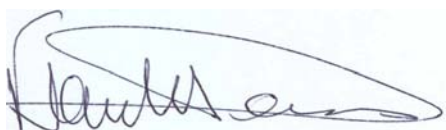


Buckinghamshire County Council
Planting the seeds of change
Cohesion & Equalities Annual Report 2007



1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is Buckinghamshire County Council's first Annual Report on Community Cohesion and Equalities. Although we have published a wide range of information about specific aspects of equality, the Report brings together for the first time all our activities and future aims in this area. Cohesion and equalities are a high priority for the County Council and strong communities are central to our Vision of Achieving Outstanding Performance
- 1.2 The Report follows the general format of the Equality Standard for Local Government so that we can link our achievements and progress against a clear corporate framework, which sets out our future direction. However, the central point about our approach to cohesion and equalities is that we aim to secure better outcomes for individuals and communities in Bucks, and so we have tried, throughout the Report, to use case studies that illustrate the difference that we are making.
- 1.3 Although the Report concentrates on the County Council's work, so that we can improve our accountability in this area, our whole philosophy is to work in partnership. Much of our work described in this report involves other public service providers and the voluntary and community sector in Bucks. Through the next Local Area Agreement, the new Comprehensive Area Review process and "Getting Closer to Communities", we will be seeking to build upon these partnerships.
- 1.4 Finally, as the County Council's lead Cabinet Member and Officer for community cohesion and equalities, we would like to express our deep appreciation to all those colleagues whose commitment and skill are reflected in the achievements set out in this Annual Report.



Frank Downes
Lead Cabinet Member for
Cohesion and Equality



Dean Taylor
Lead Strategic Director for
Cohesion and Equality

2. Our Challenges

- 2.1 The general level of prosperity masks pockets of deprivation in certain areas and within particular groups. Whilst over three quarters of Buckinghamshire's population live in the 30% most affluent areas in the country, 1% of the population live within areas which are in the 30% most deprived. 12% of under 16s live in these areas.
- 2.2 There are over 40,000 claiming benefits (not including pensions or pension credit). 1 in 5 of the working age population has no qualifications or any kind, and there are substantial numbers of people with literacy and numeracy problems.
- 2.3 Although a high performing county in terms of the performance of schools, children and young people from black and minority ethnic groups, those in care and those with physical, learning and sensory disabilities experience inequalities in terms of their educational, social and economic outcomes.
- 2.4 The towns of Aylesbury and High Wycombe experience higher levels of unemployment, crime and vandalism and poorer education attainment, housing and health than other areas of Buckinghamshire.
- 2.5 Although Buckinghamshire's population is generally healthy, with a higher life expectancy than the national average, there are significant differences in the health experience across different socio economic groups and pockets where health is poor. There is over a 10 year difference in life expectancy across wards, with life expectancy tending to be lower in the more deprived wards. Such inequalities in health outcomes are a complex mix of age, sex, hereditary factors and lifestyle but also include general socio-economic, cultural, environmental factors as well as social and community networks.
- 2.6 In common with other parts of the South East, Buckinghamshire experiences significant and growing difficulty in relation to the provision of affordable housing. The number of individuals and families that are homeless is growing, correlating to an exponential increase in people placed in temporary accommodation, unable to settle down and build the networks necessary to become included members of society.
- 2.7 Young people are increasingly finding themselves in housing need irrespective of income due to the escalating house prices and rents. Those on low incomes and benefits are forced to live in temporary or unsatisfactory housing for long periods or have to rely on emergency accommodation.
- 2.8 Our rural communities can also experience isolation and difficulties in accessing key services and facilities, particularly those people without access to cars such as young people and the elderly.
- 2.9 Communities in Buckinghamshire face a period of change. The South East plan envisages major housing growth in the north of the county. Such growth will need to be accompanied by growth in jobs and substantial investment in public infrastructure. The changing composition of the county in terms of ethnicity and

age characteristics, and the addition of new communities in housing growth areas will all provide challenges for both new and established communities. One of our challenges will be, working in partnership, to promote cohesive communities, strengthening intergenerational, interfaith and cultural understanding and to promote equality opportunity for all residents, ensuring that communities have the capacity to help themselves.

3. Leadership & Corporate Commitment

“Stronger And Cohesive Communities In Bucks”

3.1 The County Council’s overall approach to Community Cohesion and Equalities has been developed through “Stronger and Cohesive Communities in Bucks” (approved by Cabinet in June 2006). This is our corporate framework for cohesion and equalities and our Community Cohesion & Equality Strategy & Policy has been developed from this. It brings together our aims for stronger communities under four strategic objectives:

STRONGER AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES IN BUCKS			
Common Vision and Civic Pride	Diversity is Valued	Equal Life Chances for All	Strong Community Relations

3.2 To help to deliver these objectives the County Council has:

- Developed “*General Principles for our Approach to Community Cohesion*”
- Produced a draft Action Plan with existing and proposed corporate and service actions to increase community cohesion. This has been mapped against the four objectives with a separate action plan relating to Preventing Violent Extremism. (More work is now taking place on the outcomes of these actions).
- Led the development of an Action Plan to take forward the Bucks Strategic Partnership aim of Cohesive Communities. The Countywide Community Cohesion and Equality Forum is overseeing these Actions, with support from an Officer group
- Worked with Wycombe District Council and the Wycombe Partnership on their Community Cohesion Action Plan, including actions (some funded by GOSE) to Prevent Violent Extremism.

3.3 The Corporate Management Team has agreed a programme of further work with Members, Senior Managers and partners to agree local priorities for community cohesion in Buckinghamshire and the actions that need to be taken to ensure that we embed cohesion and equalities into day-to-day service delivery.

