

<b>Committee</b> Overview and Scrutiny Cabinet	<b>Date</b> 13 / 14 January 2009	<b>Classification</b> Unrestricted	<b>Report No</b>	<b>Agenda Item No</b> 8.1
<b>Report of:</b>  Assistant Chief Executive		<b>Title:</b>  <b>Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2008/2009 – Six monthly monitoring report</b>		
<b>Originating Officer(s)</b>  Michael Keating Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities		<b>Wards Affected</b> All		
Frances Jones Diversity and Equality Coordinator, Scrutiny and Equalities				

## 1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This six month monitoring report informs Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council's progress in implementing its Diversity and Equality Action Plan (DEAP) for 2008/09. A full progress report is attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The report also includes an annual summary of progress against the Council's Disability Equality Scheme. A full monitoring report of the Disability Equality Scheme is attached as Appendix Two.

## 2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes and comments on the progress in implementing the Council's Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2008/09, as set out in Appendix 1 and the annual Disability Equality Scheme monitoring report, as set out in Appendix 2.

### 3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Tower Hamlets Council has placed diversity and equality at the core of its functions and is committed to maintaining the very highest level of equalities practice both in relation to employment and service provision. In 2006 the Council was externally validated as being at the highest level of the Equality Standard for Local Government (Level 5) and the corporate Diversity and Equality Action Plan (DEAP) remains an essential vehicle for maintaining this performance across all six equalities strands.

3.2.1 The DEAP pulls together the strategic level equalities activities across the Council. It reflects the work required to maintain the highest level of the Equality Standard for Local Government, for the implementation of the Council's Race Equality, Disability Equality and Gender Equality Schemes, and actions to ensure that the Council's commitment to community cohesion is mainstreamed within all services.

3.3 The 2008/09 Diversity and Equality Action Plan focuses on four overarching strategic objectives, identified through an analysis of evidence collected during the refresh of the Community Plan to 2020 and an assessment of service performance in priority equalities areas. These objectives are:

- **Tackle worklessness and economic inactivity** among target groups
- **Support participation and engagement** of equality target groups in decision making and active citizenship activities
- **Support and promote community cohesion**, through: Embedding community cohesion considerations into planning in key policy areas (Education, Community Safety and Housing); supporting positive activities that bring people together and build bridges between communities; supporting interaction between new and existing communities and; tackling all forms of discrimination and harassment
- **Access to services**: Address evidence of differential access to services for equality target groups to ensure that services within the Council and the wider Partnership effectively meet the needs of our communities

3.4 The cross-party Members Diversity and Equality Working Group was established in September 2008. The Group aims to develop the expertise of Members in responding to equalities challenges. The Group has undertaken a number of sessions on the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda and will go on to look at homophobic hate crime and bridging communities. In April 2009 an interim evaluation of the Group will be undertaken with a view to making recommendations about an ongoing work programme.

### 4. MONITORING

4.1 The Diversity and Equality Action Plan covers the period from April 2008 to March 2009 and is reviewed every six months. Progress is measured for each key activity and milestone; a full progress report of the Action Plan is attached at Appendix One.

4.2 Performance for each of key activity milestones is measured using the Red, Amber and Green (RAG) traffic light system. Each milestone is allocated one of three performance levels:

RED                      Progress milestone not achieved, and not likely to be achieved within three months of the deadline

AMBER	Progress milestone not achieved, but is likely to be achieved within three months of the deadline.
GREEN	Progress milestone achieved or on target to be achieved within the deadline

### 4.3 Overall Progress for all milestones

Table 1: Progress milestones 2008/09 by status

Progress Status (RAG)	Number	Percentage
RED	4	3%
AMBER	26	21%
GREEN	94	76%
<b>TOTAL</b>	124	100%

4.4 At six months, 76% per cent of all milestones within the Plan had been met or were on target to be met within target timescales. This represents significant progress in a number of areas, including:

