

DRAFT



Kent County Council

Equality Strategy

April 2007 – March 2010

For further information about the Strategy, or if you require it in an alternative format such as large print, Braille, audio tape or Easy to Read, or if you would like it to be explained to you in your language, contact us by:

Email: diversityinfo@kent.gov.uk
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1. Foreword

What do we mean by equality and diversity?

For Kent County Council, equality and diversity means delivering excellent quality, value for money services to everyone in Kent. Our approach is simple. We aim to open doors to access and participation, to enable everybody to contribute to the life of the county, whatever their background or circumstances.

Our services are already rated amongst the best in the country, and we have a strong record of achievement for raising standards, increasing choice and tackling inequality. We are proud of these successes, which cut across a whole range of areas such as social care, children's services, education and employment:

- Our nationally acclaimed Supporting Independence Programme – which tackles the root causes of inequality and promotes community cohesion, making a real difference to the lives of people living in Kent's most disadvantaged communities.
- We were one of the first councils in the country to conduct an equal pay review.
- We have worked with the Department of Health and key partners across the county to pilot 'Culturally competent care', an initiative designed to develop services for black and minority ethnic older people, and best practice checklists for frontline practitioners and carers.
- The Disability Rights Commission has commended our partnership work on the development of our Disability Equality Scheme as 'pioneering'.
- We have hosted part of Natural England's diversity review, the 'By all means' project, increasing the numbers of disabled people in Kent who are able to access and enjoy countryside activities.
- We are ranked 37th out of the 100 best employers in the UK for Lesbian and Gay staff, by independent group Stonewall, joining an elite group of organisations that includes blue chip FTSE 100 companies and government departments.

This Strategy aims to support continuous improvement in service delivery across all areas of the Council, with a greater focus on meeting the needs of diverse service users. It is underpinned by a commitment to achieving best value for available resources, working in partnership and encouraging more people to have their say locally to influence decisions which affect them and their community.

The priorities in the Strategy reflect both local aspirations and regional objectives. Please take a little time to read it and let us know your views and opinions on what we are doing.

2. Executive Summary

Introduction

This is Kent County Council's first Equality Strategy, effective from April 2007 to March 2010. The Strategy sets out how the Council will promote equality and community cohesion and tackle unfair discrimination in Kent.

The Strategy incorporates the Council's **Disability**, **Gender** and **Race** equality schemes, and focuses primarily on these three areas. It spells out what Disability, Gender and Race equality mean for those who live, work in and visit Kent, and the priorities to be tackled in each area. It also deals with **poverty, deprivation**, and the cross-cutting issues of **age, faith**, and **sexual orientation**. In doing so it summarises specific initiatives being delivered across the Council to tackle these issues, such as reducing teenage pregnancy, migration, and work on the Equality Standard for Local Government.

The Strategy supports a range of other key plans and strategies, such as Towards 2010 and the Kent Children and Young People's Plan.

How we developed the Strategy

This Equality Strategy is the result of:

- **Listening** to the views of those who live, work in and visit Kent
- **Learning** from reviews of services and information from inspections
- **Looking** at our key performance measurements so we know what we are doing well and where we need to improve.

Our five priority outcomes

The Strategy identifies five priority outcomes, which describe our overall ambitions for equality, and provide a framework for delivering and managing all our services:

- **Equal and inclusive** services and information for all, regardless of age, disability, gender, faith, race or sexual orientation.
- Creative opportunities for **participation and involvement** in service planning and decision-making.
- Work with our partners to ensure the county's most vulnerable groups feel **safe and free from harassment**, and can report incidents in the knowledge that issues will be handled sensitively and effectively.
- Enhance the quality of our **intelligence** and **monitoring** systems, to ensure we can target disadvantage in the county where action is most needed and best reflects effective use of resources.

- Maintain our reputation as an **excellent employer**, promoting a culture where the Council recruits on merit, diversity is valued, and where employees are **proactive** in anticipating the needs of service users.

Focusing activity and targeting resources in these areas will have the greatest impact on promoting equality and tackling disadvantage in the county.

Making our outcomes a reality

Our five priority outcomes are underpinned by a range of objectives and actions that relate specifically to Age, Disability, Gender, Faith, Race and Sexual Orientation. These have been identified to address specific need within the county and the Council, and gaps in understanding or service provision.

The Strategy is supported by a range of robust action plans, which set out a phased approach to achieving the five outcomes. The Council's Strategic Equalities Group will monitor performance against the action plans.

Over the next six months we are committed to ongoing developmental work on the Strategy with those who live and work in Kent, to explore issues highlighted through consultation in greater detail, identify appropriate responses and take forward key actions.

If you have any questions about Kent County Council's Equality Strategy, or would like to know how to get involved with ongoing activity to develop services in Kent, please contact Corporate Diversity Team on:

Email: diversityinfo@kent.gov.uk

Telephone: 01622 221163

Textphone: 08458 247905

3. Introduction

About the Strategy

The Kent County Council Equality Strategy is effective from April 2007 to March 2010. It identifies the main activities that the Council will carry out to improve outcomes for Kent's diverse communities. It is aimed at everyone in Kent, including residents, employees, staff working with diverse groups, stakeholders and inspectors.

This **Introduction** explains why we are producing an Equality Strategy, and not three schemes. It also explains how the Council developed the Strategy, who was involved and how the views and opinions of local people influenced it.

Section 4, 'Who are the people of Kent?' provides an overview of the county, and some interesting facts about the people of Kent. It also looks at community cohesion in Kent, and the work the Council is doing in this area.

Section 5, 'What shapes services in Kent?' summarises the legislation informing the Strategy, and explains how the Strategy sits in relation to other key plans and decision-making structures in Kent. It also explains how the views of those who live, work in and visit Kent can influence services and decision-making.

Section 6, 'How we deliver equality in Kent', explains how Kent County Council is structured, and how it is promoting equality as an employer and in education.

Section 7, 'Making equality part of everything we do', explains how we communicate with our diverse communities. It also summarises the Council's complaints system, and looks at how we promote equality through partnership working and procurement.

Section 8, 'Our five priority outcomes', describes the five key outcomes the Council wants to achieve for diverse communities in Kent.

Sections 9, 10, and 11 examine in turn the areas of **Disability, Gender** and **Race** equality. They summarise the key facts and challenges in Kent, the achievements we have already made in these areas, and the priorities to be addressed.

Section 12, 'Using equality impact assessments to improve services for everyone in Kent', explains what an 'equality impact assessment' is, why they are important, and how they are helping to turn equality and diversity into every day practice.

Section 13, 'Performance and review', sets out how we will monitor our progress against the Strategy, and make sure we achieve our outcomes.

Section 14, 'Action Plans', sets out all the different actions we will be undertaking over the next three years, in order to achieve our outcomes. An Organisational Action Plan summarises actions which support all areas of equality, and three

separate action plans on Disability, Gender and Race equality summarises work that specifically relates to these areas.

Section 15, 'Appendices', contains a range of additional information for further reading.

Why an Equality Strategy, and not three schemes?

The Council has a legal duty to produce three equality schemes in relation to Disability, Gender and Race. However, it makes sense to bring these schemes together into one simple document, to ensure that our approach to equality is consistent and integrated across the organisation. It also means that the Council can address multiple issues which cut across more than one diverse group more effectively.

The legislation governing Disability, Gender and Race equality is slightly different for each area. In order to address these differences each area has its own section in the Strategy, and is supported by a specific action plan.

How we developed the Strategy

We undertook a range of important steps to develop the Strategy. These included:

- **Understanding the views of diverse groups in Kent** - overall, the views of over 1000 individuals and community groups helped to shape the priorities and actions in the Strategy.
- **Collecting and analysing a range of key data and evidence on local trends** - this included Census information, residents' satisfaction surveys and performance management indicators.
- **The involvement of staff** - through briefing sessions, themed groups and online surveys.
- **Engagement with the voluntary and community sector** - the views of key voluntary and community groups will continue to play a key role in this Strategy.

A full summary of who was involved in developing the Strategy is included in Appendix A. Unless otherwise indicated, all statistics are referenced to the Census 2001.

Over the next six months we are committed to ongoing developmental work on the Strategy with those who live and work in Kent, to explore issues highlighted through consultation in greater detail, identify appropriate responses and take forward key actions.

4. Who are the people of Kent?

About Kent

Kent County Council is the largest non-metropolitan local authority in England, with a resident population of 1,369,900 people (this figure is known as the 'Kent County Council Area', and excludes the Medway Council Area). Referred to as the Garden of England for its beautiful countryside, the county has impressive historical, cultural, shopping and educational facilities, as well as a thriving business sector. In total, there are 610 schools, 117 libraries, 22 youth and community centres and more than 5,000 miles of roads. Kent is the main Gateway between the UK and mainland Europe, with the International Station, Ashford, as close in journey time to Lille as to London.

Some key facts about the people of Kent

- The population of the Kent County Council Area grew by 10,700 people (0.8 per cent) between 2004 and 2005.
- Overall, Ashford Borough has experienced the largest increase in population in real terms, with a growth of 2,300 people between 2004 and 2005.
- No local authorities within Kent have experienced a decline in population.
- The Kent County Council Area is ranked 106th out of a national scale of the 149 most deprived authority areas in England.¹ A rank of 1 is the most deprived. The Kent County Council Area is the 2nd most deprived county council area of all county councils within the South East Region (excluding unitary authorities).
- There are similar numbers of men and women in the Kent County Council Area - 49 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. This is similar for all age groups, until after the age of 75, where there is a marked difference with significantly more women over the age of 75 (62 per cent) than men (38 per cent).
- The Kent County Council Area has an age profile similar to that of England. However, the north of Kent has more people under the age of twenty and East Kent has more people over the age of sixty-five.
- 41,534 people (3.1 per cent) in the Kent County Council Area classify themselves as from a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) group. This compares to 54,957 (3.5 per cent) residents of the county as a whole who classify themselves as BME.
- 13.1 per cent of people in the Kent County Council Area consider themselves to have a long term limiting illness.

¹ Based on the average of lower super output area (LSOA) scores.

- The Council supports more than 30,000 disabled and older people to continue living in their own homes.²
- There are 546,742 households in the Kent County Council Area. Of these, 73.6 per cent are owner occupied and 26.4 per cent are rented. 83.5 per cent of our residents live in a house or bungalow, compared with 15.9 per cent who live in a flat, maisonette or apartment.
- Married couple households are the most common single household type (48.9 per cent) in Kent overall. The 'traditional family' household structure of a married couple with dependent children make up only 18.8 per cent of all Kent households.
- The majority of the population in the Kent County Council Area is of Christian religion (75.13 per cent). The next largest religious group is Sikh with 0.6 per cent. 14.9 per cent state that they have no religion.
- Sevenoaks District has the greatest concentration of Christians (77.0 per cent of the population state this as their religion), whilst Gravesham Borough has the largest concentration of people of Sikh religion with 6.7 per cent compared to only 0.6 per cent for the Kent County Council Area as a whole.
- 65 per cent (728,664) of Kent's resident working age population is employed. Of these, 603,835 work in the county, and around 17 per cent (124,829) work outside. Kent attracts an additional 50,542 people into the county to work.
- Overall, just over 61 per cent of residents in the Kent County Council Area aged 16 and over are 'economically active'.
- In the county as a whole, the percentage of those aged 16-74 in full-time employment is highest in Dartford, followed by Medway Unitary Authority, Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling. These four areas are above the South East regional average.
- There is a greater percentage of people employed in the construction, health, finance and agricultural sectors in the Kent County Council Area, compared to the national average. However, there is a lower proportion of managerial and senior officials than in the South East as a whole.
- Car ownership is higher in Kent than in the rest of England and has also grown marginally faster than the national average.

