

Committee Overview and Scrutiny	Date 8 January 2008	Classification Unrestricted	Report No	Agenda Item No 8.1
Report of: Assistant Chief Executive Originating Officer(s) Michael Keating, Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities		Title: Diversity and Equality Action Plan – 2007/2008 – six month monitoring report Wards Affected All		

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This six month monitoring report informs Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the Council's progress in implementing its Diversity and Equality Action Plan (DEAP) for 2007/8. A full progress report is attached at Appendix One and the Corporate Priorities Action Plan is attached at Appendix Two.
- 1.2 The report also includes a progress report on actions outstanding from the Diversity and Equality Action Plan for 2006/7 (Appendix Four).
- 1.3 A full monitoring report of the Disability Equality Scheme is attached at Appendix Three.

2. RECOMMENDATION

Members are recommended to:

- 2.1 Note and comment on the progress in implementing the Council's Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2007/8 and outstanding actions from 2006/7.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT, 2000 (SECTION 97)	
LIST OF "BACKGROUND PAPERS" USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT	
Brief description of background papers:	Name and telephone number of holder and address where open to inspection
Equality Action Plan 2006/07 agreed by Cabinet on 7 June 2006.	Michael Keating, Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities
Equality Action Plan 2007/08 agreed by Cabinet on 5 September 2007.	020 7364 3183
End of year monitoring report for 2006/07	

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 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 DEAP 2007/08 incorporates key strategic activities which aim to:
- Maintain Level 5 of the Equalities Standard and ensure that the Council is able to meet the requirements of the revised Standard by 2009. The revised Standard requires the Council to maintain a high standard of practice in relation to race, gender and disability equality and mainstream arrangements for extending this good practice to three further equalities strands: age, religion/belief and sexual orientation. The Council must also ensure that relevant human rights implications are considered within policy and practice.
 - Strengthen and further progress the Council's internal equalities structures and processes.
 - Work with partners in the statutory and voluntary sector to move towards a Level 5 standard of equalities practice across the borough.
 - Respond to emerging priorities relating to community cohesion and the needs of new migrant communities.

4. MONITORING

- 4.1 The Diversity and Equality Action Plan covers the period from April 2007 to March 2008 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 Appendix Two details progress made on implementing the Diversity and Equality Corporate Priorities Action Plan. This Plan sets out actions lead by the Diversity and Equality Team, in partnership with all service Directorates, to maintain Level 5 of the Revised Equality Standard. All activities are being progressed and are expected to be completed within target timescales. This work is being lead by the Scrutiny and Equalities service area which comprises the Service Head, Scrutiny and Equalities, supported by three Diversity and Equality Coordinators.

4.4 Overall Progress for all milestones

Table 1: All progress milestones 2007/08 by status

Progress Status (RAG)	Number	Percentage
RED	9	7
AMBER	8	6
GREEN	113	87
TOTAL	130	100

4.4.1 At six months 87 percent of all milestones within the Plan had been met or were on target to meet target timescales. This represents significant progress in a number of areas, including:

- Good progress on the implementation of the Council’s first **Disability Equality Scheme**. On 1st December the annual progress report showed that of the 44 actions listed in the Scheme 32 have been achieved or are on target to be achieved within target timescales
- In November the Council launched its first **Gender Equality Scheme**. The Scheme has been in place since April 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
- In 2007, the Council was placed 28th in the **Stonewall Workplace Equality Index** of gay-friendly organisations, and ranked top local authority in London. This year Stonewall have indicated that the Council has further improved on this performance and will feature in the top 25 organisations of the 2008 Index.
- In September the Council was ranked joint fifth out of 116 public and private sector organisations by the **Employers Forum on Disability**. The Council scored an average of 85% on the three target areas (motivate, act and impact) this puts us in the gold award band.
- The **new Duty on schools to promote community cohesion** came into force in September 2007. All secondary schools and governors were provided with guidance and support to enable them to comply with these new duties.
- The **Bridging Communities Project** has continued to explore innovative ways to bring different sections of the community together. Amongst these have been the Sankfova Triangle Emancipation Project (STEPs) and Supporting Togetherness and Equality (STEPs2). Bringing together young people of African and African Caribbean backgrounds from two schools in Newham and Tower Hamlets, STEPs explored how study of the legacy of slavery can provide lessons for modern cohesion. STEPs 2 will culminate in events linked to Holocaust Memorial Day in January 2008. A group of young Muslims traveled to Auschwitz and will use their

experience of this to reflect on contemporary issues. The outcomes from both will feed into wider community cohesion work.

