

Appendix B



Central  
Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire Council

# Single Equality and Diversity Scheme Sections 1-6

Draft as at April 2010



## **Foreword**

Promoting equality of opportunity is all about making life better for all our residents, especially the most vulnerable people living in our communities, such as older or disabled people, carers, people with low levels of literacy, people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage or people living in the most rural parts of Central Bedfordshire.

It's about ensuring that everything we do in local government is accessible to everyone, no matter what their life experience or situation is. It requires us to recognize that different people experience the same situation differently and that we must remove the barriers which can stop people accessing the services they need.

These issues affect every ward, across Central Bedfordshire and members have a vital role to play in engaging local communities and championing their needs. As well as representing a number of different communities within the geographic boundaries of their wards, Members also represent individual residents who have diverse identities (age, gender, ethnicity etc). We all have a duty to learn about our residents' needs and their experiences of council services and to support everyone to achieve their full potential.

This Single Equality and Diversity Scheme demonstrates our commitment as community leaders, service providers and as an employer to ensuring that equality and diversity is at the heart of all that we do, for local people, our employees, our partners, and the community at large. The Scheme sets out our overall strategy, identifies key issues and includes our plan of action for the next three years (2010 - 13).

We want our Scheme to influence and inform the way we deliver services and work with partners, how we develop policies and how we treat our employees. The success of this Scheme will need active contributions from elected members, all managers and employees. Similarly, importantly will be the contribution and support from our many partners and stakeholders.

**Councillor Richard Stay**  
**Deputy Leader**  
**Central Bedfordshire Council**

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## 1. Introduction

Promoting equality of opportunity is all about making life better for all our residents, especially some of the most vulnerable people living in our communities, such as older or disabled people, carers, people with low levels of literacy and people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. It requires a focus on:

- ensuring that everything we do in local government is accessible to everyone
- recognising that people can experience the same situation differently.
- identifying and removing the barriers which stop people accessing services.

These issues affect every ward, across Central Bedfordshire and Members have a vital role to play in engaging local communities and championing their needs.

Equality is not about treating everyone the same, it means recognising the differences in life situations or experiences and ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all people, taking their needs into account. This definition recognises that:

- equality is an issue for everyone;
- we don't all start from the same position and to create a fairer society we must recognise different needs

Equality of opportunity is about:

- treating people with dignity and respect.
- accepting people as individuals and addressing the needs of individuals or groups.
- knowing who uses (or should use) different services and designing them round what is needed.
- enabling all people to apply for, get jobs and to progress on merit.

We recognise that promoting equality is essential for individuals to fulfill their potential, for the creation of a cohesive society and for a prosperous and strong economy.

This Single Equality and Diversity Scheme underpins the Council's Strategic Plan and sets out the Council's vision and approach to ensuring that all sections of the community receive high quality services which are appropriate to their needs. The Scheme demonstrates how we will meet our legal responsibilities to ensure equality and diversity is integrated into our service planning and delivery systems.

The Scheme also places a strong emphasis on promoting the welfare of our employees by keeping the workplace free from harassment, bullying and all other forms of discrimination.

It informs employees, elected members and all those who work for, or on behalf of the Council, of Central Bedfordshire's approach to equality and diversity and how the Council will act to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity and improve access to services and employment
- promote good relations between all people, irrespective of their race, and promote community cohesion
- eliminate harassment of disabled and other persons
- promote positive attitudes
- encourage participation of under represented groups in public life

- take steps to take account of disabled person's disabilities even where that involves treating disabled person more favourably.

Our commitment to equality in our service delivery and in our employment practices means that we value diversity and recognise the importance of inclusion and the need to challenge discrimination in any shape or form. The Scheme is relevant to all our residents, members, employees, partners and those who are contracted to work for the Council and those who visit or work in Central Bedfordshire.

## 2. Our Vision for Central Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire Council's vision is to "improve the quality of life of all in Central Bedfordshire, and enhance the unique character of our communities and our environment". The Council must deliver a range of services to its customers in a manner that meets their individual needs and provides consistent value for money. These services must be relevant, inclusive, well delivered and cost effective. In order to deliver such services the Council must transform the shape of its services by "engaging" its customers in service design and in the way that services are delivered.

This involves "putting the customer at the heart of everything the Council does", meeting real needs and not assuming that customers should 'fit' with existing service provision. Improving the level of involvement of local people and other key stakeholders is key to transforming public services.

All sections of the community including overlooked, vulnerable and minority groups must be involved. The Council must:

- recognise and understand the diversity of all its customers;
- consider their needs; and
- provide services which are appropriate both in content and in terms of the ways they are delivered.

We believe that tackling inequalities is critical if the Council is to be successful in delivering services in such a way that people whose circumstances make them vulnerable are not disadvantaged and that they are supported and encouraged to achieve their full potential.

Narrowing the equality gap requires an awareness of the needs and interests of people who are at greater risk of lower quality of life outcomes. This includes assessing how well matched services are to needs and the means available to people to influence decision making and service delivery.

Promoting equality of opportunity is about recognising people's different needs, situations and goals, and working to remove the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.

This requires a focus on four key areas of activity:

- **consultation** – asking customers what services are required, and how they should be designed and delivered in order to develop a better understanding of need that is translated into a plan for action.
- **access** – ensuring that customers are able to access services in a manner that suits their individual needs.

- **culture** – creating a professional and supportive environment which empowers employees to put the customer at the heart of everything they do and promotes the welfare and development of all employees.
- **communication** – ensuring the Council provides information to customers that will support and develop their understanding of the services and opportunities that are available to them.

### 3. Legislation and Strategic Drivers

Equality is not just an end in itself. It is also a vehicle for delivering improvement. It is important to take equality/diversity issues into account because they are vital ingredients to improving both the effectiveness and the efficiency of public services by helping to ensure that the resources invested in public services actually benefit all those they are aimed at or who need them. In addition, making services appropriate and accessible to specific groups of people can offer benefits to the general population, for instance improving access for disabled people generally benefits everyone.

Achieving customer satisfaction across all sections of the community must be key to delivering excellent services. The Council must act on customer intelligence, best practice reviews and other processes to review the shape and design of services and ensure that barriers to social inclusion are identified and removed.

Society is increasingly diverse, and everyone experiences life in different ways, for many different reasons. Prosperity and cohesion of all communities are affected by differences in identity. Social mobility, migration and other socio-economic factors affect all councils.

