



Contains Confidential or Exempt Information	No
Title	Annual Equalities Plan and Priorities April 2020 -March 2022
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Contact Details	celia.golden@hounslow.gov.uk
For Consideration By	Cabinet
Date to be Considered	9 June 2020
Implementation Date if Not Called In	Following Cabinet decision
Affected Wards	All
Keywords/Index	

1. Details of Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to note and agree

i) the refreshed Annual Equalities Plan and priorities for April 2020 -March 2022 (in paragraph 13.29) and to note the equalities progress made to date.

ii) that future promotion of equalities events is led and delivered by specialist third sector organisations who represent equality groups in order to accommodate the emerging new demand for Equalities support against fixed staffing budgets. (see paragraph 13.25.2)

iii) in principle, to the merger of the Housing Disability Tenants forum with Disability Community Forum (see paragraph 13.24.6 and 13.24.7) subject to consultation with the Tenants forum, which was delayed due to new government guidance on social distancing, following Covid 19.

iv) the equalities work to support the 'Recovery programme' to mitigate against the impact of Covid 19 and lockdown on vulnerable equality communities (see paragraph 13.29.1)

If the recommendations are adopted, how will residents' benefit?

Benefits to residents and reasons why they will benefit, link to Values	Dates by which they can expect to notice a difference
The Annual Equalities Plan and key priorities will help to reduce inequalities faced by equalities groups and deliver the Council's Equal Opportunities and Human Rights policy commitments to residents.	April 2020 -March 2021

2. Report Summary

The current Equal Opportunity and Human Rights policy was drafted in 2017. The Delivery Plan 2017 – 2021 is in its final year of implementation and this report highlights the key achievements made on the delivery plan and refreshes the objectives and priorities for the following two years.

The Equality Act 2010 stipulates that public authorities must publish Equality Objectives, annually, which are the targets and actions the Council will take to reduce inequality. The Council published its first set of equality objectives in 2017 which was based on the statutory requirements, feedback developed in consultation with equality groups and in response to evidence of inequality. This also needs to be updated as new needs have been emerging. In particular, the priorities detailed in this report also seek to contribute to the Council's work on Recovery which anticipates the scale of inequalities in the Borough to rise significantly in response to the impact of Covid 19 and Lockdown.

The new areas of work pose a significant challenge on the team's capacity to deliver to high standards on all fronts. In order to accommodate the new areas of work, it is proposed that some work, such as organising equalities events be delivered by third sector specialists with oversight and support from the Council.

It does not reflect all the work the Council undertakes, to reduce inequality. They only highlight the priorities, undertaken by the Equalities team which delivers on the Council's Equal Opportunities and Human Rights policy commitments and the Equality Objectives.

If adopted, the key financial implications for the Council will be met from within existing budgets.

3. Reason for Decision and Options Considered

3.1 The primary work of the Equality team, to ensure that the Council meets its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 will continue. However, there has been a notable shift in emphasis in the teams' work from governance to proactively initiating and leading projects which support vulnerable groups in the community. Whilst mainstreaming of equality in departments will continue, there is an ambitious drive to undertake more targeted work with communities and third sector equality organisations with limited staffing.

3.2 Response to Covid 19 and Lockdown

The shift in equalities work recognises the urgency of the Council's work on 'Recovery', to tackle the impact of Covid 19 and the Lockdown. The Council faces crucial challenges in the face of a pandemic and the economic shock that has followed it, which will continue to reverberate long after lock down has been lifted. The Council is adopting a 'Recovery' plan that aims to protect residents from the worst of the economic, social, health and environmental impacts of the disruption

3.3 The Council's equality priorities acknowledge the scale of the contribution necessary from all services to support the 'Recovery' efforts and offers critical support to combine our collective focus and energy in all our work to achieve a strong recovery.

3.4 We should not underestimate the catastrophic impacts of sectoral and structural changes in the local economy for our residents. National research by the Resolution Foundation has identified that young and older workers will be disproportionately affected by the seismic impact of reductions in actual job vacancies against the numbers looking for work. Other national research by the ONS and the Deyton review by the Institute of Fiscal Studies highlight disproportionate impacts for Black and ethnic minority communities (BAME).

3.5 Whilst we may have a sobering understanding of the economic and fiscal costs what is less clear, is the scale of impact and the inequalities that our residents are likely to face, particularly at a Borough level, especially regarding the most disadvantaged on grounds of their equality characteristics. They will face unemployment, poverty and tremendous hardships especially for those who work in the sectors predicted to shrink, resulting in significant job losses at local level.

3.6 The Equality unit will work to ensure that the 'Recovery' isn't remote, that our programme of 'Recovery' is current and relevant and that we offer leadership to shield our communities from the aftereffects of the Lock down. Equally critical, is for the 'Recovery' programme to be sensitive to the scarring it can leave behind on specific communities. Tackling Inequality has been acknowledged as a central plank of our recovery work and the Equality work will ambitiously seek to influence 'recovery' work to mitigate against the challenges our communities will face.

3.7 The new equalities work programme signals a strong focus on local communities, building social capital to create new local infrastructure and capacity for our third sector to support the most vulnerable residents to prevent dependencies by tackling the root causes of need, to help the Council to offer timely and appropriate interventions that avoids demand for acute Council services.

3.8. The Unit's new priorities also include a critical piece of work to understand the Impact on Hounslow BAME communities of Covid 19 and lockdown. The unit's work aims to contribute to the intelligence on community impact and any unique impacts for equality groups with a view to stressing both the immediate issues facing equalities groups, but also for the long term.

3.9 The new work also proposes advice at a Pan London level, to support government efforts to ensure hard to reach communities engage with the testing, tracking and tracing programme when it is offered more universally for all.

