

3) 2013-2016 Strategy – Progress

3.1 Progress in Meeting Equality Objectives 2013 - 2016

Aim 1: To reduce the effect of socio-economic background on health and life expectancy

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16

Children and Young People's Plan June 2013 – March 2015:

Priorities:

- Improved educational attainment, Protecting vulnerable children, - Early help and improving life chances, - Being healthy and positive

Outcomes relating to this aim include:

- More families in work and fewer children living in poverty, - Improved mental health for children and their parents
- Better health outcomes for looked after children, - Fewer young people engaging in risky behaviours

Update:

Poverty

The latest available data (snapshot Aug 2014) for Central Bedfordshire shows 12.8% of children living in low income families. This relates to all dependent children under the age of 20. This is an increase from 12.1% as at August 2013. It should be noted that there was also an increase nationally - where approximately 400,000 more children in families were earning less than 60% of the median income. The main reason for this increase was that the low-income threshold, which is 60% of the median income, rose from £218 in 2013, to £253 in 2014. This means that some families would have had the same income in 2013 and 2014 (e.g. £240), but would only have been considered 'in poverty' in 2014 due to the threshold change.

Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing

The Children's Trust Board has closely monitored progress in respect of children's emotional resilience, mental health and wellbeing. The latest results from an Emotional Health and Wellbeing Survey of 4,416 children and young people in 2015/16 covering Years 4 to 12 in 48 schools – indicate that:

- The percentage of pupils with a high self-esteem score has improved since 2014.
- More pupils feel that their school cares whether they are happy or not, compared with 2014, although the percentage is still lower than the wider reference sample.
- At least 1 in 10 children and young people report sometimes being so worried that they find it hard to concentrate on anything.
- Over a third of Year 8, 10 and 12 pupils have low resilience scores.

- Children and young people mostly turn to family and friends for support; however, a significant minority say they would not have any support for a range of issues.
- 23% of Year 6 pupils worry about the way they look, compared with only 16% of a wider reference sample from the SHEU data bank of 78,451 pupils in 2014.

There is also a need to support young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training where there are mental health issues that would prevent learning. Mental health and emotional wellbeing remains a key area of focus for the Children's Trust Board. A mental health partnership 'task and finish' group has been set up to lead on the improvement of mental health and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16

Shadow Health and Wellbeing Board

The Government White paper Equity and Excellence passed responsibility for public health to local authorities with the objectives are to:

- Promote health and reduce inequalities
- Support and care for an ageing population and those who are most vulnerable

Inequalities in Central Bedfordshire – A report by the Director of Public Health

The report summarised health inequalities in Central Bedfordshire and recommended actions that can be taken to address these inequalities

Update

Central Bedfordshire has a growing and ageing population which is expected to increase to 274,400 by 2016. The biggest increase of around 30% will be in the number of people aged 65 and over, which has implications for future health and social care needs. The population of Central Bedfordshire is growing due to increasing life expectancy, a rising birth rate and inward migration.

According to the latest Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), life expectancy at birth provides a good overall indicator of health and wellbeing. During 2012-2014:

- life expectancy had risen in Central Bedfordshire to 81.5 years for men and had fallen very slightly for women to 83.8 years [81.0 years for men and 84.0 years for women 2010-2012)] and both are better than the national average.
- Life expectancy is increasing at the rate of about 4.0 years for men and 2.1 years for women each decade.

Geographically there is a range of life expectancy within Central Bedfordshire, there is a statistically significant gap between the most deprived 20% and the least deprived 80% of the population. Looking at life expectancy by dividing the area into ten groups from the most to the least deprived LSOAs shows a clear difference.

There is one group that, in the present data, goes against the overall trend, this is female life expectancy in the second least deprived group which is significantly below the average for Central Bedfordshire. However, this gap appears to be reducing for both men and women in the most deprived areas (2011-2013). Life expectancy is now 6.0 years lower for men (6.6 years in 2010-12 and 8.0 years in 2009-11) and 5.2

years lower for women (5.4 years in 2010-12 and 6.3 years in 2009-11) in the most deprived areas of Central Bedfordshire compared to the least deprived.

Many deaths before the age of 75 years are avoidable, so there is an increasing focus on reducing these, particularly in the more deprived areas and in vulnerable groups within the population. The biggest causes of deaths under 75 are cancer (particularly lung cancer), heart disease and stroke, and lung diseases (including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) (<http://healthierlives.phe.org.uk>).

67.7 years for females in 2011 (this is based on data from the 2011 Census). The inequality in healthy life expectancy at birth, calculated using the slope index of inequality, was 7.7 years for males and 7.2 years for females. This means that on average those in the least deprived 10% live over 7 years in good health than those from the most deprived 10%. These figures place Central Bedfordshire in the top quartile nationally, i.e. in those areas with the smallest gap. The current focus includes:

- ensuring good mental health and wellbeing at every age
- giving every child the best start in life
- enabling people to stay healthy for longer
- improving outcomes for frail older people

The Health and Wellbeing Board monitor targets around these key areas to ensure work continues to improve each area of focus. Since the initiation of the previous Equalities Strategy, a new JSNA website has been created which provides a view of many measures including those relating to health and wellbeing. See [Local Insight](#).

Aim 2: To ensure that every individual has the chance to learn and to realise their talents to the full

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16

Children and Young People's Plan June 2013 – March 2015. Priorities are listed under Aim 1.

Outcomes relating to this aim include:

- Improved achievement and progress
- The right skills to be work ready
- High aspirations for young people and their families
- Children and young people with disabilities are supported to achieve their aspirations
- Troubled families are supported

Update:

Whilst there is a challenging (nationally set) target in respect of disadvantaged 2 year olds placed in early education / childcare, Central Bedfordshire is performing well compared to Statistical Neighbours and the Region. The latest comparator data shows that in February 2016 Central Bedfordshire reported take up of entitlement to early learning for 2 year olds as 79% (640 children) ranking Central Bedfordshire as follows: East of England: 2/11 Statistical Neighbours: 3/11 National: 41/152.

Attainment

The Council's ambition is to be in the top quartile in relation to educational attainment and progress across all the phases. In 2015 there was top quartile performance for Key Stage 1 (Level 2+ reading, writing, mathematics) and improved performance for Key Stage 4. However, there is still significant progress to make e.g.:

- 64% of children achieved a good level of development at the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) in 2015 – this was a third quartile position and ranked 110 out of 151.
- At Key Stage 2, the percentage achieving Level 4 and above in Reading, Writing and Maths 2015 (77%) is below National and Statistical Neighbour averages (both 80%). Central Bedfordshire is in the bottom quartile.
- At Key Stage 2 the 2015 percentage point gap between Disadvantaged* pupils and other pupils achieving Level 4 or above in Reading, Writing and Mathematics is 25 percentage points. The National gap is 15 percentage points and the Statistical Neighbour gap is 18 percentage points.
- At Key Stage 4 the 2015 percentage point gap between Disadvantaged pupils and other pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths is 30.5 percentage points. The National gap is 28.2 and the Statistical Neighbour gap is 32.0.

(*Disadvantaged Pupils include pupils known to be eligible for Free School Meals from Year 1 to Year 6, those who are looked after children or adopted from care).

- Narrowing the gap - the performance of children eligible for Free School Meals at Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2.