² Kent Adult Social Services, management data April 2007

Community cohesion in Kent

What is community cohesion?

The links between equality and community cohesion are well documented. Tensions, insecurity and conflict in the community are all more likely to occur where there are serious inequalities. Difficulties arise when groups of people experience things like poverty, poor housing or access to education and other opportunities, which make them feel insecure. Communities can then blame one another for their difficulties. Blame can often fall upon minority groups in the community - whether these are from culturally different communities, or from groups whose values and behaviour appear to be different.

The general definition of community cohesion is 'a state of well-being that affects the harmony and stability of a given geographical community'.^{3 4} On a practical level, community cohesion is about recognising local risk factors for tension or misunderstanding between communities, and managing these dynamic relationships effectively. Community cohesion is strongest when people have the opportunity, the resources and the motivation to participate in society as fully as they wish and on an equal basis with others.

Starting from a position of strength

Kent did not suffer from the deep polarisations and hostilities that were the root cause of the urban riots in many northern towns and cities in the summer of 2001. The county's distinct geographical and cultural communities each have their own unique identity and character, and for the most part, live in harmony with one another. This is a strong indicator of cohesion within the area.

However, the county has a number of characteristics which could represent potential tension points. For instance, the location of the major port of Dover in the East of Kent, an area of relative deprivation in the South East, has meant that in previous years the Council has had to accommodate large numbers of asylum seekers. Historically, this has exacerbated some community tensions. Although tensions were managed effectively and have eased, new trends are emerging such as an increase in migrant workers entering the county from the new accession countries⁵, many of whom are employed in low-wage jobs in agriculture.

³ Jointly agreed by the Home Office, the Local Government Association and the Commission for Racial Equality.

⁴ For further information see: The Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cante, 2001; Building Cohesive Communities: Community Cohesion Education Standards for Schools, 2002; A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order, 2001; Report of the Community Cohesion Panel, July 2004; Community Cohesion: An Action Guide, November 2004 ; Building a Picture of Community Cohesion: December 2004,

⁵ Refers to the eight countries that joined the European Union in 2004:

- Poland
- Lithuania
- Latvia
- Estonia
- Czech Republic
- Hungary
- Slovenia
- Slovakia

In addition, much of Kent's Black and Minority Ethnic population is geographically concentrated in two distinct areas, and communities of relative affluence exist alongside pockets of deprivation such as in Thanet District and Swale Borough. This means that there may be groups of people in Kent, such as people who are new to the borough, travellers, unemployed people, and people on low incomes, who may not enjoy a strong sense of belonging.

Addressing potential issues

Local issues and trends change all the time, and are influenced by a whole range of factors, many of which are outside the Council's control. Work is therefore ongoing to map trends effectively so that we can target activity appropriately. Currently, the Council's focus is on the following key areas:

- Developing local relationships
- Through our Supporting Independence Programme, tackling the root causes of inequality and making a real difference to the lives of people living in Kent's most disadvantaged communities
- Partnership working and intelligence sharing
- Using consultation and involvement to achieve shared outcomes for communities
- Regeneration
- Placing schools and education at the heart of the agenda
- Using culture and the arts to 'build bridges'
- Myth busting.

This activity is summarised below.

Developing local relationships

The development of local relationships is a vital way in which to maintain and enhance community cohesion. The County Council plays a key role in demonstrating a positive and responsive presence in the community, and supporting local relationships. This includes activity such as a recent goodwill visit undertaken by the Chairman of Kent County Council, the High Sheriff of Kent, and the Mayor of Gravesham, to Buddhist, Muslim and Sikh faith groups in Gravesham.

Supporting Independence Programme

The Council's nationally recognised Supporting Independence Programme aims to make a real difference to the lives of people living in Kent's most disadvantaged or isolated communities. Working with partners from across the public and voluntary sectors, it seeks to help a diverse range of people to lift themselves out of dependency and into independence, employment and more fulfilling lives:

- School leavers with low educational attainment
- Adult and young offenders
- Young people in care or leaving care
- Lone and teenage parents

- People lacking basic life and social skills and who lack basic literacy or numeracy skills
- People with alcohol and/or substance addictions
- People with health problems, learning or physical disabilities or who are applying for low-level, long-term incapacity benefit
- Transient or seasonal groups, including refugees, asylum seekers and the homeless
- The long-term unemployed
- Vulnerable older people aged 75 plus.

For more information on the Supporting Independence Programme please contact:
 Telephone: 01622 696932
 Email: sip@kent.gov.uk
 Textphone: 08458 247905

Partnership working and intelligence sharing

Following a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers coming into Dover in the mid 90s, the Council established a strategic partnership of local organisations to share intelligence and identify appropriate ways in which to address emerging tensions in the neighbouring community. The partnership included the County Council, Health, Kent Police, voluntary organisations and Immigration.

Outcomes of the partnership included regular drop-in surgeries across the areas most affected and the establishment of a centre in Thanet where asylum seekers and local residents could seek advice on a range of issues from childcare to job seeking. It also included the development of the 'Friendship Project', which sought to teach children in primary school about different cultures, and the reasons why some people have to flee persecution. Members of the partnership support activities during national 'refugee week', such as a multi-cultural festival in Dover, and a football tournament.

Using consultation and involvement to achieve shared outcomes

Enabling diverse communities to participate in local decision making is a key facet of cohesion. Improvements in local facilities, for example, new play areas, new schools or other local developments, are very important in making people feel good about where they live. The actual process of getting these started and making them happen, through local consultation and involvement, often provides the 'cement' that is needed to bring communities together, build positive local identities and strengthen the capacity of communities to help themselves.

Initiatives such as this include a project delivered by the Library service, called 'Words Without Frontiers', which worked with a variety of diverse communities to source books and other materials in relevant languages. The scheme also developed a highly successful temporary library ticket to enable asylum seekers and the homeless to access library services. In Dartford, courses and information sessions at the Town Centre Library are available at weekend times, to address need in the local Black community. In Maidstone, courses have been held at the

Maidstone Mosque and family learning events at traveller sites, especially in Swanley and Edenbridge.

Bringing communities together through regeneration

Regeneration programmes, planning and urban design all have a vital role to play in addressing cohesion and integration, and can be key in facilitating interaction between different groups. The Council works in partnership with key stakeholders in the county to promote cohesion and social inclusion through economic prosperity for all. Activity is focused in a number of identified 'growth areas' and areas of economic deprivation in East and Rural Kent.

The backbone of regeneration activity is the promotion of 'mixed' developments with affordable housing, to ensure that housing provision reflects the needs of local communities. Developers are also encouraged to adopt design measures that help contribute to crime reduction, reduce physical isolation and encourage social inclusion. Other activity includes:

- The **Kent Rural Delivery Framework** targets actions at older people, young people, women and ethnic minorities to encourage entrepreneurship and community engagement
- The **URBAN** project provides training and supports independence in deprived communities in North Kent in Gravesend and Dartford.
- The **Trading-Up** project engages deprived communities.
- The **Enterprise Gateways** project provides start-up advice to entrepreneurs in deprived communities.
- The **Empty Homes initiative** looks at new and innovative ways to bring back into use homes that have been empty for longer than six months.

Placing schools and education at the heart of the agenda

As the hub of the community, schools play a key role in supporting community cohesion. They create numerous opportunities for people from a range of ages and backgrounds to meet, exchange ideas and learn life skills together in a positive environment.

Within the curriculum, schools have the opportunity to address issues around stereotyping, discrimination and similar themes through personal, social and health education (PSHE), Citizenship and Religious education. The recently developed Kent Agreed Syllabus for religious education contains important guidance on this aspect for schools, and the role that different subjects have in challenging attitudes and behaviours. There are specific opportunities within the Syllabus to encourage learning about different faiths and cultures, particularly any religious groups which have local significance. Other activities include:

- The 'Creative partnerships Kent' project works with schools to develop a whole range of creative approaches to the curriculum, including cultural and religious celebrations. The Kent Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) is working with the Minority Communities Achievement Service

(MCAS) to provide a portable 'multi-faith place of worship' which will bring places of worship of different faiths to local schools.

- Schools coordinate a variety of events throughout the year to enable pupils to learn about history, such as Black History Month.
- The Council has produced detailed guidance to schools to assist with the development of anti-racist and anti-bullying policies, and has appointed an Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator to co-ordinate this work. In addition, the Council recently developed guidance for schools to address issues around homophobic bullying. Schools are shortly to be invited to participate in a pilot project, where clusters of schools will be designated a "Safe Cluster" if they meet agreed criteria in recognition of their work to tackle bullying.

Using culture and the arts to 'build bridges'

Cultural and artistic programmes provide numerous opportunities to bring communities together, and foster a sense of community pride. Multi-cultural festivals have a particular role to play, providing opportunities to celebrate the richness and value of local cultures, faiths and races. They promote a wider understanding of the contribution made by all to the whole area, and provide enjoyable opportunities to get to know and celebrate different ways of living.

The Council works in partnership with stakeholders across the county to coordinate a broad range of activities each year, such as 'Black History Month', Refugee week, Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights, and other important milestones such as the anniversary of the establishment of Virginia (USA), and the 200th anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery Act. The County Council will also use the location of the Tour de France in Kent and the Olympic Games in London as opportunities to develop inter-cultural, social, economic and curricular activities.

Myth busting

The Council's award winning Gypsy and Traveller Unit engages with residents of the Council's eight Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites and those of neighbouring communities to address tensions and facilitate relationships. The Unit also works with the local media to inform the public on Gypsy and Traveller matters and to 'myth bust' common misconceptions.

For more information on the Council's Gypsy and Traveller Unit please contact:

Telephone: 0845 345 0210
Email: gypsy.liaison@kent.gov.uk
Textphone: 08458 247905

5. What shapes services in Kent?

Legal and national priorities

Over the last three years a wide range of important legislation has been introduced, to promote equality and tackle unfair discrimination. This was partly in response to a number of incidents which highlighted the prevalence of institutionalized inequality in Britain – for instance, the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, and the urban riots of 2001. As part of this reform, six key documents were published, which set out the framework for change and the implications for councils like Kent County Council:

- The **Equal Pay Act 1970** says women must be paid the same as men when they are doing work of equal value and vice-versa.
- The **Sex Discrimination Act 1975** makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sex, in employment, education, advertising or when providing housing, goods, services or facilities.
- The **Race Relations Act (RRA) 1976** (as amended 2000, 2003), makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin.
- The **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995** (as amended 2003 and 2005) makes it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of disability.
- The **Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003, and the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003** make it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of religion or religious belief, or sexual orientation.
- The **Human Rights Act 1998** gives greater effect to rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights.
- The **Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006** and the **Age Discrimination Act 2006** make it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of age.
- The **Equality Act 2010** makes provision for the establishment of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (which will start its work in 2007), merging the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Rights Commission, and covering the new strands of discrimination law - religion, sexual orientation and age.

