



# Equality Strategy

## 2020-24

# Consultation Report

20 February 2020

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## Introduction

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### Background

The period covered by the Equality Strategy 2016-2020 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.

The continuing financial pressures on local government means that the council needs to make £80 million of savings over the period to be covered by the new equality strategy against a backdrop of rising demand for support and infrastructure. While the council's budget proposals for 2020-2024 include extra support for vulnerable people and the creation of more school places for both mainstream and SEND provision, we know that we need to maintain a prioritised and risk-based approach to other areas of need.

The council has 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, 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 will be 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. It will be updated annually to reflect progress as well as to take account of emerging challenges or opportunities for protected characteristic and vulnerable people in our communities and workforce.

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 council's two strategic aims and the five equality objectives proposed to support those aims, whether respondents thought there were other equality objectives that the council should consider and how these objectives could be delivered, what methods the council should use to keep people informed about its equalities work, and any other comments respondents wished to make.

## Methodology

The questionnaire was available to respondents online on the county council's 'Have Your Say' consultation pages for twelve weeks from Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2019 to Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2020. The questionnaire was accompanied by the draft Equality Strategy 2020-24 document and an easy read version of the draft Equality Strategy 2016-2020 and consultation questionnaire which could be printed off and returned using a Freepost facility. 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 2020-24.

Both the draft Strategy and consultation questionnaire documents 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 release and resultant coverage in local newspapers (Coalville Times, Hinckley Times, Loughborough Echo)
- Social Media
- Email to external stakeholders, including:
  - Leicester Shire Equalities Forum
  - Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group
  - Leicestershire Inter Faith Forum
  - Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations
  - Town and Parish Councils
  - A range of equalities organisations and charities at local and national level
- Meetings with stakeholder organisations and interested parties including Age UK, Gypsy and Traveller Engagement Forum, Harborough District Council, Healthwatch Leicester and Leicestershire, Leicester LGBT Centre, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, and Voluntary Action LeicesterShire.

- Presentations to the Learning Disability Partnership Board and the County Youth Council for Leicestershire
- Distribution of hard copies to residents through the Home Library Service and posters in the Community and Managed Libraries

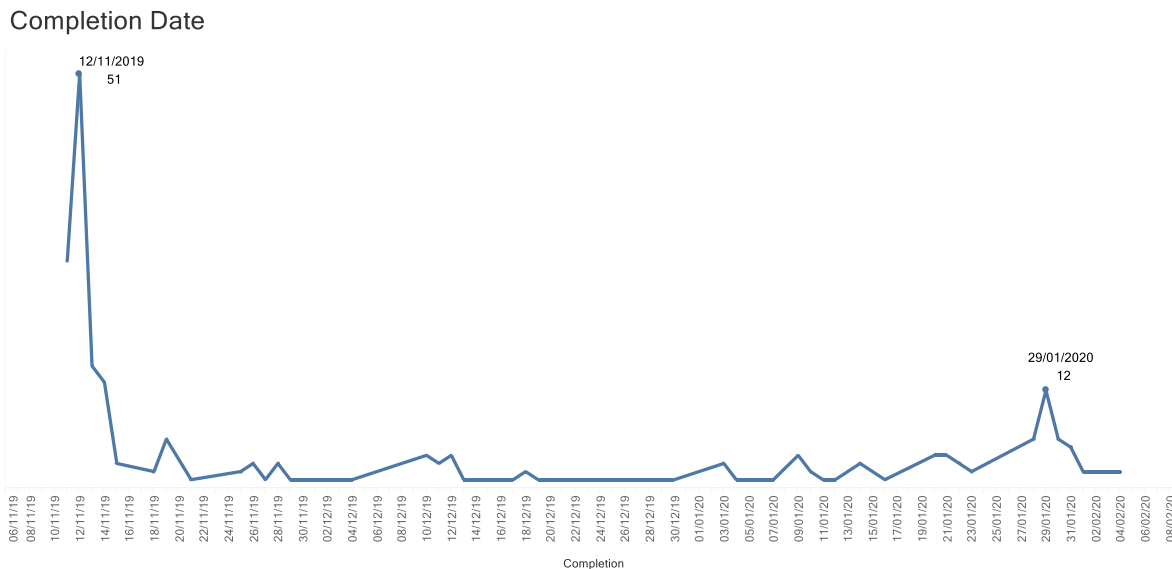
Internal

- Email to all staff members from department directors
- An Action Planning internal staff workshop
- Articles on the staff intranet – consultation launch, promoting the staff workshop and consultation reminder
- Articles in Managers’ Digest and Members’ Digest
- Presentation to all departmental management teams
- Engagement with departmental equalities groups, communities of practice and interest in services for young people

The consultation was open to anyone who wanted to comment on the draft Equality Strategy 2020-24.

