

Report of the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods

Refreshing the Council's Single Equality Scheme

Introduction

1. This report sets out the key issues for the Council's equalities agenda going forward. It proposes specific priorities and asks EAG to comment on them.
2. EAG is asked:
 - Do you recognise the picture set out?
 - Do you agree with the priorities proposed as the basis of a new Single Equality Scheme for 2012-15?

Background

3. The Council has adopted the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) as its pathway to excellence in equality. The framework incorporates the requirements that the Equality Act 2010 places on public sector bodies. Following a peer assessment in 2011, the Council was found to be at 'Achieving' level under the framework. To assist the Council to work towards 'Excellent' a peer advisor was appointed. This led to the development of an Equality Improvement Action Plan which is now being implemented.
4. The next key step is to refresh the Council's Single Equality Scheme so that it is based on "SMART"¹ objectives which will improve equality in life outcomes² especially for groups facing increasing socio-economic challenges. It is also proposed that the Council works with its partners across the city to identify two or three

¹ Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely

² Health, housing, education and lifelong learning culture and leisure, work, safety and security, self-determination

priorities for the city and establishes new partnership arrangements to drive these forward.

5. This paper introduces the term Communities of Identity (CoI). These are groups of individuals who share common experiences, opportunities and challenges because of their gender (sex), gender reassignment (sex change), disability, race, sexual orientation, social class, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marital status and civil partnership and/or because they are carers.

Vision

6. The Council believes that everyone should enjoy the excellent quality of life our city has to offer. This means enjoying a long and fulfilling life, in good housing, with excellent opportunities in work, education, training, self-development and participation in public life, safety and security in family and social life, and the chance to enjoy diverse and inclusive culture and leisure opportunities.

Equality Priorities

7. The priorities suggested below reflect both data analysis and engagement work that has been undertaken in connection with:
 - The One City Strategy
 - The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, and
 - the Fairness Commission's worktogether with past feedback from EAG and other specific consultations.
8. In examining the data and consultation feedback the issues that have arisen in relation to equality outcomes for the Communities of Identity can be categorised into three main priorities:
 - A Fairer York – Narrowing the gap in equality outcomes
 - Respecting and Celebrating Diversity
 - An Enabling, Positive, and Diverse Workforce

Priority 1: A Fairer York- Narrowing the gap in equality outcomes

9. This priority is about knowing our communities and how we can narrow the gap in equality outcomes for the Communities of Identity. Issues raised in relation to the equality outcomes are outlined below.

Employment, Training and Income

10. There is a widely held view that York needs more jobs, better quality jobs, less employer discrimination, and jobs with fair terms and conditions. The need for accessible and affordable childcare is also raised. There is a need for more employment opportunities for young people (training and apprenticeships being a specific point commonly raised). Pay levels and a higher minimum wage (or living wage) is an issue for young people but goes wider too. Child Poverty is an issue in certain wards as is fuel poverty. Income is also raised as an issue in terms of benefits and money that people have to live on. In terms of Communities of Identity issues the desirable outcomes would be to:
- Increase the number of jobs for young people and disabled people and the routes into them through training and apprenticeship schemes. In particular to reduce the number of young disabled people not in education or training (NEET)
 - Increase the number of women in employment
 - Reduce the numbers in fuel poverty in the wards where there are high incidences of fuel poverty
 - Reduce the incidence of Child Poverty in the wards most effected and the number of children on free school meals

Education

11. There is clear evidence that educational achievement is crucial in determining an individuals life prospects. Issues identified with respect to the Communities of Identity are as follows:
- Increase the educational attainment of looked after children and Gypsy and Traveller children
 - Continue to reduce the attainment gap between children in York who do not receive free school meals and those who do or who live in deprived areas

Housing

12. In terms of Housing provision feedback from Communities of Identity focused on increasing the supply of affordable housing, people being able to remain in their own homes for a long as possible, and meeting the needs of specific groups in particular people with learning difficulties, young people and the Gypsy and Traveller community:

- Ensure older people can remain in their own homes for as long as possible
- Provide support to enable people with learning difficulties to access good quality housing
- Decrease the number of economically vulnerable people who are living in non decent housing
- Meet the housing needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community
- Reduce the number of BME families living in overcrowded conditions
- Provide options for Young people and Teenage parents to access good quality housing
- Increase access to affordable housing

Transport

13. The biggest issues in relation to transport is a desire for bus services that run more reliably and extensively and which are cheaper:
- Provide accessible transport for disabled people through visual/audible/tactile public transport information for blind or partially sighted people and for those who have difficulty reading English
 - Improve access to services and employment via effective and affordable transportation network for the various Col

Health and Wellbeing

14. Life expectancy in York for both men and women is higher than the national average at 79.6 years for men (England 78.3) and 83.2 years for women (England 82.3); however, the following issues need to be addressed:
- Reduce the gap in life expectancy for both men and women living in the most deprived wards in York (for men the gap is 9.9 years, for women 3.6)
 - Improve the health outcomes of Young People living in care
 - Reduce reliance on drug and alcohol especially in those communities most affected
 - Increase the access of the Communities of Identity to health care where health inequalities are present

- Support carers in their physical and emotional wellbeing to enable their caring role and to maintain employment
- Address the incidence and impact of domestic violence on adults and children

Priority 2: Respecting and Celebrating Diversity

15. York is a diverse city with an increasing BME population and the cosmopolitan nature of the city is buoyed by significant numbers of overseas students from around the world; however, feedback suggests the need to:

- Create more opportunity to celebrate through multi-cultural and multi-faith initiatives
- Improve young people's, including students', perception of feeling welcome and safe living in the city
- Reduce the incidence of hate crime for people from the BME and LGBT communities, older people and people with disabilities
- Help the faith communities to increase their access to appropriate facilities and places of worship

Priority 3: An Enabling, Positive, and Diverse workforce

16. This priority is about ensuring that our work force is reflective of our community and understands and respects the communities we service. This also extends to our suppliers and contractors. A responsive workforce will enable the community and the voluntary sector to influence service design and where appropriate to deliver services. Particular outcomes raised through community engagement and the work undertaken by the Fairness Commission include:

- Employ, support and develop a workforce that is representative of our Communities of Identity
- Make it easier for the Communities of Identity to access services especially addressing specialist needs of specific groups such as homeless young people, people with mental health issues, people with learning disabilities and older people.
- Ensure information gets to those who need it and is easy to understand

- Engender creativity in engaging with Communities of Identity so they are able to influence service provision
- Make best use of local volunteer groups and social enterprises to help deliver services to the community

Next Steps

17. Subject to the views of Cabinet on the vision, priorities and issues identified in this report consultation will be undertaken. The timetable for developing the Single Equality Scheme is as follows:
- 30 July: EAG considers the first draft of the outcomes for the SES.
 - August 2012: The draft SES is out for 8 week consultation and the Neighbourhood Management Unit undertake consultation with the Cols throughout September and October.
 - September 2012: A special “Help us to get it Right” day takes place inviting equality community groups to discuss the proposed Scheme.
 - Beginning of October: The Scheme is further developed, following the consultation, with actions and measures
 - Early November: Council’s Cabinet signs off the final Scheme

Advice Sought

18. The views of EAG are requested on the vision, priorities and issues set out in this report.

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Report Approved	✓	Date	18.7.12.
Wards Affected:	All	✓	
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