

## Central Bedfordshire Equality & Diversity Strategy 2013 -16

### 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 and employment opportunities they need.

This Equality & Diversity Strategy 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 Strategy sets out our overall approach, audits our progress over the last four years and includes our objectives and plan of action for the next three years (2013 - 16).

The Strategy demonstrates how we will ensure our services reflect fairness and equality. The action plan focuses on key themes which form the foundation of all our service areas. This plan has been driven by a comprehensive consultation with our key stakeholders, both internally and externally. The plan reflects our statutory duties, and also our corporate commitment to improving our services and work place practices.

We will monitor and review our performance annually, to ensure we achieve all the objectives set out in this scheme.

**Councillor Maurice Jones**

**Deputy Leader and Executive Member, Corporate Resources**

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## 1) Context - The Nature of Diversity in Central Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire is a unitary authority serving a growing population of around 255,000. It is a largely rural area with over half the population living in the countryside and the rest in a number of market towns. The largest of these are Leighton Buzzard, Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Biggleswade, Flitwick, Sandy and Ampthill.

The area is generally prosperous, with above average levels of employment. This could mask the few areas where we do have pockets of deprivation and, greater need (some households in Dunstable and Houghton Regis for example).

The area has excellent transport links with the A1 and M1 running through it, three main rail lines and two international airports, Luton and Stansted, on the doorstep. It is in the centre of an academic 'golden triangle' between Oxford, Cambridge and London Universities and also benefits from its own academic institutions at Cranfield University, the University of Bedfordshire and other further education colleges.

It is a great place to live and work. It is a relatively safe, green and affluent area which has attracted major investment. People living in Central Bedfordshire earn more than the national average; this is in part influenced by some residents commuting out of the area – primarily to London, Luton, Milton Keynes and Hertfordshire.

**Age:** In 2011, 49,800 people in Central Bedfordshire were aged between 0 and 15. A further 164,700 were aged 16-64, with 39,800 aged 65 and over, this figure includes 17,900 people aged 85 and over. The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by about 50% between 2008 and 2021.

**Disability:** Using the widest definition there are more than 11 million disabled people in the UK, that's more than one in five of the adult population and one in 20 children. 80% of people experience a year of being disabled at some point in their lives and 66% of disabled people develop impairments during working age. The majority of disabled people have impairments that are not easily visible. In the 2011 census findings 15,465 (6.10%) residents in Central Bedfordshire indicated that day-to-day activities were limited a lot and 21,142 (8.30%) residents indicated that day-to-day activities were limited a little

**Carers:** Research undertaken by Carers UK indicates that over 2 million people become carers every year and 3 in 5 people will become a carer at some point in their lives. In the 2011 census findings 18,247 (7.2%) residents in Central Bedfordshire indicated that they provided between 1 to 19 hours a week of unpaid care. A further 2,702 (1.1%) of residents indicated that they provided 20 to 49 hours of unpaid care a week and 4,886 (1.9%) residents indicated that they provided 50 hours or more unpaid care a week.

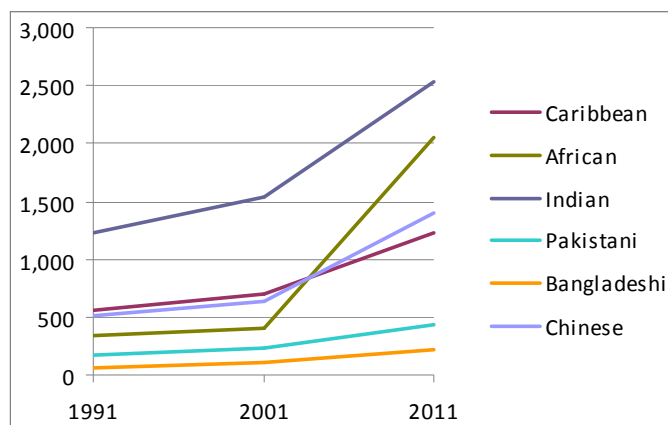
**Gender Reassignment:** The 2011 Census did not include a specific question in respect of gender reassignment. It is estimated from national research that 1 in 10,000 people experience the recognised medical condition known as gender dysphoria, generally referred to as being transgender or transsexual. In any school of 1,000 pupils there are likely to be 6 who will have transgender experience at some point in their lives.

**Marriage and Civil Partnership:** In 2011 52.5% of the Central Bedfordshire population were married and 0.1% had entered into a civil partnership. 29.2% of the population were single, 11.9% were separated / divorced and 6.3% were widowed.

**Pregnancy and Maternity:** The health and wellbeing of women before, during and after pregnancy is an important factor in giving children a healthy start in life and laying the groundwork for good health and wellbeing in later life. In Central Bedfordshire 90% of pregnant women accessed antenatal services before thirteen weeks of pregnancy. Although teenage pregnancies remain in line with the national average, they are higher than statistical neighbours. Children and young people who are already disadvantaged have an increased risk of teenage pregnancy.

**Race:** Central Bedfordshire is ethnically diverse with around 10.3% of people living in the area from black or ethnic minority communities. 1.2% of the population is Irish ('White Irish'). The largest Black and Minority Ethnic groups are Indian (1%), Black African (0.8%) and Chinese (0.6%).

Changes in Ethnic Groups other than White during 1991, 2001 and 2011

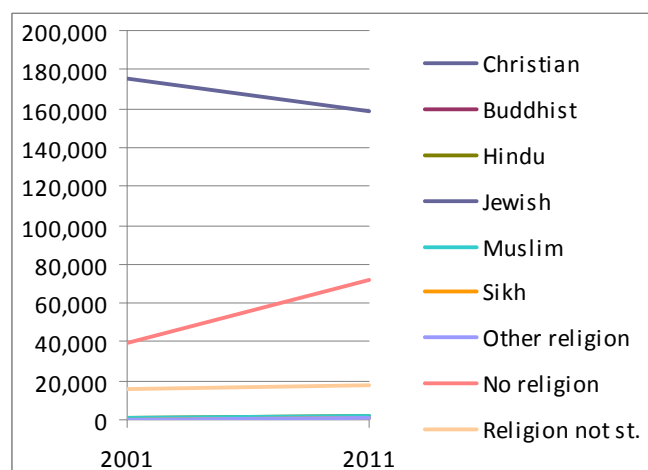


Source: ethnicity.ac.uk

People of mixed ethnicity make up around 1.9% of residents. 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.

