

Annex A

TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA'S EQUALITY SCHEME

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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce the Council's new Equality Scheme, which sets out our aims for promoting equality between the diverse communities living in the Royal Borough, and the accompanying Equality Action Plan.

People's experience of the Royal Borough is shaped by the actions of a wide range of organisations – public, private and voluntary – and of the other people who live and work here. Creating a cohesive and inclusive community, where everyone is treated fairly requires collaboration and cooperation. Our new Equality Scheme adopts a challenging set of aims for equality and inclusivity which are shared by the local NHS, the police, businesses and our voluntary and community sector partners. These aims form part of the local Community Strategy and were identified following wide consultation with local people and organisations.

Our Equality Scheme is accompanied by an Equality Action Plan, which sets out the specific actions that the Council will take over the next three years to support the achievement of these aims, together with the targets that we will use to judge whether we are successful. I encourage other local service providers to set out the actions that they will take to support our shared ambitions for a fair and inclusive community.

I thank the local organisations and individuals who have given up their time to contribute to the development of the Equality Scheme and Action Plan. This is an ambitious agenda, and one which will help us to provide fair, relevant and accessible services that respond to the needs and aspirations of everyone who lives in, visits or works in the Royal Borough.

Councillor Paul Warrick
Cabinet Member for Service Improvement

Introduction

The Royal Borough has a clear policy that sets out its commitment to promoting equality and respecting diversity, by delivering fair, accessible and relevant services and equal opportunities in employment.¹

Kensington and Chelsea contains one of the most diverse populations in London. We seek to recognise and value the differences in the people we serve and employ. These include differences in age, disability, race, faith, gender and sexual orientation.

This Equality Scheme and accompanying Action Plan set out the Council’s objectives, targets and the specific actions that it will take to achieve its ambitions for equality and inclusivity, and thereby fulfil its statutory duties.

Fulfilling our statutory duties

There are a number of legal duties that the Council must fulfil in relation to equality. Whilst the legal framework is still based on *anti-discrimination* provisions, there has been a major shift towards positive duties that require public bodies such as the Council to *promote* good equality practice.

The first positive equality duty was introduced in relation to race in 2000. The Council established a Race Equality Scheme in 2002, followed by a Race Action Plan in 2004, to meet its race equality duty. An equivalent disability equality duty has come into force in December 2006, and a gender equality duty will come into force in April 2007. Details of all of our statutory equality duties are provided at annex A.

Achieving local ambitions

We want to go beyond our legal duties to implement the spirit and principles underlying equalities legislation. That is why, since 2005, we have expanded the scope of our Equality Scheme and Action Plan to cover all aspects of equality, as well as those we are required to cover by law.

It is also why we have made a commitment to achieve the “Equality Mark”, awarded to local authorities that are externally assessed as having attained the level 5 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The Council has already achieved level 4, and aims to achieve level 5 during 2007-08.

<p>Equality Standard for Local Government</p> <p>Level 1: commitment to a comprehensive equality policy</p> <p>Level 2: assessment and consultation / participation</p> <p>Level 3: setting equality objectives and targets</p> <p>Level 4: monitoring against targets</p> <p>Level 5: achieving and reviewing outcomes</p>
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¹ Our corporate equality policy, “Promoting Equality and Respecting Diversity”, is available on our website at the following address: <http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/yourcouncil/equalityanddiversity/corporateequality0407.pdf>.

We recognise that quality of life for the different communities in the borough is most likely to be improved when local people and the organisations that serve them work together. The Kensington and Chelsea Partnership has prepared a community strategy for the Royal Borough, following extensive consultation with local groups and individuals, which contains a challenging set of objectives for equality and inclusivity.²

We have adopted these local ambitions and objectives as the basis of our Equality Scheme. Our Equality Action Plan sets out the specific actions that the Council will take to contribute to the achievement of the commitments made by the partnership in the community strategy.

Community involvement

The Council has consulted with and involved residents, community groups, voluntary sector organisations and statutory organisations in the development of the Equality Scheme and Equality Action Plan, using an approach designed to find out their views on:

- whether there are further equality objectives that we should seek to deliver through our Equality Action Plan, in addition to those already developed in consultation with local people in the Community Strategy.
- what specific actions the Council should take over the next three years to contribute to the achievement of these equality objectives.

We published "Developing your Council's Equality Scheme and Action Plan: A Discussion Paper" on 3 August 2006 and circulated it to a wide range of local people and organisations to seek their views.³ To capture the views of hard-to-reach groups, we held facilitated focus groups with local people and in-depth discussions with groups of local organisations that serve and represent black minority ethnic communities and people with learning disabilities.

We are grateful to the Advocacy Project and Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea, organisations which the Council funds to support the engagement of people with learning disabilities and people with physical, sensory and hidden impairments, for their facilitating focus groups to help us to involve disabled people effectively (a requirement of the disability equality duty).

The Equality Action Plan reflects the Council's response to the points made by residents and local organisations, both in their written responses to consultation and in their contributions to discussion groups. It also reflects our response to a detailed report on the inclusion needs of disabled people living in the borough, "Inclusive Kensington and Chelsea", prepared by Action Disability Kensington and Chelsea with

² "The Future of Our Community", the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Community Strategy 2005-2015, is available at:

http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/KCPCCommunityStrategy/general/community_strategy2005_2015.pdf

³ "Developing your Council's Equality Scheme and Action Plan: A Discussion Paper" is available on our website at: http://www.rbkc.gov.uk/Consultation/General/eqscheme_actionplan.pdf

the involvement of disabled residents and the support of the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership.⁴

A selection of some of the issues raised by local people and organisations is provided below, together with examples of the actions we have adopted in response to their concerns.

