

Community Cohesion & Equality Strategy and Policy

‘Stronger and Cohesive Communities in Buckinghamshire’



**For
Buckinghamshire County Council**

May 2006

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The County Council places great emphasis on the principle of placing communities at the heart of service provision, to achieve better outcomes for individuals and communities. The County Council aims to provide strong local leadership to improve the quality of life for all our residents. Many of the aims in the Council's Corporate Plan reflect the themes of achieving customer and local focus and identifying the importance of understanding and responding to community need.

The County Council has two corporate programmes, in particular, that aim to achieve this:

- **Customer First** – focussing on the needs of the local residents as individuals, extending choice and personalising services.
- **Getting Closer to Communities** – promoting local area service planning and working in partnership with community groups, stakeholders and other public organisations.

1.2 Whilst this Community Cohesion and Equality Strategy has similarities to these two programmes, and links into other community related local plans and strategies of the County Council, it adds a distinct and vital component to the overall aim of putting communities at the heart of service delivery.

1.3 The four overall Outcomes within 'Stronger and Cohesive Communities in Buckinghamshire' form the County Council's corporate framework for cohesion, equalities, diversity and inclusion.

1.4 The County Council's firm intention is to develop a shared partnership view of cohesion and equalities, working through the Bucks Strategic Partnership. This document is, however, an essential first step for the Council, in setting out its perspective and action that needs to be taken internally to strengthen corporate and service contributions. A key action will be to develop a baseline so that we can measure the impact of actions taken to address various cohesion and equalities issues in the County.

2.0 WHY DO WE NEED A COMMUNITY COHESION AND EQUALITY STRATEGY?

There are a number of national and local drivers that link directly to the need for a community cohesion and equality strategy:

The ten-year vision for Buckinghamshire is set out in the Community Plan and this states that:

In 2015, Buckinghamshire has maintained its economic success and its position as one of the most prosperous counties in England. At the same time it has enhanced its environment and improved the well-being and quality of life of all its residents.

This Strategy, therefore, is not a stand-alone document. Listed below are a number of corporate plans, strategies and initiatives within Buckinghamshire County Council that further support the place of communities at the heart of service delivery:

2.1 Government Publications/Green/White Papers:

- Every Child Matters – The Children’s Act 2004
- Adult Social Care Green Paper 2005
- Youth Matters Green Paper 2005
- The Public Health Agenda White Paper 2004
- Local Area Agreements
- Local: Vision – Why Neighbourhoods Matter 2005

2.2 Local Plans

- Corporate Plan Aim 5: *“Build with you safer, stronger and healthier communities”*
- Safer and Stronger Communities Plan
- Getting Closer to Communities Strategy (including the development of Extended Schools)
- Customer First
- Race Equality Scheme 2004
- Social Inclusion Improvement Plan July 2004
- Best Value Review Fear of Crime Improvement Plan 2004

In addition to these corporate initiatives, there are a number of partnership plans that have a direct link to community cohesion:

- Bucks Strategic Partnership Aim relating to “Cohesive Communities”
- Bucks Strategic Partnership Older Peoples Draft Strategy 2005-2011
- Bucks Strategic Partnership Youth Strategy 2004-2007
- Bucks Local Area Agreement/Local Public Service Agreement

On a national level, the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Home Office strongly recommend that local authorities address the cohesion agenda. Guidance has been produced over recent years to give local authorities some

practical advice about how to build and strengthen cohesive communities in their area. Elements of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) 2005 will address the need for safer and stronger communities and for working on cross-cutting projects – all of which will be supported and achieved by the Strategy. This is also part of the Local Government Strategy outlined in the 10 year vision document “Local: Vision”, linking in particular to “Why Neighbourhoods Matter”, 2005.

Recent national and local events have reinforced the importance of a Community Cohesion and Equality Strategy, setting out clearly the County Council’s key role and contribution. The changing nature of the County, with substantial growth in future years, requires a proactive approach.

The development and implementation of this Strategy is a key milestone to achieving the Equality Standard for Local Government. This document will therefore serve as the Council’s Corporate Equality Strategy and Policy for this purpose.

3.0 WHAT IS COMMUNITY COHESION?

Community cohesion has strong links to concepts of equality and diversity – but is broader than this. Community cohesion can only grow when society as a whole recognises that individuals have the right to, for example, equality of treatment, life opportunities, access to services, and when we all respect and value the diverse nature of our communities.

There are many definitions of community cohesion; for the purpose of this Strategy it is defined as follows:

“Community cohesion is the outcome of understanding and respect between different communities and a sense of identification with a wider community. It leads to a strong and healthy society. This is achieved through social inclusion, community development, community engagement, effective two-way communication and strong and representative community leadership. Community cohesion addresses a wide range of potential social divisions because of community such as age, race, faith and geographical area”.

The County Council plays many roles in supporting community cohesion, for example:

- Promoting Buckinghamshire and a sense of place and belonging to the County and its various communities
- Providing community leadership, working in partnership with external and internal partners
- Identifying, celebrating and building on successes in the community
- Identifying and working with those at risk of social exclusion, discrimination and segregation
- Monitoring, with partners, tensions within and between different communities and responding to these concerns
- Helping to build bridges and establish bonds between communities
- Encouraging and improving community capacity building
- Providing a cleaner, safer and greener environment

- Limiting health inequalities
- Raising educational attainment.
- Promoting citizenship and respect with society

The various elements that contribute to community cohesion are illustrated in the diagram below:



4.0 BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL'S VISION AND POLICY STATEMENT FOR COMMUNITY COHESION AND EQUALITY.

A key policy objective in the strategy is to balance two things. On the one hand, it is important to identify the specific needs of different people and to take specific measures to address the barriers that prevent people from accessing services equally. When people feel equal, included and respected, they are more likely to integrate - this is essential for a stronger society. On the other hand, we should avoid reinforcing the differences between people from different backgrounds. **The emphasis is now moving towards a greater focus on what binds us together. We should aim to identify common beliefs and values, rather than emphasising diversity - which on its own can be seen as divisive.**

4.1 The County Council proposes to adopt the following Vision for Community Cohesion and Equality:

COMMUNITY COHESION AND EQUALITY VISION

- There is a common vision, sense of place and civic pride in Buckinghamshire.
- Communities have a genuine influence over the services delivered in their area through appropriate consultation and engagement.
- The diversity of local people is positively valued and celebrated.
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities.
- Strong and positive relationships are formed through increased community engagement and understanding.
- Our belief in equality of opportunity will inform everything we do, from the way in which we provide services to people, to the way we treat the staff who work in our organisation.

