

# **Integrating Equality Analysis into the budget process at Nottingham City Council**

## **Background**

Nottingham is a diverse city that has grown rapidly in recent years. The latest (2009) estimate of the city's resident population is 300,800 – a rise of 31,900 since 2001. International migration (recently from Eastern Europe) and an increase in student numbers are the main reasons for the population growth since 2001. The population of pupils in the city's educational provision is extremely varied, with 40 per cent of pupils being members of BAME groups. This proportion has been rising in recent years from 31 per cent in 2005. Nearly 19 per cent of all pupils (7,200) have a first language that is not English. This is a rise of over 35 per cent (1,900 pupils) from 2005. More than a half of all our households are classed as one of three low-income 'Mosaic' groups:

1. Municipal Dependency ('low-income families living in estate-based social housing')
2. Ties to the Community ('close-knit inner city and manufacturing town communities')
3. Welfare Borderline ('people living in social housing with uncertain employment in deprived areas').

These are nearly twice the national average.

## **Summary**

We introduced a robust approach to equality impact assessment (EqIA) to ensure decision makers were well informed about impacts overall and for specific decisions.

## **Who is involved?**

- Councillors
- Community Equality Forum – our citizen equality group with representatives from different equality strands
- Our Equalities Board
- Internal team with policy, finance, equality and marketing representatives
- Directorate teams – disseminating key messages
- Adult social care, Commissioning, Children's Services teams involved in some of the most challenging EqIAs
- Director of strategic finance.

## **The challenges for us**

- Timescales were extremely tight and constantly moving
- The complexity and volume of EqIAs
- How to measure cumulative versus individual impacts
- How to measure the impact on workforce.

The Equality and Diversity team worked hand-in-hand with colleagues who led on the Interactive Budget Day process. Communication with colleagues at all levels was very smooth and followed each meeting with finance which set out the budget pressures and areas being considered for budget reductions. We utilised very flexible and easy to use 'EqIA guidance: a one page approach'. We also used a EqIA flagging system, and EqIAs were quality assured by the Equality team. We engaged with the voluntary and community

sector, and made use of councillor surgeries. We also published our EqlAs to show openness and transparency.

## **Outcomes**

- Consistent attention to EqlAs and equality analysis
- Proportionality: minimising under-compliance (EqIA not detailed enough) and over-compliance (EqIA too detailed)
- Achieving key aims of due regard: decision makers aware of impacts and any mitigating action available
- Some decisions explored but rejected linked to impact and decisions adjusted as appropriate, and with suitable evidence
- Balanced budget; delivering on aims to minimise impact on vulnerable groups
- Created a climate of trust and partnership working across the organisation and with external partners.

## **What we learnt**

- Positive relations with community stakeholders is important.
- The role of councillors is key.
- Quality assurances of EqlAs by the equality team is important.
- Close working relationships between key internal stakeholders brings wider synergies and improves decisions.
- We should have involved the VCS earlier in the consultation process.
- We could have published the EqlAs earlier publication.
- In future we will look to do fewer EqlAs (using the principles of scoping and proportionality) that are of a higher quality.
- We will take the lessons from the previous year's budget process and feed this into the 2012/13 process.
- We will be considering 'themed' EqlAs to reduce the amount of duplication and ensure that links are being made between relevant areas of activity.
- Our approach to EqlAs can be found below.

[Nottingham's approach to EqlAs](#) – on Nottingham City Council's website

## **Contact**

Haseeb Ahmad  
Head of Equality and Community Relations  
Nottingham City Council  
Email: [Haseeb.ahmad@nottinghamcity.gov.uk](mailto:Haseeb.ahmad@nottinghamcity.gov.uk)