

European Sociological Association Conference 2015

John Williams from DICE spoke at the European Sociological Association Conference in Prague in August 2015 on the topic of *'Delivering equality & diversity in sport & leisure under the new Equality Act (2010): Local experiences in the UK'*

A copy of the slides used in the presentation follows.

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‘Delivering equality & diversity in sport & leisure under the new Equality Act (2010): Local experiences in the UK’

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**University of
Leicester**

General Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties), Regulations 2012

Public authorities in UK have due regard to the need to:

- *Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct*
- *Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not*
- *Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.*

Protected characteristics:

- *Age*
- *Disability*
- *Gender reassignment*
- *Marriage & civil partnerships*
- *Pregnancy & maternity (up to 6 months following birth for service provision)*
- *'Race'*
- *Religion or belief*
- *Sex (male or female)*
- *Sexual Orientation*

Northcity Leisure: Director of Policy & Research

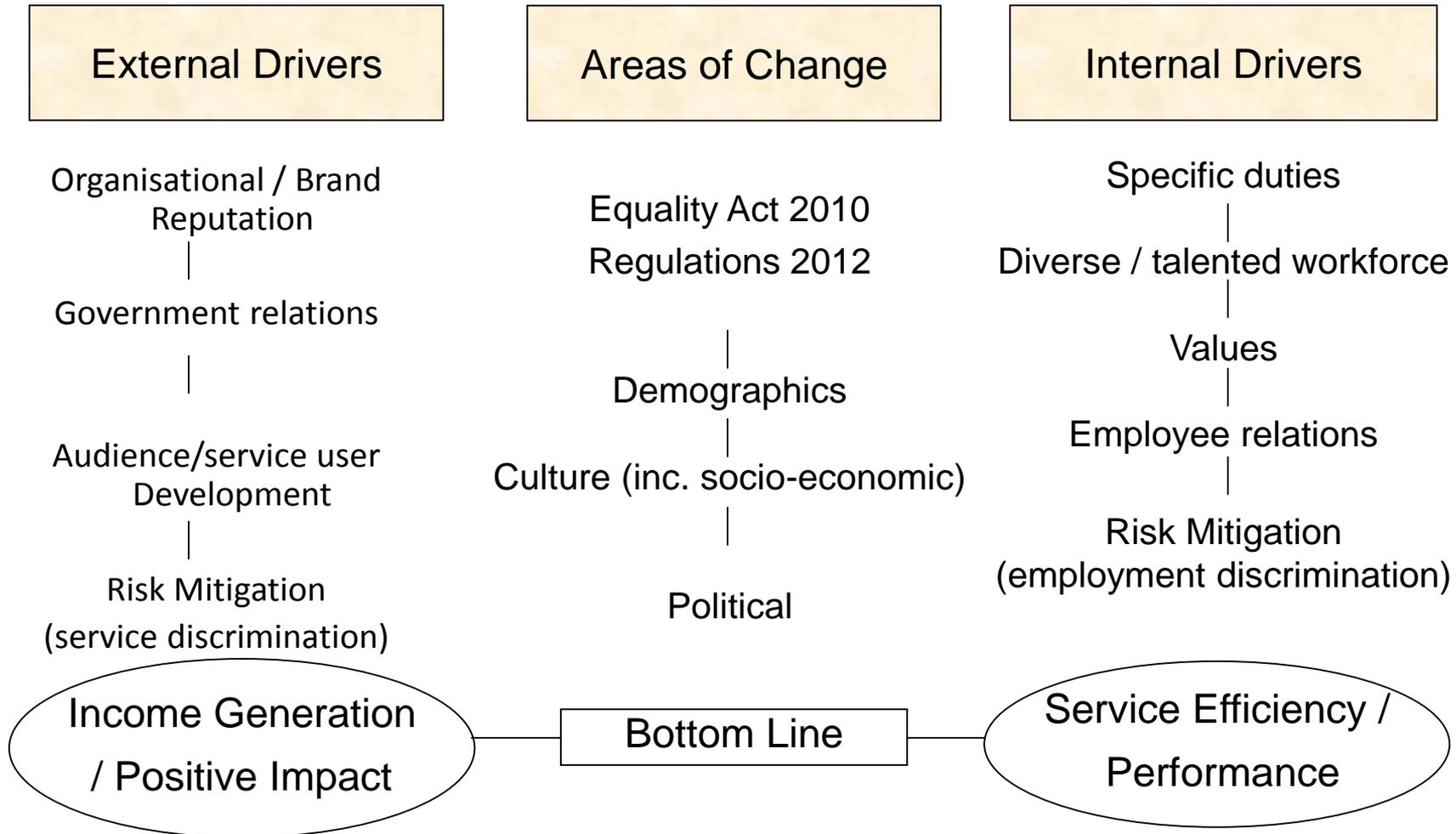
'Northcity Leisure's vision is to inspire Northcity's citizens and visitors to lead richer and more active lives through culture, sport and learning.

