



Marches
Local Enterprise Partnership Limited

Inclusive Economy and Diversity Policy and Implementation Plan

October 2021

Version History

Version No.	Date Issued	Summary of Changes
Version 1.0	23 March 2021	Document approved by the Marches LEP Board
Version 1.1	12 October 2021	Review of progress against Implementation Plan

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1. Inclusive growth

The Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is focused on developing an inclusive and dynamic economy; for us this means becoming the home of ambition and opportunity for all.

We believe in opportunity for all, regardless of their gender, religion, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, removing the barriers which make it difficult for people to take up employment and training opportunities. We want to empower our people with the skills and resources they need to take ownership of their futures and secure good jobs with fair living wages.

We want residents to own their economic future and all young people to have high aspirations, with support to enable them to make good choices. We will work to increase the earnings, qualifications levels and progression routes accessible to local residents so that every resident has the tools and confidence to access the higher skilled jobs in future.

Our vision for the Marches is that we are an inclusive place that enables residents from our communities to thrive and develop with quality jobs offering good wages, training and progression. We know business people, local authorities, education and third sector organisations in the Marches are committed to working together to invest in the prosperity of our workforce and residents.

2. What success will look like

We are focused on narrowing the gap both between the area and the national average (outside London) and within the area to promote equality, diversity and inclusion reduce inequality; this includes:

- **Closing the gap on average earnings:** Increasing the earnings, qualifications levels and progression routes for local residents will be an important issue as an inclusive economy to ensure residents have access to new higher skilled jobs in future.
- **Closing the unemployment gap:** Remove the barriers which make it difficult for our people to take up employment and training opportunities.
- **Closing the skills and education gap:** Through good schools and colleges, make sure our young people have the skills, experience and qualifications to take up and access quality training and jobs.
- **Closing the aspiration and ambition gap:** So that local people own their own economic future and all young people to have high aspirations and confidence, with support to enable them to make good choices.

3. Context

LEPs are private sector led partnerships between local authorities and businesses set up in 2010 by the former Department of Business, Innovation and Skills to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within the regions.

The Marches LEP is the business-led organisation which drives economic growth across Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin by combining the best entrepreneurial instincts of the private sector with the knowledge, resources and infrastructure of the public sector.

The Marches LEP works in partnership with central Government to ensure the Marches region is getting a fair share of funding to deliver projects to achieve its objectives.

4. The Marches LEP vision

Our vision for the Marches is of a strong, diverse, inclusive and enterprising business base, operating in an exceptional and connected environment, where the transfer of technology and skills fosters innovation, investment and economic growth.

To achieve this vision, we are working with local partners, stakeholders and the business community to identify barriers to growth.

We are prioritising projects which will help remove those barriers and drive growth.

The Marches LEP values the diversity of the region's communities and recognises this as a huge asset that should be harnessed to provide a competitive advantage and drive the growth required.

The Marches LEP also recognises that to achieve its vision, bringing benefits to all our communities, it is essential that the LEP Board represents the diverse population of the region, and embraces the benefits this will bring in improving creativity, productivity and innovation. The Marches LEP also recognises the importance of embedding its vision in its policies and procedures.

5. What are Equality and Diversity?

Equality is ensuring every individual or groups of individuals have an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents and are not treated differently or less favourably, on the basis of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age.

Diversity aims to recognise, respect and value how people's differences contribute to society and support them in realising their full potential by promoting an inclusive culture for all.

5.1 Legal Context - Equality Act 2010, Equality Duty and Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

The Equality Act 2010 places a public duty on the Marches LEP with which it must comply. It states that everyone has the right to be treated fairly and places legislation around nine protected characteristics: age, disability (including mental ill health), gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires those who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

When making economic policy decisions the Marches LEP will pay due regard to the Equality Act 2010, general duties under the Public Sector Equality Duties (Annex A) and to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

6. Our commitment

This policy reinforces the Marches LEP's commitment to providing equality and fairness to all those who wish to work with them and to not acting less favourably on the grounds of their protected characteristic. The Marches LEP is opposed to all forms of unlawful, unfair and inappropriate discrimination.

7. How we will fulfil our commitment and meet our responsibilities

7.1 Board composition

Using information collected through publicly available economic data, the Marches LEP will seek to ensure its Board composition reflects the diverse communities of the Region. In determining the optimum composition of the Board, the Marches LEP will also consider areas of expertise and industry knowledge in addition to geographical representation, background, race, gender and other qualities in order to ensure membership is balanced appropriately.

