

Equality Policy and Action Plan

Introduction

Runnymede borough has a population of approximately 81,200 residents (Office of National Statistics mid-year estimate, 2006) and covers an area of around 30 square miles. The Borough is situated to the north west of Surrey, some twenty miles south-west of central London. It borders the boroughs of Spelthorne, Elmbridge, Woking, Surrey Heath and Windsor and Maidenhead.

Runnymede has three main towns: Chertsey, Egham and Addlestone and a number of smaller communities including Virginia Water, Thorpe, Englefield Green, Woodham, New Haw, Ottershaw and Lyne.

What does equality cover?

Equality legislation makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender, disability, race, nationality, religion, belief, sexual orientation or age. The Council has positive duties to promote equality between races, tackle barriers experienced by people with disabilities and promote gender **equality, introduced by the legislation listed overleaf.**

The Council's aim is to ensure that its services are equally accessible by all people who need them, irrespective of gender, race, disability, religion, belief, sexual orientation or age. This has been the Council's stated aim since adoption of the Equal Opportunities policy in 1995 and is integrated into normal working practices. However, statutory obligations, particularly those specified under the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, as amended and the Equality Act 2006 give public bodies more specific commitments for promoting equality of opportunity for and between people of different racial backgrounds, abilities and gender.

Individuals and groups can experience a range of barriers that prevent them enjoying the same quality of life as their peers. The equalities policy and action plan aim to identify and minimise any discrimination based on gender, race, disability, religion, belief, sexual orientation or age by ensuring measures are in place to monitor whether the Council's policies or practices discriminate against any particular group and then to identify what measures could be taken to reduce any barriers.

Context

The 2001 census showed 95% of the population of Runnymede described themselves as "white", meaning 5% were from minority ethnic groups. The wards with the greatest ethnic diversity were: Englefield Green East and Chertsey St. Ann's. 3.9% of the resident population consists of full-time students. The Englefield Green East ward is particularly influenced by Royal Holloway College. Strodes College also has significant numbers of students who travel into the Borough.

9% of the borough's population declared either a long-term limiting illness, or that they were full-time, unpaid carers. North Surrey Primary Care Trust figures (2002) indicate that 4% of the Borough's population claim disability allowance, whilst 2.4% claim Income Support.

Legislation

The Council's legal obligations in relation to equality are defined by the following statutes:

- ❖ the Equal Pay Act 1970
- ❖ the Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- ❖ the Race Relations Act 1976
- ❖ the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- ❖ the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. The latter gives the Council a general statutory duty to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people of different racial groups. There are also specific statutory duties relating to the field of employment.
- ❖ The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 gives the local authority a duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination against people with disabilities and to promote equality of opportunity, encouraging the involvement of people with disabilities in putting together and monitoring the scheme and including the option of more favourable treatment, where appropriate.
- ❖ The Equality Act 2006 introduced a gender equality duty, which came into force in April 2007. It requires public authorities to promote gender equality and eliminate sex discrimination. Instead of depending on individuals making complaints about sex discrimination, the duty places the legal responsibility on public authorities to demonstrate that they treat men and women fairly. The duty encompasses policy making, services delivered to the public and employment practices such as recruitment and flexible working.

The legal requirements are designed to have an impact on both policy development and service delivery across the Council's sphere of influence in order to reduce and eliminate the level of discrimination that different groups and individuals might receive, directly or indirectly.

Vision

The Council set out its intention to achieve level 2 of the Equality Standard in 2004/05 and received validation of that level in June 2006. The Council's corporate aims, as set out in Annex B of the Strategic Plan also include:

"Exercising policies that are non-discriminatory in our dealings with and services to, our customers and also in our employment practices" and
"Engaging with and being responsive to public opinion through consultation on important issues, ensuring clear communication of our policies."

Screening and criteria for impact assessment

In achieving Level 2 of the Equality Standard and as part of its duty to promote equality, all Council policies and functions must be assessed for their potential impact on equalities. Equality assessment will be built into the service planning process and the best value review guide, so the process is integral to all Council functions. The Race Relations Act Amendment Act 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equality Act 2006 impose statutory duties to undertake such audits in relation to ethnicity, disability and gender. The DDA duty was strengthened in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005.

In March 2000 the Council adopted an access strategy, to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act, 1995. Auditing all departmental policies to ensure they did not have a negative impact on people with disabilities was stated as an integral part of that strategy.