Consultation, communication and information. This was an important issue for all groups, although their specific concerns were different. For instance: people from BME communities want us to have a stronger focus on addressing language barriers; people with disabilities had poor experiences of our customer service staff and suggested further training and the employment of more disabled staff; people with learning disabilities would like us to use simple language and pictorial aids; lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people want the Council to highlight positive aspects of the LGBT community in its publications; older people wanted a directory of services. Some of the actions we have adopted in our Equality Action Plan in response to these concerns are:

- publishing essential information about the Council's services (including our interpretation and translation offer) on our website in each of the six main minority languages, sign-posted from our homepage.
- ensuring front line customer service staff receive training in customer service standards, including diversity awareness.
- setting targets to increase the proportion of Council staff, and the proportion of the top 5% of earners, that are disabled.
- securing year-on-year improvements against both quantitative customer service standards (response times for correspondence, waiting times for appointments etc) and qualitative indicators that assess customer satisfaction with how their enquiries are handled.
- working with learning disability service users to identify which forms they want us to prioritise for simplification, and transforming these into examples of good practice for their accessibility during 2007-08.
- providing a "welcome pack" to all new residents and hand-delivering an "A to Z" directory of local services to each household in the borough every 12 to 18 months.

⁴ Copies of the report "Inclusive Kensington and Chelsea" can be purchased from ADKC (address: ADKC Centre, Whitstable House, Silchester Road, London W10 6SB; tel: 020 8960 8888; fax: 020 8960 8282; minicom: 020 8964 8066; e-mail: director@adkc.org.uk).

Access to exercise and leisure facilities was a key topic for many groups. Issues raised included: the accessibility of the central library and of our sports centres; the accessibility of bars, shops and restaurants in the borough; the accessibility of smaller museums; the lack of scooter provision in Holland Park; and the need for outreach work to promote exercise facilities to hard-to-reach groups. Some of the actions which we have adopted in response to these concerns are:

- improving the accessibility of the Central Library as part of refurbishment work, as well as maintaining our libraries' home delivery service and "Read and Ride" scheme.
- funding DisabledGo to provide and maintain a free online guide to the accessibility of key venues within the borough, selected in consultation with the local community.
- putting in place an audience development plan to improve access to the Council's museums and galleries.
- providing scooters for people to use in Holland Park one day a week, to enable residents with mobility impairments to enjoy the park.
- mainstreaming the outreach programme developed as part of our Local PSA, which successfully increased physical activity amongst target groups (including older people, women and BME groups).

Getting around the borough is a key issue for older people and disabled people. The main obstacles they identify include: areas where public transport provision is relatively poor; the attitudes of bus drivers; the provision of disabled parking bays and access to bays in other boroughs; the cost and reliability of community transport; and the availability of public toilets, including accessible toilets. Some of the actions which we have adopted in our Equality Action Plan in response to these concerns are:

- lobbying transport providers and bringing together representatives of the local disabled community with transport operators on a regular basis, in addition to our annual Safe and Accessible Transport events for older and disabled transport users.
- setting a target to increase the provision of disabled parking bays by 10% and working with partners to investigate the introduction of a single central London badge scheme, to improve accessibility for inner-London borough disabled badge holders in the longer term.
- carrying out a full review of the Taxicard scheme, involving disabled people, and setting a target for the reliability of community transport.
- promoting and acting as a point of sale for the National Key Scheme for accessible toilets. We have also asked DisabledGo to include information about local establishments' policies on letting members of the public use their toilets, as well as how accessible they are, in the free online access guide to the borough that we have commissioned.

Diversity in Kensington and Chelsea

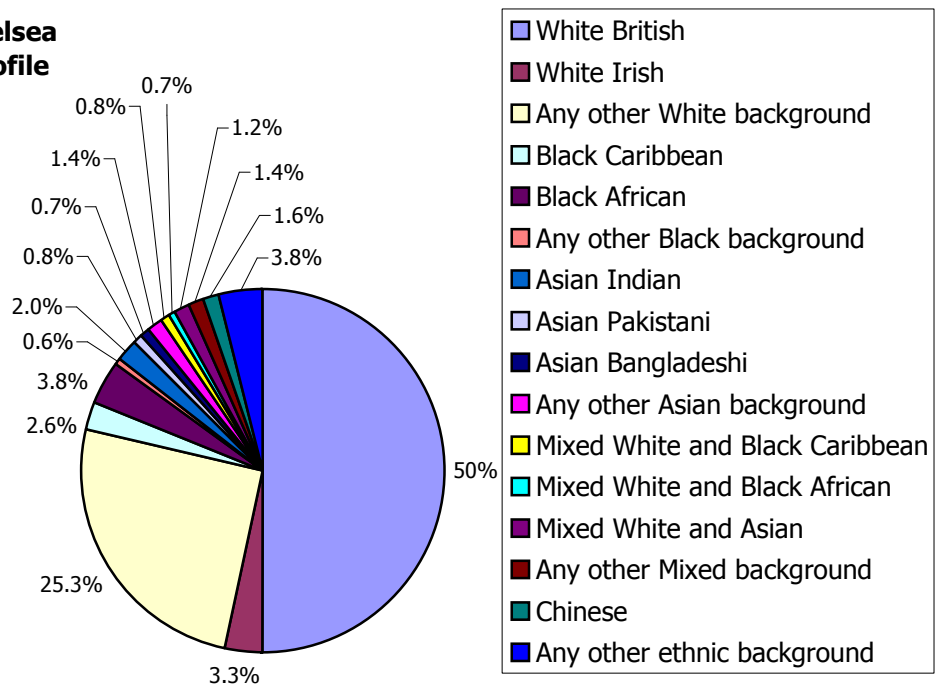
Kensington and Chelsea is one of the most culturally and ethnically diverse parts of London. Some of the key characteristics of the local population are summarised below.