- Completion of community and partner consultation on **three new Equality Schemes** in relation to Sexual Orientation, Age and Religion / Belief equality as well as the refresh of our Race Equality Scheme. These Schemes are intended to provide comprehensive information about the profile, needs and views of our communities and to identify actions to improve outcomes across the equality strands. The Schemes are currently being developed and are due to be published in April 2009.
- Completion of **two 'strategic level' Equality Impact Assessments**. This is a new level of Equality Impact Assessment and they focus on areas which have strategic significance beyond the delivery service. Two of the four Assessments scheduled for this year were completed in the first half of the year. These looked at the Tower Hamlets Partnership and the Planning Obligations process and have resulted in a programme of activities to address inequality for groups and individuals.
- Establishment of the **Gender Equality Scheme Monitoring Group** which is made up of senior officers from across the Council and partners to provide greater coherence and direction in relation to work on gender equality. The Group has met twice since its establishment in June 2008 and has overseen an overhaul in the funding of activities for International Women's Week in response to an evaluation carried out in early 2008.
- The **Workforce to Reflect the Community** Action Plan is being implemented and an update will be presented to Cabinet in February / March 2009. A presentation was made to December's Cabinet meeting by participants in several of the Council's positive action schemes, including the Aspiring Leaders and Hamlets Youth Trainee Programmes. This enabled participants to feedback directly to Members on their experiences in undertaking the schemes.
- Seventeen schools worked with local third sector organisations to secure funding from the Council's first **Community Cohesion Innovation Fund**. Funding was allocated in July and projects will run until March 2009.

- Through our **external and internal equality forums** we have consulted with both staff and service users to test the effectiveness of new policies and services, including:
  - New Equality Schemes in relation to religion / belief, age and sexual orientation;
  - Review of equalities and diversity training for staff in the Council;
  - Review of procedures for evacuation of disabled staff from Council buildings;
  - Arrangements for disabled staff and visitors to Council buildings, including parking and access arrangements;
  - Provision of improved signage in the Town Hall to meet the needs of visually impaired staff and visitors.
- A wide range of **community and arts events** have been held throughout the year which celebrate and raise awareness of the rich diversity of communities in the borough. These have included: London Week of Peace; Black History Month, International Day Against Homophobia and Interfaith Week.
- Launch of the **Youth ‘No Place for Hate Champions’** programme with eight young people enrolled on the peer training programme to equip them to challenge hate crime and hate related incidents in educational and youth settings. The project won the London Week of Peace Award and was short listed for the National Training Award;
- ‘Dignity and justice for all’ was the theme for this year’s **International Day for Disabled People**. Scores of people came together at the V & A Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green on 3rd December to celebrate the contribution local disabled people make to the borough. The day was a mixture of fun, entertainment and useful information, with a wide range stalls promoting many organisations;
- **National Older People’s Day** - ‘Full of Life’ was celebrated on Wednesday 8 October at the Museum in Docklands. Older people from around the borough came together to take part in a range of events including line dancing, t’ai chi and massage taster sessions. There were also performance by Frantic Theatre and the Connaught Opera. The event was organised by Tower Hamlets Council and supported by the LinkAge Plus Partnership for older people.

## Progress by Directorate

Table 2: Progress milestones broken down by Directorate

Directorate	RED	%	AMBER	%	GREEN	%	Total Milestones
Chief Executive’s	1	3%	6	21%	22	76%	29
Resources	1	11%	2	22%	6	67%	9
Development & Renewal	1	9%	1	9%	9	82%	11
Children’s Services	1	2%	5	11%	41	87%	47
Adults Health and Wellbeing	0	0	5	71%	2	29%	7
Communities, Localities and Culture	0	0%	7	33%	14	67%	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>		<b>26</b>		<b>94</b>		<b>124</b>

- 4.5.1 Overall 4 out of the 124 milestones have exceeded target timescales and have been assessed as 'red'.
- 4.5.2 These four actions sit within four separate Directorates: Chief Executives, Resources, Development and Renewal and Children's Services.
- 4.5.3 The balance of activities contained within the Plan across the other Directorates varies; Chief Executive's have twenty nine milestones while Communities, Localities and Culture have twenty one, Development and Renewal eleven, Resources nine and Adults Health and Wellbeing seven.

#### 4.6 Reasons for red milestones

Table 3: Reasons for red milestones

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Number of all red</b>
Action has been superseded by new guidance or requirements from other organisations	2
Staffing constraints / restructure has limited capacity to deliver on time	1
Action still being progressed but timescale slipped	1

- 4.6.1 It is important that the reasons for red milestones are fully understood so that barriers to performance can be addressed. Table 3 summarises the reasons for failing to achieve the milestones by the due date.
- 4.6.2 The most common reason for exceeding the milestone deadlines is that timescales have slipped but that work is still being progressed. Of the milestones in this category, only one milestone is expected not to be met by the end of the year. The reasons for all the milestones which have been exceeded are set out below:
- The development of an Economic Strategy Paper, which was due to have been produced by September 2008, has been superseded by central government requirement to produce a 'Wider Economic Assessment' by 2010. The Employment Strategy for the borough will go to Cabinet in January 2009, along with an enterprise discussion paper. The Wider Economic Assessment will be prepared by 2010 which will set these issues in the context of broader economic development.
  - The development of a joint PCT / Council brand for recruitment has been delayed due to a longer than anticipated sign-off of the strategy and need to identify resources for this element of the joint workforce to reflect the community strategy. However a joint PCT / Council branding team has been established and work is continuing with interim joint branding.
  - The implementation of a positive parenting programme for parents of children with disabilities has been delayed. However the team is currently being recruited to and the service will be fully operational by January 2009.
  - The development of Accessible Communications Guidelines for the Council has been superseded by the development of a one stop disability information web page for staff on the Council's website which is due to be launched by end March 2009.

