

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee – 28th March 2012

Report of the Director of Adult, Community and Housing Services

Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services Equality Action Plan 2012/13

Purpose of report

1. To consider the annual equality action plan for 2012/13 for the Directorate of Adult, Community and Housing Services (DACHS).

Background

2. The production of directorate equality action plans is an important part of the council's approach to promoting equality, ensuring that all directorates maintain a focus on planning work to deliver appropriate services for communities in the borough, on making sure employees are treated fairly and in meeting the requirements of equality legislation.
3. Overview and scrutiny of corporate equality issues is included in the terms of reference of the Regeneration, Culture and Adult Education Scrutiny Committee. Consideration of individual directorates' action plans is split up amongst the different scrutiny committees, with this committee responsible for the DACHS plan. Following scrutiny, it will be approved by the Cabinet Members for Adult Care and Housing, Libraries, Archives and Adult Learning before being published on the council's equality web pages.
4. The Directorate's action plan for 2012/13 is attached. This sets out actions to respond to the continuing implementation of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular to the public sector equality duties in the act. It also highlights how it will be contributing towards the overall council equality objectives, to be published in accordance with the specific public sector equality duties. The objectives are included in the council's draft equality scheme for 2012-15 which will have been considered by the Cabinet on 14th March 2012.
5. An annual report setting out achievements against the Directorate's action plan for 2011/12 will be completed at the end of year and circulated to the committee for its June/July 2012 meeting.

Finance

6. Any costs associated with implementing the action plan will be met from within existing budgets.

Law

7. The Equality Act 2010 replaced the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The first duties of the Act came into force on 1st October 2010.
8. The general public sector equality duty under the Act came into force on 5th April 2011 requiring public authorities to pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations covering the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
9. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities to publish equality information by 31 January 2012 and equality objectives by 5th April 2012.

Equality Impact

10. The plan sets out proposed actions for promoting equality during 2012/13. A number of the actions included in the plan derive from equality impact assessments (EIAs) carried out on the directorate services or policies, cover EIAs due to be undertaken in 2012/13 or relate to data to be collected which can assist in judging impact. Performance indicators or planned outcomes are identified against targets so that progress in achieving the action plan can be monitored and reviewed.
11. There have been a number of legal challenges nationally brought under the equality duties in previous and the new legislation and as a consequence, a number of principles relating to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) have emerged in relation to the need for public bodies to have 'due regard to equality'. The Directorate is fully aware of these and has embraced them in compiling this action plan and assessing the equality impact of its services and policies.
12. Issues relating to children and young people are covered in detail in the Directorate of Children's Services' annual equality action plans.

Recommendation

13. That the committee considers and comments on the DACHS Equality Action Plan for 2012/13.



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List of Background Papers

Guidance for the preparation of directorates' equality and diversity action plans and annual reports (December 2011)