



Eastleigh Borough Council

Equality Action Plan
2016 - 2020

1. Introduction

The Council's vision is to support Eastleigh Borough and its communities developing a strong and sustainable economy that supports improved standards of living for residents; promoting thriving and healthy communities; and maintaining an attractive and sustainable environment that resident's value (EBC Corporate Plan Vision, November 2015). The Council is keen to celebrate the diversity of our Borough and ensure that all groups can play a full and equal role in our community. Unfortunately some groups of people face a number of barriers which prevent them from fully participating in the community and achieving this aim. This action plan sets out how the Council will try to help these people and remove some of the barriers they face.

2. Executive Summary

This action plan is concerned with how the Council can help groups of people who often face disadvantage and aims to improve the quality of life for all residents as well as meeting its legal responsibilities. The plan reflects the needs of the local community and its changing demographics. The Council is keen to make sure that everyone is able to access services and be part of our community, that our services are responsive and that our staff are aware and understand equality issues. We have developed an action plan which is aimed at being responsive and pro-active in meeting these needs of residents.

3. Context

This action plan is aimed at achieving real outcomes for our communities. It is the second action plan for the Council. In the first strategy we focussed on getting our processes right, in this strategy we want clear outcomes for residents.

The action plan has been developed in the context of the Equality Act 2010 which replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. Under the Equality Act the Council has a duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- Advance equality of opportunity and
- Foster good relations.

In addition the Council has specific responsibilities to publish information to show compliance with the duty at least annually (as well as to set and publish equality at least every four years).

The action plan has also been developed in response to changing demographics within the Borough. We are aware that a significant proportion of the population of the Borough will be older people who may have specific needs. We are also aware of the need to respond to new communities moving into the Borough such as the Ghurkha/Nepalese community. Information about the demographics of the Borough is contained within Appendix 1 of this strategy.

4. Why does equality matter?

For the Council, equality matters because it means treating people fairly and promoting equality of opportunity. Unfortunately some people in our communities can face discrimination, harassment and worse outcomes in important areas such as health and education; the new legislation seeks to re-address the balance for those groups. The Act sets out what is covered by the legislation and these are termed protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are:

Age - where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).

Disability - a person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment - the process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Marriage and civil partnership - a person is legally married if the union is recognised as a marriage under UK law. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

Pregnancy and maternity - pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race - refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Religion and belief - religion has the meaning usually given to it, but belief encompasses religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex - a man or a woman.

Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes

A person is also protected if they are discriminated against because s/he is perceived to have, or is associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic

The EBC Corporate Plan includes an objective to improve the health of older people due to changes in demographics, and targeting some approaches to get people more physically active on older people and other groups with protected characteristics.

The EBC Corporate Plan also includes an objective to tackle deprivation and reduce health inequalities; this includes taking reasonable action where groups with protected characteristics are found to experience worse outcomes than other groups. (It also includes addressing issues of deprivation in neighbourhoods although this is not a protected characteristic.)

5. Our aims

One of the main features of this action plan is the focus on the needs of our community and ensuring we are in touch with the difficulties people can experience. Our main priorities will be:

- Ensuring our services are accessible.
- Ensuring everyone is able to be part of our community and that different groups of people are recognised as having a contribution to make and are respected.
- Ensuring our staff are aware and understand equality issues.

- Ensuring our services are responsive and that we communicate and listen effectively by using a range of communications channels suited to a diverse audience.
- Ensuring we have recruitment and employment practices and policies which do not discriminate against people with protected characteristics and promote equality of opportunity.

6. Our Approach

- Effective use of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to improve outcomes for all the community.
- Compulsory online training course for staff.
- Ensuring that all communications strategies and campaigns developed for Council services recognise the needs of the borough's diverse communities.
- Ensuring that an accessible information statement is included in all communications material (printed or electronic).
- Ensuring that consultation takes place with people who have protected characteristics about any new or significantly changed policies and services affecting them.

7. Progress on actions from the previous action plan

The previous action plans ran from 2012 to 2016 and below are some of the key achievements:

- Compulsory online equality and diversity training for staff introduced in 2014.
- Set up Nepalese elders group with partner organisations in 2015 with 10-20 elders attending.
- Part funded a Community Advocates course in Eastleigh for people from BME communities in a joint project with SOS Polonia. The course was attended by 22 people speaking 9 different languages from 10 countries. The course supported participants to develop their understanding of public services including Council services and health services. The project has resulted in improved communication between service providers and community members.