#### 4.7 Progress by Equality Strand

Table 4: Progress milestones broken down by equality strand

Milestone status	Status of milestone for each equality strand (% of all actions within each equality strand)					
	Race	Disability	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Religion/ belief	Age
Red	0	2	0	0	1	0
Amber	1	4	3	0	1	2
Green	9	6	5	3	3	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>32</b>

- 4.7.1 The table above demonstrates the DEAP progress against each of the strands. However, it is important to note that the DEAP contains only a selection of the significant number of activities relating to equalities and diversity objectives from across services in the Council. Moreover a significant proportion of all activities will impact on several equalities strands, for example a number of the workforce to reflect the community activities relate to both race *and* disability equality. However this table shows the distribution of all milestones under each equality strand.
- 4.7.2 The significant number of milestones relating to age equality is a reflection of the large number of activities delivered by Children's Services in the wider plan. A number of these actions also relate to other equality strands.
- 4.7.3 Since April 2007 we have had a legal duty to publish Equality Schemes not only in relation to race, (which was brought in by the Race Relations Amendment Act 2001) but also for disability and gender. These Schemes set out the actions which will be undertaken to meet the Council's legal duty to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. The strategic level actions from these Schemes are incorporated within the Diversity and Equality Action Plan and monitored corporately. Progress updates on all three Schemes are published annually on the Council's website and summaries of progress are given below. We also have new legal obligations to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of age in relation to employment practices and have a corporate commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination on the basis of all six equality strands. However in response to the need to strengthen our work on the non-statutory equality strands (religion / belief, age and sexual orientation), work is underway to produce three new Equality Schemes setting out key areas of work in each of these three areas. These Schemes are due to be published by April 2009.
- 4.7.3 We have not analysed separately those actions which relate to community cohesion as activities aimed at promoting good relations between people are embedded within a significant proportion of actions. The refreshed Community Plan to 2020 includes an overarching theme to build 'One Tower Hamlets'. This theme covers three core elements: tackling inequality; building strong and cohesive communities and; supporting effective community leadership. The 2008/09 DEAP aims to explore further the links between work on equality and community cohesion. This work has directly informed the development of a delivery framework for the three interlinked elements of 'One Tower Hamlets'.
- 4.7.4 Significant pieces of work towards strengthening community cohesion have included the establishment of the 'Community Cohesion Innovation Fund' (CCIF) for Schools. Through the CCIF schools across the borough were invited to work with local third sector organisations to submit joint bids for funding to run cohesion related activities. In total seventeen schools have been funded to work with a local community or voluntary organisation to strengthen their links with local communities.

## **5. Summary of progress on the implementation of the Race Equality Scheme**

- 5.1 The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 places a general duty on all local authorities to promote race equality and the specific duty for local authorities to produce a Race Equality Scheme once every three years which sets out how the authority will meet these duties. Each year the Council is required to monitor and review progress on the scheme both in relation to service provision and employment practice. This includes an employment duty to monitor the numbers of staff in post and applicants for employment, training and promotion. In relation to this duty the Council has in place a Workforce to Reflect the Community Strategy with targets aimed at improving the representation of BME staff across all levels of the organisation. This year a significant amount of additional work is underway to monitor employment, training and promotion across all six equality strands which will be reported in the New Year.
- 5.2 The Council is currently revising its Race Equality Scheme and using this process as a timely opportunity to think comprehensively about how we take forward race equality in Tower Hamlets. There have been significant changes since the first scheme was introduced six years ago in terms of the profile of our communities: the context of race equality particularly in terms of ideas around multiculturalism, community cohesion, Preventing Violent Extremism and integration of new migrants and refugees; the focus on partnership working and involvement of communities; and the need to understand the inter-section between race equality and the other equality strands. The revision of the Scheme takes on board these issues as well as those arising from new debates and key policy papers and research such as the report of the 'Commission on Integration and Cohesion' and the outgoing CRE report 'A lot done, A lot to do'.
- 5.3 A first draft of the revised Race Equality Scheme will be submitted to the Corporate Equalities Steering Group in January 2009.

