



Report to OSMC Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 14th November 2019

Report of: Laurie Brennan, Head of Policy & Partnerships

Subject: Sheffield City Council's Equality Duties

Author of Report: Diane Owens & Rosie May, Equalities and Engagement

Summary:

This report outlines Sheffield City Council's statutory duties in terms of equality and provides an overview of the work we undertake as the councils corporate Equalities Team to meet those duties. This includes our Equality Objectives, Annual Equality Report, Equality Impact Assessments, working with HR and our engagement activities through the Equality Hub Network.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	
Other	X

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

The Committee is asked to consider our equality duties and related areas of work; and how scrutiny may wish to consider any implications and issues, both in its work planning and ongoing work programme.

Category of Report: OPEN

Appendix

- SCC Equality Objectives 2019-22 - Leaflet
- SCC Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy 2017



Equality Objectives
2019-22 - Leaflet.pdf



SCC Equality
Diversity & Inclusion Policy 2017

Report of the Director of Policy & Partnerships Sheffield Council's Equality Duties

1. Introduction

1.1 As a public sector organisation the Council has a number of statutory duties with regards to equality. The [Equality Act 2010 and associated Public Sector Duties \(PSED\)](#) require the Council to have 'due regard' to three areas in the way it works:

1. To **eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation** and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
2. To **'take forward (advance) equality of opportunity'** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who don't.
3. To **'foster good relations'** between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

1.2 The Council must **consciously think about its statutory duties**, both in the way we behave as an employer and when we develop and review policy and projects and set our budgets. This includes how we design, deliver and evaluate our services and when we commission services from other organisations.

1.3 The Council must demonstrate **'due regard'** to the need to advance equality of opportunity, this involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people that are different from others.
- Encouraging people to participate in public life or activities in which participation is low.

1.4 The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of their **'protected characteristics'**.

Each individual has some of the protected characteristics e.g. race and age, so the Act protects everyone. The nine stated 'protected characteristics' are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality)
- Religion/ Belief (includes. no religious belief)
- Sex (women and men)
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage & Civil Partnership (only in relation to eliminating discrimination)

1.5 Reasonable Adjustments

The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled people also involve making reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments should be made to avoid disabled people being put at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled people. The need to make reasonable adjustments for staff can apply to working arrangements, or any physical aspects of the workplace. For customers it can apply to changing policies or procedures, making adaptations or providing equipment or information.

1.6 Equality Act Specific Duties

The Equality Act includes the “Specific Duties and Public Authorities Regulations” which require statutory bodies to publish equality information to show how we are meeting our duties and to publish information relating to workforce diversity, including gender pay gap information, on an annual basis. We are also required to set at least one Equality Objective every four years. All information must be published in a manner that is accessible to the public. The majority of our information is published via our internet page entitled [“Our Commitment to Equality”](#).

2.0 Equality Objectives 2019-23

2.1 Our latest Equality Objectives were drafted to reflect our current priorities and areas of focus, including areas identified in our Employee Opinion Survey, Workforce Equality data and persistent areas of inequality as highlighted in our Annual Equality Report 2017-18.

2.2 Following consultation, we have now produced a final set of Equality Objectives for 2019-22. Through our public consultation we received a total of 178 responses (largely from individuals). There was a lot of support for the areas we have chosen to focus on, with 84% of people saying that the objectives focused on either “The Right Things” or “Most of the Right Things”. We also received a range of comments and suggestions.

2.3 Our equalities monitoring for the consultation shows that we engaged with a diverse group of people, for example 18% of our respondents were from BAME groups (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic), 9% described themselves as LGB+ and 24% described themselves as having a disability.

2.4 To help us focus on important areas, so we can make a difference, for 2019-23 we have set four objectives, each with a set of three more specific aims (which are outline in more detailed on the next page):

- Objective 1: Strengthen knowledge and understanding of our communities
- Objective 2: Ensure our workforce reflects the people that we serve
- Objective 3: Lead the city in celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion
- Objective 4: Break the cycle of inequality and improve life chances

2.5 We will also be reviewing our current Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy 2017 in light of our new objectives.

2.6 Our Equality Objectives contribute across all 5 of our Corporate Plan priorities; tackling inequalities, better health and wellbeing, strong economy, thriving neighbourhoods and communities and an in touch organisation.

2.7 As a large public sector organisation, our Equality Objectives cover a broad set of issues and priorities, particularly for areas that tackle persistent inequalities, such as health and wellbeing and attainment. Many of these issues reflect challenges at a national level, and our approach to tackling these issues will inevitably be through a wide range of strategies, policies and projects, which cover a period of a number of years.

