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To: Children Families and Education Policy Overview
Committee

Date: January 16th 2009

Subject: Children, Families and Education Directorate
Equalities Action Plan

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report presents a summary of progress against the
CFE Equalities Action Plan (2008-10)

1 Introduction

1.1 The CFE Equalities action plan was updated in the first part of this year and included the following key areas of activity:

- Actions for all managers
- Participation and involvement
- Safe and free from harassment
- Data and monitoring systems
- Excellent employer
- Increase awareness of equality and diversity

Business plans provide the opportunity to set out the detailed actions each division is taking to implement this overall plan.

1.2 Since the development of the plan the Government has announced its intention to replace the Local Government Equalities Standard with a new Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG) in early 2009. The new framework will relate more directly to the new performance framework for local government and the Comprehensive Area Assessment. It highlights the role of local authority and partners in challenging inequality improving outcomes in their communities and streamlines the process and indicators while increasing the emphasis to self assessment. The framework has three levels: 1 emerging, 2 achieving and 3 excellent. LAs will measure their performance against five areas:

- Knowing your community
- Place shaping, leadership and partnership
- Community Engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A modern and diverse workforce

2 CFE ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS ON EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY 2008

Members will be aware that the directorate successfully contributed to the Equality Standard for Local Government assessment of KCC as a whole in spring this year but the latest policy developments mean that corporately we will have to change our approach to equalities to respond to the new framework due to be published in January 2009. The following report highlights and illustrates some key areas of work across the directorate to date. Although the current Equalities Action Plan runs up until 2010 it is likely it will have to be reviewed early next year to align with the new EFLG.

2.1 Knowing your community

A number of people across the directorate have been working on improving the quality of the data they collect to help them assess how well they are engaging with all sections of the local community. For example:

- Commissioning and Strategy, Policy and Performance divisions have produced guidance to schools on improving the accuracy of ethnicity and language data they keep and will be delivering joint training for schools in December 2008 .
- The Strategic Planning & Review team aim to improve equalities data recording through the review of complaints currently being initiated. This team have also set up a data group for the KCT which will have as part of its brief the need for partners to be able to provide data about what outcomes we are achieving for vulnerable groups
- Commissioning Division are working on improvements to the accuracy and level of information collected at the point of referrals for early years settings with regards to disability and ethnicity.
- Strategy, Policy and Performance and the Commissioning divisions have improved data collection and analysis to show the pattern of new arrivals within individual schools and LCSPs

2.2 Place shaping, leadership and partnership

This year most work on this aspect of the new framework has been initiated by Commissioning and Standards and Achievement divisions, although

increasingly work on partnerships is being initiated through the KCT arrangements.

For example:

- Standards and Achievement and Commissioning Divisions have initiated a number of opportunities to brief Head Teachers and schools on the duty to promote community cohesion and how that might be addressed by schools.
- The KCT will consider a proposal as to how they might improve their own governance arrangements so that they are more responsive to and inclusive of the needs of all sections of the community.

2.3 Community engagement and satisfaction

As a result of widespread work on impact assessments, community consultation and engagement with vulnerable communities is increasing across the directorate. The new performance framework will require LAs to embed and develop this work across all service areas and the KCT will be a major support in developing that work locally.

Examples of community engagement and satisfaction work include:

- The Kent Children and Young People's survey commissioned by the Strategy Policy & Performance division included a detailed analysis of vulnerable groups including children with SEN and BME groups and this provided a wealth of data on differentiated views and needs.
- SPP undertook further consultation for the CYPP included a number of targeted focus groups that aimed to explore the specific needs of LAC, disabled children, and BME children. This allowed a more responsive plan that will support work to narrow the gap between those who continue to achieve at a very high level and those who consistently achieve at a lower level.
- Health partners are planning to support the development of locally based children and young people's forums to engage children and young people in the planning and delivery of local children's services.
- A number of LCSPs have piloted innovative consultation forums to enable all voices to be heard, for example, in Maidstone 1 and Maidstone the International Student Voice.

2.4 Responsive services and customer care

This is the most intensive area of work across the directorate at the moment, as services respond to the national and local policy agenda to personalise services and make them more responsive to local communities. There are a number of examples of excellent work in this area including:

- Children's Social Services are ensuring that all their contractors delivering services on their behalf comply with the relevant legislation in terms of both service delivery and employment practices.
- Family Centres and Adolescent Resource Centres are reviewing their compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act requirements with a view to becoming more in line with the wider Property and Office Strategy
- The schools meals contracts manager in Resources has completed an impact assessment but has recently reviewed practice on the provision of specialist meals in the light of local issues being raised.
- Commissioning Division and Standards and Achievement are working within the Primary and Secondary National Strategies which will focus on narrowing the achievement gap through the Gypsy Roma and Traveller Achievement Programme, and Kent LA is a pilot authority for the national programme. There has also been the first stage of the roll out of the New Arrivals Excellence Programme to respond to demographic change as a result of increased migration.
- CFE together with Health are working collaboratively to improve outcomes for disabled children through the Aim Higher initiative.

2.5 A modern and diverse workforce

All staff have access to a range of corporate training on equalities and diversity issues to develop their awareness and understanding. Increasingly specialist training is being provided to support staff in applying this understanding to specific areas of work. For example:

- Commissioning Division and Standards and Achievement have provided workshops for specialist teachers including Gifted and Talented to increase representation of BME groups on this register, Kent Learning Zone, ASSET language development to ensure that advisory work in schools builds capacity to address inequalities. .
- Operations have ensured that all their staff receive customer care and equalities/diversity training to make them more responsive to the needs of all sections of the communities their work with in Kent.
- All CFE recruiting managers are attending Positive Action Recruitment on a rolling programme.

3 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

3.1 The directorate is potentially facing considerable change next year as it responds to both local and national pressures. Future areas of work are likely to include:

- Readjusting existing plans to reflect the new Equalities Framework for Local Government

- Increased monitoring of services to report on how well the LA and the KCT are 'narrowing the gap'
- Responding to the economic downturn and addressing community cohesion and isolation issues as they arise
- Maximising the best use of our resources and responding to the potential leadership changes across CFE and the Trust
- More intense work across the KCT on equality and diversity issues as services become more grounded in local needs assessment
- More effective monitoring of schools implementation of equality legislation

Recommendations

Members of the Children Families and Education Policy Overview Committee are asked to note the contents of report on Equalities and diversity activity in CFE and KCT. A further report on progress will be provided at the end of next year.

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Background Documents:

- CFE Equalities Action Plan (2008-10)

Other Useful Information

None