## **6. Summary of progress on the implementation of the Gender Equality Scheme**

- 6.1.1 The Council's first Gender Equality Scheme was published in April 2007. The Scheme was produced following consultation with local residents and service providers and addresses the issues facing both men and women in ensuring they get the support they need to meet their potential and fully contribute to family and community life. Strategic level actions from Scheme have been incorporated within the DEAP and progress against these milestones has been strong.
- 6.2 In response to an identified shortfall in information about gender inequality and the need to ensure that issues are not tackled in isolation but are joined-up between Directorates and partners where appropriate, a Gender Equality Scheme Monitoring Group was established in August 2008. The remit of the group, which is made up of senior officers from all the Council's Directorates as well as from partner organisations, is to:
- Monitor the Gender Equality Scheme;
  - Drive work on gender equality across the organisation;
  - Develop the knowledge and expertise of the organisation around gender equality issues;
  - Revise the Gender Equality Scheme;
  - Develop a corporate approach to gender equality, particularly in terms of joining up services and initiatives across the Council.

The group have drawn up a work programme, based on the themes identified in the Gender Equality Scheme and have taken over responsibility for overseeing corporate spend on gender equality.

## **7. Summary of Progress on implementation of the Disability Equality Scheme**

- 7.1 The Council's first three year Disability Equality Scheme (DES) was published on 4 December 2006 and runs from 2006 to 2009. The Scheme sets out the objectives and key actions for the Council over the next three years to meet the Disability Equality Duty and the needs of local disabled residents and disabled staff.
- 7.2 The Scheme's action plan contains nine objectives that are aimed at promoting equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination for disabled people. In addition, we also have a number of other actions that are aimed at embedding the Disability Equality Duty (DED) in work with our partners and the voluntary sector, how we plan and deliver our services and support Councillors in their community leadership role.
- 7.3 Progress for 2008 - Of all the actions, 34 are at green, 7 at amber with 3 at red. This shows that we are making good progress at implementing the action plan, although there are areas where we need to focus attention on to completely deliver by December 2009. The attached report lists a summary of all actions by their status and a full report of progress at 24 months of the Scheme is described from page 5.

## **8. Progress on Equality Impact Assessments**

- 8.1 In relation to service provision the duties also require that the Council monitor, assess and consult on the impact of existing and proposed policies for any adverse effect on racial equality and publish the results of these assessments. The outcomes of the equality impact assessments (EQIAs) action plans have been built into team level action plans and where appropriate picked up at a Directorate or corporate level. In 2007/08 we completed a Test of Relevance, screening all services, policies and functions across the Council for relevance to equalities. This resulted in the production of a new three year programme of Equality Impact Assessments for 2008-11. In the first six months of 2008/09, 16 EQIAs were completed against a target of 18. These included strategic level EQIAs of the Tower Hamlets Partnership and the Planning Obligations process which had previously not been subject to equalities analysis.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 This report demonstrates that the Council is continuing to make good progress on the implementation of its equalities agenda and is playing a leading role in delivering the 'One Tower Hamlets' commitment set out in the Tower Hamlets Partnership's Community Plan. For example, we are developing new Equality schemes in relation to the non-statutory equality strands, sexual orientation, age and religion / belief.
- 9.2.1 The 2008/09 DEAP focuses on four overarching strategic objectives, identified through an analysis of evidence collected during the refresh of the Community Plan to 2020 and an assessment of service performance in priority equalities areas. Many of these areas of work are new and are programmed for the second half of this year. This will include:
- Publication and launch of three new Equality Schemes in relation to religion / belief, age and sexual orientation equality, as well as a refreshed Race Equality Scheme;



- Completion of two further strategic-level Equality Impact Assessments, focusing on Access Channels to the Council and Workplace Progression;
- Launch of the four year 'Cultural Olympiad' of activities by March 2009;
- A submission to the Employers Forum on Disability Standard;
- Continuing several initiatives focused on the employment of people with learning disabilities, both internally and with partners (Veolia and Greenwich Leisure Limited);
- Development of a TH Pan-Disability Panel which can be used in both a consultative and strategic role and to gain service user feedback;
- Designing a dedicated 'one-stop disability awareness / information' webpage on the staff Intranet;
- A large programme of events throughout February to celebrate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) History Month developed in partnership with the Tower Hamlets LGBT Community Forum. This year this programme will also include an advertising campaign challenging homophobia and promoting One Tower Hamlets;
- Establishing guidance for staff on Human Rights legislation and its implications for Council services and holding a council training event on human rights legislation.

