

Scottish Borders Council Equality Outcomes and Evidence

Evidence and Drivers Behind the Outcomes

- 1. We are seen as an inclusive and equal opportunities employer where all members of staff feel valued and respected and our workforce reflects our community.**

Data shows that Scottish Borders Council's (SBC's) workforce is not representative of the communities it serves. Less than 2% of our staff having declared a disability when 20% of the work age population within the Borders have a disability. Less than 3% of our staff are from an ethnic minority when estimates suggest 10% of the communities we serve are ethnic minorities. Less than 1% of our staff have declared they are either Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual when it is estimated that around 10% of the population is either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender. Well over half of SBC staff are aged over 45, with 10% of the workforce aged 60 and above. SBC's workforce is made up of 71% female and 29% male staff but we see these percentages reverse when we look at the top levels of our pay scale.

During the engagement part of developing our equality outcomes every equality group highlighted barriers to employment within the Council. This information coupled with the changing demographics of the Borders such as the decrease in work age population and pressures of the Welfare Reform Bill provide strong drivers for taking steps towards achieving these outcomes.

By working towards these outcomes Scottish Borders Council will begin to future proof its workforce, capitalising on all available skills and talents. Having a workforce which is representative of the community enables the council to better understand and meet the needs of its community. Evidence shows that where discrimination and inequality within the workforce are reduced, productivity increases and sickness absence rates decrease delivering a more effective and efficient workforce. As the largest employer in the Borders, Scottish Borders Council is in a prime position to make a positive contribution, to the Borders economy and communities through taking steps to reduce inequality through achieving this outcome. If this outcome is also adopted by the Community Planning partners the potential to reduce inequality across the region would be maximised delivering significant positive outcomes for the whole Borders community.

2. Our services meet the needs of, are accessible to all members of our community and our staff treat all service users, clients and colleagues with dignity and respect.

Through the engagement process of developing our equality outcomes, issues around service delivery were highlighted by all of the equality groups. Groups stated that there is a need for Scottish Borders Council to continually improve its Customer Services across all areas and should be looking to ensuring excellence within customer service in order that people can fully access Council services. This includes looking at disability, cultural and social awareness training, interpretation and translation services and appropriate signposting.

This is supported by the satisfaction rates of equality groups found within the most recent Household Survey(2010). Respondents from ethnic minorities, women and disabled people were all less satisfied with Scottish Borders Council. 19% of Disabled people rated Scottish Borders Council as poor or very poor compared with 15% of non disabled people, 21% of females rated Scottish Borders Council as poor or very poor compared with 15% of males and 18% of minority ethnic respondents did not know how to rate the council compared with 14% of white Scottish respondents, indicating that our ethnic minorities are less likely to understand or engage with the Council and its services.

Groups also highlighted issues around Scottish Borders Councils' engagement and communication processes in both developing and delivering services. The need to collect better data around all the protected characteristics was also highlighted. This is essential in order that the Council can better understand the different equality groups; how and when they engage with services; their satisfaction rate with services; and be better able to identify where these groups are not engaging in order that the Council can develop and deliver effective and efficient services which meet the needs of the whole community.

By working towards these outcomes Scottish Borders Council will take significant steps towards overall service improvement and reducing inequality within the community. This can be achieved through more efficient and effective service delivery which is based upon evidence and understanding of specific needs and requirements of communities and which will enable effective targeting and maximisation of resources. This is underpinned by both the requirements and recommendations of the Best Value and the Christie Commission reports. If these outcomes are embedded within the work of the Community Planning partnership, the above mentioned benefits will be greater and will have a further reaching effect within the whole Borders community. By working towards these outcomes the Community Planning Partnership will also be better able to meet the national outcomes within the Single Outcome Agreement.

3. Everyone has the opportunity to participate in public life and the democratic process.

It is very well acknowledged that people with protected equality characteristics find it harder to participate in public life and indeed it is one of the main drivers behind the Equality Act. This is evident within the Scottish Borders and is demonstrated through the results of the household survey. Younger people, women, ethnic minorities and disabled

people all indicated that they were less satisfied with their opportunities and ability to participate. 31% of women were either very or fairly well satisfied with their opportunities for participating in the local decision making process provided by Scottish Borders Council, compared with 36% of men, 19% of respondents with a disability were either fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied when posed the same question compared with 16% of non disabled respondents and 20% of ethnic minority respondents were either fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied when asked this question compared with 16% of White Scottish respondents. The same survey also indicated that, ethnic minority people and people with disabilities were less likely to attend art, cultural and social events, engage in voluntary work or take part in physical activities.

Scottish Borders Council there where only 6 female elected members compared with 28 male members. Ethnic minorities, people with disabilities and members of the LGBT community were also under represented.

The above evidence was supported by the findings of the engagement work with equality groups. The groups highlighted numerous physical and social barriers which prohibited their opportunities and ability to participate in public life. The groups also highlighted the impacts that this had on their lives and the community around them, with factors such as the negative effects on health and wellbeing, inability to reach their full potential and the inability to contribute within society and to the community all being important factors.

By working to achieving the outcome above Scottish Borders Council will be taking steps to reducing inequalities across the communities it serves. This in turn will have positive effects on the economy, infrastructure, health and wellbeing and local society through having a healthier, more productive and cohesive community..

If this outcome is embedded within the work of the Community Planning partnerships the ability to have a greater impact will be presented. The Community Planning Partnership will also be better able to meet the national outcomes within the Single Outcome Agreement.

4. We work in partnership with other agencies and stakeholders to ensure that our communities are cohesive and there are fewer people living in poverty.

5. Our citizens have the freedom to make their own choices and are able to lead independent, healthy lives as responsible citizens.

