



## **NORTH SOMERSET COUNCIL - Equality Scheme**

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## Foreword

The adoption of North Somerset Council's first Equality Scheme marks a new phase in our approach to equalities.

We want to change the traditional approach of seeing equality as a number of separate strands, and bring together in one place an account of what we are doing to embed equality in all that we do.

Councillors and senior managers provide the leadership required to work with staff, local organisations, and local people, to proactively identify and tackle the barriers that our service users and staff may experience because of their race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender re-assignment, religion or belief or socio-economic status.

We are committed to ensuring that the consideration of equality and diversity becomes a day-to-day part of decision-making to bring about positive changes that are felt by service users and employees.

We also work with a number of other organisations such as Police, NHS North Somerset, voluntary organisations and groups and local volunteers to promote equality when commissioning or delivering services. Through the promotion of this scheme we hope to encourage other partners and organisations to improve their approach to addressing issues of equality and diversity.

This scheme has been available for comment since October 2009. We have received a wide range of comments that have helped shape this scheme and importantly the action plan that you will find attached at Appendix B.

We are thankful to everyone who has helped us reach this point. We hope that you can see that your contribution has had a positive impact, and will continue to work with us in the future.

If you would like to comment on the scheme or would like any more information please contact Louise Roberts, Equality and Diversity Manager on 01934 634832 or via e-mail at [louise.roberts@n-somerset.gov.uk](mailto:louise.roberts@n-somerset.gov.uk)

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction and background**

North Somerset Council's corporate vision is *"to provide clear leadership, quality services and affordable Council tax..."*

This means that we are continuously working to improve our ways of working as well as the services we deliver and commission.

We also recognise the importance of being seen as an employer of choice by a wide and diverse range of people. Working to eliminate discrimination and promote equality helps us to deliver services that meet local need and helps us recruit and retain a suitably skilled and committed workforce.

### **1.2 Our commitment to equality and diversity, and what this means in practice**

We have learnt from consultation exercises and research that a wide range of personal characteristics and social circumstances can prevent local people from having equal access to local services or feeling part of the wider community. Examples include race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, religion and belief, literacy, location and socio economic status.

We aim, working with our partners, to build safer and stronger communities where diversity is valued and everyone has equal chances to live, work, learn, and feel part of the community, free from prejudice, discrimination and harassment.

This means providing relevant and accessible services to people who live or work locally and who visit our area, and working proactively to identify and eliminate actions, policies or procedures that unfairly discriminate against individuals or groups.

### **1.3 The grounds of equality relevant to this scheme**

As a public authority North Somerset Council is committed to promoting equality on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, sexual orientation and religion and belief. We want to tackle discrimination and harassment, and to promote equality and good relations in everything we do.

Our consultation exercises show a high degree of overlap between the traditional equalities strands and the experiences of the wider community, reminding us that this equality scheme is just one part of our more general work to involve local people in improving our services and making decisions about the best use of resources.

### **1.4 What is an Equality Scheme?**

The Race Relations Act 1976, Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975 place public authorities such as North Somerset under what are often described as 'general duties' to tackle discrimination and harassment and to promote equality and good relations amongst diverse groups in the community.

In addition, these Acts place specific duties upon public authorities – and these include a duty to produce and publish 'equality schemes' that explain how the general duties will be met. This scheme explains in detail how we will respond to these specific duties.

Until now, the Council has fulfilled these duties by creating three separate schemes, and linking them together through an overarching document called a comprehensive equality policy.

This 'Equality Scheme' will replace all four of these separate documents and will incorporate our existing action plans for promoting equality on the grounds of race, gender and disability.

In addition, this Equality Scheme will link with our existing and planned work on promoting equal access regardless of age; currently contained in our strategy for older people, carers strategy and relevant aspects of our single plan (our main strategy document relating to children and young people). More information about these plans can be found at Appendix D.

Plans for identifying and tackling disadvantage that may be linked to sexual orientation, religion or belief and socio-economic status are also specifically referenced for this first time in this scheme.

## Chapter 2: About North Somerset Council

### 2.1 North Somerset Council

We have 61 elected councillors representing the district's 36 wards ensuring public views are reflected in the council's priorities, decisions and services.

Out of these, seven councillors make up the modern cabinet-style Executive which takes the majority of the council's decisions. Councillors who are not members of the Executive have a place on one of 7 Policy and Scrutiny Panels.

Our day-to-day services are carried out by our various staff or officers who are organised around the following five directorates:

- Development and Environment (D&E)
- Adult Social Services and Housing (ASS&H)
- Children and Young People's Services (CYPS)
- Finance and Resources (F&R)
- Corporate Services Unit (CSU)

Our Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for managing the council and as part of the Corporate Management Team (CMT) helps deliver our vision, aims and priorities set out in our Corporate Plan.

### 2.2 Our aims and values

To enable us to turn our vision of providing “*clear leadership, quality services and affordable Council tax*” into practice, we have agreed aims, priorities and values following consultation with staff, local partners and customers. These are fully explained in our Corporate Plan 2008-2011 but key points are outlined below.

Our aims as an organisation are

- Promoting lifelong learning opportunities
- Enhancing health and well-being
- Protecting and improving the environment
- Building safer and stronger communities
- Increasing prosperity
- Improving the way we work.

This scheme directly contributes to the delivery of these aims.

We have developed a framework of values and beliefs that reflect the way we work. These explain what kind of an organisation we want to be and what the people of North Somerset can expect from us. These values underpin all that we do and reflect the shared aspirations of both Councillors and staff:

- Put people first
- To respond to local opinion
- Encourage a culture of achievement
- Work with and involve others
- Think and act sustainably
- Value everyone equally and respect diversity
- Deliver value for money
- Act with integrity

This scheme directly contributes to the delivery of these values for the staff of North Somerset Council as well as the residents and visitors of North Somerset. Specifically it demonstrates practically the actions that the council is taking to 'Value everyone equally and respect diversity'.

## Chapter 3

### Our legal and good practice frameworks

#### 3.1 Unlawful discrimination

Like all employers and service providers we are bound by laws that make direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on certain prohibited grounds illegal.

1. Direct discrimination is a legal term that means treating a person less favourably. This is unlawful if the less favourable treatment is on a prohibited ground, unless there is a defence explicitly provided in the Act that applies. In practice the prohibition on direct discrimination means that people in the same situation must be treated the same.

2. Indirect discrimination is a legal term that means treating everyone the same but this treatment disadvantages certain groups. This form of discrimination is only unlawful if the disadvantage cannot be justified.

In combination direct and indirect discrimination mean people must be treated the same, but they must not be unjustifiably disadvantaged by being treated the same. In other words the law requires people to be treated 'equally' as opposed to 'the same'.

3. Harassment on a prohibited ground is a third type of discrimination that is unlawful.

Currently the prohibited grounds of discrimination when providing services are sex, race and disability. For the purposes of employment and vocational training, the prohibited grounds also include age, sexual orientation and religion or belief in relation to employment and vocational training.

4. In relation to racial discrimination, segregation on racial grounds is a fourth type of unlawful discrimination.

5. In relation to disability, there is a further type of discrimination. This is failing to comply with our duties as an employer and a commissioner/provider of services to make reasonable adjustments that enable disabled people to access services and employment.

Our duty to make reasonable adjustments means we are under a statutory duty to take account of disabled people, even where that involves treating disabled people more favourably than other persons. To explain this, the Code of Practice gives the following example:

"A disabled student may need a dedicated car parking space because she is unable to use public transport. Non-disabled users might also want a parking space, but will not suffer the same degree of disadvantage if they do not get one: the disabled student will be unable to attend the course if she does not have the space, whilst the non-disabled student will merely be inconvenienced. Favourable treatment is necessary to provide equality of access to the course."

#### 3.2 Our proactive duties to promote equality

As a public authority we have legal duties to take a proactive approach to promoting equality on the grounds of race, disability and gender. This scheme responds to all of the duties placed upon us and begins to respond to the duties placed upon us in the impending Equality Bill.

### 3.3 The Equality Bill

It is anticipated that the Equality Bill will be given Royal Assent in spring 2010 and will come into force in the autumn of 2010. The purpose of the Equality Bill is to streamline the current legislation and statutory instruments relating to equality. Also to strengthen the law in regard to a number of areas:

- **Introducing a new public sector duty to consider reducing socio-economic inequalities**  
Specifically including socio economic issues in the equality impact assessments of key strategic decisions of the council.
- **Putting a new Equality Duty on public bodies**  
This Equality Scheme 2010 – 2013 responds to this by extending the council's current duties to positively promote equality on the basis of race, gender and disability to pregnancy and maternity, age, sexual orientation, religion and belief and gender re-assignment.
- **Using public procurement to improve equality**  
Using our contracts more effectively to ensure that other organisations champion equality and diversity.
- **Banning age discrimination in the delivery of services**  
Currently age discrimination laws are limited to the provision of employment and training, this will have particular significance to Adult Social Services, Jane Smith and Alun Davies are leading on this proposed change.
- **Gender pay and equality reports**  
The council will be required to publish annual details of gender pay gap, ethnic minority employment rate and disability employment rate.
- **Positive action**  
The Equality Bill will enable us to make more opportunities for positive action where we can identify a lack of diversity in the workforce.
- **Strengthening the powers of employment tribunals**  
Any recommendations made by an employment tribunal will apply not just for the person taking the tribunal but for the whole organisation.
- **Protecting carers from discrimination**  
Making it unlawful to discriminate against someone because they are a carer, our HR policies will need to be reviewed to ensure they adequately cover this new area.
- **Offering new mothers stronger protection when breastfeeding**  
Making it unlawful to stop a mother breastfeeding in public, advice will need to be given to our customer-facing staff.
- **Private members clubs**  
Ensuring clubs who admit a range of members treat all members equally
- **Improving protection from disability discrimination**  
Extending the duties to cover people's homes and 'poor treatment' of a disabled person, briefings on this new duty will be made available to staff.

Whilst the full implications of the Equality Act are not yet known the Equality Scheme begins to consider and plan for the anticipated duties including amendments to the equality impact assessment process to include socio-economic factors on key strategic decisions and more use of positive action to encourage a greater range of people to apply for council jobs.

### 3.4 The Equality Framework for Local Government

The council has adopted the good practice standards that are contained within the Equality Framework for Local Government in 2009. These standards provide a framework for local authorities to work to ensure that a proactive approach to promoting equality on all six of the grounds that are covered by this scheme becomes an increasingly central part of our all our work.

In January 2009 we were assessed against our achievements as an 'Achieving Authority' (Equality Standard for Local Government Level 3), and from this point we will be working towards 'excellent' under this framework.