3.10 There are recommendations for new work with our equality based third sector organisations in recognition of the fact that the third sector cannot be expected to simply deliver as before, nor can we as a Council return to business as usual with the sector. We need to rethink how to harness and galvanise opportunities to build new capacity within our third sector as we can anticipate increased demand from our residents to our charity sector. So, a raft of equality work is planned to build the social capacity of the third sector specifically supporting equality organisations. This includes, a need to review the resilience of our third sector equality organisations and the challenges they faced to respond to the impact of COVID 19 and lockdown.

3.11 Equally importantly, this fundamental shift also contributes to ‘business as usual’ work and to achieving the principles in the Corporate Plan and many of the departmental Key Strategies. For example, to support our drive to spend money wisely, we help to design services that are right for all our communities the first time, so that we don’t have to spend money to redesign services. We give technical advice and pilot test the design of Hounslow Heritage sites Hogarth House, Boston Manor Park etc.

3.12 Our engagement work with DCF, Equality Plus and BSL Video Relay Service supports Council’s efforts to promote a single door experience for Hounslow residents, to make it easier for them to contact the council and for the council to resolve their enquiry first time around and for getting it right first time: It also signals the Council’s commitment to listen and respond to our residents, and act on feedback from very vulnerable customers who tell us what works, what doesn’t, and what could be better. We’ll use insight from our equalities work with communities and third sector equality groups to support our intention to ‘nip’ problems in the bud and increase customer satisfaction

3.13 Hounslow has a very diverse population of 276,700. The Borough is home to a significant and growing black and ethnic minority population, currently estimated to be around 185,600 (67%) of the total population according to GLA estimates. Out of 36,400 school pupils, 28,700 (79%) are from black and ethnic minority background.

3.14 Over 35,000 (13%) residents have a long-term illness or disability. There are over 32,000 (12%) people living in Hounslow who are over the traditional retirement age of 65 years.

3.15 The 2015 GLA estimate indicates that in Hounslow 8,195 claim disability allowance. Hanworth has the highest rate of claimants for disability allowance with Isleworth and Heston West both following with the second highest rate. The next three wards with the highest rate of claimants for disability allowance are Feltham North, Bedfont (both with the same rate) and Cranford. Chiswick Homefields and Osterley and Spring Grove mutually have the lowest rate of claimants.

3.16 The primary support reason for the allowance is for physical support either personal care support or for those who have access and mobility support, learning disability, mental health support, sensory and other support. This provides the rationale for the priority we like to give in our work to disabled residents, particularly in terms of engagement work.

3.17 The number and estimated proportion of pupils with Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP) is 2,498.

2,224 of these EHCP's are for school children aged between 5 to 19 years old. The proportion of pupils aged 15-19 years old, EHCP is mutually highest in Bedfont and Hanworth with Feltham North, Isleworth and Feltham West as the next highest (in order of highest to lowest). The two mutually lowest wards are Hounslow South and Chiswick Homefields.

3.18 Hounslow data on Sexual Orientation is not available and transgender data is not available at Hounslow level but using national data forecasting, Hounslow is estimated to have 1,400 people (approximately 70 people per ward) who identify as transgender.

3.19 The experience of inequality and its impact on life experience is complex. Some people may fit within a protected characteristic but may not define themselves that way. Similarly, other people may define themselves by more than one protected characteristic and experience multiple inequalities and discrimination. It is important that protected characteristics are not each viewed separately, but that the connections and their collective impact are considered. There is significant public health evidence acknowledging that socio-economic status, or people on low income taken as a proxy measure, have poorer physical and mental health; and have a life expectancy that is, on average, ten years lower than those living in the most affluent areas.

3.20 There is an urgent need to improve outcomes for residents for the poorest and most disadvantaged people in the Borough whilst understanding the impact communities face because of their race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, or religion and belief. To ensure that equality is considered at all levels of policy and service delivery and decision making, the Council adopted a number of high level Objectives detailed below and this report highlights progress against those Objectives.

3.21 The report also seeks Member and Chief officer endorsement for emerging new priorities set out in paragraph 3.19 and to agree to all future Equalities events being delivered by Hounslow's Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations (see paragraph 3.14.1 and 3.14.2) and to merge Housing Tenants forum with Disability Community Forum. (see paragraphs 3.13. 5 and 3.13.6).

3.22 Progress highlights

Objective 1 Ensuring employment practices are fair and consistent

3.22.1 There is a two-pronged approach to achieve this objective: the first involves an organisational focus relating to the Council's HR functions and policies. The second approach focuses on targeted support to vulnerable disabled residents to connect them to employers to improve access to employment opportunities. However, this targeted support will need to be extended to consider mitigation measures for ethnic minority communities and businesses whose employment and service offer are based in the airline industry in West London, and associated transport and freight, logistics, and tourism sector and other supply chain services. The seismic impact of Covid 19 will result in significant hardships for our residents if the key West London sectors are unable to maintain current employment rates. Many of those working at the airport are from ethnic minority backgrounds and the implications of potential job losses is that we can anticipate widening inequality created by employment and income insecurity and we can expect to see food and fuel poverty, along with housing insecurity. It is imperative that the Council gathers data intelligence and to identify the mitigation measures that are within our gift and that of our partners and which is within our orb of influence. This second approach will therefore, be more prominent. The unit will seek new partnerships to help residents retrain for new skills and offer help with job search and to work with Regeneration and the Intelligence Hub teams of the Council, to galvanise and harness every opportunity to mitigate the impact of COVID 19 on equality groups.