The right skills to be work ready

In 2014, 5,976 (23.76%) of the youth population (aged 13 – 19) in Central Bedfordshire participated in the national 'Make your Mark' campaign. This enabled young people to vote on their priorities for their local communities and identify specific campaigns that would form the focus of the youth parliament. One of the 3 key priorities identified by young people in Central Bedfordshire was the provision of high quality work experience.

As part of the 'Better Work Experience' campaign, members of the Central Bedfordshire Youth Parliament undertook research. The members surveyed 270 young people to establish their understanding and experience of work experience. They found:

- Of the participants, only 61% have been able to participate in work experience
- Of those who have participated, 59% found their work experience to be useful
- 68% of participants believed work experience should be 'mandatory'

The young people also suggested that as the largest employer in Central Bedfordshire, the local authority should lead the way in providing high quality work experience opportunities across its departments and services. This would then enable the Council to more effectively influence the schemes offered by other employers and by our schools. Following the campaign from youth parliament, the Council is committed to the development of its work experience offer.

Central Bedfordshire has seen a continued reduction in the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training. Performance is good and is now in the top quartile. Annual data (which uses a 3 month average: Nov 15 – Jan 16) shows that 3.1% of children in Central Bedfordshire are NEET. This is a reduction from 3.7% last year. The National average is 4.2% and the Statistical Neighbour average 3.4%.

Aspirations

The Children's Trust Board monitors the percentage of vulnerable children aged 11- 15 in the 'Aspire NLP School Programme reporting improved aspirations and self esteem. In Quarter 1 2016/17 88% of participants reported improved aspirations and self esteem (compared to 87% in Quarter 1 2015/16).

Supporting Families Programme

Supporting families is the Central Bedfordshire programme for the National Troubled Families initiative. The aim of the programme is to help families achieve significant and sustained progress in overcoming their difficulties. As at the end of Quarter 4 2015/16, 212 families in Central Bedfordshire were engaged with the Supporting Families Programme – which exceeded the Quarter 4 target of 180.

Looked After Children

The percentage of looked after children who have had an annual health assessment has remained stable over the past year – with good performance. In Quarter 1 2016/17 97.7% of looked after children had an annual health assessment.

Risky Behaviour

Hospital admissions for alcohol specific conditions (for under 18's) and substance misuse (for those aged 15-24) are all better than the statistical neighbour and national averages, as is the case for hospital admissions as a result of self-harm (for those aged 10-24 years).

PARTNERSHIP VISION FOR EDUCATION IN CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE 2014 Data

3rd Quartile at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage

1st Quartile at the end of Key Stage 1

3rd Quartile at the end of Key Stage 2

2nd Quartile at the end of Key Stage 4

2nd Quartile for young people not in education, employment or training

84% schools good or better compared to 81% national average and statistical neighbour average (December 2014) and this figure has been reported at 87-89% more recently.

Local employers report any issue with young people entering employment with the right skills to be work ready.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16

Disability Review – Transform services for disabled children.

An independent review of services for Children with Disabilities is being undertaken for disabled children, young people their parents and carers living in Central Bedfordshire. The review will consider services delivered across social care, health, education and voluntary sector provision. The review will also consider how residential short breaks are delivered. The proposed model of service delivery will ensure the coordination of services across and between specialist, targeted and universal services

Update:

The support and services available for children and young people with SEND is set out in one place in Central Bedfordshire's Local Offer.

<http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/children/sen-disability/landing.aspx>

It is constantly evolving with input from professionals from both Adult and Children's Services including education, health, social care, Special Needs Action Panel SNAP, voluntary and community groups.

Work has been taking place on the development of the SEND Vision and the refresh of the detailed JSNA chapter for children with SEND.

Aim 3: To give every person the opportunity to play a part in strengthening Britain's economy

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 Economic Development Plan:

Priority 3: Getting our residents **into work** **Priority 4:** Increasing the supply of **our skilled people.**

Work stream 7. Improving Access to work and learning

Ensuring residents are able to access employment, learning. The target groups identified within the Local Economic Assessment as requiring additional support to access the labour market and develop their skills are: 18-24 year olds and over 50s, disabled people and ethnic minorities. These groups are prioritised within the Into Work section of the plan and measures are proposed which will tailor welfare provision to the needs of these groups and tackle youth unemployment.

It is proposed to monitor the EDP using the following core indicators.

- Number of people in employment
- Number of out of work benefit claimants
- Economic activity rate
- Number of people in apprenticeships.

Into Work - To monitor the performance of the Central Bedfordshire Labour Market and people's ability to access employment, the following indicators will be monitored annually:

- Number of people who are unemployed or economically inactive accessing information advice and guidance on volunteering through volunteer centres
- The levels of youth unemployment

Skills for Growth - To monitor the level of individuals' skills, take up of training and business skill needs the following indicators will be monitored annually:

- % of working age people with level 2, 3, 4 qualifications
- % of people who have received job related training in Private Sector in the last four weeks

Update:

The labour market in Central Bedfordshire in 2016 remains in a positive position. In March 2016 137,300 people were in employment of a total working age population of 174,800 – 78.6%. This is higher than all comparator areas and although the rate has remained static compared to March 2015, due to an increase of the working population of 3,200 people, there are now 2,300 more people in employment compared to a year ago.

Unemployment in Central Bedfordshire remains significantly lower than comparator areas and in March 2016 the rate for people aged 16-64 was 2.5%, or 3,500 people, compared to 5.2% in England and 3.6% across the South East Midlands Local Partnership (SEMLEP) area. In February 2016 there were 9,170 people claiming out of work benefits, equating to 5.4% of the working age population, a reduction of 3,070 people since February 2013.

Although unemployment levels remain significantly lower than comparator areas, and at a record low, it is notable that the number of people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for long periods of time is not falling in the same way. 13.8% of claimants have been claiming JSA for over two years. People aged 50-59, and aged 40-44 are the largest age groups within the claimant cohort (in 2014 young people were the largest claimant groups). Similarly, the number of people who have been claiming Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance over a long period of time is not reducing.

There are 1,200 people claiming Job Seekers Allowance in June 2016 (0.7%), the lowest rate and number since October 2004 –a fall of 330 people – or 21.6% since June 2015. This recent decrease may be due to people starting to claim Universal Credit instead of Job Seeker Allowance. In comparison in February 2016 there were 6,190 people claiming Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance, equating to 3.7% of the area's working age population or 49.5% of those claiming a benefit. The percentage of this cohort has remained persistent over the years due to the entrenched challenges to employment faced by individuals. Such challenges include individuals having complex needs including mental and behavioral disorders, diseases of the nervous system and musculoskeletal system. Interventions for this group of people continue to be a key focus, with a more specialised, individual and holistic approach being required.

Groups who continue to face barriers to being economically active are ethnic minority groups, females in particular, who still tend to have a lower economic activity rate than the population of Central Bedfordshire as a whole. As do those aged over 50 and under 24 years of age.

The most frequently advertised job vacancies in Central Bedfordshire consist of a combination of both skilled, in some instances highly skilled, and unskilled work. “Other administrative occupations”; and “programmers and software development” professionals rank as highly as “care workers and home carers” in terms of the number of advertised jobs. This highlights the diversity of the local economy, which adds to its resilience to economic shocks. There appears to be broad alignment between the occupations sought by Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants and advertised job occupations, although there may be location variations and exact job requirements may not match workforce availability.

The rate of people in Central Bedfordshire in December 2015 with NVQ 2, 3 and 4 qualifications has increased by a higher number of percentage points over the last 3 years than the national rate. The rate for those having no qualifications remaining lower than the national level.

