

Meeting of the Social Inclusion Working Group 13 May 2009

Report of the Head of Civic, Democratic and Legal Services

Collecting information about the needs and views of people from the equality strands¹

Summary

1. This report explains why when and how, Council proposes to collect information about the gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion & belief of communities and individuals the council serves and employs.
2. SIWG members are asked for their views, especially about the questions that we propose to use when we ask people to tell us what equality strands they feel represent who they are (please see Annex 1).
3. The deadline for feedback to reach the Corporate Equality and Inclusion Manager is 17:00 on 30 June 2009.

Why collect information

4. Collecting information about the gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion & belief of communities and individuals the council serves and employs, is beneficial because it:
 - a. Helps the council to improve the outcomes for equalities groups through a better understanding of:
 - i. The size and makeup of groups
 - ii. Their geographic location
 - iii. The inequalities between groups and the general population, and between different groups
 - b. Demonstrates that this understanding is based on solid evidence
 - c. Highlights areas where the Council might not be complying with its own equality policy and the legislation. This will help the council to avoid unintended discrimination, by making sure that problems and issues are identified and dealt with at an early stage.

¹ The “strands” are gender, race, disability, age, religion & belief, sexual orientation

- d. Improve the council's reputation as a good and fair provider of goods and services, and as a good employer.
5. In addition, the council has a duty under equality legislation, to "gather and use information" on how its policies and practices affect communities and individuals it serves and employs, who are protected by equality legislation. The Council also needs to show that whenever it gathers information, it has included people protected by equality legislation.
6. The Audit Commission, the body that inspects the work of councils, places a requirement on councils to "support decision making by information on equality issues and outcomes" .
7. The Equality Framework for Local Government (that sets the standards for equality work in councils), asks councils to "understand the profile of their communities and the life-chances of different groups within their area". This is called **Equality Mapping** and it means systematically collecting and using information about communities and individuals councils serve and employ.

When to collect information

8. To meet these requirements, the council needs to actively collect information about the gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, age and religion & belief of communities and individuals that it serves and employs, when:
 - a. it conducts research
 - b. it deals with people as part of providing a service, answering a query or dealing with feedback.
 - c. it populates and maintains databases of customers and staff

How to collect information

9. In all three types of activity listed in paragraph 8 above, we propose to ask questions about **all six strands**. This is mainly so that we can make sure we have taken the views of everyone into account.
10. The standard questions we propose to ask, are in Annex 1 of this report. They have been put together taking on board best practice and questions asked by government bodies when they produce questionnaires and surveys.
11. At the front of the set of questions, there is :

- a. an explanation of why we gather this information
 - b. the choice to opt-out of answering them. Supporting that opt-out explanation, all questions have as an option an answer that says “I prefer not to say”
 - c. an assurance about confidentiality.
12. In the case of surveys that the government is asking us to do, we shall accept the wording supplied. If necessary and appropriate, we shall add our own standard questions for strands that are not covered.
13. We recognise that while people are generally more used to supplying information about their age, gender, ethnicity and disability, they are not so used to supplying details about their sexual orientation or religion and belief. So we shall **not ask** questions about sexual orientation or religion and belief where:
- a. as a result of us asking this question:
 - i. distress to individuals may occur, because it is clear that the individuals will not be able to understand the question- even with help.
 - ii. previous experience has shown that the questions will substantially and adversely affect the response rate.
 - b. it is not relevant to the topic being discussed.
14. Where we have repeated contact with an individual, we shall not unnecessarily gather the information more than once.
15. As with other personal data, equality mapping information will be kept confidential.

Consultation

16. The deadline for comments about what is being proposed in this report, is 17:00 on 30 June 2009. Responses should be sent to the Corporate Equality and Inclusion Manager at City of York Council, The Guildhall, York YO1 9QN. Tel: 01904 551704, e-mail: equalities@york.gov.uk

Options

17. N/A

Analysis

18. N/A

Corporate Priorities

19. Undertaking equality mapping contributes to the Inclusive City and Effective Organisation priorities of the refreshed corporate strategy.

Implications

20. These are as follows:

- **Financial** – Costs will be included in the estimates of the total cost for surveys or questionnaires and will be found from within existing resources.
- **Human Resources (HR)** – Information collected about council staff will support inclusive policy and practice in HR.
- **Equalities** - Equality mapping is a requirement of council equality strategies and schemes and helps the council meet the Duties arising from equality legislation.
- **Legal** – Equality mapping is a requirement under equality legislation.
- **Crime and Disorder** - None
- **Information Technology (IT)** - None
- **Property** - None
- **Other** - None

Risk Management

21. Undertaking equality mapping helps the Council manage the risk of:

- a. offering services that do not meet the needs of people protected by equalities legislation.
- b. not meeting the requirements of bodies that inspect it, including meeting the requirements of the Equality Framework for local government.

Recommendations

22. SIWG members are requested to:

- a. Note the report

- b. Let the Equality and Inclusion Manager have their comments on what is being proposed by 17:00 on 30 June 2009. Comments about the questions that we propose to use found in Annex 1 of this report, will be particularly welcome.

Reason: To consult on when and how Council proposes to collect information about people protected by equality legislation

Contact Details

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**Chief Officer Responsible for the
report: Quentin Baker**

**Report
Approved** **Date**

Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background papers – None

Annexes – Annex 1: About Yourself

Annex 1: About Yourself

We use the following information to make sure that we are taking everyone's views into account and that everyone is treated fairly. You don't have to answer these questions, but it will be helpful if you do. As with all the other questions, the information you provide will be treated as confidential and will not be passed on to other organisations. Thank you for your time and input.

Q1 What is your age?(TICK ONE BOX ONLY ✓)

- 16 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 59
- 60 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 to 84
- 85 +
- Prefer not to say.....

Q2 What is your gender? (TICK ONE BOX ONLY ✓)

- Male.....
- Female
- Trans male.....
- Trans female.....
- Prefer not to say.....

Q3 Are you a disabled person? (TICK ONE BOX ONLY ✓)

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) defines a person as disabled if they have a mental physical or learning impairment, which has a substantial and long- term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. " Long term" means has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months.

Yes

No.....

Prefer not to say.....

Q4 What is your ethnic group? (**TICK ONE BOX ONLY ✓**)

White

British

Irish.....

Any other White background
(please tick & write in)

Mixed

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian.....

Any other mixed background
(please tick & write in)

Asian or Asian British

Indian.....

Pakistani

Bangladeshi.....

Any other Asian background
(please tick & write in)

Black or Black British

Caribbean

African

Any other Black background
(please tick & write in).....

Chinese or other

Chinese

Any other ethnic group
(please tick & write in)

Prefer not to say

Q5 How would you describe your sexual orientation? (**TICK ONE BOX ONLY**

✓)

- Heterosexual.....
- Gay man.....
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other (please tick & write in)
-
- Prefer not to say.....

Q6 What is your religion or belief? **(TICK ONE BOX ONLY ✓)**

- None1
- Christian (all denominations) 2
- Buddhist3
- Hindu.....4
- Jewish.....5
- Muslim.....6
- Sikh.....7
- Other (please tick & write) 8
-
- Prefer not to say.....9