

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

We want West Cheshire to be a place where no one experiences discrimination or disadvantage because of their age, gender, race, disability, faith or belief or sexual orientation. We want our area to be a place of equal life chances for everybody, where all human rights are respected. We want to reduce social exclusion in our urban communities and isolation in our rural communities.

Equality is at the heart of everything the West Cheshire Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) does. We want to make sure that the services we deliver are of the highest quality and can be used by everyone who needs them. Our aim is to build equality into all of our day-to-day work, policy-making and service delivery.

Equality is about making sure people are treated fairly and given fair chances. It is also about ensuring that all people achieve equal outcomes in the standard of service they receive. It is not about treating 'everyone the same', but recognising that everyone's needs are met in different ways. It concentrates on the areas covered by law, such as Race, Gender and Disability. But additionally more recent European employment law makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone because of their religion or belief, sexual orientation or age.

Historically organisations and individuals tended to view diversity as a race, gender or disability. In reality, diversity includes sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, religious belief, physical ability, educational background, geographical location, marital status, class and work experience to name a few.

West Cheshire LSP embraces people for their individuality and recognises that local residents come from different backgrounds and circumstances. People are accepted for their cultural backgrounds and differences in lifestyles are recognised and embraced. Diversity is not a single, "one off" programme, but is at the heart of our Partnership working and integrated into all our daily business.

We view equality, human rights and good relations between people as something that affects us all, regardless of background, and we are committed to working closely with all those who are affected by, or interested in, our work to ensure relevant and responsive services are delivered. We see this as an on-going process enabling individuals and organisations to influence and shape the work we do.

We aim to do this by.....

We are absolutely committed to delivering excellence and our approach to equality and diversity is embedded in our key Partnership principles. In order to ensure our joint commitment is successfully implemented, we have a comprehensive approach to rolling out Equality Impact Assessments. They

will be undertaken when designing and delivering our Partnership strategies and policies, for example LAA delivery plans and the Sustainable Community Strategy. We are committed to the principle of delivering excellent services and we don't want our residents to experience discrimination or face barriers to accessing our services. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments ensures that new plans are modified or amended to offset any possible discrimination and where necessary, actions are included as controls to ensure that our services do not discriminate or cause exclusion.

Our approach is to be proactive and by working in partnership we know we can ensure services are delivered in a way that is fair for all, but personal to each person, without waiting for service users to tell us about the barriers they face.

We will implement a comprehensive community engagement and empowerment strategy to involve and respond to our stakeholders, with a stronger emphasis on working at our local level. The LSP will consult and involve representative networks covering all equality areas to help inform our future activities:

- We will introduce a single equality framework to govern the way the Partnership works with all our local communities;
- We will promote activities to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds and to increase public support for diversity and human rights;
- We will perform and monitor an ENIA (Equality Needs Impact Assessment) for all of our key work;
- We will enhance our monitoring and analysis systems to expand joint intelligence and data collection sharing on all equality and diversity issues, so we continue to understand our communities better;
- We will conduct or commission research on equality and diversity issues and broader human rights and publish the results to the public;
- We will ensure that our grants processes address all equality strands and target previously under-funded communities;
- We will develop equality and diversity reference groups to advise and steer these processes and to gain representation on LSP;
- We will develop a joint equality procurement framework as a Partnership so that all of our suppliers can demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity and explore training for suppliers as necessary;
- We will identify the equality profile of organisations who supply services for us and set targets to ensure they reflect the communities we serve.

- We will promote best practice in recruitment and retention issues as employers;
- We will coordinate consultation activities with equality communities;
- We will share best practice in developing Equal Opportunity training for our staff and elected Members; and
- We will help coordinate an evidence base of our local equality communities for CAA inspections.

As public authorities have a legal requirement to promote equality in relation to disability, gender and race. The new single Equality Act will strengthen protection, advance equality and simplify the law in all respects. The new legislation will extend existing equality duties and, therefore, West Cheshire LSP has decided to produce its own single equality scheme which will cover all the equality strands, extending to age, religion or belief and sexual orientation.