In addition, the recent independent Equalities Review commissioned by the Government has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the causes of persistent discrimination and inequality in Britain. This activity will be further informed by the ongoing Discrimination Law Review (DLR), which is aiming to create a simpler, fairer legal framework for equalities.

Kent County Council's key strategic documents

'Towards 2010', produced by Kent County Council, provides the strategic framework for the Equality Strategy. Towards 2010 is Kent's key document, which sets out a vision for the future of the county and the main challenges that we need to address along the way. A number of other important plans, strategies and initiatives also help to achieve our vision for Kent. These include:

- Our **Equality and Diversity Policy Statement**, which sets out the Council's overall aim to promote equality, value diversity and combat unfair treatment.
- The Community Strategy, the **Vision for Kent**, details how the County Council will work with key partners in Kent to improve the economic, environmental and social wellbeing of the county over the next 20 years.
- The Council's **Consultation Strategy** ensures that diverse groups such as young people, refugees and asylum seekers and Gypsies and Travellers are not forgotten.
- The **Kent Children and Young People's Plan**, explains how the Council will work with other key partners in the county to improve the lives of children and young people.
- The **Kent Anti-Bullying** Strategy, sets out how the Council and other key agencies will tackle bullying, and make the lives of children and young people safer and happier.
- The **Kent Youth Justice Plan** explains how the statutory youth offending partnership agencies (Social Services, Health, Education, Police and Probation) will work together to prevent offending by children and young people.
- The **Kent Local Area Agreement** was agreed by partners to improve sexual health and reduce **teenage pregnancy** in the county.
- The **Kent Crime and Disorder Strategy** explains how the key agencies in Kent will work with individuals and communities to make the county a safe place to live, work and visit.
- **The Kent Rural Delivery Framework** establishes clear regional rural priorities and effective and targeted delivery mechanisms for services across the county.

The views and involvement of local people

We have an excellent history of consulting local residents about a wide variety of issues, and provide a range of opportunities for local people to get involved with service planning and development. This includes a Residents' Panel, and numerous working groups supported by different Directorates, such as discussion forums with disabled people, and a traveller liaison group. In addition, there is a network of 12 Local Boards across Kent, attended by Councillors and covering each district council area. Local boards provide a regular forum for community debate and consultation on local issues and services.

The Council also works with the North-West Kent Racial Equality Council and the Kent-wide Black and Minority Ethnic Consultation Network.

Up-to-date information about the policies and services we are consulting on is always available on our website www.kent.gov.uk to make it easier for everyone to make their views known.

If you would like to have your say on services in Kent, please contact Corporate Diversity Team on:

Email: diversityinfo@kent.gov.uk

Telephone: 01622 221163

Textphone: 08458 247905

6. How we deliver equality in Kent

How Kent County Council is structured

Kent County Council has 84 elected councillors who each have a dual role, attending to countywide concerns as well as to the needs and interests of constituents. The County Council is led by the Council Leader and his Cabinet, who make key decisions about policy and budget. The Chief Executive and his team of officers are responsible for the day-to-day running of the Council. The Council is divided into five 'directorates', each of which is responsible for a particular area of council activity.

The County Council works closely with 12 district councils, one unitary authority (Medway Council) and more than 300 town and parish councils to deliver services to the people of Kent. The County Council manages schools, social services, strategic planning issues, highways, refuse and waste disposal sites, museums and libraries. District Councils manage services such as town planning, environmental health, housing, benefits, council tax collection, refuse collection and leisure facilities. Parish and town councils represent the most local level of government, and are independent but work closely with both the County and district councils.

The Council's Corporate Diversity Team

Although everyone in the Council has a responsibility to promote equality and tackle unfair discrimination, the Council has a central Corporate Diversity Team in place to support this activity and take the lead on key equalities issues. The Team has five main roles:

- Supporting and embedding equality across all council services and employment
- Ensuring the Council addresses the particular needs of the different communities of the county.
- Breaking down barriers of age, disability, faith, gender, language, race and sexuality.
- Co-coordinating and contributing to the Council's work to promote community cohesion and ensuring local people from diverse groups are involved in planning and decision making.
- Coordinating research and information to ensure the Council can address the needs of the diverse communities of the county.

A number of teams across the Council provide services to deal with particular vulnerable groups, such as Travelers and Gypsies, and Asylum and Immigration. A full list of all County Council services is provided at Appendix C.

Delivering equalities across the Council

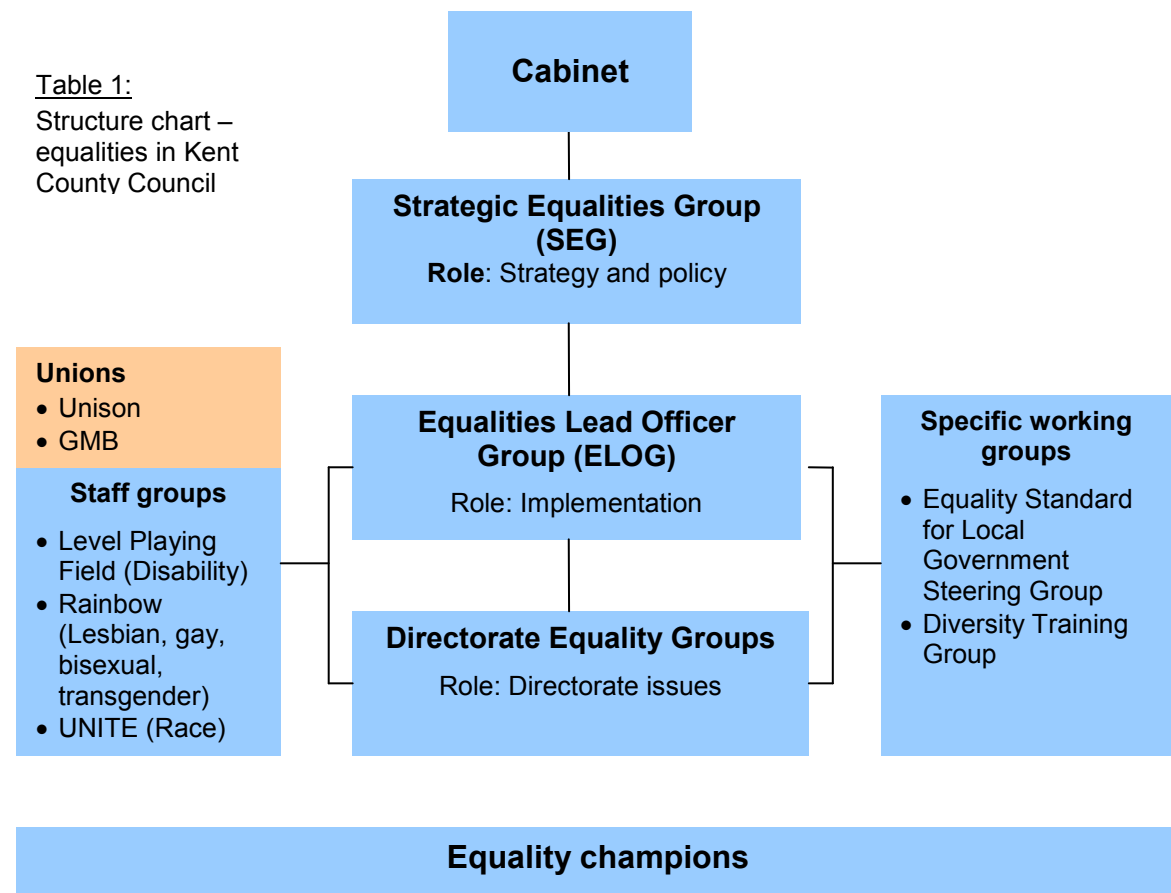
The Cabinet has collective Member responsibility to ensure that equality is successfully applied across all Council services and within the organisation as an employer. A Cabinet Member holds the Portfolio for Equality and Diversity.

The County Council’s Strategic Equalities Group (SEG) is represented by cross-party Members and senior lead officers from every Directorate, and is responsible for agreeing the overall direction of travel on equalities, and policy development. It is supported by the Equalities Lead Officer Group (ELOG), which consists of Directorate lead officers, staff group representatives, diversity specialists and trade unions. ELOG is responsible for day-to-day issues and implementation.

In addition, each Directorate has its own equality group, which produces an annual action plan.

Work on equalities is supported across all five Directorates by the presence of 48 ‘equality champions’. Equality champions are officers who volunteer to ‘champion’ a particular area of equalities, to raise its profile and encourage good practice.

Figure 1 below sets out how all the various groups link together.



Work on the Equality Standard for Local Government

The Equality Standard for Local Government is a tool for local authorities like Kent County Council to mainstream equality across service areas and into every-day practice. It:

- Helps authorities to meet their obligations under the law
- Integrates equality objectives with Best Value
- Encourages the development of anti-discriminatory practice appropriate to local circumstances
- Provides a basis for addressing all forms of institutionalised discrimination
- Provides a clear framework for auditing progress and achievement
- Over time, provides a framework for improving performance.

The Equality Standard specifies five varying levels of achievement which cover all aspects of policy-making, service delivery and employment. The County Council is currently at Level 2 and is on target to reach level 3 by March 2008.

As part of our work to achieve Level 3 of the Standard we are assessing all our policies, procedures and practices to ensure that they are easily accessible by everyone. This work is described in more detail on page 48.

Equality in employment

Kent County Council is a major employer of over 44,000 people, and is committed to promoting equality, valuing diversity and combating unfair treatment. Our work on employment good practice extends across all areas of equalities, and is nationally recognised:

- We were one of the first councils in the country to conduct an equal pay review
- The Council has been accredited as a Two Ticks (Positive about Disabled People) Employer every year since 2002
- In February 2006 we were featured in the Employers Forum on Disability (EFD) news for its good practice recruitment guide.
- In September 2006, we were short-listed for Remploy's 'Leading the Way' award in recognition of our employment of disabled people.
- We are ranked 37th out of the 100 best employers in the country for Lesbian and Gay staff, by independent group Stonewall, joining an elite group of organisations that includes blue chip FTSE 100 companies and government departments.
- Our Supported Employment Team within Kent Adult Social Services has worked with approximately 1000 people over the last three years, moving 250 individuals to paid employment.
- Formal Partnership working arrangements have been in place since 2003 with Kent Association for the Blind, Royal British Legion Industries, Blackthorn Trust, Action for Blind People, Jobcentre plus, Shaw Trust, Remploy.

The Council supports three active staff groups on Disability (Level Playing Field), Race (Unite) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender issues (Rainbow). Staff

groups help us ensure that employment practice values and supports employees from diverse groups.

We also use expert advisory services, such as the Employers Forum on Disability of which we have been a member since 2002. We are involved in on-going work to increase the accessibility of employment opportunities for diverse groups, for example inviting disabled employees to test new software for accessibility.