Local Area Agreement

3.4 Our Local Area Agreement “Promoting Prosperity – Tackling Inequalities” seeks to tackle those problems that have the greatest impact on the quality of life of local residents. It recognises that a number of communities across the county experience significant challenges and a number of targets, therefore, focus on

tackling issues in specific communities in order to improve the outcomes for everyone. These are typically problems that extend beyond the remit of any one agency and need a multi agency response to achieve significant and sustainable improvements.

CPA Improvement Plan

3.5 The 2006 CPA process identified four main areas for improving our performance on community cohesion equality issues, namely the need to:

- Embed a strategic approach
- Ensure strategies specifically addressed diversity issues
- Share learning and understanding across the council
- Improve performance against the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG).

3.6 Action taken to date to address these issues is detailed below.

- **Embedding A Strategic Approach**

- **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)**

3.7 A review of the equality impact assessment process was carried out with the Cohesion & Equalities Steering Group (see below) and completed equality impact assessments were externally assessed. As a result of the findings a new EIA template was developed, in addition to assessing for adverse impact on different groups of people, it also introduced an assessment of impact from a community cohesion perspective. The new template is supported by easy to understand guidance and ongoing training delivered by the Cohesion and Equalities Manager. In addition a robust “critical friend” challenge and a delivery monitoring process was developed to operate at both a portfolio/service level and corporately, through the Cohesion & Equalities Team, this is to ensure the completion of planned and higher quality EIAs.

3.8 As a result there has been an improved understanding of EIAs as a service improvement tool together with rising standard of assessments being carried out, including an increase in actions now being identified across a range of equality strands as well consideration of opportunities for cohesive activity. More work is needed to ensure that this approach is applied consistently to all EIAs. All completed EIAs to date have been listed, summarised and published on the council’s website as required by various equalities legislation. The EIA schedule for the next three years is attached at Appendix A1 and also shows those that have been completed to date.

- **Service Planning**

3.9 Also as part of our drive to embed the corporate approach new service planning guidance has been made available for 2008-9 to ensure that services understand what is expected of them and can demonstrate how the Council’s Community Cohesion & Equality Strategy & Policy will be delivered. Each service will review their own performance using a self-assessment tool that sets out a series of questions grouped under the strategy’s key outcomes. A summary of the findings and how they will be addressed will be

included in the narrative of the service plan. Where relevant this should identify specific actions around race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or religion or belief and include performance measures. Support will be provided to individual Service Area management teams on a needs basis.

- **Ensuring strategies specifically address diversity issues**

- 3.10 Work was carried out to ensure that the functions and policies identified as relevant for the Race Equality Scheme matched data held centrally. A number of discrepancies were identified and as a result of the findings a new schedule for equality impact assessments has been developed. See Appendix A.
- 3.11 In addition, work was also undertaken to develop screening questions for the LAA targets and an equality impact assessment of the Stronger Safer Communities Block is being developed and piloted.
- 3.12 The requirements to equality impact assess new or significantly changing policies and functions are being reinforced through the Cabinet reporting template, which include prompt questions. In addition all Overview & Scrutiny Committee scoping papers require the potential impact on equality issues to be considered by Members and support officers when agreeing the focus for a new review.

- **Sharing Learning & Understanding Across The Council
Raising Awareness with Senior Management and Members**

- 3.13 The Strategic Solutions Group (SSG) meeting scheduled for April was extended to enable the Council's top 100 managers and elected members to participate in "The Challenge" – an award winning, highly engaging and high impact theatre production run by the Garnett Foundation.
- 3.14 The event was designed to provide delegates with an opportunity to explore cohesion and equality issues, to challenge participants "safely" and provide a platform from which senior managers could develop actions within their own services for improvement.
- 3.15 A Member Workshop "Knowing and Leading Your Community" was held in November 2007, facilitated by David Parsons, Leader of Leicestershire County Council, with County and District Councillors invited to attend. The objectives of the Workshop were:
- To develop a shared understanding amongst Members of their unique role in helping Bucks to become a place where all residents feel they belong, can have a say and contribute to the way public services are offered and managed

Anticipated outcomes from the session were:

- Raised awareness of equalities and cohesion
- Exploration of skills required for community leadership

- Identification of challenges when engaging with communities
- Identification of possible solutions

33 Members attended the conference (25 County Councillors, some of whom were dual hatters, and 8 District Councillors).

- 3.17 Senior Managers in the Council further discussed issues around community cohesion and equality, particularly in relation to mainstreaming this work, at the SSG meeting in December 2007. The outcomes from these discussions are being used to inform the future development of the County Council's approach.

Cohesion and Equalities Steering Group (CESG)

- 3.18 The Cohesion and Equalities Steering Group (CESG) is chaired by Dean Taylor, Strategic Director and includes Frank Downes, Cabinet Member for Resources and Officers representing all Service Areas in the Council.

- 3.19 The CESG reviewed its role this year to ensure that it facilitated the delivery of the Council's cohesion and equality commitments, acted as a source of challenge and learning both within Portfolio and Service equalities groups and also within the Steering Group itself. This review resulted in Terms of Reference being agreed, role profiles being developed and lead officers for specific aspects of equality being identified. In addition, mapping of representation resulted in some Services choosing to consolidate their representation to Portfolio level and previously unrepresented Services identifying the representatives. The meetings were also restructured to alternate between business and workshop meetings, thereby facilitating opportunities to explore issues and learn from one another.

- 3.20 The CESG has been involved in the development of the:

- Revised Race Equality Scheme,
- Disability Equality Scheme
- Gender Equality Scheme
- Self-assessment process for Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government in England
- Employee equality forums
- Corporate programme of work for itself and portfolio/service equality groups
- Revised Equality Impact Assessment process
- Equality performance indicators for COMstat
- Workforce profile data and review of performance
- CPA peer review and equality improvement plan
- Equality and Diversity Development Strategy

- 3.21 It has also reviewed performance against equality related best value performance indicators including the gap analysis for Level 3 of the Equality Standard that was carried out in August and September 2007.

