Annex 2: Equality Policy – Annual Update 2013/14

The council is required to report at least annually on progress against set specific, measurable equality objectives, and we have to revise our objectives every four years. In our *Equality Policy 2012-17*, we set ourselves the following objectives:

1. Understanding the needs of individuals and communities
2. Providing accessible, local and personalised services, including to rural areas and areas of deprivation
3. Supporting thriving and cohesive communities
4. Promoting a culture of fairness in employment and service delivery

For each key objective we identified a number of actions which were intended to build on achievements and address areas where improvement was needed in our performance. This is our second annual report on progress against those actions.

Objective 1: Understanding the needs of individuals and communities

This objective is focused on how we understand the needs of the people and communities of Oxfordshire, including the wide range of consultation and engagement activities we already have in place. Our actions relate to how we can use this better understanding of need to plan services in response to the needs we have identified.

Action	Update
1a) Investigate why levels of satisfaction with services that are generally high are variable between different groups, for example by running focus groups with adult social care service users.	The council takes part in a national survey of people who use social care which is run in February each year. In the 2013 survey, satisfaction overall remained high, with 64% of those users saying they were either very satisfied or extremely satisfied with the services they received, and this figure is slightly above the average for similar authorities. Analysis of results from 2012 showed that of the groups surveyed those with Physical Disabilities were comparatively less satisfied than all clients taken as a whole. In responding to this finding, additional resources were targeted at this group and in 2013 their level of satisfaction with services was reported to be in line with other client groups. The survey is currently being re-run and results are due to publish in the

	Summer of 2014.
1b) Ensure that Oxfordshire Voice Citizens' Panel, our resident's panel, is broadly representative of the makeup of the county by increasing the number of people who share some of the protected characteristics to ensure it is balanced to reflect age, gender, ethnicity and disability.	Oxfordshire Voice is a citizens' panel made up of over 3,000 Oxfordshire residents who have volunteered to give up some of their time to answer surveys on a wide variety of issues. Panel members are carefully recruited to be representative of the population of Oxfordshire and are invited to stay on the panel for around three years. We continue to encourage people from under-represented groups to join the panel and participate in our surveys.
1c) Implement our new Strategy for Education to improve educational outcomes for all young people. In particular, we will take action to close unacceptable gaps in attainment levels between children from different backgrounds and who share protected characteristics (for example looked after children, some black and minority ethnic groups, and some children with special educational needs).	Our Strategic Plan for Education was approved by Cabinet in July 2012. It focuses on specific needs of all young people of the county. The delivery of the strategy has included a complete review of our educational attainment support, resulting in the establishment of a new support service specifically targeting those areas of greatest need. Overall attainment has shown an improvement, but there are a number of vulnerable groups in Oxfordshire that do not achieve as well as the rest of the cohort, or the same groups nationally. In particular the performance of children known to be eligible for free school meals (FSM), children supported at school action plus, and looked after children is of concern. Work has started to identify schools where good practice and intervention had had a marked impact on these groups. This good practice will then be transferred to schools where the gap is not improving. These issues are subject to exploration by the Education Scrutiny Committee who have set up a working party specifically to examine issues with educational attainment.
1d) Provide information and support to vulnerable adults so that more people who use services report that they feel safer each year.	The council takes part in a national survey of people who use social care which is run in February each year. In the 2013 survey, 69% of users said that they felt as safe as they want. For people who don't feel as safe as they would like, the greatest worry is falling over, particularly inside the house. The Falls Prevention Service is jointly funded by Health and Social Care and

	delivers a comprehensive fall prevention and intervention countywide service. It delivers: falls assessments and treatment plans in patients' homes in clinics and in care homes; home based exercise programs; and education and training – to both health and social care practitioners, private providers and to the general public. The increase of both Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Oxfordshire County Councils pooling of resources in older peoples services allows an increased scope for further support of services such as the falls prevention service.
1e) Ask older people and people with a disability who we work with if we can pass on their details to other services and organisations, including the Fire and Rescue Service who will be able to undertake Fire Risk Assessments in their homes.	The Combined Care service was launched in 2012 between the Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Social and Community Services directorate. The service allows for closer synergy and co-ordination between the two services to enable OFRS to effectively identify households and pro-actively target its fire risk prevention support to those already identified by the county as vulnerable. An information sharing protocol was developed through the county council's legal team, which allowed SCS clients to be given the option of having their home address details shared with OFRS. This process triggers OFRS into offering the resident a Home Fire Risk Check (HFRC), as well as potentially a free smoke alarm installed in their home in order to make them safer.

