

Equality Review 2006/07

1. Introduction

It has been an excellent year for equalities in Dartford. The Council has introduced a number of systems through which we can begin to monitor how our services are being received and embed equalities across all Council departments. We have achieved the targets we set for ourselves in the Corporate Equality and Race Equality Action Plan and will review how these achievements can be taken forward and the effect that our actions have had.

2. Summary of Achievements

Leadership and Corporate Commitment

- The Equality Steering Group has continued to meet on a regular basis to discuss equality updates, new initiatives, completed impact assessments and identify areas for development. Invitations to members of the Assessment Team were sent out by the Managing Director.
- The Council website www.dartford.gov.uk/equality now has all the adopted equality policies and completed impact assessment published on it.
- The Equality Steering Group has overseen the creation of the Corporate Monitoring Team, a group which has created a mechanism for coordinating and creating monitoring systems across the Council. The Corporate Monitoring Team is chaired by a member of the Equality Steering Group.
- All equality actions are performance managed corporately through the Council's system Covalent, so that all managers can monitor the progress of their equality actions and show how they have achieved their objectives.

Consultation and Community Development

- The Policy Officer and other Council officers have attended several events organized by partners in the voluntary sector with the aim of engaging with all parts of the community and considering how services could better meet the needs of different equality groups. These included;
 - The Dartford Mela – information stall
 - The Diversity of Cultures Open Day at the Milan Day Centre

- The Dartford Partnership for people with learning disabilities – information stall
 - Conference on people from the BME community with learning disabilities
 - Conference ‘The Experience of BME Communities Accessing Statutory Services’
 - Kent BME Network Focus Group
- In addition, the Council has worked in partnership to establish the Dartford and Gravesham Disability Equality Reference Group.
 - Internally, the Staff Consultative Group have been involved in discussions about the equality policies.
 - There is a corporate standard strap line advertising the availability of Council information in other languages upon request.
 - We are constantly engaged with children and young people and older people through the Council’s Youth Forum and Elder Forum.

Service Delivery and Customer Care

- The Equality Assessment Team was set up and officers from many service areas across the Council continue to complete Equality Impact Assessments for their policies and functions. So far, assessments have been completed for Concessionary Fares, Customer Services, Benefit Take Up Policy, Communications, Housing Strategy, Homelessness Strategy, Discretionary Housing Payment Policy and Backdate Policy, Council Tax – Bailiff Policy, HR Training and Development Policy, Housing Option and Advice.
- The following services are due to complete assessments in April 2007; Legal Services, The Orchard Theatre, Planning Policy, Community Safety, Parking Services, Environmental Health, Planning, Project Delivery.
- In addition, a number of initiatives have been introduced which are designed to improve the experience of all our customers and enable us to obtain more information about individual needs. These include amongst others;
 - The introduction of equality monitoring in several areas including customer complaints and customer satisfaction surveys
 - The introduction of Tynetalk and a fully accessible reception as part of the contact centre development
 - Housing Maintenance and Repairs – Procedure for Working with Vulnerable Women

- New Council website which is fully accessible for disabled people
- The Council has also decided to embark on a major project with DisabledGO which will result in the creation of a website containing information about the accessibility of various venues, shops, hotels, restaurants etc across the borough, which can be accessed by disabled people.

Employment and Training

- All staff have been provided with equality training in February and March 2007.
- An Equal Pay Review was conducted which demonstrates that the Council's pay structure is fair and open and does not discriminate.
- An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out for HR, which took into consideration all HR policies.

