

**TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR COUNCIL STRATEGY AND COMMUNITY  
COHESION  
26 JANUARY 2016**

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**EQUALITY INFORMATION PUBLICATION 2014-15  
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 2014-15 attached at Annex one and two for publication.

**2 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **To endorse the Council's Equality Monitoring reports 2014-15, 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

- 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. A workforce monitoring report for 2014-15 has also been produced and is attached at Annex Two.

Public Health - detailed information on access, outcomes/ performance and satisfaction will be analysed for this service area and a full report will be included next year.

### **Services Equality Information Report 2014-15**

- 5.2 The 2014-15 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. The 2014-15 level of hate crime is down quite considerably when compared with last year (down from 54 in 2013-14 to 31 in 2014-15). Bracknell Forest has the lowest number of reported hate crimes of the six Berkshire Unitary Authorities and there is now increased awareness and reporting of hate crimes following a campaign to raise awareness in the last couple of years.
- The Community Safety Partnership is working with Milton Keynes Racial Equality Council to raise awareness of hate crime both amongst professionals and the wider community. They will offer support to victims of hate crime, investigate cases and refer to the police or local authority for further action where necessary. Victims will be referred into local support services where ongoing support is required and free training will be provided to professionals in the borough. They will look to establish a network of community champions, establish third party reporting sites within the borough and carry out awareness raising activities within the local community.
- The number of racist incidents (recorded crime) is 28 which is a reduction from the previous year (46) but low compared to 2009–2011. 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 for 2014-15 (up slightly from 21 in 2013-14 to 24 in 2014-15) despite an increase in the size of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities and new housing developments in Bracknell Forest.

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

- There is a higher proportion of Asian adult learners than in the general Bracknell Forest population – 129 in total which is 8% of the population of adult learners as compared to 5% of the Bracknell Forest population. This is mainly due to focused projects, such as the European Integration Fund (EIF) which specifically funds learning opportunities for speakers of other languages, including English courses. In addition to the regular promotional mix (leaflets, web and emails), promotion to the BME population has proved most effective when conducted via community leaders, faith groups and via gatherings such as the English Language Café at the Open Learning Centre.
- There are a higher proportion of adult learners in Bracknell Forest declaring a disability or learning difficulty (24%) compared to the estimated percentage of the population with a self-declared disability (10%). This indicates that there are a higher proportion of people with self-declared disability accessing adult learning. This helps support our equality objective to improve recruitment, and employment opportunities for members of the community with disabilities.
- The proportion of the resident working age population who are in employment in Bracknell Forest is very high. Figures from March 2015 show 80.2% of the residents of working age population in Bracknell Forest are in employment, compared with 77.6% in Berkshire and 74.1 nationally. (Source: Office for National Statistics).
- Bracknell Forest also ranks highly as having low unemployment rates amongst those of working age. At the end of June 2015 only 0.8% were claiming job seekers allowance, compared with 1.0% in Berkshire and 1.8% nationally. (Source: Office for National Statistics).
- The proportion of unemployed people in Bracknell Forest who are defined as being in Long Term Unemployment is very low. In June 2015 only 14.05% of people claiming job seekers allowance have done so for at least 12 months, compared with 18.8% across the other Berkshire unitary authorities and 27.6% nationally.
- 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. The percentage of NEETs in the borough has reduced from 4.3% in 2014 to 3.77% as compared to 11.7% in the South East and 13.6% nationally.
- The gap between the attainment of children who receive additional funding (Pupil Premium Gap) and children who do not receive the extra funding has closed by 2% to 20% at the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are some improvements in maths at Key Stage 1 but further work will be done to achieve the target for the academic year 2014–2015. At Key Stage 2 and 4 there has been improvement in closing the Pupil Premium Gap with significant reductions being made (from 26.2% to 21.8% at KS2 and from 34% to 27.2% at KS4).
- The number of permanent exclusions from school in 2014-15 was extremely low as a result of schools having new ways to manage exclusions. Only two children were permanently excluded in 2014-15.

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- 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. There were 3722 e-books and e-audio books downloaded in 2012-13 and 8016 in 2013-14 and this has now gone up 11,258 in 2014-15.

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

- Over 6 weeks in autumn 2014 the independent company QA Research contacted more than 1,800 people from across Bracknell Forest. The aim of the survey was to gather the views of a representative number of Bracknell Forest residents on a variety of issues relating to the council as well as attitudes towards Bracknell Forest as a place to live and work. Residents agreed that there was strong community cohesion in their local area, and the proportion agreeing that people from different backgrounds get on well together where they live has increased significantly since 2012 (87% to 94%). There was also a low level of disagreement that people in the respondents' local area treated each other with respect and consideration, a slight decrease from 2012 (14% to 13%).
- The 'Stronger Voices' Project, funded by the European Integration Fund (at a total cost of £151,000), has been successful in supporting the integration of Nepali and other non EU immigrants in Bracknell Forest including through teaching English and integrating this teaching with employment skills like CV writing and ICT. A number of health related project activities along with cultural visits were also included. Project participants report being more confident in carrying out everyday tasks and having a better understanding of life in the UK and better integration. 113 learners attended ESOL classes against a target of 90 and 3 volunteer led ESOL sessions were run over the lifetime of the project assisting 30 eligible recipients. Over 80 people were enrolled in Skilled for Health Classes during the lifetime of the project – this is twice as many as the target of 40. Health trainers signposted 25 people to health and wellbeing services and activities and increased their understanding of primary care prevention programmes available.