In 2013/14 a second tranche of data was shared between the teams resulting in 1,039 HFRCs. In total, over 2,300 HFRCs have been carried out since the service was launched. A third tranche of data sharing is planned for 2013/14. We are extending the service to clients receiving direct payments for social care, and are also offering to pass information on if, during a social care assessment, staff notice the absence of a smoke alarm. |

Objective 2: Providing accessible, local, and personalised services

This objective, and our priority actions, is focussed on how the council responds to the needs of the people and communities of Oxfordshire.

Action	Update
2a) Maintain our focus on preventing the need for more specialist services through early identification of problems and early intervention in adult and children's services.	Within Children's Services, our seven Early Intervention Hubs work with children, young people, and their families across the county to provide intensive support designed to meet their individual needs. Although the usual age range is from birth to 19, we can extend this up to 25 if users have special educational needs.

Between September 2012 and October 2013, 2,776 new children and young people were referred to the Early Intervention Service, of whom 43% were between 11 to 15 years old. This is an increase on the previous year and reflects the overall trend for rising demand on our children's services. 57% of these were male and 43% were female. 2,183 (79%) came from White British backgrounds, and this was the most common ethnic background for all those receiving referrals to the seven Hubs. This compares to a countywide figure of 83.6% of the population reporting as White British in the 2011 census. 63% of these children had special educational needs. 28% of those referred had behavioural, emotional, and social difficulties.

The Thriving Families programme works with the most disadvantaged and challenged families to reduce worklessness, antisocial behaviour, crime and school exclusions and to increase school attendance. The key focus is on our most resource intensive and vulnerable families with the aim of reducing the numbers needing the type of support offered by social care. |

	This continues to be a vital strand in the on-going work locally to narrow the gap in outcomes that exists across the county. Within the Adult Social Care service, one of the key elements of our strategy is 'keeping people well'. This means we have a continued focus on providing early support to keep people well, support and increase their independence and prevent them from needing more intensive (and expensive) care. Services include information and advice, reablement (to aid recovery after illness), falls prevention, support to family carers, employment, assistive technology, equipment and day services.
2b) Analyse the number of children from minority ethnic backgrounds on child protection plans. The findings will be used to develop plans to address any over representation identified, and to learn from where the number of young people from certain groups on child protection plans is lower than might be expected.	We monitor the ethnic backgrounds of people on child protection plans and the Quality Assurance and Audit subgroup of the Safeguarding Board receives regular updates. We will continue to examine the data we hold to identify any potential areas to address.
2c) Map the dispersal of young carers around the County to see if there are any geographical clusters or patterns, with a view to understanding why this occurs and what action is needed to address issues that cause it	Our database allows us to analyse and map the data we have on our clients to see if there are any geographical clusters or other patterns. In 2013/14 we identified 1518 identified Young Carers - this represents an increase of approximately 30% on last year. Targeted work in schools by the Young Carers' team and the initiation of a schools standard pilot has led to a significant rise in identification of Young Carers. The Young Carers identified are reasonably evenly distributed according to Hubs, with the largest number, as might be expected, in the major population areas. Young Carers identified by Early Intervention Service Hub area: • 187 Witney

	268 Abingdon 217 Didcot 213 Littlemore 240 East Oxford 166 Bicester 227 Banbury Hubs offer support groups to all identified Young Carers.
2d) Change the way day services for older people are provided, maintaining services in major towns, but focusing on community initiatives and local decision-making about how best to support older people in their community.	During 2013 Health and Wellbeing Centres across the county have developed new services to support the Health & Wellbeing model, which best supports people to stay healthy, well and independent in their local community, and they have been well received by customers. The centre buildings are increasingly used by a range of partners providing complimentary support and advice for people, including Alzheimers Society, Stroke Association, MIND and local groups and organizations, which run both alongside and with the Health & Wellbeing service. Local Friends and Stakeholder groups have been formed to inform and steer local service development, providing customer feedback and ideas. Further stakeholder involvement is a key priority for the coming year and the services are currently looking to achieve Saturday opening in all of the seven centres by the end of 2014. A key element of the vision of supporting people in our communities is to help them to live at home and remain active in their community for as long as possible. We want people in Oxfordshire to know where they can access the right information and advice to help them make good choices about what help they or their family might need and to this end we have awarded a contract to Age UK Oxfordshire, in partnership with Volunteer Link Up to provide the Community Information Network. The Community Information Networkers will be a face-to-face contact for people who are

