

Kent County Council

Draft - Executive Summary

Annual Equality and Diversity Report April 2014 to March 2015

Useful information

This document is available in a range of formats and can be explained in other languages. To ask for an alternative version, please email alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk

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Equality policy and local context

Policy

At Kent County Council we recognise the diverse needs of our community. We value and celebrate diversity, and believe it is essential to provide services which work well for all our customers and staff. We are committed to working with our statutory partners, businesses and the voluntary sector to ensure good outcomes for those who live in, work in and visit Kent. **We will achieve our vision through our roles as:** community leader; service provider; commissioner of goods and services; and employer. We are committed to promoting equality of opportunity and diversity through: our employment opportunities and standards; service delivery; and working practices. We will ensure that our services do not unfairly discriminate against any of our customers, so that everyone in Kent has the opportunity to reach their full potential. We manage equality and diversity through:

- Community Mapping (aiming to understand our community through social demographic data, customer data and feedback)
- Leadership, Partnership & Commitment – Working together
- Community Engagement – Listening to our Community
- Customer Service – Delivering Excellence
- Modern and Diverse Workforce (inclusive recruitment and retention, maintaining fair employment practices, and developing a ‘diversity aware’ workforce)

Context and background

With a resident population of just over 1.46 million, Kent has the largest population of all the English counties. The following information is understood from the 2011 Census.

- 93.7% of all Kent residents are of White ethnic origin – this includes those who are White British, as well as other identities such as Irish, Eastern European origin etc. Kent also has Gypsy, Roma and Traveller populations greater than national average.
- 6.3% of Kent residents are classified as Black or Minority Ethnic (BME). This proportion is lower than the national average for England (14.6%).
- People living in urban areas make up 71% of the Kent population but only occupy 21% of the total land area in Kent.
- 51.1% of the total population of Kent is female and 48.9% are male.
- Significantly in terms of future challenges, Kent has an ageing population with the number of 65+ year olds forecast to increase by 43.4% between now and 2026.
- However, Kent also has a greater proportion of young people aged 5-19 years and people aged 45+ years than the national average.

- There is no single quantifiable measure of the number of disabled people in Kent (or the UK), because identifying as disabled relies on individuals' self-perception; but it is estimated that 20% of UK residents are disabled people.

Further information on social, demographic and economic aspects of Kent can be found on our website, on the Kent Facts and Figures page.

http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/kent_facts_and_figures.aspx

KCC Equality Objectives

KCC published its equality objectives in September 2012. The Equality Objectives for the council are:

- A Working with all our partners to define and jointly address areas of inequality;
- B Promoting fair employment practices and creating an organisation that is aware of and committed to equality and diversity and delivers its Public Sector Equality Duty;
- C Improving the way KCC listens to and engages with its employees, communities and partners to develop, implement and review policy and to inform the commissioning of services;
- D Improving the quality, collection, monitoring and use of equality data as part of the evidence base to inform service design delivery and policy decisions;
- E Providing inclusive and responsive customer services through;
- F Understanding and responding to the impacts on people when KCC is doing its work.

Progress on Equality Objectives 2014-15

Performance against the equality objectives in 2014-15 has been reported to Directorate Management Teams (DMT) and Cabinet Committees in September 2015. Evidence submitted suggests that overall the council has made good progress on the processes and procedures that are needed to mainstream equality into core business and highlighting future action that services intend to take to improve their delivery of equality objectives. A summary of the Directorate Equality and Diversity Reports 2014-15 is summarised below.

Education and Young Person's Directorate

Improving education and attainment outcomes for children and young people from early years through to post-16, tackling child poverty, promoting emotional resilience, delivering early help and preventing the escalation of problems, in addition to reforming our Special Educational Need (SEND) system, are just some of the ways we are improving the outcomes for the most vulnerable groups of children and young people, increasing their life chances, so that they may thrive at every stage of their lives.