**Response rates**

210 people responded to the online consultation with the greatest activity occurring in the first and last weeks of the consultation period.



Three easy read responses were received including one from school governors on behalf of a group of primary schoolchildren.

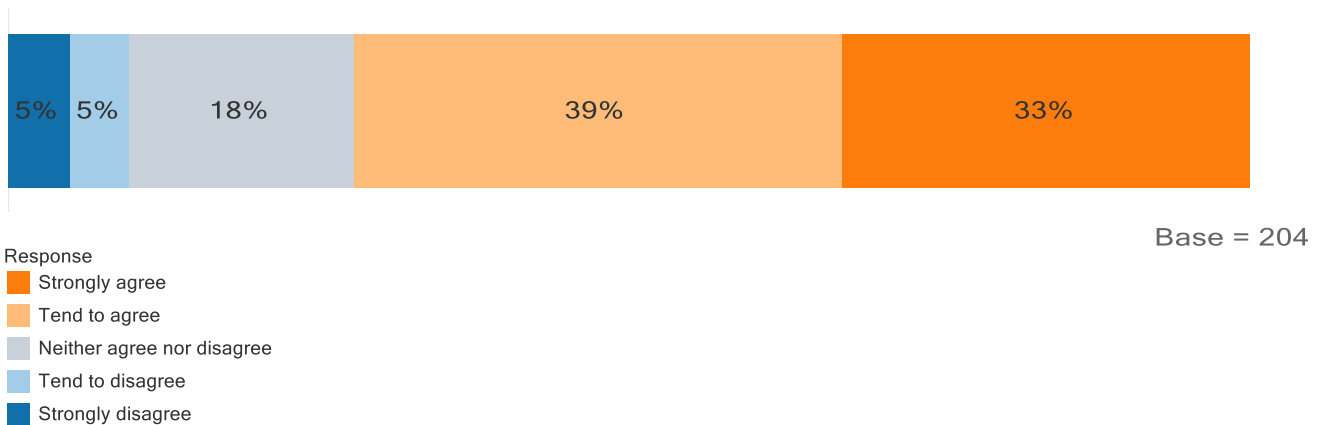
## Results

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This report includes the combined results for all **213** respondents.

### **Strategic Aim 1**

**Q3: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following aim:  
‘Leicestershire County Council will be recognised for its leadership and high performance in advancing equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity and inclusion’**



The majority of respondents (72%) agreed with the aim while 10% disagreed. However, a relatively large number (18%) were neutral on this aim compared to the rates for this type of response to subsequent questions in the consultation.

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

- **Positives / benefits of the aim**

75 comments were received under this question. Some respondents pointed to the Council's previous and ongoing record on equalities work, including the 'Excellent' rating achieved in 2011 under the Equalities Framework for Local Government, and other external benchmarking. There was also support for the Council's work in terms of positive action in its recruitment, the provision of the staff networks and other support groups and its willingness to be open to informed critique through the Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group. Positive comments were also made for the Council's continuing to aspire to high standards of outcome and provision in its equalities work.

*“Always seen positivity and honest work come from this area. The council does strive to provide the best possible support for any scenario.”*

*“The workers’ groups are something which I had not come across previously and I strongly believe that they aid inclusivity through spreading awareness of issues as well as helping those affected deal with them.”*

*“There is clear external evidence – such as the Stonewall index – and it is something woven into our activities as council employees.”*

*“From past experience, the authority has consistently demonstrated that their commitment is practical rather than simply lip service.”*

*“As a company who provide first aid and health and safety to a number of local authorities, in our experience, Leicestershire County Council are the most proactive in advancing equality and diversity issues.”*

- **Negatives / disadvantages of the aim**

A number of respondents felt that achieving the aim was either unrealistic for a range of reasons or should not be a priority for the Council in view of the challenging funding climate and the absence of any specific need to go beyond its current Public Sector Equality Duty commitments. Some respondents thought that the aim was poorly articulated by giving the impression that the Council was seeking recognition for itself rather than for achieving clear or improved outcomes. Other respondents commented on a lack of detail either for employees or the general public about how the aim would be met. More negatively, some comments implied or stated that respondents felt they were being treated by the Council in a discriminatory or non-supportive way which did not demonstrate a commitment to the aim or real inclusivity in its processes or practices. A small number of extreme comments suggested that the consultation was a sham and that the Council’s equalities work was tokenistic.