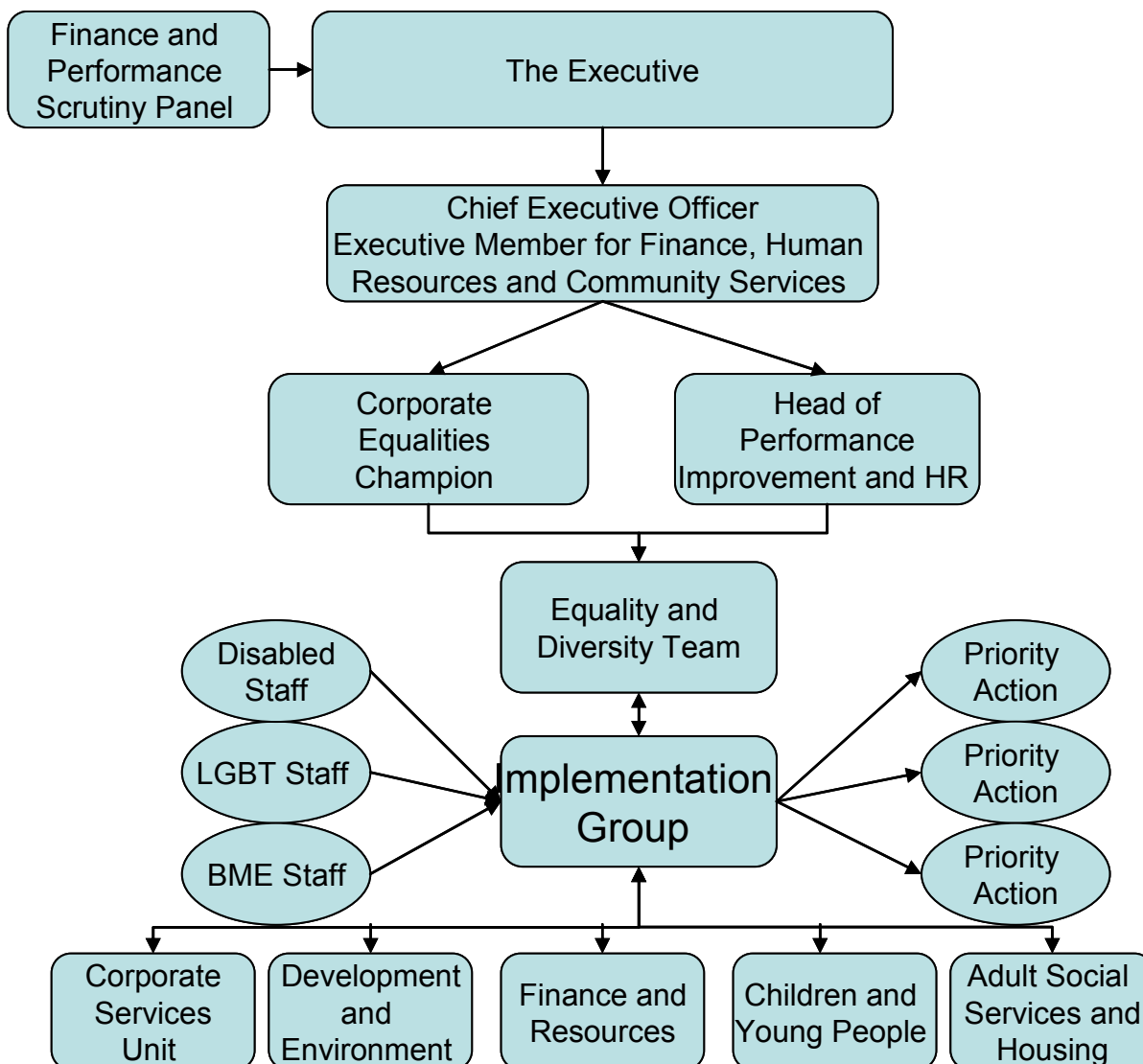
The actions listed in Appendix B recognise the ongoing commitment to improving our performance against this framework.

## Chapter 4

### Integrating our legal duties and good practice frameworks into our day to day work

#### 4.1 Our structures and lines of responsibility for delivering equalities

The lines of responsibility for delivering the equality and diversity agenda are illustrated and then explained below.



The Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel fulfil scrutiny functions and make recommendations to the Executive.

The Chief Executive Officer and Executive Member have overall responsibility for this policy, and fulfil leadership functions both internally and externally.

The Chief Executive Officer and Executive Member are supported by the corporate champion for equality and diversity (service delivery) and the Head of Performance Improvement and Human Resources (employment). These post holders provide internal and external leadership.

The corporate champion for equality and diversity and the Head of Performance Improvement and Human Resources are in turn supported by the Equality Scheme Implementation Group .

Our Implementation Group is made up of the chairs from directorate equalities groups and advisors such as the 3 staff forums, UNISON and the local Race Equality Council. This group fulfils internal leadership, corporate strategy, monitoring, resource allocation and communication functions.

This strategic group is supported by a range of delivery groups that look at the Implementation Group priorities. The focus of these groups depend on the priorities identified by the Implementation Group.

To monitor the implementation of this scheme from April 2010 The Implementation will be merged with the existing Equality Scheme Implementation Groups to review the delivery of the actions listed at Appendix B. Please refer to section 7.1.

Directorate equality groups are chaired by senior management and draw their membership from managers and staff within each directorate. They were set up to promote two way communications between customer facing staff and the corporate centre on equalities issues. Directorate equality groups are also in place to ensure that the equality commitments, objectives and outcomes are agreed within that directorate and are carried through into action.

Responsibility for co-ordinating the day to day running of this scheme rests with the equality and diversity manager, sitting in the equality and diversity team. The equality and diversity manager is committed to producing an annual report on progress against this Single Equality Scheme, which also assists the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel with their monitoring functions.

#### **4.2 The Council's functions and their relevance**

In order to meet our equality legislation duties we carryout equality impact assessments as part of our annual service and team planning process. These EIAs will include a refresh of the implementation of the key policies and strategies related to those services.

All new policies, strategies, projects or reviews will have an equality impact assessment completed as part of the development of these areas.

This list of services areas that will complete an annual equality impact assessment is published at appendix A.

#### **4.3 Our arrangements for using impact assessments to identify and tackle actual and potential discrimination**

Our equality impact assessment process requires the impact upon people from all six equalities strands to be considered. From 2010 the consideration of socio-economic status on strategic decisions has been added. This involves comparing the composition of service users against base line information to detect any disadvantage, and works with local organisations, groups and individuals through consultation to address that disadvantage.

Service managers review their equality impact assessments in line with annual service and team planning. The results of these equality impact assessments can then be fed directly into a team or service plan.

All new and proposed strategies, services and policies from across the Council are required to undergo an equality impact assessment before they are presented to the Executive, as stipulated in our policy development framework.

The current equality impact assessment tool can be accessed via the Council's internet pages or by contacting the Equality and Diversity Team.

To ensure equality impact assessment are of a high quality individual assessments are reviewed within departments, and from a corporate perspective.

#### **4.4 Using consultation to identify and tackle actual and potential discrimination**

We use a wide variety of methods to identify and tackle actual and potential discrimination.

The type of consultation that is required for each revised strategy, policy and service is decided upon by the directorate, and depends upon the nature of the strategy, service or policy; its level of impact; and who is affected by the policy.

In addition we will continue to increase opportunities for consultation by supporting the development of community groups and networks. We encourage their independence and are committed to following the local COMPACT agreement to increase opportunities for meaningful consultation and participation. A key action going forward is the development of a participation strategy to compliment the local COMPACT.

#### **4.5 Involving people from a Black an Minority Ethnic (BME) background**

Our capacity to understand the views of BME people in more general consultation has been increased by our success at recruiting more BME people onto our citizen's panel. We will continue to use a variety of formal and informal consultation methods to maximise participation including:

- Continuing to value the local Racial Equality Council's role of critical friend
- Inviting representatives from organisations, groups or individuals with relevant expertise to meetings
- Seeking advice from organisations, groups or individuals with relevant expertise on an ad hoc basis
- Maintaining ongoing dialogue with the local Racial Equality Council and the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum Project
- Formal consultation exercises such as focus groups, workshops and interviews
- Feedback from organisations, groups or individuals with relevant expertise
- Case studies
- Local research involving local people
- Supporting the continued development of the BME staff forum

#### **4.6 Involving Disabled people**

The Council has a range of processes and structures through which Disabled people are actively involved and engaged in the development of the Council's policies and services on an ongoing basis. These include the following:

- Joint Planning groups for carers, older people, people with learning disabilities, people with mental health issues and people with a physical or sensory impairment. These groups all have individual service user, carer, and community voluntary sector representation. The groups also include colleagues from health and other Council services. They cover health, housing and social care issues.

- In 2005 the Council established an Access Group to advise on all issues concerned with physical accessibility. Individual Disabled people and voluntary / community sector groups are represented together with Council officers.
- In 2005 a Disabled Staff Forum was set up within the Council to give Disabled employees a forum in which to raise issues concerning employment and disability. The group can also be consulted on wider issues affecting Disabled people within the authority.

We work to ensure our consultation events are accessible to all and have an accessible communication guide and a meeting and venue checklist to enable officers to achieve this.

#### **4.7 Consulting from a gender perspective**

There is a gender balance on Citizens Panel which enables our policies/services to be considered from gender perspective on an ongoing basis. To supplement this, we use our contacts with the voluntary and community groups and our partner agencies to help us review our policies from a gender perspective.

We also approach the current cohort of women engaged in our Springboard programme.

#### **4.8 Involving older people**

An extensive consultation process with older people was undertaken between July and September 2007 to inform our corporate Older Persons' Strategy. The consultation took the form of a written consultation document which contained a number of priorities which respondents were asked to rate in importance. There was an opportunity to 'write in' comments and several focus groups also took place. Over 100 responses to the consultation document were received. A full report on the consultation is available on request.

Through the Partnerships With Older People Project five consultation and engagement groups with older people were set up- four geographical and one for older people from BME communities. These groups are known as Senior Community Links. Representatives from the Senior Community Links meet on a quarterly basis with councillors at the Older People Champions Group. One of the roles of this group is to monitor the implementation of the older people strategy

#### **4.9 Involving children and young people**

All children's services are required to have in place a strategic plan for children and young people so that agencies can work together to meet the five key outcomes for children and young people that are laid out in the 2004 Children's Act. These outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well being

Our single plan is reviewed annually but is formally revised every three years. It will next be revised in 2010 following a comprehensive needs assessment commissioned for the Children's Trust Board and published December 2009. In developing our single plans we aim to consult with children and young people, as well as families, the general public and the widest range of relevant public and voluntary organisations. These organisations include: dioceses, unions, neighbouring authorities, prison service, probation service, local health care trusts, police, head teachers, governors.

