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To: Vulnerable Children and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

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Subject: Children, Families and Education Directorate Equality and Diversity Action Plan

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report presents an overview of the changes and development made in equality and diversity in Children, Families & Education (CFE) since April 2010. In particular this report focuses on the work that CFE has undertaken in the development of the Equality & Diversity Strategic Action Plan 2010-2013 and the achievements of the directorate in achieving the ambitions of this plan.

Introduction

1. (1) Kent County Council's Corporate Equality Strategy 2010-2013 has provided the basis and context for the Children, Families and Education Directorate Equality & Diversity Plan. The Kent Strategy and Plan have now been finalised and agreed by Cabinet. Work is now going ahead in order to prepare for the implementation of the Public Sector Equality Duties.

(2) This report sets out the key development and achievements against the first year delivery of the CFE strategic action plan for equality and diversity since POSC agreed that it would provide the strategic framework for policy development and delivery of children's services in Kent.

(3) The purpose of this Act is to harmonise over 40 years of equality legislation and case law in order to provide clarity and consistency. The Act received cross-party support prior to its enactment. Further, the Coalition government has continued with this commitment by having this agenda lead at Cabinet level. One of the major changes since its enactment and the creation of the Coalition government, has been the removal of the overarching social-economic duty which would have reinforced many of the key areas of inequality and tackling of disadvantage in Kent. However, the priorities being set in both the

Departments of Education and Health, will enable issues concerning social economic disadvantage to be picked up both in the context of education and health. For example, one of the key priorities for the Department of Education concerns the improvement of the educational performance of Looked After Children (LAC) and those on free school meals (FSM).

Achievements against Year 1 of the Action Plan

2. (1) The following report highlights and illustrates some key areas of work across the directorate to date.

(i) Knowing your community and equality mapping

The foundation of good equality practice is for those developing policy, commissioning, procuring and delivering services to have a good understanding of the profile of the communities that they serve. Year 1 ambition under this framework was to:-

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

This would serve to enable the effective and efficient delivery of services. Some examples of performance against the plan within CFE are:

- The Kent Children’s Trust Planning Toolkit contains an Indicator Toolkit which provides. A summary of performance data for a wide range of indicators in the KCT Performance Framework (including a number of National Indicators) and also provides analysis by locality (usually District) and comparisons with National figures, as well as analysis by gender, Special Education Needs (SEN), FSM and LAC (where datasets allow).
- This has been used alongside data sets such as the School Census data and Mosaic to enhance Children, Families Education ability to address areas of inequality. This has also allowed for better planning within frontline services and has been used in Children’s Centres in order to identify community needs and target resources effectively.

(ii) Place Shaping Leadership Organisational Commitment and Partnerships

The Year 1 ambitions under the second area of performance for the Equality Framework for Local Government were for CFE to:-

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

- The CFE Equality and Diversity Strategy group has been re-established and meets regularly. The membership of this group has been consolidated through renewed terms of reference and the recruitment of new strand champions to lead on key areas. The group has agreed a number of key activities for itself and the Directorate. One of the key changes is that members of the group act as representatives of the management teams of their divisions. This also provides a point of reference for ensuring that equality and diversity matters are held at management levels within their division.
- The recent business planning period has enabled managers to clearly plan and identify equality and diversity issues in the context of their core business areas. The outcome of this activity has been varied across the directorate with some plans clearly identifying areas concerning equality and diversity more so than others. The business planning was supported by Business Planning and Equality and Diversity Officers who provided challenge and support in relation to this element of the plans. Group plans now have equality and diversity objectives linked to outcomes which can be carried across into the new structures after 31 March 2011.
- We have worked closely with the Kent Children’s Trust in order to ensure the Equality and Diversity is a key theme in the development of the new LCT Boards and the development of the Children and Young People’s Plan. All District Boards will have a Champion for Equality and Diversity to ensure considerations were measured at operational level. Induction sessions are planned for March 2011 to enable champions to effectively take up their roles. This has been reinforced through structures such as the reporting framework for the Children’s Trust Executive and Board which now requires that

all papers have equality implications highlighted in order to inform decision making.

- There continues to be a developing culture within the directorate with Heads of Service requesting advice, guidance and support on implementing equality and diversity in their services.

(iii) Community Engagement & Satisfaction

Ambitions for community engagement in Year 1 were to:

“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 (Not in Education, Employment, or Training)*

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

- The development of the Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) has provided a unique opportunity for engagement with such groups. CFE has also attended key events such as the Kent Show, the Maidstone Mela and Thanet Pride in order to engage with children young people and their families. The outcome of this engagement around the plan was that a wide range of children and young people across the County were consulted about the priorities of the future plan and more specifically what they felt mattered in relation to the services that we delivered. A range of engagement activities were employed from focus groups to simple ballot box exercises and wider discussions in forums such as the Primary Children’s Council and the Kent Youth County Council.
- Minority Communities Achievement Service (MCAS) continues to encourage engagement at schools for English Gypsy young people. An example of this was undertaken with New Line Learning Academy in Maidstone. This culminated in a

celebration event which involved the whole school and was attended by family members. This event increased the confidence and engagement of the young people in school and fostered a greater sense of pride in their heritage. This increased the level of awareness within the school in relation to the culture and lifestyle of the young people. Increasing good relationships between staff and students, effective learning and greater cohesion within the school.

