

Shropshire Council

Service User Diversity Report 2013/2014

Introduction

This report is published as a complementary document to the annual workforce diversity monitoring report about Shropshire Council's workforce. It sets out to share information and statistics about the diversity of Shropshire Council's service users and communities, alongside the information that is published about the workforce, who are largely drawn from local communities.

Every year, the Council intends to update what the information is identifying, as part of efforts to collate and continue to increase the depth, breadth and focus of the evidence base about the people who live and work in Shropshire. This will help the Council to maintain its data to meet future challenges and changes.

Background

The majority of the equality and diversity information that the Council holds relating to service users is collected and monitored in service areas. They use such data in order to help develop and refine policy and strategy, and design services, as well as to assess and improve performance and make best use of resources.

The Council also uses standard documents to better understand the impact of policies and decisions on all issues relating to equality. This helps the service area and the Council to demonstrate that what is termed **due regard** is taken of equality aims in decision making processes, as required under the Equality Act 2010. These assessments are completed using standard templates to help identify whether or not any significant changes to services, including policies, procedures, functions or projects, may have an adverse impact on a particular group of people, and whether the human rights of individuals may be affected.

The templates that are used in Shropshire are referred to as **Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessments (ESIAs)**. The Council has previously used the term Equality Impact Needs Assessment. Templates have recently been revised in recognition of national and European policy drivers around a growing emphasis on social inclusion.

Information is also collected, analysed and monitored centrally by the Council, from both internal and external sources. This is particularly the case with Census 2011 data, for which a number of Census profiles are already published online giving commentary on data for groups of people who share what are described in the Equality Act 2010 as 'Protected Characteristics'. Further information about these Characteristics is given in the tables that follow this background commentary.

The Council collects and uses equality and diversity information as part of a range of partnership initiatives and corporate approaches towards meeting the needs of service users, including:

- Current work to build resilience in local communities;
- Locality commissioning;
- Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) efforts to sustain and encourage economic growth eg assisting young people into employment;
- Planning policy efforts to facilitate housing and infrastructure where it is needed eg sites for gypsy and traveller families;
- Health and Well Being Board efforts to identify and address social isolation issues that can lead to mental health problems, particularly in rural areas.

All these approaches involve consultation and engagement with current and potential service users, communities, and relevant stakeholders such as housing developers, social care providers, and voluntary and community sector organisations.

Table One: this is a table to show the ten groupings of people whose needs Shropshire Council thinks about in particular in its decision making processes

Definitions source: Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

Protected Characteristic	Definition
Age	Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).
Disability	A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
Gender reassignment	The process of transitioning from one gender to another.
Marriage and civil partnership	In England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple. [1]. This will also be true in Scotland when the relevant legislation is brought into force. [2]. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).
Pregnancy and maternity	Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
Race	Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Protected Characteristic	Definition
Religion and belief	Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.
Sex	A man or a woman
Sexual orientation	Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.
Social inclusion	Families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people considered to be vulnerable, ie having complex needs and/or requiring additional support

[1] Section 1, Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013; [2] Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014.

Table two: this is a table to show the ten groupings, along with examples of information sources for service areas.

Protected Characteristic and other groups in Shropshire	Examples of information sources for service areas
Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg young person with disability)	Adult social care data; Blue Badge records; Census 2011 profiles; children's centre data; concessionary fare records; housing services data; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)	Adult social care data; Blue Badge records; Census 2011 profiles; concessionary fare records; housing services data; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Customer complaints and comments data; national proxy data
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Housing services data; Registrar records
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Housing services data; Registrar records
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)	Adult social care data; Census 2011 profiles; children's centre data; concessionary fare records; housing services data; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)	Adult social care data; Census 2011 profile; Housing services data; Registrar records
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Adult social care data; Blue Badge records; Census 2011 profiles; children's centre data; concessionary fare records; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)	Customer complaints and comments data; drug and alcohol service customer records; national proxy data
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people you consider to be vulnerable)	Adoption and fostering data; Adult social care data; benefits customer data; children's centre data; housing services data; leisure facilities usage; planning policy records eg Place Plans

What the information says

Internal case study: Planning Policy community toolkits

Planning policy information about communities, drawn from the forty-plus community tool kits one off events that were carried out in rural areas and in market towns, included participants filling out a diversity chart when they arrived. The chart set out to record data by the groupings of Age, Disability, Race, and Sex, through use of star stickers on one large display board. This helped everyone to see in particular where there were age gaps in those who took part. People aged from nine to ninety took part in these events, which were self-selecting in themselves. The age group least likely to be represented overall were people in their thirties and forties. This therefore indicates that efforts to engage with these age groups need to be targeted differently. Results of the tool kits feed into the Place Plans for all of the market towns and their surrounding rural areas, along with other material from communities including neighbourhood plans.