In Central Bedfordshire 38.6% of the working age population were qualified to NVQ Level 4 (degree equivalent) or above in December 2015; 56.9% to NVQ level 3+; 75.4% to NVQ Level 2+; and 88.1% of the working age population is qualified to NVQ Level 1. Despite this there are people, both in and out of the workplace, having low level skills. Interventions are in place to support these people and are summarised in the Council’s All Age Skills Strategy.

Central Bedfordshire consistently performs well against the national, regional and statistical neighbour NEET (Not in employment, education or training) averages. For example, In April 2016, Central Bedfordshire’s NEET level was just below the mean average for statistical neighbours at 3.5%. Support for assisting young people move into training and employment is closely monitored and is summarised in the Council’s All Age Skills Strategy. There were 2,070 apprenticeship starts at all age levels in Central Bedfordshire in 2014/15 academic year. This is an increase of 300 people, or 17% from the previous academic year. The focus on apprenticeships will continue, especially with the introduction of the apprenticeship levy.

With regard to the skills of the local labour force, 10.5% of people received job related training over a 4 week period in March 2016, a significant increase from 8.1% in March 2013. This shows improving business confidence as more businesses are keen to invest in their employees. 29% of businesses cited a skills gap within their current workforce. This is a lower proportion than in 2014 (37%).

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 - All Age Skills Strategy

Priority 1: Working together - Enhance partnership working and improve the availability and dissemination of local labour market intelligence

Priority 2: Developing the Current and Future Workforce - Increasing the proportion of the workforce with recognised qualifications, and supporting access to academic and vocational opportunities

Priority 3: Raising Individuals' Aspirations and Achievements - Promote and raise awareness of the support and opportunities available at all ages for skills development and the importance of skills in achieving ambitions.

Update:

Overall, Central Bedfordshire performs well in respect of qualifications with the proportion of the resident working age population qualified to NVQ Level 4, above the SEMLEP average (35.1% in 2014). However, this is slightly below the national average, with some of our statistical neighbours significantly outperforming Central Bedfordshire.

74% of the working age population are qualified to Level 2 NVQ, this is marginally above national levels.

There remains a segment of the population with no qualifications (6.1% in 2014).

58% of Young People in Central Bedfordshire achieved 5 GCSEs at A* - C (including English and Maths). This is higher than the national average but lower than our statistical neighbours.

We have a comparatively low job density, with approximately two jobs for every three people of working age, however of those businesses seeking to recruit in the last 12 months, the predominant reason for recruitment difficulties has been the low number of applicants with the required skills (47%).

Central Bedfordshire is seeing an increase in the number of people aged 50-64 years in employment (67.6% in March 2013 to 71.2% in March 2016). A similar trend is being seen for the 65+ in employment, from 4,300 people (9.9%) in March 2013, to 5,200 in March 2016.

Despite this, long-term unemployment is one of the most serious challenges facing the over 50s with large numbers of people aged 50+ claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), 2590 (44.9%) in November 2015. This can be for a variety of reasons, for example ageism among employers, outdated qualifications, and for some people a lack of IT skills or declining self-confidence.

Of those Young People eligible for Free School Meals, 29.6% achieved 5 GCSE's at A* - C (including English and Maths). This is slightly lower than both the national and statistical neighbour averages.

Our young people aged 16-19 who are Not In Education, Employment and Training (NEET) in Central Bedfordshire continues to fall. For example, in 2012/13 there were 390 young people who were NEET which accounted for 4.6%. In 2014/15, this fell to 320 young people (3.7%) and reduced further in 2015/16 to 270 young people (3.1%).

IN 2015, of those Young People who were NEET: 45% were aged 18 to 19 and 35% were living in Dunstable and Houghton Regis. However, the ward that consistently has the highest number and % of Young People is Leighton Buzzard North. This population accounts for 10% of the overall NEET population.

There has been a significant rise in Young People 'unavailable' to the labour market due to emotional health/illness, with this group now making up a third of the NEET cohort.

In January 2016, there were 184 looked after children and care leavers who were supported by Central Bedfordshire. At any one time, we support 120 of this group who live in Central Bedfordshire or neighbouring authorities, including a growing number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to help them make the transition into independent lives.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16

Internal Workforce and Employment Issues, Awareness, Training and Development

Objectives for 2012 – Identified Via Annual Employment Monitoring

- Improve the data that we hold relating to protected characteristics in employment
- Increase awareness of equality requirements through training

Update:

Information held relating to the protected characteristics of CBC employees is improving through natural churn. The principle way that this information is provided is through application forms for jobs. The level of recording of protected characteristic information for existing employees is varied, however a recent update to the HR system has provided an opportunity to improve this. In the recent Staff Survey (2016) all respondents were encouraged to provide information on protected characteristics.

Online equality training is provided as part of the induction process. In addition, regular training of new Children's Services employees has been a feature of efforts to raise awareness. In addition, ad-hoc training has been provided where specific issues have arisen or it has been requested.

Aim 4: To put an end to identity-based violence and harassment

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16

Children and Young People's Plan June 2013 – March 2015. Priorities are listed under Aim 1.

Outcomes relating to this aim include:

- Children are happier and safer as a result of help received
- Improved mental health for children and their parents
- Troubled families are supported
- Young people are diverted from offending and anti-social behaviour

Update:

Details of safeguarding progress can be found in the Central Bedfordshire safeguarding Children Board Annual Report <http://www.centralbedfordshirelscb.org/lscb-website/about-us/lscb-annual-reports>

During 2014/15 the Access and Referral Hub dealt with 10,898 enquiries and during 2015/16 it dealt with 12,012 which was a 10% increase. From the 12,012 enquiries coming through the Access and Referral Hub, there were 1,389 early help assessments received. At the end of March 2016 there were a total of 1,389 children in receipt of early help.

The rate of children in need per 10,000 of the population under 18 in Central Bedfordshire has increased slightly from last year, with a 1.5% increase. The overall children in need numbers for the past four years can be seen below:

- 1631 in 2012/13 to
- 1541 in 2013/14 to
- 1495 in 2014/15 and
- 1461 in 2015/16. (Provisional figure excluding LAC and CP –Figure including LAC and CP is 1518)

The rate is below the England, statistical neighbour and regional averages. Early indications are that this decrease does not match the trends in other areas.

From the 12,012 enquires there were 2,370 referrals to intake and assessment. During the year 2015/16 the Police referred 32% of all referrals to Children's Social Care a significant number of which related to concerns around domestic abuse. Schools referred 20 % of all children to Children's Social Care services and health professionals 11%.

Where identified at the point of assessment, abuse and neglect is the highest primary need for those children assessed by Central Bedfordshire Children Social Care. Final data indicates that at the end of March 2016 the referral rate (per 10,000 of the child population) will have remained steady and is consistent with statistical neighbour and regional averages for 2015/16, with the repeat referral rate decreasing and falling below statistical neighbour and national averages.

Community Safety Partnership Plan Priorities for 2011-12:

- Reduce Anti-social Behaviour
 - Reduce Re-Offending
 - Reduce Domestic Abuse
- Includes Sexual Abuse Action Plan and actions related to Safeguarding Adults.

