

Equality Peer Challenge – London Borough of Croydon

Peers

Sam Johnson – BCP Council

Akua Agyepong – Kent County Council

John Cowings – Derbyshire County Council

Cllr Brigid Jones – Birmingham City Council

Gill Elliott – Local Government Association

Laura Wilson – Local Government Association

The Challenge

- Designed to consider the Council's self assessment at the Achieving level of the Equality Framework for Local Government
 - Not an inspection but an external assessment by critical friends
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5 Themes of the Framework

- knowing your communities
 - leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
 - involving your communities
 - responsive services and customer care
 - skilled and committed workforce
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knowing your communities

strengths:

- A wealth of data is gathered from a wide range of sources including health and other partners
- There are shared data sets across key partners e.g Job Centre Plus and Croydon Working
- Shift towards localities helps tailor services to communities
- Data and intelligence is being used to determine priorities and these differ depending on locality
- Evidence based response to issues e.g Violence Reduction Partnership; Vulnerable Adolescents Review
- The Council understands the diversity of the BAME community – e.g. use of food shops not food banks
- Some service managers know how to use data to make links and opportunities between services
- There are opportunities for managers to learn about use of data

knowing your communities

areas for consideration:

- Some of LBC's data is inconsistent e.g Number of people with learning disability in the borough ; no of unaccompanied asylum seeker children
 - Different levels of data collection/use depending on the service
 - Data storage is adhoc and not all in one place or easily accessible by services
 - Earlier engagement with communities on equality impact assessments
 - Ensure any new systems capture all the characteristic data of service users/the community
 - Ensure all staff have the skills and confidence to collect protected characteristic data and understand the importance of that
 - Ensure there is a good understanding of the diversity of BAME communities fully e.g. Eastern European communities
 - Disaggregate the data presented on BAME communities
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Leadership Partnership and organisational commitment

Strengths

- There is strong commitment to equality from political and organisational leaders
- There is a visually diverse leadership team
- Clear link on E&D from manifesto to corporate plan and cabinet. This is monitored at the members equalities group
- Strong drive on early intervention and prevention via the Localities model
- Strong partnerships with statutory partners and the VCS
- Procurement and commissioning is used to deliver equality outcomes. Insight team is closely located with their service departments.
- Recognition that celebrating diversity boosts the local economy
- Organisations representing voluntary sector partners feel able to influence LBC strategies and plans via the Local Strategic Partnership

leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

areas for consideration

- Consider establishing a service level steering group to ensure services have equality at the forefront of their work
- Consider reviewing the level of resourcing for the corporate equality function
- Increase opportunities for the scrutiny function to pay due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion
- Ensure all representatives of LBC role model its values and behaviours and support members to do so
- Quality use and outcomes of EIAs need improving, with outcomes being implemented and monitored. Heads of service and executive directors being held accountable for the final outcome.
- Voluntary sector organisations feel adversely affected by the high turnover of commissioning/contact management staff

Involving your communities

strengths:

- There are good examples of external engagement in developing strategies
 - All consultations have equality impact assessments
 - The Asset Based Community Development approach is welcomed by some in the voluntary sector as a way of empowering people
 - There are many opportunities for young people to be involved in improving and developing Children's Services e.g Young director Apprenticeship, Forum for SEN, Youth Offending Forum, Total Respect training, youth mayor, care leavers forum
 - The Get Involved consultation platform enables residents to influence policy making via an app, PC, tablet
 - Community Ward budgets are a useful tool for members to get involved local residents a say in how the money is spent in their areas.
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Involving your communities

areas for consideration:

- Further develop links with smaller communities to help inform understanding of their needs in relation to services
- Ensure communities are informed of the outcomes of consultations
- Consider developing a criteria for the distribution of community budgets
- Consult with the broadest possible range of people
- Use equality analysis to help identify potential consultees
- Improve/maximise communication channels
- Continue to develop the new approach to communications to improve access to services

responsive services and customer care

strengths:

- The CVS supports the delivery of services which meet diverse needs e.g. the dominoes club, domestic violence groups for Asian women, knife crime workshops
 - The Gateway approach enables a focus on holistic needs of people users and reducing the barriers between services
 - The Localities approach is already working in three areas where there is the most need. Children and youth Services will be area based
 - The Family Centre is praised by service users for its “can do – solution focussed” approach
 - Data is being used to improve services e.g school admissions
 - Service delivery plans have to include a focus on equality and diversity and they are monitored
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Responsive Services

Strengths

- Strong emphasis on developing staff to be able to meet customer needs e.g Family Centre Staff will be training the Gateway Team at Access Croydon “XX is the face and I am the voice”
- Young people are involved in developing services and commissioning suppliers

responsive services and customer care

areas for consideration:

- There are plans to improve service delivery in Access Croydon; these need to be implemented
- Explore whether services are adequately resourced to meet equality needs in the contact centre
- Ensure that services are responsive to the needs of the whole borough and that the area based approach doesn't create new inequalities
- The opening hours of the Contact Centre may not be responsive to customer needs
- The digital offer needs to be more responsive to staff and customer needs
- Maximising opportunities for social value when commissioning

Skilled and committed workforce

strengths:

- Staff are proud to work for Croydon “proud to serve”
 - Executive team are visually diverse
 - There are learning and development opportunities for staff e.g. mental health first aid, unconscious bias training
 - Some staff feel supported by their managers
 - The investment in gathering data and opinions from staff is being used to develop a new workforce strategy
 - Council has a baseline of data to measure improvements
 - Targeted leadership development for BAME and women has already started to see results
 - The organisation uses some positive recruitment practices
 - Staff networks are robust, well supported and really making a difference to equality in the organisation
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Skilled and committed workforce

strengths:

- The organisation goes beyond the gender pay gap requirements, also measuring disability and ethnicity pay gaps
 - The organisation has been responsive to the previous staff survey e.g. using an external provider to reassure staff of anonymity
 - There are some examples of innovative practice e.g the Menopause Guidance which has had positive outcomes
 - There are good industrial relationships with the Trade Unions
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Skilled and committed workforce

areas for consideration:

- Black men do not appear to be progressing at the same rate as their female counterparts
 - Ensure all staff are aware of the council's equality objectives
 - The organisation needs to improve its level of disclosure against the equality monitoring data by demonstrating it won't disadvantage people
 - Review the presentation of workforce data to easily identify needed actions
 - Capitalise on the intersectional work of the networks to ensure the outcomes of people are improved
 - BAME and disabled employees are disproportionately involved in disciplinary and grievances
 - Consider introducing a formal scheme for staff with language ability to provide interpretation
 - There are opportunities to harness the resources of the trade unions to positively contribute to the equalities agenda
 - Involve trade unions in developing the council's work on equality and diversity
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Overall Conclusion

**The London Borough of Croydon
has satisfied the criteria for the
Achieving level of the EFLG**

Next Steps

- Report to follow in 3-4 weeks