Ethnicity

Over 21% of residents belong to a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) group. While 50% of residents are White British, a further 28% are from other White ethnic groups (of European, American and Middle Eastern descent).

Kensington and Chelsea Resident Ethnic Profile

Source: 2001 Census



The 2001 Census shows that, compared with residents from White ethnic groups, residents from BME groups are:

- more likely to have no qualifications – 17.3% of BME residents have no qualifications, compared with 11.9% of White residents.
- more likely to be claiming Job Seekers Allowance – for instance, up to 10% of residents from Black ethnic groups were claiming Job Seekers Allowance in 2001, compared with 1.4% of White residents.
- more likely to report poor health – “not good” health and illness are more prevalent amongst residents from Black, Asian and Mixed ethnic groups than amongst White residents across all age bands.

Local data also demonstrates gaps in educational achievement between ethnic groups in some pupil intakes at specific stages of the curriculum.

Disability

Estimates of the number of disabled people who live or work in the borough vary greatly due to a lack of consensus around the definition of disability. However, 13.6% of people living in Kensington and Chelsea stated that they had a limiting long-term illness, disability or infirmity in the Census 2001 - below the London average of 15.5% and the national average of 17.9%.

National data shows that, compared with non-disabled people, disabled people are more likely to:

- live in poverty – disabled people have an average income of less than half of that earned by non-disabled people.
- be economically inactive - one in every two disabled people of working age is in employment compared with four in five non-disabled people.
- experience problems with hate crime or harassment – 25% of disabled people say that they have experienced hate crime or harassment, rising to 47% of people with mental health conditions.
- experience problems with housing and with transport - the issue given most often by disabled people as their biggest challenge.

The cause appears to work in both directions: people are also more likely to become disabled if they have a low income, are out of work or have low educational qualifications.⁵ The Council's action to promote equality for disabled people is therefore closely linked to its strategies for improving the life chances of people living in the most deprived communities in the borough.

Gender

Men and women living in Kensington and Chelsea experience different outcomes in some aspects of life, including employment and health. The 2001 Census data shows that women in Kensington and Chelsea:

- are less likely to be employed in senior positions than men - in 2001, the proportion of women aged 16-74 and in employment who were working in higher grade occupations was 10% lower than for men⁶.
- live five years longer on average than men.

It also shows that men in Kensington and Chelsea are:

- more likely to be claiming benefits due to sickness or disability than women - 4,000 men compared with 3000 women were claiming benefits due to sickness or disability in 2001.
- more likely to be claiming Job Seekers Allowance than women (whilst a higher proportion of women are economically inactive than men, the majority of those women do not want to be in employment).

⁵ Findings from the Strategy Unit report "Improving the life chances of disabled people".

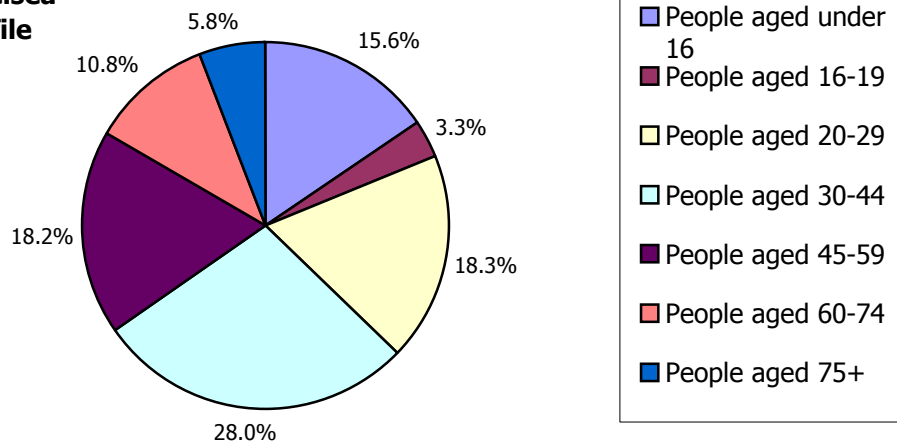
⁶ Those in higher grade occupations are working as managers and senior officials, or in professional occupations and associate professional and technical occupations.

Age

The average age of a person living in Kensington and Chelsea is 37 years. There are higher concentrations of children and young people aged under 16 in the north of the borough. The working aged population, aged 16-64, reside more densely in the middle of the borough. There are higher concentrations of residents aged 65+ in the south of the borough, and also further north in the wards of Norland, Pembridge, Campden and Holland.