Update:

Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC) Tracker Survey
77% feel safe when outside in their local area after dark
98% feel safe when outside in their local area during the day
69% feel that in their local area people from different ethnic backgrounds get on well

51% agree that CBC are making the local area safer

Domestic Abuse (DA) causes significant harm to not only the victims but also the wider family, it also accounts for just over 10% of all crime recorded in Central Bedfordshire. In 51% of all DA incidents a child was present, and 34% of DA incidents reported were at a repeat location. In Central Bedfordshire high risk victims are supported by the Multi- Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC). This is a monthly multi-agency group which meets to review cases and create a safety plan for the victim and any children. Of the 313 MARAC cases heard in the past 12 months only 10 cases were for victims or perpetrators from a black or minority ethnic (BME) group. This is disproportionate to the demography of Central Bedfordshire, and highlights possible under reporting from this community.

Within Central Bedfordshire the highest BME group is the Gypsy and Traveller community. A survey carried out with this group in early 2014 advised that 83% confirmed DA was an issue in their community. As a result of these findings the CSP lead on a Task and Finish Group whose aim is to improve engagement with that community, leading to awareness of services in respect of DA.

DA is not limited to adults; there is an increasing awareness of DA within teenage relationships. In Central Bedfordshire only 5% of victims who reported a DA incident between October 2014 – September 2015 were aged under 18yrs. The majority of victims were aged 18 – 24 yrs. These numbers are much lower than expected.

Victims assessed as high risk receive extensive support opportunities from a range of partners. This is essential to those who are high risk, but 65% of DA victims in Central Bedfordshire are assessed medium risk and therefore not heard at the MARAC. These victims do not receive bespoke support services. Working with victims who are assessed as medium risk is essential to prevent an escalation of the violence, stop the cycle of abuse and to offer support and advice as the victim requires.

The CSP commissioned a domestic abuse perpetrator programme, which due to its success has been extended to 31st March 2016. Other activities include:

- targeted range of domestic abuse communications including messages for male victims and male perpetrators.
- re-launched the domestic and sexual abuse website www.bedsdv.org.uk includes specific sections for male victims and perpetrators.
- domestic abuse training programme offers a course 'Working with Male Victims' to support frontline workers to engage with this client group.
- The pan-Bedfordshire Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) sub-group has finalised referral pathways and is implementing a training package for professionals. Development of an FGM Community Peers programme is being explored.
- CBC are developing an internal Corporate Domestic Abuse Strategy and Action Plan which reflects the key highlighted work strands. It is expected that meaningful progress against this action will commence 2016-2017.
- A range of activities are underway for 16 Days of Action; to raise awareness with both members of the public and professionals in relation to domestic and sexual abuse.

Sexual Abuse

- Between October 2014 – September 2015 there were 271 sexual offences in Central Bedfordshire reported to Bedfordshire Police. This is an increase of 54% when compared with the previous 12 months. 34% of reported offences were cases of historic abuse.
- Between October 2014 – September 2015 there were 100 offences of rape recorded in Central Bedfordshire, an increase of 32% when compared to the previous 12 months.
- In Central Bedfordshire 89% of all sexual offences recorded involved a female victim and of the 271 reported 19% of them had a victim who was aged under 18 years.
- It is known nationally that sexual abuse offences are significantly under-reported with 90% of rapes going unreported and it is therefore, believed locally that the vast majority of offences are not reported to the police.
- An increase in Sexual Assault Risk Assessment Conference (SARAC) referrals was achieved however, a lack of partner engagement in the referral process and resource implications has resulted in the suspension of the SARAC from September 2015.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16

Hate Crime Strategy 2014

- Increase in reporting of hate crime across Bedfordshire
- Raise awareness of hate crime and support available in Bedfordshire
- Provide awareness, information and challenge to young people in Bedfordshire
- Support Victims of Hate Crime

Update: Hate Crime

In 2014 the first Bedfordshire –wide Hate Crime Strategy was launched. The Hate Crime Strategy identifies; co-ordinates and leads on all aspects of our developing work on tackling and reducing hate crime. It covers all partners who together make up the Hate Crime Partnership as well as the three Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and wider community partners. In Central Bedfordshire:

- 1,500 business were contacted to raise awareness of the Hate Crime Partnership, the responsibilities of those who run a business in challenging hate crime and where to go if further support or awareness is required.
- recognising that members of the community suffering from mental health illnesses can be adversely targeted or affected by hate crimes. Each of the four Mind groups was visited and service users were given information and able to ask any question they had on hate issues.
- Supported living accommodation, care homes, day centres, libraries, leisure centres and fire stations all received information and the request to publicise hate crime information within their premises. This has raised awareness for those members of the community who use their organisations and premises.
- Briefings were given at the Adults Safeguarding Board, Children’s Safeguarding Board, learning disability forums and voluntary sector team meetings to raise awareness of not only partner agencies, but the advocates who attend those meetings and who support members of the community.

- Representatives from the Hate Crime Partnership supported a learning disability sports day event, where they engaged and interacted with attendees raising awareness and promoting stop hate messages.
- All Central Bedfordshire Council staff received an article on hate crime, and where to go if they themselves, or someone they know, required support.

As a result of all of this work there has been a 65% year to date increase in the number of people stepping forward to report the hate crime that has happened to them. This is a clear indication that victims, and advocates, have felt more confident to come forward and get the support they require.

Aim 5: To give more people greater personal autonomy and civic power

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16

Children and Young People's Plan June 2013 – March 2015. Priorities are listed under Aim 1.

'Put children at the centre of everything we do' cuts across each of the priorities – along with 'children and families' voices'

Outcomes relating to this aim include:

- More families in work and fewer children living in poverty
- Children and young people with disabilities are supported to achieve their aspirations

See information under Aim 1 and Aim 2.

2015/16 has seen progress being made to the way in which partner organisations within Central Bedfordshire consider together the effectiveness of their engagement with children and young people. This is being led by the 'Voice of the Child' group (a sub group of Central Bedfordshire Safeguarding Children Board). For more information see the Children and Young People's Voice report:

<http://www.centralbedfordshirechildrenstrust.org.uk/cbct/youth-voice/introduction-3>

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 'Transforming People's Lives'

Transforming Care and Support Through Personalisation - Putting People First consists of four main elements:

- **Universal services** - such as suitable housing, access to transport, including bus passes, leisure, including free swimming and libraries (to reduce social isolation, contribute to health and well-being) and safe pavements (to reduce falls requiring hospital admissions which increases the need for longer term care), more accessible advice and information so people can make their own decisions about longer term support options.
- **Early intervention and prevention** - there is increasing evidence that re-directing investment to Telecare / Assistive Technology, health checks and re-ablement services reduces dependency and longer term costs

- **Social capital** - support to carers, volunteering, and village care schemes etc which increase the capacity of local communities to provide solutions and reduce the need for direct support from the state.
- **Choice and control** People will have the right to Live free from abuse or neglect; Take risks, Meet personal aspirations, Live independently

The Council will

- Ensure high quality personally tailored support is available
- Offer a Personal Budget based on self / supported assessment
- Work with partners to enable people to live a life free from abuse or neglect & enjoy the best quality of life
- Make available with partners a range of universal & preventative services
- Improve advice & information for individuals, carers & community groups
- Listen & involve local people in the transformation of care & support
- Ensure the best possible use is made of funding channelled through the Council
- Support the development of a skilled local workforce
-

Update: Making it Real

Think Local, Act Personal's Making it Real is a set of 'I' statements or markers that can be used to ensure that people's expectations are considered when improving and developing services. The markers highlight the issues most important to the quality of people's lives and demonstrates the Council's commitment to personalisation and community based support. By signing up to Making it Real, the Council commits to:

- Ensuring people have real control over the resources used to secure care and support.
- Demonstrating the difference being made to someone's life through open, transparent and independent processes.
- Actively engaging local communities and partners, including people who use services and carers in the codesign, development, commissioning, delivery and review of local support.
- Ensuring that leaders at every level of the organisation work towards a genuine shift in attitudes and culture, as well as systems.
- Seeking solutions that actively plan to avoid or overcome crisis and focus on people within their natural communities, rather than inside service and organisational boundaries.
- Enabling people to develop networks of support in their local communities and to increase community connections.
- Taking time to listen to a person's own voice, particularly those whose views are not easily heard.
- Fully consider and understand the needs of families and carers when planning support and care, including young carers.
- Ensuring that support is culturally sensitive and relevant to diverse communities across age, gender, religion, race, sexual orientation and disability.
- Taking into account a person's whole life, including physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs.