Revised Intranet Provision

3.22 To facilitate the sharing of learning and information across the Council about community cohesion and equality related issues, the Intranet provision has been substantially overhauled. Officers and Members can now access information relating to:

- The Council's Cohesion & Equality Strategy & Policy and Equality Schemes
- Cohesion & Equalities Steering Group
- Employee Equality Forums
- Equality impact assessments (guidance, process and training available)
- Equality Standard for Local Government
- Racist incidents (HR guidance)
- Racist incidents in schools
- Latest information in relation to legislation, national reports, local events, good practice guidance and updates on the council's progress in relation to equality

Needs Assessment Data

3.23 A key objective in "Stronger & Cohesive Communities in Buckinghamshire" is the development of a central resource of information on community profiles and the issues they experience and to share this information with partners to inform service delivery. The County invested in a geodemographic classification tool more commonly known as ACORN (stands for A Classification of Residential Neighbourhoods). It provides us with regularly updated datasets at the postcode level and enables analysis across data such as:

- Demographic (age, family structure, health, ethnicity, religion)
- Socioeconomic (occupation, industry, employment, education, socio economic status)
- Finance (Income, shares, saving, borrowing, spending)
- Place (population density, urbanization and rurality)
- Property (housing type, tenure, amenities, house price –v- use e.g. vacant or second residence)homes
- On line behaviour (access, frequency of use)

3.24 To date this data has been used to:

- Develop community profiles based on our GC2C areas
- Ascertain whether differences in the use/non-use of services is statistically significant by ACORN / Income Group
- Sense check IMD dataset in areas that were highlighted as deprived but were not deprived according to local knowledge
- Help develop the 'concept' of defining Local Community areas
- Identify customer groups (e.g. library users, bus users)
- Profile pupils who go to each school and differences by school type i.e. upper / grammar
- To better target people who produce large amounts of waste

- 3.25 A wide range of maps have produced using the datasets and have been published on the council's website making them easily available both to our stakeholders as well as the public.

Improving Performance Against The Equality Standard

3.26 In March 2007, the Council self-assessed itself as having achieved Level 2 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. During August and September 2007 a gap analysis was carried out to identify what actions would be necessary to reach our target of Level 3 by March 2007. Individual meetings were held with the Cohesion and Equalities Team and Portfolio or Service representatives. Discussions centred on an assessment proforma designed specifically for the gap analysis and based on the requirements for Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. Portfolios judged to be low risk were assessed on a whole Portfolio basis, whilst those judged to be at higher risk were assessed on a Service basis. Judgements of risk were based on existing knowledge of activity and the type of external inspections undergone, for example, CSCI and Joint Area Reviews.

- 3.27 As a result of the evidence presented, a simple red/amber/green scoring system was applied to indicate which services had:

Evidenced achievement	Green
Would achieve with a little more work	Amber
Need substantial support	Red

The table below shows the scoring based on the outcome of the assessment.

Portfolio	Service Area	Gap analysis meeting	Status	Re-assess
Adults	Adults	28/08/2007	Green	
Children's Services	Children's Services	03/09/2007	Green	
Safer & Stronger Communities	Public Protection	21/08/2007	Amber	Jan-08
	Culture & Learning	21/08/2007	Green	
	Youth & Community	03/09/2007	Amber	Jan-08
Transportation, Economy and Environment	Transportation	28/08/2007 & 12/09/07	Red	Jan-08
	Planning & Environment	05/09/2007	Amber	Jan-08
Resources	IT	18/07/2007	Amber	Jan-08
	Procurement & Commissioning	03/09/2007	Amber	Jan-08
	OD & HR	02/08/2007	Green	
	Finance	25/09/2007	Amber	Jan-08
	Customer Services & Communication	28/08/2007	Green	

	Property Services	30/08/2007	Amber	Jan-08
	Legal & Democratic Services	29/08/2007	Amber	Jan-08
Leader/ Deputy Leader	Policy	12/09/2007	Green	

3.28 An assessment was also made of the corporate position across the four substantive areas of the Equality Standard:

Corporate Level	Status
Leadership and corporate commitment	Green
Engagement & accountability	Green
Service delivery and customer care	Amber
Employment and training	Amber

3.29 A presentation was made to the Leadership Away Day on 13 September 2007 highlighting the major areas of activity necessary to achieve Level 3 by March 2008. In February 2008 the Council decided that, as the Equality Standard was not included in the new national indicator set and was in the process of being revised, work to achieve Level 3 was no longer necessary.

Working With Partners

Bucks Strategic Partnership (BSP)

3.30 The BSP is the Local Strategic Partnership for Buckinghamshire. The Sustainable Community Strategy for Bucks includes the Aim of Cohesive Communities which states:

“The Bucks Strategic Partnership aims to support the development of strong, cohesive communities throughout Buckinghamshire and to empower them to deliver local solutions to local issues. By targeting resources and support towards local areas of particular need, the BSP will work with those communities to tackle inequalities and improve their quality of life”.