- The **Arts and Events** Team have organised 68 community festivals and events, against a target of 70 for 07/08 and expect to deliver 75 by March 2008.
- The **Independent Travel Training Team** was awarded the 2007 Changing Lives and Outstanding Public Service Team of the Year Award. Established over two years ago, the team of four is a dedicated group of independent travel trainers who help students with special educational needs learn to get about on their own.
- Through our **external and internal equality forums** we have consulted with both staff and service users to test the effectiveness of service initiatives. The Council has therefore continued to support the development of three cross-cutting equality forums for disabled, LGBT and BME staff:
 - Following feedback from the Disabled Staff Forum, further consultation took place around welfare policies including the Carer's Policy, Rehabilitation Leave and Flexible Working Hours.
 - Both the internal and external LGBT Forums are currently involved in the design and delivery of events for LGBT History Month 2008.
 - We are carrying out training with the Tower Hamlets Access Group to develop their capacity, profile and role. We are also supporting their work with the Parks and Open Space Team as they are being consulted on a specific project regarding access and inclusive design. We have recently attended meetings with two members to hear the proposals for Wood Wharf Development and they have commented on the access aspect of the plans. Other members have been involved in the Scrutiny Review of Choice Based Lettings.
 - The Council has continued to support the development of the Interfaith Forum. In November, the Forum hosted a programme of events to mark Interfaith Week, including consultation sessions with faith communities on the Community Plan refresh. The outcomes of this consultation have been used to inform a review of the Forum and an extraordinary AGM of members will be held in January to amend the constitution to provide effective engagement structures for local faith communities.

4.5 Progress by Directorate

Table 2: Progress milestones broken down by Directorate

Directorate	RED	%	AMBER	%	GREEN	%	Total Milestones
Chief Executive's	4	44	3	38	59	52	66
Development & Renewal	2	22	0	0	18	16	20
Housing	1	11	2	25	1	1	4
Children's Services	2	22	1	12	19	18	22
Adults Services	0	0	0	0	5	3	5
Environment & Culture	0	0	2	25	11	10	13
TOTAL	9	100	8	100	111	100	130

4.5.1 Overall nine out of 130 progress milestones had exceeded target timescales and were assessed as 'red'.

4.5.2 Almost half (four out of nine) of these are the responsibility of the services within the Chief Executive's Directorate. 66 of the 130 milestones in the Plan are the responsibility of Chief Executive's Directorate; the four actions in red therefore represent a small proportion of activity taking place in the Directorate.

4.5.3 The 66 milestones which are shown as falling within the remit of the Chief Executive's Directorate include both corporate and service specific activities. The balance of activities across the other directorates varies; Housing and Adult Services have four and five respectively compared to 20, 22 and 13 for Development and Renewal, Children Services and Environment and Culture.

4.6 Reasons for red milestones

Table 3: Reasons for red milestones

Reason	Number of all red
Awaiting action or guidance from other organisations	5
Staffing constraints/restructure has limited capacity to deliver on time	3
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 milestones by the due date.

4.6.2 The most common reason for exceeding milestone deadlines is that officers were awaiting action or decisions by other organisations. Delays in decisions which have adversely affected progress include:

- the Public Enquiry by the Planning Inspectorate into the borough's Local Development Framework;
- the formal government response to the Commission on Integration and Cohesion report;
- London Development Agency approval of other Olympic host borough Small and Medium Enterprise supply chain models;
- Reorganisation within the Council, particularly the staffing changes in the Community Safety Service and the Connexions Service has also delayed the implementation of some actions. It is important to note that it is expected that all the actions in the plan will be completed and that none have been abandoned.

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	4 (8%)	6 (10%)	3 (6%)	0	0	0
Amber	2 (4%)	6 (10%)	2 (4%)	0	0	0
Green	44 (88)	47 (80%)	45 (90%)	2 (100%)	7 (100%)	7 (100%)
Total	50	59	50	2	7	7

4.7.1 It is important to note that a range of practice across all six strands are embedded and are therefore not contained within the Plan. The table above demonstrates the DEAP progress against each of the strands. 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 race and disability equality. However this table shows the distribution of all milestones under each equality strand. Since April 2007 we have had a legal duty to publish Equality Schemes for race, disability and gender. 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. As is clear from the above breakdown next year further development is needed around sexual orientation, faith/belief and age.

4.7.2 We have not analysed those actions which relate to community cohesion as activities aimed at promoting good relations between people are embedded within a significant proportion of actions. This year has seen wider debate on how to be more explicit about the promotion of cohesion both within service delivery and specific projects. Significant pieces of work towards this include comprehensive support provided to all schools to ensure they comply with their new duty to promote community cohesion and the STEPs projects outlined above, which has been highlighted as examples of good practice by the Institute of Community Cohesion. Furthermore consultation on the refreshed Community Plan has highlighted better interaction between all sections of the community as important for residents.

5. Summary of progress on 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's 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.

5.2 A piece of work was commissioned in October 2007 to establish the direction and associated actions for improving the proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic community staff in senior management positions in the Council and the PCT. Detailed analysis of the outcome of the work is currently taking place. Initial actions identified following a series of focus groups both within the Council and the PCT are as follows:

- Improvement of monitoring data
- Ensuring shared ownership of diversity targets
- Review of job descriptions and person specifications
- Establishing and developing the employer brand for both organisations
- Establishing Talent Pools of Candidates and establishing systems for Talent Pool Development
- Development of Career Pathways

- Introduction of Career Coaching
- Creating a broad menu of development options

5.3 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. In 2006/7 51 assessments were carried out against a target of 42. 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. For example the EQIA of interpreting and translation will form part of a review of interpreting and translation planned for the New Year which will include review work led by the Scrutiny Lead for Excellent Public Services.

