

South Kesteven District Council

Equality Scheme

2011 – 2014

Draft v 10

Foreword by Leader of Council

I am pleased to introduce South Kesteven District Council's updated Corporate Equality Scheme (2011-2014). The scheme sets out how the Council meets its statutory duties to promote race, disability, gender, gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief and pregnancy and maternity equality under the Equality Act 2010. It replaces and builds on our previous Equality Scheme that covered the years 2009 to 2012 and also addresses our commitment to new legislation around marriage and civil partnership under the Equality Act 2010.

Our communities are valued in South Kesteven and in producing this Scheme we hope to show that we celebrate the diversity of the people who live, work or study here and those who are visitors to our district.

This is geographically a diverse district too and we recognise that the issues facing people in urban areas are different to those of people in rural settings. Our services and the way we deliver them need to reflect these differences – not everyone has the same access to or experience of our services and we are committed to putting our customers first and developing or adapting services to meet their needs. We want to work with our communities to remove the barriers of inequality and make South Kesteven a place where people from different communities get on well together and prosper.

Whether dealing with our own staff or with members of the public, we aim to treat everyone with respect and we aim to be an organisation that values and celebrates diversity.

We present our Corporate Equality Scheme (2011 – 2014) as part of our commitment to the continuous improvement of our services for all people within the district.

Councillor Linda Neal

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South Kesteven District Council Corporate Equality Scheme 2011 - 2014

1. Introduction

This document sets out how the Council intends to promote equality of opportunity in all of its functions. The scheme has been produced to reflect our ongoing commitment to the elimination of unfair discrimination, the advancement of equality of opportunity for all and to foster good relations between different communities. The scheme will also help the Council progress through the Equality Framework for Local Government and deliver the Equality Act 2010

By adopting the scheme the Council will mainstream issues of equality and diversity into service delivery, employment and procurement for all aspects of our work. We are committed to providing equal access to services and employment for all people living, working and visiting the district.

This scheme is about long-term, continuous improvement, and for this reason responsibility for implementing the scheme lies with all of the Council's elected Members and officers. Our scheme recognises the crucial importance of ensuring that the principles of equality and diversity inform key decision-making at every level within the Council.

2. Setting the Scene

Profile of South Kesteven District

Location

South Kesteven is located in the southwest corner of Lincolnshire, incorporating the towns of Grantham, Stamford and Bourne and an area known as the Deepings with over 100 villages and hamlets covering 365 sq miles of countryside. The population of the area is estimated by the Office for National Statistics to be 131,200 for mid 2009, which is an increase of over six thousand since the Census 2001 and the GP registrations for the district show a population of 137,382 as at October 2010. The gender split in the census 2001 was 49% male and 51% female.

Economy

The economy of the district which is centred mainly in the urban areas is connected with property and business services, engineering, food processing, cold storage, distribution, retail, local government and the NHS. Agriculture, tourism and the service sectors are also significant employers in the rural areas.

There were 2,052 claimants for Job Seekers Allowance in May 2011 which is 2.5% of the resident population of the area aged 16-64 compared to 3.6% for the East Midlands.

The employment rate (2010) was 75.9% as compared to 71.1% for the East Midlands, with median average gross weekly earnings by residence of £491.20 and £470.30 respectively. This earnings level is boosted by commuting to work out of the area.

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There are a number of major development plans within the district. These include: Grantham for Growth, the Bourne Core Retail Area and development of the 'starter' offices on the Northfields Industrial Estate in the Deepings.

Communications

The area lies approximately 100 miles from London, which is just over an hour away by train from Grantham and within easy reach of Nottingham, Lincoln and Peterborough by both road and rail. Whilst there are bus services between the major settlements and the many rural villages, the frequency of the services leaves the population heavily reliant on their cars for transport. The Census 2001 showed that 37.2% of South Kesteven's households have more than one car as compared to the national figure of 29.4%.