The Council has screened its existing functions and policies and established priorities for action as part of this wider equality policy (Appendix 1). All functions will be reassessed for relevance to race disability and gender equality every three years, in line with statutory obligations.

The categories are arranged in descending order of importance on the basis of:

1. Services having a direct impact on individuals' life, death, housing or employment
2. Services having a direct impact on individuals' environment or personal income
3. Services having an indirect impact on individuals

A similar assessment process will be applied to all new policies and strategies as they are developing, ensuring that consideration of equality issues becomes part of the process of policy development. If policies are found to have a negative impact on equalities, this must be stated and taken into account when a decision about agreeing them is taken. Committee reports will note any potential impact on equalities that arise from the impact assessment process.

The main elements required to assess the impact of a policy on equalities are:

- ❖ Whether the policy or practice reduces/enhances the service received by one minority group
- ❖ Whether the policy or practice clearly discriminates against one or more minority groups (as compared with the majority of residents).
- ❖ What the reasons for the impact are, eg. language, physical access, communication medium, dress codes, diet, cultural belief

Impact assessment and monitoring

The Council will monitor existing and proposed policies for adverse impact on equality. This will be done proportionately, bearing in mind that some policies and practices impact the public and staff much more directly than others.

It will do this by:

- ❖ Developing service-specific guidelines to improve current methods of data collection in relation to employment practice and service provision.
- ❖ Identifying where the stated policy is not fulfilled, or where service provision does not appear to reflect the demographic profile.
- ❖ Identifying the impact of changes to any policy or service on minority groups.
- ❖ Examining complaints to identify the extent to which they relate to minority groups and the complainants' satisfaction with the way in which they are dealt with.

Staff will be trained to carry out monitoring and where possible existing systems will be used. Training will be provided to develop best practice in conducting an impact/needs assessment for proposed policies.

Access to Information and Services

The Council is committed to ensuring that whenever possible, all members of the community have access to the services it provides and to information about them. As an employer, it is taking steps to ensure that no job applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, race, disability or age, or is disadvantaged by conditions which cannot be shown to be relevant to performance.

The Council has contacts with various agencies so that information can be translated for people who do not speak English and can be interpreted or translated for people who have difficulty in reading or understanding written or spoken English.

The Council's proposals to re-locate to offices shared with the police and library in **2008** will improve access to services for local people. The Council's intention is to share the offices with other public services wherever possible.

Consultation arrangements

The Council is committed to improving consultation. As part of the process of developing new policies and strategies that may affect the promotion of equality, it will consult interested groups to assist in assessing the likelihood and extent of any impact. The level of consultation will be proportionate to the perceived impact of the proposal. Relevant groups and individuals will be consulted as early as possible and results assessed so that account may be taken of any issues they raise.

A list of potential consultees is set out at Appendix 2. Consultation may be undertaken by focus groups, consultative groups, advisory groups, surveys and face-to-face meetings and will take into account issues of diversity. The Council will

consider repeating the consultation every 3 – 5 years, aiming to align it with the best value review process.

Measures of Achievement

The following measures will be employed to assess progress against vision:

- ❖ Results of consultation on a regular basis to test the views of those who live, work in or visit the Borough.
- ❖ Performance indicators on employment in relation to gender, ethnicity, disability and age.
- ❖ Measurement against the legal requirements and tests, particularly those produced by the Commission for Equality and Human Rights and Audit Commission. The Commission for Equality and Human Rights is the successor body to the Disability Rights commission, commission for Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities Commission and was established by the Equality Act 2006.
- ❖ The number of racial incidents recorded by the Police and the Council.

Publication of assessments, consultations and monitoring

To demonstrate its commitment to promoting race equality, the Council will publish annual reports of:

- ❖ Impact assessments undertaken
- ❖ Results of consultation
- ❖ Results of monitoring

In its capacity as employer, the Council will publish the results of its employment monitoring annually in the **Annual Pay and Workforce Plan** and on the Council's website (www.runnymede.gov.uk).

Depending on the importance of the subject and its relevance to equality, reports will be published in one or more of the following ways:

- ❖ By inclusion on relevant Council or service committee meeting agendas
- ❖ On the Council website (www.runnymede.gov.uk)
- ❖ From the Council Offices reception and other public service points

Information in languages other than English, and in Braille and audio format **may be** available on request. The Council has contact with agencies for transcription of information into formats suitable for people with disabilities.

