

## Stage 1: Equality Impact Assessment

### **1. What are the main aims purpose and outcomes of the Policy and how do these fit with the wider aims of the organization?**

Maidstone Community Development Strategy identifies the Borough Council's high level community development priorities for Maidstone Borough over the next 4 years. It then lists key actions which will be taken in the priority areas and the measurements which will be used to assess progress.

The priorities reflect the key needs of the borough: reducing worklessness, ending disadvantage and building stronger communities. This Strategy will play a full part in delivering the county's 'Vision for Kent' by helping the Kent economy grow, tackling disadvantage and putting the citizen in control. A range of successful community partnerships, involving the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, will deliver many of these outcomes.

The Strategy will also contribute to the strategic objectives set out in the Strategic Plan (2011-15), the four year delivery plan for the Borough Council. The Strategic Plan identifies the Community Development Strategy as the key delivery vehicle for achieving our priority that "By 2015 residents in Maidstone are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced."

#### **1. How do these aims affect our duty to:**

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and other conduct prohibited by the act.**
- **Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**
- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

The Community Development Strategy priorities are based on evidence, including comparative county-wide performance and strategic needs assessments. Some inequalities were found and are noted in this Strategy:

- 31.1% of Maidstone 18-24 year olds are claiming unemployment benefit though only 2.7% of Maidstone's population is registered unemployed. This is being addressed via actions targeting young people in particular.
- Life expectancy for men in the most deprived wards is five years below the borough average and for women is 2.4 years lower.

No groups of people with certain protected characteristics (e.g. particular ethnic groups, disabled or older people) were highlighted as requiring focused intervention. **[NB need more information about what evidence was examined – have inserted the inequalities which were already noted in the strategy above but seems unlikely that there weren't any others – eg Equality Objectives report noted that economic/educational inequalities would be considered by Locality Board in future work]**. Therefore, this Strategy will focus on the Borough's most deprived geographical communities (and thus most deprived people regardless of protected characteristics). However, this may shift as the local context changes. Furthermore, we aim to realise improvement across the whole social-economic spectrum.

The target of **achieving a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour** may have a knock-on impact in improving relations between people with different characteristics (eg between different age groups), and eliminating unlawful conduct such as harassment.

### **2. What aspects of the policy including how it is delivered or accessed could contribute to inequality?**

One of the targets is specifically **to reduce health inequalities** and will therefore support work which targets the most disadvantaged, regardless of their protected characteristics.

Certain targets are addressed at particular age groups:

- **Improve early years development to enable people to develop to their full capability and have control over their lives**
- **Numbers of young people engaged in apprenticeships and volunteering are increased**

Several of the actions for reaching the targets also address particular age groups:

- **Increase opportunities for children and young people to participate in community development activities to increase positive outcomes e.g. improved literacy and reduced levels of antisocial behaviour in priority areas.**
- **Develop a training action plan for young people (including work placements, apprenticeships, mentoring and volunteering)**
- **Implement diversionary activities and projects for young people to tackle ASB**

The justification for targeting particular age groups is explained below at 5.1.

Some targets if addressed via projects which were *applied* unequally (for example if help was not accessible to all groups) could increase inequality by benefiting some groups more than others, though not actually harming other groups:

- **Enable people who are not in employment or training to aspire to and engage in positive activities leading to employment.**
- **Improve early years development to enable people to develop to their full capability and have control over their lives.**
- **Numbers of young people engaged in apprenticeships and volunteering are increased.**

The ways in which unequal implementation will be avoided for each of the proposed actions are described below at 5.4.

Finally the target to **‘increase in local people actively participating and influencing local community provision and delivery’** could result in increased inequality if some groups were enabled to participate more than others. In this case this could actually lead to harm for others if their voices were crowded out. The ways in which unequal implementation will be avoided for each of the proposed actions are described below at 5.4.

**3. Will the policy have an impact (positive or negative) upon the lives of people, including particular communities and groups who have protected characteristics ? What evidence do you have for this?**

As explained at 2 above, most of the targets will have only positive effects. The exception is the target to **‘increase in local people actively participating and influencing local community provision and delivery’** but only if unequal application meant that some people felt actively excluded – research has shown that participatory activities can compound inequalities if they are not carried out with care.

If the answer to the second question has identified potential impacts and you have answered yes to any of the remaining questions then you should carry out a full EQIA set out as stage 2 below.

## Stage 2: Equality Impact Assessment

<b>1. Name of Policy/Service/Function</b>
Community Development Strategy
<b>2. Purpose</b>
<b>2.1. What are you trying to achieve with the policy / service / function?</b>
<p>The Strategic Plan sets out the role of the Community Development strategy as working to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce inequalities with communities through preventative action</li> <li>• Promote active citizenship – to facilitate and support increased involvement by local people in decision making and involvement in their neighbourhoods</li> <li>• Review the Park Wood Planning for Real activity to inform further work and activities supporting communities in identifying and meeting their needs, opportunities, rights and responsibilities</li> <li>• Implement meaningful community commissioning of services for local people.</li> </ul>
<b>2.2. Who defines and manages it?</b>
The Strategy is defined by the Strategic Plan and is managed by the Director of Regeneration and Communities.
<b>2.3. Who do you intend to benefit from it and how?</b>
The strategy is particularly targeted at the most disadvantaged citizens, but will also improve life for those for whom e.g. antisocial behaviour is a problem and in the long term reduce costs to the taxpayer. It will benefit all residents as the Borough becomes a more equal and prosperous place.
<b>2.4. What could prevent people from getting the most out of the policy / service / function?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness about programmes among all groups</li> <li>• Programmes or meetings (e.g. worklessness stakeholder event) not being accessible due to issues with timing, commitment required, location, communication needs etc.</li> <li>• People feeling alienated by the design of programmes or feeling that they are not suited to their particular needs.</li> <li>• Lack of motivation.</li> <li>• Lack of confidence e.g. to participate in community planning.</li> </ul>
<b>2.5. How will you get your customers involved in the analysis and how will you tell people about it?</b>
Consultation is underway. The Strategy has been seen by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and will be going to Cabinet. Public notices have been placed xxxx
<b>3. Evidence</b>
<b>3.1. How will you know if the policy delivers its intended outcome / benefits?</b>
The strategy includes details of the performance measurements which will be used to ensure