4.2 COMMUNITY COHESION AND EQUALITY POLICY STATEMENT

Buckinghamshire County Council is committed to achieving equality of opportunity as an employer of people, provider and purchaser of services, educator, partner and community leader. It places considerable emphasis on understanding, acceptance and appreciation of individual differences. The aim of this policy statement is to demonstrate our commitment to continued action in tackling inequality. The County Council recognises that discrimination and prejudice can take many forms and we are committed to making equality of opportunity a reality. We recognise that certain groups of people are likely to be at particular risk from unfair discrimination and acknowledge that discrimination may be on any of the following grounds: age, gender, ethnicity, disability, social background, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and those with HIV positive status.

The aim of this Policy statement will be achieved by:

- promoting the Council's commitment to equal opportunity and diversity

- developing and promoting good practice in equal opportunities and diversity awareness to ensure that services are accessible and that people are appointed on merit and are treated fairly on the basis of their skills, abilities and other objective criteria which relate to the job
- challenging discrimination and harassment at work
- training and encouraging employees from groups that are under-represented in the workforce to help them achieve equal opportunity within the Council meeting legal duties.

4.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL, MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES

The County Council, Senior Managers and Members will:	Managers will:	Employees will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • act as champions on equality within the organisation • ensure that all policies and procedures are in line with relevant legislation and good practice guidelines • integrate equality of opportunity into all aspects of local authority activity. Recruiting and valuing a workforce that reflects the diverse composition of Buckinghamshire • take action where there is under representation in the workforce • provide equal access to all service users and potential service users according to need • offer all those who use or might use council services the opportunity to influence the way their needs are met • seek to influence partners to ensure a joint commitment to Diversity • require voluntary organisations to provide evidence of their commitment to Diversity regarding Human Resource policies and delivery of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply, implement, monitor and actively promote the Council's policy on Diversity in employment and ensuring that staff have copies of and understand the Council's Diversity Policy • make services equally accessible to staff, implementing the Diversity Action Plan, and take positive measures to address inequality and promote equality of opportunity • treat staff fairly and with respect and take action to help them achieve their full potential, which includes regularly reviewing adjustments made for employees with a disability • ensure that interview panel members have received training in recruitment and selection procedures, providing induction training for all new employees and making them aware of the County Council's Diversity Policy and practices and ensuring that appropriate training opportunities are available • ensure that no job 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that they understand the aim of Buckinghamshire County Council's Diversity Policy statement • ensure that they adopt the Council's vision of equality of opportunity and embrace the expectations of the Policy • put this policy into practice in all areas of work in which they are engaged which involves being prepared to challenge comments and/or actions from colleagues which conflict with the Council's Diversity Policy • act to tackle unfair discrimination by reporting incidents in line with Buckinghamshire County Council's Harassment procedure to their manager so that action can be taken to remedy the situation • ensure that they identify for their manager, ways in which equal opportunities can be improved and promoted • be alert to any racist

<p>services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a safe, secure and accessible working environment that values the identities and culture of all our employees 	<p>applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment because of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, social background, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or HIV positive status</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that reasonable adjustments to selection processes and working arrangements are made to accommodate applicants and employees with disabilities • making staff aware that discrimination or harassment on the grounds of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, social background, sexual orientation, religious beliefs or those with HIV positive status will be treated as a disciplinary offence • apply terms and conditions of employment objectively and consistently i.e. granting of compassionate leave, job-share arrangements, maternity leave provisions, paternity leave, career breaks, and consideration of flexible working arrangements • respond promptly and treat the incident seriously, ensure that the victims of incidents are supported and deal effectively with the perpetrators • report an incident and action to the appropriate manager and recognising any wider service implications, ensuring local action is taken and raising the implications beyond 	<p>incidents and report any such incidents to their line manager and encourage colleagues to do the same</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advise the public of their right to report a racist incident and how to make a complaint
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	the manager's remit with the appropriate senior manager	
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We aim to be responsive and open, and to demonstrate both quality and equality to our residents, to our service users, and to those who visit Buckinghamshire. Our aim is to ensure that people can fully participate in decision-making processes, and benefit from the social, economic, and cultural life of the County.

We do not want any groups and individuals in our society to experience discrimination or unequal treatment. If this should happen because our services are inaccessible or inappropriate, we will do all we can to put things right and prevent it happening again. If we make mistakes we want to be able to put them right.

These are the principles that underpin the above aims:-

- Promote the Council's commitment to Community Cohesion and Equalities and challenge discrimination and harassment at work.
- Put the needs of the public first and operate as a fair, responsive and accountable local authority.
- Ensure equality of opportunity and act promptly on any complaints of harassment and discrimination.
- Promote diversity and social inclusion, in order to eradicate social exclusion, and fight discrimination.
- Work to create a sustainable and healthy environment
- Work with our partners in the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to ensure the best outcomes for the people of Buckinghamshire
- Deliver accessible services, relevant to the needs of service users
- Consult and seek the views of our residents, service users and potential customers on the quality and relevance of our services, and keep them informed of outcomes and progress
- Monitor and review our policies and procedures from an equalities perspective
- Abide by our legal obligations and duties including the Sex Discrimination Act, Race Relations Act, Disability Discrimination Act and the Human Rights Act, as well as all other related legislation and policy practice
- Ensure we deliver fair and equal recruitment policies and practices and are an employer of choice for our staff and potential staff.
- Aim to have a workforce that represents the community of Buckinghamshire
- Provide a working environment that is safe, accessible and free from harassment and discrimination, and one which values and respects individuals' identities and cultures
- Ensure that we have in place expectations and systems for dealing with and reporting racist incidents. Failure to take action on the part of the County Council

could be seen as condoning racism and may well lead to more serious incidents **(Appendix 3)**.

- Regularly consult with our employees and listen to what they have to say
- Ensure that elected Members and employees understand our equal opportunities policy and practice, and their individual responsibilities

The remaining sections of the Strategy set out how we aim to contribute to making this Vision a reality in Buckinghamshire.

5.0 THE STRATEGY

5.1 Community Cohesion and Equality Principles

The County Council recognises the importance and value of a workforce in which people from differing backgrounds are encouraged to bring fresh ideas enabling high quality services to be delivered to all members of the community. To enable this to happen, we seek to recruit a workforce, which reflects the diversity of the workforce of Buckinghamshire throughout all levels in the organisation and to offer in return a safe, secure and accessible working environment that values the identities and cultures of all of our employees.

5.2 Drivers for Improvement

The following section lists the key cohesion related issues we need to address in Buckinghamshire. However, we do not yet know enough about the impact of the drivers, their weighting or their priority level. An objective of this Strategy is for the County Council to be in a better position to gain this knowledge and to act upon the information, working in partnership.