7.2 Board Member Appointments Panel

The Marches LEP Chair will form an Appointments Panel, comprising at least three additional Marches LEP Board Members to manage Members rotation. The Appointments Panel will review and assess Board composition on behalf of the Board and, when recommending new appointments to the Marches LEP Board, will be mindful of achieving the optimum composition to maintain an appropriate range and balance of gender, skills, experience and background. The Appointments Committee will also be as diverse as possible to further promote Marches LEP commitment to diversity.

7.3 Recruitment

The Marches LEP will endeavour to recruit openly and fairly from the Region community so that the Board reflects regional diversity. This measure will be assessed regularly and the results produced for the Board.

The Marches LEP will encourage applications from all diverse backgrounds and;

- will ensure recruitment literature does not contain barriers to employment;
- will promote the Marches LEP's commitment to promote diversity in recruitment application packs and adverts;
- will aim to reach the widest possible candidate pool by using a range of recruitment methods and positive action, for example targeting under- represented groups through social media channels;
- will define the selection criteria in terms of measurable skills, experience, knowledge and personal qualities; and

- will assess candidates against the role specification in a consistent way throughout the process.

7.4 Selection

All Board appointments will be made on merit, in the context of the skills and experience required by the Board as a whole to be effective.

7.5 Equality and Diversity Champion

The Marches LEP will nominate from its number, one member, to act as its champion for Equality and Diversity. The champion, in addition to being a member of the Appointments Committee, will lead on ensuring the Marches LEP Board understands its role in promoting diversity and eliminating discrimination.

7.6 Decision making

As strategies, policies, procedures and programmes of work are developed, the Marches LEP will assess the impact on equality and consider what actions, if any, may be appropriate to improve any identified adverse impacts.

The social, environmental and economic impact and the impact on equality will also be monitored as strategies, policies, procedures and programmes are implemented.

The Marches LEP will be open and transparent and publish all information regarding its progress in meeting its commitments and duties in relation to equality and diversity on its website. The Marches LEP will also make available information that demonstrate how the achievement of its objectives is bringing benefits to all Marches Region communities.

7.7 Partners

The Marches LEP will work with partners to ensure that all commissioning and tendering processes pay due regard to the Equality Act 2010, general duties under the Public Sector Equality Duties (Annex A) and to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

7.8 Stakeholders

The Marches LEP will engage with all stakeholders and strive to be inclusive and transparent in all communications, encouraging consultation and collaboration.

7.9 Board subgroups

The Marches LEP will work to increase diversity not only at Board Member level but also in the membership of its subgroups.

7.10 Training

The Marches LEP will ensure that all members of the Board, its subgroups and all members of the Marches Executive Team undertake regular equality and diversity training.

8. Accountability

The Marches LEP is responsible and accountable for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring diversity issues are addressed by promotion of this policy.

Marches LEP Board members and Marches Executive Team members have a responsibility to challenge any unfair discrimination for reasons covered by equality legislation.

9. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with the review of the Accountability Assurance Framework (AAF) and/or the re-fresh of the Strategic Plan. Any changes will be approved by the Marches LEP Board.

10. Annex A – Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act became law in 2010. It covers everyone in Britain and protects people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

General duties under the Public Sector Equality Duties

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

Protected characteristics

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Situations in which you are protected from discrimination

Under the Equality Act you are protected from discrimination:

- when you are in the workplace
- when you use public services like healthcare (for example, visiting your doctor or local hospital) or education (for example, at your school or college)
- when you use businesses and other organisations that provide services and goods (like shops, restaurants, and cinemas)

- when you use transport
- when you join a club or association (for example, your local tennis club)
- when you have contact with public bodies like your local council or government departments

How can you be discriminated against?

There are four main types of discrimination.

1.1.1.1 Direct discrimination

This means treating one person worse than another person because of a protected characteristic. For example, a promotion comes up at work. The employer believes that people's memories get worse as they get older so doesn't tell one of his older employees about it, because he thinks the employee wouldn't be able to do the job.

1.1.1.2 Indirect discrimination

This can happen when an organisation puts a rule or a policy or a way of doing things in place which has a worse impact on someone with a protected characteristic than someone without one. For example a local authority is planning to redevelop some of its housing. It decides to hold consultation events in the evening. Many of the female residents complain that they cannot attend these meetings because of childcare responsibilities.