Currently 12% of the Borders population is living in financial exclusion and experiencing multiple deprivation relative to the Scottish population(SIMD). Statistical evidence of gender difference within the Borders in terms of access to income from earnings, assets, savings and benefits indicate that women's income from earnings and other sources are persistently lower than men's income, that women are more vulnerable to poverty and that specific groups of women are particularly vulnerable. In 2009 there was a 21.6% difference between men and women's weekly earnings in the Borders, this pay gap decreases for those who commute out with the area. Significantly more women than men are claiming housing benefits, pension credits, attendance allowance and income support. In November 2011

there were 13,205 claims for health related benefits. Nearly half of the children within the Scottish Borders live in low income households.

This coupled with the effect of the Welfare Reform Bill and the current economic climate, presents serious challenges for the Scottish Borders community as a whole. Equality Groups are the most vulnerable when it comes to the effects of these changes. The impact is expected to increase demand on services and resources and so it is essential that work towards safeguarding these groups and reducing inequalities is mainstreamed into the working of the council and Community Planning Partnership.

Community tensions were an issue raised by all of the equality groups through the engagement work carried out last summer. Issues were raised around hate crime by people from the ethnic minority community, people with learning disabilities and the LGBT community. There were also issues raised around violence against women.

These findings are supported by local data. Lothian and Borders Police have consistently recorded hate crime to be 86% race related over a five year period within the Borders. Within the Household survey women, older people, people with disabilities and ethnic minority people all felt less safe to walk alone in their local area after dark.

By working towards the outcome above Scottish Borders Council will be taking steps to protect the future of the Scottish Borders and the communities it serves. Promoting a more cohesive community has added benefits for the community as a whole and work should also focus on community capacity building in order that communities are more resilient and better equipped to support themselves.

If this outcome is embedded within the work of the Community Planning partnerships the potential to have a greater impact will be presented. The Community Planning Partnership will also be better able to meet the national outcomes within the Single Outcome Agreement.

6. The difference in rates of employment between the general population and those from under represented groups is improved.

Barriers to employment opportunities were highlighted by all of the equality groups during the engagement phase of the research. The Economic downturn and the Welfare Reform Act have raised serious concern and challenges for those from the equality groups who make up many of those furthest away from work.

In November 2011 there were 13,205 claims for health related benefits in the Scottish Borders. Only 64% of disabled people in the Borders were in work in 2008. In 2010 there were 4290 claims for Incapacity Benefit in the Scottish Borders. All of these claimants are required to go through a work capability assessment as part of the Welfare Reform. It is expected that 71% will be declared fit for work related activity.

In August 2012 there were 745 young people (under 25) claiming Job Seekers Allowance in the Scottish Borders which equates to 36% of all claimants (NOMIS). Between 2006 and

2011 the employment rate for people aged 16-24 in the Scottish Borders dropped over 20% to 51%; more that the drop experienced for Scotland which was only 8% to 55%(APS). Only 10% of Care Leavers in the Borders in 2011/12 went on to further education, training or employment (Children's Social Work Statistics 2012 Edition).

The number of women in the Borders Claiming Jobseekers Allowance increased by 123% between 2008 and 2012. Overall claims increased by 97.7% during the same period.

By Working towards this outcome Scottish Borders Council will be taking steps to reduce inequality and promote equality of opportunity.

7. The difference in educational attainment between those who are from an equality group and those who are not is improved.

During the engagement phase of the research work several equality groups highlighted issues around education. Bullying was seen as a significant issue by all of the equality groups and it was felt that this greatly impacted on educational attainment.

Females consistently out perform males within Scottish Borders Schools with more females going on to Higher Education. There is a significant gap in educational attainment between pupils who have an additional support need (ASN) and those who do not, with only 75.9% of ASN pupils gaining English and Maths at SCQF 3 or above in 2010/11 compared with 94% of pupils without an ASN.

By working towards this outcome Scottish Borders Council will be taking steps towards offering all young people within the Scottish Borders Equality of Opportunity and the ability to reach their full potential.

8. We have appropriate housing which meets the requirements of our diverse community.

Population and household numbers are growing in the Scottish Borders. Households are getting smaller and older. The Borders has a greater proportion of older people than Scotland overall and neighbouring local authority areas – 30% of households will be aged over 65 years by 2033, compared to 20% in 2008.

The number of people that require support to live independently in the Scottish Borders is also increasing – particularly older people and those suffering with dementia, people with physical disabilities and learning disabilities.

Wages in the Scottish Borders are some of the lowest in Scotland (28th lowest out of 32 local authority areas). This low wage economy has major implications on what housing 'local' households can afford. It is estimated that more than 50% households working locally cannot afford housing market prices in the Borders.

The 2001 Census shows that 2,697 individuals or 2.5% of the population of the Scottish Borders is made up of individuals from minority ethnic communities. Of these 2, 108 states that they are White Irish or 'Other White' including people from other European countries or other parts of the world. A very small proportion – 589 people, or 0.55% of the Scottish Border population includes other ethnic minorities such as Indian, Pakistani, and other south Asian, Chinese, Caribbean , African or other black. The youthful age profile of a number of minority ethnic communities suggests that this population is likely to grow at a faster rate than white UK communities. We expect that the 2011 Census data when available will show a significant increase in Ethnic minorities within the Scottish Borders and we are aware that people from these communities have very unique challenges in terms of housing.

The main increases in homelessness applications in the Scottish Borders have come from single people, and young people aged 16-17 years. The main reasons for homelessness in the Scottish Borders are where family or friends are no willing to accommodate the homeless applicants, violent and non-violent relationship breakdown, and loss of private tenancies. This is in line with trends across Scotland. (SBC Local Housing Strategy 2011-2017).

