

# Equality Mainstreaming Report 2017 - 2021

## We asked:

From Summer 2016 until February 2017, we consulted internally and externally on our 2013 -2017 Equality Mainstreaming Report. The purpose of the consultation was to highlight the progress on equalities since the publication of our first Equality Mainstreaming Report and assist with the development of our Equality Mainstreaming Report 2017 – 2021. We asked to hear views on how the Council is performing on equality and diversity matters and what improvements could be made over the next four years. This included things that we do well, areas for that need to be improved and progress against our equality outcomes.

We also asked:

- If the Equality Outcomes helps us to improve equalities in the Scottish Borders
- For any suggestions for improving equalities in the Scottish Borders and Scottish Borders Council
- If we should add to or change our Equality Outcomes

We consulted with a variety of groups during this time, including:

Our employees

Community Councils

Community and Voluntary Groups representing:

- Older People
- Children and Young People
- People with disabilities
- People with learning disabilities
- Carers
- Race
- Interfaith/Belief
- Sexual Orientation/Gender Reassignment

The consultation document was also placed on SBC's Consultation Website Page for the Scottish Borders communities to respond to. Communities were made aware of the availability of the consultation by press releases and posters displayed in Contact Centres, Libraries, Sports Centres and Community Halls where paper copies of the consultation document were available.

## You said (key aspects)

Key responses included:

- Many Council services are accessible but there are issues for access to those who live in rural areas.
- It's good that SBC has maintained 'face to face' contact centres.
- A high percentage of respondents agreed with the Equality Outcomes but some changes are required including the need for:
  - suitable adapted premises for people of all disabilities;
  - wider distribution of job vacancies and more use of positive images/logos;
  - sustainable resources to support people to engage in the decision making/participation type roles.
- Staff members feel valued and supported.
- Staff have access to Language Line and British Sign Language interpreters. Both services allow instant access to an interpreter for customers who require these services.

- Focus groups/consultation/engagement with the communities needs to be improved.

## **We did:**

From the consultation we learnt that whilst substantial progress has been made further work still needs to be undertaken in order to mainstream equalities within the Scottish Borders and the Council. Furthermore it is also appropriate to retain the eight existing equality outcomes for the period 2017-2021 as they are aspirational and still relevant.

Whilst in part the refreshed Mainstreaming Report remains unchanged a key emphasis has been to take steps to define how we will achieve our equality outcomes and we have developed an overarching action plan that will help us meet our Equality vision for the Scottish Borders.

Key aspects within the Action Plan include:

- Better performance indicators in relation to performance data.
- More effective training of Council Employees and elected members in relation to equalities.
- Ensuring business plans and commissioned services are fully embedding equality into their development and implementation.
- Greater effort to be made to engage with equality groups in the development of plans and policies.
- More targeted marketing of job vacancies in order to attract hard to reach groups to apply for vacant posts within SBC.
- Strengthened approach to homophobia and transgender issues including working towards adoption of the LGBT Charter in Schools.
- Continuing to ensure that policies, practices and processes are Equality Impact Assessed.
- Working with our Partners to ensure that services and provision meet the needs of their users.

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