We want our workforce to be reflective of the wider Northcity population & encourage people from all backgrounds to work for us.

In terms of service use, we want to see all citizens and visitors of Northcity to be able to access and use our venues and facilities.' (August, 2014)

- Minority ethnic populations in Northcity
7.2% in 2001 - 15.4% in 2011
- More than one quarter of Northcity's working age population who would work 'with adequate support' is economically inactive.
- Sport, leisure & culture as key post-industrial drivers of new employment & of future economic development

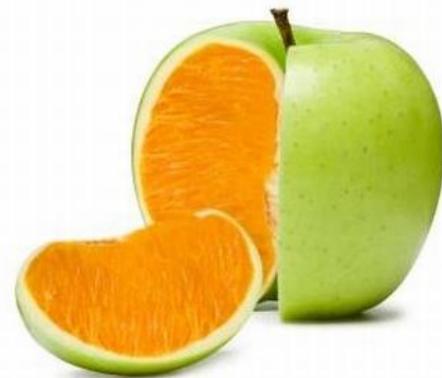
Northcity Leisure: Key Drivers



Methodology

- ▶ Policy Review – 100+ documents screened
- ▶ Literature Review (Best practice case studies)
- ▶ Staff survey – findings of 2012 survey re-analysed
- ▶ Staff Consultation:
 - Focus groups – 70 staff in nine groups
 - Training Needs Analysis (in focus groups)
 - Six, one-to-one interviews with senior staff
- Stakeholder Consultation (15 in depth interviews with local agencies)
- ▶ Service User and Non Service User survey – recommended to be carried out at a later date

Key Findings



1. Lack of E&D Understanding

- ‘Common sense’ knowledge, understanding & expertise around E&D and about protected characteristics’ groups:

‘We are periodically asked to produce information against the list of people who fall under equality and diversity.... When we discussed it, it seemed to include everyone except middle aged men in employment!’

(Venue managers)

‘I think if you’ve got a semi-professional job it’s expected that you’ve got that level of common sense and you take those things into consideration in your day to day job.’ (Marketing & publicity)

Lack of structured approach to E&D awareness & training (‘on the job’ training, ‘work shadowing’ & more ‘practical approaches’ to training):

‘The GOLD on-line stuff! You click and answer and if it’s wrong, you click until you get it right! It’s all very tick box.’ (Venue managers)

‘We had an equality and diversity course around 5/6 years ago now and everybody attended more or less.’ ‘There’s been no follow-up to it.’ (Area teams)

2. The Numbers Game

- ▶ E& D issues are often seen as an 'add on' to main service function, not a core objective embedded in delivery:

'If we are honest about improvements made in 2014 - very limited. We are still talking about the same barriers equality groups faced years ago.....The situation has regressed rather than improved.' (Equalities Operational Group)

- E& D issues were seen to be very subordinate or, to be in conflict with, other more important priorities:

'There probably is [training] if you wanted it. I personally haven't looked as I have been too busy with the demand.' (Area Teams)

'Any time anything does come up about diversity it is shut down by our immediate management because they are under so much pressure from their management just to deal in numbers.' (Frontline staff)

3. Lack of Organisational Equalities Expertise

- Staff often faced with difficult E&D challenges... but were unsure who to contact and who could assist in their resolution.

'If you have any questions it's difficult to find who is the right person to speak to.' (Frontline staff)

'They [NL] do run an equalities group – I'm not sure what comes out of that - we don't really hear anything.' (Frontline staff)

- Confusion around how policies and procedures on E&D at NL should, or could, be applied.

