can be complicated.

**Q9. Do you agree that we should help all groups of people living in Leicestershire to get on well with each other? Is there anything you would like to say about this?**

The group required some clarification as to what this aim means but did agree that it is important to make sure that different groups get on well together and that the Council fosters good relations with communities. The group highlighted that this is a difficult aim to achieve for Deaf people because they may wish to attend community events or meetings but it is difficult to communicate with hearing groups. Two or more hearing organisations/ groups can easily share information and develop relationships but Deaf people can be excluded from this, due to communication needs.

The group also said that they would like to be able to meet County Councillors from their areas. The group said that they often do not vote as they do not feel that they have or understand enough information to make an informed decision. The group said that the best way for them to get information is face to face.

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ਜੇ ਆਪ ਆ ਮਾਭਿਨੀ ਆਪਨੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਮਾਂ ਸਮਝਵਾਮਾਂ ਥੋੜੀ ਮਦਦ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਡੋ ਡੋ 0116 305 6803 ਨੰਬਰ ਪਰ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਆਪਨੇ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਵਾ ਯਕਿਨੀ ਕਰੀਯਾਂਗੇ।

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿਚ ਕੁਝ ਮਦਦ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0116 305 6803 ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਫ਼ੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਅਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਦਦ ਲਈ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਦਵਾਂਗੇ।

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