- Provided ongoing support to the Asian Welfare and Cultural Association elders group of between 35-50 people to support them in accessing services.
- Developing a "health card" to alert health services of the need for and statutory duty to provide an interpreter with West Hampshire CCG and voluntary organisations.
- Regularly attended ESOL (English as Second or Other Language) courses at Eastleigh College to provide information and respond to queries about access to services.
- Continued to support the Racial Equality Forum to meet quarterly and provision of regular updates about Council activities and services. The Racial Equality Forum has established an annual meeting at Eastleigh College which has been successful in engaging young people. The Forum has also been a key stakeholder in the Eastleigh Hate Crime project resulting in a Hate Crime reporting centre being established in Eastleigh Museum
- Continued support financially and with the organisation of the annual Eastleigh Mela including the delivery of free mini health checks. The Mela was attended by around 10,000 people in 2015 and 40 mini health checks were carried out.
- Become a member of the Hampshire Dementia Action Alliance and developing Local Dementia Action Groups and provided Dementia Friends training for staff. 25 staff in EBC have attended a dementia friends session.
- Carried out Equality Impact Assessments for key decisions and policies. This has included consulting specific groups about the Customer Service Centre, the introduction of the "My Eastleigh" system online and the Local Taxation Scheme.
- Supported One Community to host Older People's network events across the Borough in Velmore, Chandlers Ford, Underhill, Hedge End, Fair Oak and Netley Grange. Approximately 208 people attended.
- Consulted groups including older people, young people and ethnic minorities about the Customer Service Centre.

8. Action Plan

The plan below sets out the main actions the Council will undertake in the next few years. Not all Council services are mentioned in the plan, however all services will contribute towards achieving equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity.

9. Consultation Process

There will be a consultation process to ensure we have identified the right priorities and actions. This will include asking for comments on the strategy and visiting key interest groups to discuss our plans and obtain feedback.

10. Financial Implications

It is anticipated that implementing the priorities in this strategy will not be costly. It is expected that a lot of the outcomes can be achieved by asking people what they want and being responsive. Where there are initiatives which will have a financial implication this has been included in the action plan.

11. Conclusion

The Council hopes that this strategy will contribute towards improving the quality of life for residents.

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Action Plan

Priority	What we will do	Milestones
1. Effective use of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to improve outcomes for the community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Completion of EIAs for new or significantly changed services and policies where relevant. b) Publication of EIAs on Council website within month of approval. c) Record of key EIA findings to be included in Council Committee reports. d) A summary of EIAs conducted and findings to be reported to the Cabinet Portfolio holder quarterly. 	Review quarterly
2. Ensuring staff and councillors are appropriately trained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Online training course compulsory for staff as part of induction b) Provide briefings for Councillors as part of Member Development. 	<p>100% of staff to have undertaken the training.</p> <p>Sessions for Members to be arranged as part of the revised Members training programme.</p>
3. Ensuring our communication is accessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Ensure that all communication strategies and campaigns developed for Council services recognise the needs of the borough's diverse communities. d) Ensure that an accessible information statement is included in all communications material (printed or electronic). e) Respond to requests for information in alternative formats or for translation or interpretation services promptly. Record requests for monitoring. f) Ensure all literature and information provided is easy to understand and accessible. 	Annual report to Scrutiny Panel

Priority	What we will do	Milestones
4. Monitor Access to Services.	a) Ensure monitoring information about services is kept and if it seems some groups are not using services take action to identify and remove barriers.	Immediate
5. Ensure new and existing ethnic minority communities are supported to access services and integrate in the borough.	<p>a) Work with the Health and Wellbeing partnership to improve access to health services.</p> <p>b) Support the Eastleigh Mela as a focal point for celebrating diversity.</p>	<p>Pilot the NHS Health Alert card about access to interpreters.</p> <p>Support initiatives and funding bids to develop community advocates.</p> <p>Provide free mini health checks at the Eastleigh Mela.</p> <p>Provide grant funding of £9,000 for the Mela in 2016</p>
6. Ensuring we respond to the needs of older people.	<p>a) Provide funding for One Community to run Older Peoples Network meetings across the Borough.</p> <p>b) Lead the development of Dementia Action Groups across the Borough Friends and Trigger Tool training for staff.</p> <p>c) Provide a subsidised handy person scheme offering discounted home repairs for older and disabled people.</p>	<p>Funding in place for 2016/2017.</p> <p>Dementia Local action groups established in 5 local areas</p> <p>Number of people using the service is 250 plus.</p>

Priority	What we will do	Milestones	Outcome
7. Ensuring we respond to the needs of disabled people and vulnerable people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review and re-launch the Safe Places initiative in the borough in partnership with One Community. b) Develop second 3rd party hate crime reporting centre in the borough c) Develop further links with the Eastleigh Disability Forum. 	<p>Relaunch by end of 2016 at Annual Community Safety Forum.</p> <p>By Spring 2017.</p> <p>Develop a link with the Eastleigh Disability Forum and the Eastleigh Health and Wellbeing Board.</p>	Vulnerable groups more confident in visiting the town and village centres.
8. Promote equalities as an employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue equalities monitoring of the recruitment process. b) Offer interviews to all disabled applicants that meet the job description requirements. c) Sign up to the employers mental health pledge 'Time to Change'. d) Explore how we can promote employment opportunities within the Council to people from diverse background. 	<p>Report to Portfolio Lead quarterly.</p> <p>Provide mental health awareness training for managers and staff.</p> <p>Sign up to the pledge and develop an action plan in 2017.</p> <p>Monitoring information concerning recruitment complied and reviewed quarterly.</p>	

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