3.22.2 The organisational focus involves Equality and HR working closely to ensure that due regard is given to equality in all HR functions and policies. All the HR policies have been reviewed and refreshed to be consistent with Equality duties and promote LB Hounslow as an Employer of Choice.

3.22.3 The Council fully supports the employment of disabled staff and makes every effort to ensure reasonable adjustments are made to the workplace to enable staff to work effectively. As an employer, we are aware of our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and are committed to offering support and making reasonable adjustments to allow for full participation in the recruitment process.

3.22.4 Employment Equality Monitoring

The Council undertakes annual employment equality monitoring to assess how well the Council responds as an Employer to its equality obligations.

3.22.5 The Council has legal duty to collect and monitor equality data on the status and background of staff, including for example on age, gender, disability, sexual orientation and ethnicity and belief to meet the equality duty.

3.22.6 HR undertakes this annually by monitoring and reporting on staff with protected characteristic and an equality impact assessment is undertaken to compare performance from the previous year and to consider where we can influence and achieve greater outcomes to achieve equality. For example, work is planned to consider the Gender pay gap and also the pay gaps relating to Diversity

and other equality characteristics as part of the People Strategy.

3.22.7 Some of the other key HR areas considered include:

- **Disability Confident Accreditation** - replaces the 'Two ticks' Scheme and Equality and HR worked in partnership to gain Level 2 Accreditation
- **Workforce diversity** - the composition of our workforce to better assess workforce diversity and demographic representation.
- **Recruitment** - the success rates of those applying for employment with the Council
- **Formal disciplinary, performance management action** -the numbers of staff who are subject to formal disciplinary, performance management action and grievances and or who bring grievances under the following policies: Disciplinary; Capability and Grievance.
- **Staff turnover**, including reasons for leaving
- **Access to training and development** -the numbers of staff who apply for and attend training and development events.
- **Performance Appraisal** – HR has systems in place to monitor that all staff have an annual appraisal and personal development plan.
- **Dignity at Work** (including harassment and bullying) – the Council has in place up to date policies to tackle incidences of harassment and bullying by protected characteristic
- **Gender Pay Gap Reporting** –HR and Equality are working to address gender pay gap differences through its People Strategy,

3.22.8 The second limb of the Employment Objective involves Supporting disadvantaged residents into the labour market

Apart from ensuring that core equality standards are in place for the workforce in terms of HR, the equality team also work in partnership with the Employment Opportunities Service to ensure disabled residents gain and retain meaningful paid employment opportunities; by promoting and routing disabled residents to the jobs. The Council also develops key working partnerships and employer networks and with a range of providers and stakeholders including Jobcentre Plus, Adult Education, Schools, Colleges Heathrow and the Voluntary Sector. We have successfully contributed to Hounslow's Skills and Employment Strategy 2015, by creating partnerships that help disabled residents into employment and education.

3.22.9 Progress can be assessed by the number of job referrals; job retentions; numbers supported into paid work and those accessing training support; as well as the number of employers who are supported and advised

3.22.10 Progress for the year 2019-20 by the Employment Service:

There were 89 referrals to the service from 36 different sources including self-referrals. 30 job retention with 3 Access to work applications; 59 support to find work, volunteering or courses. 39 people with learning disabilities or difficulties were referred, 2 people with physical disabilities, 24 people with mental health conditions, 19 on the autism spectrum and 5 with sensory impairments.

3.22.11 The employment service has contributed to providing advice and support to

- 28 people on employment related matters
- 12 people on developing essential skills by accessing education courses
- Arranged volunteering opportunities for 8 people.

Supported 26 people with job retention issues, which contributed to 26 of 26 retaining paid employment. Employers that have been supported include Cineworld, Premier Inn, KFC, Royal Mail, Sainsburys, Hamleys, Oaklands School, BBC, Hounslow Town Primary School, Asda, Dixons, Lampton 360 and Snow and Rock.

3.22.12 The Employment Service has also worked in partnership with Nviro, Speak Out in Hounslow, Green Corridor, Groundwork London, Our Barn, Volunteering Hounslow, Shooting Star Children's Charity, Generate, Action on Disability, Leonard Cheshire Disability to bring new employment programmes for people with disabilities to the Borough. They also worked in partnership with West London Mental Health Trust to maintain and develop the Hounslow Mental Health Employment Network. This Quarterly meeting is hosted by the Service They are currently working with Bucks New University in promoting a 3-day training course for residents to become Involvement Champions that will, when completed, be registered to work with Health Education England or Bucks New University.

3.22.13 In addition, DWP has attended Council led equality training in return for partnership working to support disabled residents and LGBT residents who experience difficulties in accessing employment and training opportunities in the labour market. This work will now also explore opportunities to give support to other unemployed residents affected by COVID 19.

3.23 Objective 2 - Ensuring departments and services give regard to Equality and Objective 6 Providing Training and developing staff knowledge and competence in Equality

3.23.1 This is the bedrock of Equalities work, ensuring that we meet the Equalities legal obligations to minimise disadvantage for our communities. We do this by ensuring Equality Impact Assessments are actively considered on all Cabinet reports and Single Member decision reports, service planning and transformations and projects, notable examples include: Housing Strategy, Management of Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation, Local Plan reviews for Great West Corridor and West of Borough Publication stage and Site Allocations, Hounslow

Youth Justice Services, Consultation on Reviewed Travel Assistance Policies, Hounslow Early Help Partnership Commitment 2019- 2021 Review of investment in our housing estates, Results of the Gender Pay Gap Survey, Renewal of Additional HMO Licensing Scheme. Cycle Superhighway 9, Combining of Day Care Services, Housing Strategy 2019 – 2024, Update: Exiting the European Union – Contingency Planning Arrangements in Hounslow, Greener Borough Framework, Climate Emergency Action Plan, Proposed Changes to Some SEN centres Attached to Mainstream Schools, Final report on Review of Travel Assistance Policy in Hounslow etc

3.23.2 The EIA process is also integrated into the Budget Strategy. The equality impacts of all budget options are assessed and the findings presented to elected members before decisions are taken. This is consolidated with training on equalities.

