

Equalities Objectives and Activities 2014 – 15

Introduction

Following the introduction to the Equality Act 2010, public authorities are required to comply with the general equality duty and specific equality duties as set out below:

General Duty

In the exercise of our functions, West Berkshire Council must have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Specific Duties

In summary, the Council are required to:

- 1.** Publish information to demonstrate our compliance with the general equality duty. This needs to be done annually in January each year. This information must include information relating to people who share a protected characteristic who are employees or others affected by our policies and practices. (Employee information is published in the Annual Employee Report. Details of where this can be found are included below.)
- 2.** We must prepare and publish one or more objectives that act to further any of the aims of the general equality duty. This must be done at least every four years, beginning in 2012. The objectives must be specific and measurable.

The Council's equality objectives were drawn directly from the West Berkshire Council Strategy 2014-18, where equality is core to the way in which we plan and deliver our services.

The following table sets out the Council's equality objectives and supporting activities, and provides a summary of our progress over the last year.

	Objectives	Activities	Progress at November 2014
1	Continue implementation of personalised budgets for young people with disabilities.	The number of families currently engaged in the West Berkshire Personalised Budgets Pilot is 9 compared to 6 at this time last year. The target is to engage 10 families by the end of the year.	
2	Deliver effective transport solutions across the district	Deliver master plan for Theale station improvements to include new ticketing, new car parking and new disabled access bridge by 31 March 2016	Parts of this project are already complete – e.g. new ticket office, new pedestrian entrance (although these elements have not yet been brought into use), other elements will be delivered by end of March 2015 (new waiting shelters, cycle parking) and the disabled access bridge has slipped and will be complete in Summer 2015 (this is out of our control as being delivered by FGW and there have been some unforeseen issues).
		Develop a Planning Policy Parking Strategy for the District by 31 March 2016	This has been out to consultation and is on track.
		Increase number of bus stops having improved passenger facilities by 70.	At the end of September, 56 further bus stops have improved passenger facilities.
3	Challenge and support schools where outcomes for	Children's Centres, including those lead and managed by two nursery schools maintained by the Local Authority, identify and support children aged 0-5 years and their families and offer early intervention programmes to improve outcomes.	

	<p>pupils need improvement and focus early years support on children and families who are most vulnerable.</p>	<p>Increase the proportion of children eligible for Free School Meals (ever6) who achieve 5+A*-C grades at GCSE (incl English and Maths)</p>	<p>The gap between FSM6 students and others has reduced in West Berkshire by 2.6 percentage points, whereas it has actually increased nationally by 1.1 percentage points. Six schools decreased the gap in 2014 from the prior year, and for 4 schools the gap increased. The free school meals “ever6” cohort was 291 students out of 1919.</p>
4	<p>Endeavour to minimise discrimination, harassment and victimisation and advance equality of opportunity for employees and all members of our communities</p>	<p>Ensure that all employees have taken part in mandatory equalities training at least every 3 years</p>	<p>70% of employees have undertaken equalities training within the last 3 years. This remains stable when compared to the previous year’s level of 69%.</p>
		<p>Proportion of members trained / refreshed in equality training</p>	<p>19% of Members undertook equalities training during the last 3 years, a reduction from 31% in 2013/14. Member training is arranged every 3 years with the last session held in June 2014.</p>
		<p>Ensure all new and revised policies entered into the executive cycle have been subject to a impact assessment establishing any potential adverse impact on people with protected characteristics</p>	<p>The Equality Impact Assessment process was reviewed and amended in 2014. The decision making process requires equality to be considered and reports will be returned to Officers if it is considered that this has not occurred.</p>

		<p>Publish equality data on the equalities web pages covering the impact of the Council's policies and services on an annual basis.</p>	<p>The Council provides information relating to employees in its Annual Employee Report. Information relating to 2011/12 can be found at: http://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=34897</p> <p>The Council maintains a range of research, information and data relating to the residents of West Berkshire. This can be located at: http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=27922</p> <p>Equality Impact Assessments, where applicable, are published alongside the relevant report on the Council's Committee web pages at: http://decisionmaking.westberks.gov.uk/uuCoverPage.aspx?bcr=1</p>
5	<p>Ensure that our workforce is reflective of our communities</p>	<p>Any approved recommended actions from the annual employment report be actioned within 12 months.</p>	<p>The annual employment report 2012/13 was reviewed by the Corporate Including Everyone Board. No actions were recommended to be followed up, however information would continue to be monitored.</p>

6	<p>Continue to focus on recruitment of additional local carers with a particular emphasis on adopters and foster care for children with complex needs.</p>	<p>During the year 2014/15 there has been a complete update of the fostering and adoption recruitment pages on the main West Berkshire website in alignment with the website upgrade in April/May of the year. This focussed on giving easy access to online information and enquiry resources across all platforms including PCs, tablet computers and mobile phones, underpinned by radio, press and internet advertising to drive traffic to the resources.</p> <p>Adoption enquiries in particular responded well to this update with enquiries well beyond those required for West Berkshires needs now in training and approval process.</p> <p>Fostering enquires, under pressure from increased competitive activity in the region, have responded well after a slower start to the new resources and with a totally revamped information, training and approval process are now specifically targeted at recruiting carers for children and young people with all ranges of needs, including specialist provisions. In particular regular monthly daytime information sessions (shortly to include additional evening sessions) and quarterly three day preparation groups allow a clear roadmap for potential carers to map their follow up interests against. This programme will also include the launch of an Intensive fostering resource in 2015 aimed at the needs of particularly challenging children and young people under an 'invest to save' initiative. Focussed primarily on placing in West Berkshire children and young people placed outside of the local area, at present, in residential or specialist placements the scheme will bring the benefits of remaining in their home locality to children and young people previously unable to do so.</p>
7	<p>Influence, commission and provide adult and community learning opportunities that provide for the most vulnerable, and the wider adult population.</p>	<p>The Community Learning Team commission and fund learning opportunities for both vulnerable groups, as identified in the Council Plan and the Community Learning Plan, and the wider adult community.</p>