Equality also encompasses some of the most vulnerable groups in society (e.g. looked after children and ex-offenders). Other groups, such as people with learning disabilities and Gypsies and Travellers, are already protected by equality legislation, but some authorities still fail to see these groups as part of the equality picture.

The generic definition of equality aims to encourage authorities to consider the full range of equality issues, for example, addressing educational attainment of white working class boys as well as poorly performing boys from African-Caribbean communities.

The prosperity and cohesion of communities are affected by the impact of different needs and identities: age, gender, disability and sexual orientation all affect individuals' experiences in life. In addition, socio-economic status, poverty and migration also impact upon people's experiences of life. Addressing inequality helps to support all people in local communities.

Equality is not about accepting extreme or unrealistic expectations, it is about ensuring that everything we do in local government is accessible to everyone, no matter what their life experience or situation. Understanding the issues means accepting that different people experience the same situation differently. For example, a community meeting may be attended by thirty people, but because there is no sign language interpreter, the Council may never hear the views of deaf people in the area.

**Appendix 1** provides information about the types of inequality experienced by different groups. **Appendix 2** provides a summary of local consultation findings relating to equality.

There is a wide range of regulatory frameworks to promote equality and anti-discrimination in public sector services – from legal compliance with EU directives and national legislation, to the influence of Local Government Standards. This includes for example the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which imposes a general duty on the Council to promote racial equality. This duty applies to jobs, training, housing, education and the provision of goods, facilities and services. The Act makes it unlawful for public bodies to discriminate while carrying out any of their functions.

Similar legislation in the areas of age, carers, disability, gender, gender reassignment, religion and belief and sexual orientation, also place a range of statutory duties on local authorities. **Appendix 3** of this Scheme provides a summary of this legislation.

The Council will adopt the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) to ensure equality and fairness becomes an integral part of service provision and employment functions and that effective auditing and monitoring procedures are in place. The new framework is aimed at helping local authorities to:

- improve the services they provide so that are more representative, relevant and efficient, whilst also improving satisfaction and trust;
- ensure that policies and strategies deliver for everyone and improve accountability to local people; and
- combat inequalities and avoid expensive litigation as a consequence of discrimination.

Failure to comply with equality legislation can expose local authorities to the risk of litigation and scrutiny by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and the Audit Commission. Individuals can also take action under these statutory provisions through tribunals, and the European Court for Human Rights. **Appendix 4** provides details of the types of behaviour and activity that can potentially be deemed to be discriminatory and the responsibility of every individual to behave in an appropriate manner.

The Human Rights Act 1998 incorporates the provisions of the European Convention of Human Rights into UK law. The UK was one of the original signatories and public authorities have been required to comply with the convention and have been open to legal sanction for non-compliance for over 50 years. The Human Rights Act makes it unlawful for a public authority to act or fail to act in a way which is incompatible with the Convention rights.

It is important that Central Bedfordshire Council and its partners have arrangements in place for ensuring:

- compliance with established policies, procedures, laws and regulations.;
- activities are conducted in accordance with proper standards of conduct; and
- efficient and effective management of financial and other resources.

Central Bedfordshire Council is working to comply with these statutory obligations and to exemplify best practice.

The Scheme outlines how the Council will implement its commitments to the equality duties for Race, Disability, Gender (including gender reassignment), and the legislation relating to Age, Carers, Religion and Belief and Sexual Orientation. It includes an action plan (see section 6, page 18) which sets out our timescale over three years for meeting those commitments and how they will be monitored.

The Scheme also anticipates the Government's Equality Bill which is currently being taken through Parliament. This will streamline existing legislation by replacing the race, disability

and gender public sector equality duties with a new single equality duty, which would cover the race, disability and gender equality strands and also be extended to cover age, religion and belief, sexual orientation legislation and socio-economic inequalities.

All Council directorates will support the achievement of our strategic objectives and commitments by ensuring that actions are progressed through individual directorate and service plans. Action plans will be driven and managed through the Council's performance management framework.

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## 4. Context – The Nature of Diversity in Central Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire, as one of the largest unitary councils in the country, is home to approximately 255,000 people<sup>1</sup> living in 105,400 households. It is estimated that housing growth will increase the population to around 317,500 by 2031. Central Bedfordshire lies in the heart of the county, covering some 716 square kilometres from Leighton Linlade and Cranfield in the west to Biggleswade and Arlesey in the east, and from Sandy in the North to Whipsnade in the South.

The area is diverse, with picturesque rural villages, hamlets and historic urban market towns. It is also one of the most rapidly growing unitary councils in England, with both the Luton and Milton Keynes growth areas having an effect. The largest conurbations within Central Bedfordshire include Ampthill, Biggleswade, Dunstable, Flitwick, Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard, Sandy and Shefford.

### **Skill Levels:**

The proportion of working age people with at least NVQ1 qualifications (1 GCSE or similar is higher in Central Bedfordshire (at 85.3%) than in the east of England (78.8%) or England (78.8%). The proportion with NVQ4 or above (degree or similar) is at a slightly lower level in Central Bedfordshire (28.6%) than for England (28.7%), but is higher than in the East (26.1%). At the 2001 census a fifth (20%) of Central Bedfordshire's working age population had no formal qualifications. This was more pronounced among certain Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, particularly Chinese, White Irish, Pakistani and Bangladeshi.

Both of the former Central Bedfordshire districts (Mid and South Beds) appear to exceed both the national and regional averages for school leavers entering further education; however the numbers entering further education from deprived wards in Houghton Regis, Biggleswade and Sandy is much lower.

### **Employment:**

In the year ending June 2009, 84.4% of working age people in Central Bedfordshire were economically active. This figure includes both employed and unemployed people. The employment rate (the percentage of the working age population in employment) in Central Bedfordshire was 80.1% in the year ending June 2009 compared to a regional average of 77.0%.

The median average gross weekly income for full-time male workers residing in Central Bedfordshire was £653, above the England median average of £539. For full time female workers the median average gross weekly income was lower at £470 in Central Bedfordshire, compared with £431 in England.

Measured using the Labour Force Survey, unemployment in Central Bedfordshire is relatively low at 5.2% for the period July 2008 – June 2009. More recent Job Seekers Allowance Data show that unemployment in Central Bedfordshire was at 3.0% in January 2010, compared to 4.3% in England. The highest levels of unemployment are all in urban wards, with the worst affected areas in Houghton Regis and Dunstable. The unemployment rate for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities was 2.7% at the 2001 census, higher than that for White British (2.1%). Unemployment among young

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<sup>1</sup> 2008 Mid Year Estimate, ONS

people is generally higher than among adults as a whole. In January 2010, 6.3% of 16-18 year olds in Central Bedfordshire were not in education, training or employment.