'I know there's policy, bits of paper that you get handed a folder when you start that you take away and read. I know one of them was about equality and that sort of stuff.' (Marketing & Publicity)

- *'People are scared: 'What if I say or do something wrong?'*, not sure how to actRather than addressing issues, they stay clear of it.'
- (Equalities Operational Group)

4. A 'Silo' Mentality

- ▶ An overly-hierarchical, 'silo' structure existed within NL

'We end up being in silosYou could at least connect with people from another part of the company [in the past]. This is almost non-existent today.' (Venue manager)

- ▶ A disconnect between what happens in NL venues and decision making at management level at HQ.

'[It] can take a long time for answers to be given or issues to be resolved because of the size of the organisation and the processes that you have to go through.' (Frontline staff)

- ▶ Potential pathways for expressing concerns about E&D issues were sometimes rather opaque.

'People just assume that you know who the equalities team are. I don't know who the equalities team are and I don't know how to find them.' (Frontline staff)

'Sometimes we feel like we are doing the work for the support function rather than the other way around.' (Frontline staff)

5. Data Collection & Monitoring

- Lack of rigorous data collection monitoring & evaluation

'Asking, yes. Listening, no.'

'Well if you are going to give out evaluation forms for a whole month and then get them in and don't do anything, what's the point?' (Frontline staff)

- No clear lines of responsibility for managing information & filtering through to services. No clear strategy for data driving service improvements

'Who knows what happens with the forms? Even worse, we don't see anything changing. It would be good if we could review things and see things change. That never happens.'
(Frontline staff)

6. Unrepresentative Staffing

- ▶ NL workforce is not reflective of the wider community because of ‘unconscious bias’:

‘I think we could make more of an effort to recruit people from diverse groups, but ultimately the process of recruitment should be down to individuals.’ (Marketing & publicity)

‘The same people take the cream of the jobs. Every subgroup going has the same people. Other talent and expertise within the organisation isn’t being utilised.’ (Equal Opportunities Group)

‘We all have unconscious bias, so we like people like us. You know you do. You don’t think you’re doing it, but as all these folk know, interviews are a very subjective situation, & we all like people like us.’ (Human Resources)

- And there is cynicism & internal resistance to change.....

‘I feel like there is a bit of a politically fashionable process of who we support at any one time. Yes, it tends to be equal, but it reeks of tokenism. It’s ‘Who is the hot topic this year?’’ (Marketing & Publicity)

Positive Action?

- *‘Positive action for me is looking at your policies and procedures and going underneath that and looking at why you haven’t recruited those people (ethnic minorities] but still being in a position if you are interviewing to pick the best candidate for the job. Irrespective [of protected status].*
- *‘I think, yes, we need to pursue more [minority ethnic] people but what’s supporting that? Am I agreeing that we should just therefore say, well, we will not recruit anyone for the next six months who isn’t from one of the minority groups? So I wouldn’t agree with that... ‘*

(Extracts from HR Staff)

7. Key Stakeholder Issues

- More effective partnerships, more culturally sensitive and more responsive to community needs. Real Consultation as well as engagement.

‘As a charity, Northcity Leisure has to adapt to working more at a community level – because of its size and structure it behaves like a business, but this doesn’t fit with its charitable purpose and need to engage local people’. (Stakeholder interviews)

- Staff can sometimes seem inexperienced, unhelpful or even unconsciously prejudiced when working with particular protected status groups.
- Service planning needs to work harder to overcome ‘Northcity Leisure knows best’ perceptions:

Ways Forward?

Communications

Messaging internally is crucial for 'buy in' at all levels in the organisation



Key Emergent Themes

- ▶ Build empathy and confidence among employees on Diversity and Inclusion
 - Develop **messaging** internally to promote Inclusion
 - Incorporate **E&D across all training** programmes
- ▶ Implement effective policies and procedures
 - **Amend policies** in recruitment and retention
- ▶ Build stronger partnerships
 - Community **brokerage**
 - **Publicising good practice** by NL
- ▶ Tackle underrepresentation in staff and service users
 - **Data monitoring** (employment and service delivery)
 - Undertake **positive action** progs. (e.g. linked to community groups)
- ▶ Address the 'silo' mentality
 - Ensure **Inclusion part of GL vision** with unified leadership
 - Develop **'in house' social media** platform e.g. Yammer
- **Review change over time.....**