

WSCC Reset Plan – approach to assessing equality impact during implementation

West Sussex County Council is committed to equality of opportunity, valuing diversity and eliminating unlawful discrimination. This commitment is embedded in the four priorities within the West Sussex Rest Plan.

West Sussex County Council will meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The County Council recognises its duty (the Public Sector Equality Duty) to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

In the development and in the implementation of plan the Council will ensure that decision-makers will, in a timely way, have due regard to these commitments and can show how this has been done and an equality impact assessment will be completed where needed. The plan recognises the need for the assessment of proposed actions against the public sector equality duty to be carried out separately for each activity or intervention by reference to the likely or expected impact of that activity. Consultation and engagement activity and the evaluation of available data will be used in a focused way to understand the potential impact of proposals.

Some core information about the communities of West Sussex may provide a starting point:

- **Age** – West Sussex has an older population compared with England. In 2018, 23% of the population (195,500 people) were aged 65 years or over, compared with 18% nationally. A notable exception below county level is Crawley, where less than 14% of the population is 65+ years and 22% are aged 0-15 years.
- **Disability** – Using data from a national survey, the portion of the population with a disability equates to 21% of the total population, ranging from 3% of 0-4 year-olds to 60% of people aged 80+ years.
- **Ethnicity** – Population level data is available from the Census. In 2011, 89% of the county population were White British, higher than England (80%). Crawley is, again, notably different from the rest of the county, with 72% White British and 5.2% and 4.3% from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds respectively.
- **Gender/Transgender** - 51% of the West Sussex population is female, reflecting the longer life expectancy of women. In the older age groups the gap is greater, with 55% of 65+ year-olds and 63% of 85+ year-olds being female. There is an absence of reliable data at a national or local level relating to the number of people who have/are seeking gender re-assignment or identify with a different gender than they were assigned at birth. Nationally the Government have stated a tentative estimate of 200,000 to 500,000 people broadly described as transgender.

- **Marital Status/Civil Partnership** –The Census 2011 described the marital/civil partnership status of residents. In West Sussex, 51% of people aged 16+ were married or in civil relationships, 29% single, 10% divorced, 8% widowed, and 2% separated.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity** – In West Sussex, in 2018, there were 8,540 births, 38 of which were to mothers aged 18 years or under.
- **Religion/Belief** – 66% of people in West Sussex stated they had a religious belief (lower than England - 68%). Crawley had a higher percentage of people who stated their religion as Hindu (5%) or Muslim (7.5%)
- **Sexual Orientation** - Nationally (in 2016) ONS estimated that 2.5% of the UK population aged 16 or above identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or 'other'. Using this assumption, this represents 17,500 people aged 16+ in West Sussex

The approach will also recognise that there are other groups in the population which are at known higher risk of poorer health and wellbeing outcomes due to the lifestyle, background or other circumstances and these groups will also be considered as part of the impact evaluation to inform decision making.

Impacts of the proposed change

All West Sussex County Council Reset Plan targets aim to deliver positive outcomes for the people of West Sussex. A number of the measures in the Council Plan are aimed to have a positive impact upon the lives of groups of people with protected characteristics. There should not be any negative impacts on any group with a protected characteristic. This will be tested as plans are developed and implemented.

The work of developing proposals to deliver the aims of the re-set plan will include arrangements to ensure an understanding of all potential impacts on those with protected characteristics and the responsibilities of the Council under the public sector equality duty. This will ensure that those who prepare proposals for consideration, those who have the task of scrutinising proposals and those charged with taking decisions carry out these tasks with the information they need to ensure the Council's equality and diversity commitments are met.