Evidence

The Personal Outcomes Evaluation Tool (POET) survey provides an insight into the experience and outcomes from adult social care personal budgets. The most recent survey (February 2016) showed that

- 67% of Central Bedfordshire respondents felt that they could fully or mostly decide how to spend the money in their personal budget, compared to 72% nationally.

Those most likely to feel in control of their personal budget were 26 to 35 year olds, women, those with memory and cognition related support needs, those receiving short term support (reablement) and those using direct payments.

- 85% of respondents felt that their outcomes (as set out in their support plan) had been fully or mostly achieved.

Those most likely to feel that their outcomes had been achieved were 46-55 year olds, women, those with a learning disability and users of short term support (reablement) and those that had a service provider or Council (or NHS) held budget.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 - Community Engagement Strategy

Principle 1) Giving more people more opportunities to inform and influence decisions

Principle 4) Building the capacity of local people to engage and to do more for themselves

Update:

Principle 1) Giving more people more opportunities to inform and influence decisions

- 2x Leighton - Linslade Community Forum's engaging over 300 young people on issues that affect them, 150 residents on town centre regeneration issues.
- Since 2013, 8 Town and Parish Council Conferences have been held engaging circa 40 parish councils per event on topics including the Local Plan, the Planning process, strategies for Parking and Passenger Transport.
- 2014 CBT Conference engaged over 100 delegates / 50 organisations to influence strategic priorities for Health, Regeneration, Police and Community Safety
- Partnership with SSAFA to hold a community event in summer 2014 in Leighton -Linslade to celebrate the contribution of the Armed Forces.
- 31 residents on an estate in Houghton Regis actively engaged in efforts to remove unsightly concrete from communal grass area.
- 4 Joint/ Partnership Committees supported to help deliver a locality based approach to decision making.

Principle 4) Building the capacity of local people to engage and to do more for themselves

- In partnership with BFRS 41 defibrillators circulated and installed in 40 parishes across Central Bedfordshire.

- Over 50 nominations to Community Right to Bid processed and listed as Assets of Community Value
- CBC Land licensed to Leighton Linlade Town Council and managed by local residents as community garden.
- 3 community buildings transferred to local parish / town councils
- 6 community grants funded by section 106 monies awarded to projects in Langford and Biggleswade.
- New community grant schemes established in Caddington and Eggington.
- Over 60 parishes actively engaged in delivery of services devolved by CBC
- £125,000 awarded per annum to vcs infrastructure organisations to support, represent and nurture the growth of community groups including over 30 village hall committees advised, and encourage and support volunteering.
- £235,000 per annum distributed to Citizens Advice organisations to provide vital advice on social welfare, access to benefits and how to manage debt.

Looking forward

On a strategic level during this time the Council has agreed a new priority 'Stronger Communities' and allocated an Executive member to lead on the development and implementation of a strategy for developing Stronger Communities. The 5 pillars of the new Strategy, which will replace the Community Engagement Strategy, are

- Volunteering and Building Social Capital
- Participatory and local decision making
- Communities doing more for themselves
- Community Assets and facilities.
- Organisation and Culture / Making it Happen

Other Key Council Strategies Plans and Policies which Promote Equality of Opportunity

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 - "Let's Rent" – Housing Option

- innovative private sector housing option that allows households a choice to access a regulated private sector home, with all requisite support mechanisms for tenancy sustainment.
- potential to tackle inequality by focusing on ensuring that the diverse housing needs of customers can be met, whilst increasing customer choice and control, and promoting high quality sustainable homes.
- scheme will assist in preventing homelessness, to offer customers threatened with homelessness a viable and sustainable alternative to social housing or temporary accommodation and to promote customer choice and control

Outcomes measured in terms of Homelessness Prevention, supporting vulnerable children and adults, health and educational outcomes, and providing sustainable homes for the community.

Update:

Central Bedfordshire Council's Let's Rent scheme is aimed at people who are either threatened with homelessness or in need of housing. The service has been developed by the Council in partnership with local landlords, licensed letting agents, the Council's Housing Benefit Service and local floating support services. It allows families or individuals to have a choice of good quality, well managed, private sector accommodation in the local area, which enables local people to make important decisions in relation to employment, education, health services and family support networks.

Evidence

Of the 886 people that applied for a Lets' Rent property, 609 applicants told us their ethnicity and of those 16% were BME. Of the 134 successful applicants that told us their ethnicity, 24% were BME.

25-34 year olds were the most likely to apply for a property through Lets' Rent (36%) and were most likely to be offered a property (32%)

9% of applicants had a disability. A higher proportion of applicants with a disability were offered a property.

66% of applicants were female and 70% of successful applicants were female.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 - Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

1. Show a year-on-year increase in the proportion of vulnerable households living in decent homes and
2. As a minimum to reach the target figure of 70% by 2010.

Update:

The aim of this policy is to support residents to improve their health and wellbeing by addressing problems with substandard and/or unsuitable homes that do not meet individual needs through loan and grant assistance. The Housing Assistance function has a role in supporting the wider adult social care prevention agenda; specifically those aims of the Care Act 2014 to promote wellbeing, independence and prevent or delay care and support needs. The policy's priorities are:

A – The safety and security of older persons and other vulnerable groups, living in their home,

B - Reducing cases of fuel poverty,

C - Reduction of category 1 hazards, (with associated health related benefits) & major adaptations for people with disabilities (see below)

D - Reducing the number of non-decent homes, primarily with loan assistance that can be recycled

E - Reduction of empty homes,

F - The improvement in the thermal efficiency of the housing stock,

G - The maximising of opportunities for external funding of all types for the benefit of meeting the above priorities

Evidence:

The assistance set out in the policy is targeted at those made most vulnerable by poor quality or unsuitable housing. This includes people with disabilities that struggle to live independently in their home because of the physical barriers, Park Home owners that are most commonly older people that are at an increased risk of fuel poverty and older, frail people that are at most risk of falls in the home.

Poor housing conditions have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable households as they may have poorer health and access to financial resources to remedy the situation may be limited. The range of assistance advances equality of opportunity by giving those at most risk of poor/unsuitable housing financial assistance to improve their housing situation and thereby their health and wellbeing.

The policy's priorities are set so that the assistance benefits those most vulnerable to the impact of poor or unsuitable housing. Those benefitting chiefly are older and disabled people because of the disproportionate affect and higher risk of these two groups living in unsuitable or poor quality housing. Black and minority ethnic groups and young people especially will benefit from assistance that supports an increase in the supply of housing through bringing empty homes back in to use.