5.3 The Growth Agenda:

The Government's "Sustainable Communities Plan" has identified Aylesbury Vale as one of the major growth areas in the South East. This will impact most significantly on Aylesbury Town, which is due to grow by 15,000 new homes in the urban area by 2021 and an additional 3,300 dwellings in the remainder of Aylesbury Vale district by 2016.¹ This will have various implications with the creation of new communities; facilities; transportation and lack of employment opportunities are the obvious issues. Other more complex issues include: building community spirit, designing approaches that get communities working and living together and the integration with existing, neighbouring communities.

5.4 Demographic Change:

One of the biggest challenges we face in Buckinghamshire is to adapt to an ageing society. In Buckinghamshire there are nearly 70,000 people who are 65 years old and over, representing 15% of the population. Over 18,000 of these are over 80. The population forecasts estimate that the over 80's will increase by 21%

¹ Draft South East Plan 2005
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between 2004 and 2016.² This has a direct impact on intergenerational issues; the majority of neighbourhood complaints are directed towards young people and their link to anti-social behaviour. Young people on the other hand feel they are unwelcome in their own localities.

Buckinghamshire also has a growing **and changing** population. Projected figures taking into account the Growth Agenda are incomplete. However the population forecasts prior to the affects of the Growth Agenda estimate that by 2009 the population will grow from 481,950 (in 2005) to 486,350.³ New people to Bucks, with different values, needs and experiences will inevitably change the nature of our communities.

Changes to the ethnic make-up of Buckinghamshire are also set to occur over the next few years, particularly within certain localities. Presently the 'White' population accounts for 92% for Buckinghamshire as a whole, with the Asian community accounting for over 50% of the non-white population. For example, the most dominant group of the non-white population from the electoral division of Downley, Disraeli, Oakridge and Castlefield is the Asian, Asian/British ethnic group. This group represents a quarter of the total population which is virtually five and half times the proportion for Buckinghamshire as a whole.

Projected figures estimate a growth in all ethnic groups, estimating by 2016 the numbers of non-white population can expect to increase by 43% in the 30-64 year age group, 112% in the 65-84 year age group and 202% in the 85+ years age group.⁴

A key task is to identify those individuals and groups in the County who may be disadvantaged from receiving services because of cultural, social or other circumstances and to agree measure to address these barriers. The Council's Social Inclusion Best Value review has establishes some actions on this.

5.5 Comprehensive Performance Assessment:

The CPA 2005 requires a focus on partnerships and to show achievements in the five shared priority areas for Local Government as agreed between the Local Government Association and central government. These five areas are:

- Sustainable Communities and Transport
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Healthier Communities
- Older People
- Children and Young People

They are all key ingredients to achieving community cohesion.

The "key lines of enquiry" for Safer and Stronger Communities under the CPA will be a benchmark for Buckinghamshire County Council and in our current position we may not meet the "harder test". This Strategy will help to

² Source: 2001 Census

³ Source: BCC Policy Research Team 2004

⁴ Source: 2001 Census

demonstrate that we are aiming to reach the level required, as well as improving service delivery on the ground.

5.6 Transient Communities:

Some highly vulnerable groups or individuals are not picked up reliably in any social survey or by administrative systems. These include, for example refugees/asylum seekers, homeless people, victims of domestic violence, disengaged young people, ex-offenders, mobile populations such as gypsies or travellers and those in the bottom 10 percent of the income distribution.⁵ More information on these groups is required to understand their needs and the risks they face, and to increase understanding to help them integrate with other communities. These groups may need to have a greater level of service or access to services based on the fact that they are more disadvantaged to begin with, **and this may also require resources to be targeted at specific areas.**

5.7 Urban/Rural:

The County is one of contrasts. The north is predominantly rural, with small market towns, whilst the south is more urbanised. Within rural areas agriculture is the predominant land use, over 70% by area. Community cohesion, therefore, is not only an urban requirement – **rural areas also require targeted initiatives.** The rural nature of the County brings its own challenges, including the constraints that are placed on land development and accessibility of services for rural communities, particularly for young and older people.

5.8 Benefits of this Strategy

This Strategy aims to deliver the following benefits for local people, the Council and Partnership Working:

5.9 Benefits to local people:

- Reduced fear and perception of crime (reassurance)
- Safer neighbourhoods
- Strengthened local social networks such as families, friends and neighbours
- Increased opportunity for community involvement activity
- Improvements to the local environment
- Equal access to services
- Understanding of different cultures and generations
- Equal access to Life Long Learning
- Activities and Services better targeted to individual and community needs.

5.10 Benefits to the Council:

- Staff Recruitment and Retention
- New Ideas
- Motivated Workforce
- Opportunity to promote good management practice
- Development of community leadership role
- Good organisational image

⁵ Source: 2001 Census
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- Increase in civic pride
- More efficient, effective and responsive services
- Resource savings due to reduction in duplication of initiatives
- Increased community engagement
- Building capacity of our communities e.g. through volunteering
- A way of working to benefit Buckinghamshire during the Growth Agenda, towards sustainable communities
- Demonstrating achievement against the CPA

5.11 Benefits to Partnership Working:

- Shared resources
- Shared funding
- Shared intelligence
- Better, targeted and effective working.

5.12 Strategic Outcomes

Within the context of the overall Vision, and building on research and mapping work to date, the following Strategic Outcomes will be pursued:

Outcome 1 – Common vision and civic pride

Outcome 2 – Diversity is valued

Outcome 3 – Equal life chances for all

Outcome 4 – Strong relationship between different communities

These Outcomes and accompanying Objectives (illustrated in the diagram at **(Appendix 1)**) are set out in detail in the following sections.

These four Outcomes also form the foundation of the County Council's corporate framework for Cohesion, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion.

5.13 The four Outcomes are of equal priority, although the particular emphasis that is given to each will clearly depend on circumstances over time.

OUTCOME 1 – COMMON VISION AND CIVIC PRIDE

Cohesion and equalities requires there to be a common vision and sense of belonging for all communities in Buckinghamshire. This is translated into a sense of civic pride in the County.

Key to this is the community leadership role of the County Council and individual elected Members. Effective community leadership is essential to build trust and improve community involvement with the local communities. It provides opportunities for more visible, stronger and more accountable leadership and drives performance, engagement with local people and relationships with partners.

The County Council is pivotal in championing Buckinghamshire. This has two main facets, firstly, bringing different organisations together, challenging and scrutinising all public services in the County and local decision-making as well as

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shaping services around the needs of the local people. Secondly, helping to foster a sense of pride and belonging in the County, whether through the education of children and young people at school, or through community events.