Managing our performance on equality as an employer

The Council undertakes a range of activities to promote equality in the workforce and tackle unfair discrimination. This includes regularly monitoring employee data and delivering a comprehensive training programme. For instance:

- **Training:** We have now delivered Year 2 of our Council-wide 'Diversity In Action' training programme for staff and managers, held at various locations across the county. Specialised training is available for employees who are involved in the recruitment and selection process. Equality Impact Assessment Training has also taken place across all Directorates, incorporating both bespoke and general sessions. We maintain a brochure of Equality and Diversity training courses, and update Knet and Clusterweb online sites monthly, to reflect the training available.
- We analyse the number of employees receiving training by disability, gender and race. The Council's diversity training group prioritises identified training need, and produces an annual diversity training programme.
- **Awareness raising:** Monthly themed Equality and Diversity Training 'Extramails' are sent out globally via email to employees, to raise awareness about specific issues, and promote opportunities for further learning. Our Kent Adult Social Services Directorate is currently piloting 'Recruitability' Workshops, which are lunch time sessions for Managers across Kent, focusing on the recruitment and retention of disabled people. They are also offering 'drop in' sessions for staff to raise awareness about accessibility for Deaf people.
- **Recruitment:** We analyse applications for employment by disability, gender and race on a monthly basis across all Directorates. This covers applications, short-listing and positions offered. The Council has a detailed and challenging action plan, developed with our equality champions and staff groups, to support the recruitment and retention of target groups.
- **Retention:** We analyse data about staff leaving the Council by disability, gender and race. All staff leaving our employment are offered 'exit interviews', which provide an opportunity to discuss in confidence what it is like to work for the County Council. Our Redeployment Forum meets regularly to ensure disabled redeployees are given appropriate support, such as improving access to appropriate equipment or software.
- **Appraisal and reward** and **Grievance and disciplinary** processes are monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that all systems are fair, objective, and free from bias and stereotyping. Our appraisal process explores issues in relation to disability, gender and race and looks at whether any reasonable adjustments may be necessary to help an individual to do their job effectively,

and achieve their full potential. Our Environment & Regeneration Directorate is currently piloting equality as part of its 'Ways to Success' appraisal process.

- **Staff in post and our 'top 5% earners'**: The numbers of staff in post and the number of staff earning the top 5% of salaries in the Council are analysed by disability, gender and race. This information is also reported within our overall Best Value Performance Indicators.

Equality in education and schools

Schools have a number of duties under legislation relating to equality, in relation to age, disability, gender, faith, race and sexual orientation. As a local education authority, the County Council is responsible for monitoring the performance and statistics of schools, and helping them to meet the requirements of the Act. The main duties of schools include:

Disability equality in schools

Schools are required to have regard to the need to:

- Promote equality of opportunity between disabled and other people;
- Eliminate unfair discrimination and harassment; promote positive attitudes to disabled people;
- Encourage participation by disabled people in public life; and
- Take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment;
- Secondary schools are required to publish a Disability Equality Scheme (this requirement came into force in December 2006), and primary and special schools must have one in place by December 2007.

Gender equality in schools

From April 2007, schools have a duty to promote equality of opportunity between men and women (including boys and girls), and to publish a Gender Equality Scheme showing how the school intends to fulfil its duties. Schools must revise and review the plan every three years and report on progress annually.

Race equality in schools

Schools are under a duty to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of a different race and nationality. They are required to have in place a written race equality policy. They also have a duty to assess and monitor the impact of policies on pupils, staff and parents, in particular the attainment levels of pupils from different racial groups. Ofsted, the official body for inspecting schools, inspects and reports on whether schools are meeting their duties.

All schools and educational establishments are required to record racist incidents and to report them to the local authority on a regular basis.

7. Making equality part of everything we do

How we communicate with our diverse communities

Effective communication is an essential part of our day-to-day business. It is particularly important to get communication right when engaging with diverse communities, because inaccessible or inadequate information is a major factor in exclusion. It prevents people from making informed choices about the important matters in their lives.

Effective communication is also crucial to community cohesion, because it enables strong relationships to be maintained with groups working within the community. This enables issues to be addressed as they arise, and demonstrates that the Council understands and values the contribution of different communities.

The Council employs a range of communication methods designed to address a wide variety of access issues. These are summarised below.

Accessible formats and technologies

Each of our publications and the web pages on which they can be found give details of how to request information in alternative formats or languages. This includes formats such as audiotape or CD, in Braille and large print, and as computer files in accessible electronic formats. Information can also be made available in easy-to-read formats for people with learning difficulties or poor literacy skills.

Our Contact Centre keeps a list of staff who speak different languages fluently for 'on-the-spot' interpretation requirements, and where this is not available 'language line' is used which provides direct telephone access to interpreters and enables three way conversations to take place in emergency situations.

We are currently engaged in a range of initiatives to enhance how we communicate as a Council:

- We are setting up a new service to provide consistent, high quality language interpretation for our service users and staff. A pilot project has been undertaken in our Asylum and Migration unit and we intend to make the new service available to the whole organisation by the summer of 2007.
- A new website content management system has been established, to help make our websites and intranet more accessible and usable for disabled people. We are also investigating effective ways of making our web-based information more accessible in languages other than English.
- Guidelines have been produced for staff to enable them to understand how to communicate well with our service users and colleagues. These show how to

respond to requests for information in formats other than standard print and languages besides English.

- Textphone services are available to enable Deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing and speech-impaired people to communicate easily with us.
- Our Sensory Disabilities Unit is working to ensure that a consistent and excellent service can be provided to Deaf people who may need speech-to-text reporting or British Sign Language interpreting.

How we deal with complaints

Kent County Council treats all complaints of unfair discrimination or harassment very seriously. Unfair discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender, faith, race (direct or indirect), sexual orientation, or harassment, victimisation or abuse of any kind is a serious disciplinary offence for employees.

If you believe that you have been affected by a failure of the Council to comply with equality legislation you should tell us. Even in the best run organisations there can be times when things go wrong and you are not happy with the service you receive. If this happens then please let us know so that we can try to put things right for you.

If you do have cause for complaint:

As an employee:

Employees who feel they are being discriminated against because of their background or circumstances by other employees should raise the matter under the Council's Grievance/Complaints Procedure. If, in the course of their work, employees suffer abuse or harassment from members of the public, the Council will take appropriate action.

As a member of the public:

- Please start by telling the person you have been dealing with at the Council. Most problems can be resolved this way.
- If you feel you need to pursue your complaint further, then please contact the director of the service you have been dealing with. It will help us to deal with your complaint speedily if you write 'Complaint' in the top left corner of the envelope. The addresses of our directorates are on the back of this leaflet, but if you are in any doubt about where to write to, please address your complaint to the Chief Executive and a member of his staff will forward it to the right person.
- If you phone or visit one of our offices with your complaint, our staff will try to help you by answering your query or taking down details so that it can be investigated. They will telephone or write to you to tell you the outcome of the investigation as soon as they can.

- If you put your complaint in a letter or e-mail, you can expect to receive an acknowledgement within one week and a full reply normally within four weeks. If your complaint raises complex issues that cannot be answered within four weeks, we will keep you informed of progress at four-weekly intervals until we are able to respond fully to your complaint.
- If you are not satisfied with the director's response you should send full details of your complaint to the chief executive, at the address on the back of this leaflet, and ask him to look into it.
- A member of the chief executive's staff will try to resolve the matter to your satisfaction. You can again expect to receive an acknowledgement within one week of the chief executive receiving your letter or e-mail and a full reply normally within four weeks.
- Your local county councillor may be able to help resolve your complaint by pursuing it on your behalf with the director concerned or with the chief executive. You can find out the name and address of the county councillor for your area by telephoning our Contact Centre on 08458 247247 or logging on to our website (www.kent.gov.uk) and going to the "Your Council" section.
- If you are still not satisfied after all these steps have been taken, there are two ways you can take your complaint forward depending on whether your complaint is about a Council service, or about the Council's response to a request you have made for information under the Data Protection Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000, or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.
- If your complaint is about a Kent County Council service, you have the right to take it to the Local Government Ombudsman. The Local Government Ombudsman is an independent and impartial person, appointed by central government to investigate complaints of maladministration by local authorities. A leaflet explaining how to complain to the Local Government Ombudsman is available direct from the Ombudsman's office (contact the Ombudsman's Advice-line on 0845 602 1983 or visit the website: www.lgo.org.uk).

Promoting equality through partnerships

Kent County Council works with a wide variety of partners and stakeholders such as Kent Police, Health and local businesses, in order to improve quality of life for local people. Partnerships vary enormously in size and remit, but one of the most important is the countywide Kent Partnership, which is responsible for overseeing Kent's community strategy, the *Vision for Kent*. The Partnership is made up of representatives from the private, public, voluntary and community sectors and has a key role in encouraging community leadership, supporting new initiatives and helping to ensure the effective delivery of services.

The Partnership is involved with a number of important pieces of work to promote greater equality in the county, such as the Kent Compact. The Compact aims to

create a new approach to partnership between the County Council and the voluntary and community sector. In addition to establishing a robust framework of engagement, the Compact ensures via monitoring and analysis that local organisations have fair and equal access to Kent County Council funding streams. It also ensures that where possible organisations are supported to acquire funding to build capacity and prepare and deliver projects. In addition, the Compact requires all partnership bids to Kent County Council funding streams to demonstrate, where appropriate, that meaningful consultation with and involvement of relevant access groups and organisations working with diverse groups has occurred.

In addition to this activity, Kent County Council and 12 district councils have signed a new commitment to improve services and achieve significant savings for the people of Kent, through an innovative local agreement known as the 'Kent Commitment'. The agreement targets five major areas for further improvement, all of which have strong links to the equality agenda.

Other important partnership activity includes:

- The County Council co-leads a good practice **Equality Partnership Group** with Kent Police. The group is open to all public authorities within Kent, and includes Medway Council, Kent Fire and Rescue service, Kent Strategic Health Authorities and most of the borough councils within the county.
- The successful partnership between Kent County Council, Churches in Society (CIS) and Medway Council, the **Critical Incident Chaplains (CIC) training programme**, is now into its third year with nearly 100 chaplains. The chaplains support the emergency services, local authorities, health services and voluntary sector as well as the wider community in the event of a major emergency. This programme was recently expanded to include a wide range of faiths and cultures, and an introductory event is planned for February 2008.

Stretching our performance through partnerships

Partners represented on the Kent Strategic Partnership have signed up to a Local Area Agreement (LAA) improve sexual health and reduce teenage pregnancy in the county. Reducing teenage pregnancy is a key factor in preventing health inequalities, child poverty and social exclusion. Girls from the poorest backgrounds are ten times more likely to become teenage mothers than girls from professional backgrounds. Infant mortality rates for babies born to mothers under the age of 18 are twice the average, and are at high risk of growing up in poverty and experiencing poor health and social outcomes.⁶

An LAA is a formal agreement between the Council, local partners and central Government, setting out challenging outcomes and targets over a three-year period. What is new about this way of working is that it moves away from a 'one size fits all' national approach to making improvements, to one where priorities and targets are decided locally. This allows us to target resources wherever they are needed most.

