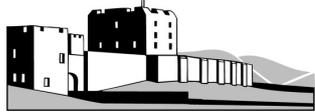


**CARLISLE
CITY COUNCIL**



www.carlisle.gov.uk

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Panel Report

Public

Date of Meeting: 6th October 2011

Title: Reporting on equalities

Report of: Policy and Communications Manager

Report reference: PPP 15/11

Summary: This report provides an update on the changes in Public Duty and an outline of the current approach.

Questions for / input required from Scrutiny:

1. Members are invited to consider and comment upon the need for ongoing reporting and the content of a future report.

Contact Officer: Steven O'Keeffe

Ext: 7258

1. Introduction

The last report to the panel on equalities was at the February panel with an amendment to the Comprehensive Equalities Scheme. The purpose of this report is to identify the topics that the panel would like covered in a report for the January panel. The approach to equalities has changed at a local national and local level. The main changes are presented in this report.

2. Legislation

The public sector Equality Duty came into force across Great Britain on 5 April 2011 and Specific Duties Regulations came into force in September 2011.

*'The objective behind the duty is to ensure that consideration of equality issues forms part of the routine, day-to-day decision making and operational delivery of public authorities, and the purpose of the specific duties is to ensure better performance of the duty. The specific duties will therefore be imposed on almost all of the public authorities subject to the duty. The only exceptions are a few very small organisations for which the imposition of the specific duties would not be proportionate or sensible. These include parish meetings, local waste and drainage bodies, and some professional regulatory bodies.'*¹

The General Duty – in the exercise of all functions the Council must have 'due regard' :

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Specific Duties – in the exercise of the General Duty the Council must have 'due regard' to:

- Publishing sufficient information to demonstrate compliance with the general duty across all functions. (Deadline is 31st January 2012)
- Preparing and publishing Equality Objectives (Deadline is 6th April 2012)
- Publication of actions to meet the Equality Duty

The purpose of the deadlines is to ensure that the public and have an opportunity to review the evidence before the authority sets objectives. There are two months

¹ EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM TO THE EQUALITY ACT 2010 (SPECIFIC DUTIES) REGULATIONS 2011
2011 No. 2260

available between publishing the evidence and setting objectives during which we would encourage informed feedback and suggestions on possible objectives. Once published, we are expected to update these objectives every four years.

The authority's current objectives and action plan have been developed from the recommendations in the Diversity Peer Challenge Report.

3. Organisation

Regionally, the **North West Employers** continue to run training events and an annual award scheme. Carlisle along with all the local authorities in Cumbria are receiving an award for the 'Achieving Equality in Cumbria Project' on 30th September 2011. This project supported all the districts to reaching the achieving level of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

The **Achieving Equality In Cumbria Steering Group** continues to meet; its purpose is under review now that the project has ended.

Locally, the **Cumbria Equality Partnership** is being brought to an end. The current proposal is:

- That the Cumbria Equality and Diversity Partnership reinvent itself as a virtual network.
- The CEDP is made up of Equality leads for organisations that have responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, or are commissioned to provide activities that would come under the Duty.
- That the County Council hosts the CEDP on its Equality pages and updates developments.
- Members of the CEDP can raise issues that they want to work on and that members of the group are sent an alert and can respond if they are interested in developing a working or project group on an issue.

The Carlisle Equality and Diversity Partnership is made up of 25 members representing the public and voluntary sectors. The group seeks to raise awareness and encourage greater partnership and co-operative working between voluntary, statutory and community groups. Officers from the Chief Executive's Team and the Economic Development Team have been involved with the group since its inception.

The internal **Corporate Equality Group** has continued to meet on a bimonthly basis to discuss the changes in approach and local issues. This group is attended by the officer Equality Champion, Acting Chief Executive Jason Gooding and the Portfolio Holder, Councillor Jacquelyne Geddes.

The **Consortium** of OutReach Cumbria, Cumbria Disability Network and AWAZ continues to be funded by authorities. This funding is covered by a COMPACT agreement.

4. Processes

The duty is in keeping with the Government's broader approach to the public sector, to reduce bureaucracy and increase transparency. The act does not prescribe Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) or an Equality Scheme.

We have maintained a leaner, thematic set of impact assessments for our service areas and policies. We are transferring this information onto the website as a way of demonstrating compliance with the general duty.

We are continuing to screen key decision for impacts on the protected characteristics; these are published as part of the Executive papers through the CMIS System. Scrutiny plays an important role in monitoring this screening and challenging any assumptions.

The emphasis is upon real equality outcomes for citizens rather than a bureaucratic exercise of compliance.

5. Local needs

We are collaborating with all the local authorities in Cumbria to review our approach to equalities. This will be based on local needs of Carlisle. It is likely to include:

- Hate crimes and incidences
- Demographics data and trends, migration and growth of student population
- Workforce Profile and comparison to local demographics