

**TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COUNCIL STRATEGY AND COMMUNITY
COHESION
21ST JANUARY 2015**

**EQUALITY INFORMATION PUBLICATION 2013-14
Director of Corporate Services**

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To brief the Executive Member for Council Strategy and Community Cohesion on the Council's equality monitoring information reports for 2013-14 attached at Annex one and two for publication.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **To endorse the Council's Equality Monitoring reports 2013-14, attached at Annex One and Two respectively, for publication on the Council's website by the end of January 2015.**

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 outline the specific duties that the Council are required to meet to demonstrate its compliance with its equality duties to have due regard to:
- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not
 - Fostering good relations between those with a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

These duties include publishing equality information annually by the end of January each year.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None.

5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 5.1 To assess whether Bracknell Forest Council's services are fulfilling the three equality duties, information on access, outcomes/ performance, and satisfaction have been analysed and reports produced for the following services:
- Adult Social Care
 - Housing Services and Housing Benefits
 - Children's Social Care
 - Community Safety
 - Customer Services
 - Economic Development
 - Education

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- Leisure Services
- Library Services

These service equality reports, which have been approved for publication by the relevant Directorate Management Teams, have been used to produce a Council wide services equality information report which is attached at Annex One. Following feedback after publication of last year's report the Council wide report has been substantially reduced to ensure it is more concise and accessible. A workforce monitoring report for 2013-14 has also been produced and is attached at Annex Two.

Services Equality Information Report 2013-14

5.2 The 2013-14 Council wide services equalities monitoring report shows that Bracknell Forest is making good progress in meeting the three Public Sector duties in the Equality Act 2010. In terms of eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation the report has highlighted the following strengths:

- The number of reported hate crimes in Bracknell Forest has fallen consistently over the last few years. Whilst the figures have risen slightly since 2012-13 (from 33 in 2012-13 to 54 in 2013-14) they are still low compared to the period 2009–2011. This recent increase could be because of increased awareness and reporting of hate crimes following a campaign to raise awareness in 2013-14.
- Similarly the number of racist incidents (recorded crime) is 46 which is an increase from the previous year (28) but still low compared to 2009–2011. Again this could be due to campaigns to raise awareness including the 'One Community: Stop Hate Crime Now' campaign, supported by the Council, Police and Voluntary Sector.
- The number of non-recordable racist incidents (i.e. racist incidents where there was no crime committed) has remained stable and has reduced for 2013-14 (down to from 27 in 2012-13 to 21 in 2013-14) despite increased diversity and new housing developments in Bracknell Forest.
- £100k was made available to address domestic abuse in 2013-14 in order to achieve three targets agreed by the Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Forum (DAF) including reducing the number of children on child protection plans where domestic abuse is a factor and to achieve the detection rate for domestic abuse assaults with injury.

In terms of advancing equality of opportunity, this report has highlighted the following strengths:

- The Council's work in partnership with other local organisations such as Bracknell Forest Homes, Involve (formerly Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action), and Bracknell and Wokingham Mencap has meant that many adults have engaged with learning who may not have done otherwise. There are a higher proportion of Asian adult learners than in the general Bracknell Forest population due to focussed projects such as 'Stronger Voices' funded by the

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European Integration Fund which provides learning opportunities for speakers of other languages.