⁶ Department of Health, March 2007

Promoting equality through procurement

The County Council sometimes pays other organisations to provide services, such as social care and youth services, in order to deliver the highest quality, most cost-effective services for the people of Kent. This is generally known as 'procurement'. Before the contract is awarded, the Council assesses the potential contractor's approach to equality, which includes looking at their commitment to providing accessible goods and services, taking into account advice and guidance produced by the Disability Rights Commission, the Commission for Race Equality, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the new Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR). Although the contractor supplying the service is responsible for complying with relevant legislation on equality, the Council is responsible for monitoring the contract.

Under earlier legislation⁷ the law limited the questions we could ask potential providers. Since then, certain aspects of the law have been repealed, which means that we can now ask potential contractors additional questions to assess their attitude and approach to equalities. Exploring how best to do this is a key action in our action plan and cuts across all areas of equality. This also includes ensuring that diverse businesses and voluntary organisations have equal access to Council contracts.

All our services are subject to Best Value Review on a rolling programme, including those that are outsourced. As a result all our services are subject to an equalities assessment at regular intervals, regardless of who provides them.

⁷ Local Government Act 1988

8. Our five priority outcomes

Five key priority outcomes have been identified based on local data and evidence, the views of diverse groups and information about our performance. They describe our overall ambitions for equality, and provide a framework for delivering and managing all our services:

- **Equal and inclusive** services and information for all, regardless of age, disability, gender, faith, race or sexual orientation.
- Creative opportunities for **participation and involvement** in service planning and decision-making.
- Work with our partners to ensure the county's most vulnerable groups feel **safe and free from harassment**, and can report incidents in the knowledge that issues will be handled sensitively and effectively.
- Enhance the quality of our **intelligence** and **monitoring** systems, to ensure we can target disadvantage in the county where action is most needed and best reflects effective use of resources.
- Maintain our reputation as an **excellent employer**, promoting a culture where the Council recruits on merit, diversity is valued, and where employees are **proactive** in anticipating the needs of service users.

Priorities for specific equality strands

Our five priority outcomes are underpinned by a range of specific priorities and actions in relation to Age, Disability, Gender, Faith, Race and Sexual Orientation. These have been identified for each of the strands as a direct result of evidence gathering and user involvement, in order to address specific need, or gaps in understanding or service provision.

For details of specific priorities in relation to Disability, Gender and Race equality, please see:

- Disability (Page 30)
- Gender (Page 35)
- Race: (Page 41)

For details of our priorities more generally as an organisation in relation to other equality strands, see our Organisational Action Plan.

9. Disability equality in Kent

What do we mean by “Disability”?

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines disability as ‘a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities’. However, many disabled people are unhappy with the limitations of this definition, and prefer a definition of disability called ‘the Social Model’. The Social Model of disability suggests that disability occurs because of the way society is organized, and that it presents numerous barriers which prevent disabled people from being properly involved in community life. This includes discriminatory attitudes, inaccessible services and information, and physical barriers, such as the design of buildings and public transport.

The legal framework

A clear legal framework underpins our activities in tackling unfair discrimination and promoting equality for disabled people. The main legislation includes:

- The **Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)**, which makes it unlawful to treat a disabled person less favourably than others in employment, providing services or carrying out public functions. Employers and service providers must make ‘reasonable adjustments’ to enable disabled people to access work and services.
- The **Disability Equality Duty**, which came into force on 4 December 2006 is an important new duty aimed at promoting disability equality across the public sector. All public authorities must:
 - Publish a Disability Equality Scheme
 - Involve disabled people in producing the Scheme and action plan
 - Demonstrate that they have achieved outcomes
 - Report on progress
 - Review and revise the Scheme.
- Under the **Building Regulations Part M 1992** Act (updated in 2003), new and refurbished buildings must meet minimum physical access requirements.
- The **Special Educational Needs and Disability** Act 2001 strengthens the rights of disabled children to access mainstream education and makes unjustified disability discrimination unlawful in nursery, primary, secondary, further and higher education. It also puts duties on local education authorities and schools to review their policies, procedures and practices to make sure that they do not discriminate against disabled pupils.
- Other pieces of legislation that affect disabled people, but come from a traditional, medical model of disability include:

- Under the **Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970**, local authorities must provide a range of social care services to meet the needs of eligible disabled people.
- Under the **Community Care Act 1990**, disabled people have the right to have their needs assessed by the local authority and a decision made about what services will be provided to them. The disabled person and his or her carer must be involved in the assessment.

Disability in Kent

Kent's population is expanding, particularly in the growth areas of Ashford and Kent Thameside. As a result of this, we are seeing substantial year-on-year increases in demand for services for disabled people, particularly mental health services and services for people with learning difficulties. Some other key facts include:

- The number of people with physical impairments accessing County Council social services has increased by some 12 per cent over the last five years, outstripping population increases.
- Of the 1,369,900 people who live in the geographical area that is known as the Kent County Council Area (which covers the whole of the county but does not include Medway), 13.1 per cent of the population consider themselves to have a long term limiting illness. Overall, the Council supports more than 30,000 disabled and older people to continue living in their own homes.
- It is currently estimated that 1 in 100 people in Kent suffer from a severe mental illness, but this is rising. By 2010 there are likely to be over 800 additional service users, and by 2016 there will be over 1700 extra people known to us with a severe mental illness.
- Compared to the South East as a whole, the Kent County Council Area has a larger proportion of residents with a limiting long-term illness who say their health is 'not good'.
- According to recent research, it is estimated that over the next fifteen years there will be at least a 10 per cent increase in adults with learning disabilities known to social services and the estimated 'true' number of people with learning disabilities in Kent will increase by 15.6 per cent.
- There is expected to be a 25 per cent increase in older people in Kent who live alone over the next 20 years, which could contribute to greater social isolation and depression.⁸

⁸ Kent Adult Social Services, management data April 2007

Disability within the Council

The Council currently employs 199 full time staff who state that they are disabled. Of these, 102 are male and 97 are female. 209 part time staff state that they are disabled, and of these 52 are male and 157 are female.

The proportion of our top 5% of earners in the Council who consider themselves disabled is significantly lower than that of our staff overall. Of our top 5% earners, six men out of 692, and four women out of 746 who work full time declare themselves disabled.

Kent County Council monitors existing employees and applicants for jobs, promotion and training by disability. Monitoring by disability is also undertaken on grievances, disciplinary action, performance appraisals and employees leaving the Council. This is an important way of identifying trends and issues, to enable inequalities to be addressed and action taken to remove barriers and promote equality of opportunity.

The Council reports statistics and sets new targets annually in relation to the following national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) which relate to disability:

- BVPI 11c – Employees declaring that they meet Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 disability criteria that are in top 5 per cent earners
- BVPI 16a – Employees declaring that they meet Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 disability criteria.

What have we achieved so far?

We are involved in an extensive range of projects to promote disability equality and tackle unfair discrimination. Over the last three years, we have achieved some real outcomes. These include:

- Through our Kent Supported Employment team, we are now working in partnership with 24 branches of Woolworth's across the county, to improve the Company's knowledge of employing and retaining disabled staff. We will begin a programme of work placements of up to six weeks. It is hoped that, through the placement process, some participants will be identified as future employees of Woolworth's.
- Work has taken place with both the Police and Health services to improve access to interpreters for Deaf people, which includes looking at developing a Kent wide interpreting service. The Council has improved access by ensuring the Contact Centre is accessible via textphone, the Gateways is purchasing video interpreting equipment and accessible information is being provided using British Sign Language via DVD and the website. Work has also taken place to develop guidance to ensure that meetings, training and other events are accessible to Deaf, deafblind and visually impaired people.

- We have commissioned a new content management system for our intranet and website. We have built in accessibility testing, which is already leading to improvements in accessibility which will benefit all visitors to the Council's website.
- During the past year, the Library service has been working closely with the Sevenoaks District Partnership Group of adults with learning difficulties, to identify an appropriate range of books, packs and audio visual resources for adults with learning difficulties. Cue cards with easy-to-read symbols are being produced, to make it easier for those who do not read to make their needs known.
- We hosted part of Natural England's diversity review, the 'By all means' project, aimed at increasing the numbers of disabled people able to access and enjoy countryside activities. As a result of this our country parks events programme now includes an enhanced range of opportunities for disabled people, and the format of the Explore Kent website is being redesigned to make it compatible with software used by people with visual impairments. Projects such as the 'all-terrain tramper' at Shorne and two other walks have been researched and implemented through close liaison with people with limited mobility. In addition, an 'easy access' trail has recently been introduced at the Canterbury Environment Centre - providing an accessible, level trail in urban Canterbury.

The challenges

Local issues and trends change all the time, and are influenced by a whole range of factors. Although many of these changes are outside the Council's control, they are likely to have a direct impact on life in Kent. These include:

- Disabled people are 29 per cent less likely to be in work than non-disabled people with otherwise similar characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, educational qualifications and family composition.⁹
- Young disabled people aged 16 are twice as likely not to be in any form of education or training as their non-disabled peers. This increases to three times as likely at age 19.¹⁰
- 54 per cent of Bangladeshis and 49 per cent of Pakistanis aged 50 to 64 report a limiting long-standing illness, compared to 27 per cent of the general population in this age range.
- Over 1.4 million people aged 65 and over currently have severe disabilities or care needs. It is predicted that the growing older population will result in a dramatic increase in the numbers of people over 65 with chronic illnesses or disabilities.¹¹

⁹ *Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review, 2007*

¹⁰ *My School, my family, my life: Telling it like it is*, produced by The University of Birmingham, School of Education and commissioned and funded by the Disability Rights Commission.

¹¹ *Dementia UK*, produced by Alzheimer's Society, February 2007

- An efficient and effective public transport system is key to empowering many disabled people to be able to take part fully in society. However, for many disabled people who do not have independent access to a car, public transport presents an insurmountable number of barriers.¹²

Our top disability priorities for the next three years

To promote disability equality and tackle unfair discrimination, activity will be targeted in a range of priority areas over the next three years:

Priority areas for action

- Through equality impact assessments and ongoing involvement with disabled people, identify specific objectives and targets across all services, to tackle barriers to access and address need.
- Explore opportunities for working jointly with partner agencies to build confidence amongst victims of hate crime and signpost to appropriate support.
- Future evidence gathering exercises need a more representative sample. A longer period of time to respond to involvement surveys; providing surveys in more accessible, individualised formats; making sure that support is available to help individuals answer questions. Strategic targeting of ethnic minorities and people with mental health difficulties must also take place. The views of children and their carers (some of whom are also disabled) must also be covered.
- The communication needs of all disabled people must be taken into account for all areas of life. In particular, the needs of people with sensory impairments should be pro-actively considered.
- There are serious inequalities between disabled people as well as between disabled and non-disabled people in terms of quality of life issues. In particular, people with sensory impairments appear to be the 'forgotten people' when it comes to appropriate provision of communication support.
- Whilst moves have been made to improve transport there is much to be done. Without good, reliable, accessible and appropriate transport, disabled people cannot participate in community life and many will continue to feel socially isolated. Kent County Council needs to continue to focus activity in relation to helping to change this situation.
- Buildings need to be checked over by disabled people. Even better, disabled people should be consulted for advice before and during building work.
- Staffing levels need to be flexible enough so that disabled people can socialise and participate in leisure and educational activities, particularly at night.
- Disabled people should be consulted before, during, and after decisions have been made. The benefit of establishing a Kent Panel on Disability should be explored.
- Continue activity to increase the percentage of the top 5% of disabled earners in the County Council.