**Religion and Belief:** Most of the population state their religion as Christian (62.2%), with (28.4%) having no religion and other religions constituting (2.6%) of the population. (Note: 6.8% did not state their religion)

Changes in Religion and Belief during 2001 – 2011



Source: ethnicity.ac.uk

**Sex:** The sex ratios of the Central Bedfordshire population vary according to age. In the younger age groups (ages 0-17) boys represent 51% of the population and girls 49%. In the working age adults groups (ages 18 -64) this ratio reverses with women representing 51% of the population and men 49%. At ages 65+ this trend increases with women representing 54% of the population and men 46%.

**Sexual Orientation:** The 2011 Census did not include a specific question in respect of 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 approximately 20, 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. The figure for civil partnerships in Central Bedfordshire was 300 in 2011.

**Skill Levels:** The proportion of working age people with at least NVQ1 or 2 qualifications (1 GCSE or similar is higher in Central Bedfordshire (80.6%) than England (77.5%). The proportion with NVQ4 or above (degree or similar) level in Central Bedfordshire (27.3%) is comparable with the figures for England (27.4%). Just under a fifth (19.4%) of Central Bedfordshire's working age population had no formal qualifications. This is slightly less than the figure for England (22.5%).

**Employment:** The findings of the 2011 Census indicated that 139,500 working age people in Central Bedfordshire (74.7%) were economically active. This figure includes both employed and unemployed people. In this group 6,400 people were unemployed.

**Health:** In 2011, 125,000 (49%) of residents reported that they were in very good health, 90,400 (35.5%) reported that they were in good health, 29,200 (11.5%) reported fair health, 7,700 (3%) reported bad health and 2,100 (0.8%) reported very bad 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

## **2) Legal Duties**

### **The Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act applies to public and private sector bodies and replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. It simplified the legislation base, removed inconsistencies and made it easier for people to understand and comply with the law. It also strengthened protection in important ways, to help tackle discrimination and inequality. The aim of the legislation is to ensure services and employment opportunities are available to all sections of society, in relation to the following protected characteristics, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

### **Types of Discrimination and Definitions**

#### **Direct discrimination:**

Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic.

#### **Associative discrimination:**

This is direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a protected characteristic.

#### **Perceptive discrimination:**

This is direct discrimination against an individual because others think they possess a particular protected characteristic. It applies even if the person does not actually possess that characteristic

#### **Indirect Discrimination:**

Indirect discrimination can occur when a condition, rule, policy or even a practice is applied to everyone but particularly disadvantages people who share a protected characteristic. Indirect discrimination can be justified if it can be shown that it is 'a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim'. Being proportionate means being fair and reasonable, including showing that 'less discriminatory' alternatives have been considered as part of the decision making process

#### **Harassment:**

Harassment is "unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual"

#### **Victimisation:**

Victimisation occurs when someone is treated badly because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act; or because they are suspected of doing so.

The Act also includes a new and additional protection relating to disability.

#### **Discrimination Arising from Disability:**

Discrimination arising from disability occurs when a disabled person is treated unfavourably because of something connected with their disability and the unfavourable treatment cannot be justified.

## **The Public Sector Equality Duty**

The Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Act) came into force on 5 April 2011. The Duty applies to public bodies and others carrying out public functions. It supports good decision-making by ensuring public bodies proactively consider how different people will be affected by their activities, helping them to deliver policies and services which are efficient and effective; accessible to all; and which meet different people's needs.

The Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

Due Regard means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Duty as part of the process of decision-making. For example:

- How the Council acts as an employer
- How policies are developed, evaluated and reviewed
- How services are designed, delivered and evaluated
- How the Council commissions and procures services and products from other organisations

Advancing equality of opportunity involves considering the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people because of their protected characteristics
- Meet the needs of people with protected characteristics
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is low

Fostering good relations involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

Complying with the Equality Duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as this is allowed in discrimination law. This could mean making use of an exception or positive action provisions in order to provide a service in a way that is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic – e.g. providing computer training for older people to help them to access information and services.

The Equality Duty is also supported by specific duties, set out in regulations which came into force on 10 September 2011. The specific duties require public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty; and to set themselves specific, measurable equality objectives.

### **Specific Duty - Publish Information**

Publishing relevant equality information helps to make public bodies transparent about their decision-making processes, and accountable to their service users. It gives the public

the information they need to hold public bodies to account for their performance on equality. The Council has published a variety of information on the website including this document.

### **Specific Duty – Identify Equality Objectives**

The Public Sector Equality Duty required public bodies to prepare and publish, by 6 April 2012, one or more specific and measurable equality objectives which will help them to further the three aims of the Equality Duty. Subsequent objectives must be published at least every four years.

It was left to each public body to decide what and how many equality objectives it should set. It was recognised that by identifying objectives which were stretching, and which focused on the biggest equality challenges facing the public body, that the greatest impact could be achieved in furthering the aims of the Equality Duty.

When deciding what equality objectives to set, public bodies are advised to take account of:

- evidence of equality issues across all its functions;
- issues affecting people sharing each of the protected characteristics; and
- the need to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations.

The number of objectives should also be proportionate to the public body's size; the extent to which its functions affect equality; and evidence that such objectives are needed.