3.31 The specific actions set out in the strategy to support this Aim are:

“We will work together to achieve the following outcomes for Buckinghamshire:

- *Local communities are empowered to help themselves*
- *Improved community infrastructure, including access to community spaces*
- *A strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector*
- *Increased levels of volunteering*
- *Equality of access to services”*

3.32 Over the past year, the BSP has:

- Held a Conference “Planting Seeds of Change” (September 2006), which produced some key issues to be addressed across each of the six strands of equalities
- Identified the Local Area Agreement as the key vehicle for contributing to this aim, principally through the following Targets:
 - Number of people who feel they can influence decision making
 - Implementing steps to community cohesion
 - Increase % of people who feel that people in their local area treat them with respect and consideration
 - Increase % of people who feel their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
 - Increase the number of people volunteering
- Agreed the following additional priorities for partnership action:
 - Community engagement work stream in the Improved Two Tier Pathfinder Agreement
 - A countywide mapping exercise of communities in Bucks, their needs and the existing/required representation
 - Establish priorities for action for the VCS through the new Infrastructure Contract
 - Countywide approach to translation and interpretation services
 - Countywide approach to complaints handling, including racial harassment
 - Partnership training initiatives on diversity and understanding cultural barriers to service delivery

3.33 The County Community Cohesion and Equalities Forum has been asked to oversee the development and implementation of an Action Plan for these priorities on behalf of the BSP. An Officer Group is being formed to lead the work.

Community Cohesion and Equalities Forum (CCEF)

3.34 This a Countywide Forum for debating issues and concerns with partner organisations relating to race relations, community cohesion and equality and comprises elected Member leads from the County and District Councils as well as representatives from the 3 Race Equality Councils and Bucks Forum of Faiths. Work to expand membership to encompass other equality dimensions will continue over the coming year. Over the last year, this forum has discussed the:

- County Council’s Disability Equality Scheme
- County Council’s Overview & Scrutiny Report into the engagement of Asian services users with the comment and complaints process
- Gender Duty
- Outcome of the Bucks Strategic Partnership Conference on Community Cohesion and Equalities
- Launch of the agreed RE Syllabus
- Bucks Strategic Partners Cohesive Communities Aim
- Statutory sector’s relationship with the race equality councils

- Reports by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion, Equalities Review and Discrimination Law Review
- New legislation in relation to religion/belief and sexual orientation
- Work programmes for the Race Equality Councils
- New LAA mandatory targets regarding respect and people getting on together
- Racist incidents in Buckinghamshire schools
- 11+ performance and ethnicity – 2006 admission
- Exclusions from school
- DFES community cohesion guidance for schools

3.35 The Community Cohesion and Equalities Forum held a workshop session in December 2007 to discuss the partnership approach for the following year. A keynote speech was delivered by Ed Cox, one of the Commissioners involved on the Commission on Integration and Cohesion. The outcomes from this workshop have been used to develop a programme of countywide actions for the coming year.

Bucks Equality Network (BEN)

3.36 The Bucks Equality Network (BEN) was established following successful joint working between the County Council, Primary Care Trust and the Mental Health Trust on the development of their respective Gender Equality Schemes. It comprises officer representatives from the aforementioned organisations, the four District Councils, Acute Hospitals Trust, Thames Valley Police, Bucks and Milton Keynes Fire and Rescue Service, South Central Ambulance Service and Aylesbury Prison Service and is serviced by the County Council.

3.37 The overall aim of BEN is to act as a collaborative forum for the planning and implementation of statutory equality duties and to maintain a focus upon the various equalities issues which affect both the delivery of services within the county and the position of partner bodies as employers of staff and commissioners of services. To date it has discussed:

- A range of equality impact assessment processes operating within the partner organisations
- County Council guidance on accessible information
- Statutory sector's relationship with the race equality councils
- Individual organisational work priorities
- Revised equality standard for local government
- County Council Residents Panel
- Discrimination Law Review

Action Against Homophobia & Transphobia

3.38 Last year 50 reports of homophobia and transphobia were made to the Police in Buckinghamshire. In response Thames Valley Police, the County and District Councils and members of the public came together to form an action group called Action Against Homophobia & Transphobia. It has evolved into a multi agency group and now also includes representatives from the Q:Alliance, Race Equality Councils, HM Prisons, Adult Social Care Services and Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) businesses. It is committed to combating homophobia and transphobia by supporting cultural change through multi agency and community action. The group has three overall objectives:

- Increase the number of reports made to police and third party reporting centres of homophobic/transphobic incidents
- Consolidate existing hate crime reporting centres in Buckinghamshire
- Decrease homophobia and transphobia in the community

3.39 Recent activity has included:

- Introduction of True Vision in Buckinghamshire (a police-funded initiative targeted to encourage the reporting of Hate Incidents)
- Aylesbury College becoming a third party reporting centre
- Launch of the Thames Valley Gay Police Association
- Website and publicity developed

4. Community Engagement and Accountability

Consultation Strategy

4.1 During 2007, the Council launched its Consultation Strategy, which identifies levels of consultation and engagement, for example, information, consultation and participation, and identifies its strategic objectives, namely:

- Improvement
- Cohesion
- Coordination
- Inform
- Consistency
- Engagement

4.2 The Strategy has been supported by consultation guidelines that provide employees with information about carrying out consultation and engagement activity including how to reach all groups throughout the county.

4.3 In addition a Consultation Portal was launched to provide a diary of all consultations taking place throughout the Council. This enables employees to assess whether they can combine consultations where the aim is to consult with similar groups over similar timescales. The Portal also holds results of previous consultations and, therefore, enables staff to use these results to inform their equality impact assessments. The portal also enable members of the public to access, through the Council's website, details of current and planned consultations and the opportunity to respond to consultations on line.

Residents Panel

4.4 2000 residents from across the county have been recruited to be part of our Residents Panel. The Panel not only represents the county geographically by the 19 Getting Closer to Community areas but also the demographics of the county in terms of race, age, disability and gender. Information was also

captured about panelists' faith and sexual orientation. The Panel can also be used by our partner agencies.

- 4.5 The Residents Panel is being used by Services in different ways, for example, Adult Social Care worked with minority ethnic members of the Panel to sense check a CD produced in different community languages to promote Adult Social Care Services. The Transportation Services, in conjunction with Wycombe District Council, is consulting the Wycombe panel members about parking and the Library Service is surveying the Panel on library usage.

