

Report on results of the Equality & Diversity Strategy consultation

1. Introduction

Portsmouth City Council's Equality & Diversity Strategy 2010-13 expires at the end of this year. The Equality & Diversity Team has therefore been working on refreshing the current strategy for years 2014-17 in order to keep it in line with its legal duties and its current policy, and to ensure that its focus is still relevant and important to Portsmouth residents, visitors and council staff. The revised strategy will be launched on 3rd December 2013, following approvals from the Governance and Audit & Standards Committee on 2nd November 2013, and the Cabinet on 2nd December 2013.

A consultation on the refreshed strategy commenced on 1st August 2013 and will finish on 31st October 2013.

2. Methodology

The consultation is aimed at all Portsmouth residents as the strategy covers people protected under the Equality Act 2010 because of their age, gender, disability race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership.

Therefore, we have employed the following methods of consulting to reach the widest possible audience:

- Service management has been asked for feedback and ideas on how to improve on the strategy. An email was sent to all service managers on 2nd October 2013 by the Head of Customer, community & democratic service asking for their input into the strategy revision process by 31st October 2013. The following questions have been asked:
 - **tell us whether you think that we should continue working on the current equality priorities**
 - **are there any other equality issues / priorities that the council should focus on**
 - **are there any specific actions that your service would like to / is able to take to support the achievement of any of the current / new (if you can propose any) priorities?**
 - **are there any other improvements that we could make to our current strategy?**
- Email has been sent to a number of diverse community groups inviting them to take part in the consultation including: Portsmouth Disability Forum, Age

UK Portsmouth, Pompey Pensioners, different BME community groups, Chatterbox for LGBT people, Chrysalis for transgender people.

- Email has been sent to key partner organisations: Community Action in Portsmouth, the University of Portsmouth, Hampshire Constabulary, Portsmouth College, Highbury College, Friendship Centre, and Hampshire Fire & Rescue.
- On-line survey (with an option of requesting a word version of a paper copy).
- Respondents can provide their views via email to equalities@portsmouthcc.gov.uk or by calling 023 9268 8559.
- The following drop-in sessions have been made available:
 - 22nd October, 2-4pm, in Ground Floor Meeting Room 3, Civic Offices
 - 24th October, 6-8pm, in Southsea Library
 - 30th October, 10am-12pm, in Cosham Community Centre.
- Individual sessions have been offered to community groups.
- Information about the consultation has been available on the council website, both on the Equality & Diversity web pages and the consultations web page.
- The consultation has also been publicised through the Voluntary and Community Sector newsletter, which is sent to many voluntary and community groups and organisations in the city.
- A PowerPoint presentation has been prepared providing a simple summary of the focus and priorities contained in the current Equality & Diversity Strategy (2010-13). The presentation has been available as part of the on-line survey, published on the Equality & Diversity web pages of the council website, and has been sent with all communications about the future strategy consultation to key partner organisations and community groups.

3. Results so far

3.1. Feedback from service management

So far, we have only received one response from service management, namely from Corporate Assets, Business & Standards.

Q1 Tell us whether you think that we should continue working on the current equality priorities

Answer:

- "the existing strategy is still relevant but the priorities could be more about inclusion in the Shaping the Future of Portsmouth vision, i.e. enabling all groups to participate in this and benefit from the city's development.
- We need to include bodies like the LEP and Health and Wellbeing Board in helping to deliver the strategy.
- We also have the census info and the latest JSNA to provide up to date information on inequality in Portsmouth."

Q2 Are there any other equality issues / priorities that the council should focus on**Answer:**

- "With the increase in the ageing population and the effect this can have on a person's life needs to be considered as an equality issue. Many older people will have decreased incomes, become less physically able, be a carer, become socially isolated, live in unsuitable housing for their needs. The JSNA data shows where in the city they are concentrated.
- Poor schools results and lack of skills in the working population still needs to be tackled to prevent the inequalities groups become more disadvantaged through poverty and lack of engagement in the city's regeneration."