### **Services Equality Information Report 2013-14 – a review of progress**

5.3 In the Council's 2013-14 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 2014-15 to implement the recommendations in the 2013-14 report.

- Due to the fall in the number of benefits claims recorded at the end of 2013-14 compared with those recorded for 2012-13 for those classed as having a disability or long term illness; the Benefits Service recommendation was to monitor this during 2014-15 and to investigate any data when available from the Department for Work and Pensions. In June 2013 the Disability Living Allowance was replaced by Personal Independence Payment. A backlog of cases at the Department of Work & Pensions meant that some customers had to wait up to nine months to find out if they were eligible for benefit. This may have contributed to the decrease in the number recorded in 2013-14. However, this year's report shows that the number has increased and is again in line with 2012-13 data.
- Adult Social Care Services have faced many changes in 2014-15 with the introduction of the Care Act 2014, along with new statutory reporting

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requirements. This has meant, since data has not yet been published, that full analysis against England averages (which often show more accurate trends in this service area than by just analysing the local population) has not been possible. In most cases this will be available for the 2015-16 monitoring report.

- The Customer Services satisfaction survey 2014-15 was made available on-line. There was an increase in the number of respondents in 2014-15 to 209 compared with 73 in 2013-14. In previous years the survey has predominately covered satisfaction with customers contacting Customer Services by telephone. Last year the survey was extended to other communication channels used by customers, i.e. visiting the Council's Time Square reception in person, emailing and using the council's website. Whilst the sample size is relatively low for this survey, overall satisfaction is high and there are no significant differences relating to the various equalities groups.
- Following the 2013-14 leisure monitoring report, discussions were held about making the equality monitoring data more representative across the leisure services department so that more than one site was analysed. Therefore the data sources for this year's report includes survey results from three of Bracknell Forest Council's leisure sites (Coral Reef Water World, The Look Out Discovery Centre and Bracknell Leisure Centre) which enabled us to analyse a much greater sample regarding the delivery of our leisure services. Coral Reef will close for around twelve months from early 2016 to enable significant improvement works to be undertaken. When Coral Reef has re-opened in 2017 a more in-depth survey will be planned to see if there are still issues with poor satisfaction from a minority of older, disabled and BME customers. If that continues to be the case an action plan will then be developed to follow up any issues.
- £100k was invested by the Council to address domestic abuse (DA) in 2014-15. The intention was to achieve 3 targets agreed by the Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse Forum (DAF):
  - Reduce the number of reported criminal offences committed by the Domestic Abuse Service Co-ordination (DASC) cohorts
  - Reduce the number of children on Child Protection Plans (CPPs) where DA is a factor and the perpetrator has participated in the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Service (DAPS) programmeAchieve the detection rate for DA assaults with injury. This target is no longer appropriate as during 2014/15 Thames Valley Police changed their methodology for measuring the 'end result' in domestic abuse cases. Previously 'detection rates' were measured, with targets set to increase the detection rates. The measurement now is recorded in terms of successful 'outcome rates'<sup>1</sup> as a percentage of the total number of crimes in that period and as such comparisons to previous years are unreliable. The successful outcome rate for Domestic Abuse Assaults with Injury in 2014/15 in Bracknell Forest was 33.2%. This figure shows better outcome rates than the average for the Thames Valley Police area.

<sup>1</sup> A successful outcome is defined by Thames Valley Police as where an offence that has been resolved where a suspect has been either charged, cautioned, issued a fixed penalty notice, there has been a community resolution, where the suspect has requested that the offence be taken into consideration at court, the suspect is deceased or CPS have decided it is not in the public interest to prosecute the suspect

Following discussions with partners in the Community Safety Partnership, it was decided that the targets above should reflect the cohorts being worked with, as opposed to aiming to achieve widespread overall reductions. This approach to reducing the harm caused by DA is the subject of an evaluation by Cambridge University who presented their initial evaluation findings in January 2015. The report shows encouraging results for the programme in terms of reducing levels of harm to victims of DA. Recommendations are to increase the cohort size and monitor the long term impact of the programme over a 2 year period, both of which have been accepted by the Community Safety Partnership.

### **Workforce Equality Information Report 2014-15**

- 5.4 The workforce equality information report for 2014-15 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 2014-15.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The relevant legal issues are addressed within the report.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 Nothing to add to the 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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