3.23.3 Progress on Providing Training and developing staff knowledge and competence in Equality

The Equalities team offer a range of generic and bespoke equality training to teams and provide briefings and lunch and learn awareness sessions on specific topics. Training courses for employees are also provided online through the e-learning platform. In the 2016/17, over 100 council staff were trained by the council's Equality team on the Equality Act, understanding disabilities and unconscious bias. The training included Library staff, Adult Education staff, Foster Carers and Social Work staff.

3.23.4 The Equality team also act as catalyst for partner training where we lead on multi agency projects to tackle disadvantage relating to equality characteristic.

3.23.5 Examples include influencing Hounslow CCG to take an active role to deliver training sessions for Hounslow GPs on early diagnosis and referral for eye care.

3.23.6 The council's Public Health team and Adult Social Care was trained on impact needs of those with dual sensory loss.

3.23.7 Influencing the Private Sector through training

Private companies such as bus companies Metro line and Abellio were trained by the equality team to ensure bus drivers at the Hounslow Bus Garage were disability aware. This was in direct response to significant challenges experienced by our disabled residents on the buses. Working together with bus operators, the Equalities team put bus drivers on a practical course, so they experienced first-hand, what a partially sighted passenger would face on a daily basis. They wore sims glasses to simulate visual impairments and sat in wheelchairs to navigate in the bus. The training was hugely successful, and the bus drivers have a better understanding of disabilities and their equalities obligations. The two companies now include equalities training as part of their driver training.



3.23.8 Improvements in Access to Leisure Services

The council worked with new Regional leisure partners to improve the leisure offer in the borough including access to art projects, health walks and indoor exercise sessions such as goal ball and cycling for blind and partially sighted people and other disabled residents. These were a huge success, with hundreds of people taking part and a sustained leisure offer is now in place in the Borough for disabled residents where previously there wasn't any offer of targeted activities for disabled residents.

3.23.9 Improvements in Access to Information and Services for Disabled Residents through 'Access Able'

Equality and Adult Care worked in partnership to deliver improved information to enable local disabled residents to find accessible venues. The refreshed web site 'Access Able' gives disabled residents confidence to go out, by giving detailed information about a venue's access. They are 100% facts, figures and photographs of **16,000+** Accessible Toilets; **1,000+** Tourist Attractions; **8,000+** Shops; **1,000+** Hotels; **100+** Universities; **3,500+** Restaurants. Trained surveyors check out every single place in person and the sites and Information collected on individual Boroughs are nominated by residents who use the guide. Equality team ran

workshops with our residents to review the new web site and disabled residents undertook surveys of the retailers in the Treaty Centre.

3.23.10 Piloting New British Sign Language Video Relay Service

Equalities team successfully submitted a bid to Public Health for a grant to commission British Sign Language (BSL) Video Relay Service to help deaf residents communicate with the Council, using its website which offers residents instant access to services. Adult Care team procured the provider for the service and ensured compatibility with Hounslow's IT network. Both Adult Care and Customer Services team are piloting the service and usage of the service will be monitored to determine demand for BSL Video Relay Service. This will be rolled out to other departments subject to service need.

3.23.11 Promoting Digital Literacy

Equalities Team negotiated Free Digital Literacy classes from the RNIB for blind and partially sighted residents. The Digital Literacy classes were then delivered through Adult Education offering sustained training to access the Council's website. More technology-based training event is planned to support the new Digital Strategy. (See paragraph 13.17 b10 for key achievements)

The council also invited Google and Action for Blind to showcase the latest app and supporting devices that blind and partially sighted residents can use. Over 300 residents attended this public event.



3.24. Objective 3- Increasing engagement between the Council and equality groups where it is traditionally low

3.24.1 Disability Community Forum (DCF)

The overall aim of the DCF is to assist, advise and support the Council to shape Council policy and processes to ensure it is responsive to the needs of vulnerable residents. It is also a vehicle for disabled residents to register their concerns on service issues which impact on the quality of their lives.

3.24.2 When service issues are raised, the Council works with departments to address those concerns but also uses this feedback more strategically to minimise disadvantages for other residents.

3.24.3 It is also a consultative body, offering residents a strong voice in key Council Changes. It is also a vehicle by which the Council secures customer feedback from seldom heard groups. This supports compliance of both the general and specific duties arising from the Equality Act 2010 which specifically requires the Council to improve participation with Equality groups where this is low.

3.24.4 The Progress on Increasing engagement between the Council and equality groups

With an average attendance of 45 residents compared to 25 in previous years the DCF continues to be a pivotal hub of information related to elderly and disabled residents and those who represent and care for them. The Disability Community Forum has seen a variety of guest speakers from both local and national organisations at each of the quarterly meetings, including guest speakers from the Citizen's Advice Bureau, Transport for London, London Councils and Hestia, Taxi card, Dial-a-ride, Fire Brigade, Heathrow Airport Limited, Hounslow Highways and Green Energy to name but a few. It continues to attract membership and participation from very vulnerable residents who value face to face contact with the Council.

