

Huntingdonshire District Council

Race Equality Scheme

Introduction

To meet our priorities of providing high quality services and effective community leadership the council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity both as an employer and provider of services.

In 2001 the Race Relations Act (RRA) was amended to give councils a new statutory duty to promote race equality. This places important requirements on the council, the first of these is a general duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- Promote equal opportunities, and
- Promote good relations between people from different racial groups.

The second is a specific duty to publish a Race Equality Scheme (RES), describing how we intend to fulfil this positive commitment and to meet our duty. In this scheme we state which of our functions and policies are relevant to the general duty and describe our arrangements for:

- Assessing, consulting and monitoring our functions and policies for likely impact on the promotion of race equality
- Publishing the results of this assessment, consultation and monitoring
- Making sure the public have access to our services, and
- Training and developing employees so that they can respond positively to these legal requirements
- Collection and analysis of employment statistics

Our commitment

A commitment to equality and inclusion underpins the councils' approach to promoting race equality. The council recognises that some people do not have equal access to our services or information about them. To ensure fairness and equity in the provision of our services, some services may need to be developed to meet different needs. The council also recognises that discrimination or exclusion cannot always be dealt with as a single issue. Different strands, particularly those relating to race, disability, age, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, rural isolation, gender and deprivation, may combine to cause inequality and social exclusion.

About Huntingdonshire

Huntingdonshire is a large rural district, which covers an area of approximately 910 square kilometres. Nearly 161,700 people live in the district, with about 45% of the population living in the 4 market towns of Huntingdon, Ramsey, St Ives and St Neots. Overall we do not have a high proportion of people from a black or minority ethnic background (BME) or have high levels of deprivation or social exclusion. However there was an increase in BME residents between the 1991 and 2001 Census (3,402 to 4,467 respectively) the largest groups were Indian and Pakistani. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) experimental statistics estimate that this figure could have risen to 6,300 by mid 2003*.

In addition to this there has been a recent growth in the numbers of people from Eastern Europe working and settling in the district. This growth indicates a need for renewed focus on race equality issues. Huntingdonshire is a growth area and the increase in population is likely to create a more diverse mix of people in the area; recent data suggests there is a growing number of Polish and Portuguese people in the district.

More information about Huntingdonshire is available from the Policy Division.

* Source ONS Crown © 2006

Huntingdonshire's constitution

Huntingdonshire operates a Leader and Cabinet model of decision making. The Cabinet consists of 9 Members; each Cabinet member is responsible for a number of council services and they have delegated authority to make decisions. The Cabinet meetings are held in public, the Agenda, Reports and Minutes are publicly available. Appendix 4 shows each of these panel meetings in more detail.

Council Organisation and Structure

The Council is currently organised into 3 Directorates each of which is headed by a Director, these are:

- Central Services (e.g. administration, legal & estates, personnel & payroll and Policy)
- Operational Services (e.g. environment & community health, technical services, operations division, housing services and planning services)
- Commerce and Technology (e.g. Information management, financial services, revenue services)

Strategic Aims for Equality & Inclusion

Some of the strategic initiatives set out below are specific to race equality; others reflect the broader diversity agenda. Our policy framework is set out in our corporate plan *Growing Success* (see appendix 3) it has been developed to provide the context for our strategies, policies and plans.

Growing Success – the council's overall plan

The vision in our plan is to ensure that:-

Huntingdonshire is a place where –

- We can make the most of the opportunities that come from growth
- Local people can realise their potential
- We balance our social, economic and environmental needs; and
- We have a good quality of life

To be successful in this vision and to achieve sustainable development the council acknowledges that:

- Huntingdonshire is made up of many different communities
- some communities have greater or different needs than others
- equality does not mean doing the same for everyone
- to make progress we must target resources to meet the greatest needs
- we must consider all communities, even those with fewer needs.

To ensure that these points are taken into account in the things that we do, the council is committed to achieving the Equality Standard for Local Government; this is a framework that sets up a way of working which will ensure that equality in employment and the way services are provided is an important part of the council's work.

To achieve our vision, we have selected six priorities that are important parts of the quality of life experienced by our residents, these are:

- a clean, green and attractive environment
- housing that meets local needs
- safe and active communities
- a healthy population
- accessible services and transport choices, and
- a strong and diverse local economy.