*“There is a danger that equality and diversity becomes a corporate marketing exercise which then translates to the wider population as being about political correctness and box ticking, cheapening the real worth and meaning of it.”*

*“The aim is a valid aim but there is not detail in how this will be achieved or how success can be demonstrated.”*

*“Perhaps too high an ambition in the current resource climate. Suggest moderate to good performance.”*

*“Equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity and inclusion only seems to be the case if you fall under a set group.”*

- **Suggestions**

Some respondents put forward suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the Council’s equality work, including providing staff with appropriate training, better support for working families and more inclusive processes. Working more with specific protected characteristic communities or groups within such communities, such as young LGBT+ people, were also suggested.

*“We currently do not do enough to recognise non-binary staff and our systems are not set up to identify genders other than male or female.”*

*“Great having systems and processes but only as good as how it is communicated to staff.”*

One respondent specifically suggested that its expertise in forms of disadvantage and deprivation that go beyond the scope of the Equality Act 2010 could help the Council to better understand and engage with lived experience communities in Leicestershire.

## **Strategic Aim 2**

**Q4: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following aim: ‘The council wants Leicestershire to be a place where there is equality of opportunity and good relations with and within its communities’?**



Overall, 85% of respondents agreed with the aim against 5% disagreeing.

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

- **Positives / benefits of the aim**

49 comments were made under this question which, compared to those received for Q3, were overall more positive than negative. Some respondents offered a qualified comment that the Council’s aspirations were good but that more could be done to improve specific services and understanding, for example, trans equality, high functioning autism provision, knowledge of LGBT+ communities, and mental health support.

*“A sensible aim for the good of all in the communities within the county.”*

*“Leicestershire is a diverse place containing many minority and vulnerable groups. We have a good record in this area and should be striving to be the best.”*



*“All the authority’s values are focussed on the provision of quality services to everyone.”*

*“Equality is good no matter what and a positive community gives people a sense of acceptance.”*

- **Negatives / disadvantages of the aim**

As with the less positive responses to Q3, some respondents were sceptical about the value of the question or how performance against this aim would be implemented and measured. A few respondents cited or implied a discriminatory experience and lack of support. One respondent reiterated a concern that the aim was compromised by the Council being selective in its treatment of equality groups.

*“The aim is entirely laudable. My concern lies in the disconnect between aim and practice.”*

*“How can anyone not agree with these aims? It is a closed question with nowhere to say if it’s likely to happen.”*

*“I agree with the aim, but how would we measure this or apply a strategy of how to achieve this aim without adequate resource?”*

*“You don’t see enough advertisement to prove this statement.”*

- **Suggestions**

One respondent said that the aim should be reworded slightly to say that “the Council will play its part to ensure that Leicestershire is a place...” of equal opportunity and good relations as this would signal a stronger commitment than just wanting the stated outcome of the aim.

Two respondents suggested that the key issues that needed to be addressed by this aim were dependent on working with communities:

*“Although LCC has a great reputation within its organisation for equality, this is harder to implement in the community where stronger opposing views are held.”*

*“The Council could be more visible in showing what it is doing to foster good community relations between people from different backgrounds. This is particularly important post-Brexit as the debate has opened up divisions between communities.”*

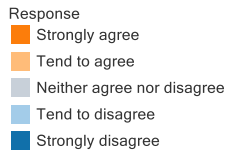
## **Objectives**

**Q5: We have proposed five objectives to deliver the council’s equality aims. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these objectives?**

**Q5a: The council will improve our understanding of the people we serve to make informed, evidence-based decisions which deliver the best outcomes for all**



Base = 203

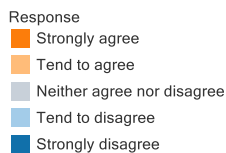


The majority of respondents (83%) agreed with this aim compared to 10% who neither agreed nor disagreed and 6% who disagreed.