3.24.5 Housing Disability Tenants Forum

This group has a membership of up to 15 attendees at every quarterly meeting. Residents from around the borough, as well as those from the Danehurst Sheltered Accommodation Unit (where the meeting is held) are regular attendees. Guest speakers such as the Occupational Therapists, Groundwork London, Public Health, One You Hounslow, INS and other organisations have attended to speak about services and to also use the group as a consultation sounding board.

3.24.6 Progress

Whilst the tenant's forum is valued by tenants, the attendance remains low. Organising this forum specifically aimed at reaching older and disabled housing tenants is time consuming and resource intensive and difficult to sustain given the other pressures on equality. Many of the speakers are often duplicated from DCF meetings. The Chair, Cllr Collins agrees with the proposed merger of the two forums.

3.24.7 Recommendation

It is recommended that this forum is merged with the Disability Community Forum with the offer of transport support to attend the evening meeting which is hosted at Hounslow House. Members are asked to agree this subject to the outcome of consultation with the group which was postponed due to Covid 19 and social distancing policies. The DCF can ensure that the agenda includes housing related presentations from Housing Officers.

3.25 Promotion of Events - Equalities Unit organises 4 events annually which also contributes to the Leisure Culture Strategy 2016 – 2020, by running events to mark Black History Month, International Women’s Day and LGBT History Month.

1. LGBT History Month



2. Black History Month





3. International Women's Day





4. International Day of Persons with Disabilities (postponed as it coincided with General election December 2019)

3.25.1 Progress

These events have been hugely successful and mark the Council's public commitment to celebrate the historical gains made on Equality by each equality group. Celebration of the events signal a symbolic solidarity with our residents and ensures that the memory of the struggles to achieve equality remain undiminished.

3.25.2 Recommendation

Whilst the significance of celebrating these events is not underestimated, it is also resource intensive and challenging to sustain within the current resources of 1.5 FTE in the team. It is proposed that in future, specialist Voluntary and Community organisations working with the above groups are commissioned to deliver these events in partnership with the Council in order to accommodate the new areas of demand below. The Council will continue to have a role at all events and the unit will retain a governance and oversight role for the events.

3.25.3 Equality Plus

A major plank of this work involves organising workshops for departments to secure advice on Council strategies, policies and initiatives. 'Equality Plus' is a resident's group who can advise on a diverse range of disabilities before we formally consult the public. It's a group that advises the Council at the design stage of a policy or project and also offer a pilot testing service for forms and web page, transport maps etc.

13.25.4 Progress

This group continues to come together to offer invaluable and very insightful advice to all services prior to public consultation, as and when requested by departments and therefore is demand led. This includes engaging with elderly and disabled residents on the Environmental Volunteering Scheme (Environment Champions), which feeds directly into the Greener Borough Framework 2020. The Transport and Traffic team have also worked closely with the E plus group in identifying ways of making cycling more inclusive. The initiative includes a range of cycles for various disabilities and combination bikes for disabled residents and their carers. This also delivers to the Third Local Implementation Plan 2019, to promote inclusive cycling.

3.26 Objective 4 Building Community Resilience to help vulnerable residents

Two areas of progress are worthy of note for success under this theme:

- a) 'Right to Sight' Improving services for blind and partially sighted residents in Hounslow
- b) Digital Empowerment of residents with no digital literacy

3.26. 1a) 'Right to Sight' Improving services for blind and partially sighted residents in Hounslow

The achievements made by the 'Right to Sight' partnership is the subject of another report, however, some of the highlights are noted below.

The scale of work to transform lives by influencing change across transport, leisure, employment, health, environment and education felt immense, but it was made possible by working with our partners and communities. We took it theme by theme and, worked collaboratively with a shared vision, we have delivered on each theme, earning the trust of our sight impaired community for keeping our promises.

3.26.2 Progress

The most notable achievement is the sheer number of health sessions delivered by key partners who volunteered to deliver the sessions. Each year, about 600 residents have attended preventative eye health educational sessions totalling 3000 residents over the 5-year period.

3.26.3 Sessions were also successfully targeted at specific communities, such as our South Asian and Somali, where particular issues such as diabetes related eye conditions were prevalent.

3.26.4 Hounslow's CCG also played a significant role by investing in a new local community ophthalmology service, called the Practice Group. They were established in 2017 and provided a service previously not available to residents locally.

3.26.5 Notable New Growth of Social Capital in the Borough

For Blind and Partially Sighted residents

The Equalities team galvanised contributions from third sector organisations in the borough, including Middlesex Association for Blind, Royal National Institute Blind, Royal Society for Blind Children, Metro Blind and the Local Optical Committee, Ashford and Hillingdon Hospital, International Glaucoma Association to support outreach into local communities. This also included active working relationships with faith groups and ethnic minority and disability community organisations to deliver talks and promote services. Our work with these charities harnessed their capacity to organise and offer new physical activities for residents with disabilities; which also directly delivers to the priorities identified in the Joint Health and Well-being Strategy 2018-2022 and the Leisure Culture Strategy 2016 – 2020

3.26.6 These regional organisations did not have any presence in the borough previously and their involvement and continuing sustained offer of activities has now created new community capital to support blind and partially sighted residents. The community capital is in place but will need nurturing from the Council to retain their presence and investment in the Borough for the benefit of our residents.

3.26.7 Eye screening for children

The Equalities team worked to secure a new focus on improving diagnosis and access for screening service for children. This resulted in the CCG, Public Health and the Council jointly declaring diagnosis and access to screening a priority and have introduced child vision screening for all four-to-five-year olds, both in school and community locations, not previously available to families and their children. This is a major achievement given the budget constraints and competing priorities for the Council and the CCG.