For each of these priorities we have a series of objectives which set out what we plan to do.

Equality & Inclusion Strategy

Our Equality & Inclusion Strategy formalises our commitment to race equality in providing high quality services and effective community leadership.

We intend to do this through the way we -

- plan and deliver services
- monitor and evaluate
- consult and engage
- develop & support employees
- support our communities

To contribute towards meeting these priorities our Equality & Inclusion Strategy has identified two outcomes that we need to achieve

- That our services are provided in ways that meet diverse local needs
- That the council is recognised for promoting equality and inclusion in communities

The two measures that will tell us how successful we are:

- % of local people who believe that council services meet their needs
- % of local people who believe that the council promotes equality and inclusion in their community

How did we develop our Race Equality Scheme?

We have established a Corporate Equality Steering Group, comprising senior officers who have assisted the Chief Officers Management Team in developing the RES, Action Plan and Assessment timetable.

We recognise the requirement to consult, we have consulted with our stakeholders, including the Primary Care Trust and Police and where possible groups representing BME residents. Our RES was also sent to Peterborough Race Equality Council and Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum for consultation

Responsibility for the Race Equality Scheme

Councillors

Councillors will support this RES and work towards the promotion of equality and inclusion in all council and community activities.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the implementation of the RES for the council as a whole.

Directors

Directors have a duty to promote the RES throughout their directorates. They also have responsibility for implementing relevant review, monitoring and performance procedures.

Services

Heads of service, activity managers and team leaders are responsible for implementing the RES in the day-to-day delivery of their service, including the collection of data.

Employees

All employees have a responsibility to implement the RES and work towards the provision of services that meet the goals and objectives of the RES. Appropriate training will be provided to help employees achieve this.

Head of Policy

The Head of Policy will ensure that the RES is reviewed and maintained on a yearly basis, and will evaluate and verify performance data that has been provided.

Contractors

When a contractor carries out any function on behalf of the council they will be expected to conform to relevant equality legislation and practice

Corporate Equality Steering Group

This group will lead on the implementation of the RES, help co-ordinate different activities, including:

- producing guidance and information
- co-ordination of impact assessments
- production of annual report on progress

Membership of this group comprises one representative from within each directorate, an employee representative, a representative from Personnel along with Policy Division support. The group will report the results from the RES action plan and annual report on progress to Chief Officers and Cabinet. The group will deal with issues relating to race, gender and disability through the achievement of the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Review of race equality scheme

The Corporate Equality Steering Group will prepare a report of progress made towards achieving the objectives in the RES and in complying with its obligations under the amended RRA (appendix 2). This will be reviewed by the group annually; it will be submitted to COMT and the Cabinet and will also be published on our website.

The council will conduct a comprehensive review of the Race Equality Scheme every three years (next in 2009). This will include an assessment of how the council has complied with its obligations under the amended RRA and compliance with the general and specific duties. The process of assessing policies and functions for relevance, degree of relevance and prioritisation will be repeated every 3 years.

Assessment of relevant functions and policies to the promotion of race equality

'Functions' means the full range of the council's duties, powers and services.

'Policies' means the full range of formal and informal decisions, procedures, plans, strategies, and objectives about how we carry out our duties and use our powers.

'Relevant' means 'having implications for (or affecting) race equality.

We have identified our functions and policies to determine their relevance to the general duty and given them a priority depending on their relevance to race equality. The priority given determines our 3 year assessment plan, e.g. those functions and policies that have been given a higher priority will be addressed in year one of the 3 year assessment plan. A table showing the prioritisation of functions and policies can be found in appendix 1

Assessing the impact of functions and proposed policies on the promotion of race equality

The list of functions and policies determined to be relevant to the general duty will be subject to equality impact assessments during April 2006 – April 2009, the Corporate Equality Steering Group will develop a template to assist services to conduct Equality Impact Assessments. We may combine some functions/policies within one impact assessment in order to make best use of resources. The equality impact assessment will be an integral part of achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard and will also feature in our comprehensive management process.