In such a rural community the internet plays a large part in communications, but the number of premises with no access to fixed line broadband in 2010 is estimated to be 11.02% with areas mainly to the west of Grantham being affected. The broadband take up in the urban areas where there is good connectivity ranges from 54%-56% and in the rural areas it ranges from 63%-69%.

Social Profile of the Community

The population projections estimate that the district's population will increase to 152,000 by 2031. The age group anticipated to increase the most over the coming years is the 65+ age group in particular the 80+ year olds with the 40-50 year olds experiencing decreasing numbers.

The average house price as at December 2010 was £181,845 which is higher than the East Midlands average of £164,130. However the prices appear to have levelled off and the lack of mortgages available could drive prices down as the market stagnates. As house prices increased over the years 2001 to 2007, affordability became an issue for those on lower incomes and the economic situation also impacted on the number of new houses being built. The mean household income for the district is approximately £33,000 making house prices 5.5 times household income.

There are excellent high achieving schools in the district with five of the secondary schools achieving a 90%+ pass rate for 5 GCSE A*-C grades in 2009 and 67.4% of all people had qualifications of NVQ2 or above.

South Kesteven tends to lose many of its young people particularly of college age, when they move away for education and employment reasons and then do not necessarily return.

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98.4% of the population in 2001 were classified as White with the remaining 1.6% (approximately 2,000 residents) from Black and Minority ethnic groups (BME). In 2009 there were 52 different nationalities living in the area. 5,050 persons are registered for national insurance (NI) contributions, the majority of whom come from Poland in the first instance and then Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Portugal, Slovak Republic, India, Philippines and South Africa. National insurance number registrations were declining from 1,100 in 2007 but have increased from 490 in 2009 to 550 in 2010. GP registrations also suggest that numbers of international migrants aged 0-15 years and 65+ years entering the county have been on the increase.

The school census in January 2011 indicates that there are 2,068 BME (not white English, white Scottish or white Welsh) school children in the district out of a total pupil population of 18,234 with approximately 740 pupils (490 in Grantham) having English as an additional language.

Figures from the 2001 census show that 82% of the local population are of Christian belief with over 900 people recorded as Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh.

The number of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people is not known, however based on national research by Stonewall and HM Treasury, the estimated number of LGBT people living in the district is about 8,500.

There are two hospitals in the area, one in Grantham with an A&E dept. and the other in Stamford without an A&E facility. The NHS health profile for South Kesteven 2010 shows that hospital stays for alcohol related harm, people diagnosed with diabetes and new cases of tuberculosis are all significantly better than the average for England. The life expectancy rate for females is 82.1 years and for males it is 78.5 years (2010) which is higher than that for the UK.

There were a total of 8,630 claimants on key out of work benefits as at November 2010 (a decrease of 180 since May 2010) and 3,730 of them were on employment and support allowance (ESA) and incapacity benefit, which is 4.5% of the resident population aged 16-64. Of the 29,030 state pensioners in the district (plus any that choose not to claim), 3,795 of them claim attendance allowance.

There are four leisure centres and four libraries each based in the main towns with a mobile library to serve the rural community, with online services for ordering books. Grantham and Stamford also have an arts centre with theatres and tourist information centres.

Source of information: Office for National Statistics, DWP Information Directorate, Nomis, DCLG, DfES, Land Registry

3. The Council's Corporate Priorities

The Council's corporate priorities are:

- **Customer First:** Making sure the customer is at the heart of everything we do by getting it 'right first time' and making it easy for them to access our services
- **Quality Living:** To create an attractive and sustainable environment for the community to enjoy, with a street scene that is green, clean, safe and well maintained
- **Good for Business:** To work in partnership to promote the growth of local businesses and develop the economy in South Kesteven
- **Quality Organisation:** To provide effective access to services and to improve the skills and capacity of the organisation to meet local priorities and deliver excellent services

4. Corporate Equality Objectives

The Council's equality objectives are:

- To ensure Council services are accessible
- To provide fair and equal treatment that meets individual needs
- To deliver the Corporate Equality Scheme and associated four year action plan

5. Our Commitment to Equality and Diversity

South Kesteven is home to a wide range of people who make different and valuable contributions to life in the area. These identifiable groups of people include people with disabilities, men/women, transgender people, people from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, religions and faiths, lesbians, gay men, bisexual people and people from all age groups.