outcomes are being delivered.
<b>3.2. How satisfied are your customers and how do you know?</b>
A residents' survey was recently carried out and shows good levels of satisfaction. Further work is being undertaken to highlight any differences on a ward basis.
<b>3.3. What existing data do you have on the people that use the service and the wider population?</b>
This strategy potentially affects all residents and therefore any internal surveys as well as Census information and the Borough Health Profile have been used to inform the Strategy.
<b>3.4. What other information would it be useful to have? How could you get this?</b>
The updated Census will provide useful information and will be available in the next few months. The Revenues and benefits Team are undertaking an analysis of customers which will prove useful.
<b>3.5. Are you breaking down data by equality groups where relevant (such as by gender, age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, marital status, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity)?</b>
Where this information is available it is being broken down.
<b>3.6. Are you using partners, stakeholders, and councillors to get information and feedback?</b>
A number of partners are involved in actions within the Strategy and will therefore be feeding back on an ongoing basis. As stakeholder events are carried out feedback will be sought both on how to conduct these events and how to improve them. Councillors will be involved in the plans for their local areas and have been invited to comment on the overall Strategy.
<b>4. Impact</b>
<b>4.1. Are some people benefiting more – or less - than others? If so, why might this be?</b>
This will need to be assessed once the strategy is in place to ensure that the implementation of the strategy has been fair and not resulted in increased inequality. However, whilst some people in the borough will benefit more from the actions in the Strategy this is to increase levels of equality with others.
<b>5. Actions</b>
<b>5.1. If the evidence suggests that the policy / service / function benefits a particular group – or disadvantages another - is there a justifiable reason for this and if so, what is it?</b>
As described above, certain targets and actions for reaching the targets aim to benefit particular age groups. Age is a protected characteristic but addressing these groups is justified because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the six actions identified by the Marmot Review for ending health inequalities was to 'Give every child the best start in life'. By enabling young people to develop their life skills they will be more ready to achieve better whilst in education, become ready for employment and</li> </ul>

learn those skills and have positive aspirations to pass onto their children – addressing children is a sustainable approach.

- Maidstone teenage pregnancy figures have increased by 11% though Kent figures have decreased.
- 31.1% of Maidstone 18-24 year olds are claiming unemployment benefit though only 2.7% of Maidstone's population is registered unemployed.
- Families which cost public services most and pose most problems for their communities are often characterised by intergenerational unemployment – breaking this cycle will benefit everyone.

#### 5.2. Is it discriminatory in any way?

No.

#### 5.3. Is there a possible impact in relationships or perceptions between different parts of the community?

The target of **achieving a reduction in crime and anti-social behaviour** may have a knock-on impact in improving relations between people with different characteristics (eg between different age groups), and eliminating unlawful conduct such as harassment.

#### 5.4. What measures can you put in place to reduce disadvantages?

The priorities in the Strategy need to be addressed in a way that means no protected characteristic is unfairly disadvantaged compared to another. The actions described in the Strategy for meeting the priorities include the following:

- **Increase targeted support for families with children aged 0-3, particularly the most vulnerable and deprived:** This targeting means that the most needy will be assisted, regardless of protected characteristics.
- **Develop a neighbourhood action approach within priority communities (Park Wood, Shepway North, Shepway South and High Street Wards); Finalise model for engaging residents in priority areas in neighbourhood management/ neighbourhood policing:** As this model is finalised attention should be paid to engaging with people of many protected characteristics.
- **Develop and deliver a sustainable programme of preventative health work focusing on the Borough's health priorities, including obesity, smoking, substance misuse, sexual health, self harm and mental health in priority areas.** This scheme will include a system for GP referrals which will make many of the most needy residents aware of it. The programmes will need monitoring to check that they are accessible to people with different protected characteristics. Work is already planned to increase the number of males who take up the Healthy Weight Programme, in order to meet one of the Council's Equality Objectives. It has been noted that it would be useful to collect data on more of the protected characteristics where possible.
- **Organise and deliver a Worklessness stakeholder event addressing sustainable employment through targeted support:** Ensuring the Maidstone Disability Group and VCS is engaged in the event. Ensuring venue is accessible.
- **Develop a training action plan for young people (including work placements, apprenticeships, mentoring and volunteering); Increase opportunities for children and young people to participate in community development activities; Implement diversionary activities and projects for young people to tackle ASB:** The programmes will need monitoring to check that they are accessible to people with different protected characteristics.

Further measures to ensure equal implementation may be identified during the ongoing consultation.

**5.5. Do you need to consult further?**

Consultation is currently underway.

**5.6. Have you identified any potential improvements to customer service?**

Improvements may be identified during consultation and when events are undertaken.

**5.7. Who should you tell about the outcomes of this analysis?**

The analysis will be shared with the Maidstone Disability Focus Group, MBC's Scrutiny Function, key partners.

**5.8. Have you built the actions into your Service Plan or Policy Implementation Plan with a clear timescale?**

Build into the annual service plan.

**5.9. When will this assessment need to be repeated?**

The Strategy will be assessed on a bi-annual basis and this assessment will be checked at this time.