	less likely to use the telephone or internet services to access information. They will also signpost people to sources of more specialist information and advice such as dementia advisors or assistive technology specialists. The network will officially launch in May 2014.
2e) Focus on giving people choice in the way they lead their lives and how they secure the services they need to support them. We will increase each year the proportion of people who receive a direct payment which allows them to secure the services they need to support them.	The proportion of social care users receiving self-directed support or direct payments allowing them to secure the services they need to support them continues to rise. In 2012/13, 45.5% of service users, including carers, were receiving direct payments. This meant we ranked top compared to all other local authorities in England. In 2013/14, the number of people receiving direct payments increased by a further 9%. Over 3,000 people now receive direct payments or self-directed support.
2f) Support older people and people with a disability to live in their own home for longer by: i. Providing more support to help older people increase their ability to cope so that more of them can return home and stay there after hospital discharge	We have a continued focus on providing early support to keep people well, support and increase their independence, and prevent them from needing more intensive (and expensive) care. Services include information and advice, reablement (to aid recovery after illness), falls prevention, support to family carers, assistive technology, equipment and day services. By the end of 2013/14 approximately 50% of people completing the reablement service have been sufficiently supported so they need no on-going care. However, this is below our target, so we need to work even more closely with Health partners to improve performance, increase the number of people accessing the service, and encourage all home care providers to take and an enabling approach. As outlined in update 2d above, we are also establishing Community Information Networks so that

		older people can access the right information and advice about the support and care available to them.
ii.	Increasing the number of hours of long term support made available to clients	Over the last three years we have increased the amount of care provided to support people to live at home. Comparing the number of users of our services on 1 April 2012 with the same day on 2013 and 2014, the number of hours has risen by 41%, from 21,491 hours in 2012 to 30,475 hours by 2014. This has supported an additional 24% more older people from 1,970 in 2012 to 2,433 in 2014. People are also getting much more support when they are supported.
iii.	Devolving budgets to local area managers so that they are specifically able to address the needs of their locality	We have been moving toward a policy of devolving budgets to localities and in 2014/15, over £13 million will be formally devolved to locality teams for older people to spend either on care homes or home support depending on local pressures. A further £1m has been allocated to local physical disability teams to spend on home support.
iv.	Increasing the availability of extra care housing and assistive technology	Extra care housing offers older people the combination of living independently in their own home with access to on-site support and services they might need. It is an increasingly popular alternative to residential care. In 2009, there were only 20 extra care housing units in Oxfordshire. A total of 893 flats are on track during the first five year period of the programme (2010-15). The ambition is to develop Extra Care Housing at a ratio of 55 places per 1,000 persons aged 75+, giving a long-range target of 4,300 flats to be developed within Oxfordshire from 2010 until 2031.

We are now supporting over 4,600 people living in the community with telecare and stand-alone assistive technology. In 2013/14, additional funding was put into training health and social professionals to improve awareness of the technology available and how it can be used to support clients to live independently. |

v. Continuing to provide information and support to carers.	We continue to offer information and support to carers. We have a dedicated website for carers (http://www.carersoxfordshire.org.uk/), and produce publications offering advice and information for everyone who cares for others. We also offer grants to give carers the help or breaks they need.
2g) Work with business network providers to develop and implement a strategy for the roll out of super-fast broadband across the county, to improve access to online services.	Better Broadband for Oxfordshire is a £25 million project extending commercial deployment of fibre broadband to over 90% of homes and businesses in Oxfordshire by the end of 2015. It is jointly funded by £10 million from Oxfordshire County Council, £4 million from the Government and £11 million from BT. By stepping in to fill gaps not served commercially, the project is ensuring that many more people can get online and take advantage of a wide range of services that many already take for granted, such as accessing the increasingly available on-line public sector transaction capability. The contract signed in August 2013 requires BT to upgrade the infrastructure in such a way that the maximum number of premises possible are able to order fibre broadband with funding available. Roll out began just before Christmas 2013 and the surveys for the whole intervention area are due to be completed by July 2014. More information about the Better Broadband for Oxfordshire project can be found online at http://www.betterbroadbandoxfordshire.org.uk
2h) Enable all Adult Learning tutors to integrate equality and diversity into their teaching – content and classroom management – in order to ensure inclusivity for all learners	Equality and diversity are integral to all the training and sessions Oxfordshire Skills and Learning provide. During observation sessions, tutors are assessed on their implementation and understanding of this. The overall grade is collected centrally, and along with six sub-grades, four of which relate to equality and diversity.