¹² Disability Rights Commission 2006

10. Gender equality in Kent

What do we mean by “Gender”?

The term ‘gender’ refers to the different roles and expectations of men and women in society. Gender roles can be affected by a variety of factors such as education or economics, and vary widely within different cultures.

Gender roles and expectations are often identified as factors hindering the equal rights and status of men and women, with adverse consequences that affect life, family, socioeconomic status and health. For example, although girls generally outperform boys in schools, they are 30 per cent less likely to be in work than men with otherwise similar characteristics, such as age, ethnicity, educational qualifications and family composition.¹³ Similarly, men are around 25 per cent less likely to visit their GP than women, which has implications for their long-term health and well-being. For this reason, gender is an important element of planning services.

What do we mean by “transgender”?

Gender equality also takes into account the needs and experiences of transgender people. There is considerable debate around these definitions within gender identity groups, however, the legal definition of the term transsexual refers specifically to those people who have undergone, or are undergoing the medical process of gender reassignment. The legal definition of transgender is wider; as well as transsexual people, it also includes, for example, those who choose to live as members of the opposite sex without intending to undergo medical gender reassignment. Although they fall outside the current legal definition, they experience significant harassment and discrimination on grounds of their identity.

The legal framework

A clear legal framework underpins our activities in tackling sexual discrimination and promoting equality for men and women. The main legislation includes:

- The **Sex Discrimination Act 1975** makes it unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of sex. Specifically, sex discrimination is not allowed in employment, education, advertising or when providing housing, goods, services or facilities.
- The **Equal Pay Act 1970** says women must be paid the same as men when they are doing work of equal value and vice-versa.
- The **Equality Act 2006** created the **Gender Equality Duty** for the public sector. The Gender Equality Duty has two parts to it, the ‘general’ duty and the ‘specific’ duty. The general duty places a legal duty on the County Council:
 - To eliminate unlawful discrimination and harassment

¹³ *Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review, 2007*

- Produce a gender equality scheme identifying gender equality goals and actions to meet them, in consultation with employers and other stakeholders
 - Monitor and review progress
 - Review the scheme every three years
 - Develop, publish and regularly review an equal pay policy, including measures to address promotion, development and occupational segregation.
- Transgender people are protected under the Sex Discrimination Act (as amended in 1999). It is also unlawful to discriminate in the employment field on the grounds of pregnancy and maternity. Harassment in employment, vocational training and further education is also prohibited.
 - The **Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999** protect the rights of people who intend to undergo, are undergoing, or have undergone gender reassignment by stating, for example, that employers must not treat such employees less favourably than other staff.
 - The **Gender Recognition Act 2004** became law on 4 April 2005. It allows transsexuals to gain legal recognition in their acquired gender. Once issued with a gender recognition certificate, transsexuals have the right to marry and obtain a birth certificate in their acquired gender and obtain state benefits like anyone else of that gender.

There is no current legal requirement under the Gender Duty for public authorities to take action to promote equality between transsexual or transgender people and non-transsexual or transgender people. However, the Government's Discrimination Law Review will examine extending protection for transsexual and transgender people in this area.

Gender in Kent

The 2001 Census statistics show that there are similar numbers of men and women in the Kent County Council area - 49 per cent and 51 per cent respectively out of a population of 1,369,900. The exact number of transgender people living in the County is not currently known. The proportion of boys and girls under 16 living in the County is also evenly balanced, at 51 per cent and 49 per cent respectively. However, the gender split amongst older people is very different, with significantly more women over the age of 75 (62 per cent) than men (38 per cent). Some other key facts include:

- Women in Kent are significantly more likely to be 'economically inactive' as a result of looking after the home/ family, than men (13 per cent compared to 1 per cent) (the term 'economically inactive' means people who are not working because they are full-time students, are retired or are unable to work due to long-term sickness or disability).
- Similar numbers of women and men in Kent have a limiting long-term illness (17 per cent and 16 per cent respectively).

- There are 8.5 times more female than male lone parent families with dependent children in Kent, (32,000 as compared to 3,750).
- The Kent teenage pregnancy rate currently stands at 38.0 per 1000 females under 18, which is below the national average of 41.3 per 1000. Evidence suggests that teenage pregnancy is particularly high in Swale and Thanet.¹⁴ There is a clear and acknowledged link between teenage pregnancy and deprivation.¹⁵
- Young women between 16 to 19 years of age are far less likely than young men to take part in physical activity or sport (50 per cent compared to 72 per cent). Similarly, women aged between 25 and 29 are also less likely than men to participate in sport (66 per cent compared to 78 per cent).
- Women in Kent (18 per cent) are much more likely than men (11 per cent) not to have access to a car.
- Overall, girls in Kent schools out-perform boys in terms of educational attainment. Boys' under-achievement is most apparent at Key Stage 4. Significant gaps in attainment are evident in certain subjects with girls outperforming boys, although at Key Stage 3 there is no longer a gender gap in mathematics and science at Key Stage 3. In English at Key Stage 3 the gender gap was 12 per cent, which represents a continued reduction and is smaller than the national average. Boys writing improved in 2005 at Key Stage 3. In Kent this is most marked in primary writing assessments.
- In Kent, more men (32 per cent) than women (23 per cent) occupy professional positions, including higher and lower managerial and professional occupations.
- Men in Kent (19 per cent) are more likely than women (8 per cent) to be self-employed.
- The majority of Kent's part time workers are women, who make up 87 per cent of employees. Of all economically active females, high proportions of White British women (24 per cent) work part-time, compared to all other ethnic groups (18 per cent).
- 27 per cent of women in Kent work within 2km from their home, compared to 16 per cent of men.
- 30 per cent of women in Kent have no qualifications as compared to males (27 per cent).
- Between January 2006 and December 2006, 24 gender hate incidents and seven transphobic hate incidents were reported to Kent Police. It is estimated

¹⁴ LPSA statistics (2002) report

¹⁵ Every Child Matters Cross-Government Group report January 2007, 2005 data returns.

that as much as 90 per cent of hate crime goes unreported, because victims are either too frightened to report it, or feel it will not make any difference.

Gender within the Council

Kent County Council currently employs 6030 men and 11637 women on a full time basis. This means that 66 per cent of our staff are women, and 34 per cent are men. In addition to this there are 3512 male (12 per cent) and 25089 female staff (88 per cent) on part time contracts.

Kent County Council monitors existing employees and applicants for jobs, promotion and training by gender. Monitoring by gender is also undertaken on grievances, disciplinary action, performance appraisals and employees leaving the Council. This is an important way of identifying trends and issues, to enable inequalities to be addressed and action taken to remove barriers and promote equality of opportunity.

The Council reports statistics and sets new targets annually in relation to the following national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) which relate to Gender:

- BV2a: The Equality Standard for Local Government in England.
- BV1a: % of top 5% earners that are women
- BV176: Number of domestic violence refuge places per 100000 population provided/supported by authority
- BV197: Teenage pregnancies.

What have we achieved so far?

We are involved in an extensive range of projects to promote gender equality and tackle sexual discrimination. Over the last three years, we have achieved some real outcomes. These include:

- The 'Why Suffer in Silence' Domestic Violence Conference 2006 was organised in partnership by Kent County Council, North West Kent Racial Equality Council, Rethink Sahayak, and Thames Gateway Women's Multifaith Forum. The conference was extremely well attended, and aimed at local communities and statutory partners to raise awareness. It focused on a range of multiple issues and specific implications for women from a Black or Minority Ethnic background.
- We were one of the first councils in the country to conduct an equal pay review, which concluded in April 2006.
- The Council has worked with local schools in Kent to produce national best practice guidance, 'Boys can do better', to provide teachers with ideas for raising the standards of boys' writing in their schools without any detrimental effect on girls. The case studies included are written by Kent teachers and based on work implemented in classrooms.

- The Council promotes an established programme of flexible working practices as part of its work life balance policy. This includes flexible and compressed working hours, home and teleworking and job-sharing.
- The Council is currently undertaking a special initiative to explore how to encourage girls to take part in more sport in school, and to address the reasons why some girls drop out of physical education.

The challenges

Local issues and trends change all the time, and are influenced by a whole range of factors. Although many of these changes are outside the Council's control, they are likely to have a direct impact on life in Kent. These include:

- Women make up nearly half of Britain's workforce and the proportion is growing. Girls and young women are excelling and outperforming boys in education, but this is not translating into earnings for many. Women are still working predominantly in lower paid areas – cleaning, catering, caring, cashiering and clerical work – which is one of the reasons why their full-time pay on average remains 20 per cent less than full-time men, 40 per cent less if they work part-time. A key fact in this is their need to accommodate career interruptions through childbirth and care, and flexible working thereafter, into their careers.¹⁶
- At the current rate of progress, it will take until 2085 to close the pay gap between men and women.
- Occupational segregation between men and women is predicted to be a key factor in a major skills shortage in the future. While jobs are forecast to shrink in the next decade in manufacturing and heavy industry, three in four of the one million new jobs predicted by 2012 will be service sector jobs in education, health, personal and social care or retailing.¹⁷
- Women with children under the age of 11 are more than 40 per cent more likely to be out of work than men.¹⁸ Overall, women are 23 per cent less likely to be in work than men with otherwise similar characteristics, such as age and ethnicity, the level of educational qualifications and family composition.
- Domestic violence continues to be a major issue for many families. It accounts for a quarter of all violent crime, has the highest rate of re-offending of any type of crime. One in four women experience domestic violence at some time in their lives and two women are killed each week by violent partners or by former partners.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review, 2007*

¹⁷ *Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review, 2007*

¹⁸ *Fairness and Freedom: The Final Report of the Equalities Review, 2007*

¹⁹ Women's Aid, 2007

- Although the majority of lone parents in Britain are women, some men are bringing up children alone or share responsibility with former partners. Stereotyping about parental roles can mean that men's different needs and experiences are overlooked when support services are designed.
- Men and women make different use of public transport. They have different access to private transport, different patterns of commuting and employment, and different child-care and other family responsibilities. Women are the prime users of public transport, especially buses.

Our top gender priorities for the next three years

To promote gender equality and tackle unfair discrimination, activity will be targeted in a range of priority areas:

Priority areas for action

- Through equality impact assessments and ongoing engagement activity with men and women, identify specific objectives and targets across all services, to tackle barriers to access and address need in relation to gender and transgender.
- Explore opportunities with Kent Police and other specialist agencies to build confidence among victims of domestic violence, report incidents and signpost to appropriate support.
- Review gender composition of the Transport Accessibility Forum taking positive action measures to encourage recruitment from women, to better reflect local transport issues affecting women.
- Continue to tackle health inequalities in young people, to reduce the rate of teenage pregnancies in line with the national interim target of a reduction of 15%, and increase physical exercise in girls and young women.
- Continue to work with schools to tackle boys' under-achievement.
- Continue activity to increase the percentage of the top 5% of female earners in the County Council.

11. Race equality in Kent

What do we mean by “Race”?