A participation network group plays a key role in encouraging the participation of young people

Through this network, young people are actively influencing future developments in North Somerset through youth parliaments, forums and youth Councils. There is active engagement in school Councils and the youth parliament, with a student parliament representative on the Scrutiny Panel of the Authority who advises head teachers and governors

#### **4.10 Consulting on religion and belief**

Elected members are leading work to develop engagement and consultation with religion, belief and faith groups. Work has begun with a local network of faith groups which will lead to the first of what is hoped to be annual events in 2009.

In 2010 work has begun engaging with faith communities through a faith audit. It aims to look at the support provided by faith groups and pull together a faith and belief forum for the area.

#### **4.11 Consulting with lesbian, gay men, bi-sexual and transgender people**

We are in the early stages of developing ways of capturing views specifically from these perspectives. A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender employees group has formed and is developing slowly but steadily. We are working with voluntary and community organisations working with lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people to improve our engagement with people in the community. More active engagement with our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender staff is planned in the future.

#### **4.12 Arrangements for equality monitoring of service users**

The purpose of our equality monitoring is two fold. The data informs our impact assessments and therefore helps us identify groups of people who are not accessing our services or employment equally. It also provides baseline information that enables us to measure progress we are making in narrowing inequalities.

For these reasons we try to encourage service users and employees to participate in our equality monitoring but appreciate that there are some people who prefer not to participate or who are willing to participate to a limited extent.

Previous impact assessments that have identified a need to improve data collection and analysis Proportionality continues to inform our approach to improving our equality monitoring. This means that as our monitoring procedures continue to develop, we can direct our data collection resources for each equality strand towards the areas of our work which are most relevant to local people.

In our service provider/commissioner role resources are predominately directed towards those customer facing services which are of particular relevance to people. We have formal procedures to monitor ethnicity, disability and gender of service users in respect of the housing waiting list, adult services, supporting people, intermediate care, drug and action teams, hate incident reporting, children and young people's services.

Our monitoring of service users by age is most comprehensive around young people, with data being collected to measure our progress against the outcomes on the Children's Act and individual attainment via sources including:

- the annual school census
- Travellers' Education Service
- Pupils with Special Educational Needs, including Gifted and Talented pupils
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Service
- Looked after Children

- Youth Offending Team
- Surestart

Information about services users by age is also routinely collected and used by Adult Social Services, Supporting People and Housing. It is anticipated that plans to extend our monitoring of older people's access to services will be informed by the outcomes that are being developed under our Older Persons' Strategy

Our monitoring of services users by religion and belief and by sexual orientation is currently limited.

This being said, adult services do enquire about service users' religious belief as a routine part of client assessments and clients' sexual orientation is taken into account as part of heavy care packages.

As regards young people, the Council asks schools for data about harassment on the grounds of religion and sexual orientation.

The Council as a whole works with a range of other organisations within North Somerset to jointly tackle harassment on a number of grounds and as part of this collects and analyses data on harassment that is on the grounds of religion and sexual orientation.

We are committed to taking a more proactive approach to monitoring service user on these grounds and our new monitoring guide now requires appropriate services to undertake appropriate monitoring.

A standard set of diversity monitoring questions is available from the council's internet or from the Equality and Diversity Team

#### **4.13 Equality monitoring arrangements in employment**

Human Resources monitor the ethnicity of our staffing in line with the published Commission of Racial Equality recommended classifications. We have extended this statutory monitoring to include disability and gender.

The results of this monitoring are discussed regularly at management team meetings and investigation/action undertaken to explain/address any issues that become apparent. We also collect and publish statistical data in relation to

- Attendance at training sessions
- The results of performance appraisals, grievances and disciplinary action that is related to discrimination and harassment
- Grievances and disciplinary action that is unrelated to discrimination and harassment leavers

Additionally we monitor the following

- Job applications
- Progression through the recruitment process
- Applications for promotion
- Success rates for promotion
- Sickness
- Staff who utilise the Childcare Voucher Scheme

We do not collect data relating employees by religion or belief, sexual orientation but have committed to undertaking this in the future.

#### **4.14 Publishing arrangements and access to information**

We recognise that lack of awareness of our services causes inequality of access. Our website ([www.n-somerset.gov.uk](http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk)) is the primary way in which we provide information to the public about our services.

Our website follows the accessibility guidelines issued by the World Wide Web Consortium and the Royal National Institute for the Blind, meaning that our information should be viewable by most browsing devices.

To make this information more accessible essential web pages have been made available in other languages and in formats accessible to people with learning disabilities.

In acknowledgement that some people are not able to access the Internet the Council will continue to work with community groups and local people to identify groups of such people and work to find ways of improving their access to information.

Additionally it will approach community groups with information about its services that can be included within newsletters and have staff available to attend meetings on request.

We endeavour to ensure language is not a barrier for people. We therefore subscribe to Language Line to enable people who do not speak English to speak to us if they make contact with us by visiting reception areas.

Please refer to the Council's Accessible Information and Translation Guide for more information.

#### **4.15 Promoting Equality in Procurement**

We spend more than £130 million of public funds each year on goods and services. This figure makes us one of the largest purchasers in the south west.

We recognise procurement as a function is relevant to our general duties to promote equality regardless of whether the contracts concern goods, works or services. This is addressed in our Procurement Policy which requires equality considerations to be central throughout the entire tendering process and contractual relationship.

We encourage, and where possible require, companies and other organisations that bid for our services to practice equal opportunities. We will not award a contract to any contractor who breaches any equality standard that we observe.

Equality and diversity issues in the contracting process ensure the following occur:

- Our equality and diversity policy is reflected in service design, delivery and review
- Our equality policy is reflected appropriately in the process and procedure associated with tendering and procurement generally
- Community needs are reflected in service design, delivery and review, which includes fulfilling duties to make reasonable adjustments for Disabled people
- Contractors fulfil their own equal opportunities obligation as employer in respect of race and other equality and diversity issues when carrying out work for us.

Compliance with our equality standards is monitored by the council's Procurement Officers and the Equality and Diversity Manager

Details of this policy and information for contractors can be found on our website.

#### **4.16 Promoting equality in partnership working**

We recognise that our general duties do not end when we are working in partnership with other organisations, even if those organisations are not under the same proactive duties.

In addition tackling disadvantage and promoting equality of opportunity has been identified as a priority within the Sustainable Community Strategy for North Somerset. The Sustainable Communities Strategy is produced by the North Somerset Partnership (NSP). This partnership is made up public organisations, private businesses, and voluntary and community groups who work together to improve economic, social and environmental well being within North Somerset. The partnership agrees the priorities for delivering services under the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and monitors the services delivery by reference to a range of targets.

To deliver equality of opportunity and treatment, the Sustainable Community Strategy aims to:

- Enable the development of successful neighbourhoods across North Somerset
  - Support the development of the voluntary and community sectors
  - Ensure all people are able to make a positive contribution to their communities
  - Meet the learning, social and cultural needs of North Somerset Communities
  - Encourage community cohesion within our urban and rural neighbourhoods
  - Address social isolation within our urban and rural communities
- Commitment from all partners that equality and diversity will remain at the forefront of the partnership's agenda.

As will be seen in chapter 7 below, arrangements have been put in place through the NSP governance structures to ensure that equalities issues are picked up and reflected in all planned activities, and monitored where appropriate through a performance management framework.

Provisions have been made in this scheme to improve the monitoring of equality issues through our partnership arrangements.

#### **4.17 Reporting hate incidents**

People in North Somerset have the right to live, work, and visit without being subjected to hate incidents. Where a person believes a hate incident has taken place, they have the right to complain about the incident. The council has responsibility to take appropriate action to try to prevent these incidents occurring again and to support the victims.

The council is opposed to all forms of hate incidents and will positively support residents, visitors or council representatives who are the victims of such incidents. Victims will receive a prompt, sympathetic and sensitive response from the council. All reported hate incidents will be investigated and appropriate action taken by the council. It is difficult to determine what an appropriate response would be as this would depend on the nature of the incident and the victim's wishes. However the council will endeavour to investigate the situation, make recommendations and agree with the victim the action to be taken.

The Council's policy is to:

- Encourage people in the community and within the council to report any hate incidents
- Make it easy for them to report such incidents
- Support them when they make a report
- Investigate the situation thoroughly within agreed timescales
- Deal with the perpetrators appropriately

The strategic objective of 'Creating a Safer Community' directly illustrates the actions we are taking to ensure hate incidents are reported and responded to positively.

## **Chapter 5 - Promoting equality in employment and training**

### **5.1 Our commitment**

We are committed to being an equal opportunities employer. We recognise that this requires a widespread culture of trust and respect for all employees. All employees have a responsibility to act professionally and to challenge inappropriate behaviour whenever they encounter it. We will provide training opportunities for all our staff in equality and diversity issues to raise awareness of potentially discriminatory practices within the workplace.

We are committed to reflecting the increasingly diverse nature of our community in the workforce. In consultation with recognised trade unions we will introduce fair employment practices that go beyond eliminating direct and unjustifiable indirect discrimination. As part of this we will continue to work to ensure equal pay for all staff and introduce family friendly policies, as well as encourage balancing work and life commitments.

We will continue to work to improve our recruitment and retention policies to ensure they are non-discriminatory and encourage applicants from the whole community.

As regards equal pay we have fully implemented Single Status, which is the new grading system all employees paid on NJC terms and conditions. This resulted in greater pay equity and was demonstrated by an equal pay audit in 2009.

We aim to provide a safe and accessible environment where individual identity is valued and respected, and which is built on a culture that is free from harassment, bullying, discrimination and violence.

Harassment, bullying and discrimination on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation is dealt with under our Workplace Behaviour Policy.

A copy of which is available on the council's intranet or from the Equality and Diversity Team.

In addition to this all employees are expected to take responsibility for their own health, safety and well being and for that of their fellow workers. We expect all employees to act professionally and to treat colleagues and service users with dignity and respect. In return employees can expect to be treated in the same way.

### **5.2 Our People Strategy 2009 – 2012**

Specifically supports the Council's priority to 'improve customer services'. Within the scheme it sets out ambitious plans to improve:

- Organisational development
- Leadership development
- Skills development
- Recruitment and retention
- Pay and rewards
- 

As a major employer in the area, we will

- affirm our commitment to equality in all aspects of employment, including recruitment, selection, career development, training, promotion and welfare
- develop a workforce that reflects the relevant labour market
- inform all employees and Councillors of the implication of this policy on ways of working and provide appropriate training

- inform all employees of their rights to protection from discrimination, harassment or victimisation
- failure to comply with this policy is a matter which may be dealt with under the council's disciplinary procedures.