Reducing inequality in education and learning outcomes, reducing achievement gaps and championing the needs of the most vulnerable children and young people is

therefore a vital part of the Local Authority's role and purpose. This affects individuals and whole communities

The Kent Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2014 – 2017 sets out our ambition for early years and childcare in Kent. One of the five strategic aims of the strategy is: 'To mitigate the effects of poverty, inequality and disadvantage through the provision of high quality early education and childcare, more effective support for parents and narrowing of the early development achievement gaps for the most disadvantaged children'.

In 2014, for Kent overall, 68.6% of children achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD) which represented a 5.1% increase on 63.5% in 2013. Girls continued to achieve more highly than boys, with 76.4% of girls and 61% of boys achieving a GLD, with the gender achievement gap at 15.3% having narrowed marginally (0.7%) since 2013. The achievement gap based on Free School Meals data was 12%, a significant narrowing of 7% since 2013. The national achievement gap between the lowest attaining 20% of children and the mean was 27%, a small widening since 2013.

The achievement gap for Kent Children in Care was 46.3%, which had widened by 15% since 2013, and for Other Local Authority Children in Care was 35.4% a narrowing of 5% from 2013. The achievement gap for children with English as an additional language is 11.8% and has narrowed by 1.5%.

The attainment and progress of pupils with special educational needs in Kent, in the 2014 results, was significantly above or in line with national average attainment levels for similar pupils. Pupils with SEND in Kent performed better than equivalent children nationally; 50% of pupils at school action in Key stage 2 achieved Level 4 in Reading, Writing and Maths compared with 47% nationally. Of those at school action plus in Kent 42% achieved Level 4 compared with 36% nationally. Both these results were significantly above national performance. The most complex children, those with a Statement, achieved in line with the national level; 13% compared with 15% nationally. We have set ourselves a target for 2015 of 16%.

We have successfully implemented a new system of high needs funding for pupils with special educational needs. Alongside this we have reviewed and improved the arrangements to provide SEND funding (known as SCARF) to support severe and complex children access early years settings.

KCC remains committed to the programme to rebuild or refurbish all Special Schools. This programme, together with the re-designation of pupil numbers, has so far provided an additional 229 places in Special schools, with further additional SEND capacity planned. Two Special schools have had improvement works completed and five have new builds underway to replace or refurbish their premises.

The 14-24 Skills and Employability Strategy was refreshed and now focuses upon 14-19 curriculum changes and the development of improved pathways and opportunities for all learners to participate to age 18 and up to 24 for those young people with learning difficulties and disabilities.

At Key Stage 4, 33% of pupils in Kent at 'SEND school action' attained 5 or more A-C grade GCSEs (including English and Maths) which was significantly above the national average of 24%. Similarly at 'SEND school action plus' 24% of pupils in Kent Schools achieved 5 or more A-C grade GCSEs compared to 20% nationally. 8% of Kent pupils with a Statement of SEND attained 5 or more A-C grade GCSEs. The national average was also 8%.

NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) figures for vulnerable groups have reduced from 944 to 761. This improvement is encouraging as it reflects the impact of the increased focus on supporting vulnerable young people by KCC, in particular through the 14-24 Skills and Employability Strategy, SEND Strategies and the establishment of Early Help and Preventative Services. We are seeing a reduction in overall NEET numbers, now standing at 4.6% from 5.9% in 2014, but not quickly enough and the percentage is still at 5.2% for Year 13, but lower, at 2.3% for Year 12 which is encouraging

Permanent and fixed-term exclusions continue to decline in Kent with some positive outcomes for certain groups. Pupils on Free School Meals (FSM) account for around 37.5%, a slight reduction of last year's 40% of all permanent exclusions, although it remains a much higher rate than the normal FSM% for the school population which is around 14%. When analysed by phase, 42% of excluded pupils are eligible for FSM in Primary schools, compared to 36% in Secondary schools. Both have been reduced from last year's respective figures of 59% and 37%. A significant improvement has been made in the reduction of children with SEND being permanently excluded. In 2013/14, SEND pupils account for 58% of permanent exclusions, a significant reduction from the previous year's 84%.

