

Equal Opportunities Policy & Corporate Equality Objectives Consultation Nov 2011-Jan 2012 Summary Report

A full report detailing the Council's response to the consultation feedback, which includes all of the consultation responses and a council response, is available at www.haringey.gov.uk/equaloppspolicy.

a) Consultation Process

This consultation concerned two areas of Haringey's Equal Opportunities Policy. The first part of the consultation looked at the Equal Opportunities Policy and related equality objectives. We received responses from the Haringey Disability First Consortium, Haringey Women's Forum, Wise Thoughts, Stonewall Housing, Haringey Forum for Older People and Irish Traveller Movement Britain. A consultation session with community and voluntary sector groups was also attended by Haringey Race Equality Council, Haringey's Women's Forum, and Haringey Community & Police Consultative Group. The second part of the consultation looked at the Equal Opportunities Staff Handbook.

Our questionnaire had a total of 22 responses, with 10 from residents, one on behalf of a business organisation, four on behalf of a community group/organisation, and seven Council employees. Two staff events to discuss the Equal Opportunities Staff Handbook were attended by 29 members of staff (17 staff, 12 managers).

b) Summary of Responses

General suggestions and comments regarding the policy were:

- Community groups would like to work more with the Council in this area
- Some wanted more tangible outcomes and targets from the policy, some also felt that measuring and publicising the outcomes of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) could be improved.
- There was concern over the move away from the social model of disability in the policy
- We should continue to collect staff data on sexual orientation and religion – set an example
- The importance of staff training was raised and its impact on improving access to services emphasised.

c) Overview of public responses

In general, comments about the policy were the objectives were positive and constructive. Of the online questionnaire more people supported each objective than not. We received numerous comments and suggestions for each equality objective, but with little or no consensus around the addition of any new objectives.

d) Summary of changes

A brief summary of some of the issues raised and changes made to the proposed equality objectives as a result of the consultation is given on the following pages.

Equality Objectives	Response
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three draft objectives have been merged to form a single broad objective which will consider allocation of properties across the protected groups, with a focus on addressing homelessness. Other suggested objectives from respondents included supporting people with mental health issues; addressing affordable housing and supporting disabled people in independent living. Their absence from the set of objectives does not mean these issues have been ignored. They have been included in the Homelessness strategy delivery plan.
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment objectives have not been included in the final list of objectives as actions around these objectives fall under the Greenest Borough Strategy which will be reviewed towards the end of the calendar year. We will consider any potential equality objectives for environment when we review the objectives next year. Other suggested objectives from respondents included ensuring public spaces are safe and accessible. Their absence from the set of objectives does not mean these issues have been ignored as many actions in these areas are already underway, for example through the Local Implementation Plan. Suggestions have been passed to service heads for consideration as part of future service planning.
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving early maternity services booking rates for pregnant African women and increasing male life expectancy in the east of the borough will be included as equality objectives. We did not take forward the objective to improve early maternity services bookings for pregnant women under 20. This is because data has highlighted that targeting low booking rates for African women will have a greater impact on reducing the infant mortality rate. We will review whether to include this as an equality objective for next year following analysis of the latest data. An objective around mental health has been added as a result of the consultation and after analysis of available data. Teenage pregnancy was highlighted as an issue in the consultation. While this will not be taken forward as an equality objective this year, it is included as a priority in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and progress will be monitored through that strategy. We will review whether to include it as an equality objective for next year.
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the three draft objectives are integrally linked, they have been merged to form a single objective. Other suggested objectives from respondents included tackling sexualised and homophobic bullying; supporting children with specific learning disabilities and supporting gifted and talented children from low income backgrounds to attain places in elite universities. These issues are being taken forward within existing service delivery plans.
Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This objective has been amended to focus on young people. This is due to analysis of available data. Sexual violence has been removed as a needs assessment of levels of domestic and gender based violence is under way, due for completion by the beginning of April 2012. The needs assessment will help us to identify specific issues where further action is required. We will consider whether to include this as an equality objective for next year when we review the objectives. Many of the suggestions made by respondents have been identified as strategic priorities in the Community Safety Strategy and will be included in the delivery

	plan which is currently being updated.
Unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three draft objectives have been merged to form a single objective. The wording of the objective has now been amended to specifically mention BME, young people and disabled people and this partly reflects the feedback received on this issue. Other suggested objectives from respondents included support for disabled people in the workplace. Disabled people have historically been and will remain a focus of Council run employment programmes. All Council contractors delivering employment support services are required to ensure that 10% of the people they work with are disabled. The Council's staff handbook mentions that the Council will ensure accessible workplaces for disabled employees, making reasonable adjustments to facilitate disabled people.
Voluntary Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This objective has been removed as the Council is undertaking a review of its community building portfolio aimed at better supporting a vibrant voluntary sector. This will also involve the review of access to other council premises within schools, housing, parks and leisure, alongside a wider audit of premises across the borough. The Council notes the comments from the consultation and suggested equality objectives. This feedback is welcomed, and will be taken into account as part of the review. Action regarding the voluntary sector will also be taken forward through our procurement equality objective, below.
Employment of Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An objective 'To produce and publish a headcount profile of the Council's workforce covering equalities protected characteristics, analysing and evaluating these and taking appropriate corrective action' (where data is available) was added following consultation with staff.
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The actions included in the consultation will be taken forward under a new procurement objective "To promote the Equal Opportunity policy through procurement and commissioning" which will focus on putting in place a supplier charter, implementing the voluntary and community sector commissioning framework, and producing an equality training guide.

e) Overview of staff responses

- The guaranteed interview scheme for disabled applicants should continue
- Ensure transparency and consistency in the recruitment process
- Concern over generic job descriptions and applications for jobs arising through shared services
- Many staff felt they had not had sufficient equalities training, some managers felt that they would also benefit from a greater understanding of equalities issues to help them manage staff
- Cultural awareness and an understanding of diversity issues were seen as important, particularly in frontline areas. How are different groups affected by the cuts? Have soft skills i.e. community languages, been lost through staff reductions?
- Staff agreed that the rights in the handbook were comprehensive; many, but not all, were aware of them. Practical examples could illustrate how they affect staff
- Staff agreed that the council shouldn't collected data on sexuality and religion
- There is a need to consider how we apply equality policies to contractors as we increasingly become a commissioning body.

These issues are being taken forward by Human Resources through the staff handbook and business plans as appropriate.