Our commitments and the responsibilities placed on employees that arise under this Equality Scheme, are actively promoted through inclusion in the staff induction package and staff handbook. Managerial responsibilities are also part of the mandatory equality training (Fair for All) for managers. This scheme is also available on the internet and intranet.

All our employment policies continue to be reviewed through equality impact assessments so that any disadvantage can be identified and addressed.

### **5.3 Encouraging a more diverse workforce**

We have set progressive annual targets to increase the number of Black and minority ethnic people, women and disabled employees across all sections of the council. These are targets not quotas and we do not use unlawful positive discrimination to meet them. We do however use positive action to encourage equal opportunities to access our jobs and retain staff such as

- Advertising in voluntary sector newsletters
- Promoting the Council as a credible employer at Black and minority ethnic events
- Offering advice and assistance with filling in application forms

As regards the employment of Disabled people, we have been awarded the Two Ticks symbol for our commitment to the employment of Disabled people and people with long term health impairments. Awarded by Jobcentre Plus, the scheme requires the Council to undertake five actions including guaranteeing an interview to any disabled person who meets the essential criteria of any post advertised. The result of the outward visible commitment has been to increase the number of disabled people applying for posts within the Council.

In 2007 the council piloted the "Workright scheme" to increase the numbers of people with a learning difficulty the Council employs. The scheme proved successful and in 2008 was broadened to cover all Disabled people. The scheme allows for flexibility with the council's recruitment procedures and support for people in the early stages of employment.

We have published guidance for managers on the recruitment and employment of Disabled people which provides information and advice on actions to take when reviewing the job description, advertising for staff, short listing, and conducting interviews, among other things.

In practice, successful candidates at interview stage are asked to complete a pre-employment questionnaire. Dependant on the post and/or the impairment it may be necessary to ask the candidate to attend for a pre-employment medical assessment with the Occupational Health service. This is to assist with identifying any "reasonable adjustments" that need to be made. Contact is also made with the 'Access to Work' service if this is appropriate.

Our aging workforce and low levels of young people being recruited into jobs are among our organisational challenges. For this reason we are working with Trade Unions to develop and implement initiatives such as National Vocational Qualifications, Apprenticeships, succession planning and career grades.

Links with local schools are being established to encourage younger people into the organisation through recruitment fairs and the introduction of work placement programmes. 60 places were offered to young people in 2006/2007 across all directorates. Also, in partnership with human resources, Connexions and Next Step 4 placements were provided for young people in care or

care leavers on 2007. More challenging targets for the recruitment of young people will be set year on year.

This scheme makes provision for us to find out more about the needs of our older employees, and how religion or belief, and sexual orientation affect people's experiences of working for us.

#### **5.4 Our staff groups**

The Council has 3 staff groups:

- Disabled Staff Forum
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Employees Group
- Black and Minority Ethnic Staff Group

Staff who wish to attend these groups have the full support of the Corporate Management Team. Representatives from these groups attend the Fair for All Group to ensure any issues raised are taken forward at a strategic level.

#### **5.5 Monitoring performance**

The following performance indicators are monitored and reported to CMT, the Executive and Finance and Resources Policy and Scrutiny Panel on a regular basis:

- BVPI11a – top 5% of earners: women
- BVPI11b – top 5% of earners: ethnic minorities
- BVPI11c – Top 5% of earners: Disabled
- BVPI16a - %employees: Disabled
- BVPI17a - %employees: ethnic minorities

In addition to this all areas of recruitment and elements of our employment practices, for example leavers, grievances and staff who use the Childcare Voucher Scheme are monitored on an annual basis.

## Chapter 6

### How we developed this Single Equality Scheme, our equality objectives, and the outcomes within our action plans

In the various stages of development of this scheme we have consistently drawn our priorities for the scheme from a wide range of information

- Impact assessments that have been completed on all policies and procedures since 2004.
- Relevant consultation that has been completed in the last 24 months.
- North Somerset Council workforce and other national statistical and qualitative information.
- Discussions with North Somerset Council staff and at the Council's Corporate Equality Group.
- Other information and feedback, including that received from audit and inspections.

#### 6.1 Lessons learned from our Equality Impact Assessment

Our equality impact assessments have high-lighted a number of areas that identified potential disadvantage, these included:

- Helping libraries hold books and resources that are interesting to the whole community
- Improving the provision of accessible information about public transport
- Ensuring there is enough of school places to meet the needs of hard to place groups
- Increasing the support for schools around their Community Cohesion requirements
- Increased publicity of the advocacy services that are available through Adult Social Services
- Improvements to the way the council collects diversity data
- Need to encourage new BME people to North Somerset to take-up the services that are available
- The need to increase the accessibility of information about HIV/AIDS services
- Increasing the number of people with caring responsibilities to access community learning opportunities

These actions (along with a wide range of others) form a part of the Equality Scheme Action Plan.

Assessing disadvantage from the perspectives of age, religion and belief and sexual orientation has only been a required element of our impact assessments from 2008.

Based on our experience of completing impact assessments on the three statutory grounds we anticipate that this first round will show

- A lack of data about the age, religion or belief and sexual orientation of service users and employees and how these personal characteristics affect people's experience of dealing with the Council.
- A lack of formalised networks to consult on religion or belief and sexual orientation issues
- A lack of understanding about how age, religion and belief and sexual orientation may impact upon people's experience of dealing with the Council.

Outcomes to address these issues have been included in the action plan in appendix B.

## **6.2 Lessons learned from involving service users, including Disabled people, partners and stakeholders**

As agreed by the Executive in July 2009, the Council's equality scheme was available for public consultation from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009 to the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010.

The public, stakeholders and members were encouraged to comment on the scheme through a variety of different ways:

- Inviting members of the public to comment on the scheme through an article in North Somerset Life and on the internet
- Attendance at all scrutiny panels
- Running a workshop for stakeholders
- A written invite to a range of local groups and partners to encourage them to comment on the scheme.

We received over 100 comments to the consultation. A full list of all the comments received and the response is available from the Equality and Diversity Team and has been fed back to those who contributed to the consultation.

The wide range of comments we received have been grouped around the following themes:

### **Physical access to services**

Comments included:

- The availability of induction loops
- The implementation of the council's Upgrade of Office Accommodation Project
- Provision of accessible toilets

### **Transport**

Comments included:

- Improving access to services should include bus services
- Transport for young people should be considered
- Lack of accessible public transport is a problem

### **Hate incident reporting**

Comments included:

- How is the council working with other partners such as the police to challenge hate incidents
- How are hate incidents being challenged in schools
- Raising awareness of the hate incidents experienced by Disabled People
- Do more to encourage the victims of hate incidents to come forward
- Staff need to be more aware of the support that is available for the victims of hate incidents
- Need to be more proactive and challenging of hate incidents

### **Accessible information**

Comments included:

- The Council makes too many references to information that is available on the internet
- Awareness of events such as Your North Somerset should be in accessible formats
- Phone links in libraries are inaccessible
- Information about what information is available through the internet etc in a range of accessible formats
- Improve the speed of delivery of information in alternative formats
- Our communication should be in simple English making use of key signage
- Be mindful when communications types do not provide access for all groups in the community

## **Access to social care**

Comments included:

- Rural areas are isolated and don't get access to services
- Recognise cultural sensitivities in problem resolution, e.g. parenting support
- Need to improve access to advocacy as a key service
- The Health and Social Care criteria is set to high, meaning not everyone can access services

## **Employment and Training**

Comments included:

- Job satisfaction of disabled people needs to improve
- Staff need to be more aware of the needs of their disabled customers
- The council should take a more creative approach to improving access to employment
- Make more opportunity for work experience and volunteering
- The availability of job sharing opportunities should be publicised
- We should do more to employ people with mental health issues
- Make more use of positive action
- Do more to influence employers in North Somerset

## **Working with our partners to improve the consideration of equality and diversity across North Somerset**

Comments included:

- The council should develop its community leadership role and encourage partner organisations to develop and deliver equality plans.
- The council should influence Town and Parish councils to improve their approach to equality and diversity
- Use contractors that promote and understand people's needs
- Use the information gathered through partner EIAs to inform service delivery

## **6.3 Priority improvements**

There were four areas in particular where a number of issues were raised and questions asked; the following areas have been identified as priorities for this Equality Scheme. A group will be established to look in detail at each of these 4 areas and report back progress to the Equality Scheme Implementation Group on a quarterly basis.

### **Blue Badges and car parking for disabled people**

We received the most comments from elected members and the public relating to the eligibility and enforcement of the Blue Badge Scheme and the provision of accessible car parking including the charging of disabled people.

Comments included:

- Do schools have to provide accessible parking spaces?
- Concerns were raised about the new loading restrictions introduced to Weston-super-Mare
- Provision of accessible parking at the Town Hall
- How is the Blue Badge Scheme enforced?
- Issues raised as to the criteria and usage of the Blue Badge Scheme

### **Effective engagement with diverse communities**

The council received positive feedback on a range of engagement activities it has carried out. However more effective, ongoing engagement was a consistent theme raised by elected members, the public and stakeholders.

Comments included:

- Your North Somerset is a very successful and positive event

- Concern that council engagement activities are not as effective as they could be
- It is key that our engagement activities link with the PCT and other health organisations
- There should be better engagement with the Gypsy and Traveller community
- Make a genuine commitment to giving a response on the outcomes following engagement and consultation
- Engagement should be genuinely led by user groups and individuals

### **Support for schools to enable them to champion equality**

An area raised by elected members and officers, comments included issues on our schools approach to supporting diverse pupils through hate incident reporting and developing a positive culture to promote diversity through the development of relevant, effective equality schemes.

Comments included:

- Should schools produce their own equality schemes?
- Following on from the new OFSTED requirements on reporting hate incidents, what is the council's policy ?
- Are the community cohesion requirements on schools fully understood?

### **Using procurement and commissioning to improve equality**

An important area raised by officers and stakeholders, comments included our role in raising and monitoring the standard of equality practice amongst the organisations who provide services on our behalf.