- 1a) Objective** – Develop a customer-focused consultation framework to keep up-to-date with the needs and desires of local people, demonstrate that service delivery has been shaped around these needs and desires and monitor the effect on the public's perception of the council.
- 1c) Objective** – Develop strong and innovate partnerships between internal service areas and with external organisations from the voluntary, community and public sectors to meet the needs of local people and join up the services provided.
- 1d) Objective** – Support Members to develop their skills and knowledge as advocates for their community.
- 1e) Objective** – Foster a sense of belonging for all communities in Buckinghamshire and increased citizenship and civic pride.

AIM 2 – DIVERSITY IS VALUED

Community Cohesion and equalities requires that the diversity of the different backgrounds and circumstances of people living and working in Buckinghamshire is positively valued.

The County Council will promote the desire for cross-cultural interaction and, at the same time, celebrate and value differences. This will be achieved through open dialogue with local communities and consultation involving all sectors of the community.

To mainstream community cohesion, the County Council will communicate what is meant by community cohesion to all employees to develop an understanding of how this relates to all service areas. Employees will reflect this change in culture by delivering culturally sensitive and innovative service delivery.

The County Council is currently developing ways of promoting the “Community Cohesion Education Standards in Schools” document to all schools. The role of primary and secondary schools is seen as central to breaking barriers between young people, reinforcing citizenship and helping to create cohesive communities. The four strategic aims of this document are:

- Close the attainment and achievement gap
- Develop common values of citizenship based on dialogue, mutual respect and acceptance of diversity
- Contribute to building good community relations and challenge all types of discrimination and inequality
- Remove the barriers to access, participation, progression, attainment and achievement.

- 2a) Objective** - Recognises the importance and value of a workforce in which

people from differing backgrounds are encouraged to bring fresh ideas enabling high quality services to be delivered to all members of the community. To enable this to happen, we seek to recruit a workforce, which reflects the diversity of the workforce of Buckinghamshire throughout all levels in the organisation and to offer in return a safe, secure and accessible working environment that values the identities and cultures of all of our employees.

- 2b) Objective** – Raise the awareness and understanding of County Council employees and local people about people of different backgrounds, ages, races, cultures and faiths in Buckinghamshire.
- 2c) Objective** – All services to support School Improvement in their role to guide schools on how to implement the “Community Cohesion Education Standards in Schools”.
- 2d) Objective** – Develop a central resource of information on community profiles and the issues they experience and to share this information with partners to inform service delivery.
- 2e) Objective** – Work with partners to empower local people to make a difference in their community through greater public involvement in local decision-making. (e.g.” Why Neighbourhoods Matter” Local: Vision Document, 2005).

AIM 3 – EQUAL LIFE CHANCES FOR ALL

Community Cohesion and equalities requires that everyone, regardless of background or circumstance should have equal life opportunities. Eg : access to services, education, employment, benefits.

Buckinghamshire County Council will target its services to meet the needs and requirements of local communities by developing a good understanding of the local context. In order for everyone to have access to the same life opportunities it may be necessary for some communities to have a greater level of service or access because they are more disadvantaged to begin with. A greater understanding of the barriers to services is also required to shape services differently and market services to meet the needs of local individuals. The Customer First and Getting Closer to Communities programmes will lead the delivery of this.

Service providers will set up networks and work together by sharing information and resources to avoid duplication and overlapping of work. This will also provide information for the County Council to identify areas of need for specific programmes to be put into place.

This consistent way of working will create efficiencies and effective, improved outcomes and at the same time produce a targeted delivery of service provision.

- 3a) Objective** – Coordinate service delivery at the local level to focus on individual needs and access to services for a consistent approach to community cohesion.

- 3b) **Objective** - Mainstream community cohesion within the delivery of all local services through heightened cultural sensitivity, encouraging cross-cultural interaction and contact with hard-to-reach communities.
- 3c) **Objective** – Develop communication between service areas to avoid duplication and promote inter-service working around individual needs
- 3d) **Objective** – Deliver the objectives of this Strategy through the Customer First and Getting Closer to Communities programmes.

OUTCOME 4 – STRONG RELATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

Community Cohesion and equalities requires that there are strong and positive relations between people from different background, through increased community engagement. This requires bonding within communities and bridges between communities. This is as much about promoting the things that bring people together in Bucks as being aware and sensitive to cultural or other differences.

An important action here is Community Capacity Building. This is the activity, resources and support that strengthen the skills, abilities and confidence of people, enabling them to take effective action and leading roles in the development of their communities. Active involvement and participation in community activity and local decision making will play a key role in achieving community cohesion and removing elements that lead to tension.

The County Council is a key player in encouraging cross-cultural, cross-geographical and cross-generational activities to break down pre-conceived views, and build understanding. Services will consider activities to increase community participation and engagement when delivering their services.

- 4a) **Objective** - Actively engage all sectors of communities in building social capital⁶ and volunteering from all sections of the community, including County Council employees.
- 4b) **Objective** – Develop practical, visible and targeted cross-cultural/generational/geographical activities that will help to bring communities together.
- 4c) **Objective** – Work with all schools and other partners to contribute to capacity building within the community, linked to the extended schools programme.
- 4d) **Objective** – Develop a guide to supporting effective community engagement
- 4e) **Objective** – Support managers in improving their skills in working with communities and identifying and responding to community tensions.

⁶ Networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups (OECD 2001:41).

6.0 DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

6.1 Responsibility

Collective responsibility for delivery of this Strategy rests with the Cabinet. There is also a Lead Cabinet Member for Cohesion and Equality. Each Cabinet Member has individual responsibility for reviewing and evaluating equalities for their service area.

The Corporate Management Team has responsibility for the delivery of the Corporate Equality Plan it's contents, specific objectives and the performance against those objectives.

The Strategic Director (Community Services) will take the lead responsibility for the overall management of Corporate Equality Plan, assisted by the members of the Equality & Diversity Group.

All Strategic Corporate Directors, Heads of Service, and Senior Managers are expected to show commitment to ensuring that the equality strategies and targets are implemented at every level. This commitment includes effectively monitoring and regularly reporting against performance targets, and continuous planning for improvement.

6.2 Community Strategy and Working with Partners

Tackling inequalities is a key theme of Buckinghamshire's Community Strategy and the Local Agreement. The Strategy was developed through wide consultation with the Bucks Strategic Partnership membership, and the wider community of Buckinghamshire. The other key themes of the strategy, Community Safety, Community Cohesion, Health, Social Care, Transport, Environment, Jobs and Accessibility are also intrinsically bound up with equality issues. Implementing the Community Strategy with the partners who helped to shape it is therefore an important equalities objective in itself.

6.3 Finance

The delivery of the Outcomes and Objectives in this Strategy should not involve significant additional expenditure. The philosophy is about changing the way our employees view our communities and deliver services. There may, however, be the requirement to reallocate existing resources to areas of greater need.