Objective 1: Strengthen knowledge & understanding of our communities

Aims

1. We will improve the data we hold about people who use our services in terms of consistency and robustness. This will include capturing improved equality monitoring data to enable us to better understand people's needs and levels of satisfaction.
2. We will work with the people of Sheffield and our partner organisations, including the voluntary, community and faith sector, to ensure data and knowledge are used to deliver joined up approaches to the big challenges that affect the city and our communities. Data on equalities will also be used to ensure we set a fair and evidence based budget for the council.
3. We will improve the information we hold about our diverse communities including around influence, engagement and cohesion. We will continue to undertake a broad range of consultation and engagement activities to inform decision making and will support underrepresented communities to raise issues and put forward solutions.

Objective 2: Ensure our workforce reflects the people that we serve

Aims

1. We will work towards achieving Disability Confident at Level 3 (currently level 2). We will also undertake work to further understand and respond to lower morale scores for disabled staff to try and bring them in line with non-disabled staff.
2. We will work to increase the diversity of top earners from the following groups, BAME (Black Asian Minority Ethnic), Women, Disabled People and LGB+ and trans people; based on Chief Officer grade and equivalent.
3. We will increase awareness about the support available to carers within our workforce. In response to lower morale scores we will undertake further work to understand the challenges carers are facing and what can be done in response, with a view to bringing scores in line with non-carers.

Objective 3: Lead the city in celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion

Aims

1. We will work with our partner organisations across all sectors, to celebrate and promote our diverse city locally and nationally. We will support and promote events and activities that celebrate and raise awareness with our diverse communities.
2. We will continue our work to tackle poverty and promote social justice, including through the Fairness and Tackling Poverty Partnership and Making Sheffield Fairer Campaign Group. We will raise awareness of the Fair Employer Charter and Living Wage with employers in the city; and will ensure our commissioning processes are fair and inclusive.
3. We will continue to support citywide work to ensure our city is an inclusive and accessible place to live and visit. We will work with our partner organisations to raise awareness of hate crime and how it can be reported; and will continue to challenge discrimination, bullying and harassment.

Objective 4: Break the cycle of inequality and improve life chances

Aims

1. We will focus on improving health and wellbeing in the city, especially for groups that experience poorer outcomes. We will ensure decent, inclusive and accessible housing that promotes wellbeing. Health inequalities will also be a key focus of our revised Health and Wellbeing Strategy and we will continue to join up and improve health and social care services to provide high quality and accessible care.
2. We will work with partners to ensure there are effective pathways into education, training and employment (including apprenticeships) to enable young people to fulfil their ambitions. We will continue to work with schools and partner organisations from early years onwards, to ensure children have a great start in life and to close attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
3. We will work with the Police, health, specialist providers and other partner agencies to tackle domestic and sexual abuse. We will work with communities and interest groups on prevention, and ensuring key messages about healthy relationships, consent and sexual harassment are included in 'relationships and sex education' in the city. We will develop whole family working on domestic abuse that supports victims and children and holds perpetrators to account; and ensure services are accessible and meet the needs of our diverse communities.

3.0 Equality Impact Assessments

3.1 Tackling inequality remains **fundamental to the values** of the Council and is considered throughout our policies and proposals. We believe it is vitally important that we understand how the difficult decisions taken by the Council impact on different groups and communities within the city, and that we take action to mitigate any negative impacts that might be identified.

3.2 When setting policies or changing how we deliver services, we routinely undertake [Equality Impact Assessments \(EIAs\)](#). Equality Impact Assessments are a systematic way of assessing the effects and potential disproportionate impacts that a proposed policy or decision is likely to have on different groups within the city; and demonstrates how we meet the General Equality Duty. Equality Impact Assessments are led by Portfolios.

3.3 Our EIA process also prompts us to consider **cumulative impacts**, which could be cumulative year on year or due to different proposals impacting on the same group. This approach helps us identify these impacts and to make positive changes where possible.

3.4 We take a **proportionate approach** to carrying out EIAs, focussing on those areas of high impact and risk. Through our 'live' EIA process we monitor adverse equality impacts, as reductions and changes in provision can occur during implementation and delivery.

3.5 Our EIAs focus on the impact on groups with protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. These are age, disability, race, marriage and civil partnership, sex, sexual orientation, religion/belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity.

3.7 In addition, since 2016 we have taken a decision to go **beyond our statutory duty** and we also assess the impact on the voluntary and community and faith sector (VCFS), poverty, carers, armed forces and cohesion. We also consider the impact on health and wellbeing. We believe this approach gives us a wider understanding of the potential impacts of policies and projects in the city.