Families with young children will also benefit from a health and social perspective through the reduction of homes with category 1 hazards. Affordable warmth assistance will reduce the number of children living in cold, damp homes and DFGs will enable children to live at home with an increased level of independence.

Carers will be able to cope better with their caring responsibilities both physically and mentally.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 - Homelessness Strategy

The Homelessness Strategy has the potential to tackle inequality through actions which are designed to meet the diverse housing needs of customers across Central Bedfordshire, whilst increasing customer choice and control, and promoting high quality sustainable homes.

Priorities:

- Harmonise housing options services across Central Bedfordshire.
- Work with young people aged 16-24 to meet their needs more effectively.
- Embed the Think Family approach within all homelessness prevention activity and broader interventions to sustain families in permanent settled accommodation.
- Strengthen safeguarding practice for vulnerable adults and children across all aspects of housing options and homelessness prevention.
- Investigate the particular problems and pathway journeys that are experienced by people with complex needs, including mental health and substance abuse.
- Strengthen equalities practice across all aspects of the service.
- Make best use of private sector accommodation in meeting all other homelessness priorities.
- Sharing awareness and working in partnership with the community and between partner agencies.
- Tenancy sustainment.

Update - Homelessness Strategy

Our objectives are to:

- Effectively prevent homelessness by offering good realistic advice and support together with practical help.
- Understand and tackle the root causes of homelessness at a local level.

- Where people do become homeless, help them to find and sustain suitable homes as soon as possible.
- Involve people affected by homelessness in planning services to meet their individual needs.
- Improve how we work together so services are easier to use and make the best use of available resources.
- Work in partnership with Children's Services to develop bespoke and sustainable housing solutions for young people and care leavers, including the provision of supported housing.
- Ensure our responses to homelessness promote customer choice, equality of opportunity, reduce social exclusion and contribute to community cohesion.
- Delivery of high quality frontline services, which consistently achieves great results, whilst making the best use of resources.

The delivery of the Homelessness Strategy will ensure that those at risk of homelessness will receive the support and advice to prevent losing their accommodation. Those that are homeless will receive the accommodation and non-accommodation based support to enable them to regain their independence and prevent future homelessness. Homelessness has a deep impact on health, employment opportunities, educational achievement, and is linked to offending and substance misuse. For most people who become homeless their lack of accommodation is a symptom rather than a cause of their social exclusion. Those at most risk of homelessness or who are disproportionately affected are Families with children', Single homeless, Young people (16-17 year olds and 18-20 year old care leavers)

Evidence

Statutory homeless acceptance data shows that young people aged 18-24 represent 32% (38) of all statutory acceptances in 2013-14 with those aged 25-34 accounting for 30 cases (25%). These groups combined make up more than half of all acceptances (56%), indicating that people from young or relatively young age groups are disproportionately affected by homelessness.

Housing Services' prevention data shows that out of the total 281 prevention cases 2% were given a priority need category of 'applicant aged 16 or 17', 70% dependent children and 4% were vulnerable due to old age.

Ten of the 124 households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were given the need category of 'mental illness or handicap'.

18% (22) of households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during 2013-14 were one person households. 13 (59%) of applicants were male and 9 applicants were female

An examination of statutory homeless acceptances in 2013-14 shows that 48 (40%) of all acceptances were from lone females with dependent children, making them the largest priority group. Couples with dependent children accounted for 14 (12%) of cases with single females making up 12 (10%) of acceptances.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 - Local Transport Plan

Objectives:

- Increase the ease of access to employment by sustainable modes.
- Reduce the impact of commuting trips on local communities.
- Increase the number of children travelling to school by sustainable modes of transport.
- Improve access to healthcare provision by the core health service (hospitals and GPs).
- Ensure access to food stores and other local services particularly in local and district centres.
- Enable access to a range of leisure, cultural and tourism facilities for residents and visitors.
- Enable the efficient and reliable transportation of freight.
- Encourage the movement of freight by sustainable modes.
- Minimise the negative impacts of freight trips on local communities.
- Reduce the risk of people being killed or seriously injured.

Update:

There has been significant investment in transport improvements in Central Bedfordshire since the adoption of LTP3 in April 2011 which has contributed towards meeting equalities related objectives. The emphasis of much of the authority's investment has been on improving transport choice and providing alternatives to the car, which whilst beneficial to all, particularly targets those without access to a car and as such those at most risk of suffering from social exclusion as a result of poor accessibility to jobs and services.

Examples of some specific schemes which have been delivered include:

- The Luton to Dunstable Busway which opened in 2013 provides a fast, high quality link between Luton Airport, Luton town centre, Dunstable and Houghton Regis increasing access to jobs and other opportunities.
- Shared space schemes in Dunstable and Biggleswade which seek to priorities road space for vulnerable road users as opposed to general traffic.
- The Travel Choices programme in Dunstable and Houghton Regis investment in, and raised the profile of, walking, cycling and public transport in the conurbation which included the opening of the Travel Choices Hub, which provided a one stop shop for travel advice.
- Safety schemes around schools in Maulden, Eatonbury (Stotfold), Clifton, and Stanbridge for example.
- Introduction of 20mph schemes in Dunstable and Potton in seeking to reduce the impact of traffic on vulnerable road users
- Investment in bus stops including real time information, raised kerbs and shelters to make using public transport easier, particularly for those with limited mobility and impaired vision.
- Cycle infrastructure improvements in terms of dedicated cycle links, signage and parking facilities to work towards making cycling a realistic travel option for those without access to a car.

This investment has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured on the roads, including children. Figures on the increase in use of public transport and walking and cycling are harder to ascertain. However, the number of households within 30 minutes travel time of a number of key services has reduced in the same period.

LTP4 Objectives

It is proposed to focus the new LTP4 on delivering sustainable growth as the single most predominant issue facing the authority. Sustainable growth forms the basis to the Government's economic policy and is key to securing the future prosperity of Central Bedfordshire. Given this focus, there are three broad areas through which transport can contribute to facilitating growth, and these three areas are intended to form the objectives of the Plan. They relate to:

Capacity – Provide the transport capacity to facilitate growth - New development will increase pressures on the transport network and the demand to travel in the local area. Providing new capacity and making better use of the existing capacity will allow the authority to absorb this increase and accommodate additional trips, to enable development to come forward and minimise the impact on existing residents.

Connectivity – Improve connectivity to jobs and services - Connected communities which can readily access the new jobs and opportunities provided by growth ensure that all local residents can realise the benefits associated with new investment in an area. Improved connectivity also helps to give business a competitive advantage and embed sustainability into the growth agenda.

Communities – Create safe and attractive communities - Safe, attractive and inclusive communities are places in which people want to live and businesses want to invest. Through the creation of more civilised streets, reducing the impact of traffic and improving safety and personal security, transport investment can help create communities and preserve a local environment that draws in external investment.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 - Customer First Programme

Aims to:

- Improve the customer experience whilst interacting with Central Bedfordshire Council. Moving services online will make self-service easy for those who are able to access and use the internet. Integration of front and back office processes will ensure that customer enquiries can be resolved at their first point of contact with us, through the lowest cost channel.
- Unlock the financial benefits that can be gained through avoiding unnecessary contact with customers or, where appropriate, enabling customers to interact with CBC through our website.

As part of the development of the Channel Shift Strategy consideration has been given to issues such as location of facilities, access to buildings and provision of translation services etc. There is also an undertaking that all staff will offer a consistently high level of customer service and have access to high quality sources of accurate information.