Although the term ‘race’ has no exact legal definition, a racial group is any group that can be defined on racial grounds, for instance, in relation to race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins. A person can fall into more than one racial group; for example, a Nigerian may be defined by race, colour, ethnic or national origins and nationality.

All racial groups are protected from unlawful racial discrimination under the Race Relations Act (RRA). In addition, Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Jews and Sikhs are also recognised as constituting racial groups.²⁰

What do we mean by “racial discrimination”?

Under the Race Relations Act, 'racial discrimination' means treating a person less favourably than others on the grounds of his or her race. However, the law applies only to people's actions, not their personal opinions or beliefs. This means that it is against the law to refuse to provide someone with a service because of his or her race. It is not against the law to have private prejudices.

Generally speaking, a racial incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person. Racial incidents include verbal racist abuse, threatening or intimidating remarks about a person's race, racially motivated assault and racially motivated damage to property.

Between January 2006 and December 2006, 1290 race hate incidents were reported to Kent Police. It is estimated that as much as 90 per cent of hate crime goes unreported, because victims are either too frightened to report it, or feel it will not make any difference.

The legal framework

A clear legal framework underpins our activities in tackling racial discrimination and promoting equality. The main legislation includes:

- The **Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA)**, which makes it unlawful for employers and service providers to discriminate directly or indirectly because of someone's race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origin.

²⁰ It should be noted that although Jews and Sikhs have been defined as a racial or ethnic group for the purposes of the Race Relations Act, Jews have not wanted to be, and Sikhism is a religion.

- The **Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000**, which placed a new duty on public authorities to consider how to meet the following objectives in relation to everything they do:
 - Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination;
 - Promote equal opportunities;
 - Promote good relations between people of different racial Groups.
 - Under the Act, each public authority has to publish a race equality scheme setting out what actions it will take to make sure they meets its duties.

Race in Kent

Of the 1,579,206 people who live in Kent, 54,957 (3.5 per cent) belong to a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) group. Within the geographical area that is known as the Kent County Council Area (which covers the whole of the county but does not include Medway), 41,534 people (3.1 per cent) classify themselves as BME.

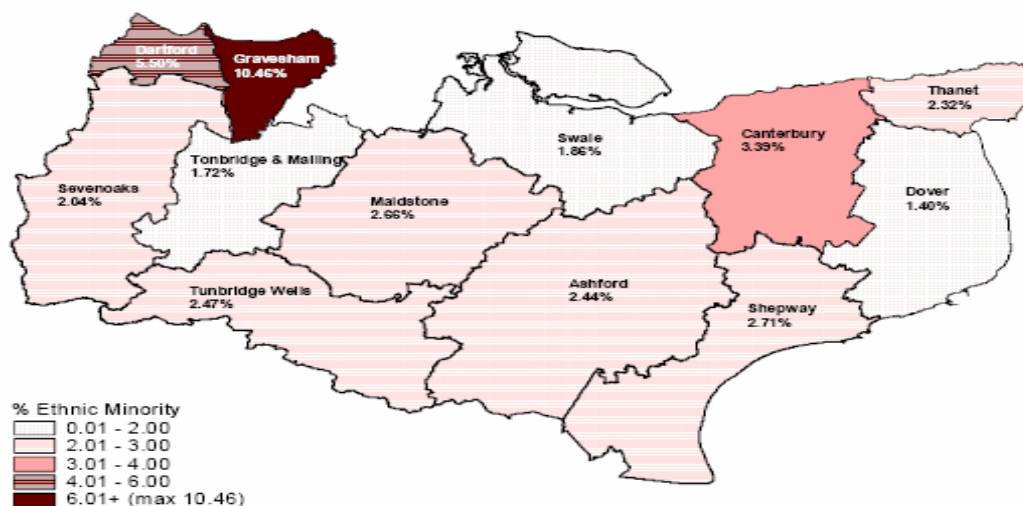
This figure is significantly lower than the percentage for England as a whole (9.1 per cent) and slightly lower than the figure for the South East (4.9 per cent). In contrast, 28.9 per cent of the population of London are from an ethnic minority.

As Figure 2 below shows, the majority of Kent's minority ethnic population is concentrated in North Kent and Medway. Within the Kent County Council Area, North Kent has the greatest concentration of people from a BME background. Gravesham Borough has the highest proportion (10.5 per cent) of BME residents, followed by Dartford Borough with 5.5 per cent.

Indians account for the largest BME group in the Kent County Council area, representing around 12,294 people (0.9 per cent of the total population). The category 'Other Black' represents the smallest group at 0.04 per cent, closely followed by Pakistanis (0.08 per cent) and Mixed White & Black African (0.08 per cent).

Ethnic Minorities within KCC Area

Figure 2: Ethnic minorities as a % of the total resident population
Kent Districts



Gypsies and Travellers

Around 8,200 (0.6 per cent) of the population in Kent is a Gypsy or Traveller. Probably less than half of that number lives in caravan or mobile home. The Council manages eight publicly-provided Gypsy and Traveller caravan sites in Kent. Other councils in Kent manage a further nine. The county's 205 public pitches provide for nearly 300 caravans, and over 500 more caravans are on private sites with planning consent and tolerated sites in Kent. The Council works closely with Medway Council, all district councils and Kent Police when unauthorised encampments occur in the county.

Recently, the Council formed a Joint Select Committee with borough and district councils in Kent, to strategically address the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers. As part of this work the Committee published its Select Committee Report, Gypsy and Traveller Sites, in April 2006. The report made a number of recommendations which will provide a key focus for activity over coming months.

Asylum and immigration

In the UK the term 'asylum seekers' denotes people aged 18 or more who arrive from overseas and apply for refugee status, stating they are fleeing persecution, torture or war. While their applications are being considered by the Home Office, they are termed asylum seekers until their refugee status is confirmed. Those whose claims fail will have their leave to enter or to remain in the UK cancelled.

In the past, the Council has had to accommodate large numbers of asylum seekers, mainly due to the location of the major port of Dover in the East of Kent. In recent years, several major pieces of legislation were introduced²¹ which led to the Home Office setting up the National Asylum Support Service (NASS) to take over from local authorities the role of providing support to asylum seekers. However, the County Council is still required to give assistance to those asylum seekers who arrived before April 2000 and have not yet had a decision on their claim. The Council administers the various benefits asylum seekers are entitled to and also makes provisions for temporary accommodation. Support under the Children Act is provided for unaccompanied minors arriving in the county from abroad.

For more information on Asylum and Immigration please contact:

Telephone: 08458 247 100 or Textphone: 08458 247905

²¹ The Asylum and Immigration Act 2004.

Migration

During May 2004 and September 2005, between 2,200 to 2,900 migrant workers from the new Accession countries were registered in Kent.²² Similarly to Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire and the Grampians, Kent is one area of the country where there are significant concentrations of migrants employed in agriculture.

Recent statistics suggest that there has been an increase in the last year in the number of migrants coming to Britain, which has been driven in the main by the EU Accession Countries, particularly from Poland. Overall, around 293,000 migrants moved to Britain during this period. Around 22 per cent live in London, 14 per cent in the East of England, 9 per cent in East Midlands and around 8 per cent in the South East.

Concerns that migrants would come to the UK to take advantage of social benefits have proved to be unfounded, though working migrants are entitled to claim in-work benefits. 99 per cent of applications from migrants have been for employment purposes. This is not a new trend and many high growth economies around the world rely upon attracting migrant workers.

Race within the Council

The Council currently employs 9542 men and 36726 women on a full and part time basis. Of these, 121 men and 418 women are from a BME group, representing 539 BME employees overall.

The Council monitors existing employees and applicants for jobs, promotion and training by racial group. Monitoring by racial group is also undertaken on grievances, disciplinary action, performance appraisals and employees leaving the Council. This is an important way of identifying trends and issues, to enable inequalities to be addressed and action taken to remove barriers and promote equality of opportunity.

The Council reports statistics and sets new targets annually in relation to the following national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's) which relate to Race:

- BV2a: The Equality Standard for Local Government in England.
- BV2b -The quality of an Authority's Race Equality Scheme (RES) and the improvements resulting from it
- BV11b -The percentage of the top 5 per cent of the Council's staff who are from an ethnic minority
- BV17a - The percentage of local authority employees from ethnic minority communities.

²² It should be noted that migrants only need to register for 1 year upon arrival in the UK, and it is acknowledged to be an inaccurate measure as there is no requirement to re-register after a year.

What have we achieved so far?

We are involved in an extensive range of projects to tackle racial discrimination, promote equality and good relations between different groups. Over the last three years, we have achieved some real outcomes. These include:

- We launched and implemented a highly successful personal and leadership development programme, 'ASPIRE', for Black and Minority Ethnic staff in grades KS 8 – 12. The course was designed to improve confidence and performance in order to prepare delegates for more senior positions within the organisation. The programme ran during 2006, and was attended by 16 delegates who received one-to-one coaching and mentoring as part of the programme.
- Three BME 'customer groups' were set up in January 2006 in each of the Council's library areas, enabling BME residents to participate and influence discussions about library services. Actions are being implemented as a result of these discussions, for instance, a number of new newspaper and magazine subscriptions have been agreed for various libraries.
- We successfully delivered the 'Kick Racism out of Football' campaign in partnership with Kent Police, NWK Race Equality Council, Walk Tall, Kanko Arts and Kent County Football Association. Events took place across the County during October 2006. Over 100 people took part in each event. Work with young people on poster design and poetry reading in preparation for the event was so successful it has continued and has influenced drama sessions which are now exploring monologue work in relation to the cross cutting themes of race, sexuality, gender and disability.
- Kent Youth County Council has an elected membership of 48 diverse young people aged 13 to 18. Young people involved come from across the different areas of the County. This is a mixed group that reflects various backgrounds based on race, gender, class, age, religion, sexuality, culture and disability. The group meets once per month in session house on Sundays across the year, they engage in debate, other informal and social education activities and take action at times on issues that are of a concern to them.
- A recruitment DVD was commissioned in 2005 featuring a variety of Kent governors across the diversity range. The DVD shares information about the governance role through the mouths of the featured governors, and forms the basis of a presentation to community groups, used in our county recruitment campaigns.
- In response to identified need in the Dartford area, a project was set up for young Muslim people at Highfield youth and community centre. There are more than 40 members aged 13 - 19.
- More than 2000 new British citizens were welcomed to the Kent community through the Registration and Coroners Citizenship Ceremonies programme in over 80 group ceremonies held at County Hall between April 2006 and March

2007. Customer feedback from the new citizens has indicated a high level of satisfaction and enjoyment of the ceremonies provided by Kent County Council.

- Working in partnership with the Scrine Foundation, Dover Asylum Team and Kent Refugee Action at Canterbury, the Council provides opportunities for young refugees and asylum seekers to learn new skills around basic English, essential living and understanding 'British' culture. 60 young people are on the register and 35 attend regularly workshops take place 5 mornings a week 51 weeks of the year.
- Parkside Primary School, in Canterbury, has compiled a large index of resources for teachers wishing to incorporate aspects of Traveller culture into the Literacy Hour. Texts are grouped by genre, using categories from the Literacy Framework.