Corporate Equality Action Plan

| | Objective | Action | Completion Date | Update 2006/07 |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---------------------|--|
| 1. CITIZENSHIP AND COMMUNITY | | | | |
| 1.1 | Ensure the Comprehensive Equality Policy and Corporate Equality Action Plan has been endorsed by Council staff and the local community. | Consult on the draft Corporate Equality Action Plan and Comprehensive Equality Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with Council staff, the wider community and stakeholders • Publish in full range of formats and languages | July 2006 - ongoing | Consultation undertaken with community groups, staff consultative group, service managers. |
| 1.2 | Obtain information on how services are perceived by service users and users' experiences of equality and diversity at Dartford. | Engage in consultation with Members, staff and the community on; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's service delivery (within departments) • Impact Assessments | July 2006 – ongoing | As above. Consultation also taken place with staff through the Corporate Monitoring Team. |
| 1.3 | Promote active engagement with community groups and inclusive participation in policy formulation. | Review the DBC consultation strategy with a view to developing strategies for communicating and consulting with disadvantaged and minority groups | August 2006 | |

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| 3. LEISURE TIME | | | | |
| 3.1 | Increase understanding of the equality profile of audiences at The Orchard Theatre. | Incorporate ethnic monitoring into the annual user survey. | September 2006 | Survey completed. |
| 4. ENVIRONMENT | | | | |
| 4.3 | Ensure market pitches are awarded without discrimination and that market customers are treated without discrimination. | Review the procedure for market pitch allocation and traders' code of conduct. | March 2007 | Review underway. To be partially implemented by amendments to Traders Permit conditions – programmed Feb to Mar 2007. |
| 5. HOUSING | | | | |
| 5.1 | Ensure that the Choice Based Lettings policy is being implemented in a non-discriminatory manner. | Monitor the effect of Choice Based Lettings on disadvantaged groups within the Borough. | March 2007 | Complete |
| 5.2 | Ensure the Housing Services Equal Opportunity Policy is in line with current equality legislation and best practice. | Re-write the Housing Services Equal Opportunity Policy, taking into account the recommendations from the Audit Commission inspection. | August 2006 | Draft completed |

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| 6. QUALITY SERVICES | | | | |
| 6.1 | Establish the Council's current achievement in equality and diversity and identify areas in need of further development. | <p>Services engage in equality self assessment, scrutiny and audit through;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact Assessment and assessing achievement through the Assessment Team • Monitoring progress through Member and Management scrutiny, covalent and Best Value audit | ongoing | Second round of impact assessments underway. Regular monitoring takes place through Equality Steering Group meeting and Member Champion. All equality plans monitored through covalent |
| 6.2 | Ascertain whether Council services are experienced differently by minority or disadvantaged groups and take appropriate action if they are. | Develop a corporate information and monitoring systems planning group to monitor service delivery across all equality strands. | July 2006 | Corporate Monitoring Team established. |

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| 6.3 | Embed principles of equality and diversity into council services in a co-ordinated manner. | Develop service level equality objectives and targets and integrate them into service plans. | August 2006 | Actions from the first round of impact assessments have been incorporated into equality plans or are monitored by service managers on an individual basis. |
| 7. CORPORATE HEALTH | | | | |
| 7.1 | Monitor and scrutinise equality objectives and ensure that the Steering Group have input into the process. | Create a corporate toolkit for the assessment of service level equality objectives | July 2006 – ongoing | Equality objectives monitored through covalent. Objectives assessed by Assessment Team and Steering Group. |
| 7.2 | Ensure the Comprehensive Equality Policy is integrated into the Council's partnership arrangements. | Incorporate equality objectives into partnership arrangements and circulate draft policy documents to partners. | July 2006 - ongoing | Equality statement in youth strategy and compact with voluntary sector. |

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| 7.3 | Establish a publicly accessible equality plan which has been amended in the light of consultation. Establish a long term strategy for the publication of information. | Publish; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Corporate Equality Action Plan on DBC website • Results of impact assessments, consultations and monitoring • Annual review of Corporate Equality Action Plan | August 2006 | All published on www.dartford.gov.uk/equality |
| 7.4 | Ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 | Draft a Disability Equality Scheme for publication in December 2006 Begin compiling an up to date database of stakeholders for consultation | Ongoing | Complete. |
| 7.5 | Ensure staff are confident of all the service areas where equality issues can arise. | Review Staff Handbook and update the equality section to include information and guidance on race and disability. | July 2006 | Complete. |
| 7.6 | Ensure the workforce broadly reflects the local population and that the Council meets its duties under the Equal Pay Act. | Engage in workforce profiling and equal pay review and annually publish the results of employment monitoring. | September 2006 | Monitoring to be included in year end report to cabinet. |
| 7.7 | A workforce that understands the duty to promote good relations between all groups and eliminates discrimination. | Implement equality training, both generic and dedicated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the objectives of this plan and service plans | August 2006 | Complete. |