Comments included

- How do we ensure our contractors comply with equality law?
- Commissioning contracts and public service agreements need to reflect equality duties
- Improve our common approach to commissioning and procurement

### **Other specific comments included:**

- Consideration of support for volunteers
- Making a provision for transient communities within the scheme
- Including a reference to the importance of play partnerships
- Referencing the council's new duties to consider socio-economic disadvantage through the equality scheme
- Improving the provision for disabled people in libraries

Where appropriate these comments have informed the development of the action plan at Appendix B

## **6.4 Other consultation that has informed the development of this scheme**

During the development of the draft scheme we also asked people to share their knowledge of people's experiences of the Council from religion and belief, as well as sexual orientation perspectives. We were told that people felt they were not always listened to. Other live issues for these groups included:

- Issues in schools around faith
- Having dietary needs met by catering services, and access to worship
- Meeting the spiritual needs of young, as well as older people in care, and having this included all aspects of care planning
- Being sensitive to how gender impacts upon certain faith communities, and their need to have carers of the same gender
- Awareness raising about what domestic violence and harassment are, and publicising that help is available

We also sought input from our service users, stakeholders and partners when reviewing our Comprehensive Equality Policy so that it could be incorporated into this scheme. Key messages here included

- The recognition that the Council was engaging with external organisations in the development of its equality plans
- The need to look at equality issues wider than the 'traditional 6 strands'
- The need to fund community organisations who deliver services to the community more effectively so they can assist the Council meet its aspirations and outcomes.
- The Council needs to strengthen its position as a community leader on all equality strands
- With the exception of age, perception was that Council needs to put more focus on equality issues
- Changes in the language of the Comprehensive Equality Policy, replaces words use like try with stronger phrases such as 'must ensure'

Actions to address these issues are included in this scheme.

On the question of options for sustainable consultation methods on the grounds of age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation,

- The annual Your North Somerset event was cited one a good model to follow, giving consideration as to how this or similar events can to cover all equality strands. Different events were needed.
- There is no single body operating in North Somerset across all faiths but the LA does not make use of the existing structure of local churches and other faith groups.
- The need to develop a forum of religious groups
- There is a need for the Council to help different parts of the equality community to come together and understand each other better to overcome conflicts and issues that exist between groups, and leadership by the elective body is crucial
- There was concern to ensure that the voice of young people is heard in the development of equality plans

Plans to start tackling some of these issues have been included in this scheme.

## **6.5 Lessons learned from involving staff**

In common with all major policy documents, our equality schemes go through internal consultation before publication. We recognise however, that this process does not necessarily lend itself to being an effective way of gathering feedback about people's experiences of working with in the Council. Our schemes have therefore drawn upon the results of staff surveys that were available at the time.

We sought the views of managers and staff, including the staff forums on priorities for action in relation to age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. This told us that:

- Gay and lesbian staff can feel marginalized and do not feel confident that the organisation is able to deal with complaints about homophobic bullying
- The need to raise the profile of LGBT issues in the workplace and ensure that equality related training adequately covers this
- We could use our role as service commissioner to influence staff attitudes in our providers and address homophobic issues experiences by clients.
- Work could also be done within secondary schools where the perception is that the issue still largely goes unmentioned.
- Our lack of knowledge about the numbers of LGBT staff and their experiences as employees was identified as another area for development.

- Managers asked for guidance on dealing with religion and belief issues, such as requests to pray and time off for religious holidays or holy days, given that our working time is orientated around Christian festivals.
- A need for more information about different religions and how religion affects people's perception of dealing with the Council.
- Guidance on how to deal with issues that arise between the conflict of religion and belief and sexual orientation legislation.
- The lack of prayer rooms was also noted.

Where possible these issues raised have been reflected within this scheme and its action plan.

## Chapter 7

### Implementing our 2009-2010 Equality Scheme

#### 7.1 Monitoring and reporting on the progress of this scheme

It is clear that the Equality Scheme will only be genuinely effective if all the actions and commitments within it are implemented and completed. Therefore it is vital that there is an effective way of monitoring and reviewing the scheme and particularly the action plan.

The monitoring begins from the leadership given at the highest levels in the Council. The ultimate political responsibility for the scheme will be with the Council's Executive. One of the members of the Executive is the champion for equality and diversity and this includes being the political lead on the development and delivery of the Equality Scheme. The Executive and Council will receive reports on progress with the Equality Scheme as explained below.

At officer level responsibility for the scheme will be with the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT), which is made up of the Council's Chief Executive officer and the Directors of the Council's services. The Director of Adult Social Services and Housing and the Head of Improvement and Human Resources, have joint responsibility as officer leads for Equality and Diversity. The Equality Scheme will come within their brief of providing strategic leadership.

The Equality and Diversity manager will have operational responsibility to oversee the implementation and delivery of the scheme. Key to this will be the Implementation Group. This is a group of officers from each of the Council's directorates who act as equality and diversity champions in their directorates and stakeholders from key partners and community groups.

At a directorate level the relevant actions will be included in directorate business plan, service and team plans. It is these plans which set out the priorities and work of services or teams for the following year. Through this process the delivery of the actions in the action plan will be part of the core business at a local level. The individual officers who are named for delivering the actions in the action plan will have these included in their annual objectives set through appraisals which are monitored in line management sessions.

The above process is fully in-line with the Council's existing performance management framework.

At the end of each year of the scheme the Council's Executive will receive progress reports on the implementation of the scheme. It will report on those actions that have been achieved and highlight areas where further work needs to be done.

The outcome of the annual report will also be publicised in a number of ways. It will be published on the Council's website, and a summary will be published in "North Somerset Life", a Council produced magazine which goes to every home in the district.

The annual employee monitoring report published by human resources as part of their annual update will also be circulated to the Council's staff groups and the Implementation Group for information and comment. A summary of this report will also presented to the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel

Monitoring of the Corporate Plan provides further measurement of our outcomes.

Our Corporate Plan requires our performance to be assessed against key corporate performance indicators (KCPI's). These are monitored on a regular basis and progress is reported to monthly to the Corporate Management Team and quarterly to the Executive and Policy and Scrutiny Panels.

Within the current Corporate Plan we have a range of KCPIs that focus on equality issues:

- Increase those on long term benefits supported into sustained employment
- 81% of older people achieving independence through rehabilitation/intermediate care by 2011
- 3,750 per 100,000 of people supported to live independently through social services by 2011
- 38% of carers receiving needs assessment/review and a specific carers service or advice and information reviews by 2011
- 750 per 100,000 of social care clients receiving Self Directed Support by 2011
- 92% of clients receiving a care package following an assessment within 28 days of 2011
- 90% of all clients receiving services having a review by 2011
- 96% of items of occupational therapy equipment delivered within seven working days
- Reduce the delayed transfers of care by 5.0% (per 100,000 people) by 2011.
- Reduce to 76 per 100,000 of older people admitted to care homes by 2011.
- Reduce to 12% of looked after children having three or more placements during the year by 2011
- 100% of Surestart centres delivered by 2011
- 100% roll out of extended schools including provision for play by 2011
- 85% of young offenders' engagement in suitable education, employment or training by 2011
- 100% of care leavers in suitable accommodation by 2011
- 95% of looked after children and young people have a Personal Education Plan in place by 2011
- 100% of children and young people in long term care have a Personal Education plan in place
- 85% of children and young people in long term care have an up to date Personal Education Plan (in the last six months)

As regards the Sustainable Communities Strategy, the North Somerset Partnership (NSP) has agreed the priorities for delivering services under the Local Area Agreement and monitors the services delivery by reference to a range of targets.

The Local Area Agreement is a plan that has been approved by the NSP and agreed with central government. The targets within the plan are monitored and reported on every quarter.

The Local Area Agreement 2008-2011 includes the following additional targets for young people's services that relevant to this scheme:

- Improving the emotional health of children
- Reducing obesity in primary school age children
- Increasing take up of 14-19 learning diplomas
- Increasing the participation of 17 year olds in education or training
- Reducing the under 18 conception rate
- Increasing achievement across the Early Learning Foundation stage, as well as at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 in maths and English
- Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- Increasing GCSE attainment
- Increasing young people's participation in positive activities
- Reducing substance misuse

- Reducing the number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training
- Increasing young people's access to transport

Targets that relate to disability equality include

- Increasing the number of adult with mental health problems in employment
- Increasing the number of vulnerable people who are able to live independently

Further targets relate to

- Reduce domestic violence

We also have National Indicators, which are reviewed and reported on annually, that track progress in relation to issues such as:

- The percentage of top-paid 5% of local authority staff who are women
- The percentage of top-paid 5% of local authority staff who are from ethnic minorities women
- The percentage of the top paid 5% of staff who have a disability (excluding those in maintained schools)
- The percentage of staff from ethnic minorities
- The percentage of staff declaring that they meet the Disability Discrimination Act disability definition
- The number of staff who feel the Council is committed to equality of opportunity and staff development
- Disabled staff who feel the Council is committed to equality of opportunity and staff development.

## **7.2 Publicising our Equality Scheme, equality objectives and action plans**

We will publish a range of equality impact assessments that are in electronic format; written consultations and research reports; results of service user and employment monitoring; and the annual progress reports on the Equality and Diversity section on our website.

A proportionate approach will be taken to distributing copies of these items, with copies being provided to:

- stakeholders who have taken part in their development where possible;
- organisations and individuals who we work in partnership with to promote equality;
- agencies who audit our practice, and any other person on request.

The Council will use mainstream and specialised methods to signpost the public to these publications such as

- Press releases to the local press
- Articles in the North Somerset Life magazine
- Articles in voluntary sector newsletters
- Minutes of partnership meetings

A summary of this Equality Scheme will also be prepared and made available for staff, stakeholders, partners and the public. These will also be available on our website and available in a variety of languages and alternative formats on request.

## **7.3 Addressing disadvantage in access to information**

Through our consultations we recognise that some people, including many older people and some BME people, do not use the internet to the same extent as other groups and have difficulty accessing the information that they need. We are keen to ensure that different groups gain

access to information about the services that are especially relevant to them and recognise that there is a need to be particularly proactive about promoting some of our services to particular groups.

We will continue to support information sharing events such as the annual 'Your North Somerset' event where staff from services are able to provide information and answer questions face to face. To encourage an inclusive approach to the celebration of diversity from 2009 this event will include information across all strands of equality.

#### **7.4 Training our staff on our general and specific equality duties**

Corporately we will continue to use and develop formal and informal methods of training to demonstrate the Council's commitment to achieving its value of 'value everyone equally and respect diversity'; a significant investment funds an ongoing programme of equality and diversity training. Over 1,250 staff, managers and Councillors have attended this awareness-raising programme since 2004. The programme, which is facilitated by external equality consultants, has included general equality and diversity principles and legislation as well as offering staff the opportunity to reflect on their own values and take to understand their role in challenging discrimination.

Corporately we will continue to use and develop formal and informal methods of training and awareness raising to ensure staff:

- Understand that equality is a corporate priority.
- Feel confident fulfilling their responsibilities.
- Have improved understanding of the needs of equalities groups within the community and in employment.

Raising awareness of the Equality Scheme on the Corporate Induction and New Manager's training programme is one of our plans for the year ahead.

Recognising that staff learn in different ways we will explore the potential for some diversity training to be offered through an e-learning package.