**Health:**

Overall health is better than the UK norm whilst in terms of deprivation no part of Central Bedfordshire is within the worst 10% nationally. However, this overall picture of affluence masks some aspects of deprivation, and communities within Downside, Flitwick, Parkside, Sandy and Tithe Farm face particular challenges relative to the rest of the area. For example, there are parts of these communities which suffer from deprivation and appear in the top 10% nationally when specific indices of deprivation are considered such as Crime, Education, Skills and training and barriers to Housing and Services.

**Age Profile**

In 2008, 50,100 people in Central Bedfordshire were aged between 0 and 15. A further 168,200 were aged 16-64, with 36,800 aged 65 and over. The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by about 50% between 2008 and 2021.

**Ethnicity:**

Central Bedfordshire is ethnically diverse with around 6% of people living in the area from black or ethnic minority communities. According to the 2001 Census, 94.0% of the Central Bedfordshire population is white ('White British'). 1.3% of the population is Irish ('White Irish'). The largest Black and Minority Ethnic groups are Indian (0.6%), Caribbean (0.3%) and Chinese (0.3%). People of mixed ethnicity make up around 0.9% of residents.

ONS ethnic estimates for 2007 forecast some changes to these figures:

|                               |                           |      |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------|
| White                         | British                   | 89.0 |
|                               | Irish                     | 1.2  |
|                               | White Other               | 2.9  |
|                               | White and Black Caribbean | 0.5  |
| Mixed                         | White and Black African   | 0.2  |
|                               | White and Asian           | 0.4  |
|                               | Other Mixed               | 0.4  |
|                               | Indian                    | 1.3  |
| Asian or Asian British        | Pakistani                 | 0.7  |
|                               | Bangladeshi               | 0.3  |
|                               | Other Asian               | 0.4  |
| Black or Black British        | Black Caribbean           | 0.6  |
|                               | Black African             | 0.8  |
|                               | Other Black               | 0.1  |
| Chinese or Other Ethnic Group | Chinese                   | 0.6  |
|                               | Other Ethnic Group        | 0.5  |

The increasing amount of data on migrant workers, unaccompanied asylum seekers and other young people from non-UK backgrounds predicts that immigration in the region will increase.

## **Carers**

In 2001 there were over 21,400 people (9.2%) providing unpaid care in Central Bedfordshire. 3,500 of these provided 50 hours or more of care each week. The number of unpaid carers is likely to increase significantly as Bedfordshire's population ages in coming years. 11.2% (3,433) of household residents aged 65+ in Central Bedfordshire provided unpaid care, including 540 who described their own health as 'not good'. Of those 540, 280 provided care for 50 hours per week or more. Caring responsibilities are not confined to adults; 580 children aged 17 or under provided unpaid care, with 71 reporting that they provided 20 or more hours each week.

## **Disability**

In the 2001 Census a limiting long term illness was reported by (13.5%) of residents.

## **Religion and Belief**

Most of the population state their religion as Christian (74.9%), with (16.9%) having no religion and other religions constituting (1.4%) of the population. (Note: 6.8% did not state their religion)

## **Sexual Orientation**

It is estimated that 'out' gay people living in the United Kingdom form between 6% -10% of the population. This means that in Central Bedfordshire at least 15 000 people are likely to openly be lesbian, gay or bisexual, with others feeling unable to disclose such information because they fear the reactions of people around them.

## 5. Central Bedfordshire Council's Approach to Equality and Diversity

Central Bedfordshire Council has a unique opportunity to bring together existing good practice and mainstream equality across all its activities from the outset - by making equality and diversity principles an integral part of service design and employment practices - to ensure that improved outcomes are delivered for all sections of the community by embedding a systematic way of doing things across Central Bedfordshire.

Although the responsibility for complying with the new Equality legislation, meeting the 'Duty to Involve' and tackling inequality lies with all members and managers, achieving this depends on managing a broad service improvement agenda and adopting new ways of working. Success will depend on the leadership embracing a strategic and coherent approach

If we are to demonstrate we are truly tackling inequality and embedding this in our strategic and operational approaches the Council will need to exhibit the following characteristics:

- Promotion and maintenance of a **culture** where everyone who comes into contact with the Council in any way is treated with dignity and respect. This includes people who use different goods and services as well as those who are employed by the Council.
- Members and officers acting as **champions** for equality, understanding the significance of equality in the place shaping agenda and take direct and personal responsibility for promoting greater equality.
- **Bullying and harassment** addressed in an appropriate and timely manner, including harassment of transgender people, disabled people, gay men, lesbians, older people, younger people and people with different faiths and beliefs.
- Services must meet the **needs** of all citizens appropriately.
- In employment there is no **gender pay gap**, disabled people are represented at all levels of the organisation and the workforce represents the diversity of the local area at all levels of the organisation. Barriers to equality have been identified and actions are being taken to overcome them.
- **Resources are targeted** effectively to ensure that they are allocated to address all people's needs.
- The **local authority engages effectively** with others in the private, voluntary and public sectors, making the most effective use of others' expertise of equality issues and service delivery.
- Organisations that are contracted to do work on behalf of the Council have equality obligations **built into contracts**, and their policies and procedures promote equality and eliminate discrimination.

The achievement of these objectives will require a focus on the following processes:

- Leadership and Accountability.
- Partnership Working.
- Development of a Corporate Approach.
- Delivery of commitments across every service.
- Taking action and evidencing improved outcomes for disadvantaged groups.

## **5.1. Leadership and Accountability**

We will foster demonstrable leadership and corporate commitment to equality and diversity. Members and officers will act as champions for equality, understanding the significance of equality in the place shaping agenda and will take direct and personal responsibility for promoting greater equality and ensuring the working environment is free of discrimination, including harassment, victimisation and bullying.

The responsibility for complying with the new Equality legislation, meeting the 'Duty to Involve' and tackling inequality lies with all members and managers. All key Council decisions will reflect equality and diversity considerations.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for ensuring that the Council has robust plans for meeting the equality duties. All Directors and their Management Teams have accountability for leading and directing actions in respect of service delivery and employment (see section 5.4.1). Heads of Service will be responsible for ensuring that relevant actions and targets set out in the Action Plan are incorporated into their local business plans and that these are achieved (see section 5.4.2). All staff have a responsibility to be aware of their obligations under various equality legislation. **Appendix 5** of this Scheme summarises key actions.