1.1.1.3 Harassment

This means people cannot treat you in a way that violates your dignity, or creates a hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. For example a man with Down's syndrome is visiting a pub with friends. The bar staff make derogatory and offensive comments about him, which upset and offend him.

1.1.1.4 Victimisation

This means people cannot treat you unfairly if you are acting under the Equality Act (like making a complaint of discrimination), or if you are supporting someone else who is doing so. For example, an employee makes a complaint of sexual harassment at work and is dismissed as a consequence.

What else does the Equality Act do?

1.1.1.5 Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act also requires public bodies (like local councils, hospitals, and publicly-funded service providers) to consider how their decisions and policies affect people with different protected characteristics. The public body also should have evidence to show how it has done this.

For example, a local authority wants to improve its local bus service. It carries out a survey of people who use public transport and finds that very few women use buses at night because they are worried about sexual harassment. The local authority decides to work with the police and the transport provider, as well as local residents, to find ways to address this problem and make the bus service more inclusive.

11. Annex B – Implementation Plan

Principle 1 – To work towards ensuring we have a workforce that reflects the diversity of the Marches				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating*
To ensure all staff have equality and diversity objectives agreed in each performance review and appraisal.	Line Manager	Annually	Ongoing - All staff reminded to discuss and agree an equality and diversity objective for reporting year 2021/22 with their line manager	
To review equality and diversity training needs every 6 months and to identify any gaps in knowledge that need to be addressed.	Line Manager	Bi-annually	Ongoing - All staff reminded to complete the equality & diversity training module available on Leap Learning at https://shropshire.learningpool.com/course/view.php?id=397 and review their equality and diversity training needs every six months to identify any knowledge gaps	
To ensure that any equality and diversity issues are included and addressed at the fortnightly management meetings.	Line Manager	Fortnightly	No issues identified	
To consult and update all job descriptions to ensure that all employees have a duty to promote Marches LEP's Equality and Diversity Policy and proactively seek ways to promote equality in carrying out their day to day responsibilities.	Line Manager	Ongoing and once implemented, reviewed at end of year performance review	Ongoing - HR confirmed this can be done directly by line managers in agreement with staff	

*RAG Rating – Red, Amber, Green Rating

Principle 2 – To embed equality into the heart of business planning and day to day operations				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
Responsibilities are set out in the employee handbook – these are to be monitored by each line manager on an ongoing basis	Line Manager	Ongoing	Employee handbook is being reviewed	
Take action when incidents occur in breach of our policy.	Line Manager/ HR Admin	Ongoing	No breaches occurred	
Ensure that our equality and diversity statement is included and implemented in all job adverts/ descriptions.	Line Manager	Ongoing	Partly included in recent advert for Careers Hub Lead. Line Managers to amend job descriptions in agreement with staff	
Review employee monitoring forms to identify whether there is any significant under-representation. Use this information to specifically target certain audiences when recruiting and review job descriptions in line with this. Incorporate any relevant actions into the implementation plan.	HR Admin	Annually	Recruitment monitoring information is contained within Shropshire Council published annual diversity report	
Ensure that all employees are offered support if required and reasonable adjustments are considered.	Line Manager/ HR Admin	Ongoing	This is covered in the induction process or as/when, if there are any changes that the Marches LEP is made aware of	
Principle 3 – To ensure that Marches LEP’s diverse communities, particularly the most disadvantaged people, benefit from Marches LEP’s vision to deliver sustainable economic growth.				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
Promote the importance of carrying out an equalities analysis (EqA) to all project applicants as part of the development of their proposed application by signposting to sources of data/research. They should also be advised to consider the needs for consultation and involvement of disadvantaged groups to inform their application.	Project Appraiser	Ongoing	Awaiting outcome of LEPs Review and Levelling up White Paper to understand future role of LEPs	

