

Single Equality Scheme Report November 2010

Introduction

Equalities and Human Rights legislation place a statutory duty on Aberdeen City Council to produce Disability, Gender and Race Equality Schemes. We must produce and publish an annual report on the Race Equality Scheme by 30 November 2010 and on the Disability Equality Scheme by 4 December 2010. We also have a duty to publish an annual report on the Gender Equality Scheme by 29 June 2011.

In preparation for the Equality Act 2010 we developed a Single Equality Scheme, which covers the existing statutory schemes for Disability, Gender and Race, and includes detail and action plans for Age, Faith/Religion/Belief and Sexual Orientation. This was launched in November 2009.

This Single Equality Scheme sets out how the Council will meet both the general and specific duties for these individual schemes under the respective acts (listed in the Appendix 1 of the Single Equality Scheme Document). The scheme links with strategic plans and with National Outcomes 7 and 10 of the Single Outcome Agreement framework.

By publishing the Scheme, the Council is accountable for its proposals to meet the duties. The Scheme sets out actions for all council service areas to meet the general and specific duties. Progress reports on these actions are provided to the Corporate Policy and Performance Committee annually. This is the first annual report on the Scheme which has to be published no later than 30 November 2010.

We have consulted as widely as possible with officers, members, partners, and involving representatives from all the communities of interest groups and others on our progress on equalities. Within this report, we have also incorporated new issues which have risen over the year which may not have been in the first publication of the Single Equality Scheme.

Despite the challenges confronting the Council we have made a good start on delivering on our Action Plan. We are pleased with the progress we have made and look forward to continuing building on this initial success.

Achievements

General

- The Progress and Achievement Group (PAG) set up to monitor and challenge progress made on the Council's Single Equality Scheme, has taken presentations from the Council's Education Culture and Sport, and Housing and Environment Services. This group is made up of stakeholders from the equality groups representing the different strands – age, disability, faith/religion/belief, gender including transgender, race including Gypsies/Travellers and sexual orientation. These presentations gave the group the opportunity to question barriers on the Council's progress.

- We have been actively engaging with the members of the Communities of Interest Forums to provide positive articles for the Equalities Newsletter and have successfully included their articles in the August and November 2010 Editions.
- Changes to the Aberdeen City Council Equality and Diversity web pages have been completed to reflect a more customer friendly experience. The pages have been revised and reorganised to ensure all equalities groups are represented and that information is easily accessible and understandable. Along side this we have made our Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIAs) available on the website and developed an online training package on how to conduct an EHRIA.
- The Equalities Action Network (EAN) Consultation Event demonstrated our commitment to involving communities of interest and equality groups in developing and monitoring the Single Equality Scheme. The EAN is a Community Planning Challenge Forum tasked with leading on equalities in the city.
- The event was a good example of driving forward the shared services agenda. Aberdeen City Council, Grampian Police, Grampian Fire and Rescue and University of Aberdeen and The Robert Gordon University worked together to create the opportunity for the public to give their views on the progress we are making on the equalities agenda within the city.

- Launch of the Single Equality Scheme, November 2009:

Our outcomes from the launch of the Aberdeen City Council's Single Equality Scheme and, Community Planning Diversity and Equality Fortnight 2009 included:

- Bringing together the different partner agencies and communities of interest;
- Raised awareness of the Single Equality Scheme;
- Demonstration of community involvement in developing the scheme through
- production of a DVD.
- The Scottish Human Rights Commission reported on their observations on the Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIAs) as in practice at Aberdeen City Council. The report was based on interviews held in January and February 2010 with staff who had used the EHRIA tool and/or received awareness training on how to carry out an EHRIA.
- The Next Five Years and EHRIAs:
We have engaged and involved the community in our budget process (The Next Five Years), which will result in more informed decision making by elected members. Training workshops on preparing EHRIAs have been delivered to officers so that they can ensure EHRIAs are carried out on all budget savings/service options and published on the website.
- Increased Awareness and Improved Community Cohesion:

Organised events and/or supported drives to organise events to promote awareness around national and international events such as Holocaust Memorial Day, LGBT History Month, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, International Women's Day, and the International Day Against Racial Discrimination.

- The Council raised the profile of its equality work nationwide when our submission "Rising to the challenge of creating a successful Diversity and Equality Policy" was shortlisted within the category of Best Employee and Equality Initiative for the Association of Public Service Excellence Awards in Derry, in September 2010.