A full report on what has been achieved in 2014-15 can be found at:

Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee, 18 September, 2015
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=832&MIId=5823&Ver=4>

Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate

The Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate (GET) has a good equality record with their Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) being used as good practice examples across the authority.

In 2014/15 we launched a major Customer Service Review with the aim of delivering consistent customer service aligned to the principles in the Corporate Customer Service Policy. In-depth analyses have been taking place across the Directorate in the following areas; Speed Awareness, Coroners Service, Highways fault reporting, Online licences and the GET Priority Response Enquiries. The purpose is to gather evidence of how we currently deliver customer service with a view to highlighting areas for improvement and sharing best practice. Equality and Diversity considerations are an intrinsic element of this work.

In Libraries, Registration and Archives, the 'Touch a New World' scheme has loaned iPads to homebound customers, enabling these customers to have the same digital

opportunities as residents who can't physically access our libraries. The service has provided support on how to use the iPads and understand their full potential. The project was launched in September 2013 and to date, 26 housebound customers had completed the training, with five customers receiving training and five more waiting to start. Doris, a 95 year old service user said "I can't get out much so this is a very convenient way of keeping in touch with my family and friends. I don't feel so isolated, the world can come into my life. Now that I am 95 I can't do what I did. I used to love travelling but with the iPad I can explore the world from my armchair. Doris also plays games like Sudoku and Scrabble against other on-line users. She says, *"It keeps your mind active, it has given me my independence. I can share pictures and keep in touch with my great grandchildren"*.

Over the last year, Highways and Transportation (HT&W) has begun to gather better information about the equality aspects of complaints and compliments. HT&W is also working closely with Corporate Communications to better target those customers who prefer not to use digital channels, through differently designed media campaigns, as well as seeing how vulnerable customers, such as the elderly, can be reached by asking their friends, family and neighbours to assist them in reporting highway issues that might be affecting them.

In the last year, waste management has engaged with equality and diversity groups across Kent on potential barriers or improvements that could be made at Household Waste and Recycling Centres. The work produced a set of recommendations on future improvements which will now be implemented in a phased approach.

Lessons have been learned from HT&W's Safe and Sensible Street Lighting Project and the Division has committed to improve the EqIA process for the new LED Procurement Project, working even more closely with the corporate equalities team to ensure that all requirements are being met.

Environment, Planning and Enforcement's Sport and Physical Activity Service has co-developed and co-led Project 500; a campaign to address the imbalance of male to female sports coaches, creating a more diverse workforce to drive the growth of female participation in sport. This project won the County Sports Network's National Impact Award for 2014.

A full report on what has been achieved in 2014/15 can be found at:

Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee, 16 September 2015

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=831&MId=5892&Ver=4>

Growth Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee 15 September 2015

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=833&MId=5829&Ver=4>

Social Care Health and Wellbeing

The Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Directorate (SCHW) has a leading role in discharging the council's statutory responsibilities for public health and social care.

Above all, the directorate aims are about building on peoples' strengths and capabilities and promoting their independence to improve their health and wellbeing, assisting people to achieve outcomes that matter to them and working with statutory and non-statutory partners to protect the most vulnerable children and adults.

The principal responsibilities of the Directorate include undertaking individual and population needs assessment, commissioning and arranging services to meet the eligible needs of people and safeguarding vulnerable children and adults.

The Health and Social Care sector continues to operate in an era of unprecedented change. Every aspect of social care provision, including how we commission services is being transformed. This is being brought about by a number of significant legislative and regulatory changes. SCHWB is contributing to the delivery of KCC's whole council transformation as described in the Transformation Plan – 'Facing the Challenge: Whole Council Transformation'. This is the way in which KCC will transform services to meet the financial challenges facing us, while meeting the increasingly complex needs of the people we support.

The people who we support have increasingly diverse and complex needs. The population is living longer with complex needs putting further demand on social care, and people want better quality and choice in the services they use

Learning Disability and Mental Health commissions and provides a range of services to deliver the best possible social care outcomes for people with a learning disability, people with mental health issues and their carers living in Kent.