## **5.2. Partnership Working:**

Central Bedfordshire Council is responsible for providing a wide range of services to its population. This includes education, social care for children and adults, libraries, leisure, housing services and transport. The delivery of our priorities and ensuring excellence in our services will be achieved by working in partnership with other agencies, both statutory and voluntary.

We have established a Central Bedfordshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), which will provide an overarching strategic framework for partnership arrangements and delivery of our Local Area Agreement.

As part of our commitment to ensuring involvement, we will engage with our community and ensure that representatives of our diverse community are empowered to influence our service delivery and equality and diversity objectives. This is an integral part of our arrangements for partnership working through the LSP and through our emerging community engagement strategy. We will strive to ensure that understanding and tackling inequality is embedded within all our collaborative working.

## **5.3. Corporate Approach to Equality**

Although the responsibility for complying with the new Equality legislation and tackling inequality lies with all members, managers and staff, achieving this depends upon managing a broad service improvement agenda and adopting new ways of working. Success will depend on the leadership embracing a strategic and coherent approaches follows:

### 5.3.1. Corporate Officer Network

We will have a network of Officers across the Council, which will include a designated officer lead for each service, who will act as equality champions within their respective service areas. The Officer Network will support all aspects of equalities in relation to policy development, service provision and employment to ensure that the Council meets its obligations under the equalities legislative framework.

The Officer Network will provide a corporate overview to mainstreaming equality and diversity across all services and will review the Council's progress towards maintaining its commitment to equality in employment and service provision.

### 5.3.2 Performance Measurement and Monitoring

Monitoring is an essential part of service delivery and policy development and will enable the Council to measure the impact of services on various community groups. We will develop a corporate approach for equality monitoring to provide a consistent framework for the collection of equality monitoring information. The Officer Network will provide a corporate overview to mainstreaming equality and diversity across all services and will review the Council's progress towards maintaining its commitment to equality in employment and service provision.

The Corporate Policy Team will work closely with the Performance Team to support Managers across the Council in developing these processes. This will be informed by reference to the National Equality Measurement Framework which focuses on:

- **outcomes**; process (unequal treatment, discrimination, lack of dignity and respect); autonomy (empowerment, choice and control).
- **10 Domains**; Life; health; physical security; legal security; education and learning; standard of living; productive and valued activities; individual, family and social life; identity, expression and self respect; participation, influence and voice.
- **8 Characteristics**; Age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion or belief, sexual orientation, transgender, social class.

Further details can be found in **Appendix 6** of this Scheme

We will develop information and monitoring systems, for example for grants allocation and complaints, and an inclusive customer feedback process that allows us to systematically disaggregate data on performance indicators and assess progress for vulnerable groups.

Our equality scheme will be reviewed every three years and we will produce an annual report as a means to monitor and report back on progress to elected members, employees and residents as part of the Equalities Scheme.

### 5.3.3. Equality Forum

The Central Bedfordshire Equality and Diversity Forum was established in 2009 to act as a consultation group and advisory body to the Council on issues relating to age, disability, gender, gender re-assignment, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

## Core Functions

- To provide a mechanism for consultation and liaison with community groups and other voluntary sector agencies.
- To advise on the overall development and implementation of the Council's Single Equality Scheme.
- To provide advice and feedback on the impact of new policies and functions\*.
- To consider and quality assure Equality Impact Assessments undertaken by the Council, or in conjunction with partners, relating to strategy, policy and service development. Recommendations will be fed back to the Officer Network and relevant services.
- To raise awareness within the Council of the potential barriers to inclusion and equality of opportunity experienced by vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

\* *Forum members will provide initial advice and feedback, where members feel that they cannot provide an informed analysis of the ways in which a strategy, service or policy proposal will impact on a certain group then secondary consultation will be required. This will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Engagement and Consultation Strategies.*

The Forum will help us work with key partnership groups as part of the overall framework for the Local Strategic Partnership. Members of the Forum are drawn from local community and voluntary sector organisations with equality and diversity expertise.

We will further encourage community participation and involvement by engaging with a broad range of local and regional equality and diversity representative groups through an Equality & Diversity Network.

### 5.3.4. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Gender Equality Act 2006 require Public Authorities to assess the impact of their policies and practices, or the likely impact of proposed policies and practices. In order to ensure that our services are equitable and accessible to everyone, the Council has developed an Equality Impact Assessment framework (Toolkit) (**Appendix 7**) and will agree an annual EIA programme as part of service planning processes. We will identify and prioritise areas for equality impact assessment and develop a programme for their completion.

Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on:

- new functions, services, policies and procedures;
- reviewed or altered policies and procedures;
- existing functions and policies and procedures that have not had an impact assessment carried out.

**Appendix 8** of the Scheme highlights the relevance of equality to council functions, strategies and policies.

The Equality Impact Assessment process will take all equality strands into account to ensure that our service delivery and employment practices are not discriminatory.

The Corporate Policy Team will guide and support services through the provision of screening documents which will highlight relevant service specific equality evidence.

All EIAs will be quality assured by the Corporate Policy Team and high priority EIAs will be considered by the Equalities Forum. EIAs will be published on the Council's website. Impact Assessment action plans will be reported as part of the annual report on the Council's progress on equality and diversity.

#### **5.3.5. Customer Feedback**

We welcome suggestions, complaints and compliments and general comments as an invaluable aid to monitoring and developing the quality of our services

The Council wishes to use a transparent process in dealing with complaints in order to increase satisfaction and confidence in the Council's ability to deliver on this important agenda. The Council will continue therefore to work in partnership with local community groups and their representatives to enhance transparency.

The Corporate Management Team has overall responsibility for complaints made on all grounds, including that the Council has failed to comply with its equality duties. The Customer Relations Manager will be the point of contact for coordinating all such contact with the Council. We will ensure that our policies and procedures are robust for dealing with complaints or dissatisfaction with regard to meeting the obligations under equality legislation.

We will continually review our customer feedback and complaints procedures to ensure accessibility and where possible will collate information across the six equality strands.

### **5.4. Delivering our Commitments across every Service**

Directors and Senior Managers will ensure that equality and diversity is integral to the planning and delivery of services and all employment practices in order to achieve compliance with the Council's obligations under equalities legislation. Objectives and targets relating to equality will be incorporated into the Council's strategic and operational plans, and risk management process.