Disability

- From a Disability Advisory Group event involving all its members on Saturday 11th September 2010, feedback was received about the Single Equality Scheme, the Council's Priority Based Budget work (The Next Five Years) to feed into the review.
- Secured revenue funding to both ShopMobility and Aberdeen Action on Disability for the immediate future. Further support is being given to help relocate ShopMobility to the bon Accord Shopping Centre, which will help raise their profile and secure their future. A recent Social Return on Investment Report into ShopMobility states that for every £1 that has been invested in ShopMobility Aberdeen, a social return on investment of £3.27 has been realised. The report presents a powerful argument for further investment in the charity's support and development, and demonstrates that Aberdeen City Council has made a worthwhile investment by supporting ShopMobility Aberdeen.
- Reviewed the Disability Advisory Group membership to ensure a better and more constructive role to help the Council understand the needs of people with disabilities in the city.

Race (including Gypsies/Travellers)

- We have worked on the Single Equality Scheme Actions to ensure that they are in line with actions produced by the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism.
- We have supported the Ethnic Minority Forum to run information events on important and highlighted issues:
 - The Seminar event in November 2009 was very successful and aimed to help newcomers to the country understand Scotland's Criminal Justice System. Ethnic minority communities had identified that often one of the biggest differences between countries is their legal systems - being aware of these differences is extremely important as it is not uncommon for someone new to Scotland to break the law without realising it.
 - On the 20th September 2010 a representative from The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was invited to speak about their work. The IOM is an international organisation and helps voluntary return for people who have overstayed their visa, those staying illegally in the UK and asylum seekers.

Detailed information on activities by GREC, MeAL and International Centre are available in their respective annual reports. Each continues to provide welcome support in achieving outcomes for our Single Equality Scheme.

For example, MeAL has been running two projects with schoolchildren. Cultural Xtra is a series of workshop performances of different cultures delivered to 850 primary school children annually. Respect for All is a partnership project with other equality groups. Over 8 weeks the project explores all the equality groups to promote Fairness, Respect and Understanding, and concludes with a 'celebration of difference' in poetry, rap, hip hop and art. The project is currently being delivered to 260 S1 pupils and has proven successful in Aberdeenshire. One of the largest barriers at the moment is funding, and MeAL is currently working to implement Respect for All and Cultural Xtra in the City as they have proven successful in the Shire.

Part of the strategy within the schools projects is that they start in the primary schools and then move on to the secondary so that they are reaching children twice, also enabling them to gain feedback on what did and didn't work.

GREC has provided training and awareness sessions by the Police Seconded within schools, informing teachers and more than 3000 pupils on identifying discrimination, and a series of Know Your Rights sessions, which were jointly organised by GREC and Grampian Police. The sessions were targeted towards students and parents, to raise awareness of equalities and discrimination.

- Progress on meeting the needs of Gypsies/Travellers:
Proposals for the development of the short-term halting sites for Gypsies/Travellers have been included in the Draft Local Development Plan, which was approved by committee in August 2010 and is due to be adopted in April 2012. This is part of our progress in implementing the recommendations from the report by Craigforth Consultation and Research into the housing needs of Gypsies/Travellers in the Grampian area. A report submitted to the Housing and Environment Committee on 26 October 2010 recommended that work be done to identify temporary halting sites. Officers are to organise a summit to take place as soon as possible to bring together representatives from Aberdeen, Moray and Aberdeenshire Councils, Grampian Police, the settled community, travelling community and another other relevant agencies and organisations. A report is then due to be presented to Committee 12 January 2011.
- The Gypsies/Travellers Event held on 1 October 2010 brought together people from the community and the public sector to hear about Scottish Gypsy/Traveller culture. The event was primarily run by Scottish Travellers with the assistance of the Elphinstone Institute. This was an attempt to build bridges between the Traveller and settled community to show that not all Travellers are the same. The event also raised awareness of what Grampian Police and Aberdeen City Council can and can't do when issues arise. Finally, it was also an opportunity for Travellers to network with the settled community.
- We are also working towards a Service Level Agreement with the voluntary sector to bridge the gap left by the loss of the Gypsy/Traveller Education and Information Project (GTEIP).

Gender (including transgender)

- We have developed a relationship with North East Scotland Trans Support (NEST Support) to increase awareness of the issues members of the Trans community face
- Our outreach work with the Aberdeen Women's Alliance has encouraged a more localised approach to the work that they do, as opposed to a City-wide approach.

Sexual Orientation

- LGBT training is being administered by City Council services for staff, with the help of Terrence Higgins Trust and Grampian Police
- The Council has been active in setting up the Grampian Employees Network, which has been created to support public sector LGB & T staff.