- There are a higher proportion of adult learners in Bracknell Forest declaring a disability or learning difficulty (23.9%) compared to the estimated percentage of the population with a self-declared disability (10%). Indicating that there are a higher proportion of people with self-declared disability accessing adult learning.
- The proportion of the resident working age population who are in employment in Bracknell Forest is very high, with the area ranking in the top 20% of areas nationally. In Bracknell Forest, 81.6% of the resident working age population are in employment, compared with 78.4% in Berkshire and 71.7% nationally. (Source: Grant Thornton - Local Futures – Sept 2014).
- Bracknell Forest also ranks highly as having low unemployment rates amongst those of working age, as at the end of July 2014 only 1% were claiming job seekers allowance, compared with 1.2% in Berkshire and 2.4% nationally. (Source: Grant Thornton Local Futures – Sept 2014).
- Bracknell Forest has significantly fewer 16-24 year olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to the South East and the national average; 1.6% compared to 2.2% and 3.8% respectively.
- Early Years Foundation Stage results show that the gender gap between girls and boys has improved. In 2012-13 data showed that girls outperformed boys in all areas and the gender gap was 21% compared to the national gap of 16%. Improvements in 2014 have resulted in a gender gap of 16% which is now in line with national figures.
- The number of permanent exclusions from school in 2013-14 was extremely low as a result of schools having new ways to manage exclusions. Only one child was permanently excluded in 2013-14 (compared to 5 in 2012-13).
- Due to a new way of working in Adult Social Care people are now automatically assessed for short-term or reablement support first. These services are provided over a short period and help to maximise the individual's independence and ability to stay in their own homes. This may also reduce the need for a long-term package of care. As a result there has been a reduction of people ages 65 or over who have been assessed for long term support compared to the England average.
- To respond to the trend for downloading e-books and accessing online resources from Bracknell Forest libraries the amount of material available to download has increased. In 2012-13 there were 3722 e-books and e-audio books downloaded and this increased to 8016 in 2013-14.
- Overall there were a higher percentage of responses to the leisure services survey from BME groups - 27% compared to 13.8% in 2012-13.

In terms of fostering good relations, this report has highlighted the following strengths:

- Levels of hate crime can indicate how well people from different backgrounds get along together in the local area. Hate crime and racist incidents (recorded

crime) have increased slightly this year; however this may be due to awareness campaigns. The figures are still considerably lower than the last three years.

- The 'Healthy Voices' Project, funded by the European Integration Fund, has been successful in supporting the integration of the Nepali community in Bracknell Forest including through teaching English and a number of health related project activities. Project participants report being more confident in carrying out everyday tasks and having a better understanding of life in the UK. The project received a very positive full independent evaluation.

Services Equality Information Report 2012-13 – a review of progress

5.3 In the Council's 2012-13 services equalities monitoring report a number of recommendations were included to improve the Council's ability to demonstrate it is meeting the aims of the equality duty across all service areas. Below is a summary of the work done in 2013-14 to implement the recommendations in the 2012-13 report.

- Sandhurst Library was closed for two weeks in November 2013 to enable a complete refurbishment to take place. The new layout has improved wheelchair access and the children's area has been moved away from the external doors to make it safer.
- Employment opportunities for those with disabilities is something that the Council is striving to improve through awareness raising and use of the 'Two Ticks' symbol. This shows the Council encourages applications from people with disabilities by guaranteeing an interview to disabled candidates who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy. 2.3% (1.3% last year) of applicants who were successful in gaining employment with the Council this year were disabled (not including schools). As this is lower than the percentage of disabled applicants, further analysis will be undertaken this year. This will establish if there is any undue bias or if the applicants are simply not meeting person specifications and whether adaptations were being considered.
- The Council's Consultation Steering Group is exploring how to best engage with minority ethnic groups both through the Council's consultation portal and through other surveys. Involve (formerly BFVA) have a database which can be used to target BME groups and ask them how they would like to be engaged. One of the targets of the Council's 2014 Residents survey communications plan was improved response rates from BME communities.
- Bracknell Forest Community Safety Partnership promoted the Stop Hate UK facility and domestic abuse services in the borough by investing in a GP's Health Care Guide for users of health services.
- A number of projects are underway to achieve the Economic Development vision. A new Enterprise Hub was created in the town centre by converting some empty office space to provide a 'one stop shop' facility and services for business start-ups. The Hub is providing workshops and network events to improve the performance of small businesses as well as operating a drop in centre with a Business Club membership providing free internet connection and drinks.
- Work has already started to encourage people to start their own businesses, while Bracknell and Wokingham College offer courses on how to start a business.

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These developments should improve the employment prospects of all communities living in Bracknell Forest in the future.

Workforce Equality Information Report 2013-14

- 5.4 The workforce equality information report for 2013-14 attached at Annex Two has already been approved by the Council's Employment Committee for publication. The report summarises all of the Council's workforce equality information for 2013-14.

6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 Nothing to add.

Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 The analysis of this equality information and delivering on any subsequent identified actions, ensure that the Council is meeting its public sector equality duty.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 Effective equality monitoring reduces the risk of non-compliance with the Council's equality duties.

7 CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 The Council's Equality Group

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 By email and in meetings.

Representations Received

- 7.3 Incorporated into this report.

Background Papers

N/A

Contact for further information

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