

Gender Equality Scheme On-Line Questionnaire

Summary of Results

Introduction

The Equalities Act 2006 placed new duties on public authorities to promote gender equality; making things fairer for women, men and people who have changed gender.

Part of this duty required the council to produce a Gender Equality Scheme setting out how it intended to make equality happen. Within the Scheme the council are required to show how they have consulted employees, service users and others to find out what the different needs of women and men are in the town and in setting our gender equality objectives.

Specific duties required the council to consult stakeholders and take account of relevant information in order to determine our gender equality objectives.

As part of the consultation process, the council published a leaflet, in partnership with Blackpool Primary Care Trust (PCT), outlining the new duty and a reply slip including a selection of questions. This was distributed across Blackpool including to the Area and Equalities Forums and local voluntary sector organisations. An online survey was also set up in partnership with the PCT, asking a wide range of gender equality questions. This was publicised through the leaflet, Your Blackpool and internally through staff focus groups and the Internet Staff Notice Board.

72 questionnaires were fully completed online from 11th January 2007 to 31st July 2007. Although a relatively small number, the information gathered was used to determine the priority objectives in the Action Plan.

The major findings of the consultation exercise were:

- Increase opportunities to be involved in the shaping of services
- Awareness raising for staff on Transsexual issues
- More family friendly facilities within services
- Wider advertising of job opportunities

The summary below highlights some of the most common responses and also indicates some of the relevant equality objectives included in the Action Plan to Blackpool Council's Gender Equality Scheme.

A Profile of Respondents

Gender

The majority of those who responded were female (60.5 %), which also reflects the gender breakdown of the town. However, 6.5% stated they would use a term other than male or female to describe their gender identity and 5.3% declined to answer.

Also, 21.7% answered that their gender is not the same as that assigned at birth and 11.8% answered that they do not live full time in the same gender.

Age

26.3% of respondents were aged between 35-44 which does not reflect the age of the town as according to the 2001 Census 25% of Blackpool's population are over 60 years.

Ethnicity

According to the 2001 Census, the ethnicity of Blackpool residents is predominantly white British which is also reflected by 81.6% of respondents identifying as white British. However, in 2001 the largest ethnic minority group was Chinese, but for respondents it was Pakistani.

Demographics

Just over half of the respondents stated that they live in Blackpool and 73.7% stated they work in Blackpool. Thus indicating that some respondents both live and work in Blackpool.

Disability

Of the 72 respondents, 14.5% stated they consider themselves to be disabled, with 40% indicating mental health conditions.

Sexual Orientation

The majority of respondents stated their sexual orientation as heterosexual. There were almost equal numbers of lesbian, gay men & bisexual people who responded.

A Summary of the Responses and Equality Objectives

Community Safety

43.3% indicated that they had been a victim of crime, the majority of whom believed this was because of either their gender or their sexual orientation.

When asked to state where incidents had occurred, 62.5% had happened when out socially, 25% at work and 8.3% at school.

Of the incidents described, they ranged from verbal abuse to being mugged, sexual assault and rape.

The majority, 91.7% said they feel safe in their home and 58.3% in their neighbourhood. However, 26.7% stated that they live in fear of crime mainly because of their sexual orientation, gender, transgender status and ethnic origin.

Equality Objective: to review and reform the hate crime incident monitoring scheme particularly to include transsexual issues.

Discrimination

Over half (56.7%) have felt discriminated against or unfairly treated at some point. The majority felt the experience was related to their gender, ethnic origin or sexual orientation.

When asked where the incident had occurred, the majority (58.1%) said it had occurred at work, 41.9% when out socially, and 25.8% when accessing health services.

65.7% said it had also happened more than once.

Incidents included transphobic attitudes of hospital and shop staff and sexually based jokes.

Equality Objective: ensure all services are accessible and free from discrimination through awareness raising and training for staff, develop knowledge and awareness of gender equality issues through training.

Community Involvement

The majority of respondents do not feel they have a say in how services are delivered by the council (53.7%) and PCT (68.3%). People feel they are prevented from getting involved because of:

- staff attitudes,
- lack of motivation,
- lack of childcare
- lack of information
- work commitments
- unsuitable meeting times

The majority also answered that they would like to be more involved. What would encourage them is:

- childcare provision
- seeing positive results
- councillors taking notice
- greater visibility
- positive role models
- change of attitudes
- more convenient meeting times
- use of plain English

Equality Objectives: ensure that community consultation and engagement structure captures the views of both women and men, explore the scope for establishing a women's forum/community group under the Equalities Forum structure, ensure the LGBT Forum is accessible to Trans people and lesbians, examine how to address the gender imbalance on some existing forums and so obtain more representative membership.

Access to Services

The majority indicated that they are put off using council and PCT services because of staff attitudes and an unwelcoming environment.

Also indicated were

- lack of family-friendly facilities
- lack of public transport
- service not taking account of needs of someone who has changed gender
- unsafe environment
- previous experience of discrimination

Examples Given of Positive Experiences when Accessing Services

- Introduction of a clinic specialising in sexual health for women.
- GP surgery and pharmacy had a positive attitude towards a trans-woman.
- Family appointments provided by a local dentist.
- More female GPs being employed.

Examples Given of Negative Experiences when Accessing Services

- Lack of public transport that is suitable for prams.
- Council parking for staff often includes walking through secluded and unpleasant areas.

Suggestions to improve Access

- increased awareness for staff and public of Transsexual issues
- ensure services really meet need
- more meaningful consultation

Suggestions Made for Gender-specific Services

- More women only services.
- male 'wellness' clinics
- Some medical services.
- Contact sports facilities.
- more single sex community groups e.g. Dads Clubs
- Counselling services.

Suggestions for Transsexual-specific Services

- Swimming sessions.

Other Suggestions for change

- staff awareness training on all gender issues
- encourage more girls into higher education
- equal pay for all
- streets safer at night

Equality Objectives: customer facing services to examine issues such as the need for single-sex and trans-specific services, family-friendly reception areas, ensure all services are accessible and free from discrimination through awareness raising and training for staff, develop knowledge and awareness of gender equality issues through training.

Employment Opportunities

Half of respondents stated they were put off applying for jobs with the council and PCT due to lack of flexible working. As both organisations have very good flexible working schemes this response shows lack of awareness.

A third said they felt their life chances have been hindered by their gender because:

- of attitudes towards Transsexual people.
- Discrimination is still a problem for women in employment.

- Discrimination that exists for men accessing traditionally female jobs is not recognised.

Suggestions for Action

- Training & awareness of employers, staff & public of Transsexual issues
- More open-minded approach to recruitment
- More targeted recruitment of certain communities
- Clear and specific references to gender reassignment surgery and gender role changes in organisations Equal Opportunities Policy
- More opportunities for self-development
- More women only empowerment/aspiration courses
- More flexible working, informal open days & job fairs

Equality Objective: training to ensure managers are able to manage gender equality issues in the workplace, respond positively and support staff, ensure positive attitudes are promoted around gender issues in schools to ensure equal opportunities for boys and girls, ensure services are developed to promote equality of employment opportunity, develop knowledge and awareness of gender equality issues amongst all staff.

Conclusion

The information gathered from this questionnaire was used to determine the priority objectives in the Gender Equality Scheme Action Plan. It is intended that the questionnaire will be repeated annually during 2007-10 in order to inform reviews of the Scheme.

Blackpool Council would like to thank all those respondents who took part in this consultation process.