Getting Close To Communities (GC2C)

- 4.5 The Council has developed the "Getting Closer to Communities" (GC2C) strategy, which sets out our approach to local area working. It is central to the County Council's Vision for Achieving Outstanding Performance and the way we work as an organization and with partners. GC2C requires that we plan community needs and service delivery based upon nineteen local community areas. It seeks to ensure that services are genuinely responsive to the individual needs of different local communities through:

- Enhancing the community leadership role of local members (at all tiers of local government)
- Improve engagement with the community
- Improving local access to services
- Join up public services locally
- Tailor our services to meet the needs of local communities

- 4.6 In order to support our approach, a community profile has been developed for each local area that includes information about demographic makeup, educational attainment, occupational status, income bands, deprivation score, household composition, household amenities and tenure, car ownership and mode of transport to work. Following an introductory period in five areas of the County, the approach is now being rolled out countywide, working in partnership.

Thematic Partnerships

- 4.7 The 2006 CPA report for the council identified the need to develop the capacity of the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) to fully engage in partnership working. The County and District Councils have committed further resources to establish additional themed partnerships over the coming year. These are currently being developed in conjunction with Voluntary Impact (the consortium of Bucks VCSs) with a focus on encouraging grass roots development of appropriate groups. These will include forums covering the main equalities strands; at present we anticipate the formulation of:

- Women's Forum
- Disability Forum
- Ethnic Minority Forum

The intended outcomes from these forums are:

- Increased voluntary sector representation on key partnerships and the Local Area Agreement
- Greater involvement in formulating priorities, shaping and delivering services
- Improved access of VCS organisations to procurement and commissioning opportunities and policy development
- Improved ongoing engagement with communities and “hard to reach” groups
- Clearer channels of communication between strategic partnerships and the VCS
- Clearer understanding of VCS organisations and the services they provide

Statutory Sector Working and Race Equality Councils

4.8 Work has been undertaken to review how the statutory sector and the three Race Equality Councils could work together to improve race equality. Initial discussions have been around the various statutory sector organisations assessing their needs and requirements and discussing with the Race Equality Councils how we can best work together to achieve them. A workshop with statutory sector partners and the Chairs and Directors of the Race Equality Councils is to take place in November and will be facilitated by Alexis Wright, Policy and Programmes Advisor for the Commission for Racial Equality (South East).

Overview & Scrutiny

4.9 One of the roles of Overview and Scrutiny is to provide an enabling voice to the concerns of the public and the community. It also acts as a critical friend, challenging services and seeking to make improvements as identified through Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) meetings and by undertaking in depth reviews of identified topics.

4.10 The following lists a sample of reviews that have been carried out to date which each demonstrate a commitment to equalities and inclusion:

- The Adults’ Services OSC noticed that Adult Social Care services received fewer complaints than would be expected from Asian service users and agreed that this should be examined. The review working group included a representative from the Asian community and the process involved speaking to a wide range of people from community groups and from the voluntary and charitable sector.
- Concern about national bullying statistics prompted the Children’s Services OSC to find out what was happening in Buckinghamshire’s schools. As part of the review they spoke to teachers, officers and students, including pupils of two special schools in the County to get a full range of views that informed their recommendations.
- A review, which looked at how the Council involves young people in decision-making and local democracy, identified some of the difficulties in reaching and involving young people who might not traditionally participate in groups such as Schools and Youth Councils. They spoke to young people involved in

the Youth Offending Service, and the Drug and Alcohol Action Team and also sent out questionnaires to Looked After Children in the County as part of their investigation.

- 4.11 Each of these reviews resulted in recommendations that were accepted by the Council's Cabinet, some of which have been implemented and others are in the process of being implemented.

5. Service Delivery & Customer Care

Customer First Strategy

- 5.1 Customer First is our strategy for putting the customer at the heart of everything we do. We aim to have services which are joined up, delivered locally and meet customer needs including "hard to reach" groups. The strategy aims to:

- Provide a better experience for our customers
- Meet their expectations for access and quality
- Increase the information available about services provided
- Provide a consistent level of customer service across the County

- 5.2 To help us achieve our aims we have been using a service transformation model which looks at services from the customer perspective to help us challenge traditional ways of working, break down service barriers and join up functions and services across the organisation and partner agencies. There are close links between Customer First and GC2C.

Mystery Shopping

- 5.3 The Council has started monitoring all aspects of its customer service performance through a programme of mystery shopping. Calls, e-mails and visits will take place to all services. Mystery shoppers will represent the population of the county including disabled mystery shoppers and mystery shoppers from BME groups. The results from the exercises will result in an improvement plan being developed for Council Services.

Accessible Information Directory

- 5.4 In response to requests from Services for information about making information accessible, a guide was produced which provides information about:

- How to respond to requests for alternative formats
- A description of alternative formats
- An indication of cost and time factors involved in producing alternative formats

- 5.5 The Directory has also been shared with the organisations making up the Bucks Equality Network who are each considering its adoption as the standard for their own services.

Faith Guidance

- 5.6 The Ethnicity and Learning Disability Group (a Sub Group of The Learning Disability Partnership Board) developed a faith guidance booklet following concerns raised by staff caring for people with learning disability. Employees were finding it difficult to meet the cultural and faith needs of their clients due to their own lack of knowledge. The guidance was developed in partnership with various professionals from the District and County Councils, voluntary agencies and faith groups and has been distributed within the voluntary and statutory sector in Learning Disability teams across Buckinghamshire. It is being made available to all Council Services through the intranet to enable services to become more aware of issues of religion/belief can be taken account of when providing services or engaging with people.