An increase of cohesive working with other partners may produce resource savings due to a reduction in the duplication of initiatives. This is evidenced by the recent mapping exercise of cohesion related activities across the County. This highlighted duplication and overlaps of similar projects. It is also evidenced by experience in some other authorities who have adopted community cohesion strategies. This report does not, however, analyse the potential to redirect funding through smarter working, although it is an area that requires further work.

The resources required to support the County Council's work on the wider equalities agenda is subject to consideration within the Medium Term Plan.

6.4 Partnership

The Strategy is required to clarify the County Council's view of and contribution to community cohesion and the internal actions required. However, the County

Council is committed to partnership working and, indeed, community cohesion cannot be delivered without this.

In particular, a number of the eight Aims of the Bucks Strategic Partnership are reflected in this strategy:

- Safe Communities
- Cohesive Communities
- Healthy Communities
- Prosperous Communities
- Well Connected Communities and Transport
- Superb Environment
- Older People
- Children and Young People

This Strategy will need to link closely to the Bucks Strategic Partnership objectives to avoid duplication and to build on good practice.

6.5 Action Plan

To be successful, the Strategy needs to be owned by the County Council and partners. Therefore it will be important to work up an Action Plan to deliver the objectives in partnership.

The types of activities to be included in the Action Plan are to be specific outcome focussed deliverables that will link directly to the four Outcomes outlined in this document and which Service Areas can deliver.

Many of the actions which will come out of this Strategy will already exist in a number of improvement plans across the County Council, for example in the Social Inclusion Improvement Plan, and the Safer and Stronger Communities Plan. We will, therefore, produce a consolidated Action Plan to encompass all community cohesion related actions for the County Council to take forward. The diagram at Appendix 1 illustrates this.

The Buckinghamshire Local Area Agreement will also have significant influence on the Action Plan as will the pilot area work within Getting Closer to Communities.

A key action will be to develop a baseline so that we can measure the impact of actions taken to address various cohesive issues in the County. Local indicators will be required to support this.

6.6 Next Steps

Timescale: The proposed timescale for drawing up the Action Plan is September 2006.

Partnership: In parallel with the process of embedding community cohesion across the County Council, the County Council will enter into a partnership debate with the Bucks Strategic Partnership and other agencies.

Project Management: A Project Officer post based in the Youth and Community Service has now been agreed. This post will work closely with other key community development posts in the Council, as well as all Heads of Service.

Delivery: Currently there are a number of groups that are potentially in a position to own, produce and deliver the Action Plan for the Community Cohesion and Equality Strategy.

The following arrangements are proposed for delivery:

- Cabinet Member Sponsor
- COMT Sponsor: Strategic Director (Community Services)
- Lead Head of Service: Head of Youth and Community
- Project Board: Representative from each Portfolio
- Stakeholder Group(s): Equalities and Diversity Steering Group

7. MONITORING AND EVALUATING COMMUNITY COHESION AND EQUALITY

We will ensure that our improvement plans address equalities issues in a tangible way that is open to the inspection and audit process by:

Challenging: - whether the services meet the needs of all sections of the community

Comparing: - over time, how well our services are performing from the point of view of all groups, against other service providers

Consulting: - effectively about services and ensuring that consultation is carried out in a non-discriminatory inclusive way, and is used to manage and promote equality and diversity

Compete: - ensure that service providers meet equality objectives effectively

We will use and develop best value tools to measure and continuously improve our performance on equalities.

Our equality policy and monitoring will enable us to assess how well we are doing in meeting our equality core objectives, principles and actions. Monitoring will be undertaken service area by service area, and carried out by service managers. In addition the Council will make an assessment of its achievements against the **Equality Standard for Local Government**.

The Equality Standard is a key performance indicator for best value and we will be reporting our achievements through the Corporate Plan.

In addition to the Equality Standard there are a number of laws that place responsibilities on local authorities to ensure they are taking steps to, remove discriminatory practices and promote equality of opportunity

Buckinghamshire County Council intends to ensure that the lessons and recommendations from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry are integral to the way in which we operate on a daily basis.

7.1 Community Cohesion and Equality Action Plan

Our Community Cohesion and Equality Action Plan aims to:

- Incorporate a consultation and scrutiny element
- Incorporate an equal access to services element
- Ensure we are an equal opportunities employer

The Action Plan sets out what specific action will be taken to put these aims into practice, how our achievements will be monitored and what improvements will be made.

The areas covered by the Action Plan are:

- A. To show effective leadership and commitment in delivering equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination in its various forms (e.g. race, gender, disability, religion or belief, age and sexuality)
- B. To carry out equality impact assessments across County Council services, establish consultation, scrutiny and audit arrangements, and take action on the results of assessments and consultation.
- C. To improve the equality of access to goods, facilities and services in the areas of race, religion or belief, disability, gender, age and sexuality
- D. To improve the County Council's management of diversity issues in order to maximise the potential of employees, ensure it reflects all sections of the community within its workforce, improve the access to and delivery of services and to raise the profile of the authority as an outstanding Equality employer

All service areas will be required to ensure that the principles set out in the Action Plan and equality policy are effectively planned into service plans and policies.

7.2 Outcomes

By taking these actions and meeting our objectives as set out in the following Action Plan, we will expect to achieve outcomes that show real improvements over time.