Faith/Religion/Belief

- The event for Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) 2009 is an example of partnership working to increase awareness around equalities. It commemorates the victims and tragic loss of life at the hands of the Nazis in the genocides of World War II – including Jews, Gypsies/Travellers and people persecuted because of their sexual orientation – and those who suffered and died in other acts of genocide in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur. HMD is held on or around 27th January, the anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau.
- Each year a multifaith calendar is distributed to schools and libraries as a form of education and awareness raising.

Age

- Intergenerational Funding Bid:
A bid has been submitted to a European funding stream on Age Sustainable Communities to support intergenerational work, which is being developed in Torry. The outcomes from the project will be:
 - older and younger people coming together to show more positive change in the community
 - Residents choosing to remain in the area
 - Increased community cohesion with Torry becoming a more age friendly community, and
 - Services reflecting local community need.

This bid offers a positive opportunity to show our Best Practice model across the city, Scotland and Europe and share our findings with global networks and European partners and is a huge opportunity for Aberdeen as a leading council to counteract previous negative publicity with good news stories.

- The Older People's Consultation & Monitoring Group (OPCMG), an informal engagement group for the older people of Aberdeen, provides an opportunity for them to have their say about, and influence, health and social care services in Aberdeen. Over its lifespan, the OPCMG has contributed to the development of, and reviewed, a number of social care information, such as the Eligibility Criteria leaflet and Adult Protection Guidelines. The OPCMG were also involved in the development of the local Adult Protection Committee, which is a key means of

tackling abuse in our local community. The Group continues to offer Social Care and Health services an ongoing means of engaging with older people in Aberdeen.

Outputs

- Almost 600 people attended the Community Planning Diversity and Equality Fortnight events which covered all the equality strands and also offered the opportunity to meet the new Directors.
- There was a presentation by Nicola James of NEST Support at the Community Planning event on 18 September 2010. Following this Nicola has been invited to participate in a meeting of the Council's Extended Corporate Management Team to raise awareness of the issues and needs of the Transgender community and to ensure that Council services are meeting these needs.
- Aberdeen City Council in partnership with the Elphinstone Institute, University of Aberdeen held a successful event at the Aberdeen Arts Centre on the 1 October 2010. The 'Travellers in Scotland: Celebration of Our Culture and Heritage Today' showcased Scottish Gypsies/Travellers culture. There were 42 people in attendance and we received positive feedback on the event.
- 5000 Gypsy/Traveller Myth buster A3 size posters for notice boards were distributed to all the major public sector employers within the Grampian area via Aberdeen City, Shire and Moray Councils, NHS Grampian, Grampian Police and Grampian Fire and Rescue Service. The poster was designed to get people talking and seeing a different perspective, and to show that not all Gypsies/Travellers are the same. Four posters were distributed to each school within the city and it was left to the discretion of the head teacher whether to display them on notice boards. The Association of Chief Police Officers Scotland (ACPOS), Amnesty International and the Scottish Traveller Education Programme found the poster impressive and ACPOS is interested in adapting the poster for its own use. The poster was designed in collaboration with Grampian Racial Equality Council and was based on a similar earlier myth buster poster for migrant workers, which proved very successful.
- Approximately 1000 copies of the Single Equality Scheme were distributed to partners, community groups, community councils and across the Council.
- A customer survey conducted through the City Voice in June 2010 received a response from 668 panellists. The responses showed that only 12% of the panellists are aware of the Single Equality Scheme, and 11% are aware of the Communities of Interest Forums. Our task is to now engage with the main body of citizens in Aberdeen and work with our Communications team to publicise our initiatives more widely.

Scheme improvement and progress

Equally, however, we also need to hear what work we still need to do and what areas require improvement.

General

- Following restructuring of the Education, Culture & Sport Service, the senior management team has reviewed the actions in the current Action Plans for the Service. The Service believes that good progress has been made in addressing the range of issues covered by the Action Plans. The very nature of the outcomes that the Service is trying to achieve means that much of the work is on-going, covers more than one strand and builds year upon year. Particular areas of work and associated actions that demonstrate progress include:
 - Updated Race Equality Policy for schools
 - Development of a new multi-agency incident recording and reporting form
 - Refreshed anti-bullying policy
 - On-going awareness raising and discussion of equality issues via the school curriculum
 - Continued and increasing involvement in Holocaust Memorial Day
 - On-going support for children and young people with English as a second language
 - Ensuring that equality and diversity issues were raised during the debate to establish the new Aberdeen City Parent Forum
 - On-going work to support young people with disabilities as they move from school to adult services
 - Establishing the Aberdeen City Student Forum to enhance “voice” for children and young people, including those with additional support needs
 - Supporting schools to audit and address equality and diversity issues via school self-evaluation and school improvement process

