

## Corporate standard for equality and diversity monitoring

**Ratified by Corporate Equality Group - June 2009**

### Why do equality and diversity monitoring?

The reason we ask for monitoring information is to make sure that residents and staff get access to services and fair treatment. For example, do we know if

- Older and/or younger people feel more satisfied with what we do?
- Disabled people use our community centres and are they active in our tenants associations?
- People from certain faiths, beliefs or religions use more of our services than others?
- Women and men (including those who are transgendered) have similar access to our sports and leisure facilities
- We have more complaints about services from a particular black and minority ethnic group?
- There are a similar proportion of people in our workforce from different backgrounds compared to our economically active population?
- A disproportionate number of our Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Trans communities feel dissatisfied with our adult social care services?

It is only by asking for the monitoring information in the questions on page 5 that we can find out the answers to these sorts of questions.

To improve our customer and staff care we want and need to know more about how things affect diverse people at different times. To do this we must ask our staff, service users and customers about their background. We must do this consistently across our organisation and over time. Then we can make sure we do something if we spot inequalities and generally find better ways of doing things.

The law says that we must ask some information in certain areas and we can choose what we do in others. We have already decided that we want to cover all the equality strands. <sup>(1)</sup> This standard is based on best practice guidance from a variety of sources including for those areas not covered by statutory requirements. <sup>(2)</sup>

### When to monitor?

Each service area must carefully consider when, how and why they need to ask questions about equality and diversity. Any information we collect should be relevant to our overall aims and objectives. A common sense approach is always best.

We should only collect this data when we need to know about the person receiving services and/or those affected by it. We must make sure we also have the ability to use the data collected and a procedure for compiling reports

There may be times when it is not appropriate to ask our staff or customers for the information this standard. For example, when a

- A swimming pool ticket is needed
- Pest control advice is sought
- Fly tipping needs dealing with

Services in these areas should consider if they can do other sorts of monitoring so they get a picture of who is using their services and if they are accessible, e.g. postal surveys or intermittent occasional samples that are repeated at sensible intervals

Sometimes a service needs to ask some of the questions in our standard and not others e.g. where there are big queues of people like applications for free bus passes or housing benefit and front desk enquiries. It may be better to ask for this to be filled in later or use a survey approach. Another example is where a service a specific survey is being conducted say about women only swimming groups making the sexual orientation question irrelevant and likewise environmental health type services.

There are other times and services where we can and should routinely ask for the full range of information like in schools, when we provide social care and housing services, on issuing library cards or dealing with planning applications and when a complaint is submitted. Here it should be possible to ask for the full range of questions either verbally or in a form to be completed.

We should always ask the full range of questions to our staff and when we are doing customer satisfaction surveys or in on line service enquiries or feedback.

At all times it is essential that we have made sure that confidentiality, relevant anonymity and that arrangements for the secure and safe storage of the information is in place. We should only be asking for this information if we know that we will be making use of it and in a way that is useful to us and the people who use our services

## **Do we have to keep to the categories in this standard?**

The categories in the standard questions on page 5 have been carefully chosen for a range of reasons. Some contain information we need to have to compare things with the national census. Others are based on best practice guidelines gathered from a range of specialist organisations. Service areas should where possible keep to these core standards. The gender and sexual orientation questions in particular should not be altered as transgender must not be confused with sexual orientation.

It is acceptable to extend on the categories on page 5 if this is needed by a service e.g. additional breakdown of the religious categories like types of Christianity. Where a service decides to do this they must make sure that they have a way to fit the information they are getting back into the broader headings. The reason for this is to make sure we can if we need to compare like for like across the whole council. This would also apply to the age categories, if you need information about 18 to 65 year olds then use this broader category.

## **How to ask?**

Best practice says that the earlier we ask for equality and diversity information then the better. We must be clear from the start and ready to answer any questions about why we are doing this.

When doing a written survey or on line consultation, we can put the questions as on page 5 into each document at the end. Completing the categories should not be obligatory in order to move to the next section so people have a genuine choice about giving their information. The introduction to the survey should be something like

“So we can make sure our services are fair and accessible we would like to find out more about you. Would you please take some time to complete the following questions? We will keep your information confidential, safe and secure.”

Some times staff might feel unsure about verbally asking the questions. We and our unions rightly want to make sure that when they do they are confident, competent and able so it works out well for all concerned. We suggest that if asking monitoring questions face to face the questions should be open ended. It is essential that the person themselves decides the category and staff should not make assumptions for them or complete the form on their behalf without them indicating expressly which category they consider themselves to be in. Here are some ideas as to how the questions can be asked

“We need to be sure that our service is reaching all sections of the community, to check that no-one is receiving less of the service, or is less satisfied with it., can I ask you to complete the following form/can I ask you the following questions? You do not have to complete this/tell me unless you are happy to do so.”