#### **5.4.1. Role of Management Teams**

Each Directorate's Management Team will have responsibility for ensuring that equality is a key part of their planning, monitoring and review processes and that the commitments set out in the Equality Scheme are progressed. Management Teams will embed consideration of equality and diversity issues in planning for services by ensuring that;

- functions and policies are assessed for any adverse impact on any particular group;
- plans are developed to address any problem areas or identified gaps;



- all new policies, procedures and service development are assessed for any adverse impact on different groups and take action to avoid this;
- managers are aware of their responsibilities and act proactively to avoid discrimination towards customers and employees.

#### **5.4.2. Role of Heads of Services**

Every Head of Service will be responsible for ensuring that robust equality impact assessments are undertaken, that staff training needs are identified and addressed and that the working environment is free from discrimination and harassment. The Corporate Policy Team will provide guidance, support and quality assurance. Effective equality impact assessment requires a focus on the following key areas:

- **Understand and Include – Diversity Mapping / Need Analysis**  
Officers will consider a variety of relevant data and research evidence of needs when developing strategies, policies and services. Take up rates of services and outcomes for service users will also be carefully analysed and action taken to increase service take up by under represented groups.
- **Consultation and Engagement**  
Officers will build strong relationships between communities and encourage the participation of under represented groups by using a variety of techniques to consult with a cross section of residents, employees & stakeholders in order to identify differing levels & types of need. The Council's Community Engagement Framework promotes the need to take into account diversity of interest, needs and geography. The Council will foster communication and consult with communities at risk of discrimination and establish new and innovative approaches to engagement and involvement to encourage active participation.
- **Deliver Excellent Services**  
Officers will ensure that our services meet the diverse needs of our community and local residents and that they are accessible to all with due regard to the principles of equality and fairness. The Council will ensure that equality issues are an integral part of commissioning and procurement processes. Contractors and outside agencies who carry out work on behalf of the Council will be required to give a commitment to adhere to the Council's equality policies, procurement procedures and the Local Government Act 1988.
- **Inform and Communicate**  
Officers will publicise services effectively and check levels of awareness across different communities. The Council will provide feedback on the results of consultation exercises. Information about services will be accessible in alternative formats and languages, through an interpreting service and on the website. The Council will ensure that information is published in a customer friendly format, is accessible and cost effective.
- **Employees Engaged and Empowered**  
The specific experience of inequality and discrimination can vary from service to service. Officers will ensure that they take steps to regularly update their knowledge of changes in equality legislation and developments in evidence bases relating to the experience of inequality across different groups and services

We will train and develop our workforce effectively, raising awareness of diverse community needs and ensuring that the work environment is free from discrimination, harassment and bullying.

### **5.4.3. The Role of Human Resources**

The Council will aim to have a modern and diverse workforce that is representative of the community we serve. The People Strategy will set out the framework for taking this forward. All staff should experience fairness and equity of treatment in the workplace and be treated with dignity and respect. The Council will actively work to remove discriminatory barriers that can prevent people from obtaining employment opportunities. The Council will not tolerate processes, attitudes and behaviour that amount to discrimination including harassment, victimization and bullying through prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and stereotyping.

We will train and develop our workforce effectively, raising awareness of diverse community needs and ensuring that the work environment is free from discrimination, harassment and bullying. All employees will be expected to promote these values at all times. Employees found in breach of this policy may face disciplinary action.

The Council will consult with staff to identify and address to identify improvements that can be made to working practices.

The Council will undertake annual equality monitoring of employment practices relating to:

- Staff in post
- Applications for employment,
- Applications for training and recipients of training
- Applications for promotion
- Staff who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of performance assessment procedures
- Staff involved in grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Staff who cease employment

### **5.4.4. Working with Schools**

#### **The Children and Young People's Plan**

Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty to promote race, gender and disability equality. As part of the development of the Children and Young People's Plan consideration has been given to the needs and outcomes for vulnerable groups. This has identified particular issues related to performance for lower ability girls, boys, students with special educational needs (action and action plus), students receiving free school meals, looked after children and some groups such as Pupils who are Travellers of Irish Heritage and Gypsy/Roma, Pupils from Black Caribbean background and Pupils for whom English is an additional language. These issues have been identified as a priority in the Children and Young People's Plan 'Priority 10: Raise achievement for all learners particularly underachieving groups and children in vulnerable circumstances' and will need to be addressed as part of the raising achievement plan

## **Education Vision**

The Council's Education Vision includes a commentary on Inclusion and Special Educational Needs (section 11.5) and there will be a distinct programme of activity relating to pupils with special education needs within the overall programme.

## **Central Bedfordshire Accessibility Strategy:**

Central Bedfordshire believes that every child/young person should be able to access the full curriculum and other opportunities that are provided through their local early years setting/school, and will work with these settings to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to make this possible. Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to working with schools and settings, partner agencies such as the Health Services, children and young people and their parents/carers to remove barriers to the achievement of good outcomes for children with disabilities. We promote appropriate inclusive practices, both in our own services and in the schools and settings in our area. While we will comply with all legislation around Equality, Access and Disability, we will also seek, together with our schools and settings, to go beyond this to make positive inclusion a reality for children and young people.

## **Partnership between Central Bedfordshire and settings/schools**

The government's expectation is that the Council will support and challenge settings/schools to ensure that they fulfill these responsibilities. Central Bedfordshire works closely with settings/schools to ensure that where responsibilities are shared this is managed strategically.

The Council provides and signposts services to support settings/schools in making reasonable adjustments and removing barriers to learning and achievement.

## **Actions the Council is taking to meet its DDA duties**

- We will provide or signpost up to date guidance and relevant legislation to our setting/schools on the expectations and requirements around accessibility and equality.
- We will facilitate professional development where required.
- Where physical adaptations are required to make a nursery school/school accessible that falls outside of any reasonable adjustments that they should be making, the Council will manage and administer funding for improved accessibility through the Schools Access Initiative (SAI).
- We will maintain an up to date Asset Management Plan for our schools. Accessibility audits will be separately documented as part of suitability assessments. These will inform use of the SAI funding and will incorporate meeting access requirements for pupils and other building users with disabilities.
- We will provide and if necessary develop checklists for schools to undertake their own self evaluations on accessibility.
- We will call in and quality assure schools Accessibility Plans and Equality Schemes
- We will use the Accessibility Plans and the Disability Register to help inform our forward planning for where adjustments may need to be made.
- The current capital programme allows for School Access Initiative funding, and this will be reviewed as appropriate.