The Council acknowledges that some people in the district may face discrimination every day because of their race, age, disability, gender, sexual orientation and other issues. Through disadvantage, discrimination and prejudice people are denied opportunity, find access to services more difficult and therefore suffer inequality.

South Kesteven District Council believes that everyone should be treated fairly and with respect. Our commitment is to recognise and understand the differences without creating an advantage for one group over another. The Council will continue to work to improve the quality of life for everyone in the district.

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This Equality Scheme has therefore been developed to recognise and value the diversity that exists in the district, and is based on principles of mutual respect, fairness and social inclusion. The aim of the Scheme is to help promote the ideals of proportionality, accessibility, and equality in everything we do.

6. The Law

The Equality Act 2010 became law on 1st October 2010 and brings together, in one place, the majority of all previous equality legislation.

The major pieces of legislation which are now included in and superseded by the Equality Act 2010 are:

- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- Equal Pay Act 1970
- The majority of the Equality Act 2006
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulation 2006
- Equality Act 2006 (much of it)
- Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) 2007

The law rightly protects people from unfair discrimination because of their

- Race
- Disability
- Sex
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Religion or Belief
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

These are known as protected characteristics.

The Act also sets out a public sector Equality Duty together with a schedule for implementation. The Duty has three aims:

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

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Therefore, the Council has a responsibility to challenge unfair discrimination, wherever it happens, and is committed to doing so. We will work towards ensuring that people are not discriminated against because of a protected characteristic. In doing so we recognise that individuals do not fit neatly into categories and that some people may be affected by more than one form of discrimination.

Our commitment applies whether the Council is acting as an employer, a service provider, or as a purchaser to other organisations.

This means the Council must build equal opportunity into everyday business, policy-making, service delivery, procurement, employment practice and other roles.

Definitions of the various types of discrimination can be found in [appendix 1](#) of this document.

7. The Equality Framework for Local Government

We are committed to raising our performance in the management of equalities and diversity and being subject to open and external assessment against accepted standards of best practice.

The Equality Framework for Local Government recognises that equality cannot be achieved overnight and sets out three levels of improvement:

Developing → Achieving → Excellent

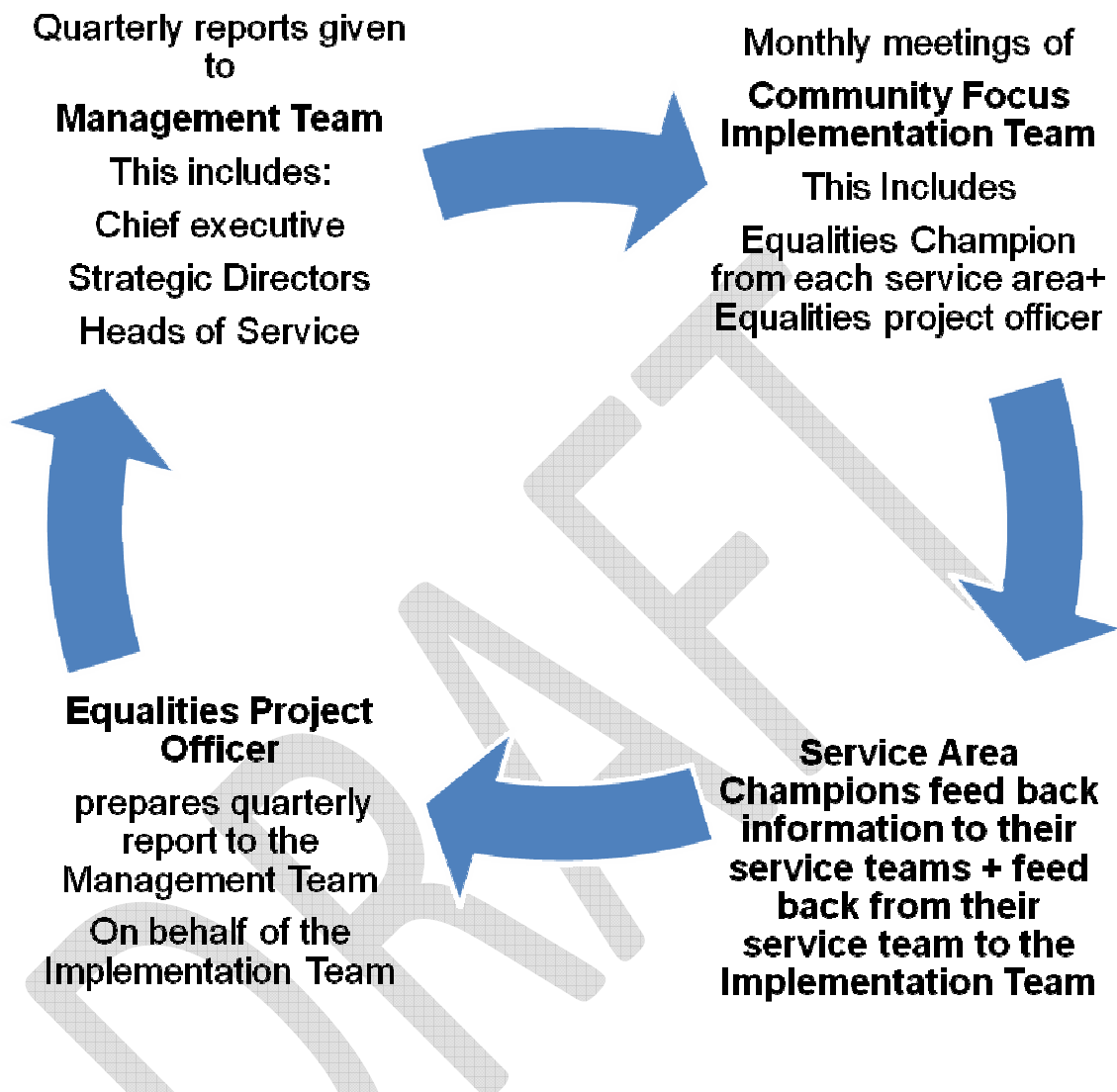
In 2006 the Council was externally assessed at Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government which equates to Developing level on the Framework.

8. Management of the Council's commitment to Equality and Diversity

The Council's Management Team leads on our commitment to Equality and Diversity. The group is chaired by the Chief Executive and membership includes all Strategic Directors and Heads of Service.

The diagram below shows the relationship between the Management Team and the Community Focus Implementation Team responsible for progressing delivery and implementation plans and monitoring results and progress. All Council services are represented and involved in this work.

Equality and Diversity Management arrangements



9. Service Responsibilities

Managing service delivery is about providing appropriate services, according to need, for everyone in the district. We will do this by recognising the diversity of our customers and acting to ensure that individual needs are met proportionately through reasonable adjustments to services

We recognise that as well as monitoring the diverse needs of our communities across the district we also need to monitor progress in the way we deliver our services to ensure effective outcomes and that our practices are free from discrimination.

The Scheme requires service areas to monitor information about who uses their service, satisfaction levels across groups and to identify barriers to the take up of services which can be addressed by the Council.

10. Analysis of the Impact on Equality

In order to identify whether our service delivery affects the various groups identified in our community in either a positive or negative way, all service areas within the Council have undergone a rigorous equality analysis of their service delivery.

