

Equality information and objectives

The Equality Act 2010 has a number of provisions that only apply to public bodies. The Act places a pro-active legal requirement on public bodies in Part 2, section 149, called public sector equality duty (the equality duty). This is a general duty which is supported by specific duties intended to help performance on the general equality duty.

The general duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

In order to comply with the general equality duty, each public authority must

- Prepare and publish one or more objectives they think they should achieve to do any of the things mentioned in the general aims of the equality duty by 31 January 2012 and every four years thereafter.
- Ensure that those objectives are specific and measurable
- Publish those objectives in such a manner that they are accessible to the public.

Purpose of equality objectives

The purpose of setting specific, measurable equality objectives is to help listed authorities to better perform the general equality duty, focusing on the outcomes to be achieved.

Using equality information

The specific duties require public authorities to publish information to demonstrate compliance with the general equality duty. This includes information about equality issues in relation to employees and service users to provide a good evidence base to support the development and adoption of equality objectives.

The council's data intelligence on equality

The council collects data on demographics, health, crime, education and a number of other key domains which can be disaggregated to highlight analysis by equality groups. The council also considers equality implications of all its decisions to ensure that due regard is given to equality routinely as part of its decision making process.

Although data is available and can be interrogated for equality analysis, set against the climate of public sector funding reductions, the collection, monitoring

and analysis of equality data has to be focussed to offer insight to where limited resources need to be targeted against competing demands.

It must be capable of sign posting where there are gaps in service provision or provide performance information to robustly defend commissioning priorities.

This is the third year in which the council is evidencing compliance with the specific duties and this year the council has begun to use data intelligence gathered in two service areas, together with stakeholder engagement to inform service improvements and our long term commissioning intentions. The two areas include services to the borough's blind and partially sighted communities and to the rough sleepers.

The council has also highlighted data on employees below which provides a breakdown of workforce data by age; disability; ethnicity and gender profile for the period 1 January - 31 December 2013. This can be compared with employment for the previous period 1 January to 31 December 2012. Other areas of data include comparative data on homelessness and incidence of hate crime data.

Equalities objectives for 2014 - 2018

In 2014, the council's equalities objectives are:

1. Minimising disadvantage experienced by rough sleepers
2. Minimising disadvantage experienced by blind and partially sighted residents
3. Reducing the incidence of Hate Crimes
4. To ensure that employment practices are fair and consistent with the council's employment policies.

The revised equalities objectives have been developed in response to the data gathered on equality and in response to stakeholder and or residents feedback.

1. Minimising disadvantage experienced by rough sleepers

The data indicates that rough sleeping affects older white men (See attached data). The numbers also show a dramatic increase of rough sleeping compared to the previous years from 24 to 106 in the last three years. In mitigation, the council aims to commission services to reduce the incidence of rough sleeping but also to provide ancillary support for improved health and social care to discourage rough sleeping. This is specific and measurable activity as success can be measured by the reduced incidence of rough sleeping each successive year.

2. Minimising disadvantage experienced by blind and partially sighted residents

The number of people living with eye conditions in Hounslow is estimated to be 19,539 and this figure is expected to rise. There is national evidence to suggest that 50% of sight loss can be avoidable. See attached evidence base for 'Promoting a Vision Strategy' for the borough. The action plan to mitigate disadvantage is being finalised with partners and is planned for publication in June 2014 following Cabinet decision and report to Health and Well Being Board.

3. Reducing the incidence of hate crimes

The council is keen to take steps to reduce the incidence of hate crimes to ensure that all residents feel safe in the borough.

Please see attached evidence comparing current and previous data and the actions to support victims of hate crimes and actions against perpetrators.

4. To ensure that employment practices are fair and consistent

Employment data, by equality groups is routinely collected and analysed with regard to the workforce, recruitment, grievances, disciplinary, dismissal and training to ensure that employment policies are applied fairly.