3.26 b) Digital Empowerment of residents with no digital literacy

3.26. b1 The Equalities work focussed on this because there has been a number of national reports commissioned by GO ON UK which looked at the level of digital capability across the UK, some of which considered the likelihood of exclusion at a local Authority level by use of metrics to score and provide a Digital Exclusion Heat Map. The research examined five basic digital skills below:

- i) Managing Information
- ii) Problem solving
- iii) Communicating
- iv) Creating and
- v) Transacting at local authority level.

3.26. b2 The Heatmap research and scores for Hounslow highlighted the following:

Basic Digital Skills: 80% of adults in Hounslow have all five Basic Digital Skills.

Access: 10.5% of adults in Hounslow have never been online.

Infrastructure: 5.40% of households in Hounslow do not receive broadband speeds of at least 2 megabits per second (Mbps).

3.26. b3 The September 2015 equalities briefing identifies 12% of adults in Hounslow as being over 65 and 13.8% of adults in Hounslow as having a long term illness or disability.

3.26.b4 Being older than 65 contributes significantly to the likelihood of an individual being offline and lacking Basic Digital Skills. Illness and disability contribute significantly to the likelihood of an individual being offline and lacking in basic digital skills.

3.26.b5 In terms of demand the Council can expect to see a continuing demand for alternative channels for communicating and transacting from at least 10.1% of our residents who have never been online and from our disabled and older residents.

3.26.b6 Other barriers to digital capabilities are low levels of education and affordability. Lack of core literacy skills can indicate a lack of broader skills, including Basic Digital Skills.

3.26.b7 Affordability is one of the key barriers to people accessing the Internet. £22,400 is the average income per taxpayer in Hounslow. The income amount is the median figure for the area.

3.26.b8 National data also indicate that 23% of small businesses don't have Basic Digital Skills. This is likely to reflect the profile of Hounslow's small businesses as well, as there is no evidence to indicate that small businesses in Hounslow are comparatively more digitally capable. In the charity sector the challenge is even greater. Over half of all UK charities are lacking the 5 Basic Digital Skills.

3.26.b9 So an emphasis for 'Digital by Default' can frustrate some of our most vulnerable residents access to the Council but it can transform some 80 % of resident's transaction with the Council as they have the Basic Digital skills to take advantage of enhanced digital offer from the Council.

3.26.b10 Progress on raising Digital Literacy

Hence the Equality team in partnership with Adult Education and IT, prioritised digital literacy classes to minimise disadvantage to those digitally excluded. The enrolments showcase both demand and success of reaching those needing basic IT Literacy

- 2016/17 – 193 enrolments
- 2017/18 – 293 enrolments
- 2018/19 – 324 enrolments
- 2019/20 (to date) – 202 enrolments

3.26.b11 In addition to the above over 100 ethnic minority women aged 70 plus and disabled residents who have never used a computer were trained to email and learn basic computer skills by the Equalities team in 2018.

13.26.b12 There will be a continuing priority to empower our third sector partners to support such residents. This will involve initiatives to build social capital to better support small charities targeting support to Equalities groups.



3.27 Objective 5 Improving equalities data collection for Equality Analysis

3.27.1 The aim of this is to gather data relating to inequalities in the Borough and is commissioned every two years from the Intelligence hub. However, this needs to be available as standard data for all departments to access without specific request for it.

3.27. 2 Council's departments and services need to have data to keep this at the forefront of shaping policy and to steer our collective efforts to respond to poverty and inequality better. Going forward, a new approach and access to data will need to be in place, beyond that which is needed for Equality Analysis.

3.28 New Equality Priorities April 2020 – March 2022

3.28.1 The current equality objectives will remain in the most part as the Council's key Equalities priorities. However, a new objective is proposed to respond to Covid 19 and the Lock down and its impact on local communities. Equality work within the Objectives are being refreshed for April 2020 -March 2022, It reflects the changing needs commissioned by departments and residents and in direct response to needs arising from impact of Covid19 and lockdown

3.28.2 The priorities have grown to include eighteen new areas of work listed below including the work to mitigate against the adverse impact of Lockdown. The work on cultural competency and cultural toolkit is a new service offered to support Adult Care services and Children's services. This will result in a number of benefits including staff gaining insights into family structures and better managing the role and impact of extended families and wider communities. The cultural knowledge will also offer staff an understanding of the traditional relationship between the state and families. This will enable staff to make confident judgements when undertaking enforcement roles such as Child Protection reviews, foster caring, work with Refugees and asylum seekers, placements etc.

3.29. Members are asked to note and agree the new priorities detailed below:

3.29.1 Responding to the Impact of Covid 19 and lockdown to support vulnerable communities

- i) Responding to complex cases referred by the Community Hub to find solutions for individuals experiencing hardships due to lockdown eg blind and deaf residents, individuals with Learning disability
- ii) Building a solid understanding of the scale and depth of the impact of the Lockdown as well as Covid-19 on BAME communities and to set out informed strategies to build resilience, help BAME communities to recover. (note that much work is already underway to support disabled communities in the Borough)
- iii) Supporting Pan London test, track and test group to advise government on methods to engage 'hard to reach' communities which can be scaled up across London in preparation for when testing and tracking becomes universally available.
- iv) Building Social Capital for third sector equality groups to support vulnerable communities to better respond to economic, health, social and environmental impact as lockdown is lifted. (See 3.29.5 and 3.29.5 iii on page 23 for detail)

3.29.2 Hounslow Cultures Knowledge Library and toolkit

The aim of this work is to support staff understanding of local communities and will offer much needed insight on how to work with those hardest hit by the pandemic. The plan is to develop a toolkit for frontline practitioners who work with communities affected by health and social care issues. The toolkit will include tools and resources to assist health and social care practitioners and service providers in providing culturally competent health and social care services.