We know that people with a learning disability are likely to have greater health needs than their non-learning disabled peers – 70% of people with a learning disability in Kent have one or more long-term conditions in addition to their learning disability.

During 2014/15, significant work has been undertaken in partnership with Kent and Medway Commissioning Support, the Clinical Commissioning Groups, Public Health England and NHS England to improve the uptake of health screenings and health promotion by people with learning disabilities. The following health areas have been targeted: obesity, diabetes, cardio vascular disease and epilepsy.

Actions have included sharing information between organisations in order to ensure that people with a learning disability are identified; developing training for GPs to ensure that they understand the barriers for people with learning disabilities to use health checks and that the GP is provided with tools to overcome this, and developing an audit of screening practice in GP surgeries for people with learning disabilities with colleagues from Public Health England.

Older People and Physical Disability commissions and provides a range of services to deliver the best possible social care outcomes for older people and disabled adults and their carers living in Kent. As part of the newly transformed service, Older People and Physical Disability has increased its service access hours to 8am to 8pm, seven days a week, including Bank Holidays, providing access to support for vulnerable people whenever they need it.

Our Care Pathways have been re-designed to enable us to better address the needs of our service users. The outcomes achieved in 2014-15 mean our service users receive the most appropriate support, with a focus on enabling independence and reducing dependency. As a result more older and disabled people have benefited from enablement, and are now living independently in their own homes with less or no homecare support.

Through the commissioning and procurement of social care services the right level of support is provided at the right time, in the right place and at the right cost for vulnerable adults, children and young people and carers in Kent. Our aim is to drive, promote and support transformational change through commissioning strategically to ensure the provision of a range of high quality, cost effective, outcome based services for vulnerable adults, children, young people and their families. We ensure that equalities considerations are written into all of our contracts with providers, so that for example our residential care providers respect older people's sexual orientation

We work with people who use our services and the public to shape our strategy development and commissioning. For example children and young people have been involved in developing the new Emotional Wellbeing Strategy 'The Way Ahead', which has been written from the perspective of a young person. Two films of young people talking about their experiences of mental health have been developed for Mental Health Summit meetings

Specialist Children's Services is responsible for discharging the statutory duties placed on the authority by safeguarding children from harm and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people, working together with all the key partners.

We have strengthened the Children in Care Council's ability to represent children in care so that their views can influence the design and development of services, and ensured that disabled children and those from minority groups are represented. Children who need to be placed with a foster family come from a wide range of backgrounds and have diverse needs. As such we have sought to actively recruit foster carers who are also from a range of backgrounds.

We have delivered fostering recruitment campaigns which have been targeted at potential BME and same-sex foster carers and to find foster carers for 'hard to place' children including disabled children. We have published the Local Offer on KCC's website to give families of children with special educational needs and disabilities information about what support is available in their area and what they can expect. We have developed child-friendly communication channels including consultation leaflets, and we are developing a 'coming into care' pack

During procurement of Infant Feeding services in West Kent, Public Health identified that white women are least likely to continue with breastfeeding. Subsequently we have stated in the service specification that the provider must carry out targeted work with white women, as well as the universal offer. Public Health identified the need to ensure that the information we provide fully meets the needs of disabled people. This

has led to changes in leaflets and ensuring that the webpages about sexual health follow the principles of accessibility.

There has been an improvement in the collection in use of monitoring data which supports our commissioning activity across SCHW. For example the equality analysis undertaken to inform the development of a new postural service identified two main challenges. The first is that the service may need to work harder to reach out to individuals from ethnic minority communities. Secondly, the location of the services could create barriers for access. The service specification was adjusted to ensure that harder to reach ethnic minority groups are targeted. A range of venues are now available in each locality.

A full report on what has been achieved can be found at:

Adult Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee, 11 September 2015

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=829&MId=5790&Ver=4>

Children's Social Care and Health Cabinet Committee, 8 September 2015

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=830&MId=5804>

Strategic and Corporate Services

The Strategic and Corporate Services Directorate has a role in equality compliance that covers every service that KCC provides. They fulfil an important role regarding equality governance and in the main provide the internal controls to help achieve compliance of the Equality Act 2010. Respective roles include; Finance; Procurement; Governance and Law; Human Resources; Information Communication Technology (ICT); Property & Infrastructure; Communication & Consultation Team.