	To help raise awareness about the diverse nature of the county's residents, the Oxfordshire Skills and Learning Service also creates posters highlighting festivals and celebrations from around the world that are displayed in all learning centres.
2i) Continue to develop improved accessibility routes on the public rights of way network.	Our Transport Strategy commits us to improving accessibility on routes across the county. In close consultation with representative individuals and groups, we aim to ensure that footway provision, parking, bus stops and other highway measures take full account of the needs of all people irrespective of movement or sensory ability.
2j) Provide training to Highways & Transport staff involved in policy and design to ensure they understand the constraints faced by customers with a disability using our services, and have regard to these constraints in service design and delivery.	Awareness is managed through the personal development process for all staff as and when required. In addition we undertake regular consultation with vulnerable user groups on individual schemes in advance of construction.

Objective 3: Supporting thriving and cohesive communities

The county council is committed to working closer to the communities we serve, to understand the challenges they face, and to make sure our services are working together as effectively as possible. We our also committed to empowering communities to do things for themselves, including identifying and/or responding when the public sector might not be able to continue to provide a service.

| 3a) Continue to work in partnership to improve the quality of life in the most deprived areas of the county. This will include promoting better engagement in education, employment and training; supporting the vulnerable and those with multiple and enduring problems; promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing health inequalities; reducing and mitigating the effects of child | We are continuing our 'Breaking the Cycle' programme that concentrates on the most deprived wards in Oxford and Banbury, identifying families most at need of help and providing them with intensive support from all agencies able to assist.

As part of our Thriving Families programme, we are working with |

poverty.	the district and city councils and other agencies, especially those dealing with anti-social behaviour and community safety. We are identifying families who either receive services or are known to others agencies, and deciding which agency is best placed to work with them. We are then monitoring their success to build up a picture of what works and how to identify other families likely to require support, so future interventions can happen early and effectively.
3b) Continue to provide a Big Society Fund that will support local communities and organisations who wish to identify local priorities and do things for themselves about issues that matter to them. We will also review expressions of interest, applications and funding patterns from 2011/12 and work with community groups to raise awareness and encourage access to the Fund.	Looking to build on the success of the Big Society Fund, it was renamed 'Councillor Community Budgets' in 2012, and the policy was refreshed to allow even greater local determination over how money is spent. In 2013/14 each county councillor had a £10,000 budget to support projects that mattered most to their local community. Over 400 community projects received funding under the 2013/14 Councillor Community Budgets grant scheme, with a total spend of £590k. Grants were allocated to a variety of community associations and voluntary organisations, schools, town and parish councils, sports clubs, youth clubs, residents associations, parent-teacher associations, social enterprises, museums, historical associations, community newspapers and magazines. A wide range of projects have been awarded funding under the programme: repairs and refurbishment work to village halls and community centres, purchasing of equipment for schools, youth clubs, playgrounds and after school clubs, day activities for the most vulnerable members of the community, youth engagement and outreach programmes, festivals and community events, support for carers, small infrastructure projects. Councillor Community Budget funding has often been requested as match funding or additional funding to top up existing grants.

3c) Continue to work closely with our military partners to maximise the value obtained from the pupil premium by focusing on specific needs of children from armed forces families, and ensure schools have appropriate information to support these children.	Best practice for spending the service pupil premium has been circulated to all schools. This advice will help schools provide the appropriate support to service children to reduce the disadvantages they face as part of the armed forces community.
3d) Continue to work closely with military partners to ensure we maximise the support we offer to carers of vulnerable people. We will ensure that we provide more information and support to carers around military bases and ensure that we support developments such as good neighbours' schemes by military bases.	The needs of the armed forces are championed through our armed forces health and wellbeing board which has representatives for the local NHS and armed forces community. We have been working in partnership with the local military to ensure our work continually matches the needs of the armed forces communities in Oxfordshire. Carers on military bases have received information and support to ensure they receive the same service as other residents in Oxfordshire.
3e) Raise awareness of the MANTRA (Multi-Agency Network for Tackling Racially Aggravated Harassment) service. We will also increase the number of agencies and venues people can use to report incidents of and concerns about hate crime, including in rural areas.	A review of the MANTRA service in May 2012 concluded that it was not as performing as effectively as intended. It was replaced with a free 24 hour phone line providing a single approach to third party reporting of hate crime across all local authorities in the Thames Valley area. The phone line is provided by Stop Hate UK, a registered charity and social enterprise based in Leeds. The service also offers users the option to use text relay services or online systems instead of the telephone. Stop Hate UK is a registered Charity providing a third party reporting system for victims of hate crime. A trained counsellor is available 24/7 365 days per year. Callers can remain anonymous and can choose whether or not to report to the Police. Information about Stop Hate UK is available on the Oxfordshire County Council website.