Kensington and Chelsea Resident Age Profile

Source: 2001 Census

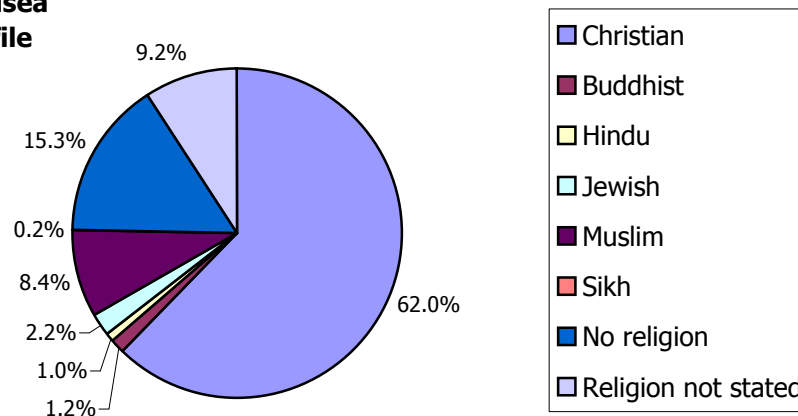


Faith and religious belief

Some three quarters of the population has some form of stated religious affiliation. After Christianity, Islam has the largest proportion of followers amongst residents in the borough. Kensington and Chelsea is ranked third out of all local authorities in England and Wales for the proportion of the population that is Buddhist (1.3%). The breakdown is illustrated below:

Kensington and Chelsea Resident Faith Profile

Source: 2001 Census



Sexual orientation

Although there are no accurate statistics for the numbers of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people residents, the 2001 census recorded 522 same sex couples living together as partners in Kensington and Chelsea.

Informing, communicating with and consulting residents

“Responding to residents” is one of the Council’s three aims. We invest significant amounts of time and money in consulting local people and listening to their views on how the Council should manage local services. We want to ensure that we inform, communicate with and consult all residents, including those from traditionally ‘hard to reach’ groups, effectively. This is essential if we are to enable people to access the Council’s services on an equal basis.

Aims

- ✓ To improve the ways that we inform, communicate with and consult residents by:
 - improving and diversifying ways of communicating with residents and service users to take account of their different needs and language abilities.
 - being consistently polite, courteous and helpful when dealing directly with the public.
 - consulting effectively with all parts of the local community.
 - providing effective information about how organisations work, the services they deliver, and the opportunities they offer for residents to get involved in and influence decision-making.
 - using a range of methods to gauge levels of satisfaction with services among different groups.

- ✓ To support and develop community life and leadership by:
 - bringing together the Forum of Faiths as a demonstration of tolerance, respect and the value of diversity, to address issues of common concern.
 - helping people to get the advice and information they need to tackle challenges, including dealing with harassment and discrimination.
 - providing accurate local information to counter inaccurate and occasionally irresponsible reports in the national media;
 - supporting efforts to assist those who find it hardest to be heard, get involved or get organised.
 - supporting active citizenship and widening participation in community decision-making, especially among young people and others who are often under-represented on governing bodies.

Achievements

As part of our “Here to Help” programme, we are making it much easier for groups of customers who may have specific difficulties to access our services and to have a really positive experience when they do.

We have established a telephone interpreting service at all of our customer receptions and main telephone lines, and introduced a video link to British Sign Language interpreters, to ensure that our customers have rapid access to an interpreter when necessary. We have translated our customer service brochure into the six main minority languages spoken in the borough, to publicise our interpretation services and our offer to provide important documents in alternative languages and formats.

We have achieved national accreditation for the accessibility of information provided on our website. Our website meets the RNIB's "See it Right" standard, has received an "AA" rating under national access standards and is accredited by the Plain English Campaign.

Consultation with customers with specific needs shows the importance of the attitude and awareness of our customer services staff. We have filmed a diversity awareness DVD, made by our front line staff working with local community groups, which we are using in diversity awareness training for staff. We are providing separate training sessions to cover the needs of specific groups of customers in more depth, which to date have addressed mental health, hearing impairments and speech impairments.

We have a wide range of mechanisms for involving residents, including those from hard-to-reach groups, in decision-making. We support a wide range of service user forums and representation on our key partnerships. For instance, we commission the Advocacy Project to run the "It's My Life" network of learning disability service users and support four of their representatives to attend and participate in our Learning Disability Partnership Board. We include service users on interview panels for key posts within the Council, such as posts in our disability and mental health services. We have achieved the highest level of the national "Hear by Right" standard for our involvement of children and young people in decision-making as part of our Local PSA.

We have included a challenging set of targets in our Local Area Agreement to further increase community engagement, and to extend the involvement of children in decision-making to a younger age group (5-13 years).

Actions for the future

We will take further action to strengthen community engagement. We will:

- provide £310,000 for the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership over the three years to 2008-09 to fund community empowerment projects led by partners, in addition to our programme of community engagement.
- increase by 6% the proportion of residents who agree all residents are encouraged to take an active role in their communities by 2008-09.
- increase by 6% the proportion of residents who agree that the Council consults local people on the decisions it takes by 2008-09.

- achieve the “established” level under the national “Hear by Right” standard for our involvement of children aged 5-13; and maintain the “advanced” level for our involvement of children aged 13-19.
- increase the percentage of children aged 5-13 who are satisfied with opportunities to influence important decisions by 15% by 2008-09.