Racist and other discriminatory incidents

- 5.7 In recognition of the new duties in relation to disability, religion/belief and sexual orientation, the racist incident reporting system was expanded to cover all six equality dimensions. Work in partnership with the Health and Safety Team, an on line reporting system has been developed and will be launched in June 2008. Work is also underway to pilot the system within schools to encourage prompt reporting of incidents rather than the current practice of termly reporting.

6. Employment & Training

People Strategy

- 6.1 The County Council's vision is to continue to be an Excellent Authority that represents the interests of all its residents by:

- Providing high quality services recognized as delivering good value for money
- Working with customers/communities to deliver the services they need
- Using modern business techniques to become more innovative and responsive to changing circumstances

- 6.2 These challenges shape the people requirements for the organisation and play an important role in determining the skills, competencies and behaviours needed from our employees. Our People Strategy identifies the following key objectives:

- Being the best employer
- Bringing in additional talent
- Developing our existing talent
- Championing Diversity
- Transforming the organisation

Diversity Core Competency

- 6.3 The core competence of "Respecting Others and Valuing Diversity" has been integrated to the Council's recruitment and appraisal processes. The full competence statement is

"The ability to demonstrate and promote the Council's Community Cohesion and Equality Strategy and Policy in ways that can be recognized by employees, customers, partners and colleagues."

- 6.4 The fact that this has been agreed as a core competence for all employees reflects the seriousness that the council gives to this issue. The expectation that we have within these processes is that all potential employees will be assessed for their ability to demonstrate this behavior before appointment decisions are made. Once employees, they will be continually reviewed for demonstration of this behavior and if development needs are identified then as an integral part of their appraisal training will be provided and reviewed for impact.

Employee Equality Forums

- 6.7 Employee equality forums were established to provide an arena where employee communities of interest can meet to discuss key issues impacting upon them and where they can develop and debate options for how the Council can improve its practice both as an employer and as a Service deliverer having specific regard to equality issues.
- 6.8 March saw the first round of meetings for the newly formed Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), Lesbian Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) and the Disabled Employee Equality Forums. The initial meetings of all three groups considered and agreed their individual Terms of Reference, elected a chair for the year and suggested key issues to be considered over the coming year. An intranet web page was established for each forum which included the Terms of Reference, minutes of the meetings, newsletters from the chairs and the ability to email comments on issues discussed for those employees unable to attend. As a result of issues raised during the first round of meetings, a Faith Forum was established and plans were put in place to establish a Carers' Forum.

Training & Development

- 6.9 Diversity Awareness training has been undertaken in a variety of formats to meet the breadth of needs of our employees and Members. We have a programme aimed at ensuring employees understand what community cohesion and equality means and does not mean (the hearts and minds approach); that they are aware of and understand their responsibilities regarding the agenda; and develop the capacity to apply this understanding and responsibility to their day-to-day working environment. The following is a list of some of the methods we have used to meet the above identified needs areas:-

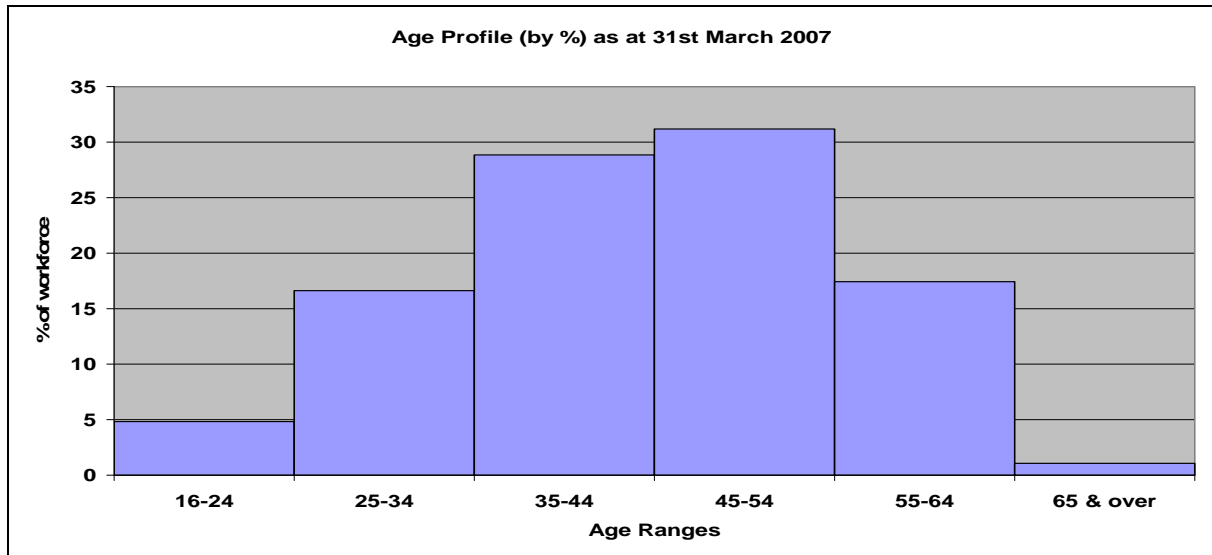
- Theatre production for our senior managers, members and colleagues specifically within Adult Social Care (to be continued through 2007/08 for other areas).;
- (National award winning) on-line development tool for home carers
- Interactive CD developed in Culture and Learning Service
- 19 people completed the NCFE Level 2 Certificate in Equalities and Diversity
- Management toolkit developed for using in team meetings to raise understanding and awareness of the diversity agenda;
- Holding a Diversity Conference
- Development of videos for use in team meetings focusing of different stream areas of the equality agenda (age, disability, gender, race, etc)
- Disability awareness workshops

