



**'All of Us'
Equality Scheme 2017- 20**

**Bracknell Forest – the borough of
opportunity for everyone**



**Making a difference: assessing the scheme's
impact 2017-18**

1. Introduction

Bracknell Forest Council Equality Scheme 2017-20

The [Bracknell Forest Equality Scheme](#) 2017-20 sets out what the council intends to achieve in terms of advancing equality and diversity and includes the council's equality objectives. The equality scheme has been linked to the service planning process for 2017-18 to ensure that the implementation of the equality objectives will be integrated, wherever possible into the mainstream delivery and monitoring of services across the council. This is the first annual monitoring report and will track progress in implementing the scheme.

Our vision, our commitment

Bracknell Forest is a thriving, welcoming and inclusive community. As our community grows and changes, Bracknell Forest Council is committed to ensuring no one is left behind, isolated or disadvantaged. We take great pride in our support for vulnerable groups and individuals: we want to make sure Bracknell Forest is a borough of opportunity for everyone.

At Bracknell Forest Council, we believe:

- reducing inequalities benefits everyone in the borough
- strengthening communities make for a better borough
- understanding and promoting diversity improves people's lives

2. Equality Scheme Objectives – highlights 2017-18

1. Access to our information, services and facilities is fair and equitable for everyone (Strategic theme 1, 3, 4)

Our ambition is for all of our information, services and facilities to be accessible to everyone. We will consider the different needs of people in all aspects of the planning and delivery of our services, facilities and information, and for reasonable adjustments to be made for people who need them. Highlights of work done in this area include:

- A review of leisure services as part of the council's Transformation Programme has led to a contract with [Everyone Active](#) from 1st March 2018 for Bracknell Leisure Centre, Coral Reef and Downshire Golf Complex. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was undertaken to ensure the needs of those with protected characteristics were taken into consideration during the selection process. The requirement to record equalities monitoring data was also included within the specification for the new operator. The contract ensures that community groups who use the leisure sites can continue under the same terms as previously offered. These include the Red Diamonds Sports Club (for people with disabilities) Activate GP Referral Scheme and Fit For Life programme (aimed at over 50s). Everyone Active has a robust and inclusive [Equality & Diversity Policy](#) which ensures equality and diversity training for all staff. They will communicate with under represented groups to make sure activities offered reflect the diversity and needs of the local community.

- The new public website has gone live, and has received positive feedback from customers. New online services launched including e-benefits, online bookings for bulky waste and online payments and bookings for parks and countryside events. The website is being used to promote take-up of the subscription-based email service and the number of online accounts has increased to 25,200. The council is working to ensure that the website is [accessible](#) to all and has been awarded [Shaw Trust Accessibility Accreditation](#).
- The council has been working with partners to coordinate opportunities for Digital Inclusion. Due to the work at the council's Time Square offices it was difficult to make progress on this during 2017-18 however the redesign of the public areas is now underway and this will include providing suitable space for supporting customers in developing digital skills.
- The Bracknell Forest Community Network works to support people with Mental Health needs and their carers and ensure they gain independence and access community resources. They work with the Bracknell Forest Mental Health Team, GP surgeries and community groups.

2. High levels of community cohesion are maintained (Strategic theme 6)

We aim to promote good relations between and within communities and for diversity to be respected and celebrated. We intend to maintain and build on our relationships with our diverse communities and collaborate across sectors to promote greater awareness and understanding. The 2017 Residents' Survey showed that 96% of people surveyed believe that people from different backgrounds get on well together in the borough. Work with key partnership continues to contribute to high levels of community cohesion in the borough:

- The Bracknell Forest Civilian Military Partnership is making good progress in implementing its action plan to ensure that members of the armed forces community face no disadvantage in accessing local services.
- The Community Cohesion and Engagement Partnership continues to monitor hate crime. Figures for 2017-18 show that there was no overall increase in hate crime in spite of terror attacks in London and Manchester.
- The Prevent Steering Group hold awareness raising workshops with education, faith and community groups to address issues around community cohesion.
- The Bracknell Forest Cultural Festival organised by involve with the support of Bracknell Forest Council. took place in March 2018 and is now an annual occasion. This colourful, active and diverse event brings together people from all walks of life throughout our community and shows the diversity and range of people living and working in Bracknell Forest.
<http://involve.community/news/cultural-festival-18/>

3. Gaps in outcomes for citizens are narrowed (Strategic themes 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)

We are aiming to narrow the gaps and diminish the differences between communities and individuals in terms of poverty, employment, health and well being, educational attainment and housing.