**Q5b: The council will foster good relations with and within our communities, inform and involve our citizens to increase participation, particularly of under-represented groups**



Base = 205

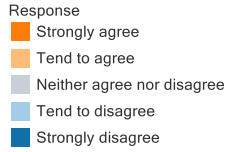


This objective received a slightly lower level of support (82%) and slightly higher levels of neutrality (11%) and disagreement (7%) compared to the responses to the objective around improved understanding and informed decision-making.

**Q5c: The council will deliver inclusive and responsive services to improve equality of outcomes and satisfaction amongst the people we serve**



Base = 205

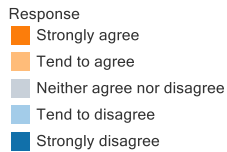


Fewer respondents agreed with this objective but still comprised a majority view (79%) compared to those who disagreed (7%) or who neither agreed nor disagreed (13%).

**Q5d: The council will show leadership, work with others and celebrate and promote our success**



Base = 205

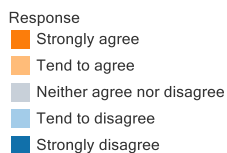


This objective was slightly less supported by the majority of respondents (78%) against 7% who disagreed while those who neither agreed nor disagreed rose to 14%.

**Q5e: The council will develop a skilled and committed workforce that reflects our communities**



Base = 204



A majority of 78% of respondents agreed with this objective with 7% disagreeing and 14% with no preference either way.

**Q6: Do you have any comments on the above?**

61 respondents commented against the objectives. Comments were in general more detailed than those made against the aims and also more qualified as respondents sought to draw attention to gaps in understanding, provision and practice as well as what they saw as other barriers to successfully delivering the objectives. Some respondents focussed on the adverse impact of reduced staffing and resources on service provision, while others reflected that an emphasis on inclusive outcomes was not always realistic. A few comments were made on specific elements of equalities teaching in schools.

The nature of a number of comments indicated a lack of awareness of specific aspects of the Council's equalities work and processes, for example, the purpose and depth of equality monitoring, training, positive actions to support the needs of under-represented groups, and the information the Council publishes to show progress and compliance.

- **Positives / benefits of the objectives**

*“Encouraging more people to disclose their religious beliefs, age disability and sexual orientation will help to improve data quality in order to make informed, evidence-based decisions.”*

*“These reflect current practice that has led me to believe that Leicestershire is an exemplar in equality and fairness.”*

*“In terms of delivering satisfaction to all people we serve – this is easy said than done and sometimes it is necessary to ensure one group is supported more than another to ensure equality of access.”*

*“If we talk to more communities, people will understand each other better. Schools are the next generation and they can show others how we work to not bully and treat people fairly.”*

- **Negatives / disadvantages of the objectives**

*“It may not be possible to deliver the best outcomes for all. Some people may not agree with decisions made and the outcome of those decisions and may feel the outcome isn't a benefit to them. Does this mean the council has failed in this objective?”*

*“There is no mention of intersectionality... and as such the strategy tends to pigeon hole staff and residents instead of embracing the more complex nature of being human. Should we be encouraging people to disclose a characteristic or should we strive to ensure that everyone is treated fairly?”*

*“It’s odd that we can know what percentage of Leicestershire’s population is religious or disabled but not how many residents are LGBT. How can the council interact with a community if it can’t quantify it?”*

*“Communications to help inform and involve citizens is becoming harder to achieve with reduced resources. Social media, facebook / twitter etc does not reach all members of community.”*

- **Suggestions**

*“The council should also demonstrate their commitment by having senior leadership champion equality and diversity education for all and make a priority – by people being able to be themselves at work and naturally drive performance and in turn result in us being able to celebrate not only success but also inclusion.”*

*“There is always more that we can do... although I worry about those that fall under the equality act that cannot get out to groups, that do not have a computer or support network...We have a number of stakeholder links that we utilise and could further develop these.”*

**Q7: What other equality objectives, if any, should we consider? Do you have any views about what we could do to deliver them?**

54 substantive comments were received for this section alongside a small number of “No”, “Not applicable” and similar responses.

Comments in this section included some that raised specific issues around some respondents’ experience as an employee or member of a protected characteristic group as well as a few more negative comments questioning the value and effectiveness of some forms of support. A few respondents also highlighted issues around accessibility to non-County Hall based staff of equalities events and wellbeing services.

There were also more positive comments offering a range of suggestions on how to better support employees. Examples cited included more encouragement of flexible working at senior levels, improved paternity or parental leave provision, widening the staff networks and increasing opportunities for them to work in partnership on equalities issues, introducing or increasing breastfeeding facilities in the workplace, and improving the quality and consistency of support for staff with a disability or health-related condition.