The Business Intelligence division continues to provide publically accessible updates on equality and diversity information on the people of Kent. This information is used for a range of analytical activity in service planning, performance management commissioning and Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA's).

The team have carried out numerous insight projects to better understand the make-up of our customers / service users and have incorporated "About You" service information in all analysis (where the information is available).

Performance in key areas of potential inequality is measured regularly and the Performance and Evaluation Board challenge performance and help drive improvements where performance is falling short of expectation. An example of this in 2014-15 is the Quarterly Performance Report tracking which included:

- Attainment gap for children with Free School Meals at Key Stage 2 and 4
- Young people aged 16 to 18 who are NEET
- Apprenticeship starts for 16-18 year olds
- Adult Service users who are extremely or very satisfied with their care and support
- Adult Service users who have adequate or better control over their daily life

- Adult Service users who find it easy to find information about services

Engagement, Organisation Design and Development (EODD) includes Customer Service, Communication and Consultation and provides an integrated approach to engagement organisation design and development leading to improved customer service. Its purpose is to enhance KCC business performance through its strategic and core services.

The Customer Service Team have focused on improving the customer service and experience by placing customers at the heart of service delivery.

In 2014/15 the Customer Service Team worked with Property on the Gateway exit, advising on the equality implications for changes. The team oversaw the delivery of the Kent Support and Assistance Service, supporting the most vulnerable to remain independent in our communities. Further the Taktix Customer Service knowledge base, is hosted by KCC, shared with and populated by DWP and a cross-section of public and 3rd sector partners working in face to face services. This knowledge base is used to signpost customers to the most appropriate service regardless of provider.

Equality analysis is an integral part of the consultation process both in terms of efficacy and legal compliance. KCC teams are advised to tailor their consultation activities depending on stakeholder analysis and the stakeholders identified in the EqIA.

Accessibility and web content standards are critical to ensuring that customers are able to access the range of services offered by KCC. When websites are correctly designed, developed and edited, users are able to access online services. Accessibility helps to ensure that we do not discriminate in the way we provide information and services. The web content standards have been designed to comply with the W3C's Checklist for Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0

Activity to ensure KCC is promoting and enabling accessibility include:

- Inclusive communications guidance for commissioned service providers
- Alternative formats requests
- Alternative formats statement
- Easy Read formats
- Accessible Events Advice

Ensuring that the County Council has due regard to the equality impact of its budget proposals is a high priority for the Finance Team. Equality analysis for the overall budget process has confirmed that the Budget Book and Medium Term Financial Plan documents set out a comprehensive analysis of budget proposals.

The Medium Term Financial Plan sets out the overall financial context and the council's strategies for revenue budget, capital programme, treasury management and risk management, as well as detailed financial appendices.

The equality priorities are reflected at both a high strategic level for the overall budget, and a more detailed level of specific proposals for individual directorates and services. There is a clear emphasis that individual proposals are subject to their own detailed equality analysis to ascertain impact before changes are implemented.

KCC spends around £1 billion per annum on goods, services and works to provide infrastructure and services to support the people of Kent. Therefore, the services provided to the community should be geared towards their diverse needs and requirements.

Spending by KCC sustains and maintains a significant number of jobs in Kent. The council has a statutory duty to make sure that public money is spent in a way that ensures value for money and does not lead to unfair discrimination and social exclusion.

Furthering equality is a key goal of best value, because the procurement process is one of the most important tools that a council has to develop its equality objectives and outcomes. Local government procurement must be carried out to comply with both EC and UK regulations, such as the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Equality Act 2010 strengthens provisions on procurement.

