

Equality Action Plan Progress Highlights January to August 2013

The council's previous equality scheme, Making Connections – Changing Perceptions, was in place until December 2012. Since January 2013, whilst work has continued on the consultation and development of the new Equality Action Plan (2103 – 2016), the following progress has been made on the seven strategic equality objectives.

Strategic Planning

Objective 1: To consider the needs of and impact on diverse communities and clients in developing council strategies, policies and plans.

- A Cumulative Impact Assessment was compiled and examined as a key part of the budget planning process. This ensured that an overview of the potential combined impact of the various individual proposals, on the equalities protected characteristics, was available before decisions were taken and, where necessary, mitigating actions were taken.
- The Council Plan has been produced as a two sided document, highlighting key challenges. This is much shorter than in previous years so that it is an easy read, simple document.

Service Development and Delivery

Objective 2: To provide customer focussed and accessible services, taking into consideration the changing diversity of the city's population profile and needs.

- Equality and Safety Impact Assessments (ESIA) continue to be done for new policies, proposals and service amendments, for example the proposed changes to customer services where the ESIA has led to a full public consultation and the draft ESIA has been published to ensure that it is reflective of all the possible impacts.
- Consultation on the budget proposals led to changes being made as a result of feedback received – for example reinstatement of part of the funding for a carers project and an extension of funding for the youth service for another year.
- Work continues on the refurbishment of the Civic Centre and the building is once more open and accessible to all members of the public during business hours.

Objective 3: To ensure commissioning, contracting and grants decisions of the council take into account the diverse needs of the city's population.

- The Southampton City Clinical Commissioning Group, in partnership with the council, is developing a joint training programme for staff that includes reference to equalities issues throughout the procurement cycle.
- The application forms for the council's new outcome based grants included questions relating to Equality and Safety Impact Assessments to inform decision making when making grant awards.
- The council is currently also developing an ethical procurement policy that will include equalities issues.

Performance

Objective 4: To monitor regularly relevant service performance in relation to groups identified in the Equality Act and embed equality measures in the Council Plan.

- An Equalities Profile has been researched, analysed and produced to bring together existing data about the diversity of Southampton's residents. This profile, which will be available on the Equality Information Portal, will be used to improve the understanding of the needs of residents in all aspects of the council's work.

Objective 5: To ensure that policies in place are fair so that they do not discriminate against anyone and the council workforce is reflective of the population.

- Work has continued on council's pay and allowance framework.
- An event was held for major employers in April 2013, linked to the Southampton Fairness Commission, to explore the concept of the Living Wage in the city.
- The council continues to provide support for staff and to record information about employee gender, ethnicity and age.

Communications

Objective 6: To ensure all council communications reflect the diversity of the city's communities.

- Work is being carried out on the council's website to embed Google Translate. This will help to make online content more accessible to people for whom English is not their first language.
- All council documents continue to be available in alternative formats if this is necessary to make them more accessible; for example in Easy Read.

Partnerships

Objective 7: To ensure that partnership activities, plans and initiatives take into consideration relevant equalities issues.

- In June, Cabinet approved the establishment of the Southampton Fairness Commission; a time-limited, independent body to examine issues to do with inequality in the city. The Commission will examine key areas including education, employment and pay; access to a better local environment and services; and increasing citizen, community and voluntary sector involvement.
- The council has continued to work with partner agencies to support victims of hate crime and harassment and on other community safety initiatives, like Operation Fortress which is tackling drug issues.
- The council has been working with other agencies who are looking to establish Southampton as a City of Sanctuary.