- We continue to monitor the effective use of the Pupil Premium grant and ensure high expectations for disadvantaged pupils. During 2017-18 three targeted schools received additional visits to ensure plans are effective and recommendations given. A Pan-Berkshire Pupil Premium Conference was held in June 2018.
- Work has continued to provide focused support for care leavers to enable access to appropriate education employment and training opportunities. At the end of March 2018 77% of care leavers were in a positive destination and although this is a high level, the aspiration is to reduce the gap in participation rates between care leavers and their peers. Going forward all care leavers will be in receipt of advice and support they need to ensure they can transition to their chosen destination.
- Supporting children and young people with English as an additional language. Assessments are carried out for new arrivals or where language barriers have been highlighted. Students regarded as complete beginner receive support from an EAL (English as Additional Language) teacher. Students can then prepare take IGCSE English as a First Language.

4. A positive, diverse and inclusive workforce is ensured and promoted (Strategic theme 1)

We are committed to having workforce policies and practices that do not discriminate. We provide equal opportunities for employees to progress and develop and are responsive to the needs of the workforce. We also ensure our workforce understands and supports our equality commitments.

- A staff survey took place in autumn 2017 and results were analysed by protected characteristic. Some younger staff (16 – 34 year olds) felt they had experienced discrimination due to their age and further follow up work will be carried out with younger members of staff including setting a network for younger staff.
- Annual work force monitoring takes place and is published annually. Staff are encouraged to self disclose personal information to increase the accuracy of data. Staff can now enter personal data via the new iWorks HR system which ensures confidentiality and should lead to increasing accuracy of workforce information.

3. Conclusions

The council has been successful in implementing the first year of the strategy. This can be seen from the key performance measures against which the success of the strategy has been judged. The Action Plan at Annex 1 shows 3 of the 35 actions are

already completed within the allocated timescale while 29 are in progress and ongoing as of April 2018.

There are three actions which remain Amber (possibility of the action falling behind schedule):

- Analyse the staff survey results by protected characteristics and follow up on any areas of concern. Further follow up work is required as some younger members of the workforce (aged 16-34) felt they had been discriminated against due to their age.
- Ensure effective use of Pupil Premium grant to close gaps in attainment - work continues to improve results in this area.
- Work with partners to coordinate opportunities for Digital Inclusion activities – this was difficult to progress during 2017-18 due to building works at Time Square.

The Residents' Survey 2017

The council's performance is also measured through testing residents' perceptions and the findings of the 2017 Residents' Survey should also be noted:

- The percentage of people who feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together in the borough has increased to 96% in the 2017 Residents Survey from 82% in 2008, 87% in 2012 and 94% in 2014
- The majority of residents, 88% percent, felt there was little problem with people not treating each other with respect within their local area; a minority of residents, 12% considered this to be a problem.

The findings continue to confirm that residents generally view Bracknell Forest as a good place to live and this view has strengthened slightly over time.

Although these figures are encouraging we appreciate families in Bracknell Forest are still experiencing financial hardship and we recognise national changes to the benefits system have placed additional pressure on some households; we will do our best to continue to provide advice and support to mitigate the impact of these changes.

Conclusion

The Council Plan was developed in November 2015, it outlines how the council is addressing the current financial challenges and those ahead whilst continuing to provide effective services for Bracknell Forest's residents, businesses and communities. The Plan included a commitment to review all council services through the Transformation Programme and a new narrative which underlines the council's commitment to reducing inequalities.

The Transformation Programme is ensuring that the needs of vulnerable people and families are prioritised when reviewing our services. The programme focuses on what gives value to customers and communities and where possible to eliminate that which is not necessary or valuable. Enabling people to help themselves - through various aspects of self service, online access and use of ICT technology - is a theme that is also being emphasised to focus resources where there is the greatest need.

We will seek to minimise the effect of the decisions we make about future service provision and consider all protected characteristics taking into account the Equality Act 2010. The council will publish an annual review on our progress in meeting these objectives. The equality objectives may be revised as a part of this annual review to take account of issues raised by the annual publication of our equality monitoring information. The council's Equality Sub Group will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of this equality scheme, reporting to the council's executive and the Community Cohesion and Engagement Partnership annually.