- Where it is believed that adjustments may be required parents/carers will be encouraged to visit schools prior to making an application. (Note that if the child has a statement of SEN then there is a separate process for admissions). Settings/schools and other partners within the Children's Trust will be encouraged to advise parents to inform any potential future school of their child's accessibility needs.
- All of our new buildings and facilities will be designed to be fully accessible.

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## 6. Corporate Equality Action Plan

The Action Plan currently includes a focus on delivering tangible outcomes on the following themes:

- 1: Developing and embedding Central Bedfordshire Council's approach and processes
- 2: Leadership / Partnership Working
- 3: Workforce and employment issues, awareness, training and development
- 4: Feedback, engagement and consultation
- 5: Intelligence, monitoring and review.

| Objective   | Action  | Outcome and Evidence   | Lead   | Timescale  |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| <b>Theme 1: Developing and embedding Central Bedfordshire Council's approach and processes.</b>             |   |  |  |  |
| Prepare the Council for compliance with the new Equality Framework.   | Develop and maintain an Equality and Diversity Scheme which takes account of recognised equality strands. | Up to date single equality and diversity scheme with action plans published.<br><br>Scheme meets statutory requirements.<br><br>Council ready for peer challenge and assessment to Achieving status. | Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity).                             | Adoption May 2010 and annual review and refresh (minimum every three years). |
| Corporate and service level structures are in place to ensure delivery and review of the equalities agenda. | Confirm strategic equality and diversity champion from the Central Bedfordshire Council Management Team.  | Promotion of equality and diversity at a leadership level of the Council<br><br>Active involvement and   | Chief Executive, supported by the Assistant Director Strategy and Performance. | Ongoing from May 2010  |

| Objective   | Action  | Outcome and Evidence  | Lead   | Timescale             |
|---|---|---|--|-----------------------|
|   | Members' equality and diversity champion (portfolio holder) to attend/chair the Equality Forum.   | mainstreaming of equality and diversity within service processes.   | Portfolio holder supported by Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity). | Ongoing.              |
|   | Service/directorate management teams to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>include equality and diversity matters in the terms of reference for their meetings as a standing item</li> <li>put in place network of equalities champions</li> </ul> | Members are comfortable with equality issues and able to deal with complexity<br><br>Equality champions are confident, skilled and fully understand the complexities and issues the role entails. | Directors  | Ongoing from May 2010 |
|   | Support informal officer network comprising directorate champions   |   | Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity)                                | Ongoing from May 2010 |
|   | Provide training and briefings for equality champions   |   | Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity)                                | July 2009 and ongoing |
| Political overview and scrutiny processes review equality impacts and objectives. | Approach to overview and scrutiny to provide for review of equality impacts and objectives.   | Active challenge on the approach to equalities and diversity through overview and scrutiny  | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance - as the Designated Scrutiny Officer | Ongoing               |
| Embed equality and diversity objectives within organisational planning.           | Guidance on service and directorate planning covers equalities and this is monitored via performance management arrangements.   | Equality and diversity becomes an integral part of business processes and the performance management framework, with measurable outcomes.   | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance.                                     | Ongoing               |

| Objective   | Action  | Outcome and Evidence   | Lead  | Timescale   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| Corporate strategies and policies are being impact assessed on an ongoing basis and published                         | Promote and quality assure EqIAs in line with the equality impact assessment protocol for the Council   | Equality impact assessment integral to service planning, design and delivery.  | Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity)   | Ongoing   |
| A corporately prioritised programme of equality impact assessments (EqIAs) is in place.                               | Develop an action plan and timetable for equality impact assessments/ initiate EQIA process for new policies and strategies/ review EqIAs on due dates. | All equality and diversity issues identified and challenged<br><br>All impact assessments reviewed and commented on by the Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) and high priority assessments considered and signed off by the Equality Forum | Authors of new policies/ strategies<br><br>Management Teams of all service groups   | 2010/11 programme will be developed from the Forward Plan and proposals within Directorate plans. Will be updated quarterly, and published on our website |
|   | Programme of quality assurance for completed assessments.   |  | Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) and Equality Forum  | Ongoing   |
|   | Ensure human rights matters are included in equalities training.  | Knowledge and understanding of human rights issues throughout the Council.   | Assistant Director People   | Will be detailed with the annual Learning & Development Plan  |
| Appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that human rights considerations are identified when planning services. | Review, and amend as necessary, corporate and service customer care policies and procedures to ensure they highlight human rights considerations.       | Human rights issues integral to corporate and service customer care policies   | Authors of policies/ strategies in consultation with AD or Head of Legal Services and Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) | Ongoing   |

| Objective  | Action   | Outcome and Evidence  | Lead  | Timescale   |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Appropriate measures are put in place to ensure the service needs of vulnerable and marginalized groups are identified and that customers and citizens are treated with dignity and respect. | Review, and amend as necessary, corporate and service customer care and complaints policies and procedures to ensure they highlight the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups. | Equality and diversity issues integral to customer care and complaints procedures.  | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance and Director of Customer and Shared Services                        | Ongoing April 2009                                    |
|  | Ensure the corporate complaints policy includes a specific reference to complaints of discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, gender and religion      |   | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance   | Ongoing   |
|  | Explore opportunities for providing targeted information on access to and availability of services across CBC  | Service users have more choice and information on accessibility of facilities and services within CB can be found in one place/access guide | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance   | Proposal by end of Quarter 2                          |
|  | Agree and implement Accessibility Strategy for Schools   | Improving access and outcomes for pupils with disability and Special Educational Needs  | Assistant Director Children's Services Operations   | Agreed April 2010 for implementation during 2010 / 12 |
|  | Implement programme of support for schools in tackling Racism  | Improve social cohesion and reduce racist incidents   | Assistant Directors for Strategy and Performance and Children's Services - Learning and Strategic Commissioning | 2010 / 11   |





| Objective   | Action  | Outcome and Evidence   | Lead  | Timescale                             |
|---|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|
|   | relevant performance information e.g. customer feedback, service take-up levels.  |  |   |                                       |
| <b>Theme 2: Leadership / Partnership Working</b>  |   |  |   |                                       |
| Leader, chief executive and partners commit publically to improving equality outcomes and can tell the equality story for their community.  | Central Bedfordshire Council to publish an annual report on its progress in implementing the Single Equalities Scheme.  | Continuing progress in meeting equality agenda and working towards excellent status  | Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) | Annually – at anniversary of approval |
|   | Refresh of the Council's strategic plan and other relevant key strategies and plans to highlight equalities and diversity issues and include equality and diversity objectives and outcomes |  | Leadership Team                                   | Ongoing                               |
| Sustainable community and other partnership strategies and working arrangements (LSP, LAA, and MAA) have been reviewed with the voluntary and community sector and the community to deliver locally identified equality outcomes. | Ensure that the refresh of the sustainable community strategy and other partnership plans include equality objectives and outcomes.   | The Sustainable Community Strategy. LAA and other partnership plans highlight how inequality will be tackled and evidences progress in improving outcomes for vulnerable people. | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance       | Ongoing                               |
|   | Ensure that all LAA delivery plans take account of equalities issues and impacts.   |  | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance       | Ongoing                               |
|   | Build equality impact assessments into LAA processes.   |  | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance       | Ongoing                               |