Objective 4: Promoting a culture of fairness in employment and service delivery

The county council is committed to ensuring equality of access, fairness, and consideration to all of our staff and potential future staff, and in the delivery of services to the people and communities of Oxfordshire.

4a) Ensure all managers and Councillors are aware of their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, and encourage all employees to access learning and development opportunities to increase their awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues.	Directorates regularly run their own training and refresher sessions for staff, and revised and updated guidance on equality issues is easily found on the council's intranet.
	Staff are also required to complete the online 'Respect for People' e-learning course which outlines why we should value diversity and provides essential information about the importance of fair and equal treatment for all service users and colleagues. We also encourage staff to repeat the course every two years.
	Managers are reminded of their responsibilities at 'Managing People Equality Act Essentials' briefing sessions.
	There was a county council election in May 2013. As part of the induction process, the principles around the Equality Act and the Equality Policy at the council were broadly covered as part of both the Code of Conduct training for councillors and the training for the Appeals & Tribunals Sub-Committee in dealing with appeals.
	In addition the council's Respect for People eLearning course was included in the list of recommended eLearning courses that was given to councillors at the Welcome Event.

4b) Ensure equality and diversity is integrated into the culture of the Customer Service Centre by embedding it within the behaviour and attitudes of staff, as well as the routine policies, procedures and practices of the service.	The Customer Service Centre prides itself on how its culture, policies, and practices integrate and embed awareness of equality and diversity issues into its work. All staff complete our mandatory online training in equality and diversity when they start working for us, and we ask people to repeat it on a rolling basis. We also run a series of briefings for staff. Internal staff satisfaction surveys always include questions about equality and diversity requirements. We regularly monitor calls to ensure people receive a quality service, including giving appropriate attention to any special requirements requested by the caller. We also offer supportive information in EasyRead format, and we now accept more on-line and over the phone applications.
4c) Undertake a full review of existing equality and diversity policies to ensure they remain in line with best practice and meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.	Following the review, our new Dignity at Work policy dealing with bullying and harassment in the workplace was launched in April 2013 and a series of briefings were delivered raising awareness of the responsibilities of managers and employees.
4d) Continue to encourage people from diverse backgrounds to apply for roles at the council, and do more to increase awareness of the support available to staff and guidance for managers to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made where appropriate.	We continue to encourage people from diverse backgrounds to apply for roles at the council, and were successfully re-awarded the Disability Two Ticks Symbol for 2013/2014. We provide a course for managers ensuring that they have a good understanding of the Equality Act and their legal responsibilities towards staff.
4e) Investigate the reasons for the lower levels of young workers employed by the council, and continue to expand the number of apprenticeship opportunities to create entry level posts.	We currently offer access to 8 different apprenticeship frameworks and a growing number of services and teams are taking these up. This means that our opportunities are not only

open to people from a broader range of backgrounds but that where appropriate, we are also able to support the council's positive recruitment policy.

We have recruited 55 apprentices since the beginning of April 2013. 22 of these were Level 3 qualifications starting at Grade 3. The rest of the apprentices were entry level, Level 2. The qualification level for entry to a Level 2 apprenticeship is Level 1 (GCSE Grades D-G). Of these 45 apprentices, 3 were care leavers. More information about the schemes and how representative our apprentices are of the wider community can be found in our latest 'Equality in Employment Report' here.

The council is tackling under-representation of young people in our workforce under section 159 of the Equality Act 2010 and for this reason a number of our apprenticeship vacancies are only open to individuals aged between 16 and 24 years old.

4f) Identify opportunities to work with others to deliver services that improve outcomes for groups with protected characteristics more effectively and develop innovative approaches to common issues, whether through formal partnership arrangements or more informal collaborative arrangements.	Oxfordshire County Council proudly works in partnership with other organisations from the public, private, military, voluntary, and community sectors across the county on areas of common interest. There are several partnerships in operation, all overseen by the Oxfordshire Partnership.
4g) Ensure that where services are being restructured there is a well-managed approach to diversity, including completion of Service and Community Impact Assessments to ensure that under-represented groups are not disproportionately affected in the resulting staff reductions. Statistics for redundancy will also need to be closely monitored.	Service and Community Impact Assessments (SCIAs) form an important part of how we develop policies and make decisions. They are produced for every contemplated service change, and regularly updated as proposals change and develop, ensuring that under-represented groups will not be not disproportionately affected by the changes. The HR department monitors the characteristics of staff leaving

	the organisation and the reasons for their departure, and presents their findings in the annual 'Equality in the Workplace' report. The most recent edition can be downloaded from here.