3.8 Budget EIA: We liaise with Portfolio Equality Leads to ensure all budget related proposals have had appropriate EIAs and that there is suitable consultation undertaken with stakeholders, including people who use services, service providers and staff. We undertake both a corporate [Council wide Budget EIA](#) on the budget as a whole, as well as individual EIAs on the various proposals that are being recommended.

3.9 We continually test our practice with regards to EIA's to ensure our processes are effective in identifying and mitigating the potential negative impacts of our policies and projects. Following the 2017-18 Budget we undertook a review of our EIA process and in 2019 we also undertook an internal audit. As part of the review we worked with our Portfolio Equality Leads to look at how we undertake health and wellbeing impact assessments and also ran a workshop on cohesion and integration. Both exercises identified areas for improvement, which have shaped an Improvement Plan which we will be working to implement.

4.0 Equality Information & Monitoring

Equality monitoring is led by Portfolios. As a council equality monitoring helps us ensure that our services are accessible. Recording people's personal circumstances allows us to analyse how well we are meeting our commitments to different groups of customers and can help ensure effective targeting.

Demographic research such as the Census also provides a detailed profile of the population of Sheffield which enables us to compare who requests and receives services against the data we collect.

Equality monitoring helps us to:

- Better understand who is accessing our services and who we might be missing
- Improve delivery of services making it easier for all groups of customers to access services

5.0 Annual Equality Report

5.1 Our [Annual Equality Report](#) gives an overview of how we are meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty. It summarises our actions and progress on improving equality, in the way we serve the people of Sheffield and how we behave as an employer.

5.2 The report includes more detailed information about some of our areas of work and highlights areas of persistent inequality. The examples in the report are only a selection of the ways in which we work to improve equality and to meet our equality duties.

5.3 HR also compile a separate report on our workforce diversity; you can view our latest [Annual Workforce equality Report 2017-18](#). The report provides detailed analysis across a range of areas, including disability, sex, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Detailed Portfolio reports are also produced. Alongside our Employee Opinion survey these reports inform our HR led Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan, which support delivery of Equality Objective 2 “Ensure our workforce reflects the people that we serve”.

5.4 Our partner organisations, e.g. CAPITA and Veolia also have a duty to report on their work around equality. Alongside our Annual Equality Report these partner reports are shared at our Strategic Equality and Inclusion Board, which has a strategic role in terms of our work around equalities.

6.0 Strengthening voice and influence: Equality Hub Network

6.1 In 2014 the Council established the [Equality Hub Network](#) to strengthen the voice and influence of communities of identity (COIs) in Sheffield. The Equality Hub Network (EHN) is designed to provide a route for the Council to engage with underrepresented groups to help shape policy and services in the city.

6.2 The Network brings underrepresented communities and decision-makers together to work for positive change. These Communities of Interest are specifically identified as a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010.

6.3 We chose to focus the network on people with protected characteristics, partly because we have a Public Sector Equality Duty in relation to the protected characteristics outlined in the Act; and also because we know that these particular groups face additional barriers and therefore have difficulties accessing traditional engagement routes.

6.4 Recognising that people can belong to more than one COI, the Network provides opportunities for individuals and groups to engage with and work across communities, and influence the Council

The Network is made up of the following hubs.

- Age Hub (intergenerational)
- Disability Hub
- LGBT Hub (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans)
- BAMER Hub (Black Asian, Minority Ethnic and Refugee)
- Women's Hub
- Religion and or Belief Hub (includes people with no Religious belief)
- Carers' Hub

6.5 During 2017-18 we estimated that **over 1,000 people** attended Equality Hub Network (EHN) joint events or meetings on a range of topics. Hub priorities were decided upon by Hub members (following a consultation exercise) and included hate crime, domestic and sexual abuse, health and wellbeing, violence against women and girls and transport. Thousands more people will have engaged with events supported by the Hubs such as Holocaust Memorial Day, International Women's Day, SheFest, Pinknic and the Peace Walk.

6.6 The Equality Hub Network has recently undertaken an internal review which has identified a number of changes that need to be made in order to enable the Network to reach its full potential. The Network currently operates very well on a relatively small budget but securing additional funding from partner organisations would enable the Network to have a greater impact on decision in the city. Discussions are underway to try and ensure this can be in place for 2020-21.

7.0 What does this mean for the people of Sheffield?

7.1 As a Council, we have a major role in tackling inequality and it is important that we work with communities and partners in doing so. It is also important that underrepresented communities are able to engage on a number of levels with the work of the council and to have influence on decisions made in the city.

7.2 Our ongoing work around equalities demonstrates our commitment to challenging inequality and promoting a fair and inclusive City and we believe our approach helps us achieve this.

8.0 The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:

8.1 The Committee is asked to consider our equality duties and related areas of work; and how scrutiny may wish to consider any implications and issues, both in its work planning and ongoing work programme.