| Objective   | Action   | Outcome and Evidence   | Lead  | Timescale   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| Internal, external and partnership communication strategies are designed to promote good relations across all local communities.  | Ensure the Council's communications strategy takes account of equalities issues.   | Improved access to services by providing information in clear language and in different formats and languages. | Assistant Director - Communications   | Strategy to be approved April 2010 then ongoing                                 |
|   | Ensure the Council's branding guidelines and advice includes the need to reflect diversity in terms of images and content. | Improved customer satisfaction.  | Assistant Director - Communications   | Ongoing   |
|   | Ensure the Council's website is accessible and informative and takes account of the needs of various groups.               |  | Assistant Director - Communications   | Web Strategy to be approved April 2010 then ongoing                             |
|   | Agree Central Bedfordshire Council policy on translation and interpretation service and procure provider                   |  | Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity)                                       | August 2010   |
| Structures are in place within the authority and across partnerships to promote positive relations, enable different groups of people to get on well together and deal with harassment and hate crimes effectively. | Put in place corporate and partnership structures and guidance on recording cases of harassment and hate crime.            | Increase in the reporting of cases of harassment and hate crime.<br><br>Increase in conviction rate.           | Assistant Director Community Safety, Public Protection, Waste and Leisure               | TBD   |
|   | Ensure the community safety strategy has objectives and outcomes in respect of harassment and hate crimes                  | Consistent approach to the promotion of equality initiatives, activities and events.                           | Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership  | Include in Community Safety Plan 2010-12 to be agreed April 2010 – then ongoing |
|   | Develop a coordinated approach to promoting international, national and local celebrations.                                |  | Assistant Director - Communications / Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) | Ongoing   |

| Objective   | Action  | Outcome and Evidence  | Lead                                 | Timescale   |
|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Theme 3: Workforce and employment issues, awareness, training and development</b>  |   |   |                                      |   |
| <p>The authority's workforce strategy identifies key equality issues.</p> <p>Authority understands its local labour market, the barriers equality groups face and the impact this has on achieving a diverse workforce.</p> | <p>Develop a human resource strategy to meet equality employment duties and which secures a diverse and appropriately managed workforce</p> | <p>Managers appraised against equality objectives</p> <p>Workforce confident with equality issues.</p> <p>Positive experience in the workplace.</p> <p>Fair and equal access to learning and development opportunities.<br/>Work/life balance promoted.</p> <p>A workforce that is representative of the community it serves at all levels.</p> | <p>Assistant Director<br/>People</p> | <p>People Strategy<br/>March 2010 and ongoing</p> |
| <p>Ensure that all employment procedures comply with equality legislation and employment codes of practice.</p>   | <p>Review human resource policies to ensure they are compliant with latest legislation.</p>   | <p>Dignity at work and fair employment practices in place.</p>  | <p>Assistant Director<br/>People</p> | <p>Ongoing</p>                                    |
| <p>Authority has a prioritised programme for carrying out EqlAs on major and new employment policies. These are made public.</p>  | <p>Ensure human resource policies and strategies are subject to equality impact assessments.</p>  | <p>Dignity at work and fair employment practices in place.</p>  | <p>Assistant Director<br/>People</p> | <p>Ongoing</p>                                    |
| <p>The authority has made a commitment to equal pay and started work on its equal</p>   | <p>Develop and maintain an equal pay policy.</p>  | <p>Results of analysis published.</p>   | <p>Assistant Director<br/>People</p> | <p>Ongoing</p>                                    |

| Objective   | Action  | Outcome and Evidence  | Lead   | Timescale |
|---|---|---|--|-----------|
| pay review.   | Identify any gender pay gaps and take action.   | Action taken on equal pay for work of equal value.  | Assistant Director<br>People                         | Ongoing   |
| Structures are in place to identify, prevent and deal effectively with harassment and bullying in the workplace.                    | Develop and maintain an unfair treatment policy, and train all managers on the implementation of the policy.                        | Effective measures in place to address harassment, bullying, discrimination and victimisation.    | Assistant Director<br>People                         | Ongoing   |
|   | Put in place and publicise support structures for staff.  | All staff have positive experience in the workplace.  | Assistant Director<br>People                         | Ongoing   |
| Equality issues are integrated into appraisal systems.  | Ensure performance development review process takes account of equalities issues.   | All staff have positive experience in the workplace   | Assistant Director<br>People                         | June 2010 |
| The Council carries out a training needs assessment of the development required to deliver equality outcomes.                       | Carry out training needs assessment in respect of equalities matters both for staff and members and identify required competencies. | Training needs and competencies identified to inform development of training programme.           | Assistant Director<br>People                         | 2010/11   |
| Raise awareness of equality issues in training courses and ensure officers have relevant and appropriate levels of skills required. | Prepare and deliver awareness raising and training programme for staff members and Town and Parish Councillors.                     | All staff have positive experience in the workplace.  | Assistant Director<br>People                         | June 2010 |
| Ensure that equality and diversity policies are   | Include an introduction to equalities issues in induction process.  | Increase in knowledge and competency of equality and diversity at all levels of the organisation. | Corporate Policy<br>Adviser (Equality and Diversity) | In place  |