The challenges

Local issues and trends change all the time, and are influenced by a whole range of factors. Although many of these changes are outside the Council's control, they are likely to have a direct impact on life in Kent. These include:

- The ethnic minority population of Britain is forecast to grow from nine per cent to about 11 per cent by the end of the next decade. Within particular ethnic groups, the highest increases will be among Black Africans, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.
- The numbers of people in ethnic minority communities who are aged over 60 are predicted to increase enormously over the next 10 years, from around 175,000 people today to nearly 1.8 million in 2016. Older people from ethnic minorities face particular inequalities. For example, they tend to have health and social care needs at a younger age than average, and have poor knowledge and understanding of available services.
- The numbers of migrant workers from the Accession countries coming to Kent is likely to increase over coming years. Migration is likely to be increasingly polarised between highly-skilled migrants and those with low skills, and also between short-term migrants and those who come to stay.
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, with the same qualifications as White women, are 30 per cent more likely to be out of work. Despite high levels of economic activity, Black Caribbean women face high levels of unemployment, and obstacles to progression - particularly at senior manager level.
- Some BME groups are far less likely to use pre-school education for their children. 77 per cent of the three and four year olds among ethnic minority children use early years provision, compared to nearly 87 per cent of White three and four year olds.

- Although Chinese, Mixed White and Asian heritage and Indian pupils are doing better on average than White British pupils, pupils from some other ethnic minority groups are doing less well. A large attainment gap exists between Gypsy/Roma and Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils and pupils from all other ethnic groups. In 2006, less than a third of Traveller of Irish Heritage pupils reached the expected levels in Reading and Writing at age seven.
- Gypsies and Travellers have significantly poorer health and more self-reported symptoms of ill-health than other UK-resident, BME groups and economically disadvantaged white UK residents. The life expectancy of a Traveller or Gypsy is 20 years less than the average citizen.

Our top race priorities for the next three years

To promote race equality, tackle unfair discrimination and encourage good relations between groups, activity will be targeted in a range of priority areas:

Priority areas for action

- Through equality impact assessments and ongoing engagement activity, identify specific objectives and targets across all services, to tackle barriers to access and address need amongst Black and Minority Ethnic communities.
- Explore opportunities for working jointly with Kent Police and specialist agencies to build confidence amongst victims of hate crime and signpost to appropriate support.
- Review ethnic composition of the Kent Residents Panel, taking positive action measures to encourage recruitment from Kent BME communities to ensure panel composition reflects the Kent population as a whole.
- Through consultation, identify information needs within Black and Minority Ethnic Communities, and how sign-posting to key services (particularly health and social related services) can be improved.
- Work with partners to enhance the quality of race statistics collected across Kent, particularly in relation to satisfaction and service usage patterns.
- Continue activity to increase the percentage of:
 - Black or minority ethnic employees in Kent County Council compared with the percentage among the economically active minority ethnic population of Kent
 - The top 5% of Black or minority ethnic earners in the County Council.

12. Using equality impact assessments to improve services for everyone in Kent

What are equality impact assessments?

Equality impact assessments are a way of rigorously checking all council policies and services, to ensure that they are easily accessible by everyone. They provide a clear system of quality assurance, and help us to focus on meeting the needs of service users.

We have developed our own, evidenced-based system of equality impact assessments, which has been approved by Diversity in Action in Local Government (DIALOG). We aim to have finished assessing all our policies and practices by December 2007. See Appendix C for a list of County Council services.

Equality impact assessments make good business sense

Equality impact assessments make good business sense for everyone in Kent. They help us to understand the needs of all our service users, which enables us to target resources more efficiently. Understanding the needs of service users is an important part of service delivery, because providing services which are inappropriately designed is inefficient. By targeting resources where they will be most effective we can maximise our impact and deliver more competitive, value for money services which benefit everyone.

What happens during an equality impact assessment?

There are two stages to equality impact assessments in Kent:

- **Stage 1** is a **screening and prioritisation** exercise using a 'screening tool'. The screening tool asks a range of questions to help assess the practical impact of our policies and services, and find out whether everyone has similar access to them. We will be asking service users to 'reality check' our initial findings, to help make sure that we are being thorough and robust.
- **Stage 2** involves **full consultation and engagement** with diverse groups on barriers to services, key issues and priority and objective setting.

Publishing the results of equality impact assessments

The findings of equality impact assessments will be reported on our website www.kent.gov.uk/diversity.

If you have any questions about Equality Impact Assessments, or would like to get involved in 'reality checking' our findings, please contact:

Email: diversityinfo@kent.gov.uk
Telephone: 01622 221163
Textphone: 08458 247905

13. Performance and review

Monitoring performance on the Equality Strategy

The Equality Strategy and progress on the action plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, by the Council's Strategic Equalities Group. In addition, residents and employee forums will play an important role over the course of the year, in assessing our progress and making suggestions for improvements.

For further information about our performance, or if you would like to get involved in helping us assess our progress on the Equality Strategy, please contact:

Email: diversityinfo@kent.gov.uk
Telephone: 01622 221163
Textphone: 08458 247905

Publicising the Strategy

The Strategy will be available online, in all libraries in the county and on request from Corporate Diversity Team.

The Strategy will be available in alternative formats including CD and audiotape, Braille, large print and easy read. It will be available on request in alternative languages.

Over the next 12 months we will use a range of tools to raise awareness about the Strategy and our work more generally to promote equality and tackle unfair discrimination. We are committed to ongoing developmental work on the Strategy with those who live and work in Kent, particularly around our supporting objectives and actions.

Members of the Strategic Equalities Group, the Equalities Lead Officer Group and our Equality Champions have responsibility for raising awareness about the Strategy with employees, service users and partners.

DRAFT

Appendices

Consultation summary

Disability

Our arrangements for involving disabled people on the identification of issues and priorities in relation to the development of the Disability Equality Scheme included:

- Staff were engaged and consulted in developing actions and priorities for the employment elements of the Scheme (during April and May 2006) through a questionnaire using the Council's internal website (KNet) and council-wide emails, promoted through our disability champion network including our staff group Level Playing Field.
- Working with the Tizard Centre at the University of Kent, a postal survey was sent to approximately 1,000 disabled people (service users). Focus groups comprising 99 people were also held at three Active Lives events in Maidstone. In total 402 disabled people took part. The questionnaires were analysed by Tizard using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).
- Findings from the questionnaire and the focus groups have been used to develop the Action Plan.
- Directorates identified key priorities from their business plans, to be included in the Scheme.
- We co-lead a Disability Equality Scheme Partnership Working Group with Kent Police. This group is open to all public authorities within Kent, additional partners are:
 - Medway Council
 - Kent Fire and Rescue service
 - Kent Strategic Health Authorities
 - Most of the borough councils within the county

The group meets four times a year to share good practice and help each other to develop their schemes.

The Council is committed to ensuring continued involvement with disabled people on priorities and actions in relation to disability, through an active working group of volunteers. The working group will help ensure the Disability Action Plan is explicit and robust, and prioritised appropriately. Areas to be strengthened will also be identified and recorded, and this will inform all future development of this and future schemes.

Disabled people will be involved on future updates of the Scheme at all key stages, to include identification of the issues and priorities, and the action plan.

Age, gender and race

- BVPI general satisfaction survey 2006, postal survey of 1396 male and female respondents, analysed and weighted in relation to age, gender and ethnicity.
- Focus groups covering the cross-cutting issues of age, gender and race [full details to be included following conclusion and analysis].
- Employee survey [full details to be included following conclusion and analysis]

Over the next six months we are committed to ongoing developmental work on the Strategy with those who live and work in Kent, to explore issues highlighted through consultation in greater detail, identify appropriate responses and take forward key actions.

Summary of equalities legislation

The Kent County Council Equality Strategy complies with the following Equal Opportunities Legislation, Codes of Practice and recommendations:

- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and 1986
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- Gender Equality Duty
- The Equal Pay Act 1970 as amended by the Equal Pay (Amendment) Regulations 1983
- Codes of Practice, including on Equal Pay
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000
- Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- Five Year Plan for Asylum and Immigration
- Incitement to Religious Hatred Act (1986 Public Order Act)
- The Macpherson Recommendations, Stephen Lawrence Inquiry
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) Act 1999
- Disability Equality Duty
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- Equal Opportunities Commission and Commission for Racial Equality Codes of Practices
- The Human Rights Act 1998.
- Equality Standard for Local Government

Appendix C

List of Kent County Council Services

<p>Adaptations and equipment for disabled people Additional (including special) educational needs Adoption Adult education Adult protection Air quality Alcohol and drugs misuse Animal feedstuffs Animal health and welfare (farm animals) Archaeology Archives and local studies Arts/cultural development Asylum seekers Awards (school, college and university students) Biodiversity Blue parking badges Bridges Business advice Career Services Care services for adults and support for their carers Child employment permits Children's Centres Child protection Children's Information Service (CIS) Children in entertainment licences Children with special needs Community care for vulnerable people Community Safety Conference and training facilities Connexions service for young people Consumer advice/protection Contact Centre Coroners Country parks and picnic sites Countryside and nature conservation Cultural Development Cycling strategy and cycleways/cycle routes Cycling proficiency courses Day care and day opportunities Deaf services Design Guide for Development Disability sport</p>	<p>Drugs education Drug and Alcohol Action Team Duke of Edinburgh's Award Early Years Economic development Education Education welfare Emergency planning Environment Awards for Kent Business Environmental health Environmental policy/management Environment Task Force (New Deal) European affairs/funding Family support Farmers markets Food labelling Food safety training Footway maintenance Foster care Gypsies and travellers services HandyVan Scheme Heritage and museums Highway design for the mobility impaired HIV and AIDS advice and counselling Historic built environment advice Homecare services for elderly and disabled Household waste recycling centres Independent living Inward Investment Kent Children's University Kent Business Awards Kent Music School Kent Residents' Panel Kent Schools Advisory Service Kent Scientific Services Kentish Fare Learning support service Link family scheme Libraries, including mobile libraries Meals on wheels Mental health services Minorities Communities Achievement Service Museums</p>
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Appendix C

List of Kent County Council Services – continued.

<p>Nature conservation Nursery education Partnerships with Parents Service Pavement maintenance Pedestrian crossings Physical and learning disabilities Physical and sensory services for children (education) Planning applications Population statistics Pothole repairs Pre-school additional educational needs and portage services Princes Trust volunteers Proof of age cards Protection of vulnerable adults Psychology service (children) Public rights of way Recycling of waste Regeneration Registration of births, deaths and marriages Residential care Respite care Road maintenance, including winter gritting/snow clearing Road safety Roadworks information Rural Community Wardens Rural Regeneration and Revival grants</p>	<p>Rural review programme Safer Kent scheme Safe Kent schools initiative School admission appeals School buildings School governors Schools: primary and secondary and special School provision planning School transport and school crossing patrols Social Services Special Educational Needs (SEN) Sports development Street lighting Substance misuse Supported employment for vulnerable adults Sustainable business partnership Tourism development and research Tourism promotion Trading standards Traffic signals Transport planning Volunteering Waste disposal Walks and countryside publications Weddings Weights and measures and weighbridges Youth and Community Youth offender support Youth Services</p>
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The list of Kent County Council services changes from time to time. An updated list of Kent County Council services, which also provides guidance on where further information can be obtained, is to be found on our website (www.kent.gov.uk).