## **10. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (LEGAL)**

- 10.1 The European Union Race Directive 2000/43 (published in June 2000) prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin by laying down "the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin".
- 10.2 In November 2000, the European Union published the Equal Treatment Framework Directive 2000/78. This Directive sets out the anti-discrimination "principle of equal treatment" in the context of sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability and age. This Directive was implemented on 2 December 2006 in relation to disability and age.
- 10.3 The Government consultation paper "Towards Equality and Diversity-Implementing the Employment Race Directive" (2001) indicated its intention to implement the Directives by amendment to the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. The consultation paper also referred to the Government's intention to introduce legislation to prohibit discrimination in work and training on the grounds of sexual orientation, religion / belief and age. The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 were enacted with effect from 1 and 2 December 2003 and transposed the phase 1 provisions of the Directive into UK law. The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 gave effect to the provisions on age discrimination with effect from 1 October 2006.
- 10.4 The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 strengthens the Race Relations Act 1976 by extending protection against racial discrimination by public authorities and by placing a duty on public authorities to have regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote racial equality and good race relations.
- 10.5 The Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2009/09 sets out the Council's intentions with regard to equality and has been formulated having regard to and in compliance with legislation. Regular monitoring and review of the Plan enables the Council to maintain compliance with statutory requirements as well as measuring progress in relation to non-statutory aspects.

## **11. COMMENTS OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**

- 11.1 Equalities issues should be embedded into service delivery, and they are taken into account when budgets are set. As such, there are no additional budget implications arising from adopting the Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2008/09. However, if additional costs arise from implementing the plan, they must be contained to within current revenue budget provisions in Directorates.

## **12. ONE TOWER HAMLETS CONSIDERATIONS**

- 12.1 The Diversity and Equality Action Plan represents an important step in progressing the Council's commitment to building One Tower Hamlets as a place in which people live together and where they are treated with respect and fairness regardless of their differences. The attached Plan clearly shows how equalities are at the heart of the Council agenda and the progress towards integrating diversity and equality fully into all aspects of service delivery and employment practice. The 2008/09 Plan also specifically explores the inter relationship between work on equalities and community cohesion. The aim of the Plan is to create an environment in which everyone who lives and works in our borough is treated with dignity and respect and where everyone can improve their life chances and access the increasing opportunities on offer.
- 12.2 The Diversity and Equality Action Plan aims to tackle the barriers currently preventing some of the most disadvantaged people in our community from accessing the life opportunities on offer and aims to enable them to participate actively in creating and sharing prosperity in the borough.

## **13. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT**

- 13.1 Efforts will be made to ensure that in delivering the commitments of the Diversity and Equality Action Plan the impact on the environment is kept to an absolute minimum. This includes the use of recycled paper in any documentation, and careful consideration of the methods used to engage with local communities, partners and staff.

## **14. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 14.1 The Council is seeking to implement an ambitious diversity and equality agenda in the context of changes in national legislation and standards. Progress to date has been very positive, but there is still much to be done if all the Council's targets are to be achieved and all the new legislative requirements are fully complied with. Any slippage could potentially undermine this.
- 14.2 The Diversity and Equality Action Plan provides a focus for all the Council's equalities work, and a means by which Members can ensure that each of the progress milestones are achieved. The arrangements in place to review progress during the year through the Corporate Equalities Steering Group, Corporate Management Team and finally by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are considered to be effective ways of keeping this work on track.
- 14.3 Diversity and equality performance indicators will help keep the focus firmly on delivery and outcomes. The emphasis on consultation will mean that the Council's performance in this area will be judged by the experiences of service users on the ground.

- 14.4 A greater emphasis will be given this year to communicating the progress that is being made to the wider community and to staff, including greater use of existing communications media such as East End Life and Pulling Together.
- 14.5 The Council will continue to work closely with the Improvement and Development Agency to ensure that local practice in implementing the Equality Standard and all equalities issues is informed by best practice taking place in other parts of the country.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2008/09 Six Month Monitoring Update

Appendix 2: Disability Equality Scheme 2008 Annual Monitoring Report

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### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 1972 SECTION 100D (AS AMENDED) LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT**

<b>Brief description of background papers:</b>	<b>Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection</b>
Equality Action Plan 2008/09 agreed by Cabinet on 30 <sup>th</sup> July 2008.	Frances Jones, Diversity & Equality Coordinator, Scrutiny and Equalities 020 7364 4521