Q3 Are there any specific actions that your service would like to / is able to take to support the achievement of any of the current / new (if you can propose any) priorities?**Answer:**

- "Our approach to housing which is to work closely with Social Care to support vulnerable people to live independently (older people, people with physical or learning disabilities).
- The employment, learning and skills services that support people to gain skills not learned in school, and who have barriers to learning and employment. This is not completely new work, but has more of a focus on allowing disadvantaged people being able to participate in 'Shaping the Future of Portsmouth'."

Q4 Are there any other improvements that we could make to our current strategy?**Answer:**

- "Only those mentioned above."

3.2. Survey

There has been a low response to the on-line survey. Only 10 persons have chosen to provide their views on the future strategy using this method.

Question 1 - Do the 5 priorities in the current strategy continue to reflect the needs of people in Portsmouth?

- 9 of 10 persons have answered this question.

- The majority of respondents agreed that all 5 priorities continue to reflect the needs of people in Portsmouth.
- 66.7% of respondents agreed whilst 33.3% respondents were unsure whether Priorities 1 (Promoting fairness and diversity by tackling inequalities, disadvantage and discrimination) and 5 (Promoting community engagement) continue to reflect the needs of people in Portsmouth.
- 55.6% of respondents agreed whilst 44.4% were unsure whether Priority 2 (Leadership and partnerships) continue to reflect the needs of people in Portsmouth.
- 55.6% of respondents agreed, 22.2% disagreed, and 22.2% were unsure whether Priority 3 (Employment and training) continue to reflect the needs of people in Portsmouth.
- 55.6% agreed, 11.1% disagreed, and 33.3% were unsure whether Priority 4 (Service delivery and access) continue to reflect the needs of people in Portsmouth.
- Some respondents have further commented that:
 - There is a need for "more programmes to tackle more easier the issues such as discrimination, social depreciation, exclusion by poverty..."
 - "introduce more empowerment to all citizens in the community"
 - "More emphasis required on encouraging, promoting and supporting young people with disabilities into employment".

Question 2 - If you feel that the council should continue working on any of the 5 current priorities, please can you tell us what specific actions you think the council needs to take to achieve these priorities?

- 4 of 10 respondents answered this question.
- "Since the cut back in Employment Advisors, disabled young people are struggling to access and secure employment and as a result, are NEET. This is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed by the PCC to ensure that these young people are NOT being discriminated against and automatically being dismissed as too hard to reach or impossible to employ."
- "don't believe enough information reaches some of the groups especially in the disability area".
- "In order of priority: Community engagement; service delivery/access; promoting fairness; employment training. They are in this order as I feel there is work to be done with building bridges before you tackle employment and training, as although this is a priority, there is existing inequality in some service provision which needs to be dealt with first."

Question 3 - Are the 5 priorities important to you?

- 9 of 10 respondents answered this question. A large majority (75% and above) of those who have responded feel that all the 5 priorities are important to them. None of the respondents disagreed and few (between 12.5 and 22.2%) were not sure.

Question 4 - Are there other equality issues that the council should focus on?

- 4 of 10 respondents answered this question.
- Those who have responded have raised the following issues:
 - "with equality and diversity it is important that children are reached early in their lives to value these things, therefore perhaps the council could work with schools more in the running of events and helping with highlighting the value behind being different."
 - "Better provision of information"
 - "Ensuring that young people with mental health problems are not discriminated against."
 - "Gender inequalities in the workplace".

Question 5 - How else can the council improve on the current strategy?

- 6 of 10 respondents have answered this question.
- Those who have responded have suggested the following improvements to the current strategy:
 - "The council should enable access to buildings, especially their own"
 - "To keep consulting with the community as needs regularly change and the strategy should identify that it should be regularly updated according to the needs of people in Portsmouth."
 - "To consult with under-represented communities and find a way of understanding barriers / issues."

3.3. Email / telephone responses

We received the following comments and suggestions for improvements to our current Equality & Diversity Strategy via an email received on 22nd July 2013:

Section 5 Context mentions: "In addition to these issues, there have been significant changes in the population of Portsmouth in recent years, including inward migration from the new European Union states in Eastern Europe, and

further increases in the number of overseas students living in the city. These issues are further covered in Section 6"

I have did not come across any further information about the number of overseas students living in the city. Some general statistics will help build a more accurate profile of the BME community in Portsmouth.