Specifically, we will continue to examine each function and policy according to the priority given to it to identify whether there is evidence that they are affecting racial groups differently. To do this we will –

- use ethnic monitoring to collect and analyse information about people’s racial and ethnic origins to assess fair access to and use of services
- use national guidance and definitions to inform our assessments
- use historical data, including any available evidence, complaints or public concerns, survey and research findings, ethnic data and census results or general or specific research to assess the effectiveness of our services in promoting race equality
- compare our policies and the way we carry out our functions with other local authorities and public bodies.

Monitoring and evaluation

Without ethnic monitoring data there is no way of knowing whether discrimination is taking place. We will establish and improve systems to monitor the impact of functions/policies on BME communities; however we will need to take into account - resource implications, sensitivity of information and willingness of people to supply it.

We will monitor and analyse our policies and functions for any adverse impact on the promotion of race equality. We will use a range of methods to do this -

- statistical analysis of ethnic data
- satisfaction surveys analysed by racial group
- random or targeted surveys
- qualitative research

We will use a range of information to help us monitor and evaluate, for example the 2001 Census and other data provided by the Office of National Statistics.

We will use the same ethnic classification system for ethnic monitoring as that used in the 2001 Census, except where research is targeted at specific communities where more detailed information might be required.

We will incorporate consideration of the duty into review programmes, including service reviews and performance management systems.

We will use this information to determine future priorities, for example if evidence suggests an adverse impact we will take remedial action. We will report the findings of any monitoring and evaluation to Chief Officers and Councillors

Consultation and engagement

We will undertake clear, representative and proportionate consultation, using a range of appropriate methods. Specifically we will try to engage people from different racial or ethnic communities to ensure that any new policy does not discriminate or harm good race relations. We will work with Huntingdonshire Diversity Forum to remove barriers to consultation with black & minority ethnic groups and to try to establish effective mechanisms for effective consultation.

We will use the results of assessment, consultation and monitoring to ensure we avoid or minimise adverse impacts on race equality and race relations. The information will be used to understand and meet the needs of different racial groups and to make new arrangements or change arrangements so that our policies and the way we carry out our functions promote race equality.

Any new arrangements or changes we make will be relevant to the nature of the policy or function and its possible effect on the public, particularly any racial group.

Access to information and services

We will ensure that information about the Council and our services is available to all sections of our communities and that services are accessible to everyone. To do this we will –

- consider access to information and services when assessing and monitoring services
- make sure our staff have the necessary skills, information and understanding to provide services and information equally and fairly
- ask local communities what services and information they need and how they want them provided
- translate information where reasonable and ensure interpreters are available when needed and consider other methods for ensuring information is accessible.

Employment

The council is a large employer, with over 1,200 employees. To meet the specific employment duty in the amended RRA, the council will monitor diversity as set out below and will publish the results of its monitoring annually. Reports on monitoring will be prepared for the Corporate Equality Steering Group, senior management and Councillors.

- staff in post
- applicants for employment, training and promotion
- those who receive training
- those who benefit or suffer detriment as a result of performance assessment procedures
- those involved in grievance procedures
- those who are the subject of disciplinary procedures
- those who leave the council's employment

We will report these findings to Chief Officers and Employment Panel. Any future revision of our RES will include the results of employment monitoring.

Training

In order to deliver our responsibilities under the amended RRA, we will ensure that all employees and councillors are aware of relevant legislation and how this impacts upon their work. The council has commissioned a training and development programme for its employees to promote an understanding of equality and its implications for meeting the council's goals and objectives.

Where appropriate detailed training plans for achieving the Equality Standard for Local Government for each directorate/division will be prepared to ensure that appropriate information and training is provided which takes account of individual's responsibilities.

Senior management, Councillors and employees who will be directly responsible for the RES will receive additional specific training.

Publication of the Race Equality Scheme and publishing results

The RES or summary will be made available to all employees and to all relevant community and voluntary groups, organisations and businesses via the Internet, Intranet or in hard copy. A summary of the scheme will be made available in alternative formats upon request.

A copy of the report compiled after each assessment will be available in full on our website (www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk) or on request from the Policy Division, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN 01480 388032.

Where appropriate the council will consider using or commissioning new methods of publication that are proportionate to achieving race equality.

Complaints

The council has an established and robust complaints procedure, which we will keep under review to ensure that we are meeting our duties and to ensure complaints about race equality are dealt with.