The diversity chart was also adapted for use with adults with learning disabilities, as part of work to draw up a new Adult Social Care Strategy in 2012. This involved a number of events across the county with stakeholder groups and with service users and carers. The data gained remains an information source for current work with adults with social care and their families and carers.

What the information does not say

The Council's intelligence sources, national data, and the efforts of exemplar authorities, clearly demonstrate that there can be challenges in finding out more about the needs of individuals in communities. Individuals may not wish to self-identify unless the need actually arises for medical reasons, eg a person experiencing an episode of poor mental health that they do not wish to be known about in what may be a very small community.

There are also opportunities for the Council to make better use of the data that it currently holds (please see Table Two). Making use of comparative data from other local authorities provides a useful starting point, and the following case study illustrates how similar data could be better utilized.

External case study: Gloucestershire Children's Centres

Gloucestershire's current annual Service User Diversity Report gives statistics and commentary about their Children's Centres.

It explains by way of context that the performance report for Gloucestershire's Children's Centres is an evaluation of a range of key areas of children's centre activity during the year April 2012 – March 2013. This includes information of engagement with key user groups.

The information has been used to inform the revised specification for Children's Centre services and improve the effectiveness of children's centre services as part of the performance management arrangements.

From April 1st 2013, Gloucestershire County Council Children's Centres are managed by four organisations who bid to run seven locality contracts. All activity is now monitored at children's centre locality and county level. Gloucestershire has 39 centres, which vary between large centres offering a wide range of services throughout the week in deprived areas, and smaller 'bases' that offer fewer activities and interventions.

Information sources are described as including:

- e-Start data;
- the online Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (EJSNA);
- other Gloucestershire County Council data collection systems including Capita One, Liquidlogic and EMS;
- OFSTED data;
- Sufficiency Assessments;
- data collected through Annual Conversations with Children's Centres.

Commentary includes a table about parent carers, on whom data is collected by the groupings of Disability, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, and Sex. As a result, Gloucestershire are able to make the following observations:

"Numbers of parent carers accessing children's centre services

- Registrations in children's centres have more than doubled from 2012 to 2013. New birth data is available to children's centres on a regular basis and engagement with new parents is monitored as part of contract monitoring.
- The number of fathers seen registered has increased significantly however this may be partially due to better recording of data on E Start by children's centre providers. Most children's centres have Dads groups although the proportion of male carers seen remains relatively low.
- The number of female carers seen has fallen although the number of teenage mothers or pregnant teenagers has risen indicating a greater emphasis on working with vulnerable groups
- The numbers of carers with a disability seen at a children's centre has fallen although carers attending with special educational needs has risen. Family support services continue to offer 1:1 and targeted support to families in greatest need. "

Where we are in 2014

Service delivery arrangements in Shropshire involve opportunities to ensure that service usage data can be systematically recorded across the Protected Characteristic groups. This helps the Council to understand likely barriers to accessing services, and to respond to and cater for the diverse and changing needs of diverse and changing communities.

For example, an individual's sexual orientation is not a barrier to physically gaining entry to a Customer Service Point. However, someone who describes themselves as having a limiting long term illness, involving use of a wheelchair, is clearly someone for whom physical entry to the Customer Services Point needs to be achievable, comfortable and dignified.

The challenge for this year is to create opportunities to identify and collect service area data in ways that respect confidentiality whilst helping to produce robust information and quality intelligence. This will assist in targeting available resources. It will also help in securing a fair and equitable share of central government funding, and in efforts to access other funding, e.g. EU funding for social inclusion, which is a strategic activity through the LEP.

There are learning opportunities from other public sector service providers, including Stafford Prison, from where the Governor has offered to share their approaches.

Lessons can also be learned from the local voluntary and community sector, examples of which would be faith groups, and the Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Community Benefit Society or community co-operative.

The Council will continue to draw on examples of good practice, including Cornwall, Cumbria, Gloucestershire and Leicestershire.

What we would like to know from communities

The Council very much welcomes any data and comment that people in Shropshire may like to share, to help fill information gaps, and will observe confidentiality and anonymity in so doing. The Council uses a wide a range of customer feedback mechanisms and information exchange mechanisms, including social media, to enable open feedback from a range of audiences and stakeholders. The views, issues and learning from people living and working in Shropshire are welcomed and encouraged.

Conclusion

Over the next year, efforts will be targeted at finding out where there are gaps in data, and in finding out where there may be barriers to accessing particular services, for people with one or more of the Protected Characteristics and for people who are at risk of social exclusion. The Council's revised equality objectives action plan records this commitment, under the new action area to "collect and analyse more proactively".