- Diversity awareness training workshops held with teams
- Lunchtime awareness sessions with Bucks Association for the Blind, the Epilepsy Centre and Scope amongst others

Employee Monitoring Data

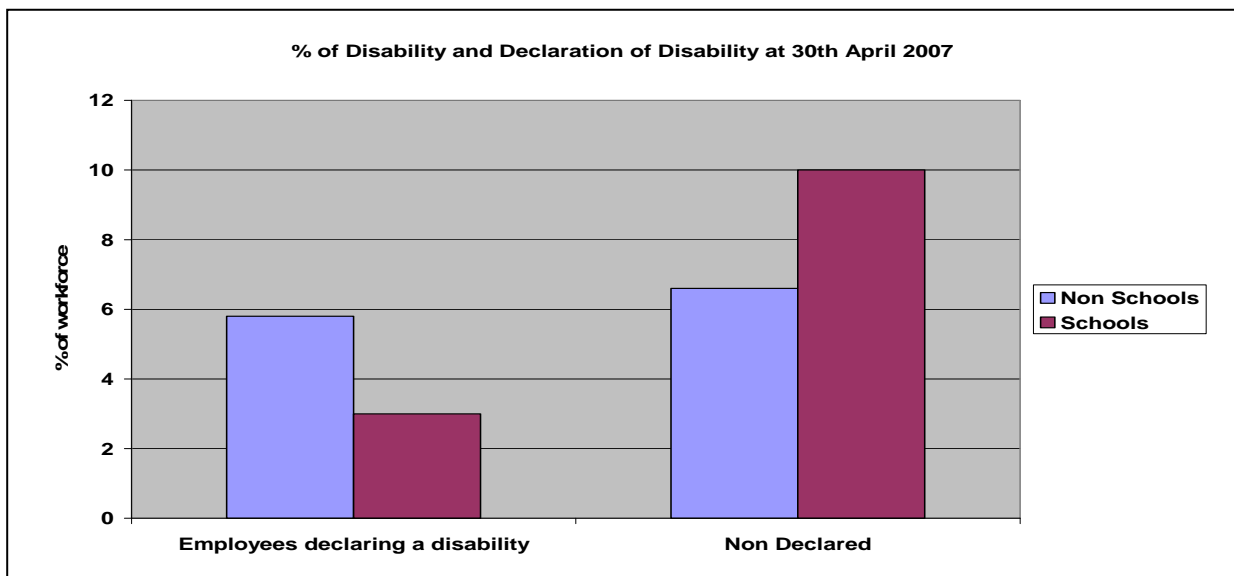
6.10 The workforce at Buckinghamshire County Council is approximately 14,500 at 31st March 2007.

Age – the table below shows a breakdown of the age of our employees.

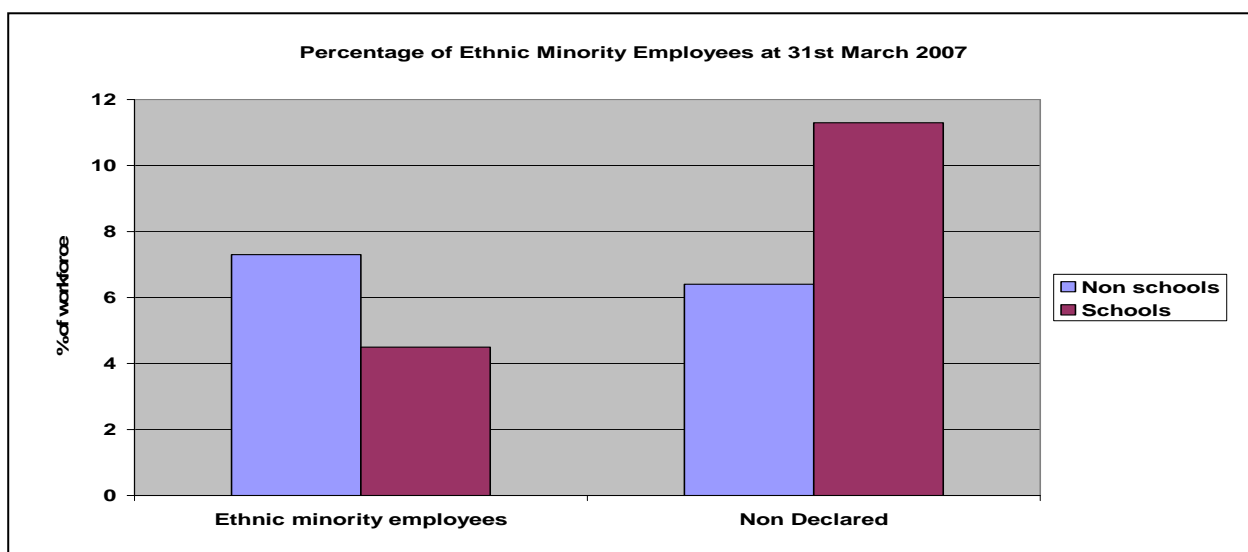


6.11 What is clear from this graph is that almost 50% of our workforce is aged over 45 and only 5% are aged below 25. Although this profile is not dissimilar to other county councils and does reflect the ageing nature of the UK population generally, we nonetheless need to attract younger people in order to create a more diverse workforce.

6.12 **Disability** – we have disability data for 91.2% of our workforce, of which 4.1% declare a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act. Declaration levels vary across service areas, for example, 10% non-declaration within schools as opposed to 6.6% in other areas. The levels of representation of employees declaring a disability across service areas are also varied with percentages ranging from 10.2% to 0%.