Race Equality Scheme

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| 8. ASSESSING OUR POLICIES AND FUNCTIONS | | | | |
| 8.2 | Establish a methodical, rigorous approach to race equality impact assessment, ensuring all new policies have addressed the issue of race equality. | Review the procedure for assessing and consulting on proposed policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include different methods such as research findings, survey results, and population data. | August 2006 | Completed as part of the Equality Impact Assessment Process |
| 9. MONITORING OUR POLICIES | | | | |
| 9.1 | Determine whether Council policies are perceived to have a different or unequal impact on different racial groups. | Monitor ethnic minority views and experiences of Council services, functions and policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider methods such as an anonymous survey | July 2006 | Equality monitoring has been introduced on a number of customer satisfaction surveys (i.e. in housing and for the Orchard Theatre). |
| 9.2 | Establish a comprehensive monitoring system which can be applied to all new and existing Council policies. | Monitor all policies relevant to the general duty for adverse impact on race equality, using the newly established monitoring group. | March 2007 | System established on Covalent for recording monitoring information. |
| 9.3 | Identify any patterns of inequality in dealing with complaints and increase confidence in reporting any racial incidents for both residents and staff. | Monitor and record the number of complaints made by people of ethnic minority origin, including racial incidents. | ongoing | Monitoring information contained in a report to A and S 28.2.07 |

| | Objective | Action | /Completion Date | Update 2006/07 |
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| 10. CONSULTING WITH OUR COMMUNITY | | | | |
| 10.1 | Ensure active engagement with the ethnic minority community in consultation on the revised Race Equality Scheme and Impact Assessments. | Establish and implement a procedure for regular consultation with the ethnic minority community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include group leaders and REC • Provide consultations in alternative languages | July 2006 | Part of Kent BME network, attend conferences etc through REC. Race equality groups have been included in consultation. All Council documents are now available in alternative languages and formats upon request. |
| 11. PUBLISHING THE RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT, CONSULTATION AND MONITORING | | | | |
| 11.1 | Inform ethnic minority groups, the wider community and staff of the Council's progress on equalities. Create a long term strategy for the on-going publication of information relating to race equality. | Publish on the DBC internet website and intranet; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The progress of the Race Equality Scheme (annual review) • The results of impact assessments, consultations and monitoring (every six months) | August 2006 - ongoing | Complete. Consultation results will be published in due course. |

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| 12. ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES | | | | |
| 12.1 | Ensure equal access to Council information and services for all residents. | Review access to service information in alternative formats and languages and investigate access through the new customer contact centre | September 2006 | Corporate procedures in place. |
| 13. TRAINING OUR STAFF | | | | |
| 13.1 | Ensure the workforce understands the general and specific duties under the RRA Act 2000 and how to implement the Race Equality Scheme in everyday work. | Instigate a training programme for all staff to be trained on the race equality duty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate into other equality training programmes | November 2006 | Training took place in February and March 2007. |
| 14. EMPLOYMENT | | | | |
| 14.1 | Ensure there is no disparity in the way in which employees are treated with regard to ethnicity and that the Council promotes a non-discriminatory stance. | Continue to monitor by reference to racial group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff in post • Staff who receive training • Outcomes of performance assessment • Involvement in disciplinary/ grievance procedures • Perception of equal opportunities • Applicants for employment / those who cease employment | November 2006 | 1. Complete and ongoing 2. Kiosk due to be launched in April 07. In meantime corporate training continues to be monitored. 3. Staff who move to market salary after successful probation or where progression is withheld, are monitored. 4. Complete and ongoing. 5. |

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