The toolkit will provide the following:

- Principles of cultural competency and its importance in relation to the planning, development and delivery of health and social care services.
- Self-assessment tools that support planning and assessment of processes and practices at both individual and organisational levels.

The objectives of this toolkit are to offer:

- Quick access to demographics and cultural profile of Hounslow's diverse communities to assist health and social care professionals to know their communities and how culture impacts on service delivery.
- Practical resources and tools that will enable health and social care service providers to know how to improve relationships between the Council and with families and communities dealing with families of excluded children.

3.29.3 Training: to develop and deliver Cultural Competency training for staff and managers

- Understanding Hounslow: Its People and Place to develop an understanding of Hounslow's diversity and cultural history and of its complexity
- Developing Cultural Competency and personal effectiveness
- Developing Culturally Competent Managers
- To identify the varying needs of different communities within the borough and how this affects service design, delivery and decision making
- Help staff to reflect on their own values, beliefs and identify how these inform behaviors, attitudes and personal leadership style
- Identify ways to communicate and engage effectively with diverse communities, understanding the power dynamics within communities and between communities and the Council

3.29.4 Coordinating European Union Settlement Scheme for EU nationals to support EU citizens

This is a completely new area of activity co-ordinated by the Equality team and will continue through to June 2021. The training raises awareness and gives guidance on: 'What is the EU Settlement Scheme and how to help clients to apply for EUSS'.

It is a very informative session, where staff will gain the practical skills and knowledge to route and refer European citizens to support services and to explain the process of applying for the settlement scheme. During the session there will be two training presentations from European law experts and in-depth case study analysis and opportunity for staff to ask questions. The work involves:

Co-ordinating delivery of training for staff

Co-ordinating delivery of weekly surgeries for EU residents

Oversight/Governance of EUSS service for the Council

Monitoring performance of provider

Providing quarterly performance update to Brexit Contingency Board

Providing advice on marketing and publicity for promotion of EUSS

Distributing leaflets to EU nationals, third sector and faith organisations and schools

This work will be delayed in the light of Covid 19 and government guidance on 'Social distancing'. However, government has issued new grants to progress this work from October 2020 – March 2021 and the work will include the submission of a new bid for the Council and will resume in October 2020 if we are successful with our bid to the Home Office.

3.29.4 Equality Training and Advice to Council's Trading Companies

Lampton 360 is negotiating with the Equality team for training and strategic advice for equality for policies, employment and service delivery support for Lampton 360, Coalo, and Subsidiary Companies.

The training will be bespoke, for Managers and Staff of Lampton 360, Coalo and Subsidiary Companies and the team is also being commissioned to provide operational advice and case work support to solve complaints and customer service queries

3.29.5 Building New Social Capital for Vulnerable and Isolated residents with equality protected characteristics

Building Social Capital, here refers to facilitating and galvanising new community organisations to operate from Hounslow to address impact of Covid 19 and lockdown and the disadvantages experienced by residents on grounds of their equality characteristic.

The aim is to build long term community capacity in the Borough where there are known gaps in community organisations/networks at local level to support specific equality groups. The objective is also to upskill residents to ensure there is sustained long term support to achieve greater independence and health and wellbeing for residents and be resilient against hardships they are likely to experience in the wake of the pandemic.

i) Building Social Capital for Deaf Residents and residents with hearing loss

The introduction of the BSL Video Relay service will support our ambition to make the Hounslow Digital Strategy 2020 – 2025 accessible for all by offering choice to our Deaf residents to communicate effectively; and reduces barriers. This responds to the Public Health priorities and the Joint Health and Well-being Strategy 2018 – 2022 to promote health and wellbeing and to achieve greater independence for our residents. The introduction of the BSL video relay service also contributes to the Customer Service Strategy 2019 - 2022, as we move more towards 'digital by default' as our preferred form of communication.

Building on the successful new investment of social capital for Blind and partially sighted residents, the new priority is to model this for residents who are deaf or who have hearing loss, creating new community presence in Hounslow for deaf and hard of hearing residents, especially acknowledging the challenges the deaf and blind communities experienced during lockdown.

We will be looking to improve communication by introducing British Sign Language classes for the community. This is an area that is needed and has been validated by

requests from the Deaf community, but this form of communication also became critical in our response to COVID 19.

ii) Building Social Capital for LGBT Residents

This aims to create and build up new community presence through local partners such as Middlesex Association for Pride to tackle inequalities faced by LGBT communities, especially focussing on health-related needs eg mental health and unemployment and hate crimes

iii) Building Social Capital for third sector equalities groups

Equality and Human Rights plans to work with Hounslow Voluntary Sector Support to set up a new Community Equality Advisory Group.

This new group will act as a vehicle for consulting on equality matters to shape, influence and guide Equality Impact Assessments and to:

- work with the Council to review the resilience, capacity and gaps in response to COVID 19 and put in place mitigation measures to strengthen the work of the third sector equalities groups.
- guide the Council in tackling inequality and create a fairer Hounslow.
- advise the Council on inequalities and issues faced by specific communities and/or equalities groups, specifically, reviewing impact of COVID 19.
- support the Council by responding to formal consultations and ensure the experiences of specific groups are represented in policy and programme and consultations.
- provide a powerful advocacy role on inclusive practices in the Borough
- receive training to develop better understanding of equalities, of Council structures and functions and assess their capacity to help residents apply for services, report issues, request forms and Pay for Council Tax etc to improve access for the most vulnerable residents who are challenged by our Digital offer. To identify ways to work more collaboratively and explore how they can optimise limited resources.

iv) Residents with Autism and Neurological Needs

Hounslow Autism Society have approached equality to raise awareness of the needs of residents with Autism and gaps in service responsiveness. This work is in an early developmental stage and equality is working with the group to jointly host an event to understand the needs of this community and assess the support they will need to minimise disadvantages experienced by residents with Autism and other neurological conditions. It will also be an opportunity to help our services evaluate how we can be more responsive to needs of residents with Autism and neurological conditions.