### **3) Central Bedfordshire Council Priorities – The Medium Term Plan**

The Council is committed to a series of priorities, outlined in its Medium term Plan which collectively will help our communities to progress and prosper. They are:

- Enhancing Central Bedfordshire – creating jobs, managing growth, protecting our countryside and enabling businesses to grow.
- Improved educational attainment.
- Promote health and wellbeing and protecting the vulnerable.
- Better infrastructure – improved roads, broadband reach and transport.
- Great universal services – bins, leisure and libraries.
- Value for money – freezing council tax.

The corporate equality objectives outlined in this Equality Strategy indirectly support all six Council priorities. In addition the strategy also identifies the service specific objectives already captured within previously agreed strategies and policies which contribute directly to the achievement of Council priorities.

#### 4) The Central Bedfordshire Equality & Diversity Strategy 2013 -16

The Equality Act 2010 does not require that statutory bodies must continue to develop a separate Equality Scheme. The Council is keen however to ensure that it continues to adopt a good practice and robust approach to equality issues across all its activities and this can best be achieved through the continued implementation, review and inclusion of an Equality & Diversity Strategy as part of the Council's Policy Framework.

This Equality & Diversity Strategy has been developed in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The strategy sets out a practical approach to delivering achievable solutions which:

- Address the key issues raised from our consultation with stakeholders regarding both service and employment practices.
- Have due regard to national best practice and guidance
- Takes account of local socio-economic factors and
- Recognising the good work and actions undertaken to date and the work remaining from a robust audit of the current strategy

As a result the Council has identified four corporate, overarching objectives and activities which are essential to ensuring that consideration of equality is embedded across all Council activities.

- **Strong Leadership (Championing Diversity in our Area, Identifying Objectives and Monitoring Outcomes)**
- **Improved Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups**
- **Good Recruitment and Management of a High Performing Workforce**
- **Improved Engagement, Civic Participation and Cohesion**

The Strategy's action plan addresses these four key objectives and forms the foundation of ongoing activity across all service areas. These are detailed at Appendix 1.

The objectives have been identified with close reference to the three levels of the Equality Framework for Local Government, Developing, Achieving and Excellent. The Council believes it has reached Stage 2 Achieving and will strive for excellence but due to the need to prioritise resources on front line services has not sought costly, formal accreditation.

The Triennial Review (How Fair is Britain) 2010 published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) assessed a wealth of evidence sources and identified in its Agenda for Fairness the most pressing and significant equality challenges facing society

- Reduce the effect of socio-economic background on health and life expectancy
- Ensure that every individual has the chance to learn and to realise their talents to the full
- Give every person the opportunity to play a part in strengthening Britain's economy
- Put an end to identity-based violence and harassment
- Give more people greater personal autonomy and civic power

Since its formation in 2009 the Council has consulted on and approved a variety of strategies and policies. Numerous Equality Impact Assessments have been undertaken as part of this process and a variety of specific equality objectives have already been approved by the Council in relation to equality which closely correlate with the Agenda for

Fairness. These are detailed at Appendix 2 and are grouped according to the above 5 aims.

## **5) Audit of the Council's Approach 2009 - 2013**

The Council approved its first Equality and Diversity Scheme in May 2010. The Action Plan set out 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

Progress in achieving these outcomes is detailed at Appendix 3

## **6) Employment Practices and Policy Statement**

The Council aims to have a modern and diverse workforce that is representative of the community we serve. 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. The Council's approach and expectations of managers and employees is summarised in the Policy Statement detailed at Appendix 4

The Council will train and develop its 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 implement 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 capability, grievance and disciplinary procedures
- Staff who cease employment

## **7) Accessibility Strategy and Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils**

Local authorities are required to prepare an accessibility strategy in relation to schools for which they are the responsible body. Further strategies must be prepared at such times as may be prescribed.

The objectives of the accessibility strategy are to:

- increase the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in schools' curriculums;
- improve the physical environment of schools for the purpose of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by schools;
- improve the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.

Local authorities in implementing an accessibility strategy must have regard to:

- the need to allocate adequate resources for implementing the strategy;
- pupils' disabilities and any preferences expressed by them or their parents.

In addition, schools and education authorities have had a duty to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils since 2002 (originally under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (the DDA) and, from October 2010, under the Equality Act 2010). From 1 September 2012 the reasonable adjustments duty for schools and education authorities includes a duty to provide auxiliary aids and services for disabled pupils.

The duty is 'to take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to avoid the substantial disadvantage' to a disabled person caused by a provision, criterion or practice applied by or on behalf of a school, or by the absence of an auxiliary aid or service.

Details of the council's approach can be found in Appendix 5.

**Corporate Equality & Diversity Objectives and Action Plan 2013 - 2016**

The Strategy’s action plan focuses on four key objectives which form the foundation of activity across all service areas:

- 1) Strong Leadership (Championing Diversity in our Area, Identifying Objectives and Monitoring Outcomes)**
- 2) Improved Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups**
- 3) Good Recruitment and Management of a High Performing Workforce**
- 4) Improved Engagement, Civic Participation and Cohesion**

<b>1) Strong Leadership (Championing Equality in our Area, Identifying Objectives and Monitoring Outcomes)</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Promote equality and diversity at leadership level of the Council	There is a coherent vision of equality which is shared and owned by the authority, partners and the community.	Leader	Ongoing
Identify appropriate Equality Objectives and monitor progress	Authority can demonstrate success in meeting objectives	Executive Member for Corporate Resources	May 2013 and ongoing
Actively challenge the approach to equalities and diversity through overview and scrutiny	Authority scrutinises and challenges its own and its partners’ performance and service delivery	Chairs of Overview and Scrutiny	Ongoing
Embed equality and diversity objectives within organisational and partnership plans	Equality objectives have been integrated into strategic, operational and service specific plans	Council Management Team	Ongoing
<b>2) Improved Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Impact assess all relevant service and employment planning, design and delivery processes.	All relevant equality and diversity and human rights issues relating to service delivery and employment are identified and addressed via the completion of robust Equality Impact Assessments	Assistant Directors and Heads of Service	Ongoing
Promote and quality assure Equality Impact	All impact assessments reviewed and commented on by	Corporate	Ongoing