We will take the following actions to diversify the ways in which we inform, communicate with and consult residents:

- deliver year-on-year increases in the use of telephone interpreting services and BSL video interpreting services.
- carry out a mystery shopping exercise of services for those with English as a second language during January 2007.
- consult deaf customers on their satisfaction with access to our services during 2006-07, working with the Royal Association for Deaf People.
- publish essential information about the Council’s services (including our interpretation and translation offer) on our website in each of the six main minority languages, sign-posted from our homepage.
- introduce a “Have Your Say” section on our website to set out opportunities for residents to get involved in decision-making, and produce an updated “Have Your Say” leaflet, during 2007-08.

The Equality Action Plan sets out further details of the actions we will take.

Improving physical access to local facilities

The Council wishes to bequeath to future generations a pleasant, attractive and inclusive borough in which to live. Our plans for renewing the legacy cover improvements to the streetscape, transport infrastructure, schools, housing, public art, parks and public spaces. They provide us with a great opportunity to improve physical access to local facilities for all of our residents, now and in the future.

Aims

- ✓ To improve the accessibility of buildings and public spaces within the borough by:
 - ensuring the physical soundness of and access to arts venues managed by the Council.
 - providing high quality parks and open spaces that all can use.
 - improving the quality and accessibility of sports and leisure provision for all in the borough and encourage participation in physical activities by ensuring that services are accessible to all.
 - improving the accessibility of buildings within the borough.
 - improving the accessibility of the streetscape within the borough.

- ✓ To improve local transport management, services and networks by:
 - working with strategic and operational partners to enhance the public transport system for the whole community, by expanding services where needed and improving the passenger experience.
 - ensuring that recreational, educational, health and shopping centres are easily accessible by public transport.
 - providing specialist transport services to those unable to access mainstream provision.

Achievements

We are putting access at the heart of our ambitious capital projects to help keep Kensington and Chelsea a great place to live and work in, and to visit.

For instance, our plans to improve Exhibition Road are based on principles of 'inclusive design' to help ensure that the route at both street level and underground will meet high standards of accessibility. Our vision for a new Holland Park School and a new secondary school in Chelsea will enable more children with specific needs to access learning in the borough, as will radical designs for the overhaul of St Joseph's Primary School and Holy Trinity Primary School. The design of our new customer service centre includes a checklist of improvements to make the environment better for disabled people - including counters at the right height for wheelchair users, automatic doors, and accessible toilets.

Many buildings in Kensington and Chelsea were designed and built before modern access design standards were introduced. A number are also listed and subject to planning constraints which prevent adaptations.

We have developed a local performance indicator for the accessibility of Council buildings that recognises the limitations imposed by the age of properties and planning constraints. It focuses on the measures that are in place to overcome physical barriers that cannot be removed through reasonable adjustments to deliver accessible services. We have set a target to ensure 60% of qualifying Council buildings offer 'good' to 'excellent' physical access, or alternative ways for users to access services, by 2006-07.

We have commissioned DisabledGo to provide and maintain a free online guide to the accessibility of key venues within the borough, selected in consultation with the local community, by April 2007. This will empower disabled residents and visitors to the borough to judge for themselves which venues are suitable for their own individual needs.

Actions

We will:

- introduce an audio description of facilities within Holland Park for visually impaired visitors and provide a scooter service one day each week to enable a wider range of residents to access and enjoy the park.
- ensure that all residential streets and 50% of major roads are well lit with "white light" by 2010, to improve visibility for people with visual impairments and make the streets safer for all in the community.
- increase by 10% the number of disabled parking bays for blue badge holders by December 2009, and work in partnership with Westminster Council to facilitate reciprocal parking arrangements for disabled badge holders in both boroughs.
- increase by 10% the number of bus stops within the borough at which wheelchair users are able to board and alight from buses by 2008-09.
- lobby Transport for London to persuade them of the case for new and expanded bus routes to improve the bus network in relatively poorly served areas of the borough and provide a range of statutory and discretionary accessible transport services.
- increase the percentage of Council buildings with public areas that have completed costed access audits and are taking follow-up action to 75% by March 2007 and 100% by March 2008.

The Equality Action Plan sets out further details of the actions we will take to deliver our aim to improve physical access to local facilities.

Delivering fair, relevant and accessible services

We want to respond effectively to all of our residents, and ensure that we provide them with really good services that meet their needs and ambitions.

As part of our programme of equality impact assessments, each year we carry out in-depth reviews of a number of key services to assess how fair, relevant and accessible they are to different groups and identify recommendations for improvement. Annex B lists the services that will be assessed during 2007-08. In addition, an assessment of the impact of new decisions for different groups of residents is a core requirement of our key decision making process.

Aims

- ✓ To improve the relevance and accessibility of local services to residents and other service users by:

In all services

- taking account of people's diversity when delivering services and information to them.
- operating a robust and effective complaints procedure.
- dealing effectively with incidents of illegal discrimination and harassment.

In Homes and Housing

- eliminating unjustified discrimination in services received by people from different ethnic, faith and other minority groups.
- engaging with traditionally excluded groups, such as young people and black and minority ethnic groups, so that they become more involved in decision-making.
- preventing homelessness and ensuring that temporary accommodation is of a suitable standard by targeting support for those at risk and increasing the number of vulnerable people accessing support.
- meeting the housing needs of disabled residents.

In Culture, Arts and Leisure

- widening the range of residents who enjoy the Council run museums, libraries and galleries, and Opera Holland Park.
- ensuring that the Royal Borough has a strong reputation for high quality culturally diverse arts.
- increasing the use of libraries, especially by those traditionally under-represented amongst library users.
- promoting physical activity as a means of improving quality of life and well-being, especially for children, young people, older people and disabled people.