Update:

The Findings of the 2016 Resident's Survey highlighted that:

- 73% of residents feel informed about the services and benefits provided by the council, compared to the national average rating of 63%
- 70% of residents believe that the Council provides good quality services.
- Over two thirds of residents are satisfied with the way the Council runs things. This is above the national average but a slight drop from 2014 responses.

- The majority of residents (58%) remain satisfied with Value for Money and we are continuing to perform higher than the national average of 52%.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 - Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy

To set out the vision, strategic objectives and spatial strategy for the area up to 2031 and the policies for achieving the strategic vision. This will entail an assessment of general development needs together with the consideration of any necessary Green Belt reviews. The identification of strategic-scale development sites will also be considered.

Update:

Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy

To set out the vision, strategic objectives and spatial strategy for the area up to 2031 and the policies for achieving the strategic vision. This will entail an assessment of general development needs together with the consideration of any necessary Green Belt reviews. The identification of strategic-scale development sites will also be considered. The Development Strategy was submitted to the Secretary of State last October for independent examination. Following initial meetings with the Planning Inspector, the Council received a letter from the Inspector in February, stating that the Council had not met the 'Duty to Cooperate' with other local authorities. On that basis the Council withdrew the Development Strategy in November 2014 and began work immediately on preparing a new Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire (see below).

Central Bedfordshire Council Local Plan 2015 – 35

The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan is the key strategic planning document for Central Bedfordshire and will guide and support the delivery of new infrastructure, homes and jobs. It sets out the long-term vision and objectives for the area, outlines what is going to happen, where, and how this will be achieved and delivered up until 2035. The Plan provides for up to 20,000 additional new homes and a minimum of 24,000 jobs. It includes a range of different homes to rent and buy with a mixture of sizes including family homes, two bedroom homes, apartments and bungalows. To help people get on the housing ladder, this will include 30% to be provided as lower cost options, such as affordable rent and shared ownership. In terms of access to services and facilities, larger developments include requirements for road improvements, new shops, community facilities, leisure facilities, schools and integrated health and care hubs, where the NHS can provide Integrated Health and Care Hubs. Small and medium developments in and around towns and villages are only included where this can be supported by existing services, or where the development will enhance these services and where there is good accessibility.

Action Identified in Equality Strategy 2013/16 - Gypsy and Traveller Plan

To identify the Council's approach to the provision of additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches and sites, including the allocation of new sites if required

Update:

Central Bedfordshire and all other Councils are required under the Housing Act to assess accommodation need, and develop a strategy to meet that need, for Gypsies and Travellers. We are required as a Council to balance the needs of Gypsies and Travellers with the representations of the settled community, in an effort to promote community cohesion.

Central Bedfordshire was one of just a handful of local authorities which have sought to strike this balance and in June 2014, following a long process of plan preparation and consultation, the Council submitted the Gypsy and Traveller Plan to the Planning Inspectorate, believing the Plan to be sound, that is, fit for purpose following scrutiny by the Planning Inspector.

An independent Planning Inspector was appointed, who wrote to all respondents to the Plan on 1 August 2014, inviting them to attend an Examination from 23 September to 3 October 2014. He also at that time circulated his assessment of the main matters, inviting respondents to prepare statements on these matters for discussion at the hearings, by 22 August 2014. In his main matters the Inspector raised numerous issues about the Gypsy and Traveller Local Plan and asked the Council to undertake a considerable amount of additional work prior to the commencement of the Examination hearings. Because of the numerous and detailed issues raised, the Council needed more time than the three weeks given, to clarify the matters and prepare responses. On this basis it is proposed that Central Bedfordshire Council withdrew the Plan.

The preparation of the GTLP has taken a considerable amount of time and resources to prepare. The contents are a matter of significant public interest for all parties including the local community. The Council has acknowledged that not having a Plan in place makes the Council more vulnerable to challenge and appeals and increased incidences of unauthorised developments and encampments. Notwithstanding this, the Council considered withdrawal to be the most appropriate and prudent manner in which to proceed to avoid the risk of the Plan being found unsound by the Inspector or being challenged by third parties. Officers have been working to address the Inspector's concerns and it is only following this work that the Council can consider how best to move forward with the Plan.

Corporate Gypsy and Traveller Board

The purpose of the Corporate Gypsy & Traveller Board has been to establish a collaborative approach to working with the gypsy and traveller community; to encourage integration, to improve cross directorate joint working, to improve access to Council Services. This is being achieved through establishing new policies and procedures, information sharing and community engagement. The Board's strategic aims are:

- Identify current levels of engagement with the gypsy and traveller community across the Council
- Share information and knowledge to help identify the gypsy and traveller community's needs
- Identify training needs and deliver training to officers working with the gypsy and traveller community
- Research work in this field both locally and nationally and seek best practice guidance
- Design and deliver policies and procedures to improve the services that the gypsy and traveller community receives
- Identify methods of better integration of the gypsy and traveller community and the settled community

3.2 Progressing in Delivering Equality Action Plan 2013 - 2016

| 1) Strong Leadership (Championing Equality in our Area, Identifying Objectives and Monitoring Outcomes) | |
|---|--|
| Action | Progress |
| Promote equality and diversity at leadership level of the Council | <p>Equality strategy was considered and approved by all scrutiny committees</p> <p>Induction training for new members was delivered 2015</p> <p>The values of the council include a focus on respect and empowerment – we will treat people as individuals who matter to us.</p> <p>The code of conduct requires officers to promote and improve equality outcomes for all the people of Central Bedfordshire.</p> <p>The Council's Constitution recognises Equality as an integral part of the policy framework and the code of conduct for members highlights the requirements of equality legislation</p> |
| Identify appropriate Equality Objectives and monitor progress | Objectives published and update on progress detailed in appendix 3 |
| Actively challenge the approach to equalities and diversity through overview and scrutiny | Committee Reports highlight the equality implications of every proposal and are checked by the Council's equality lead |
| Embed equality and diversity objectives within organisational and partnership plans | Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken as part of the development of all strategy and policy development. Further detail can be found in Appendix 3 progress in delivering equality objectives |
| Promote equality and diversity at leadership level of the Council | <p>A Management Development Programme has been delivered which has included workshops and coaching sessions. The programme included a focus on unconscious bias and has given managers the knowledge skills and behaviours to enable them to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have increased confidence in their role as a manager and a leader • Apply appropriate communication and leadership skills • Effectively manage challenging behaviour with confidence and assertiveness • Build a high performing, results focused team |

| 2) Improved Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups | |
|--|---|
| Action | Progress |
| Impact assess all relevant service and employment planning, design and delivery processes. | The need to undertake Equality Impact Assessments is built into Project Initiation mechanisms. |
| Promote and quality assure Equality Impact Assessments in line with the Council's agreed protocol. | The Council's Equality Lead supports the development and quality assures all Equality Impact Assessments |
| Gather evidence on the profile of communities and the extent of inequality and disadvantage | The Community Intelligence Team supports staff across the organisation to better understand the needs of residents. By analysing a range of census and other information and using tools like Experian Mosaic which help us to understand the characteristics and needs of residents / service users. The Council has undertaken complex analysis to understand and address the impact of welfare reform. |
| Collect, share and use equality information with partners | The Council publishes a wide variety of information on the website under the heading Statistics and census information A range of data is provided including equality information, relating to population, deprivation, ward and town profiles, key facts and figures, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for health and social care and economic information |
| Embed equality analysis as a requirement in all data system development in order to identify the extent to which all sections of the community are able to access services and achieve positive outcomes | JDI Planning system for Reg 18 and 19. As new systems are commissioned, this will be considered. Takes place as part of EIAs. |
| Ensure consideration of equality is integral to customer care and complaints procedures | The Authority welcomes feedback; compliments, comments and complaints from customers. Feedback is recorded and acted upon in accordance with the Customer Feedback Procedure and in line with the standards in the Customer Charter. The Council promotes a fair and responsive feedback procedure and tries to ensure that procedures are open, easy to access and responsive to enable customers and/or their representatives to make Representations and complaints. The Council want to ensure all sections of the community are able to access the feedback procedure and undertakes monitoring to check that this is the case |