Assessments in line with the Council's agreed protocol.	the Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity)	Policy Adviser (E&D)	
Gather evidence on the profile of communities and the extent of inequality and disadvantage	Systems are developed corporately and across services which collect and analyse soft and hard data / intelligence about the community their needs and aspirations	Heads of Service	Ongoing
Collect, share and use equality information with partners	Consistent and effective use of information and data throughout the Council and between partners	Heads of Service	Ongoing
Develop systems to collect, analyse and measure data on how all sections of the community are able to access services and outcomes achieved	Increased take-up rates amongst vulnerable and marginalised groups. Gaps identified and actions taken to and meet needs.	Heads of Service	Ongoing
Ensure consideration of equality is integral to customer care and complaints procedures	Improved customer satisfaction across all groups.	Assistant Chief Executive People and Organisation	Ongoing
Procurement and commissioning frameworks take account of the differing needs of users and citizens and the requirements of the equality duty.	Specifications for the procurement and commissioning of services are developed and assessed in accordance with the equalities impact assessment protocol.	Assistant Directors and Heads of Service	Ongoing

### 3) Good Recruitment and Management of a High Performing Workforce

Action	Description	Lead	Timescale
Ensure human resource strategies and policies are in place to meet equality employment duties and secure a diverse and appropriately managed workforce.	Dignity at work and fair employment practices in place. Work/life balance promoted. Workforce that is representative of the community it serves at all levels.	Head of HR Policy & Development	Ongoing
Assess employment policies and procedures to identify equality implications	Adverse impacts identified and also opportunities to advance equality	Head of HR Policy & Development	Ongoing
Deliver a range of learning and development opportunities	Fair and equal access to learning and development opportunities. Workforce confident with equality issues	Head of HR Policy & Development	Ongoing
Monitor and analyse harassment and bullying incidents	Appropriate action is taken to address issues that have been identified	Head of HR Policy & Development	Ongoing
Establish and maintain a range of inclusive structures and mechanisms to engage and involve staff	Structure and processes in place to capture and address staff concerns	Head of HR Policy &	Ongoing



		Development	
Monitor and analyse all employment practices on a regular basis	Appropriate action is taken to address issues that have been identified	Head of HR Policy & Development	Ongoing
<b>4) Improved Engagement, Civic Participation and Cohesion</b>			
<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Timescale</b>
Develop inclusive community engagement structures throughout the authority and its partnerships	Implement and embed the Community Engagement Strategy across the organisation	Head of Partnerships & Community Engagement	Ongoing
Ensure all service areas are consistent and inclusive in their approach to engagement and participation	The authority involves and consults with all its communities in accordance with the Consultation toolkit	Heads of Service	Ongoing
Design internal, external and partnership communication strategies which promote good relations across all local communities.	Ensure the Council's communications strategy takes account of equalities issues. The Council's branding guidelines and advice includes the need to reflect diversity in terms of images and content	Heads of Service	Ongoing
Establish and maintain structures within the authority and across partnerships to promote positive relations, enable different groups of people to get on well together and deal effectively with harassment and hate crimes.	Increase in the reporting of cases of harassment and hate crime. Increase in conviction rates	Community Safety Partnership	Ongoing
Maintain an effective forum of local experts focussing on equality and diversity issues	High priority Equality Impact Assessments are considered and assessed by the Equality Forum	Corporate Policy Adviser (E&D)	Ongoing
Improve the participation of under represented groups in civic and public life in particular with regard to disabled people	Demonstrable increase of under-represented groups in civic life Continued implementation of Engagement Strategy	Head of Partnerships & Community Engagement	Ongoing

## Service Specific Objectives which Tackle Equality &amp; Diversity Priorities

Aim 1: To reduce the effect of socio-economic background on health and life expectancy		
Directorate	Objective	Council Plan & Date Approved
Children's Services	<p><b>Children and Young People's Plan</b></p> <p><b>Priority 2:</b> Protecting children and keeping them safe;  <b>Priority 4:</b> Targeting the most deprived areas and vulnerable groups to improve children's emotional and physical health</p> <p><b>Objectives include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect children and young people from harm by providing a co-ordinated and effective safeguarding process.</li> <li>• Reduce the impact of domestic abuse on children and young people.</li> <li>• Focus on early intervention including children's mental health services, childhood obesity, drugs and alcohol and sexual health.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Children and Young People's Plan</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 15/03/2011</p>
Social Care Health and Housing	<p><b>Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board</b></p> <p>The Government White paper Equity and Excellence passes responsibility for public health to local authorities. Objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote health and reduce inequalities</li> <li>• Support and care for an ageing population and those who are most vulnerable</li> </ul>	<p>Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board by April 2012</p> <p>Full Power from April 2013</p>
Public Health	<p><b>Inequalities in Central Bedfordshire – A report by the Director of Public Health</b></p> <p>The report summarises health inequalities in central Bedfordshire and recommends actions that can be taken to address these inequalities</p>	<p>Draft copy published November 2012</p>
Aim 2: To ensure that every individual has the chance to learn and to realise their talents to the full		
Directorate	Equality Objective	Council Plan & Date Approved
Children's Services	<p><b>Children and Young People's Plan</b></p> <p><b>Priority 1:</b> Helping children and young people achieve more and transforming our relationships with schools;</p>	<p><b>Children and Young People's Plan</b></p>

