

## Equality information analysis Planning

1. What are the directorate's key functions and services?

**Primary functions - as summarised [here](#)**

Head of Planning Services - Mark Ketley

- Strategic planning policy - lead officer is Joan Sanderson
- Neighbourhood and Infrastructure Planning - lead officer is David English
- Development Management - lead officer is Elizabeth Sinnamon
- Planning Enforcement - lead officer is Abbie Nendick
- Affordable Housing Delivery - lead officer is Rebecca Fenwick
- Highways Development Management - lead officer is Graham Fairs
- Conservation - lead Officer Sara Rushton

2. What information does the group or service area have about people for each of the protected characteristics below?

In analysing data we acknowledge that some people have multiple protected characteristics and this may increase the equality impacts for these people. The statistics of the population of northumberland as outlined in the main equality information report would apply to planning services as we supply services and the impact of our decisions would affect the whole population.

3. What consultations or engagement has the group undertaken, were there any differences in results for different protected groups?

Planning services provides its services to all people, so there is a need to ensure that access to the service, and consultation on its procedures, is accessible to everyone. The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is one of a group of documents that supports the Local Plan. The first SCI was adopted just after Local Government Reorganisation in 2009. Following consultation a revised version of the SCI was adopted in 2015 and this can be found here:

<http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/NorthumberlandCountyCouncil/media/Planning-and-Building/planning%20policy/Local%20Plan/NCC-SCI-February-2015.pdf>

The role of the SCI is to set out how people and organisations will be involved in local planning processes (e.g. the determination of planning applications and the setting of planning policy and guidance through the Local Plan). It also identifies how we communicate with different types of groups, some of which are currently under-represented in the planning process. Responses from the community engagement exercise indicated that the Council in general needed to make more

effort to engage in appropriate ways with particular groups, including disabled people, although no specific difficulties with accessing the service were identified. Subsequently a number of protocols and compacts have been agreed, taking on board the requirements of the 2010 Equalities Act and these commitments have been integrated into the revised SCI.

The SCI consultations provided a strategic overview of how representative groups view, and wish to be involved with, the processes of preparing the Local Plan and the determination of planning applications. As part of the preparation of the Core Strategy an Equality Impact Assessment was prepared. Specific targeted engagement was undertaken with hard to reach groups including the gypsy/traveller communities, disabled people and people with a learning disability. Information regarding the Core Strategy has been disseminated to a range of groups, and Officers have attended meetings to raise awareness of it. There has been no recent, detailed survey information obtained from individual users of the Development Management and Conservation Service regarding the use of, or satisfaction with, the service by disabled groups.

4. Are there any good practice examples or progress in improving services or employment opportunities for people with protected characteristics within your group or service areas?

An equalities workshop was held as part of the Core Strategy Issues and Options consultation in 2012. Also an easy read version of the Issues and Options document was produced to help facilitate discussions amongst a wide range of groups, incorporating all protected characteristics.

The directorate has continued to offer work placements and apprenticeship opportunities and aims to recruit a diverse range of applicants. We have a broadly equal gender balance in the vacancies we have recruited to. We have policies to promote equality in the workplace including flexible working and a carers policy. Staff undertake mandatory equality training to promote awareness and understanding of equality issues for example some staff have undertaken additional training in understanding the particular needs of visually impaired people in accessing the built environment

5. What actions have been taken or are planned within the group or service area to achieve the NCC equality objectives?

- *We would like to develop a accessibility strategy that can be consistently applied to everything we do. This includes the Local Plan and Development Management . We would like to work with protected groups and equality leads to help identify what we need to consider and get a better understanding of how we can progress equality issues.*

- *Review who we consult on major applications to ensure we take into account the views of protected groups*
- *Ensure our officer reports demonstrate that we have taken equality into consideration.*
- *Revise SIC and carry out a new Equality Impact assessment. We will engage from the outset to incorporate equality issues.*
- *Undertake Equality Impact Assessment of each stage in the Local Plan process. Protected groups are involved in policy formulation from an equalities perspective.*
- *Promote equality awareness through team meetings*
- *Support staff to undertake additional training where appropriate to increase knowledge of barriers to access*
- *Encourage staff from the directorate to become equality allies*

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