| 3) Good Recruitment and Management of a High Performing Workforce | |
|---|--|
| Action | Progress |
| Ensure human resource strategies and policies are in place to meet equality employment duties and secure a diverse and appropriately managed workforce. | <p>2016 figures</p> <p>80% Agree - CBC Does not Discriminate: (79% 2014, 72% 2012, 74% 2010, 63% 2009)</p> <p>72% Satisfied with Opportunities for Flexible Working: (69% 2014, 70% 2012, 69% 2010, 71% 2009)</p> <p>67% Agree - Achieve Correct Balance between Work and Home Life: (63% 2014, 56% in 2012)</p> <p>77% Agree - Good Working Atmosphere in my Team: (79% 2014, 78% in 2012, 73% in 2009)</p> <p>89% Agree - My Line Manager is Approachable: (90% 2014, 91% in 2012, 89% in 2009)</p> <p>89% Agree - My Line Manager is Supportive: (87% 2014, 81% in 2012, 74% in 2010, 74% in 2009)</p> |
| Assess employment policies and procedures to identify equality implications | <p>Since 2013 the Council has reviewed a range of policies such as annual leave, special leave, managing attendance, sickness absence reasonable adjustments, disciplinary procedure, grievance, probationary, your year review, shared parental leave, adoption paternity maternity leave, managing restructures, developing people secondment scheme, bullying and harassment, volunteers policy, recruitment and selection, employee handbook, learning and development. The equality implications have been considered as part of this process. The Council has also developed a Transsexual, Transgender and Gender Reassignment guidance for employees and managers.</p> |
| Deliver a range of learning and development opportunities | <p>Equality and Diversity training is provided for all employees. The Corporate Policy Adviser (Equality and Diversity) provides regular equality briefings as part of Children's Services and Social Care Health and Housing Induction processes and also delivers awareness raising sessions at team meetings. A suite of e-learning courses are available; including Equality and Diversity (Introduction); E&D in Recruitment; Making Reasonable Adjustments and Equality Monitoring. Classroom courses are available for specific service areas. The Springboard Programme aims to enable women to take more control in their life whether achieving a better work / home balance, aiming for promotion or simply being prepared to speak up for themselves</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Monitor and analyse harassment and bullying incidents</p> | <p>Part of employment monitoring low numbers are reported which are dealt with robustly Improving scores from staff survey - 65% Agree (2016) - CBC would deal effectively with bullying / harassment : (63% 2014, 57% 2012, 52% 2009)</p> |
| <p>Establish and maintain a range of inclusive structures and mechanisms to engage and involve staff</p> | <p>Staff surveys are undertaken by an independent organisation every two years. A staff newsletter is published on a weekly basis. The Chief Executive and Directors undertake regular roadshows to inform and engage staff</p> |
| <p>Monitor and analyse all employment practices on a regular basis</p> | <p>Annual employment monitoring undertaken.</p> <p>CBC remains an authorised member of the Two Ticks scheme which is a recognition given by Jobcentre Plus to employers based in Great Britain who have agreed to take action to meet five commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees. It is represented by the Two Ticks disability symbol that participating organisations are authorised to display. The Council is in the process of transferring to the Disability Confident Scheme.</p> <p>CBC has an excellent profile regarding applications from a wide variety of ethnicities and ages, suggesting that the council is a desirable employer to the Central Bedfordshire population (and surrounding areas) as a whole.</p> <p>As part of the move over to Success Factors the Council has tried to encourage staff to update their employment information to increase the robustness of equality monitoring</p> |

| 4) Improved Engagement, Civic Participation and Cohesion | |
|--|--|
| Action | Progress |
| Develop inclusive community engagement structures throughout the authority and its partnerships | The Community Engagement Strategy for Central Bedfordshire has been developed by the Central Bedfordshire Together Partnership, which comprises senior representatives of: the Council; Police; Fire; Health; Education; Business; Town & Parish Councils; and the Voluntary and Community Sector. The aim of the Strategy is to ensure a strategic and joined up, co-ordinated partnership approach. The emphasis is on partners working together with communities to tackle local issues, share information and develop a better understanding through community insight. |
| Ensure all service areas are consistent and inclusive in their approach to engagement and participation | The Community Engagement Strategy recognises that people like to engage in many different ways. The strategy includes traditional techniques such as petitions, surveys and meetings as well as recognising the growing use of websites and social media as a means to engage. The Council's Consultation Team advise on approaches to consultation and undertake analysis of results. |
| Design internal, external and partnership communication strategies which promote good relations across all local communities. | The Council's Communications Team provide advice on promoting services to all residents, designing posters and other promotional material, developing marketing and communications plans, use of social media and websites. |
| Deliver greater added value to our citizens by enabling individuals and groups to make decisions and deliver some services themselves. | The Community Engagement Strategy includes Principles to enhance the role of Town and Parish Councils and to enable more services to be delivered locally. Further information is highlighted in the section progress on Equality objectives |
| Establish and maintain structures within the authority and across partnerships to promote positive relations and deal effectively with harassment and hate crimes. | A Bedfordshire-wide Hate Crime strategy has been approved. A range of activities have been delivered which have led to an increase in reporting rates as highlighted in the section progress on Equality objectives |
| Maintain an effective forum of local experts focussing on equality and diversity issues | The Equality Forum acts as critical friend to the Council as policies and strategies are considered. Representatives are drawn from a range of voluntary sector organisations. A range of issues considered over the lifetime of the equality strategy such as: Sheltered Housing Standard, Sex Establishments Policy, Residential care provision, Impact of Welfare Reform Social Care, Commissioning Work book, Allocation policy, CTV Employment monitoring Leisure Strategy, Discretionary Housing Payment Policy, Budget Welfare Reform Resident Impact Analysis. Leisure Strategy Action Plan Discharge of Homelessness duty – Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, Micro Enterprises, |

| | |
|---|--|
| | Library link service Procurement Developing the Early Intervention Offer through Childrens Centres Deprivation of liberty Advice Central Community Safety Plan priorities Homelessness Strategy Caddington Hall Safer routes to school - Health and wellbeing strategy - Medium Term Plan Passenger Transport Strategy Advice Strategy – Ensuring good mental health and wellbeing at every age- Children services payments to voluntary sector, Joint strategic needs assessment, Housing Strategy - Social Care efficiencies |
| Improve the participation of under-represented groups in civic and public life in particular with regard to disabled people | The Council is committed to engaging individuals, interest groups and stakeholders in the future development of activities that relate to social care and health. This includes looking at the demographic needs of older and disabled people within the community and considering how their needs will be addressed. The statement of community involvement provides further details. |