We will undertake specific training that is required to address equality issues in services that are identified through equality impact assessments this is arranged by directorates.

As our employment statistics demonstrate that there is still much we need to achieve in terms of gender equality we have introduced a training and development programme aimed specifically at women workers called Springboard. The programme is in its forth cycle so it is early days to see results which can be directly attributable but feedback from participants has been extremely good and we are hopeful that the positive impacts will be felt on a longer-term basis.

The council's Access Officer for Disabled People undertakes a wide range of training and support work to assist the delivery of a variety of services by individual teams across the council. The aim is to empower staff to deliver services for disabled people in a mainstream environment and not as exceptions in their work programmes. Some examples include:

- Working with Planning Officers in the Planning Development Control teams to:
  - Effectively deliver planning legislation for disabled people to ensure accessible development
  - Provide guidance on a number of specific issues e.g. Design and Access Statements and Accessible Housing.
  - Promote the better use of design guidance

- Providing training to the Contact Centre and front facing staff on communication issues in dealing with disabled callers
- Seminar aids and equipment sessions for training staff to explain the needs of disabled participants e.g. using visual aids, communication aids or formats for documents.
- Bite Size sessions on Accessible Information.
- Delivering CYPS team away day on Disability Discrimination Act and children with complex needs.
- Seminar session on provision of the “Accessible School” at school Governors training.

## **Chapter 8: Our strategic equality aims**

### **8.1 Our strategic equality aims**

We have taken an overview of the results from the research, consultation, monitoring and impact assessments that were undertaken as the various elements of the scheme have been developed. This view helps us to understand the progress we are making as an organisation to determine our direction of travel as an organisation.

To help us progress as an organisation we have identified a number of themes arising from our research, consultation, monitoring and impact assessments, and have organised them into strategic equality objectives.

- Improving access to services
- Improving access to employment
- Improving our processes
- Improving our approach to engagement with diverse communities
- Creating a safer and stronger community

### **8.2 Meeting our strategic equality aims**

Appendix B contains actions we have planned to take until March 2013 to help us make our equal opportunities and corporate commitments a reality.

The actions listed here are a combination of actual changes to policies, practices and services, and reviews that are intended to identify if changes are needed.

From 2010 this whole Equality Scheme will be formally reviewed every 3 years. An update on progress will be reported annually.

Putting the plan together has involved a number of different elements. Most importantly the actions have tried to respond to the issue raised by local people in consultation. This is not just from the consultation exercises carried out specifically for the scheme, but from other consultations the Council has carried out over the last few years.

Through our action plan we seek to deliver as much as possible within current resources and explain how and when specific issues or tasks can be resolved.

## **Appendix A - Our Equality Impact Assessments**

All service managers are encouraged to review their equality impact assessment on an annual basis as part of their routine service planning.

All new policies, strategies and key decisions will be subject to an equality impact assessment as part of their review or development.

### **Adult Social Services and Housing**

- Contracts
- Early Intervention
- Rapid response and rehab
- Learning Disabilities Team
- Safeguarding
- Training
- Community Meals
- Community Learning
- HIV
- Supporting People
- Care Management
- Charging Policy
- Housing Strategy & Commissioning
- Private Housing and Renewals
- Housing Options and Advice

### **Children and Young People's Services**

- Complex Additional Needs Service
- Looked After Children Resource Service
- Locality Service
- School Organisation & Access
- Workforce and Cultural Development
- Policy & ICT
- Primary Learning
- Secondary Learning
- 14-19 Learning
- Excellence Cluster
- Youth Offending Team
- Children's Area Social Care Service
- Quality Assurance Children's Social Care Service
  
- Policies that will have an equality impact assessment during their development:
  - Single Plan
  - Integrated (Multi Agency) Working Guidance
  - Joint Commissioning Strategy
  - Workforce Strategy
  - Primary Capital Programme
  - Building schools for the Future Programme
  - LAC Placement Strategy
  - Parenting Strategy
  - Integrated Youth Support Strategy

## **Corporate Services Unit**

- Legal Services
- Democratic Services
- Electoral Services
- Registration Services
- Learning and Development
  - Appraisal policy
- Equality and Diversity
- Performance Team
- Health and Safety
- Community Safety
- Stronger Communities
- Emergency Management
- Customer Services
- Marketing and Communications
- Policy and Partnership
- Community Strategy
  - Compact
- Human Resources
  - Disciplinary Policy
  - Grievance Policy
  - Absence Management policy
  - Recruitment Policy

## **Finance and Resources**

- Strategic Procurement
- Business Improvement
- Financial Management
- Property and Asset Management
- Exchequer Services
- Internal Audit
- Revenues and Benefits
- Information and Communication Systems

## **Development and Environment**

- Waste
  - Strategy
  - Collection
  - Recycling
  - Disposal
  - Minimisation
- Car parking
- Events and Concessions
- Green Spaces/infrastructure
- Area Officers/Community liaison
- Public rights of way
- Development Control
  - Applications
  - Compliance and enforcement
  - Support (customer enquiries, systems & registration)
- Economic development
- Regeneration
- Transport Policy

- Transport Programmes
- Major schemes
- Public Transport
- Concessionary Fares
- Road safety
- Sustainable travel
- Integrated transport schemes
- Environmental protection
- Food safety
- Trading standards
- Licensing
- Health & Active lifestyles
- Library services
- Sports & Leisure



## Appendix C

### **A profile of the North Somerset community from an equalities perspective**

North Somerset is currently home to around 190,000 people, the population having more than doubled since the 1950's. During the 1980's the district was the third fastest growing shire district in the country. The four main towns have grown considerably in size and population, with large new housing developments of several thousand homes still being built in Weston-super-Mare and Portishead. The rural areas including the villages of Congresbury, Yatton, Banwell and Backwell have also seen an increase in population. The population is expected to have increased by a further 5% between 2001 and 2006, and that growth will continue to be above that for the UK as a whole. Although much of North Somerset's population is relatively prosperous, there are also significant pockets of deprivation. Areas of two wards within Weston-super-Mare fall within the 10% most deprived in England.

When the profile of North Somerset is looked at from an equality perspective, we can start to understand the range of experiences and needs that exist within our local area.

Census data shows that a main feature of the North Somerset population is that around 25% of the population are aged 60 or over, which means it has a 4.2% higher percentage of older people than the national average. Also, nearly 10% of the population are aged over 75, which is almost 30% higher than the national average.

The number of people aged under 45 is lower than the national average, and population growth is expected to be strongest in the 20-34 age category, which are the age group who traditionally have the highest rate of participation in sport and physical activity (footnote1).

Despite this population growth, the over 60 age group is expected to grow to around 34% of North Somerset's population over the next 20 years (2). This will clearly impact upon our adult social services because frailty and dependency often increase with age, as does the risk of elder abuse (3).

As regards younger people, the census indicates 22% of North Somerset's population is made up of people aged under 19. The proportion of 16-24 year olds is recorded as being 8.6%, which means our proportion of residents from this age group is lower than the national average of 10.3%. It is thought that this is due to young people moving out of the area to go to University or take advantage of job opportunities that are not available within the immediate area (4).

There are around 145 young people in North Somerset who are the main carer for one of their family members, and 700 young people with disabilities.

From an ethnicity perspective, in 2001 the ethnic composition of children and young people within North Somerset was different to the profile of the adult population, with 4% of children and young people being identified as having an ethnic minority background at that time.

Ethnicity data collected by schools shows that there has been an increase of around 550 children from ethnic minority backgrounds within North Somerset Schools over the last 3 years. This has seen the Black and minority ethnic profile of school age children change to 6.2%.

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<sup>1</sup> North Somerset 2007 Culture, Leisure and Tourism and Topic paper

<sup>2</sup> North Somerset Council 2007 Older Persons' Strategy

<sup>3</sup> North Somerset Council 2007 Older Persons' Strategy

<sup>4</sup> North Somerset Council 2006 Single Plan for Children and Young People

A report by the Children and Young People's services in 2009 shows that around 68 languages are spoken by children and young people across North Somerset.

Returning to the profile of the adult population, the South West Observatory notes that the South West has one of the smallest ethnic minority populations in Britain (5). This was borne out of the 2001 census which stated that 1.38% of North Somerset residents identified themselves as belonging to a visible ethnic group (6) and a further 1.27% identified themselves as 'white other'.

The census data indicates that there are Black and minority ethnic (BME) people living in all wards across the district, though some wards are more diverse than others. The more urban areas of Weston-super-Mare and Clevedon being the most diverse, with residents from all ethnic groups living there, as well as the highest proportions of people who identified themselves as 'white other'. Areas of Weston-super-Mare also contain the highest number of Chinese people as compared with other wards. The census also indicates that Portishead is the least diverse area, though otherwise small numbers of all ethnic groups reside in the more rural areas to North of the district, which contain the district's highest levels of mixed heritage and Asian residents.

The proportion of BME individuals within each ward is below the national average with just one exception. This is Portishead which, despite being the least ethnically diverse area, has a slightly higher number of mixed heritage individuals than the national average (7).

Two important issues for us arise from this census data. The first being that the Black and minority ethnic population in North Somerset is very diverse but also small – meaning that people can feel isolated and therefore more vulnerable. Secondly, the way in which people are unevenly distributed across the district could lead to clusters of different racial groups forming.

Data collection exercises since 2001 highlight that the census data is no longer wholly accurate. For instance Weston College and Ethnic Minority Achievement Service monitoring data, together with a scoping exercise undertaken by Somerset Racial Equality Council suggest that migrant workers are being drawn to the area and are not reflected in the census. These people are working in a variety of occupations in varying conditions. Many are integrating well however, others maybe vulnerable to exploitation and living in substandard housing.

Also a snap shot Community Development report profiling Locking Castle suggests that this housing development, which occurred after the census, has attracted residents from different racial backgrounds (8). It seems likely that a mixture of people will continue to be drawn to the big housing development such as those in Weston Village and Portishead.

Although Gypsies have been resident in North Somerset since the sixteenth century, media coverage, and controversy surrounding planning applications are indications of potential community tension. Research conducted in North Somerset shows that the national patterns of discrimination by Gypsies are adversely affecting life chances and life expectancy (9). This

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.swo.org.uk/State\\_of\\_the\\_South\\_West/population.asp](http://www.swo.org.uk/State_of_the_South_West/population.asp)

<sup>6</sup> These census categories indicating this being: Mixed White and Black Caribbean; Mixed White and Black African; Mixed White and Asian; Mixed Other; Asian or Asian British Indian; Asian or Asian British Pakistani; Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi; Asian or Asian British Other Asian; Black or Black British Black Caribbean; Black or Black British Black African; Black or Black British Other Black; Chinese or other ethnic group Chinese; Chinese or other ethnic group Other Ethnic Group

<sup>7</sup> [www.localknowledge.co.uk](http://www.localknowledge.co.uk)

<sup>8</sup> Carol Slocombe 2005, NSC Area Profile Locking Castle East

<sup>9</sup> Sheffield Hallam University 2003, the Health Status of Gypsies and Travellers in England; Somerset Racial Equality Council and North Somerset PCT 2004 The First Step

research suggests that Irish Travellers, a different racial group, are similarly affected and that it is unlikely many people from both of these groups took part in the census.