Other commentary and suggestions included:

*“Leicestershire is a very diverse community in the Midlands. Welcoming this community of old and young people will enhance their lives (and) eventually support each other in all aspects of life reducing the support they need from the local authority.”*

*There could be an objective around identifying and tackling discrimination. The council could employ an independent, external provider to manage an annual / biannual staff survey to obtain confidential, anonymous feedback from staff on issues they might otherwise feel unable to raise internally."*

*"We need to make sure minority and other vulnerable groups are protected and represented in all that we do. The Leicestershire Equalities Challenge Group has been a key part of this."*

*"We need to continue to be creative. Utilising the initiatives within our department and building on them across LCC as a whole would be great. For instance, we have an initiative where we share our time, you can sign up to help people with gardening and they may help you with baking. With this we could have a great impact on loneliness and also there is a self-referral tool into contact plus."*

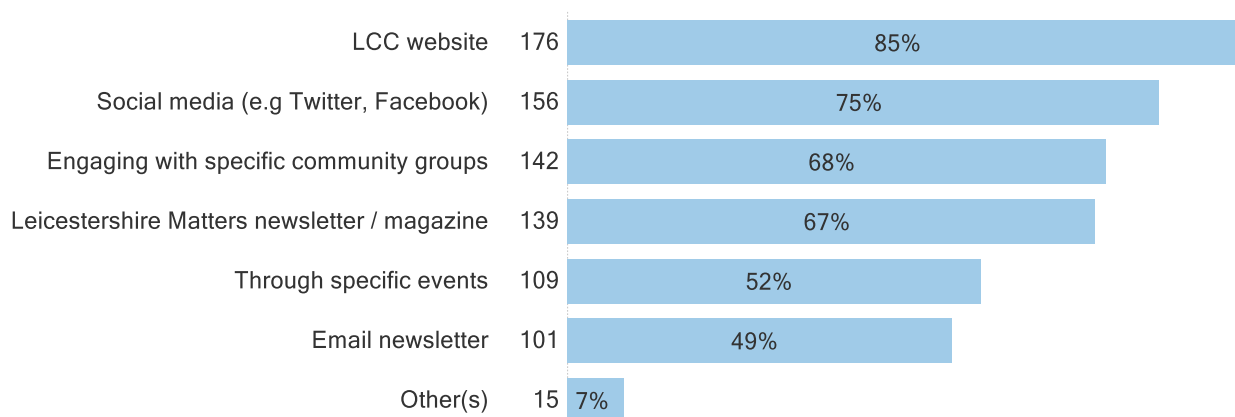
*"Working with our service delivery partners, to help disadvantaged members of the community access to employment opportunity, linking service contract awards to provision of apprenticeships, learning and development... and also minimum number of agreed employment opportunities within LCC boundaries."*

*"Ask all Councillors, County, District and Parish to constantly spread the word."*

*"Although not necessarily an objective – the action plan should pick up something about engagement and consultation."*

*Good, well rounded inclusive education; minority centred activities targeted at engaging the youth and young people to be encouraged."*

**Q8: How do you think the council should keep people informed about, and involved in, our equalities work?**



Base = 208

Respondents indicated a high level of preference for a range of traditional and technological channels for informing people about the council's equality work and positive stories from people and communities. Online, social media, other corporate communications and targeted engagement received the strongest support.

**Q8a: Please specify 'Other(s)'**

Suggestions for other means of communicating with residents and members of protected characteristic groups included making more use of local papers and radio, particularly for older people who are less aware of and / or less inclined to be significant users of online channels, SMS message links, face to face engagement at times and places to suit the community rather than being based on council office hours. One respondent suggested utilising services that go directly into peoples' homes, for example, the mobile library service, in order to reach vulnerable and hard to reach groups (this method was used to promote the consultation).

**Q9: Do you have any other comments on the council's draft equality strategy 2020-24?**

34 substantive comments were made in this section. A small number of negative comments reiterated those in previous sections including that the consultation was a waste of time, not fit for purpose, and could have included more detail about actions, key performance indicators and monitoring.

## Respondents

This chapter aims to provide some insight into the profile of the **213** respondents to the consultation.