- 6.13 The percentage of employees who self-declared in 2006/07 has risen substantially as a result of proactive drive in January. This action will be repeated next year alongside work being undertaken now to act on issues raised by the new Disabled Employee Forum. A clear emphasis needs to be placed on finding out the reasons for non-declaration within schools.
- 6.14 **Ethnic Minorities** – The 2001 Census show 7.4% of Buckinghamshire residents are from a minority ethnic background. We have ethnicity data for 91.5% of our workforce, of whom 5.6% declare to be from an ethnic minority. Again the table below shows differences between school and non-school workforce that we will investigate through this year in conjunction with our new Black and Minority Ethnic Employee Forum.



- 6.15 In comparisons made nationally between all 34 County Councils in England, Buckinghamshire County Council is rated 2nd highest in the country for the percentage of ethnic minority employees in its top 5% of earners. This improvement, although significant, is not sufficient for the County Council however, and we have recently started working with all the District Councils in Buckinghamshire specifically to improve this situation, for the county council and all of the county's local authorities.
- 6.16 In addition to the above, the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 Employment Duty also requires the Council to review and publish, at least annually, monitoring results by racial group for:
- Applicants for jobs, promotion and training
 - Grievances
 - Disciplinary actions
 - Performance appraisals (that lead to benefits/penalties)
 - Staff leaving the authority

This information is published on the Council's website (see link) <http://www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/route?contentid=1244695811> The key issues that have been prompted for action from this data relate to our need for more in-depth

investigation into the recruitment process to enable us to improve the numbers of people from the BME community who work through from application to appointment.

6.17 **Gender** – 54% of the UK working population are male. In Buckinghamshire the figure is 46%. Within the County Council the figure is 16.3%, although this figure disguises differences between schools and non-schools with representation figures of 12.3% and 23.3% respectively. The differences in gender representation across service areas vary greatly from 93% - 37% female representation in different areas.

6.18 The Council has undertaken an equal pay audit and has established an Equal Pay Working group with the unions and employee representatives to action areas identified for concern. In terms of male/female representation across the salary ranges 49.31% of the top 5% of our workforce (not including schools) are women, an increase from 43.7% in 2005/06.

7. Measuring Our Performance

7.1 The table below shows the council's performance across a range of corporate equality focused Best Value Performance Indicators from 2004/5 and the targets set for 2007/8.

Code			Indicator (2005/06 Description)	Good to be (Units)	2004/05 Outturn	2005/06 Outturn	2006/07 Target	2006/07 Outturn	2007/08 Target
BVPI	2	a	Equality Standard for Local government	↑	1	1	2	2	2
BVPI	2	b	Duty to Promote Race Equality	↑ (%)	42%	53%	60%	60%	75%
BVPI	11	a	Percentage of top-paid 5% of local authority staff who are women	↑ (%)	41.35%	43.72%	43.72%	49.31%	49.5%
BVPI	11	b	Percentage of top 5% of Local Authority staff who are from an ethnic minority	↑ (%)	0.8%	3.69%	3.69%	3.92%	4.0%
BVPI	11	c	Percentage of the top paid 5% of staff who have a disability. (Excluding those in maintained schools)	↑ (%)	New for 2005/06	1.73%	1.73%	5.03%	5.5%

Code			Indicator (2005/06 Description)	Good to be (Units)	2004/05 Outturn	2005/06 Outturn	2006/07 Target	2006/07 Outturn	2007/08 Target
BVPI	16	a	Percentage of local authority employees with a disability	↑ (%)	0.65%	0.96%	0.96%	3.33%	3.5%
BVPI	17	a	Percentage of local authority employees from minority ethnic communities	↑ (%)	4.77%	5.23%	5.4%	5.26%	5.5%
BVPI	156		Percentage of authority buildings open to the public in which all public areas are suitable for, and accessible to, disabled people	↑ (%)	91%	93.62%	100%	87.50%	90%
BVPI	165		Percentage of pedestrian crossings with facilities for disabled people as a proportion of all crossings in the local authority area	↑ (%)	100%	100%	100%	94.7%	98.5%
BVPI	174		Racial Incidents Recorded	↑	40	49	50	71	70
BVPI	175		Racial Incidents Resulting in Further Action	↑ (%)	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

8. Looking Ahead

8.1 This section sets out the next steps for the further development of the County Council's approach to Community Cohesion and Equality in the light of our work so far and recent developments. It sets out actions involving the Community, Members, COMT and Services, underpinned by further community consultation and needs analysis. The key actions proposed for the coming year are:

- Establish a picture of community cohesion in Buckinghamshire through a **community mapping exercise**
- **Identify the priority issues** in relation to cohesion and equalities
- **Agreeing a range of actions** including cross cutting, service and local area based actions

- Use a **local approach to deliver** community cohesion through the GC2C programme
- **Develop a basket of indicators** to monitor our progress
- **Develop a revised framework** that can be discussed by Members in October
- Develop a **Single Equality Scheme** through a review of our existing Race, Gender and Disability Equality Schemes with partners and stakeholders
- Develop the actions necessary to deliver the **changing national Indicators around equality** once agreed
- Develop an **equality monitoring policy** to ensure that we are fulfilling our legal duties to eliminate discrimination across all six equality strands
- **Celebrate Diversity** through a programme of activities, agreed with partners where appropriate
- **Equality Standard for Local Government** – to embed the improvements achieved so far and action plan for the revised indicator *“Increase the reported levels of satisfaction by service users across the strands of race, gender, disability, faith and age to reach the highest reported level for each Service Area”*
- **Equality Impact Assessments** – monitor the delivery of the schedule and continue to improve the quality
- **Develop a publicly searchable database** that will provide information on Service provision countywide, including by the Voluntary and Community Sectors, and key events taking place
- **Equal Access to Services** – undertake a programme of disabled mystery shopping to complement the corporate programme and also carry out research around the communication needs of disabled people within the county
- **Themed Partnerships** – to be established and functioning
- **Develop a training and development plan** within existing resources