One demographic change that was anticipated but does not appear to have been realised is an increase in the number of asylum seekers – despite the opening of the Home Office Registration centre at Portishead. This seems to be the result of government policy which disperses asylum seekers supported by the National Asylum Seeker Service to designated dispersal centres, and North Somerset is not a dispersal centre. This means that adult asylum seekers in the area tend to have support networks. There are a very small number of unaccompanied children in North Somerset registered as asylum seekers.

North Somerset Council monitors the ethnicity of its employees, and sets targets for measuring its success at recruiting and retaining employees from a range of ethnic groups at different levels within the organisations. These targets are reviewed annually.

Our workforce monitoring shows that our total ethnic composition of our employee profile is very close to the ethnic profile of the adult population at 1.49%.

Turning to North Somerset's profile from a disability perspective, the 2001 census included a question: "Do you have any long-term illness, health problem, disability which limits your daily activity or the work you can do?" 18.05% of people in North Somerset answered yes to this question. This compares with 17.05% nationally.

As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2009 3.15% of our employees identify themselves as being disabled.

These internal and external statistics suggest that there is a continuing need for us to work to increase work opportunities for Disabled people and challenge assumptions about how a person's impairment will affect their job performance.

As regards service users, figures collected by the Council's adult social services and housing directorate show the following profile of impairments:

- Physical impairment register - 1229
- Learning disability register - 337
- Deaf and hard-of-hearing register - 149
- Blind and partially-sighted register - 1307

These are from registers of people who have identified themselves or have been identified to us.

Our 'supporting people' service requests information in its regular monitoring of service providers on numbers of Disabled people who use the separate services. The monitoring breaks the classification of Disabled people down into separate impairment groups - mental health, physical and sensory impairment and learning disabilities.

We keep a record of all Disabled people who are eligible for and have received a Blue Badge parking badge. In June 2009 this figure was 13,000.

The number of Disabled people who receive the Council's "Diamond card" concessionary bus pass was 1,685 in June 2009.

As at June 2009 we currently have 42,849 Diamond Travelcard holders. Of these cardholders, 55.7% are female and 44.1% are male.

The profile of North Somerset from a gender perspective shows that just over half the population are female, and that women outnumber men in all age groups except those aged under 24, and those aged between 55 and 59.

As regards our own workforce, the statistics of male and female workers who work part and full time by directorate are contained in the following table:

Table as at 31/03/2009

Directorate	Male FT	Male PT	Fem FT	Fem PT
Adult Social Services and Housing	38	22	218	341
Children and Young People's Services	66	37	261	295
Corporate Services Unit	38	2	81	54
Development and Environment	245	72	145	209
Finance and Resources	91	2	62	27
Schools	83	157	188	1788
<b>Total</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>2714</b>

This breakdown shows that considerably more women than men work part time. Also, women tend to occupy posts that are linked with children and the caring professions, which suggest that gender stereotyping continues to impact upon our employee profile.

Our gender profile by seniority is as follows:

Table as at 31/03/2009

Grade Group	Male FT	Male PT	Fem FT	Fem PT
Chief	13		1	
M5-M8	31		28	2
M1-M4	204	17	257	124
JG 5-7	164	29	410	625
JG 1-4	138	208	228	1911
Other		20	3	6
Soulbury	9	1	21	7
Youth	2	17	7	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>561</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>955</b>	<b>2714</b>

This data tells us that women are under-represented in senior positions; however, it must be borne in mind that these positions have a low rate of staff turnover.

In developing the Gender Equality Scheme, we also took into account the following national patterns of inequality.

- 1.6 million Families are headed by a lone mother, 180,000 families are headed by a lone father (10).
- 49% of boys and 59% of girls gain five or more high grade GCSEs or equivalent (11).
- Extreme segregation of young women and men is seen in apprenticeships. 97% of hairdressing apprentices are women and 99% of apprentices in construction and plumbing are men (12).

<sup>10</sup> ONS (2005) Focus on Families

<sup>11</sup> DFES (2005) Education and Training Statistics for the UK 2005 edition

<sup>12</sup> Learning and Skills Council (2005) Apprenticeship Data

- 57% of women employees and 23% of men employees use one or more of the following arrangements: part-time, flexitime, annualised hours, term-time working, job share and home working (13)
- In 2005 the average hourly earnings for a man was £14.08, £11.67 for a woman (14).
- Retired women receive 47% lower weekly income than men (15)

We also considered data that looking at multiple-discrimination, and found that:

- Disabled women and men both have lower employment rates than those who are not disabled. 49% of working age, disabled women are employed compared to 75% of working age, non-disabled women. 52% of working age, disabled men being employed compares to 85% of non-disabled men.
- Overall 50% of ethnic minority women are in employment, but Pakistani and Bangladeshi women both have unemployment rates of less than a quarter (16)

Our profile from a religion and belief perspective, the census shows that 75% of people identified themselves as being Christian, 16.6% identified themselves as having no religion – both of which are higher than the national averages. With this in mind it is unsurprising that the percentages of people from other religions are below the national and regional averages, with only 0.2% of the population being Buddhist, 0.2% being Muslim, 0.1% being Hindu, 0.1% being Jewish, no Sikhs and 0.3% identifying with other religion.

Home office funded research shows that hostility and fear of violence is common among Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. Followers of these religions may adopt traditional dress or other visible symbols of allegiance, meaning that their religious identity is clearly visible, and that this can make them feel vulnerable.

The research also shows that members of these religions who are also from a visible ethnic minority background feel particularly vulnerable, and that there is an additional gender perspective to religious discrimination, with assumptions being made about women of colour wearing religious dress resulting in them receiving particularly unfair treatment.

We recognise that this sense vulnerability is likely to be intensified for people living in areas such as North Somerset where they are one of a very small number of people from these religions.

This research also shows that certain Christian denominations, such as Jehovah witnesses and Mormons, also report experiencing hostility and unfair treatment in many aspects of their daily life. We recognise that there are a diverse range of religious organisations that are categorised as Christian, that local people are members of these organisations, and feel disadvantaged by their religious beliefs.

Turning now to sexual orientation, the census and local labour force statistics do not contain data about people's sexual orientation. Office of National Statistics is addressing this shortfall to some extent by starting to collect data about civil partnerships. However, this will only highlight a part of the gay and lesbian community.

The Council does not routinely ask service users or employees about their sexual orientation, this is an area for focus of this scheme.

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<sup>13</sup> ONS (2005) Labour Force Survey Spring 2005 dataset

<sup>14</sup> ONS (2005) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2005

<sup>15</sup> Women and Equality Unit (2005) Individual Incomes of Men and Women 1996/97 to 2003/04

<sup>16</sup> ONS (2005) Labour Force Survey Spring 2005 dataset

Stonewall, is the leading national organisation which seeks to address the needs of gay people, estimates that 6% of the population are gay, lesbian or bisexual, and that over half of gay people are still not 'out' in the workplace.

Research by Stonewall suggests that 1 in 5 lesbian and gay people have been the victim of homophobic crime, and three quarters of these people do not report it because they believe nothing will be done.

## Appendix D Links to other relevant age related plans

### Single Plan for Children and Young People 2006 – 2009 – Extracts

(Please note that this plan is being rolled forward to 2010 and will be refreshed)

**“Our vision is for North Somerset’s children and young people to be happy, healthy and safe and achieve their full potential. This is the keystone to their future personal success and the contribution they make to their communities. This plan is about identifying and addressing inequalities that prevent us from meeting our vision”**

The purpose of the plan is to set out:

- What children, young people and their families have said that they would like us to be doing
- How well we are performing against a range of performance measures\*
- Some of what we have already done, but more importantly what we still intend to do, to improve outcomes for children and young people

Priorities will be underpinned by a number of infrastructure changes such as the establishment of multi-professional, locality-based teams. Within North Somerset our priorities are organised around five outcome areas:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well being

We have also made progress on delivering some key service areas for children and young people and their families. Examples are:

- Producing a comprehensive service directory so that parents and children and young people can be clear about the services available from different agencies
- The development of the For All Healthy Living Centre on the Bournville Estate in Weston-super-Mare
- Increasing capacity within the fostering service
- Expanding provision for pre-school children and play schemes, including schemes for disabled children, through involvement in the voluntary sector and the Children’s Fund
- Introducing the Youth Key which provides 11 – 19 year olds with discounts on a range of leisure and recreational activities
- Developing dedicated confidential advice and support services for children and young people, which include the ‘No Worries’ project – a service that provides advice on a range of teenage health issues
- Establishing a specialist well being service for Looked After Children and their carers called “Consult”
- Establishing a Children’s Champion group of cross party elected members to work on behalf of children in North Somerset.

Improving outcomes for children and young people is a priority of the North Somerset Partnership which is responsible for the Community Strategy. This is co-ordinated through The Children’s Trust Board, which comprises representatives of key organisations from statutory and voluntary sectors. The role of the partnership is to:

- Identify areas of common purpose and agree joint priorities
- Pool resources and jointly commission services
- Develop integrated services
- Monitor plans against shared outcomes and performance measures
- Identify and share good practice

In all that we do, we will work in partnership with agencies and involve children, young people and their families in the planning, development and evaluation of services.

*\*The full version of the Single Plan includes detailed performance data.*

Topics and aspirations, on which the plan focuses, though this extract doesn't contain an exhaustive list, are summarised as follows:

### **Being Healthy**

- Immunisation rates
- High proportion of Under 5's having contact with health visitors
- Proportion of schools achieving awards under the Healthy Schools Scheme
- Reduce teenage pregnancy rates

### **Staying Safe**

- Child protection prevention, procedures and training
- Low numbers of looked after children and permanency for those who are
- Assessment timescales (initial and core) and management of the child protection system (reviews, re-registrations, and de-registrations).
- Improve placement stability for older Looked After Children, especially those with behavioural difficulties and further develop the recruitment of specialist adolescent foster carers

### **Enjoying and Achieving**

- Childcare performance
- Good performance at all Key Stages
- Low levels of permanent exclusion and effective alternative tuition
- No exclusions and good attendance of Looked After Children
- Positive performance of young people with learning difficulties/ disabilities
- Raise standards of Looked After Children achievement, especially at GCSE
- Continuing to raise overall standards of achievement in schools

### **Making a Positive Contribution**

- YOT performance
- Engagement of young people in decision making
- Support for LAC
- High number of children and young people with disabilities supported in the community

### **Achieving Economic Well Being**

- High levels of Employment Training or Education (ETE)
- Ensuring care leavers are in ETE
- Participation in further and higher education
- Broaden the range of 14 –19 progressions routes, especially at 19, with a specific emphasis on young people not in education, employment or training.

