

Children Families & Education

Equality & Diversity Strategic Action Plan 2010-2013

Introduction: From Lead Member

- Top authority in many ways
- Two outstanding audit commission reports
- Aspire to become an excellent authority in EFGL by April 2012

1. Our Strategic Framework for Equality and Diversity

As an ambitious and dynamic authority Kent aspires to be an excellent service provider and community leader. Our Equality and Diversity Strategic Plan will enable Children, Families and Education to fulfil this ambition and is informed by a strategic national and local framework:

- Legal Framework: As a public sector organisation we have a duty eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote equal outcomes in all areas of our service design and delivery.
- Every Child Matters Agenda for Change: challenging our services to improve outcomes of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution and achieving economic well-being.
- The Kent Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014: sets out the vision for change and our priorities for improving outcomes for children, young people and their families in Kent.

Our performance on equality and diversity is assessed through the Equality Framework for Local Government, the Comprehensive Area Assessment and the wider framework for inspection for services and provision within the Local Authority. The Comprehensive Area Assessment measures our performance across ten dimensions of equality.

KCC has committed to achieving excellent in the Equality Framework for Local Government during 2011.

2. Why have an Equality and Diversity Strategy Plan?

Kent County Council is committed to providing high quality services and working actively to involve children, young people and their families in the decisions that will affect them.

Our 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment has assessed Kent as an Excellent Authority and a Good Authority in the provision of Children's Services.

Our Strategic Needs Assessment has identified inequality of outcomes, for example, we know that under-achievement and poorer outcomes in various aspects of their lives is evident for:

- Children from low income families
- Children and young people with behaviour, emotional and social needs (SEN)
- Children in families where parents have mental health issues (as evidenced through safeguarding)
- Boys in their attainment at different key stages

We will address inequality through taking action across CFE and all of our partners through the Children's Trust.

This strategic plan will build our internal competence, confidence and capacity to provide effective leadership in promoting change for children and embed equality and diversity into the way we work.

3. What do we mean by Equality?

The Kent County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy Statement (2004) describes our commitment to Equality and Diversity:

'As a major employer and provider of services, KCC is committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity and combating unfair treatment.

We believe we will achieve this through our roles as community leader, service provider, employer and procurer/ commissioner.

We are committed to ensuring that service users, employees or job applicants will not be discriminated against on the grounds of social circumstances or background, gender, race, disability, sexuality, age, or religion. The principles of understanding and respect for others are central to what we believe.'

In demonstrating our effectiveness in this area we will be providing evidence against the Equality Framework for Local Government and its vision of an equal society:

"An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and opportunity to live in the way people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish.

An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be"

We recognise the inter-relationship between our work to promote community cohesion (promoting a shared vision, sense of belonging and addressing inequality) and our strategic actions to promote equality and diversity.

4. About our Equality and Diversity Strategic Plan

This plan has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders in Children Families and Education and builds on a platform of excellent practice and outcomes from our consultation, involvement and strategic needs assessment activities

The strategic plan is built on the five performance areas under the Equality Framework for Local Government:

- Knowing your community and equality mapping
- Place shaping leadership partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- Modern and Diverse Workforce

By embedding and delivering equality and diversity through CFE core business we have prioritized actions that will enable us to achieve excellence. Our strategic plan will be underpinned by an annual action plan co-ordinated by the Equality and Diversity Manager.

5. Knowing your Community and Equality Mapping

What we know we're already doing well:

CFE has invested in developing a sector wide information management system and has comprehensive MOSAIC data. We are building our understanding of the equality map across Kent.

We have a wealth of information regarding participation and achievement, based on age, location, ethnicity, disability, looked after children and socio-economic status and this already informs our needs assessment processes.

CFE is recognised in the CAA report as performing well in sharing information with our Trust Partners to build a common understanding of the community and its needs.

Our planning and policy documents address inequality of access and outcomes for children, young people and families in Kent. For example, the development of the Child Poverty Needs Assessment, JSNA – Children's Health Needs Assessment and the Every Child Matters Needs Assessment for the Children and Young People's Plan 2011-13.

Priority Actions

Year 1:

Data Monitoring

Develop support mechanisms to embed equality and diversity in our core business, for example, through disseminating information and effective practice on the Kent Trust Web to all our staff, schools, settings and providers.

Ensure information, guidance and effective practice is used to inform the development of responsive and evidence based service.

Year 2:

Build an equally well informed profile for the seven identified equality strands across:

- The children's workforce and key stakeholders (e.g. school governors);
- Participants in consultation and engagement processes;
- Children and young people and their parents and carers.