In Health and Social Care

- ensuring that physical health, diet and exercise are addressed in care planning for people with disabilities or mental health problems.

- working with the community to improve our understanding of residents' service needs.
- working with community and voluntary organisations to enable service users and potential users (especially those who are hardest to reach) to improve their own health and influence the way services are delivered.
- improving continuity between child and adult disability services to facilitate seamless delivery of services.

In Learning

- increasing accessibility to and participation in learning and development, by supporting schools to identify challenging targets that reduce the risk of underachievement.
- working with the NHS and other partners to provide more integrated services, especially for children with high educational needs and disabilities.
- promoting high educational achievement for looked after children.
- securing and coordinating a broad range of complementary community-based learning opportunities, including supplementary schools, that meet the needs of the community.
- widening participation in learning, especially by traditionally under-represented groups of adults, to improve their choices, lifestyles and their economic well-being.
- reducing the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

In Work and business

- improving the employment prospects of residents.

Achievements

We are taking a wide range of steps, large and small, to tailor day-to-day delivery of our services to meet the specific needs of particular customers - such as employing outreach workers to improve access to mental health services for African, Caribbean and Arabic speaking communities, giving priority to older residents for waste collection from their doorstep as part of our "Too Big for the Bin" scheme, and running a special project to help Arabic speaking elders to access homecare and other social care services.

A selection of the achievements we have made in making our services fairer, more inclusive and accessible is provided below. We have:

- increased physical activity amongst target groups (including older people, women and BME groups) through an exercise programme benefiting over 2,000 people, delivered as part of our Local PSA, and we have secured permanent funding to mainstream this outreach work.
- expanded youth service provision for young disabled people – for instance, Lancaster Youth Centre gives special priority to disabled people on Wednesdays and provides fully integrated activities for the rest of the week – and supported

our local wheelchair basketball team, Raiders, to compete in the national league, in partnership with ADKC.

- delivered a successful "Arts for All" project as part of our neighbourhood renewal programme, which is providing a strong legacy of high-quality culturally diverse arts within the borough, supported by a long-term commitment to award a third of our Arts Grants Scheme funding for culturally diverse artists or projects.
- closed the gap in standards of street cleanliness between the north of the borough – where there are higher levels of deprivation and greater concentrations of children, residents from Black and Mixed ethnic groups and disabled residents – and the south of the borough.
- increased the number of black minority ethnic carers who benefit from our breaks service, and increased the take-up of direct payments amongst disabled and black minority ethnic people.

Actions

A selection of the actions we will take to deliver fair, relevant and accessible services over the next three years is set out below. Details of further actions we will take are provided in the accompanying Equality Action Plan.

We will:

- reduce the gap between the average life expectancy of Royal Borough residents and that of the bottom quartile of the local population by 2012.
- assess the accessibility of all social rented homes in the borough that are available to let, and the access requirements of all applicants for housing, so that we can match people with properties that meet their needs.
- establish an incentive scheme to encourage and support able bodied tenants living in social homes that are, or could be, adapted to move, and so free up suitable homes for people with access needs, by April 2007.
- work in partnership with the police to improve reporting and monitoring of hate crime against disabled people and provide crime prevention outreach services to disabled people and their organisations.
- ensure that one third of the funding available through the Council's Arts Grants Scheme is awarded for culturally diverse artists or projects.
- increase the proportion of the 4,800 people who participate in our adult and community learning programmes who live in the most deprived areas of the borough by 5%.
- provide work placements for 80 people from groups that are under-represented in the media sector - particularly women and young people from BME groups - and secure jobs for 64 of those people.
- ensure that at least 133 residents with mental health problems receive pre-employment training, through the SMART programme funded by the Council, by July 2007.
- reduce the percentage of 16-18 year olds that are not in education, employment or training to 8.5% by 2008-09.

- double existing after school care for disabled children, and more than double provision for school holidays, by providing holiday play five days a week to any child with a disability who requests it from December 2006.
- establish a centre for children with disabilities and their families , and use it as a resource from which to provide a transitions programme for young disabled people up to 25 years old, by summer 2008.

Community leadership: influencing our partners and suppliers

The Council applies the same high standards to services that are delivered in partnership or by a third party as it does to the services that are delivered directly by the Council – including with regard to equality. We seek to use our role as a community leader and our considerable purchasing power to encourage other organisations to promote equality and respect diversity.

Aims

- ✓ To influence our partners and suppliers to promote equality and respect diversity by:
 - following best practice advice from the Commission for Racial Equality when procuring services.
 - working with partners to implement voluntary and community sector codes of good practice.
 - working in partnership to remove barriers to inclusion for disabled people.

Achievements

We share a set of clear objectives for equality and inclusivity with our partners, which are contained in the Community Strategy developed by the Kensington and Chelsea Partnership.

We have organised diversity awareness training for frontline staff employed by contractors, including leisure centre staff employed by Cannons and waste collection staff employed by SITA, to help ensure that all members of the public receive high quality customer service.

We work effectively with our voluntary sector partners to promote equality and respect diversity. The Kensington and Chelsea Compact, which was established in 2001 to promote effective working between the statutory and voluntary sectors, is supported by four Codes of Practice dealing with areas where all parties need to make a particular effort to recognise local diversity, ensure equal access and enable effective consultation (the funding, consultation, volunteering and black minority ethnic Codes of Practice). Equality and access is embedded in the process for assessing all applications to the Council for grant funding made by voluntary sector organisations.