Training

Council staff are responsible in varying degrees for making sure that the Council meets its general statutory duty under equalities legislation. Particular duties apply to staff in Personnel, Housing and to functions including procurement and property management. All staff are responsible for meeting the requirements of equalities legislation as it affects their service area, which includes assessing the extent to which services are accessed by people from minority groups and what the reasons are for non-use of services.

Heads of Service and specialist staff are responsible for assessing the impact of their policies and practices on equality and will receive training in doing so. It is expected that departmental management teams will include equalities as a standing item on meeting agendas and that equalities will be incorporated into service planning and review.

According to their level of need, all staff will be provided with sufficient training to equip them with the knowledge and skills to perform these duties. As a minimum, all staff will undergo general awareness training on equality and disability, which will subsequently form part of the induction process for new staff.

Training will also be provided for elected Members. Where appropriate, training will be made available to other partner organisations.

Action Plan

The Council has established a cross-departmental equalities group, which is responsible for developing and monitoring this strategy. A plan of actions to be taken by the Council over the next three years is set out in Appendix 3. This action plan may be reviewed and amended as necessary.

This document was agreed at:

Directors' Management Board 22 nd August 2005
Corporate Management Committee 8 th September 2005
Council 20 th October 2005
Reviewed and progress noted: January 2007
Updated and progress noted:	January 2008

APPENDIX 1

FUNCTIONS - categorised by relevance to equality and aligned with the best value service review timetable

Category 1 (2005/2006) – these impact assessments are available on the Council's website: www.runnymede.gov.uk/equalities

EIA		On web
✓	Burials/cremation	✓
✓	Crime & disorder/anti-social behaviour, s17 obligations (in line with service review timetable)	✓
✓	Day centre provision (inc. meals)	✓
✓	Employment policies: recruitment, retention	✓
✓	Enforcement policy	✓
✓	Housing needs (lettings, allocations, homelessness)	✓
✓	Meals on wheels/day centres	✓
✓	Partnerships (in line with service review timetable)	✓
✓	Tenancy management	✓

Category 2 (2006/2007)

EIA done	Service area	On web (published)
✓	Access to leisure facilities:	-
✓	community halls	tbc
x	leisure centres	x
✓	Chertsey Museum	✓
✓	Parks	✓
✓	Allotments	✓
-	Activities for children & young people:	-
✓	– playscheme & splash	✓
✓	– Sports Development (Surrey Youth Games)	✓
✓	Arts Development Steering Group	✓
✓	Benefits	✓
✓	Community safety and crime reduction	✓
✓	Development Control	✓
✓	Building control	✓
-	Discretionary fees & charges (in line with service review timetable)	x
x	Electoral Services	✓
✓	Home Improvement Agency (Runnymede Care & Repair)	✓
✓	Inspection of premises (Environmental protection)	✓
✓	Housing maintenance/estate management	tbc
✓	Internal personnel policies	✓
✓	Licensing	✓
✓	Private sector housing (enforcement & assistance)	✓
✓	Property services (in line with service review timetable)	✓
✓	Refuse collection	✓
✓	Homelessness	✓

Category 3 (2007/2008)

Community strategy *

Communication policy/strategy

Cultural strategy including childcare, youth plans and arts development

Grants to voluntary organisations

Licensing

Local development framework (new policies to be reviewed as developed)

Markets

Partnerships

Property letting/asset management

✓Tax collection (Council tax & business rates)

Strategic objectives/corporate policies eg. procurement

Quality of environment (in line with service review timetable)

***The Community Strategy is due to be fully revised and subject to wider consultation in 2008, so the Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of this process.**

APPENDIX 2

LIST OF PROPOSED CONSULTEES:

(To be asked for advice when policies are considered to have the potential to have an impact on minority groups)

Disability Groups

Mencap (Runnymede & Spelthorne)	01784 453404
Philip Southcote – school for children aged 11-16, with learning & other associated difficulties	01932 562326 www.philipsouthcote.co.uk
Freemantles – for children with autistic spectrum disorders	01483 545680
Meath School (ICan) – primary school for children aged 5-11 where severe & complex communication difficulties are the primary disability	01932 872302 www.ican.org.uk
Runnymede Access Liaison Group	Jonathan Fisher, Chairman 01784 43622. jlf@jlfisher.demon.co.uk
Runnymede Physical Disability forum	
North West Surrey Association of Disabled People	
North Surrey Partnership Board for physical, sensory & Cognitive Disability	Carol Pearson. Carol.pearson@surreycoalition.org.uk 01483 456558
White Lodge White Lodge works with disabled adults, children and their families to provide a creative, individually tailored service to meet their needs	01932 567131 www.whitelodgecentre.co.uk
Surrey Association for Visual Impairment	01372-377 701 http://www.surreywebsight.org.uk
RNID	0808 808 0123 www.rnid.org.uk
RNIB	0845 766 9999 www.rnib.org.uk
Elmbridge & Runnymede Talking News	http://www.users.waitrose.com/~earnt/earnt@waitrose.com 01784 435 622