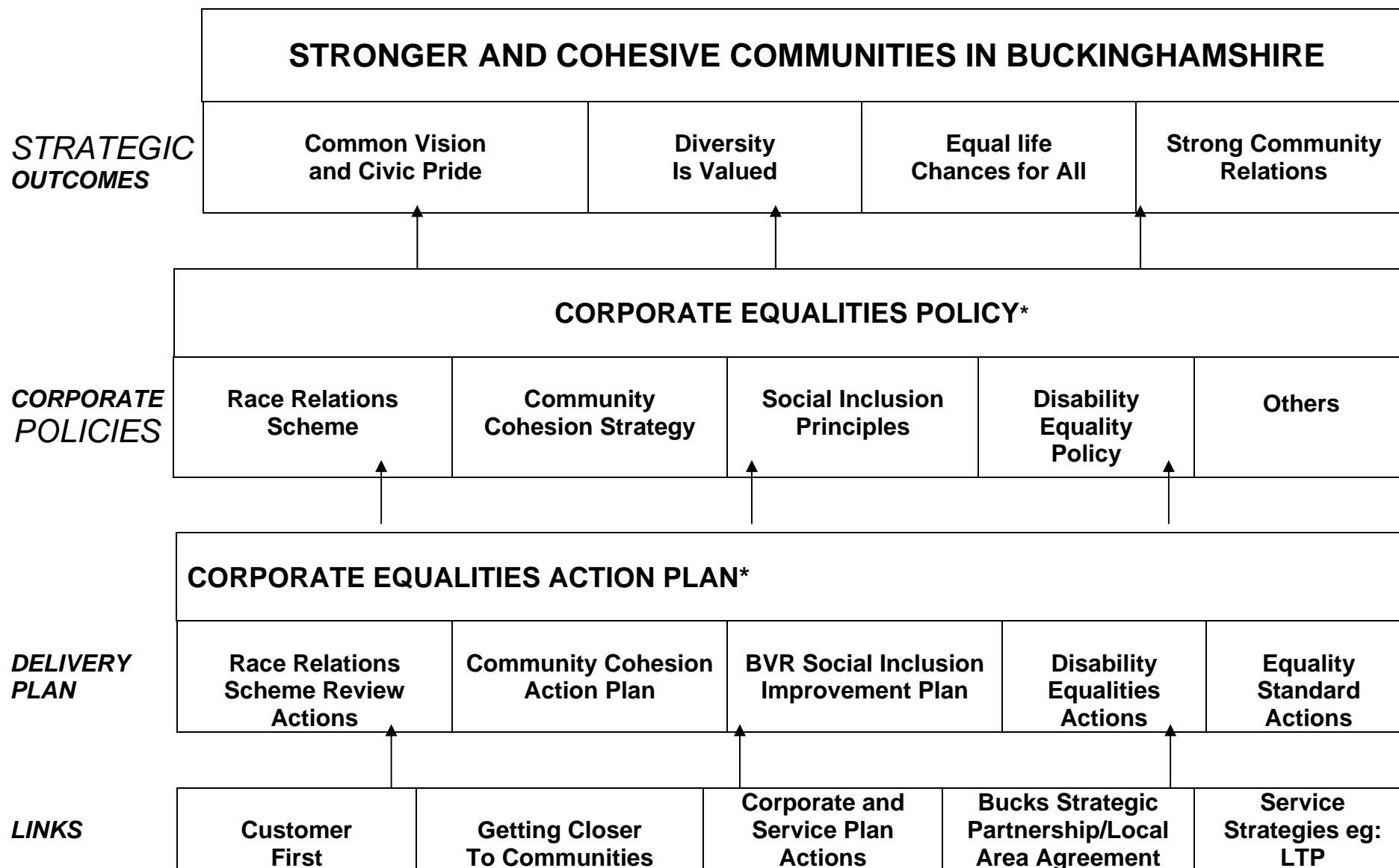
The people of Buckinghamshire will experience:

- Improved service provision that reflects the diverse needs of our communities
- Better access to services
- A caring and responsive council meeting the demands of the communities we serve and our users, creating improved satisfaction across all areas.
- A workforce that is representative of Buckinghamshire with an improved employee profile that reflects the council commitment to diversity and equality in employment at all levels.

7.3 Monitoring

Services will be monitored by, setting targets in the Corporate Plan and Service Plans. The Equality Standard for Local Government will provide a benchmark to indicate how well we are doing and where shortfalls are identified what action will be taken to achieve improvement

**APPENDIX 1A
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL CORPORATE FRAMEWORK
FOR COHESION, EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY**



* Currently policies and actions plans are separate; the aim is to consolidate into a single coherent framework and remove overlaps

APPENDIX 1B

10 YEAR VISION FOR BUCKINGHAMSHIRE - BUCKS COMMUNITY PLAN CORPORATE PLAN – SERVING YOU AND YOUR COMMUNITY

STRONGER AND COHESIVE COMMUNITIES IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

1.COMMON VISION AND CIVIC PRIDE

2.DIVERSITY IS VALUED

3.EQUAL LIFE CHANCES FOR ALL

4.STRONG RELATIONS BETWEEN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES

OUTCOMES

OBJECTIVES

1a) Develop a communications and consultation framework to keep up-to-date with the needs and desires of local people, and current services being provided by the county council to meet these needs.
1b) Develop strong and innovative partnerships between internal service areas and with external organisations from the voluntary community and public sectors.
1c) Support members to develop the skills they need to be advocates for their community.
1d) Foster a sense of belonging for all communities in Buckinghamshire and increased citizenship and civic pride.

2a) Raise the awareness and understanding about people of different backgrounds, ages, races, cultures and faiths in Bucks both in and outside the council.
2b) Services to support School Improvement in their role to guide schools on how to implement the Community Cohesion Education Standards in Schools.
2c) Develop a central resource of information on community profiles and their level of community cohesion.
2d) Work with partners to empower local people to make a difference in their community through greater public involvement in local decision-making processes.

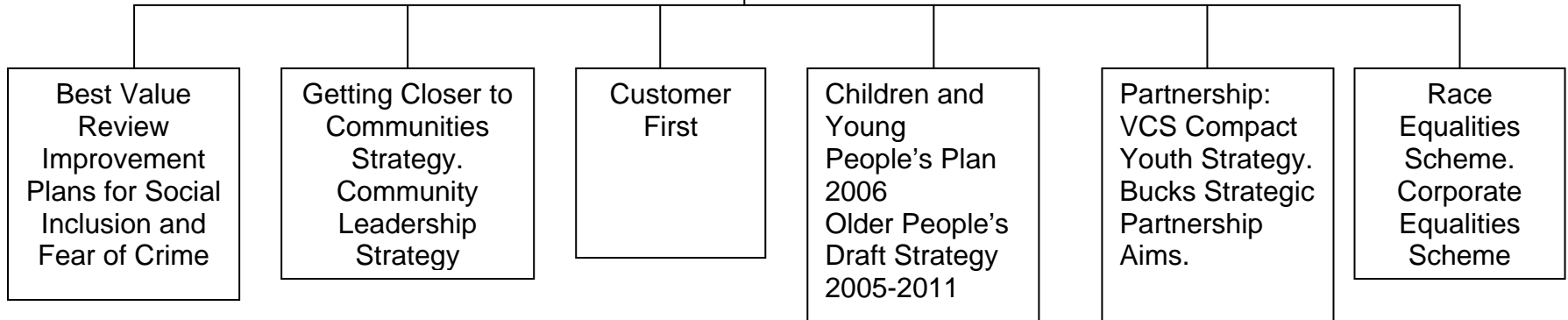
3a) Coordinate service delivery at the local level to focus on access to services for a consistent approach to community cohesion.
3b) Mainstream community cohesion within the delivery of all local services through cultural sensitivity, encouraging cross-cultural interaction and contact with hard-to-reach communities.
3c) Develop an approach to communication between service areas to avoid duplication and promote inter-service working.
3d) Deliver the objectives of this Strategy through the Customer First and Getting Closer to Communities Programme.