	<p><b>Objectives include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transform teaching and learning and raise achievement for all learners including underachieving groups and children in vulnerable circumstances.</li> <li>• Develop and promote children and young people’s positive contribution to all communities so that they are able to influence the decisions that affect their lives and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Reduce youth offending and anti-social behaviour.</li> </ul> <p><b>Priority 3:</b> Reducing child poverty and the effects for those living in poverty and improving early intervention and prevention;</p> <p><b>Objectives include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximise opportunities for families in poverty to access employment which will have the outcome of more families working and thus reducing levels of family and child poverty.</li> <li>• To improve life chances of children and families by intervening early to prevent poor outcomes and raising educational achievements and aspirations with the outcome that children from poor households gain better qualifications to ensure their access to the labour market so that the cycle of intergenerational poverty is broken.</li> </ul>	<p>Approved by Executive Committee 15/03/2011</p> <p><b>Child Poverty Strategy</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 15/03/2011</p>
Children’s Services	<p><b>Disability Review</b> - Transform services for disabled children.</p> <p>An independent review of services for Children with Disabilities is being undertaken for disabled children, young people their parents and carers living in Central Bedfordshire. The review will consider services delivered across social care, health, education and voluntary sector provision. The review will also consider how residential short breaks are delivered. The proposed model of service delivery will ensure the coordination of services across and between specialist, targeted and universal services</p>	<p><b>Children and Young People’s Plan Disability Review</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 10/01/2012</p>
<b>Aim 3: To give every person the opportunity to play a part in strengthening Britain’s economy</b>		
<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Council Plan &amp; Date Approved</b>
Sustainable Communities	<p><b>Economic Development Plan:</b></p> <p><b>Priority 3:</b> Getting our residents <b>into work</b></p> <p><b>Priority 4:</b> Increasing the supply of <b>our skilled people</b>.</p> <p><b>Work stream 7. Improving Access to work and learning</b></p> <p>Ensuring residents are able to access employment, learning. The target groups identified within the Local</p>	<p><b>Economic Development Plan</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 11/11/2011</p>

	<p>Economic Assessment as requiring additional support to access the labour market and develop their skills are: 18-24 year olds and over 50s, disabled people and ethnic minorities. These groups are prioritised within the Into Work section of the plan and measures are proposed which will tailor welfare provision to the needs of these groups and tackle youth unemployment.</p> <p>It is proposed to monitor the EDP using the following core indicators.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people in employment</li> <li>• Number of out of work benefit claimants</li> <li>• Economic activity rate</li> <li>• Number of people in apprenticeships.</li> </ul> <p><b>Into Work</b> - To monitor the performance of the Central Bedfordshire Labour Market and people's ability to access employment, the following indicators will be monitored annually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people who are unemployed or economically inactive accessing information advice and guidance on volunteering through volunteer centres</li> <li>• The levels of youth unemployment</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills for Growth</b> - To monitor the level of individuals' skills, take up of training and business skill needs the following indicators will be monitored annually:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of working age people with level 2, 3, 4 qualifications</li> <li>• % of people who have received job related training in Private Sector in the last four weeks</li> </ul>	
Sustainable Communities	<p><b>All Age Skills Strategy</b></p> <p><b>Priority 1:</b> Working together - Enhance partnership working and improve the availability and dissemination of local labour market intelligence</p> <p><b>Priority 2:</b> Developing the Current and Future Workforce - Increasing the proportion of the workforce with recognised qualifications, and supporting access to academic and vocational opportunities</p> <p><b>Priority 3:</b> Raising Individuals' Aspirations and Achievements - Promote and raise awareness of the support and opportunities available at all ages for skills development and the importance of skills in achieving ambitions.</p>	<p><b>All Age Skills Strategy</b></p> <p>Scheduled for Approval by Executive Committee 27/03/2012</p>
Corporate Resources	<p><b>Internal Workforce and Employment Issues, Awareness, Training and Development</b></p> <p><b>Objectives for 2012 – Identified Via Annual Employment Monitoring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the data that we hold relating to protected characteristics in employment</li> <li>• Increase awareness of equality requirements through training</li> </ul>	<p><b>Annual Employment Monitoring Report 2010/11</b></p>

