

Equalities Update

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

This report outlines how the Board will be addressing equalities issues in its policy work. It also provides members with potential future policy areas within which officers see potential to broaden the focus on equalities. Members are asked to provide a steer on the areas outlined in the report.

Is this report confidential? Yes No

Recommendations

Members are asked to agree the policy areas outlined in section 8 of the report which will provide further potential for addressing the equalities brief.

Actions

- Officers will continue to review the impact on equalities across their policy briefs, providing particular focus to the work areas in section 8 of the report
- Officers will update the Board on any new policy areas which will address equalities issues

Contact officer: Sonika Sidhu
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 07775802327
Email: sonika.sidhu@local.gov.uk

Equalities Update

Background

1. The Executive Advisory Board have asked each Board to identify a member to be an Equalities Advocate. The aim of this is to raise the profile of any equalities issues within the Board's workstream, to contribute to the cross-cutting work around equalities, and to report into the Executive Advisory Board on equality issues relating to their Board. Cllr Kevin Bentley is the People and Places Board Equalities Advocate.
2. Members of the Board have encouraged officers to provide further focus on equalities issues which meet with the Boards remit. Cllr Bentley has highlighted that the Board should be looking at equalities' issues on a regular basis. This report outlines the equalities issues the Board is currently looking at through its work and potential future work areas which may provide additional opportunities for consideration.

Context

3. The purpose of the People & Places Board is to provide a forum for local authorities that are not metropolitan to debate economic growth and public service transformation in their areas.
4. The role of the Board is to develop greater clarity on the role of non-metropolitan authorities in enabling economic growth for the long-term benefit of residents, and on how devolution and transformation of public services can enable that. Its remit is to consider how planning and infrastructure provision, publicly-funded skills and employment programmes, digital connectivity and housing might be better-deployed in a non-metropolitan setting to drive growth, and how people services and health and care integration, together with greater use of pooled funding, might help to drive transformation in services.
5. The Board deals with a range of cross cutting issues which don't directly read across to the protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010 in particular, the Board does not deal with the delivery of any particular service or the discharge of any specific local authority duty. However, in addressing economic growth, skills and employment issues and transformation of public services the work of the Board addresses key issues which have a direct impact on equality of opportunity and the life chances of individuals. It also plays a key role in shaping and advancing the LGA's policy on devolution which seeks to better connect decision making with local priorities and give local communities a stronger voice on the national stage.

6. In light of the Covid pandemic one of the major strategic focuses of the Board will be the economic recovery of non metropolitan areas. The manner in which recovery is delivered will have direct impact on issues of equalities, which the Board will need to consider. These issues will vary across different regions.

People & Places Board activity

7. Officers are currently working on the following projects, with implications for EDI:

7.1. Strengthening Recovery and Resilience in Rural and Coastal Areas

There is a perception that the significance of deprivation and economic challenges in rural and coastal areas have been underestimated by national datasets and, as a result, subsequent policy interventions have failed to provide adequate support. Following discussions on the need to spotlight these issues, the Board approved the commissioning of work to Strengthen Recovery and Resilience in Rural and Coastal Areas. This will explore the often-unique economic challenges facing rural and coastal areas and outline what steps national and local government can take to strengthen the recovery and resilience of these communities within the current context.

This report will include findings on:

- The economic impact of covid-19
- The role of volunteers as a component of civil resilience
- Disability and access to services in a sparse geography
- Isolation and mental health
- The suitability of national measures of deprivation in capturing pockets of inequality

7.2. Councils' Guide to Supporting Exports

Trade in UK goods and services will continue to play an important part in the Government's ambitions to increase national growth and prosperity as part of its 'levelling up' agenda. Building on previously published guides for councils looking to attract foreign capital investment and drawing on lessons learned from established and emerging sub-national bodies, we have commissioned Value Adage to produce a guide to outline best practice, advice and assistance to councils looking to support local businesses to increase their exports.

Recognising both the gaps in national service provision and the role councils have played in leveraging the knowledge and relationships held by their diverse communities this work will include a focus on diaspora communities and the potential trading they can providing in connecting domestic links and global markets.

7.3. EU and associated match funding

To support our UKSPF and wider growth policy work, we have commissioned work to explore the extent of match funding of the current European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) programme, that will soon be replaced with UKSPF. The intention of the project is to help understand funding sources that have supported ESIF programmes. This will in turn enable local areas to strategically plan how UKSPF and wider growth funding can help create inclusive growth and tackle inequalities, as well as meet the Government's levelling up agenda.

7.4. Employment and Skills projects

Jobs and skills recovery: To help facilitate knowledge transfer across the sector, we will deliver two online resources by the end of March. The first is a 'top tips' resource focused on five themes critical to jobs and skills recovery, and the second a case study resource capturing the sector's role to support jobs and skills during the Covid-19 crisis and as they plan for recovery. As the economy begins to open up, those already at a disadvantage will likely find it harder to enter, sustain and progress in work. We envisage some of the project outputs will have read across to what local government can do to help people access the labour market.

Education to Employment – Supporting Youth Participation. York Consulting have been commissioned to deliver an action learning project with eleven areas (councils/combined authorities). The project aims to develop a better understanding of the barriers/challenges councils face in fulfilling their statutory duties for young people, for instance, in relation to those not in education, employment or training (NEET) and to explore potential solutions. The final report will include:

- the barriers faced by young people and specific groups, for instance, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- evidence and insights from local authorities, including barriers faced in providing support to diverse cohorts
- Innovative solutions to delivering effective support to different groups
- a selection of case studies showcasing a range of diverse innovative approaches planned/undertaken by authorities

The current COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated existing challenges for many disadvantaged groups and the report will examine how these could be addressed.

Potential work areas for future consideration

8. The following policy issues may provide further opportunity to develop our work on this agenda:

- The Devolution and Recovery White Paper due for publication within the next 12 months.

- Exploring how the Skills for Jobs Further Education White Paper will support a more placed based approach to jobs and skills, including more targeted support to people and places.
- The Government's broader 'Levelling Up' agenda and its interaction with tackling persistent inequalities.

Implications for Wales

9. Officers are regularly working with the Welsh LGA to share best practise across equalities issues.

Financial Implications

10. There are no additional financial implications of any of the work outlined above.

Next steps

11. Members to provide feedback about equalities issues which they think need further focus through the Boards policy work.