The results of the equality analyses are consulted on with representatives from minority groups to ensure that, as far as possible, all considerations have been taken into account.

Where areas for improvement in service delivery or any negative impact has been identified, we have taken reasonable and proportionate steps to address these issues.

A summary of each of the service area equality analysis is published on the Council's web-site and also made available in hard copy or alternative formats on request. The full and detailed equality analyses will be available to the public on request.

11. Access to Services and Information

We are committed to ensuring that all sections of the community have access to information about council services and access to the full range of services. Service areas are encouraged to provide their information in Plain English and to include the Council's translated message on all relevant publications, informing service users of the provision to request information in alternative formats.

We have implemented a variety of different ways to ensure that information about our services is widely distributed and understood. These include:

- The Council's website which offers people information about how to access our services and the local democratic process. The website can convert text into speech using SpeakIT Plus, it can enlarge text for people who require large print and there is a translation facility available.
- The Customer Services Centre is located in the Council Offices on St Peter's Hill, Grantham. From here experienced customer service advisors are available to offer residents assistance with their queries.
- Satellite customer service offices located in Bourne, Stamford and Market Deeping ensure that services and information are accessible to communities throughout the district.
- Information leaflets are available in alternative formats on request.
- A Language Line facility is available for members of the community who have a language need.
- Text Relay is available for those with a hearing impairment.

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Customers can access our services in a number of ways which include, telephone, face-to-face, visiting buildings, by letter, by e-mail, by text message and using the internet. We will also explore people's preferred method of contact with the Council on service matters and seek to identify and overcome barriers to access to services and information.

12. Positive Images and Language

We ensure that our communications and publications are easy to understand and use images and language that help to promote equality of opportunity and good community relations.

13. Consultation and Community Engagement

In order to successfully tackle inequality we must listen to people's views and work with communities as an essential part of informed decision-making. We use a variety of methods to gather the views of local people such as surveys, on-street consultation, community forums, organised events etc. We recognise that a targeted approach is required to engage successfully with some members of local communities. The Council has a consultation policy and toolkit to help ensure our consultation and engagement reaches the broadest possible range of people. We also have a Community Focus Forum which is made up of representatives from a wide range of our diverse communities. The Forum is consulted on a wide range of issues such as new or amended policies, service area equality analysis and the Equality Scheme.

14. Hate Crime Reporting

A key part of our commitment to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in the community is to take action to tackle and prevent hate crime and hate incidents in the district.

Hate crime can affect all communities whether in towns or villages. Victims of such crime can often feel marginalised and isolated. It is therefore vital that as a service provider we are mindful of hate crime and incidents and take appropriate action where required.

Together with a wide variety of partners, the Council has played an active role in the development of a Lincolnshire-wide Hate Crime Strategy which encourages the reporting of hate crime through a variety of methods such as the Police, third party reporting centres and a 24 hour helpline Stop Hate.

We will continue to promote hate crime reporting by distributing information to the Community Focus Forum, in our customer service centres, on our web-site, by distributing leaflets to local minority community businesses and by training our employees on how to report hate crime.

15. Employment

Our workforce should reflect the diversity of the population of the district. We will try to achieve this by positively encouraging applications from those sections of the community that are currently under-represented in our workforce.

A workforce validation was conducted in 2009 - 2010 and during 2011. A report regarding our employment trends with regard to diversity issues is produced and published on an annual basis.

We will meet all our equality duties and employment regulations and ensure equal opportunities.

With regard to recruitment and selection we will ensure that practices and procedures reflect current best practice and that person specifications contain only criteria that are necessary to perform the duties of the post.

16. Learning and Development

We recognise that equality and diversity awareness training is crucial for all employees and Members of the Council. Such training will enable them to share the responsibility of promoting all aspects of equality both within the Council and with our external customers.

All employees are required to complete a diversity workbook and equality analysis training has been delivered to managers and other appropriate members of staff. More specific and targeted equality training needs will be delivered to front line staff.