<b>Aim 4: To put an end to identity-based violence and harassment</b>		
<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Council Plan &amp; Date Approved</b>
<b>Sustainable Communities</b>	<p><b>Community Safety Partnership Plan</b></p> <p>Priorities for 2011-12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce Anti social Behaviour</li> <li>• Reduce Re-Offending</li> <li>• Reduce Domestic Abuse</li> </ul> <p>Includes Sexual Abuse Action Plan and actions related to Safeguarding Adults.</p>	<p><b>Community Safety Partnership Plan</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 15/03/2011</p> <p>Annual Refresh Scheduled for Approval by Executive Committee 27/03/2012.</p>
<b>Aim 5: To give more people greater personal autonomy and civic power</b>		
<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Council Plan &amp; Date Approved</b>
<b>Social Care Health and Housing</b>	<p><b>‘Transforming People’s Lives’ –Transforming Care and Support Through Personalisation</b></p> <p><b>Putting People First consists of four main elements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Universal services</b> - such as suitable housing, access to transport, including bus passes, leisure, including free swimming and libraries (to reduce social isolation, contribute to health and well being) and safe pavements (to reduce falls requiring hospital admissions which increases the need for longer term care), more accessible advice and information so people can make their own decisions about longer term support options.</li> <li>• <b>Early intervention and prevention</b> - there is increasing evidence that re-directing investment to Telecare / Assistive Technology, health checks and re-ablement services reduces dependency and longer term costs</li> <li>• <b>Social capital</b> - support to carers, volunteering, and village care schemes etc which increase the capacity of local communities to provide solutions and reduce the need for direct support from the state.</li> <li>• <b>Choice and control</b> People will have the right to Live free from abuse or neglect; Take risks, Meet personal aspirations, Live independently</li> </ul> <p><b>Council will</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure high quality personally tailored support is available</li> <li>• Offer a Personal Budget based on self / supported assessment</li> <li>• Work with partners to enable people to live a life free from abuse or neglect &amp; enjoy the best quality of life</li> </ul>	<p><b>Transforming People’s Lives</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 09/02/2010</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make available with partners a range of universal &amp; preventative services</li> <li>• Improve advice &amp; information for individuals, carers &amp; community groups</li> <li>• Listen &amp; involve local people in the transformation of care &amp; support</li> <li>• Ensure the best possible use is made of funding channelled through the Council</li> <li>• Support the development of a skilled local workforce</li> </ul>	
<b>Corporate Resources</b>	<p><b>Community Engagement Strategy</b></p> <p>Principle 1) Giving more people more opportunities to inform and influence decisions Principle 4) Building the capacity of local people to engage and to do more for themselves</p>	<p><b>Community Engagement Strategy</b> Approved by Executive 23/08/2011</p>
<b>Other Key Council Strategies Plans and Policies which Promote Equality of Opportunity</b>		
<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Council Plan &amp; Date Approved</b>
<b>Social Care Health and Housing</b>	<p><b>“Let’s Rent” – Housing Option</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• innovative private sector housing option that allows households a choice to access a regulated private sector home, with all requisite support mechanisms for tenancy sustainment.</li> <li>• potential to tackle inequality by focusing on ensuring that the diverse housing needs of customers can be met, whilst increasing customer choice and control, and promoting high quality sustainable homes.</li> <li>• scheme will assist in preventing homelessness, to offer customers threatened with homelessness a viable and sustainable alternative to social housing or temporary accommodation and to promote customer choice and control</li> <li>• Outcomes measured in terms of Homelessness Prevention, supporting vulnerable children and adults, health and educational outcomes, and providing sustainable homes for the community.</li> </ul>	<p><b>“Let’s Rent” – Housing Option</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 09/02/2010</p>
<b>Social Care Health and Housing</b>	<p><b>Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Show a year-on-year increase in the proportion of vulnerable households living in decent homes and</li> <li>2. As a minimum to reach the target figure of 70% by 2010.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 09/03/2010</p>
<b>Social Care Health and Housing</b>	<p><b>Homelessness Strategy</b></p> <p>The Homelessness Strategy has the potential to tackle inequality through actions which are designed to meet the diverse housing needs of customers across Central Bedfordshire, whilst increasing customer choice and control, and promoting high quality sustainable homes.</p>	<p><b>Homelessness Strategy</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 06/04/2010</p>

	<p><b>Priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Harmonise housing options services across Central Bedfordshire.</li> <li>• Work with young people aged 16-24 to meet their needs more effectively.</li> <li>• Embed the Think Family approach within all homelessness prevention activity and broader interventions to sustain families in permanent settled accommodation.</li> <li>• Strengthen safeguarding practice for vulnerable adults and children across all aspects of housing options and homelessness prevention.</li> <li>• Investigate the particular problems and pathway journeys that are experienced by people with complex needs, including mental health and substance abuse.</li> <li>• Strengthen equalities practice across all aspects of the service.</li> <li>• Make best use of private sector accommodation in meeting all other homelessness priorities.</li> <li>• Sharing awareness and working in partnership with the community and between partner agencies.</li> <li>• Tenancy sustainment.</li> </ul>	
All	<p><b>Sustainable Community Strategy</b></p> <p><b>Eight priorities, which are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximising employment opportunities and delivering housing growth to meet the needs of our communities</li> <li>• Ensuring our local people have the skills to prosper</li> <li>• Keeping our communities safe</li> <li>• Nurturing a sense of pride and belonging</li> <li>• Getting around and caring for a green and clean environment</li> <li>• Promoting health and reducing health inequalities</li> <li>• Educating, protecting and providing opportunities for children and young people</li> <li>• Supporting and caring for an ageing population and those who are most vulnerable</li> </ul> <p><b>Two key themes that underpin and support all the priorities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• creating the conditions for economic success and community prosperity, and</li> <li>• raising standards and tackling inequalities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Sustainable Community Strategy</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 08/06/2010</p>
Sustainable Communities	<p><b>Local Transport Plan</b></p> <p><b>Objectives:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the ease of access to employment by sustainable modes.</li> <li>• Reduce the impact of commuting trips on local communities.</li> <li>• Increase the number of children travelling to school by sustainable modes of transport.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Local Transport Plan</b></p> <p>Approved by Executive Committee 15/02/2011</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve access to healthcare provision by the core health service (hospitals and GPs).</li> <li>• Ensure access to food stores and other local services particularly in local and district centres.</li> <li>• Enable access to a range of leisure, cultural and tourism facilities for residents and visitors.</li> <li>• Enable the efficient and reliable transportation of freight.</li> <li>• Encourage the movement of freight by sustainable modes.</li> <li>• Minimise the negative impacts of freight trips on local communities.</li> <li>• Reduce the risk of people being killed or seriously injured.</li> </ul>	
<b>Corporate Resources</b>	<p><b>Customer First Programme</b></p> <p>Aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the customer experience whilst interacting with Central Bedfordshire Council. Moving services online will make self-service easy for those who are able to access and use the internet. Integration of front and back office processes will ensure that customer enquiries can be resolved at their first point of contact with us, through the lowest cost channel.</li> <li>• Unlock the financial benefits that can be gained through avoiding unnecessary contact with customers or, where appropriate, enabling customers to interact with CBC through our website.</li> </ul> <p>As part of the development of the Channel Shift Strategy consideration has been given to issues such as location of facilities, access to buildings and provision of translation services etc. There is also an undertaking that all staff will offer a consistently high level of customer service and have access to high quality sources of accurate information</p>	<p>Business Case Approved by Executive Committee 15/11/2011</p>
<b>Sustainable Communities</b>	<p><b>Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy</b></p> <p>To set out the vision, strategic objectives and spatial strategy for the area up to 2031 and the policies for achieving the strategic vision. This will entail an assessment of general development needs together with the consideration of any necessary Green Belt reviews. The identification of strategic-scale development sites will also be considered.</p>	<p><b>Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy</b> To be approved by May 2013</p>
<b>Sustainable Communities</b>	<p><b>Gypsy and Traveller Plan</b></p> <p>To identify the Council's approach to the provision of additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches and sites, including the allocation of new sites if required</p>	<p><b>Gypsy and Traveller Plan</b> To be approved by September 2013</p>