### Q10: What is your gender identity?

Question Wording	Response	#	%
What is your gender identity?	Female	24	52%
	Male	22	48%

Base = 46

### Q11: Is your gender identity the same as the gender you were assigned at birth?

Question Wording	Response	#	%
Is your gender identity same as your gender at birth?	Yes	43	100%

Base = 43

### Q12: What was your age on your last birthday?

Question Wording	Response	#	%
What was your age on your last birthday?	Under 34	21	49%
	35 - 64	18	42%
	65 +	4	9%

Base = 43



**Q14: Are you a parent or carer of a young person aged 17 or under?**

Question Wording	Response	#	%
Are you a parent or carer of a young person aged 17 or under?	Yes	10	22%
	No	35	78%

Base = 45

**Q15: Are you a carer of a person aged 18 or over?**

Question Wording	Response	#	%
Are you a carer of a person aged 18 or over?	Yes	6	14%
	No	38	86%

Base = 44

**Q16: Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?**

Question Wording	Response	#	%
Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?	Yes	9	20%
	No	37	80%

Base = 46

**Q17: What is your ethnic group?**

Question Wording	Response	#	%
What is your ethnic group?	White	40	89%
	Asian or Asian British	3	7%
	Mixed	2	4%






Base = 45

**Q18: What is your religion?**

Question Wording	Response	#	%
What is your religion?	No religion	29	64%
	Christian (all denominations)	13	29%
	Buddhist	1	2%
	Hindu	1	2%
	Sikh	1	2%



Base = 45

**Q19: Sexual orientation**

Question Wording	Response	#	%	
Which best describes your sexual orientation?	Heterosexual / straight	35	85%	
	Bisexual	2	5%	
	Gay	2	5%	
	Lesbian	1	2%	
	Other	1	2%	

Base = 41

**Q20: Are you an employee of Leicestershire County Council?**

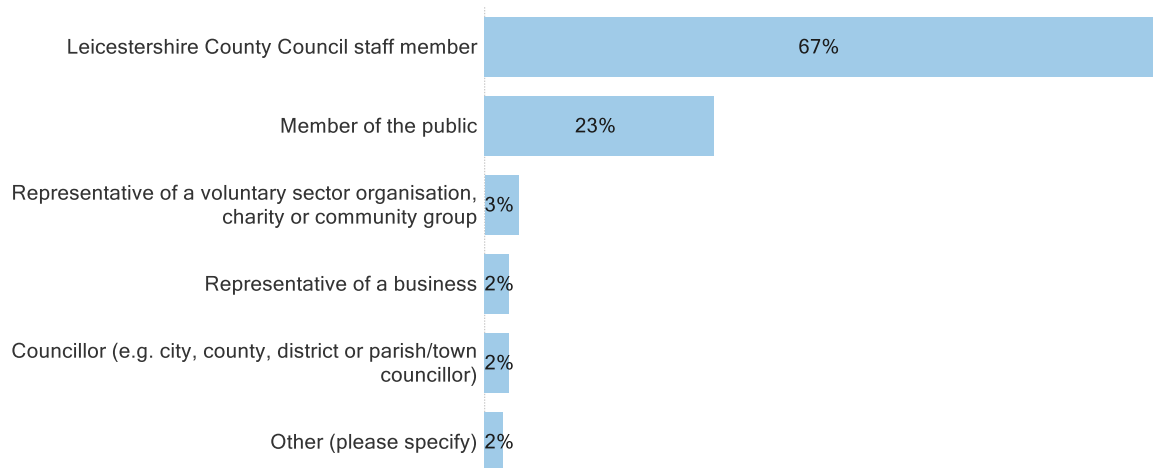
Question Wording	Response	#	%	
Are you an employee of Leicestershire County Council?	Yes	5	12%	
	No	37	88%	

Base = 42

## Role/ capacity in which responding

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



Base = 211

#### Q1a: Other (please specify)

Ex-employee from adults and Communities department

Leicestershire County Council employee and PA employed directly by families

Student

Supplier of services to the council

#### Q2: Please provide the following information

##### Organisations:

North west Leicestershire District Council

Leicestershire Care

Foxton Parish Council

Medacs Healthcare

RECOVERY Assistance Dogs

The Baca Charity

Leicester Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Centre

Safe Haven Accommodation Ltd

The Training Company

Melton Mencap  
 Elite Care  
 First response (First Aid) Ltd  
 Citizens' Advice LeicesterShire  
 Quorn Parish Council  
 Measham Parish Council  
 Highgate Primary School  
 The Bridge  
 Melton Mowbray Community Care Centre



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