## Older Persons Strategy

In December 2006 it was agreed that the Council should develop a corporate older people strategy. Extensive engagement with older people took place through-out 2007. The focus of the engagement was asking Older people to prioritise actions to deliver the seven outcomes set-out in the "Independence, Well-being And Choice" Green paper in 2007. These are-

- improved health;
- improved quality of life;
- making a positive contribution;
- exercise of choice and control;
- freedom from discrimination or harassment;
- economic well-being; and
- personal dignity.

The final strategy was agreed by the Council's Executive in March 2008 and will run for three years. The next strategy is intended to be a strategy for the whole North Somerset Partnership.

Implementation of the strategy is monitored on a quarterly basis. To oversee the implementation of the strategy and to promote older people issues the Council set up in July 2008 an Older People Champions Group. This group is made up of councillors and representatives from Senior Community Links. Senior community Links are engagement forums for older people set up under the Partnership for Older People Project.

Many of the actions in the action plan have either been achieved or incorporated in to mainstream work of the council. Key achievements include-

- The establishment and successful operation of Older people panels which have now become the Senior Citizen Links which are engagement groups with older people
- The setting-up and continuation of the Community Café project to get information more accessibly and easily to rural communities and carers
- Successful implementation of the concessionary fare Diamond travel card for older people and Disabled people
- Growing numbers of older people making use of services through personalisation
- Effective development work with older people from Black and other minority ethnic communities resulting in more people making use of council services
- The Carers Emergency Response Service has been set-up and is working well
- The Carers Strategy has been revised and is being implemented
- There are several intergenerational projects involving older people and younger people now taking place in a number of schools facilitated by Age Concern Somerset.
- A Single Point Of Access has been developed to all council services which will improve access to services for older people
- The use of "Telecare" systems to assist older people to remain living in their own homes is expanding

Due to the progress with the action plan it is being revised and up-dated during 2009.

## Appendix E - Our equality achievements so far

When the Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes were written in 2007, reviews of the progress we had made in promoting equality on the grounds of race, disability and gender were undertaken. These showed that we had introduced the following processes to deliver on equalities on these three grounds:

- Structures and lines of responsibility for delivering on equalities established.
- Revised and updated list of strategies, policies and partnerships published.
- Commitment made and delivered upon to formally review this list on a three-year basis.
- A rolling programme of impact assessments on existing strategies, policies and partnerships has become established across the organisation.
- Corporate Policy Framework ensures new strategies, policies and partnerships are impact assessed.
- Areas for ongoing support to increase managers understanding of equalities issues identified and addressed on a continual basis
- An ongoing programme for all staff to attend Equality and Diversity training which includes Disability Equality.
- Equality standards are written into our contracts and agreements, regardless of whether they concern goods, works or services.
- Our partners are aware of our general and specific racial equality duties, and we work with them to integrate equality into our joint working.
- Targets and performance indicators used to help focus our attention and monitor our progress in relation to equality, that are based upon demographic information
- Positive action used to help people overcome specific barriers in gaining employment within the Council
- Methods for engaging with wide variety of interest groups on important policy decisions established
- Improved systems for equality monitoring of service users
- Hate incident reporting system has been revised, updated and extended
- Equalities integrated into the local area agreement

Although we have not systematically worked to promote equality on the grounds of age, sexual orientation, and religion and belief before the introduction of this scheme, there have been pockets of good practice which we hope to build upon under this and subsequent equality schemes.

Our strongest examples of promoting equality on these new grounds are in relation age. We have taken actions to identify and tackle disadvantage experienced by children and young people, as well as older people, plus overcoming cross generations issues.

Examples of the work we have already undertake in relation to children and young people follow, many of which have been recognised by the Audit Commission.

- Support provided for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual young people through the Youth Service
- Church schools understood and responded to well
- Creating a youth Council
- Creating a Youth Parliament
- Introducing a Children's strategy
- Providing dedicated support to younger people
- Using apprenticeships to support young people into employment
- Holding career fairs, local democracy week and work experience to encourage young people into employment
- Holding Noscars (North Somerset Oscars) competition, which is one of a series of regional film competitions for schools which take place across the country.

- Community learning – age related projects
- Removing library fines for children on overdue books
- A comprehensive package of interventions including specific interventions for young people with learning disabilities provided by the Youth Offending Team (YOT)
- Work by YOT mean supervised juveniles now have better access to education, training and employment when compared to national statistics and local residents support restorative justice schemes
- The COSMIC project which is aimed at supporting children and young people, whose parents and carers abuse alcohol and drugs
- The Youth Service provide a number of training packs for use in youth clubs and settings to support young people making informed choices
- Targeted activities to promote good health and well-being in children and young people, such as increasing physical activity in children; reducing teenage pregnancies
- Working to improve children's services at the hospital, such as including a dedicated children's area in the accident and emergency unit.
- Prevention and health improvements are supported by a wide range of good family support services that can be accessed flexibly
- CAMHS is providing a responsive and well regarded service
- Children and young people most at risk from abuse are well protected through good multi agency safeguarding arrangements.
- Looked after children services work well together to plan and achieve good outcomes.
- Good progress has been made in developing placement choice for looked after children
- The overall quality of education provision is good and there is effective challenge and support for schools as well as effective support for pupil behaviour and attendance.
- The level of educational attainment in schools is on the whole good
- Young people overall receive good advice, support and guidance through the Connexions service.
- The media summit which explored the role of the media, media perceptions of young people and began to challenge the way young people were portrayed in the media, – recognised by IDEA as a good practice example
- Amica Group Sessions target young mums and cover issues from health, benefits, housing to specific sessions on issues such as diversity, money and debt matters, and positive images with the aim of empowering young women to develop their own confidence, self esteem and skills.
- Residential experiences for young women to try some challenging outdoor activities and have fun in a safe and supportive environment.
- Sessions for young people with special needs at Nailsea Youth House after school,
- Running a Mystery Shopper Project, involving 23 young volunteers to assess the No Worries service in North Somerset.
- 6 week teen's parenting programme
- DVD made by Looked After Children / Care Leavers which will be used in Foster Carer Recruitment
- Interview skills training for young people
- LINX floating support service, providing housing support to vulnerable young people aged 16 - 25 with diverse and complex needs
- Encouraging schools to set up support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans young people

As regards older people, our work to identify and tackle disadvantage to date includes

- Successfully competing for Partnership of Older People's Project funding to create 4 older persons forums to contribute to the Councils work through mechanisms such as the BME forum and citizen's panel
- Introduction of Older Persons' Strategy

- Creation of an Older Person's Champion within the Executive
- Community cafes to provide information about services to overcome mobility problems
- Providing community meals
- Increasing numbers of older people are supported to live independently at home
- Collections of books are delivered to 112 residential elderly persons' homes using delivery vans and mobile libraries on an eight-weekly cycle
- Library books are delivered to 232 housebound customers by the mobile libraries and by volunteers.
- Introducing a lower level of reservation charges for village libraries and mobile libraries
- Concessionary library fees for older people
- Social care initiatives and projects are targeted to meet the needs of older people, including through voluntary and community groups.
- Working with the Department of Work and Pensions to ensure people are receiving the correct payments and day care provision
- Actions to improve the housing stock and improved routing of buses.
- Linking Domestic abuse service with elder abuse, meaning this service can be used where the perpetrator is a partner, spouse, or a person's child
- Working with the police to raise awareness of elder abuse in residential homes
- Revising the Safeguarding Adults policy so that it is more user friendly, easier to follow and improves uptake
- A domestic abuse project to raise awareness of this service among the over 50's
- Falls care pathway initiative
- Joint documentation with health, including Falls Referral and Assessment Tool (FRAT);
- FRAT screening at a single point of access
- Falls prevention training, North Somerset wide;
- Maintaining a falls register;
- Hosting exercise classes in local community/health centres;
- Undertaking falls screening by primary and secondary care staff;
- Using health promotion e.g. Osteoporosis – medications management and screening;
- Introducing a standard referral process for anyone who has fallen and contacted NSC pendant alarm service
- Hospital Admission prevention by diverting category 3 ambulance calls to Rapid Response and Intermediate Care Services
- Increased awareness of services available resulting in increased referrals by wider range of organisations
- Continued support for the Weston and National Abbeyfield Societies
- Training managers on age discrimination legislation
- Offering training to carers on issues such as dementia, strokes
- Running a number of activities at our leisure centres aimed at the over 50s

Our cross generational work to date includes:

- encouraging older people to offer a story-telling service for children in libraries
- encouraging schools to perform their Christmas Concerts to older people in their area
- Giving child and adult protection a high priority
- Training in child and adult protection is compulsory and regularly refreshed.
- Dementia care floating support service to younger people with dementia and older people with memory problems or dementia.

As regards promoting equality on the grounds of sexual orientation, we

- Have piloted staff training focussing upon creating a safe environment for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff
- Are encouraging the creation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual employee group

- Supporting a drop in at Alexandra Pub for victims of homophobic incidents to report incidents
- Incorporating sexuality needs in care plans
- Providing civil registration services
- Providing domestic abuse services available for people within same sex relationships
- Commission a help line and support service for victims of homophobic incidents

We have also taken action to promote equality on the grounds of religion and belief, such as

- Including this as part of home care assessments – e.g. foods in care plan, burial rituals.
- Sharing information and best practice through an information file and promoting NVQ qualification in care
- Distributing leaflets about domestic abuse services to all places of worship in the district.
- Organising targeted awareness raising work in South Ward and Nailsea, enabling the domestic abuse service to form close links with the local churches in Nailsea
- Involving church leaders in organising a seminar in November and launching a Nailsea Domestic Abuse Forum
- Looking at upcoming religious festivals in editions of the Supporting People newsletter
- Ran two pilot religion and belief staff equality and diversity training sessions
- Signposting Muslim carers to Crossroads for support

Other actions have touched all three of these new grounds and include:

- The multi-agency hate incident reporting system covering incidents that occur in work, the streets and schools across north Somerset
- Requiring managers to consider these three grounds when undertaking equality impact assessments
- Using our procurement functions to requiring supported housing providers to undertake equality impact assessments that consider these three grounds
- Issuing guidance on how to monitor age, sexual orientation and religion and belief in services
- Including these in the equality and diversity element of the leadership development programme