## Audit of the Council's Approach 2009 - 2013

<b>Theme 1: Developing and Embedding Central Bedfordshire Council's Approach and Processes</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Prepare the Council for compliance with the Equality Framework for Local Government.	Scheme reflected requirements of Equality Act and Framework.
Corporate and service level structures are in place to ensure delivery and review of the equalities agenda	Implementation led by Policy and Strategy Team. Corporate Policy Adviser (E&D) provides support to all teams.
Political overview and scrutiny processes review equality impacts and objectives.	Committee reporting format requires identification of equality implications.
Embed equality and diversity objectives within organisational planning.	E&D objectives identified during development of all Council Plans.
Corporate strategies and policies are being impact assessed on an ongoing basis and published. A corporately prioritised programme of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) is in place	Over 200 EqIAs undertaken since 2009 (average 60 per year) EqIAs identified via Forward Plan and in discussion with managers.
Ensure that human rights considerations are identified when planning services	Consideration built into EqIA process.
Appropriate measures 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.	EqIA and consultation processes give priority to consideration of these issues as services and policies are developed
Procurement and commissioning frameworks take account of the differing needs of users and citizens. All commissioning and procurement processes take account of equality issues. Contracts include a requirement to deliver an effective and appropriate service fairly and equitably.	Procurement processes include assessment of equality practices. EqIAs inform development of Commissioning Strategies. Contract specifications increasingly developed in Social Care following consultation with service users and families
<b>Theme 2: Leadership / Partnership Working</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Leader, chief executive and partners commit publically to improving equality outcomes and can tell the equality story for their community.	Equality Objectives identified and published 6 April 2012

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.	Sustainable Community Strategy includes commitment to tackle inequalities. Community Engagement Strategy includes commitment to give more people, more opportunities to influence decisions.
Internal, external and partnership communication strategies are designed to promote good relations across all local communities	Brand Guidelines consider accessibility & inclusive customer focus. Publications highlight extensive range of Council activities but not really focused on promoting good relations.
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 / hate crimes effectively.	Police subscribe to national reporting help line Stop Hate UK. Publicity drive planned. Community Safety Partnership considering research into local levels of hate crime and under reporting.
<b>Theme 3: Workforce &amp; Employment Issues, Awareness, Training &amp; Development</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
The workforce strategy identifies key equality issues. Authority understands its local labour market, the barriers equality groups face and the impact this has on achieving a diverse workforce.	People Strategy approved in March 2010. Equality was one of 5 key themes. Annual employment monitoring undertaken to review progress and identify issues
Ensure that all employment procedures comply with equality legislation and employment codes of practice.	Policies developed with reference to ACAS guidance and Equality Act Code of Practice
Authority has a prioritised programme for carrying out EqlAs on major and new employment policies. These are made public.	EIAs undertaken on Your Space, Recruitment, Managing Change, Terms / Conditions, Redeployment, Disciplinary Learning & Development and Capability policies
The authority has made a commitment to equal pay and started work on its equal pay review.	All the legacy authorities had completed single status. As a result of the TUPE transfer of employees into CBC at 01.04.09, there are men and women carrying out like work being paid at different rates because of TUPE. TUPE is a genuine material factor that can be used as a defence against any equal pay claims. Any previous equal pay claims that existed under BCC and transferred to CBC have been dealt with.
Equality issues integrated into appraisal systems	Highlighted on PDR template for 2011/12 but not currently
The Council carries out a training needs assessment of the development required to deliver equality outcomes	Equality Adviser and Learning and Development Advisers meet regularly to review provision.
Raise awareness of equality issues in training courses and ensure officers have relevant and appropriate levels of skills	Draft Learning & Development Policy Range of Ongoing Equality Courses informed by EIA processes.

required. Ensure that equality and diversity policies are communicated, understood and mainstreamed into CBC.	Equality Clause in Training Agreements
Structures are in place to identify, prevent and deal effectively with harassment and bullying in the workplace	Council Value: Respect and Empowerment. Conditions of Service, Grievance, Disciplinary and Accident & Incident Reporting policies in place. Occupational Health and Well-Being Team provides Employee Support. Staff survey monitors views
A range of inclusive structures are in place to engage and involve staff before priorities are set.	Team Talk, Annual satisfaction survey, roadshows and issue specific surveys (e.g. Your Space, Terms & Conditions)
<b>Theme 4: Feedback, Engagement and Consultation.</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
Inclusive community engagement structures developed throughout the authority and its partnerships which include communities of interest. The authority involves and consults with all its communities including disabled people, on an ongoing basis before priorities are agreed. The authority involves and consults with vulnerable and marginalized groups to ensure their views are taken account of. Services ensure that local communities are consulted and/ or engaged with appropriately about service planning and delivery	Community Engagement Strategy adopted by Council on 13/10/09. Social Care Users and Carers Engagement Strategy in place Statement of Community Involvement agreed CBC consultation toolkit designed to help employees plan and carry out effective and meaningful consultation and engagement activities. The toolkit provides information around each stage of the process, from planning a consultation, involving hard to hear groups and interpreting the results. Integral part of EIA processes. The E Communications and Consultation team provide guidance and support in conducting consultation.
Customer feedback and complaints system. Carry out an annual review of complaints, categorised by the equality strands, and develop actions for improvement.	Statutory Adult Social Care & Children's Services complaints are currently monitored and reported annually. Housing to be incorporated in ASC with view to introduce tenant and member involvement. June 2011 may implement complaints customer satisfaction survey. This records some equality data CRM system will enable annual reporting of all Council complaints. Some customer data will be recorded but not across all protected characteristics
Maintain an effective forum of local experts focussing on equality and diversity issues	Forum established since June 09. Four meetings a year held to review EIAs and consider other equality issues
EqIAs involve appropriate community and / or stakeholder groups and are made public.	Forum and stakeholder involvement is Integral part of EIA processes.