| Objective  | Action  | Outcome and Evidence   | Lead   | Timescale |
|--|---|--|--|-----------|
| communicated, understood and mainstreamed into CBC.  | Ensure all training courses (however delivered) take account of equalities issues   |  | Assistant Director People  | Ongoing   |
| A range of inclusive structures are in place to engage and involve staff before priorities are set.  | Put in place and/or facilitate staff engagement structures and processes through a variety of means such as annual survey, focus groups, team briefings, support groups.                  | Staff effectively engaged and supported to contribute to the Council's priorities.<br><br>Structure and processes in place to capture and address staff concerns over equality and diversity matters | Assistant Director – Communications                              | Ongoing   |
| <b>Theme 4: Feedback, engagement and consultation.</b>   |   |  |  |           |
| Inclusive community engagement structures are being developed throughout the authority and its partnerships which include communities of interest. | Ensure community engagement and consultation strategies and structures take account of the needs of vulnerable and marginalised people and include mechanisms to engage different groups. | People from the different equality groups are more effectively involved in policy development and the development of future priorities.  | Assistant Directors of Strategy and Performance & Communications | Ongoing   |
| The authority involves and consults with all its communities including disabled people, on an ongoing basis before                                 | Ensure that service user engagement structures and consultations take account of equalities issues  |  | Heads of Service   | Ongoing   |

| Objective   | Action  | Outcome and Evidence  | Lead  | Timescale                        |
|---|---|---|---|----------------------------------|
| <p>priorities are agreed.</p> <p>The authority involves and consults with vulnerable and marginalized groups to ensure their views are taken account of.</p> <p>Services ensure that local communities are consulted and/ or engaged with appropriately about service planning and delivery</p> | Carry out regular consultation with service users and that the findings inform future service design and delivery.  |   | Heads of Service/<br>Assistant Director -<br>Communications                                   | Ongoing                          |
| Customer feedback and complaints system   | Carry out an annual review of complaints, categorised by the equality strands, and develop actions for improvement. | <p>Target timescales met.</p> <p>Learning points shared annually across the Council.</p> <p>Equalities monitoring and evaluation carried out.</p> | Assistant Director<br>Strategy and<br>Performance   | Ongoing                          |
| Maintain an effective forum of local experts focussing on equality and diversity issues   | Hold regular meetings of the Equality and Diversity Forum   | Council activities scrutinised by local experts.  | Corporate Policy<br>Adviser (Equality and<br>Diversity)                                       | Quarterly programme<br>in place. |
| EqlAs involve appropriate community and / or stakeholder groups and are made public.  | Equality impact assessment protocol provides for stakeholder involvement.   | All relevant issues identified.   | Corporate Policy<br>Adviser (Equality and<br>Diversity)                                       | Ongoing                          |
|   | Develop broader network of equalities and diversity stakeholders  | Equality and diversity network working in conjunction with local partnership and community engagement arrangements                                | Assistant Director<br>Strategy and<br>Performance /<br>Assistant Director -<br>Communications | Ongoing                          |

| Objective   | Action  | Outcome and Evidence   | Lead  | Timescale |
|---|---|--|---|-----------|
|   | Continue to consult with Access Group to ensure equal access for all.   |  | Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) | Ongoing   |
|   | Continue to develop relationships with educational establishments such as the colleges to highlight issues and improve their knowledge of accessing council services. |  | Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) | Ongoing   |
| Plans are in place to improve the participation of under represented groups in civic and public life in particular with regard to disabled people   | Ensure LAA delivery plan for national indicator 3 (civic participation in the local area) covers this matter.   | Demonstrable increase of under-represented groups in civic life  | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance       | Ongoing   |
| <b>Theme 5: Intelligence, monitoring and review.</b>  |   |  |   |           |
| Understanding and mapping our diverse populations<br><br>The authority has in place plans to gather evidence on the profile of their communities, the extent of inequality and disadvantage within their communities and to identify priorities across the authority. | Develop and publish ward profiles and the sustainable community strategy evidence base, both of which will highlight inequalities in Central Bedfordshire.            | Equality mapping evidence based profile of the community based on national and local data, which is regularly reviewed, understands the needs of diverse communities of interest within their locality and uses the information to inform corporate priorities and improve service delivery. | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance       | Ongoing   |



| Objective   | Action   | Outcome and Evidence   | Lead  | Timescale           |
|---|--|--|---|---------------------|
| Systems are being developed corporately and across services to collect and analyse soft and hard data / intelligence about the community their needs and aspirations. | Consider and develop an approach designed to coordinate existing activity  | Equality mapping evidence based profile of the community based on national and local data, which is regularly reviewed, understands the needs of diverse communities of interest within their locality and uses the information to inform corporate priorities and improve service delivery. | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance   | Ongoing             |
| Plans are in place to collect, share and use equality information with partners.  | Determine what is shared and what should be shared and ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place e.g. information sharing agreements and protocols. | Consistent and effective use of information and data throughout the Council and between partners   | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance<br><br>Bedfordshire and Luton Information Sharing Steering Group  | CBC are signatories |
| Robust equalities monitoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Delivery</li> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Corporate</li> </ul>                          | Set up monitoring systems and analyse information by equality categories.  | Evidence bases for service improvement and innovation, policy reviews, impact assessments and identification of training needs that take account of the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups and address discriminatory practices   | Assistant Director Strategy and Performance<br><br>Heads of Service<br><br>Assistant Director People<br><br>Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) | Ongoing             |

| Objective   | Action   | Outcome and Evidence   | Lead   | Timescale         |
|---|--|--|--|-------------------|
| <p>The authority is developing systems to collect, analyse and measure data on how all sections of the community are able to access services.</p> | <p>Carry out regular user surveys to assess service satisfaction rates.</p>  | <p>Gaps identified and actions taken to improve customer satisfaction and meet needs.</p>  | <p>Heads of Service</p>                                  | <p>Ongoing</p>    |
|   | <p>Ensure services review current participation in and take up of services and identify gaps.</p>  | <p>Increased take-up rates amongst vulnerable and marginalised groups.</p>                 | <p>Heads of Service</p>                                  | <p>Ongoing</p>    |
|   | <p>Customer Insight programme introduced:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer Segmentation data used to identify our customer groups. This information will start to inform the types of Council and partner services accessed by each group and their preferred methods of accessing these services.</li> <li>• Current access channels reviewed with service areas and partners</li> </ul> <p>Customer journey mapping undertaken to proactively deliver additional appropriate services at the first point of contact</p> |  | <p>Assistant Director Strategy and Performance</p>       | <p>March 2011</p> |
| <p>Monitoring and reporting of the Single Equality Scheme and actions through agreed consultation method/s.</p>                                   | <p>Annual assessment and monitoring through BT Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Equality</p>  | <p>Ensure staff and customers are kept up-to-date with the progress of the action plan</p> | <p>Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity)</p> | <p>Annually</p>   |

| Objective | Action                                      | Outcome and Evidence   | Lead | Timescale |
|-----------|---|--|------|-----------|
|           | Forum<br>The Scheme is revised if necessary | Satisfaction across the authority of the progress made under the Scheme. |      |           |

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