Actions

We will:

- update our equalities procurement guidance to ensure that the Council includes equality criteria relating to the new disability and gender equality

duties (in addition to the race equality duty and anti-discrimination legislation) in its contracts when it procures services.

- carry out an annual audit of a sample of contracts to ensure that:
 - contracts are consistent with our equalities procurement guidance.
 - the performance of contractors against equality criteria is being monitored.
 - contractors are meeting the equality criteria in their contracts.
- report the results and set improvement targets if necessary after the first annual audit of the equality components of our contracts.
- update the Compact and Codes of Practice to reflect good practice, in consultation with voluntary and community sector partners.
- raise awareness of the Compact and Codes of Practice by statutory and voluntary sector partners and secure an additional 20 signatories to the Compact by 2008.

The Equality Action Plan sets out further details of the actions we will take to promote equality through our procurement and partnership activity.

Our workforce: reflecting the community we serve

The Council strives to promote equal opportunities in employment, and to recognise and value the differences in the people it employs. We believe that this will help us to better serve the different people living in our community.

Aims

- ✓ To employ a labour force that broadly reflects the diversity of the population we serve. Our long-term ambitions are:
 - a) to be in the upper quartile of local authorities in England for the following national performance indicators:
 - the proportion of all staff that have a disability.
 - the proportion of top 5% earners that are women.
 - the proportion of top 5% earners that are disabled.
 - the proportion of top 5% earners that are from BME groups.
 - b) to ensure that the proportion of staff that are from BME groups is at least as high as the proportion of residents that are from these groups.
 - c) to eliminate unequal outcomes for people from different groups with regard to recruitment, retention, performance related pay and training.
- ✓ To provide suitable training in diversity and equality issues for decision makers and staff at all levels.

Achievements

The Council has signalled a strong commitment to the employment of disabled people. We gained "Two Ticks" accreditation under the "Positive About Disability" standard in 1997 and we have maintained it ever since. We participate in the Employer's Forum on Disability to ensure that we remain at the forefront of good practice in the employment of disabled people and we have established a pilot project to provide a home working placement for a local person with a disability who is unable to travel to work. Through our work with Kensington Recruitment, we have provided work placements for disabled residents of the borough since 1995.

As part of our commitment to equal opportunities in employment, we have also established career development programmes for men and women who are not in managerial grades. "Springboard" is an award winning development programme designed specifically for women. "Navigator" provides an equivalent programme for male staff. We also provide work placements for young residents through our "Headstart" programme, and have placed 40 Headstart trainees in permanent jobs at the conclusion of their training, a significant percentage of whom are from BME communities.

The percentage of staff that agree the Council is genuine in its commitment to equal opportunities for all staff increased by 7 percentage points to 64% between 2004 and 2006. We want to see this rise to 70% by 2008.

The Council is also committed to raising awareness about equality and diversity amongst its staff and members. In 2006, we received the Society of Chief Personnel Officers Diversity Training Award for "The Leap", a training programme developed jointly with the Garnett Foundation and our partners. We launched a diversity e-learning package for staff and worked with local community groups to create a diversity awareness DVD for front line staff.

The percentage of staff that agree the Council is committed to raising awareness about diversity issues rose by 17 percentage points to 76% between 2004 and 2006. We want to see this rise to 85% by 2008.

Actions

We will take further action to achieve our aims. We will:

- increase the proportion of top 5% earners that are women from 31.8% to 33.3% in 2006-07, 34.9% in 2007-08 and 36.4% in 2008-09.
- increase the proportion of top 5% earners that are from BME groups from 5.5% to 6.3% in 2006-07, 7.1% in 2007-08 and 7.9% in 2008-09.
- increase the proportion of top 5% earners that have a disability from 2.7% to 4.1% in 2006-07 and maintain it at least that level.
- increase the proportion of all staff that have a disability from 4.7% to 5% in 2006-07, 5.2% in 2007-08, and 5.4% in 2008-09.
- maintain the proportion of all staff that are from BME groups (currently 28%) at a higher level than the proportion of residents from those groups (currently 21%).
- conduct an in-depth investigation if data for any Business Group or for the Council as a whole consistently shows - when disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and disability - that people from a particular group are:
 - less likely to be appointed than other short-listed candidates when they apply to us for jobs;
 - receive fewer days training, or receive less developmental training, than other staff;
 - receive lower performance ratings than other staff;
 - leave the Council after a shorter period of time than other staff.
- ensure that all staff undertake a discussion with their line manager on their current diversity awareness and training needs, and reflect these in their Personal Development Plans for 2007-08.

The Equality Action Plan sets out further details of the actions that we will take to support the achievement of our aims in relation to our workforce.

Monitoring and reporting progress

Progress within individual services

At the level of individual services, equality impact assessments and the action plans that are developed to take forward their recommendations are a key tool for monitoring and reporting on progress in promoting equality.

Monitoring who accesses each of our services, and how satisfied they are, is key to enabling us to identify and reduce: any inappropriate over- or under-representation of particular groups amongst users of our services; and any differences in satisfaction levels amongst particular groups of service users.

Service managers are encouraged to use the Council's corporate diversity categories when they collect performance data and satisfaction ratings. This monitoring information is used to inform equality impact assessments of services, and identify areas for improvement.