Plans in place to improve the participation of under represented groups in civic and public life particularly disabled people.	Engagement Strategy approved 06/10
<b>Theme 5: Intelligence, Monitoring and Review.</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Progress</b>
The authority gathers evidence on the profile of communities, the extent of inequality and disadvantage within their communities and to identify priorities across the authority. Collect, share and use equality information with partners	Ward profiles available on website Joint Strategic Needs Assessment available on website Deprivation and inequalities data included
Systems developed corporately and across services to collect and analyse soft and hard data / intelligence about the community their needs and aspirations.	Customer and Community Insight Team, the E.Communications & Consultation Team and Corporate Policy Adviser promote the collection and use of such data across the Council.
Robust equalities monitoring in relation to Service Delivery, Employment and Corporate overview	Variety of approaches across council. Some gaps in information for certain protected characteristics.
The authority is developing systems to collect, analyse and measure data on how all sections of the community are able to access services.	Customer Services Strategy helping to raise awareness of services, develop a variety of access options, increase levels of access and monitor outcomes / customer satisfaction levels amongst different groups. The strategy includes a commitment to implement a Customer Insight programme which uses Customer Segmentation data to identify customer groups. This illustrates the types of Council and partner services accessed by each group and preferred methods of service access.
Monitoring and reporting of the Single Equality Scheme and actions through agreed consultation method/s.	Scheme adopted May 2010 Action Plan reviewed April / May 2011. Updated Action Plan presented to Equality Forum 23 June 2011

## Policy Statement - Summary of Key Actions

Central Bedfordshire Council is committed to the elimination of discrimination in both service delivery and employment because it is essential that services are provided fairly to all sections of our community and because we value the contribution our employees make to achieve this.

### Equality of opportunity is about:

- Treating people with dignity and respect and accepting people as individuals.
- Understanding and addressing the needs of individuals or groups relating to age, carers, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and other factors such as socio economic disadvantage.
- Engaging with service users, local communities, staff, stakeholders and contractors to identify and implement improvements.
- Tackling barriers which restrict access to services and employment opportunities
- Knowing who uses (or should use) different services.
- Making sure our recruitment, selection, training and promotion processes support us to appoint the best people for the job and to develop and maintain the highest standards of skills and expertise.

### The Council will act to:

- § eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality of opportunity
- § ensure that all service users are treated with dignity and respect and that we recognise and value people's differences
- § understand that some groups of people experience more disadvantage than others and target services to meet their particular needs
- § encourage participation of under represented groups in public life
- § continually improve services to make sure they are accessible and provided fairly to everyone in our community
- § create and maintain a workplace where all employees are treated with dignity and respect
- § develop and train our members and employees to help them recognise equality issues

<h3>Directors and Managers will</h3>
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- Actively promote awareness of equality and compliance with legislation
- Undertake training on equality and diversity issues regularly (every three years)
- Ensure fairness and equity of treatment in service delivery and employment practices
- Identify equality implications of council functions, strategies, policies and decisions
- Ensure the service delivery and working environment is free of discrimination, including harassment, victimisation and bullying
- Ensure that all people who help to deliver our services are aware of this policy statement
- Provide clear information about where, and to whom, customers should complain
- Listen to complaints and comments and act upon them
- Make clear to staff that discrimination is unacceptable and that it will be treated as a serious matter and a disciplinary offence
- Deal promptly and thoroughly with complaints of discrimination recording all incidents
- Support customers or staff who experience discrimination
- Take appropriate action against any customer or member of staff who harasses or acts in a discriminatory way towards other customers or members of staff

## **Employees will**

- Act in line with this policy statement
- Ensure that they treat other colleagues and customers fairly and with respect
- Undertake training on equality and diversity issues regularly (every three years)
- Not use discriminatory behaviour or practices in the workplace or when providing services
- Record any incident of harassment, bullying or victimisation
- Support customers or staff who experience discrimination
- Provide clear information about where, and to whom, customers should complain
- Listen to complaints and comments and act upon them

### **Accessibility Strategy and Reasonable Adjustments for Disabled Pupils**

Central Bedfordshire Council 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 and schools 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.

For a number of years the Council has managed and administered funding for improved accessibility through the Schools Access Initiative (SAI). Numerous modifications and improvements have been made across all Central Bedfordshire schools to increase physical access. The Council has maintained an up to date Asset Management Plan for maintained schools and accessibility audits have been separately documented as part of suitability assessments to inform use of the SAI funding.

The current capital programme continues to allow for SAI funding for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools, and this is reviewed as appropriate. Voluntary Aided schools are also able to access DfE funding through the Local Authority Coordinated Voluntary Aided Programme.

The Council also works closely with health partners to establish the needs of individual pupils and to identify appropriate support. All new buildings and facilities are designed to be fully accessible.

An increasing number of Central Bedfordshire schools are seeking academy status and as a result are taking on full responsibility for ensuring accessibility for disabled pupils. Non maintained schools will have to apply to the Education Funding Agency for capital adjustments and will need to fund the provisions of auxiliary aids and services from their own budgets.

Central Bedfordshire Council will continue to support and challenge settings/schools to ensure that they fulfil these responsibilities. In instances where responsibilities are shared this will be managed strategically.

The Council will continue to signpost schools to guidance and good practice in making reasonable adjustments and removing barriers to learning and achievement.