- Children Centres in the Isle of Sheppey continue to work closely with the Prison Service in order to ensure the well being and continuing of family bonds of children who have parent(s) in prison. Workers from the children centres provide books and toys during prison visits to enable fathers to read to their children and as far as possible to 'normalise' the wider context of the prison visit.
- In September 2010, a successful evening was held which involved the Managing Directors and Lead Cabinet Members for CFE and Communities and Cllr Paul Carter to meet with members of the Kent Youth County Council and the Children in Care Council. The session allowed senior members of the organisation to discuss key policy changes and also for the Young People to raise areas of concern to them also. The evening was a success and it was agreed that future meetings be arranged.
- The Work of the participation working group continues to ensure the engagement of children and young people and their families across the County. Working in partnership with external partners in Health and Communities has resulted in shared best practice, resources, information and intelligence which have served to influence services within Kent County Council. The development of a toolkit for those who would like to undertake consultation and engagement activity with children and young people is an example of some of the shared resources within the group. An annual conference delivered by the "Participate By Right" team will focus on the role of participation and engagement in a number of areas an example is involving children and young people in commissioning and procurement.

(iv) Responsive Services and Customer Care

The ambitions agreed in relation to the performance area of responsive Services and Customer Care were to

*"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 Equality Impact Assessments are used to support the design, delivery and evaluation of projects and to Implement the new CFE wide complaints process”.

- The new CFE wide complaints process has now been implemented. This will provide greater consistency and clarity to the complaints process in CFE. This will lead to service improvement as the organisation responds to issues which can be managed and improved.
- An example of the task and finished model can also be seen in the creation of corporate standards in relation to interpretation and translation services across Kent County Council. In response to management request, a core group was formed with representatives from all directorates to pull together a common set of standards and processes which would enable frontline managers to make good decisions and access the most cost effective services for translation and interpretation in the County. The standards will be published in March 2011.
- Further, the same model was used to improve and bring together the framework for undertaking Equality Impact Assessments within Kent County Council in order to ensure legal compliance and most critically to ensure that managers would use the process in order to enhance and improve services that are being delivered.
- Equality Impact Assessment training continues to be a core priority within CFE. Since December 2010 the new framework for Equality Impact Assessments has been implemented in Kent County Council. This will enable managers to efficiently identify equality issues within services. An example of this is the Serious Incident protocol aimed at providing a consistent approach between the various staff groups within the Children, Families and Education Directorate in order to ensure a co-ordinated response to how serious incidents involving children are reported to senior managers has been assessed and implemented.

(v) Modern and Diverse Workforce

In relation to achieving a modern and diverse workforce, Year 1 aims were to:

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

Examples of the implementation of these ambitions are:-

- Staff capacity continues to be built through the CFE and local induction processes. Clear corporate messages are enabled through the use of KCC's "Together... making a difference" corporate induction video. This has been well received by new staff and contributed to raising levels of awareness in services.
- The Early Years and Family Group Conferencing team has developed a set of core induction materials for new and existing staff which highlights the importance of equality and diversity in the delivery of their services and the implications and risks where this is not done. Further, it aims to build the capacity and confidence of staff who may find it difficult currently to deal with issues as they arise
- An equality capture exercise 'Stand up and be counted' was undertaken across the whole organisation. The aim was to re-capture equality data of staff within Kent County Council. The outcome of this exercise will be available end March/early April. It is hoped that having a better sense of the organisation's profile will support the people management frameworks and enable Kent to be a high performing council through its workforce.
- The Staff Group Conference - Expect Respect, was successfully held in February 2011. It was agreed at the last CFE E&D strategy group meeting that support for staff attendance should be reiterated by the CFE management team. Also, the Personnel Department has been asked to explore the possibility of temporary staff being able to join and access staff groups in recognition of the fact that temporary staff is a pool of future candidates and that some remain with KCC for a significant period of time.

Related Issues

3. (1) At the six month update the changing regulatory environment related to equality and diversity was highlighted to the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This has become even more evident as a result of the challenge to the Secretary of State for Education by Kent County Council and others in relation to

Wave 4 of the Building School for the Future Programme. Further judgement was held against London Councils with regard to budgetary changes that were made which failed to fully consider the equality implications of their decision.

(2) Also it was highlighted that the Equality and Human Rights Commission has a mandate to ensure that equality legislation is realised. Consequently, specific powers have been created which enables the Commission to challenge the decision of public authorities where they believe that there has been a failure in the implementation of its duties. As such, it is critical that equality and diversity issues continue to be considered and embedded in the core business of CFE regardless of future structures.

(3) More details of the new top level structure will be needed to demonstrate how services will be supported to plan strategically and influence policy and practice. Therefore it is now more critical that officers are aware of and implement the requirements under equality and diversity legislation.

Next Steps

4. The next steps that have been identified in relation to the strategic plan are to:

- Continue to work towards achieving the outcomes identified
- Ensure that equality and diversity priorities are carried forward through to the new structural arrangements for Kent County Council in order to ensure positive outcomes for children and young people within the county and to mitigate risks in relation to those outcomes and organisational reputation.

Recommendations:

Members of the Joint Children, Families and Education Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- Note the contents of the report.
- Consider the future framework for the delivery of Equality and Diversity as part of business practice and policy development as a result of the new duties that have come in force since the implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and organisational change in Kent County Council.
- Continue to receive regular reports of activity against the Equality and Diversity strategic action plan in order for the work to remain a key priority in the changing regulatory environment.

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Background Documents:

CFE Equality & Diversity Strategic Action Plan 2010-20

Other Useful Information:

None