Section 7 mentions: "As well as limitations to the quality of data, there are also issues of scope – we currently lack useful data on the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and gypsy and traveller communities." Will this become an action in the Single Equality Scheme?

There also seems to be no mention of **BME youth** in terms of population and community engagement strategies. I feel that it is important to understand the statistics behind BME youth and how to engage them in community development in and around their areas. This can possibly come under the ethnicity section.

3.4. Drop-in sessions

Unfortunately, despite many drop-in sessions having been made available at different times of the day and different accessible locations in the city, there has been no take up for any of the sessions.

The drop-in sessions have been widely publicised via various channels: PCC website (consultation and equality & diversity pages), voluntary and community sector newsletter, an email to key partner organisations, an email to all our contacts for different community groups including BME groups, Portsmouth Disability Forum, Hilsea Youth Club - Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Group, Chatterbox - social groups for LGBT people, Chrysalis - charity supporting transgender people, Age UK, Pompey Pensioners, and many others.

3.5. Individual sessions

Individual sessions have been on offer throughout the consultation period. Groups and organisations have been encouraged to contact us to express an interest in us organising a session at time and in a location that suited them, where specific issues could be explored.

We have organised three such sessions:

3.5.1. Portsmouth Disability Forum (PDF)

The future strategy was discussed at PDF meeting in October 2013. No specific issues have been raised or comments made about the future strategy. The members

of PDF who attended said that they would contact us if they wished to provide their feedback.

3.5.2. Chatterbox - social group for LGBT people

A session for held with the group in October 2013 and the following issues have been raised / comments made:

- Valuing Diversity Survey (2009) was inadequate. It was too general; no specific questions were asked that would be relevant to LGBT people. Data from the survey is fundamentally unsound.
- LGBT includes lots of different people who might have different problems. There are LGBT communities, not community.
- There is a trust / confidence issue in people identifying themselves as LGBT. More effort needs to be made to approach LGBT people to gain their confidence before engaging with them more fully.
- Hate crime against LGBT people is massively under-reported.
- Lack of data / information about LGBT community in Portsmouth. Chatterbox chair will signpost us for more information.
- There are issues with housing and hounding for LGBT people. Chatterbox would like to see a policy of zero-tolerance towards people living in council housing and harassing other local residents because there are LGBT. Often, it is the victim who is moved on to another accommodation, rather than perpetrators being evicted. Chatterbox have given a few examples of persons they know who have suffered verbal and emotional abuse as well as anti-social behaviour (such as dog poo being put through their letter box) because of undergoing a gender reassignment. Victims are often scared to report or have no confidence in effective response by the police. Therefore, they suffer in silence and are isolated.
- The council is doing a good job in terms of keeping in contact with the Muslim community and supporting Muslim residents, such as with the recent issues around the development of an Islamic school in Portsmouth. However, it is important that the council also reaches the wider Muslim community, not just the self-appointed leaders, who might have a completely different outlook to the general Muslim community.
- Transgender people particularly suffer from not being understood by other people. There is a need to raise awareness of LGBT.
- There I also a need to promote religious tolerance by demonstrating similarities between religions to the general public.

3.5.3. Gateway project volunteers

The volunteers from different BME communities in the city have listened to a talk about the future strategy, but no specific equality issues have been raised or suggestions made for improvements to the current strategy.

4. Conclusion

The consultation is open until 31st October 2013. Despite low numbers of respondents and therefore the consultation results not being statistically valid or demographically representative, some useful qualitative information and feedback has been obtained, which will help steer out future work in the Equality & Diversity field.

Clearly more engagement and work need to be done with Portsmouth's LGBT community to better understand the issues they face and come up with actions to tackle them.

An issue has also been raised about the lack of council's engagement with the BME youth. Furthermore, young disabled people's employment has been raised an issue that will need further exploration.

We continue to lack useful data on the needs of asylum seekers and refugees and gypsy and traveller communities. Some work will therefore need to be done in this area to gain an understanding of the issues and support needs of those communities.