To position the council to deliver against its aims, we have transformed the procurement function and processes by:

- *Resourcing and procurement expertise:* We have restructured and centralised procurement to deliver a consistent approach. The new team have been briefed by the Equalities Team and are fully aware of the requirements to deliver the aims above.
- *Governance and control of appropriate processes:* All procurements over £50k have a procurement plan which is signed off by the relevant member of the procurement team. Included in the checklist for the plan is that the internal client has carried out equality analysis. The equality analysis will cover any additional needs required to complete the contract. Completion of equality analysis has continued to improve. To support the introduction of the new standard processes the procurement pages of the intranet have been updated to give clear guidance for internal clients, training modules have been developed to inform internal clients of their responsibilities. Procurement and the Equality and Diversity Team have been working together to ensure that the Kent Business Portal is accessible and useable as the system is opened up for smaller contracts.
- *'Spending the Councils Money' information:* Spending the Councils money is a guide to help suppliers understand how they can seek to do business with KCC and this has been revised in 2012/13 to make the equality section easier. Training is being delivered to support internal clients in their contract management responsibilities which include monitoring the suppliers' adherence to the council's equality and diversity policy. A Contract

Management Guide is also available from the How to Buy page on the intranet.

KCC believes and recognises that the diversity of its workforce is one of its greatest strengths. KCC is committed to challenging inequality, discrimination and disadvantage for everyone who lives in, works in and visits Kent. Details of how the Authority's workforce is made up as at 31 March 2015 is:

- Currently 9,296 Full Time Equivalent (fte) (non-schools)
- 77.1% of staff were female (51%*)
- 6.1% of staff were Black & Minority Ethnic (6.6%*)
- 3.9% have declared a disability (7.4%*)
- 2.4% of staff were lesbian, gay or bisexual
- 57.6% of KCC's leadership group were women
- Sickness levels were 7.18 days lost per fte
- The proportion of staff aged under 25 or below increased to 7.7%
- Average age of staff was 45.11 years
- 3,814 staff on grades KR6 or below (earning salaries up to £21,085)
- 39.9% of employees were aged over 50
- 2.3% of employees were aged over 65 (6.1%*)

The percentage of the workforce from minority groups continued to increase in 2014/15 better representing the Kent population.

The percentage of women within KCC's leadership roles has increased.

*Figures in brackets with an asterisk are the percentage of the Kent population from those groups.

For further information on staffing figures – Personnel Committee Report

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=129>

Diversity and Equality is integral to the way we develop, deliver and monitor our corporate training programmes. Through the Organisational Development and Corporate Equalities Groups, priorities are identified to ensure that we continue to deliver quality, inclusive training programmes, which are accessible to all.

During 2014-15, 330 Risk Assessments relating to staff health and wellbeing were carried out, with the majority of assessments being for Display Screen Equipment

use. Since health problems can arise from poor layout of workstations, there is a significant case for supporting staff through workstation assessment.

Over the last two years the European Week for Safety and Health Campaign have focussed on 'Healthy Workplaces Manage Stress' with the Health and Safety team visiting a number of KCC locations across the county providing teams with an opportunity to talk to about stress management.

Creating an environment in which people are treated, fairly and with dignity and respect, demands more than minimum legal compliance. KCC's terms and conditions, policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and impact assessed to ensure it promotes inclusive conduct and behaviours.

The introduction of KCC's Shared Parental Leave (SPL) policy promotes equality of opportunity and inclusion as key provisions, i.e. entitlement to leave and statutory and contractual payments, that were previously only available to employees on maternity leave are now open to all employees. KCC has ensured there is parity between contractual SPL and maternity leave.

Following on from the Total Contribution Pay Equalities Monitoring Report 2013/14, a series of meetings have been held with key managers who are responsible for the part of KCC with the highest proportion of staff working on a part-time basis. This has resulted in an improvement in parts of the directorate which initially returned an overall performance rating profile for part time staff which was lower than the KCC average.

KCC has 4 staff groups which include Aspire (staff 30 and under), Level Playing Field (disabled staff and carers), Rainbow (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender staff) and Unite (Black and Minority Ethnic staff). They play a leading role in providing support and development opportunities for their members as well as advising on policy and practice to support our commitment to promoting equality, valuing diversity and combating unfair treatment.