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

6.1 The Gender Equality Scheme was produced in April 2007 and was formally launched in November with the Women in Tower Hamlets Network (WITHIN). 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, it should however be noted that a number of major activities represent new areas of work and are therefore not due to be completed until 2008/09.

7. Summary of progress on implementation of the Disability Equality Scheme

7.1 The Council's first Disability Equality Scheme (DES) was published on 4 December 2006. 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 On 4th December 2007 we posted a copy of the Scheme's action plan with first year progress up to 30 November 2007. Of all the actions, 32 are at green, eight at amber with four 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 to deliver the action plan by December 2009. Full details are attached as Appendix Three.

8. Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2006/07 – Progress on Outstanding Actions

8.1 The monitoring report at Appendix Three sets out progress against 34 actions outstanding from the Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2006/7. The majority of these actions are now complete.

8.2 There are five actions that remain 'red'. Two of these are for Adult Services to progress the development of integrated learning resource centre due to open in 2009 and to progress the development of the centre for independent living for people with physical

disabilities due to open in 2008. In both of these cases there has been an ongoing delay in the decision on PFI credits from the Department of Health (DOH) which has caused slippage. Officers continue to work with key stakeholders to progress this work and once a decision is known, new targets will be set through close working with stakeholders. The other three have been incorporated into other pieces of work currently being undertaken.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 This report demonstrates that the Council is continuing to make good progress on the implementation of its equalities agenda and has responded effectively to recent changes in legislation and policy. For example, we have published new disability and gender equality schemes, provided comprehensive support to enable schools to meet their new duty to promote community cohesion and strengthened our work on six equalities strands to meet the requirements of the revised Local Government Equalities Standard.
- 9.2 In response to comments from Members on the DEAP last year for the first time this year the plan has been linked to other key strategic and service level plans via Excelsis, the Council's performance management software. This has enabled diversity and equality work to be further strengthened and embedded in the 'golden thread' running right down from the Strategic Plan to individual work plans.
- 9.3 Throughout the first part of this year the restructuring of Scrutiny and Equalities involved the recruitment of three new Diversity and Equality Co-ordinators. Alongside the revised Equality Standard and the new Disability and Gender duties this has given the Council the opportunity to review diversity and equality practice as was outlined in the September report to Cabinet introducing the 2007/08 DEAP. Much of this work is programmed for the second half of this year. This will include:
- Reviewing internal practice and procedures including monitoring by the six equality strands, guidance on undertaking equality impact assessment and incorporation of human rights legislation where required
 - Preparation for the Council's third three-year Race Equality Scheme
 - Development of the Disability and Gender Schemes to strengthen incorporation into service delivery
 - Further work on the age, religion/belief and sexual orientation strands to ensure that these issues are fully incorporated into our work
 - Working towards becoming a Level 5 Borough is one of the actions within the 2007/08 Community Plan. In January a meeting will be taking place with all local statutory and third sector partners to explore the opportunities for further joint work. The consultation on the Community Plan will also link into this.
 - Initial announcements about the Government's response to the report by the Commission on Integration and Cohesion have highlighted the linkage between improved cohesion and good diversity and equality practice. Among the areas for development will be further 'bridging activities', interfaith work and interpreting and translation.
 - Development of an effective assessment tool to provide a transparent measure of good diversity and equality and cohesion outcomes
 - Further work with London Councils via Capital Ambition to ensure that good practice is shared across the capital
 - Working to ensure the preparations for the new Local Area Agreement and the new performance indicator set address diversity, equality and cohesion issues

9.4 The involvement of members is crucial to the successful implementation of the Plan. A workshop to explore how this can be strengthened will be organised early in 2008.

10. CONCURRENT REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER

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 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 2007/08 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 As service design and provision already give consideration to equalities issues Directorate budgets reflect these issues and consequently no additional budgetary provision is expected as a result of the Diversity and Equality Action Plan 2007/08. Any additional costs arising from implementing the Plan will be contained within Directorate 2007/08 revenue budgets.

12. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 By incorporating national standards, the Diversity and Equality Action Plan represents an important step in progressing the Council's diversity and equality agenda. 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 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.

13. ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 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.

14. SUSTAINABLE ACTION FOR A GREENER ENVIRONMENT

- 14.1 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.

15. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 15.1 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.
- 15.2 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.
- 15.3 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.
- 15.4 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.
- 15.5 The Council will continue to work closely with London Councils and 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.

- Appendix One: Diversity and Equality Action Plan - six month monitoring report 2007/08
Appendix Two: Diversity and Equality Corporate Priorities Action Plan
Appendix Three: Disability Equality Scheme – first year progress report
Appendix Four: Report on outstanding actions from EAP 2006/07