Religious organisations

Churches Together

Synagogues (Staines/Weybridge)

Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking

Islamic Welfare Association of West Surrey

Inter-faith group

Reviewed January 2008

Minority Ethnic Groups
Gypsy and Irish Traveller Groups

General organisations

Age Concern
Careline users
Community Safety Partnership
CAB
Friends of Parks
Health Promotion Unit
Housing Associations
Police
RAVS
Residents' Associations
Royal Holloway College
Runnymede over 50's group
Surrey County Council
- Childrens' Services
- Adult services
- Youth Development Service
- Education department
- Libraries
Strodes College
St. Peter's Hospital
Tenants' associations

APPENDIX 3

ACTION PLAN

Activity	Action being taken	Action required	Action by	Timescale	Achievement as at 31/12/07
<p>Review all Council functions and policies for relevance to the duty to promote race, disability and gender equality</p> <p>Current functions and policies</p>	<p>Review in accordance with the priorities in Appendix 1, incorporating into service planning and best value reviews wherever possible</p>	<p>Review of category 1 functions</p> <p>Review of category 2 functions</p> <p>Review of category 3 functions</p> <p>Corporate guidelines for best practice in conducting an impact/need assessment to be produced</p>	<p>Heads of Service*</p> <p>Heads of Service*</p> <p>Heads of Service*</p> <p>*where functions cross services</p> <p>Equalities Group to nominate single Service Head</p> <p>Equalities Group</p>	<p>September 2006</p> <p>September 2007</p> <p>September 2008</p> <p>October 2005</p>	<p>90%; see appendix 1.</p> <p>55%</p> <p>Completed & service heads briefed year-on-year. EIA format to be reviewed to highlight data and need to feed back into service reviews.</p>

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Activity	Action being taken	Action required	Action by	Timescale	Achievement as at 31/12/07
New Policies	<p>Equalities should be considered as part of new policy development.</p> <p>Assessment tool to be piloted and training given in its use</p>	<p>All new policies to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ assessed for relevance to gender, race, disability and age ▪ drafted in accordance with the principles of this strategy ▪ the subject of a proportionate level of consultation when appropriate 	<p>Heads of Service and DMT</p> <p>Equalities group to advise about categories to consider and to review assessments.</p>	From September 2005	Not done for all policy changes, though incorporated in committee agenda prep. notes. Needs corporate system to review and remind.
Service plans		<p>Service plans to reflect the need to review policy & practice, including training on awareness of equality issues and to review systems and policies to ensure equal access.</p>	Heads of Service	As for programme of review of functions	Needs to be checked

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Activity	Action being taken	Action required	Action by	Timescale	Achievement as at 31/12/07
Compliance with statutory duties relating to employment monitoring	Regular reporting on BVPI's 11a, 11b, 11c, 16a, 16b, 17a	<p>System to be established to record by reference to racial groups, the numbers of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ staff in post ▪ applicants for employment and training from each group ▪ those who receive training (external & internal) ▪ those benefiting or suffering detriment through performance assessment ▪ those involved in grievance procedures ▪ those subject to disciplinary procedures ▪ those who leave the authority <p>Results to be published annually (BVPI and</p>	<p>Personnel Manager Personnel Manager</p> <p>Personnel Manager and section training Officers</p> <p>Personnel Manager</p> <p>Personnel Manager/section heads Personnel Manager</p> <p>Personnel Manager</p> <p>Personnel Mgr/ Communications</p>	<p>End of December 2005. Reporting in Annual Pay & Workforce Plan</p> <p>As above As above</p> <p>2007</p> <p>Once JE complete and when new performance system drafted</p> <p>2007 End of December 2005. Reporting in</p>	<p>Done and included in Performance Indicators and annual Pay and Workforce Plan. To be summarised for website equalities page.</p> <p>JE scheme abandoned. New Performance Mgt Scheme being piloted in 2008.</p>