4a) Actively engage all sectors of communities in building social capital and volunteering from all sections of the community.
4b) Develop practical, visible and targeted cross-cultural/generational/geographical activities that help to bring communities together.
4c) Work with schools and other partners to contribute to capacity building within the community.
4d) To develop a guide to supporting effective community engagement.
4e) To support managers in improving their skills in working with communities and to identify and respond to community issues.

ACTIONS

- All services promote community engagement through actions to increase participation.
- All services carry out an analysis of cohesion activity within their service plans.
- Local representational role is enhanced through devolved decision making.
- Area based Service delivery through network of access points/countywide standards
- Targeted integrated service interventions to meet needs through innovative community projects.
- Employees' training programme; an increase in community development skills and diversity training.
- Support and target the Voluntary and Community Sector bodies, through a volunteer target and policy.
- Cross Council co-ordination of cohesion work; through local measures and targets
- Partnership actions agreed; through LPSA2, LAA, BSP
- Reach Equality Standard 2, through improving BCC performance.
- Diversity Steering Group to lead on action plan; through a new remit and Work Programme.
- Support the voluntary and community sector to develop an infrastructure that meets diversity needs

LINKS



APPENDIX 2

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

What the law requires

The Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended by the Equal Pay Amendment Regulations 1983)

requires employers to give equal pay to men and women for

- like work
- equivalent work and
- work of equal value

Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974

This Act provides that if a convicted person completes a specified period without being convicted of further offences the conviction can be regarded as 'spent'. These sentences then do not have to be declared and may not be used as grounds for exclusion from employment or promotion.

Some posts are exempt from the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, for example, employees with substantial access to children or vulnerable adults. Applicants are therefore required to declare any convictions or cautions which they may have, even if they would otherwise be regarded as 'spent' under this Act together with any cautions or bind-overs and any prosecutions pending against them.

All application forms now include a question about criminal offences relating to 'unspent' convictions. If the applicant has a conviction, which is spent or unspent, it doesn't mean that you can't recruit them. The test is whether it affects their suitability for the job.

The Race Relations Act 1976 and the Sex Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986

prohibit direct or indirect discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, sex or marital status. 'Discrimination' is defined as treatment of one person less favourably than others on grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin, sex or marital status.

Direct discrimination occurs when for example, a job applicant is rejected or a person is refused services because of their sex or race. Indirect discrimination occurs when an employment practice has a greater detrimental impact (however unintentional) on a particular group or category of employees than others, unless the employer can show that the practice is justifiable. For example, a rule to give part-time or temporary employees less leave entitlement (pro rata) than full time employees:

- would affect a disproportionate number of women (most of the Council's part-time employees are female)
- would have a detrimental impact on them
- for such a practice to be lawful, the employer would have to be able to show that the practice was justifiable.

These Acts do permit employers to specify that a particular job be held by a person of a particular race or sex if the employee's race, sex or marital status is a 'Genuine Occupational Qualification' (known as GOQ).

NB. A GOQ will apply where it is essential because of the nature of the job, that it be carried out by a member of one sex or a particular race, or where the job is one of a pair to be held by a married couple.

Managers must get professional guidance before designating a position as exempt from the Discrimination Act on the grounds of "Genuine Occupational Qualification".

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

prohibits discrimination against people with a disability in:

- the recruitment process
- offers of employment
- terms of employment
- promotion
- training or other benefits

The Act:

- sets out the definition of disability
- makes it unlawful for an employer to treat a person with a disability less favourably than someone else because of their disability, unless there is a good reason. This applies to all employment matters including recruitment, training, promotion and dismissal
- places a duty on employers to look at what changes or 'reasonable adjustments' they could make to interview arrangements or to the workplace of the person with a disability in relation to the job and make any changes which are reasonable

NB. 'Reasonable adjustment' to the working arrangements of people with disabilities might include adjustments to premises, equipment, duties, working hours and/or providing special support, training and facilities.

Part III of Disability Discrimination Act 1995 gives disabled people important rights of access to every day services. Duties are coming into force in three stages:

- treating a disabled person favourably because they are disabled has been unlawful since 1996
 - since October 1999, service providers have to consider making reasonable adjustments to the way they deliver their services so that disabled people can use them
 - the final stage of the duties, which means service providers, may have to consider making permanent physical adjustments to their premises, comes into force in 2004.
-

The Impact of the Equality Policy upon other Buckinghamshire County Council's HR Policies

Recruitment, Selection and Retention

- Job Descriptions and Person Specs for all posts
- Information about job vacancies must be available to all sectors of the community
- Shortlisting criteria based upon person specification
- Selection decisions based upon merit
- Provision of recruitment and selection training for all staff
- No applicant receives less favourable treatment
- Opportunities for flexible working

Training and Development

The Council is committed to the development of every employee and thus will support individuals to undertake the training necessary to enable them to do their job as effectively as possible e.g. induction programmes and on the job training. A range of development opportunities are available which take account of the different ways in which individuals learn and to accommodate different working patterns The Employee Development Policy statement states the role of the individual in relation to training and development.

Disciplinary and Grievance

The Council's Procedure for dealing with matters of Disciplinary and Grievance have been developed in conjunction with the Trade Union. Under the Disciplinary Procedure, unfair discrimination against employees, clients or members of the public can amount to gross misconduct and lead to dismissal.

Harassment and Bullying at Work

This is entirely unacceptable. Any employee who feels they are being harassed or bullied is able to complain without fear of being victimised. Refer to Harassment at Work Procedure/Grievance Procedure.

Redundancy and Capability

Fairness will be ensured in relation to the Redundancy and Capability Procedure.

Employee Consultation

The views of all employees will be sought on a wide range of issues. The Trade Unions will be consulted on the development of County Council policies on employment issues.

The Diversity Steering Group, which has senior management representatives from each Service area, has actively developed the Council's Diversity Action Plan and continues to monitor the achievement of deliverables against the plan. Buckinghamshire County Council will provide equality of opportunity in all areas of employment.

Guidance Notes

Interpreting the Disability Discrimination Act

The Act defines disability by focusing on the medical condition of the person. There is, though, a difference between an impairment and the experience of

disability. An impairment will be less disabling if employers can make arrangements or adjustments to overcome it. The detriment to a person with a disability is not caused solely by an impairment, but rather by attitudes to that impairment and the willingness to make reasonable adjustments.