When responsible for appraising projects, ensure that our policy is taken into consideration.	Project Appraiser	Ongoing	Awaiting outcome of LEPs Review and Levelling up White Paper to understand future role of LEPs	
Principle 4 – To support the development across the Marches LEP economy of diverse markets, workforces and suppliers, in particular through working with key employers, business, voluntary and community sector and skills providers				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
Ensure that all external organisations and stakeholders are made aware of and encouraged to adhere to our equality and diversity policy.	Meeting Chairs	Ongoing	Implementation slowed down by ongoing LEPs Review and uncertainty over the future role of LEPs	
Review where current links lie with diverse stakeholders. Identify gaps and create new links if required.	CEO	Annually	Implementation slowed down by ongoing LEPs Review and uncertainty over the future role of LEPs	
Principle 5 – To provide leadership as an employer and service provider to drive our work to reduce inequalities across the Marches				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
This policy is to be stored in a central place on our website for all to view to increase awareness.	PR & Comms	Once agreed	Policy available on the Marches LEP website, under Policies and Procedures	
Issue all interested candidates with monitoring forms to assess any employment data gaps in our recruitment advertising.	HR Admin	Ongoing	Gaps in employment are covered within the main job application form, with candidates asked to detail any gaps and recruiting managers would discuss at interview	
Ensure that all those involved in the recruitment and selection process are trained in non-discriminatory selection techniques.	HR Admin	Ongoing	All recruiting managers are required to attend mandatory recruitment training, which covers equality and diversity (as well as best practice) for recruitment purposes	
Review the recruitment and selection policy and procedures.	HR Admin	Ongoing	These are reviewed regularly and updated if required	

Principle 6 – To have a governance structure that holds the organisation to account, ensuring that benefits are achieved from mainstreaming equalities across all of our work				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
Produce a report on progress against the Implementation Plan to the Marches Board. Revise when further measures are identified to ensure providers and staff are taking action to enable equality to be promoted in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.	Diversity Champion	Annually	Due in March 2022. Mid-year update to be provided at October PRMC and November Board	
Appoint a Diversity ‘Champion’ at Board level to ensure we are compliant with the Equality Act 2010, including the three main parts of the Public Sector Equality Duty.	LEP Chair/ CEO		Completed in September 2020	
Principle 7 – To utilise our evidence base and ensure equality is built into data collection, analysis and reporting of economic trends affecting the Marches to inform our work on economic development				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
Review our equality and diversity monitoring form to ensure that we are collecting only relevant data.	HR Admin	Ongoing	Recruitment monitoring forms are reviewed regularly and updated if required	
Principle 8 – To monitor, review and revise equality measures and objectives to analyse the impact of our work on the Marches businesses, communities and our workforce				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
Undertake regular reviews of the Equality and Diversity monitoring information of applicant enquiries and attendance at workshops/events to identify any under-representation. Take steps to address this, including measures such as improving the accessibility of our communications, venues and provision of advice and guidance.	HR Admin/ Event Organiser	Ongoing	Due to the Covid-19 pandemic no physical events/ workshops have taken place	
Ensure an access review is carried out when planning any external located meetings/ events/ workshops in line with the duty to make	Event Organiser	Ongoing	This is done for each event/meeting and/or workshop. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic very few physical	

reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.			events/meetings and/or workshops have taken place	
Ensure that all candidate access and dietary requirements are checked and implemented in advance of any meetings/events/ workshops.	Event Organiser	Ongoing	This is done for each event/meeting and/or workshop. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic very few physical events/meetings and/or workshops have taken place	
Principle 9 – To comply with equalities legislation and pay due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty as a requirement of public sector and EU funding				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
Ensure that our Equality and Diversity policy is kept up to date and compliant.	Director of Corporate Services	Ongoing	Policy and compliance reviewed regularly. Implementation slowed down by ongoing LEPs Review and uncertainty over the future role of LEPs	
Ensure that this policy is implemented in the day to day working environment.	Line Managers	Ongoing	Implementation slowed down by ongoing LEPs Review and uncertainty over the future role of LEPs	
Principle 10 – To set a broad range of targets to ensure that we are meeting the needs of diverse communities and achieving a broadly representative workforce				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
Ensure that our equality and diversity plan objectives are embedded in our Business Plan, SAP and any other relevant documents.	CEO	Ongoing	New CEO started in October. Work to be taken forward in due course depending on outcome of LEPs Review	
Principle 11 – To ensure all business have equal access to opportunities offered by the Marches LEP in order to have a diverse supplier market that supports and works in partnership to meet our strategic objectives				
Action	Lead	Frequency	Progress as October 2021	RAG Rating
Evaluate data from monitoring forms used given to business and partners. Feedback this information to the relevant person in charge to enable changes to be implemented.	HR Admin/ Named Lead	Ongoing	Implementation slowed down by ongoing LEPs Review and uncertainty over the future role of LEPs	