3.29.6 Providing Design Advice to Council's Heritage sites specifically technical advice on building design and accessible information and signposting advice for reasonable adjustments

3.29.7 Organising Design Workshops for departments to engage with disabled residents to improve access to arts and heritage sites for disabled and other equality protected residents

- a) Boston Manor House
- b) Hogarth House
- c) Gunnersbury Park Museum

3.29.8 Develop New pilot projects with Town and Country Planning Association for community learning to upskill and empower residents with equality characteristics to interpret and advice the Council and engage confidently and strategically on Local Plans and transport and traffic maps

3.29.9 Working with IT and Adult Education to improve Digital literacy by marketing courses to residents who have no computer skills and designing bespoke IT solutions for different groups eg residents who may be deaf/blind or have learning disability.

3.29.10 Providing Advice and arranging consultation workshops for Major Planning and Infrastructure projects -This is less frequent but time consuming and demand led by Departments, examples include eg Heathrow, Cycle Superhighway 9, Climate Change etc

4. Key Implications

The revised priorities will result in an informed investment of limited resources for very vulnerable residents with equalities characteristics and contributes significantly to our recovery efforts to tackle the Impact of Covid 19 and lockdown on our communities.

5. Financial Details

a) Financial Impact On The Budget

The priorities highlighted in this report are expected to be delivered from within existing budgets

b) Comments of the Executive Director, Finance and Resources

This report seeks approval of the refreshed Annual Equalities Plan and priorities for April 2020 -March 2022. It also proposes changes to the delivery of equalities related events and, subject to consultation, the merger of two of our forums that focus on the needs of residents with disabilities.

Any costs to the Council arising from the implementation of the new priorities must be funded from within approved budgets

6. Legal (to be completed in conjunction with the Legal Department)

a) Legal Details

The relevant equality legislation is set out in paragraph 11.1 below.

b) Comments of the Head of Governance

The Head of Corporate Governance supports the revised priorities

7. Value For Money

The Equalities priorities and projects maximises scarce Council resources to ensure residents can benefit from the co-ordinated efforts of all Council departments and key third sector partners to minimise disadvantage affecting the most vulnerable residents. The priorities aim to reduce the need for service interventions and the associated costs resulting from it.

8. Sustainability Impact Appraisal

N/A

9. Risk Management

Much of the work detailed in the report is led by the Equalities team which is resourced by 1.5 FTE. There is a possibility of delays in implementation because of the limited resources available and because of the impact of redeployment of the entire team to offer management advice to the 'Community Hub' set up to respond to COVID 19. Some promotional activities such as Black History Month and LGBT History month etc and all events-based work is likely to be commissioned through the Voluntary and community organisations in order to manage and deliver significant new areas of work.

10. Links to Council Priorities

The new priorities will continue to respond to 'Customer first' pledge which informs Council priorities and principles, set out in the Corporate Plan. The report has high ambitions for borough residents, and it seeks to go the extra mile and demonstrates that we never give up trying to find ways around barriers to improving services. There is a single-minded drive to improve the quality of residents' lives, whether by tackling barriers experienced by residents in their transactions with the Council or with partner organisations. We seek to understand residents' needs fully and have been working with residents, communities and voluntary organisations to empower them to meet their needs where they can do so. The initiatives also contribute to the other Key Strategies such as Health and Well Being Strategy, Skills Strategy, Leisure and Culture Strategy and the Preventative Agenda

11. Equalities, Human Rights and Community Cohesion

- 11.1 The Council has to give due regard to its Equalities Duties, in particular with respect to general duties under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Having due regard involves, the need to remove or minimize disadvantages suffered by equality groups.
- 11.2 The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to adopt evidence-based equalities Objectives to reduce disadvantages. The report introduces revisions to bring up to date the Council's Equality priorities and seeks to be continuously responsive to service needs and residents needs. It will keep our work current and results in more effective targeting of scarce resources to those most in need.
- 11.3 The priorities appear to favour disability related initiatives over other equalities strands. This responds favourably to the legal emphasis in the Equality Act 2010 to take account of disability and recognises needs which are most pressing. However, it must be noted that seventy percent of users benefiting from the projects highlighted in the Delivery Plan are predominantly women. The Council in prioritising disability is also addressing disadvantage affecting women and older people and ethnic minorities. The new priorities such as the Cultural competency work, EUSS work and LGBT project initiatives will benefit all equality characteristics.

12. Staffing/Workforce and Accommodation implications:

None

13. Property and Assets

N/A

14. Any Other Implications

15. Consultation

Each of the new priorities was developed following feedback from departments in the course of our work, from vulnerable residents and consultation with specialist Voluntary and Community groups and front-line staff working with targeted equalities groups. The Equality Objectives and the Delivery Plan is a constantly evolving document and will be subject to amendments following annual analysis of needs and future consultation with stakeholders and residents.

16. Timetable for Implementation

The new priorities if agreed will require the current Delivery Plan to be updated. The Delivery Plan is a live document and reflects work already underway but the timescale for implementation of the new priorities is 2022.

17. Appendices

None

18. Background Information

19. Internal Consultation

This report has been sent to HR, Finance and Legal for comments and their comments have been incorporated into the document.

REPORT ENDS