KCC has supported 37 employees through the Public Health Champions programme. Public Health is every employee's business, so working in partnership to help tackle key public health priorities across Kent and Medway, with a particular emphasis on tackling health inequalities in the workplace as well as in the community of Kent is a key priority.

A number of divisions across KCC have undertaken workforce planning activities, including Succession Planning and Talent Management. Divisions are asked to identify and consider the equality profile of their staff, particularly focusing on under represented groups through the analysis of equality data.

The Future Manager Programme is a pilot initiative for managers to spot talent and develop them to ensure we have managers for the future. Diversity is integral, both within the programme and the principles around which managers identify high potential, performing individuals.

The New Joiner Survey is a survey aimed at new staff to help measure how they are experiencing their first six months within KCC. Part of the survey includes an analysis of the equality and diversity data to ensure all groups are fairly represented and trends identified inform future targeted initiatives.

The Corporate Communications Team continues to work closely with directorates and services to understand the specific communications challenges that they face. They have developed profiles of different teams to aid discussions and in some directorates are attending team meetings to discuss communication preferences and adapting their approach accordingly. The publication of accessible documents continues to be a challenge so are reminding publishers of their responsibilities and ensuring their training is as robust as possible.

KCC continues to provide quality work placement opportunities for young people across Kent. During 2014/15, 88 young people were provided with placements within a variety of roles.

KCC continues to support the programme, which was identified as a strategic priority for 2014/15. Through the Kent Apprenticeship Programme, KCC continues to employ apprentices throughout KCC across all directorates. A total of 112 apprentices were appointed in 2014/15.

Assisted Apprenticeship Programme funded by KCC, supports disadvantaged young people aged 16-24 years into Apprenticeships, providing a designated champion to ensure an appropriate level of support. A total of 51 Apprentices have secured positions either within KCC or in businesses across Kent.

KCC's Graduate Programme offers opportunities across 2 graduate streams, the organisation has a long tradition of employing graduates through its Graduate Programme with over 116 graduates having been recruited through the scheme with 60 still in employment, from Grade KR8 to senior positions, including a Director.

GradsKent is managed by KCC's Skills and Employability Service, with a mission to increase graduates and skills in Kent. GradsKent has a registered pool of students and graduates looking for work across all sectors and locations. GradsKent works with internal and external employers, matching them with their skills.

In 2014/15, 33 graduates were recruited within KCC. 71% registered are 25 or under, and 92% are under 35. 39% of graduates are Black & Minority Ethnic, 2% have a disability and 3% are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual.

Self-service enables staff to enter and/or change their equalities data held on KCC's staffing database through an on-line self-service tool. The information is confidential and enables KCC to maintain an accurate and up to date profile of the workforce. During 2014-15, 275 staff visited the equalities screen to either view or updated their equalities information.

Key challenges for 2015/16 and beyond

The Spending Review 2015 and the subsequent local government finance settlement are expected to confirm that public sector finances, and in particular the finances available to local authorities, will continue to be constrained over the course of the next five years. Combined with the demographic and service pressures arising from an ageing population, and an increasing population of children and young people, the council will need to undertake further changes in how it organise and conducts its business to promote greater independence and resilience for all local people, whilst taking care not to overlook the needs of people with protected characteristics.

We are committed to improving social care outcomes within the constraints of a challenging financial climate. By 2018, there will be a slight increase in older people, and demand on services will gradually increase. At the same time funding that councils can use to spend on services has been reduced. Current trends show that from 2018 to 2026 the population of older people will increase significantly.

The councils approach to meeting these challenges is through becoming a strategic commissioning authority. To effect the improvement in outcomes that we need to achieve for residents, including those with protected characteristics, we need to work increasingly with a wider variety of public, voluntary and private sector partners and providers to maximise resource available to improve outcomes. We also need to promote greater independence for people, with earlier and more preventative interventions where necessary, and become adept and better at strategically commissioning services which prevent demand and reduce escalation of need. It is in this challenging policy context that KCC needs to ensure the equality outcomes of the people of Kent remain a priority.