

Report

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Report to:	Equal Opportunities Forum
Date of Meeting:	7 June 2011
Report by:	Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

Subject:	Equality Data Pilot with the Improvement Service
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an update on the involvement of the Council with the Improvement Service in the improving local equality data project

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the contents of the report be noted.

3. Background

3.1. In January 2011 Corporate Resources successfully entered a bid to participate in the Improvement Services project to look at the use and development of data to improve local equality outcomes. This is particularly important due to the emphasis now being given in the Equality Act 2010 to use evidence to inform decision making and the drive to have an outcomes based focus in relation to equalities.

3.2. The Improvement Service, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Scottish Government are working in partnership to deliver an action research project. This will provide hands-on, practical and specialist support to five councils/Community Planning Partners (CPPs) to develop and use the equality evidence base in order to measure and evaluate progress towards equality – taking account of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, religion and belief, sexual orientation, transgender and social class.

3.3. Having robust equality evidence is crucial to help councils meet a range of needs and requirements, including making evidence based decisions to improve the outcomes of the equality groups and communities that they serve and in this difficult economic climate to ensure that spending decisions do not disproportionately affect certain equality groups.

3.4. The project will assist participating councils/CPPs to identify, develop and pilot solutions and tools designed to address the key challenges they face in developing an authoritative evidence base and in implementing an outcomes approach to performance management, self-evaluation and service planning and delivery.

4. South Lanarkshire's Project Plan

4.1. A number of areas of work have been identified for the project to focus upon. These have come from areas where we know improvement will assist in the better collection and use of data across resources. The areas are as follows:-

- ◆ developing a system to detect when a customer/employee was last asked for equality data
- ◆ improving central data storage systems to include equalities evidence, and promote the use of these systems
- ◆ engaging all parts of the community and workforce with the reasons why asking for equality related data is key
- ◆ building strong examples both internally and externally to evidence to people the differences that can be made if data is collected and used properly

4.2. Some key equality issues identified in South Lanarkshire, where robust outcomes will be of particular benefit, are:-

- ◆ improving access to public services - reviewing points of contact, publications, use of easy read/plain English
- ◆ tackling attitudes towards hate crime, domestic abuse and violence against women
- ◆ awareness of mental health issues
- ◆ enabling people with learning disabilities and difficulties to find paid employment, particularly via programmes of peer support and advocacy
- ◆ encouraging internal buy-in to the benefits of improving the equality evidence base by addressing gender imbalance in the workforce and employment opportunities for the black and minority ethnic (BME) and disabled communities

4.3. A cross-council group will work with the Improvement Service and Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) to develop the project outcomes.

5. Project Participation

5.1. The issues and areas for improvement identified above are seen as a starting point to help the council develop a realistic outcome focus to equality matters in our area. The availability of robust and clear data will enable the council to have clear evidence upon which to base its decisions.

5.2. Overall this can improve our strong approach to equality matters and the services we provide. In the current financial climate a robust evidence base can ensure our decisions are informed and give proper due regard to our equality duties.

5.3. The project will run over a twelve month period and progress will be reported to the Equal Opportunities Forum.

6. Employee Implications

6.1. None

7. Financial Implications

7.1. There are no financial implications as equality policy is well established and any costs will be met from within current resources.

8. Other Implications

8.1. The risk to the Council is that if Resources do not have due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty it may lead to non-compliance with equalities legislation. This can now carry unlimited financial penalties.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment is required.
- 9.2. There was also no requirement to undertake any consultation in terms of the information contained in this report.

Robert McIlwain
Executive Director (Corporate Resources)

20 May 2011

Link(s) to Council Objectives

- ◆ Fair and open
- ◆ People focused
- ◆ Working with and respecting others
- ◆ Excellent employer
- ◆ Tackling disadvantage and deprivation

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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