We have a Community Focus area on the Council's intranet which gives employees and Members equality and diversity information e.g. demographic information for the district and at ward level, information and guidance regarding equality monitoring, guidance regarding analysis on the impact on equality and information on the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Duty.

Members receive appropriate equalities training as part of their induction and ongoing development.

17. Equality and Diversity Action Plan

The aims of this scheme will be progressed through an equality and diversity action plan. The action plan will include service delivery and employment issues, contain specific, measurable and achievable targets, and will identify the resources required to deliver the objectives.

18. Complaints

We take complaints about the services we provide or about employees very seriously and complaints from members of the public that the Council has failed to comply with its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 will be handled under the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

We have grievance and disciplinary procedures in place and a policy on dealing with complaints of harassment relating to employees. We also have a Whistleblowing Policy. These policies and procedures will be used as appropriate to investigate complaints relating to Council employees in respect of responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and this scheme.

The Members' Code of Conduct and Standards Committee provide the mechanisms to address complaints about the conduct of elected members.

19. Feedback

Equality and diversity issues affect everyone, so it is important that we all understand the issues and are able to have our say. That is why we welcome feedback on our Equality Scheme. If you have any comments either positive or negative please send them to: The Equalities Project Officer, South Kesteven District Council, St Peter's Hill, Grantham, Lincolnshire. NG31 6PZ

Types of discrimination: definitions

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (see perceptive discrimination below), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (see associative discrimination below).

Perceptive Discrimination

This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic e.g. the incorrect assumption that a person is gay or has a disability. This protection applies to age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and also covers disability, gender reassignment and sex.

Associative Discrimination

This is direct discrimination against an individual because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic e.g. carers of older and disabled people. The protection applies to race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, disability, gender reassignment and sex.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination occurs when there is a condition, rule, policy or practice in an organisation that applies to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if you can show that you acted reasonably in managing your organisation, i.e. that it is "a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim". A legitimate aim might be any lawful decision you make in running your organisation, but if there is a discriminatory effect, the sole aim of reducing costs is likely to be unlawful. Being proportionate really means being fair and reasonable, including showing that you have looked at being less discriminatory.

This protection applies to age, religion or belief, race, sex, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment and marriage and civil partnership.

Harassment

Harassment is "unwanted conduct relating to a person with a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual".

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Harassment applies to all protected characteristics except for pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. Employees will now be able to complain of behaviour they find offensive even if it is not directed at them, and the complainant need not possess the relevant protected characteristic themselves. Employees are also protected from harassment because of perception and association.

Third Party Harassment

The Equality Act 2010 makes an organisation potentially liable for harassment of its employees by people (third parties) who are not employees of the organisation, such as customers or clients. The organisation will only be liable when harassment has occurred on at least two previous occasions, the organisation is aware that it has taken place but has not taken reasonable steps to prevent it from happening again.

This protection applies to sex, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when an employee is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so. An employee is not protected from victimisation if they have maliciously made or supported an untrue complaint.

There is no requirement to compare treatment of a complaint with that of a person who has not made or supported a complaint under the Act.

Consultation

The following groups and organisations were invited to take part in the consultation and to comment on the Equality Scheme:

African/Caribbean Social Group	Keyring
Age UK Lincoln	Lincolnshire Association for People with Disabilities
Alzheimer's Society	Lincolnshire Community Development Project
Boston Belles	Pink Lincs
Carers Connect	Mencap
ChristChurch Grantham	Midlands Health and Safety Executive
Churches Together in all Lincolnshire	Polish Club
Grantham Children's Centre	South Lincolnshire Blind Society
Grantham College	South Lincolnshire Community Voluntary Service
Grantham Disability Forum	Total Voice
Jubilee Christian Fellowship	South Kesteven District Council Implementation Team
Just Lincolnshire	South Lincolnshire MIND