Year 3:

Systematically report to the Policy and Overview Scrutiny Committee how the community mapping process has informed service commissioning and decommissioning. Continue to explore opportunities with the third sector and local community groups to input into the community mapping processes and, in particular, to add qualitative as well as quantitative information.

We will achieve excellent when:

- ✓ CFE stakeholders report that data management processes provide them with accurate information to inform decision making and service planning.
- ✓ CFE stakeholders and partners are working with a shared and consistent understanding of the picture of inequality and community need across Kent.
- ✓ CFE stakeholders and the Kent community have a shared understanding of the equalities performance monitoring and how it improves service delivery.
- ✓ Performance monitoring against service objectives and National/Performance indicators are analysed by equality strand.
- ✓ Community Mapping informs strategic service planning for example the new CYPP and Child Poverty needs assessment

6. Place Shaping Leadership Organisational Commitment and Partnership

What we know we're already doing well:

There is a clear ambition from the CFE's Senior Management Team and Lead Members to achieve excellence in the EFLG.

CFE has demonstrated strong leadership in the development of the Kent Children and Young People's Plan and through establishing projects to address inequality through service transformation such as Aiming High for Disabled Children and the Kent Pledge for Looked After Children

Priority Actions

Year 1:

Re-establish the Equality and Diversity Strategy Group and the CFE Champions Network.

Lead CFE officers continue to identify, build and communicate the business case for a strong Equality and Diversity Strategy that will support the delivery of the Kent Vision.

All managers have clear equality and diversity performance targets and outcomes, which are integrated into business plans and performance monitoring processes.

Year 2:

Equality and diversity lead officer works closely with Kent Children Trust's Partnership Manager and strategic partners to ensure commitment to equality and diversity is incorporated into key strategies and activities of the new CYPP. Leadership competence framework.

We will achieve excellent when:

- ✓ Equality is embedded into the governance structure of the Kent Children's Trust and there is clear accountability for responding to inequality within Kent.
- ✓ CFE benchmarks its performance against other highly rated children's services in England
- ✓ SMT has communicated the vision of equality and diversity as part of core business of CFE.
- ✓ The CFE Equality and Diversity Strategy group provides effective challenge co-ordination and scrutiny for the directorate
- ✓ There is increased level of confidence and competence amongst managers in CFE together with Head teacher and school governors in leading equality and diversity.
- ✓ Equality and diversity is embedded within strategic planning and scrutiny processes.
- ✓ CFE leaders and officers are leading the equality agenda across with all Trust Partners.

7. Community Engagement and Satisfaction

What we know we're already doing well:

CFE has consulted with children, young people and their families to ensure their voices are included in the development of policy and services.

The Children and Young People's Survey is an excellent example of securing the views of users with over 45,000 young people responding to the survey in its first year.

There are a broad range of opportunities available for children and young people to participate in decision making processes including:

- Kent Youth County Council
- School councils
- Children in Care Council
- Participation in key selection panels
- Voice for Youth Forums

Children's Centres are a valuable and effective space for engaging with parents and carers in a wide range of issues that affect their lives.

Priority Actions

Year 1:

Continue to develop a strategic approach to consult and engage with all children, young people and their families, specifically:

- Looked after children
- Homeless children and young people
- Gypsy, Traveller and Roma children and young people
- Young Offenders
- Disabled children
- Asylum seeking and refugee children
- Children with parents in prison
- Young carers
- Children and young people with diminished mental health
- NEETs

In partnership with Kent's Children's Trust, develop an approach to community engagement that facilitates ongoing dialogue that builds trust with all communities.

Year 2:

Work with schools and youth providers to develop their capacity to work with children and young people through a broad range of engagement processes.

Continue to build feedback loops back to communities explaining how engagement processes influenced policy and service development.

We will achieve excellent when:

- ✓ CFE continues to expand the mechanisms we use to engage the community in policy and service development and evaluation.
- ✓ CFE continues to expand the diversity of voices and representation on participation and consultation forums.
- ✓ CFE are achieving consistent satisfaction and participation levels reported across equality strand communities through monitoring of service delivery.
- ✓ We are able to demonstrate links back to service development and improvement through the consultative process eg “A Good Childhood in Kent”.
- ✓ We have broad and innovative approach to engagement and consultation which is inclusive and relevant.