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Activity	Action being taken	Action required	Action by	Timescale	Achievement as at 31/12/07
		Website). Results to be analysed and any issues addressed	Officer Equalities group	Annual Pay & Workforce Profile	Analysis completed and trends being identified.
Review of current employment/ personnel policies	Review of policies relating to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Recruitment processes▪ Anti bullying / harassment▪ Grievance and disciplinary	Systems to be put into action for monitoring and reporting on the above criteria in relation to gender and disability as well as race.	Personnel Manager	September 2006 September 2006 Done – 2004	Employment monitoring is undertaken for gender, race and disability.
External Consultation Engaging local residents	Reviewed Residents' panel		In conjunction with the L.S.P	Every 3 – 5 years	Done. Not yet tested in a

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Activity	Action being taken	Action required	Action by	Timescale	Achievement as at 31/12/07
	<p>- will include ethnicity and age details.</p> <p>Information on groups operating within the Borough and details of those willing to be consulted is being collated.</p>	<p>A list of appropriate consultees to be drawn up, in conjunction with other local agencies (eg. Surrey Police, PCT, Strategic Health Authority) who also have a duty to consult on equalities issues.</p>	<p>(CEO/Policy Officer)</p> <p>KW/Policy Officer/Housing/Equalities Group</p>	<p>January 2005</p>	<p>questionnaire.</p> <p>Some info gathered from Runnymede Access Liaison Group. Approaches being made to RHUL and Ashford & St Peter's Hospital.</p>
<p>Consultation on new policies</p>	<p>Collating list of consultees.</p>	<p>Relevant consultations to be undertaken in developing new policies when appropriate</p>	<p>Director/Heads of Service</p>	<p>From September 2005</p>	<p>EIA's completed for new policies: Waste Strategy Play strategy Leisure card Concessionary bus fares</p>
<p>Consultation when reviewing functions and policies</p>		<p>Relevant consultations to be undertaken when reviewing functions and policies when appropriate, ideally as</p>	<p>Director/Heads of Service</p>	<p>From September 2005</p>	

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ACTION PLAN

Activity	Action being taken	Action required	Action by	Timescale	Achievement as at 31/12/07
		part of the best value review programme.			
Internal Consultation Members		Approval of strategy and action plan	Directors' Management Team and Corporate Management Committee	August/September 2005	Completed
Staff	Development of internal equalities group	To pilot impact assessments and advise on potential impacts on minority groups	KW/Policy Officer	September – December 2005	Piloted and being used. Some changes to be made to highlight impact and "risk".
Monitoring	Monitoring undertaken already to report on specific BVPI's.	Monitoring implementation of the action plan for equality policy	Equalities group	Six monthly	Annual review undertaken.
Employment monitoring	Monitoring the Best Value performance indicators in relation to employment	Ongoing requirement	Personnel Manager	Annually	Done

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Activity	Action being taken	Action required	Action by	Timescale	Achievement as at 31/12/07
	Monitoring compliance with statutory duties relating to race equality	Report to Directors' Management Team, along with BVPI's	Policy Officer	Annually	Done
Publication		Reports of impact assessments carried out, consultations undertaken, statutory employment monitoring, other monitoring.	Communications Officer/Policy Officer	Once assessments are complete.	Done – 24 shown on website. List also distributed to Access Liaison Group and White Lodge for comments/challenge.
Training Members, partners and staff	Suitable trainers in equality/diversity issues being sought to	Training programme to be agreed.	KW/Equalities group	Programme to be prepared by January 2006	Done. All staff attended awareness trg and it's now on-going

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ACTION PLAN

Activity	Action being taken	Action required	Action by	Timescale	Achievement as at 31/12/07
	cover the following general areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness training for Members ▪ Awareness training for Runnymede staff, (mandatory) and partners (optional) 	Awareness training to be included in mandatory training for all new staff. Voluntary organisations to be contacted to identify levels of interest	KW/Director of Administration & leisure Personnel Manager, Director of Housing & Community Services, Policy Officer in consultation with L.S.P.	Completed by June 2006 To be completed by June 2006 June 2006	for new staff. Member training still needs to be completed. No requests for follow-up training received internally either in response to all-staff e-mail or at training group.
Heads of service and specialised staff		Specific training including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensuring equality in service delivery ▪ How to conduct an impact assessment for proposed policies ▪ How to carry out monitoring 	Equalities Group/ Personnel Manager (Surrey-wide Training Officers' group) external trainer	June 2006	Housing have done some for staff and have arranged tenant group training.