Each year, we publish a report on each of the equality impact assessments undertaken in that year, which includes the action plan to take forward the recommendations identified in the assessment.

The Borough Community Relations Advisory Group has agreed to act as a "critical friend" and provide advice to the Cabinet Member for Service Improvement on each of the equality impact assessment reports and action plans before they are approved for publication. The Council has provided training to members of the Advisory Group to support them in this role.

From 2006-07, the lead Overview and Scrutiny Committees will receive annual progress reports from Cabinet Members on activity to promote equality and diversity, and the outcomes achieved, in services they are responsible for. The five Overview and Scrutiny Committees will also establish a working group to visit the Council's services and scrutinise how effectively equality commitments are being delivered in practice.

Progress across the Council as a whole

The Council places a high priority on communicating with residents about what is going well and what is not going so well. We will publish the following reports on the Council's overall progress in promoting equality:

- an annual report on progress in implementing the actions and achieving the targets contained in its Equality Action Plan, which will be submitted to the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- an annual report on equality and diversity in the workforce.

- details of our performance against national best value performance indicators for equality, as part of our Performance Digest.

One of the national performance indicators for equality is the level achieved by the Council against the Equality Standard for Local Government, which tests whether our systems for promoting equality in all aspects of policy-making, service delivery and employment are comprehensive and robust, and whether they are resulting in improved outcomes.

The Council is committed to achieving the highest level of the Equality Standard, which will require us to carry out a thorough self-assessment of our progress in achieving equality in employment and service provision, validated by an external assessor.

Roles, responsibilities and resources

The Kensington and Chelsea Partnership is responsible for overseeing the achievement of the objectives for equality and inclusivity contained in the Community Strategy. It has established a "Community, Equality and Inclusivity" sub-group to track partners' progress towards these objectives.

The Council is responsible for providing services that are fair, relevant and accessible to all residents, and equal opportunities in employment. Its actions will contribute to the achievement of the partnership's objectives for equality and inclusivity, as well as supporting the Council's corporate aims. The roles and responsibilities for equality within the Council are explained below:

- The Cabinet Member for Service Improvement has **executive** responsibility for promoting equality and respecting diversity across all of the Council's services, including those delivered on the Council's behalf by private companies and voluntary organisations.
- A number of **advisory and consultative** groups help to inform decision-making, including the Council's Borough Community Relations Advisory Group, the Forum of Faiths and the borough Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Advisory Group.
- Overall responsibility for **implementation** of the Council's commitments in relation to equality and diversity lies with the Town Clerk and Chief Executive. Every member of staff has a responsibility to promote equality and respect diversity, and the Equality Action Plan identifies the lead officers responsible for the specific actions and targets it contains.
- The Corporate Equalities Group, chaired by the Director for Strategy and Service Improvement, and the Equality Improvement Teams in each Business Group have responsibility for **monitoring and reviewing** progress in promoting equality across the Council.
- The five Overview and Scrutiny Committees are responsible for **scrutinising** the equality implications of executive decisions and the Council's progress in promoting equality.

The Council is investing resources to achieve its ambitions for promoting equality and respecting diversity. The delivery of the Equality Action Plan will be supported by existing staff resource and budgets - including budgets for service delivery, staff training, voluntary sector grants, property management and capital development. The Council will take decisions on future investment in improvements to the accessibility of its properties, on the basis of its programme of access audits, through the annual capital planning process.

Equalities Legislation

Race Equality

The Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, places a general duty on public bodies, including the Council, to promote race equality through all of their relevant functions.

Under the general duty, in carrying out its functions the Council must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination
- promote equality of opportunity, and
- promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

The Council must set out its race equality commitments and the actions it will take to implement them in its Equality Scheme and Action Plan.

Disability Equality

The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 places a general duty on public bodies, including the Council, to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people through all of their relevant functions. Under the new duty, public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled people and other people;
- eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Act;
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disability;
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people;
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life;
- take steps to meet disabled people's needs, even if this requires more favourable treatment.

The Council must involve disabled people in the development of its Equality Scheme and Action Plan, to set out its disability equality commitments and the actions it will take to implement them by 4 December 2006.

Gender Equality

Under the Equality Act 2006, a new duty will be placed on public bodies, including the Council, to promote equality of opportunity between men and women and to

prohibit sex discrimination in the exercise of public functions. The duty will impose three key obligations from April 2007:

- to identify specific gender equality goals in an Equality Scheme (to be published, monitored and reviewed every three years) and show the action they will take to implement them;
- to develop and publish an equal pay policy, which must include measures to ensure fair promotion and development opportunities and tackle occupational segregation;
- to publish gender impact assessments in respect of all major proposed developments in employment, policy and services.

Faith and Sexual Orientation

The Equality Act 2006 will also make discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief or sexual orientation in the provision of goods, facilities, services, premises, education and the exercise of public functions unlawful. These provisions will come into force in October 2006.

Age

Under the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, discrimination in employment, training and education on the grounds of age will be outlawed from October 2006.

Programme of Equality Impact Assessments

During 2007-08, the Council will carry out equality impact assessments of the following services:

- Economic development and regeneration
- Service improvement
- Communications
- Youth centres
- Pupil support services
- Services to support schools governance
- Substance use
- Older people care homes
- Older people day care

We will establish a new programme of equality impact assessments for the three years from 2008-09 to 2010-11.