8. Responsive Services and Customer Care

There are a significant number of projects aimed at tackling disadvantage at local community level, for example:

- Total Place - Margate
- Parents Consortium: provided services to disabled children and their families
- Poverty pilot (Thanet).¹
- Kent Credit Union- Gravesend

We have been recognised in the CAA for having quality child care and extended services provision.

The Looked After Children Pledge offers a clear service promise to young people in care and we have an active Black and Minority Ethnic and Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual foster care networks.

The Kent Gateway “One Stop Shop” brings key service providers together in one place has been highlighted by the Audit Commission as a leading edge and innovative approach to improving access to services.

There are good examples of “turn around” teams and targeted services making a real impact on outcomes for disadvantaged groups (eg Portage).

Priority Actions

Year 1:

- Maximise the “task and finish” model to address areas of persistent inequality.
- Ensure a more rigorous relationship between engagement processes and service design to improve the likelihood of delivering services that communities experience as meeting their needs.
- Ensure Customer Impact Assessments are used to support the design, delivery and evaluation of projects.
- Implement the new CFE wide complaints process.

Year 2:

- Develop and expand equality and diversity standards as part of the procurement process.
- Increase performance monitoring and accountability for equality and diversity outcomes from those delivering service on behalf of CFE (eg Connexions).
- Continue to expand the range of satisfaction measures used to assess service value.

¹[http://66.102.9.132/search?q=cache:xTlqwqgYiocJ:www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/UserFiles/CW/File/Policy/Unit_Briefing_Summaries/Poverty.doc+Poverty+pilot+\(Thanet\).&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk](http://66.102.9.132/search?q=cache:xTlqwqgYiocJ:www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/UserFiles/CW/File/Policy/Unit_Briefing_Summaries/Poverty.doc+Poverty+pilot+(Thanet).&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk)

- Ensure that Equality and Diversity is embedded within all directly delivered, contracted and commissioned services. Ensure client satisfaction, reported by strand, is embedded into contract requirements.

We will achieve excellent when:

- ✓ CFE service delivery teams are confident and competent to make quality service delivery decisions.
- ✓ We are able to demonstrate service improvement and development through our complaints system.
- ✓ We are able to ensure that services delivered through our contractors fulfil equality requirements and demonstrate good practice.
- ✓ When all service delivery is informed by Customer Impact Assessment.

9. Modern and Diverse Workforce

What we know we're already doing well:

There is a clear commitment to equality and diversity throughout the recruitment process for all roles, with all panels requiring at least one person who has completed Positive Action in Recruitment Training.

Kent County Council has a strong portfolio of people management policies including flexible working, maternity and paternity leave, carers leave and the Learning and Development framework.

CFE has embraced the use of new technologies in order to deliver services and enable to enable staff to work effectively and flexibly.

Buddying and mentoring programmes designed to support all employees are embedded within CFE.

Priority Actions

Year 1:

Secure and publish people management data across all equality strands with an action plan to address any identified gaps in:

- Recruitment
- Progression
- Overall profile of workforce
- Absence Management, Grievance and Disciplinaries
- Learning and development
- Turnover
- Sickness
- Reward (pay gap)
- Profile of workforce across pay grading and structure

Data is actively managed at group and directorate management team level.

Managers and staff are clear about the responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity.

All officers engaged in designing or delivering a community consultation or engagement strategy have advanced skills in the community capacity building agenda.

Lead officers engaged in planning and policy development have a high level of equality impact analysis skills and capability.

Increase participation in staff engagement survey and respond to outcomes through a robust plan.

Year 2:

Managers will ensure that equality and diversity principles are embedded in all learning and development programmes both with internal and external providers at individual and team level.

Equality and diversity is embedded as a core competence area in leadership, development, recruitment and performance management.

We will achieve excellent when:

- ✓ CFE employees report that they feel well equipped to respond to the equality challenges for Kent children, families and young people.
- ✓ Building organisational diversity is seen as strength in performance improvement at all levels of CFE.
- ✓ The KCC policy framework consistently supports a commitment to building a vibrant and diverse workforce.
- ✓ We achieve consistent levels of staff engagement regardless of social identity.
- ✓ Effectiveness of the implementation of staff policies is measure through the staff engagement survey and through performance monitoring.
- ✓ We have effective and strong relationships with staff groups and are actively engaged and respond to issues and concerns.
- ✓ Managers and staff are clear about personal accountability in relation to ensuring equality and diversity considerations are part of their people management and service delivery responsibilities.

Arrangements for delivery:

The arrangements for delivery against the plan will be drafted in consultation with the nominated CFE SMT lead.