The Act specifies three main criteria for a person to meet the definition of disability:

- they must have a physical or mental impairment (this might be a sensory disability, a learning disability, or a mental condition which is well recognised)
- the impairment must have a substantial adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities
- the adverse effect must be long term: at least 12 months, although you should regard a shorter impairment as long term if the prognosis is that it is likely to last 12 months

Some groups are to be treated as if they meet the definition whether or not they do so at a particular point in time, they are:

- those with a severe disfigurement
- (until 2 December 1999) people registered as disabled on both 12 January 1995, and 2 December 1996
- those with progressive conditions (e.g. a terminal illness) where the condition results in some adverse effect
- people who have a history of an impairment, which meets the core definition of disability, although not currently affected

To fall within the definition in the Act, a person must be substantially affected in their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities in one of the following ways:

- mobility, physical co-ordination and manual dexterity
- continence
- ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects
- speech, hearing or eyesight
- memory or ability to learn or understand
- perception of risk

Discrimination

Under the Act this can happen in two ways:

- an employer treats the disabled person less favourably than they would treat another when the reason for the treatment is related to the disability, and the employer cannot show that the treatment is justified
- an employer fails in their duty to make reasonable adjustments for the disabled person and the employer cannot show that the failure is justified

To demonstrate less favourable treatment, the employee need not provide a comparator: what matters is that someone without the disability would have been treated better.

A person who believes they have been discriminated against on the grounds of disability can make a claim to an Employment Tribunal.

Reasonable Adjustments

The following factors can be taken into account when deciding what is reasonable:

- the financial outlay
- the size and revenue of the Council
- other ways to get access to resources

- how effective the adjustment will be in overcoming the difficulty

Budget considerations are unlikely to be a justifiable barrier to making adjustments. Seek advice on alternative methods of funding if necessary.

For example you might:

- supply information and accept job application forms in different formats (Braille, on tape, and so on)
- modify procedures for testing and assessment
- restructure a job, re-allocate tasks, offer part-time work or alter work schedules
- adapt the workplace, provide equipment and aids (for example, providing a loop system) or assign the employee to a different workplace
- provide qualified signers, lip-readers or interpreters
- transfer the person to fill another vacancy
- give extra training, support from a colleague or extra supervision
- allow absences for rehabilitation, assessment or treatment
- modify instruction or reference manuals (tape, Braille, large print, and so on)

Further help and guidance

- Human Resources can advise on reasonable adjustments and on referrals to the Employment Service and/or Occupational Health.
- the Occupational Health Advisor can advise on whether a person has a disability which is covered by the Act, and can carry out workplace assessments.
- the Employment Service offers an Access to Work Scheme, which provides advice, workplace assessments and financial help towards support and/or adjustments for people with disabilities.

Interview Guarantee Scheme

All applicants who declare a disability are guaranteed an interview if they meet the essential requirements for the post. For further information please contact the Recruitment Team.

APPENDIX 3

Racist Incidents - Buckinghamshire County Council Statement

Commitment to Dealing with and Reporting Racist Incidents

"A racist incident is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person"

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (1999) recommended that this definition of a 'racist incident' should be universally adopted by the Police, local government and other relevant agencies.

The report also recommended that the term "racist incident" must be understood to include crimes and non-crimes in policing terms. Both must be reported, recorded and investigated with equal commitment.

Some people will use existing systems to report racist incidents. Staff may use grievance procedures, harassment policy, and whistle-blowing policy. Service users or the wider general public may use the complaints procedures.

However, in order to give every opportunity to identify and deal with such matters, a specific "racist incidents" reporting form is available to deal with and report such incidents.

This reporting form is based on the Code of Practice on reporting and recording racist incidents produced by the Home Office. The use of this standard format ensures effective procedures are established for the reporting and recording of racist incidents.

By ensuring that consistent information is captured Buckinghamshire County Council can work with other agencies, as appropriate, to prevent racist incidents occurring and deal with incidents that have already occurred.

The Council is required, under the duty of Best Value to provide information on their performance against specific "performance indicators"

Dealing with Racist Incidents

The HR manager will provide advice and support to managers dealing with staff racist incidents and the **Designated Complaints Officer** will deal with service related incidents. In both areas, the HR Operations Team and the Designated Complaints Officer will;

- ensure that appropriate action has been taken in response to the incidents reported
- collect racist incidents reports, analyse frequency and nature of racist incidents and report to the appropriate management team
- in so doing, highlight the wider implications of the racial incidents requiring further action by the appropriate management team
- prepare information concerning racist incidents regardless of the source of reporting and report such information with recommendations for action on a six monthly basis to the Strategic Manager - Resources and local Racist Incidents Group.

Managers' and Employees' Responsibilities.

Managers will:	Employees will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• respond promptly and treat the incident seriously however minor they perceive the incident to be• ensure that the victims of racist incidents are supported and kept aware of progress relating to the incident• deal effectively with the	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• be alert to any racist incidents and report any such incidents to their line manager or other appropriate person or use the racist incidents reporting form• encourage colleagues to do likewise• if the incident is related to a user of services/member of

<p>perpetrators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report an incident and action to be taken to the coordinating manager • recognise the wider service implications and ensure appropriate local action is taken • raise the implications beyond the managers remit with the appropriate senior manager • keep a written record of their actions 	<p>the public they should explain their right to report the incident as a racist incident and how to make a complaint</p>
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If a racist incident report contains or implies criticism of the conduct of an elected Member of Buckinghamshire County Council it will, as a matter of course, be reported by the Monitoring Officer to the Standards Board for England.

Identifying Racist Behaviour

Some examples are:

- incitement of others to behave in a racist way
- threatening behaviour against a person or group because of race
- derogatory name-calling, insults, racist jokes and language
- racist graffiti
- provocative behaviour such as wearing racist badges or insignia
- bringing racist materials such as leaflets, comics, magazines or computer software into the workplace
- using computer systems to access and distribute racist material
- using racist comments in the course of discussion
- attempts to recruit others to racist organisations and groups
- ridicule of an individual for cultural or religious differences, e.g. food, music, dress, worship patterns etc.
- refusal to cooperate with others because of their race.

APPENDIX 4

Acknowledgements

Contributors to this Strategy:

Aylesbury Vale District Council
Chiltern Vale District Council
Wycombe District Council
South Bucks District Council
Vale of Aylesbury PCT
Wycombe PCT

Aylesbury Race Equality Council
Chiltern Race Equality Council
Wycombe Race Equality Council

Children's Trust
Thames Valley Partnership
The Cohesion and Faiths Unit, Home Office

Buckinghamshire Drug Action Team
Buckinghamshire Youth Offending Service
Adult Learning
Communications and Consultation
Early Years and Childcare
Human Resources and Organisational Development
Learning and Sensory Disabilities Team
Libraries and Heritage
Older People Services
Partnerships Team, Corporate Policy
Physical Disabilities Team
Policy Support Team
School Improvement
Social Care for Children and Families
Special Education Services
Trading Standards and Regulatory Services
Transportation
Youth and Community