- The Education, Culture and Sport senior management team has reviewed progress and wishes now to build upon the experience of operating a Single Equality Scheme for a year. The key piece of work that will take place is to align more fully the Service’s Improvement Plan and the Single Equality Scheme and to ensure a more robust mechanism for assessing and evaluating progress on achieving outcomes. Officers from the Service have liaised with corporate officers and discussed the intention to adopt the Equality Framework for Local Government that is currently used by councils in other parts of the UK. The Equality Framework focuses on the mainstreaming of equality into service delivery and employment and helps a local authority to manage the development of equalities work via three developmental levels.

- The points below are in relation to services provided by Housing and Environment:
 - Housing and Environment has worked to ensure that all new build properties have to be built to Housing for Varying Needs Standards. In addition, wheelchair accessible housing is being provided within the new build programme.
 - Housing and Environment is continuing to promote the assisted uplift scheme and at the moment are uplifting through the scheme: 1183 Domestic Waste Bins, 684 Garden/Food Waste Bins, and 726

Recycling Boxes/Bags. With the advent of alternate weekly collections a policy to provide an additional bin to families of 5 or more, and people with a disability that generates excess waste was approved by Council.

- The Grampian Domestic Abuse Training Consortium with support from the Social Work Training Unit have run a number of training days this year (available to Council staff) in order to raise awareness of the issues attached to domestic abuse both for services users and staff that may experience domestic abuse.
 - The Community Safety Partnership is finalising their three year strategic assessment which outlines their strategy and actions in order to improve the services of people experiencing domestic abuse. There are also now three accommodation units.
 - Efforts to pursue opportunities for community engagement with Gypsies/Travellers are being addressed through the Grampian Inter-agency Group.
 - The Council has recently secured funding from the Scottish Government to improve facilities at Clinterty Travellers Site and the renovation process is nearly complete.
- The following are some of the points raised by participants at the consultation event on 18 September 2010:
 - The communities of interest representatives can play a role in campaigning for adequate spend on all equalities strands at a time of reducing public sector budgets.
 - There can be misunderstanding with some of our communications and the use of jargon, so we need to use simple and clear language in our communications.
 - We need to allow enough time for meaningful consultation and involvement before decisions are made, using the right questions in a simple way, so that impact assessments reflect the consultation process and that officers act on the results.
 - From the City Voice questionnaire 7% of respondents said they had experienced discrimination in Aberdeen. Because we are always working to encourage anyone who experiences discrimination to come forward, we are introducing a revised prejudice incident reporting package to ensure the process of reporting is easier, more efficient, and so that all Council staff are aware of the correct procedures to follow.
 - We recognise the need for better staff training and understanding for the needs of people with disabilities and we will investigate equalities training for all staff, not just frontline.
 - With the introduction of the new Equality Act 2010, we will be making adjustments to the Council's Single Equality Scheme to reflect the new act, but will have to wait until April 2011 when the Public Sector duties are finalised before introducing further modifications.
 - We must work harder to demonstrate the changes and improvements at grass roots level in communities with tangible measurements and engage further with the community at the neighbourhood level so we will research ways to inform the community about their human rights and equalities, and why it is important that they know.

Disability

- We recognised the need to get better data about people with disabilities and over the summer we had our first response from an entry in City Voice, which we intend to repeat on a regular basis, and we have obtained some useful information from national statistics

Race (including Gypsies/Travellers)

- We will seek to provide increased support to teachers for reporting on prejudice incidents
- We are working with other agencies to decrease the negative press towards Gypsies/Travellers and consider creating an educational awareness raising campaign to tackle stigmatisation

Gender (including Transgender)

- Discussion groups at the 18 September Consultation Event welcomed the progress in promoting Transgender issues and in carrying out training on LGBT issues for staff
- It has come to our attention that there are concerns about comfort and confidence using Council services for the local community of Transgender individuals and we are working to find ways to address these issues

Sexual Orientation

- We will making more effective use of the Grampian Employees Network for consultation

Faith/Religion/Belief

- There is a need for spaces for reflection in schools and Council owned buildings

Age

- We are implementing intergenerational practice into work with the communities