- What age (or age group) are you? (you in?)
- Do you consider your self to have a disability .....and if so would you mind telling me what sort it is?
- Can you tell me your gender within the categories I have on this form/read them out?
- Do you have a faith, belief or religion .....and if so would you mind telling me what it is?
- How do you describe your ethnic background?
- How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Please do not read out all the categories in the strands unless this is needed or the customer/person asks for it.

After asking for this information verbally it is also very important to double check it is accurate at the end of noting things down.

If it is helpful the Social Inclusion Unit can offer learning and development opportunities to assist. Depending on service areas and staff needs this could take several different forms. Managers please contact the social inclusion unit on [inclusion@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:inclusion@plymouth.gov.uk) if you think we can assist.

If you come across any issues when asking these questions, the Social Inclusion Unit would like to know about them. Please feel free to contact us on [inclusion@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:inclusion@plymouth.gov.uk). When you contact us we can either assist with the situation that has arisen or make sure that we use what you tell us when we update this standard in the future.

## Dealing with the answers

Don't be embarrassed if people are not clear about their answers. This is because the meaning of terms, such as “ethnic origin” or “race “are not necessarily clear to everyone. People may talk about their nationality rather than their ethnicity. The difference is that nationality is about where they are born or what passport they have and ethnicity about the cultural background they consider themselves to have. So if some-one says British you may need to ask more as there are a range of ethnicities within that nationality. So you would ask another question like ‘Is that White or Black British?’

Sometimes people are worried about asking about customer's sexual orientation. Stonewall says that

“Monitoring sexual orientation plays an important part not only in being able to identify good or poor practice, improving the experience of individuals where applicable, but also in demonstrating to individuals from minority groups that they also matter in a majority culture.”

So it is important that we do ask this question when we can.

Where a person objects to answering then the questions should not be asked or answers pursued.

Remember though most people are proud of who they are and usually happy to tell you about themselves. Overall our experience is that very few people object to telling you their equality and diversity categories especially if asked confidently and politely

## What about data protection?

When collecting personal information we must follow all Data Protection Act requirements. So when using the questions on page 5 managers must make sure that this is accompanied by a ‘Privacy Notice’ also known as a fair collection notice. This information can be obtained from our Document Library.

## What do we do with the information when we have it?

If you do not intend to use the information that you obtain from monitoring, then do not ask the questions. The purpose of monitoring is to see what is going on and what if anything you need to do about it.

Where possible we should try to avoid asking the same questions to the same customers and staff over and over. Where we can this information should be joined up, for example, our Human Resources Information (HRIS) and “FLARE” Service request and “Have your say” systems can capture this information about specific individuals and so this should be checked and cross referenced rather than ask time and time again.

When you have gathered information retain it securely and use it to inform Equality Impact Assessments; service reviews and changes and also business/service planning. You can also use it for specific equality actions as needed in improving our services and achieving excellence.

## For more information

Please contact the Social Inclusion Unit on [inclusion@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:inclusion@plymouth.gov.uk) or 304321. You can also contact your departmental Corporate Equality Group Representative (CEG).

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(<sup>1</sup>) Age, Disability, Gender, Faith/Belief/Religion, Race, Sexual Orientation are the equality strands and for further information about the range of legislation that covers this requirement please contact the Social Inclusion Unit as above.

(2) There are best practice guidelines written by Equality and Human Rights Commission (ECHR) ACAS, Stonewall, Press for Change, the Employers Organisation. These standards are based on these national guidance’s and reading them will assist staff to feel confident about asking for the information on page 5.

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What is your Age? (Please tick one box)					
Under 16	17-18	19-50	51-65	66-75	76 or over

Gender – Are you? (Please tick one box)			
Male	Female	Do you identify yourself as Transgender?	Prefer not to say

Are you a person with a disability? (Please tick one box)		
Yes	No	Prefer not to say
Would you like to let us know more about your disability? (Please write in.)		

Ethnicity – Are you? (Please tick one box)			
<b>A. White</b>	British	<b>C. Asian or Asian British</b>	Bangladeshi
	Gypsy/Traveller		Indian
	Irish		Pakistani
	Any other white background (please state)		Any other Asian Background (please state)
<b>B. Mixed</b>	White and Black Caribbean	<b>D. Black or Black British</b>	African
	White and Black African		Caribbean
	White and Asian		Any other Black background (please state)
	Any other mixed background (please state)		
<b>E. Chinese or other ethnic group</b>	Chinese	<b>Any other ethnic group (Please state)</b>	

How would you describe your faith, belief, religion? (Please tick one box)	
Buddhist	Jewish
Christian (Inc Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	Muslim
Hindu	Sikh
Other religion – (Please write in)	None
Prefer not to say	

What is your sexual orientation? (Please tick one box)	
Bisexual	Heterosexual/straight
Gay man	Other (including questioning)
Lesbian/Gay woman	Prefer not to say

What is your marital status? (Please tick one box)	
Single	Married
Civil Partnership	Living with partner
Prefer not to say	