

Cheshire LAA: Equality Needs Impact Assessment Report and Community Cohesion Sub-outcome

Cheshire LAA Equality Impact Assessment: executive summary

Context:

The Cheshire LAA is a three year strategic service delivery agreement between central Government, Cheshire's local authorities and other strategic partners in the sub-region (working through the seven Local Strategic Partnerships) to improve public services. The LAA supports the planning and implementation of agreed priorities of both Government policy and locally identified needs. The intention behind LAA policy is to explore the range for central government departments to devolve detailed daily control of their national programmes and to move towards stronger partnership working with local authorities.

The aim of the Cheshire LAA is to deliver: "improved quality of life for people in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods; service providers more responsive to neighbourhood needs; and improved service delivery." The assessment has involved representatives from the following: Cheshire County Council, Cheshire LAA Group, BME Focus Group (supported by CHAWREC, Cheshire Police Authority and Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council) and Traveller Education and Minorities Support (Cheshire County Council) and Supported Employment Unit (Cheshire County Council).

The scope of the policy:

The LAA outcomes and sub-outcomes were assessed following the results of three brief consultation exercises: considering how views expressed compared and contrasted against the existing Agreement. The exercises were identified as needing to be more rigorous to ensure future assessments are more effective and timely.

The Cheshire, Halton and Warrington REC was commissioned to organise a focus group of BME communities in the Cheshire area to look at the current Local Area Agreement. The REC brought together fourteen people from a variety of communities from it's BME Consultation Panel. The Partnership was concerned that the needs of migrant workers and Gypsies and Travellers were addressed; therefore the REC sought attendance from both the Polish Association and Cheshire Gypsy and Travellers Voice to secure, as far as possible, a representative voice.

Additionally, The Cheshire LAA key and sub-outcomes were analysed and reviewed by colleagues in Cheshire County Council's Supported Employment Unit and Traveller Education & Minorities Support Service (TEMS). The Support Service is part of the Inclusion & School Improvement Service (ISIS) within Cheshire Children's Services Department. The outcomes were reviewed with a particular focus and emphasis on

determining any potential negative consequences for Cheshire's Gypsy and Traveller and newly arrived migrant communities and to identify if the Disability Equality Duty was not being compromised.

Key findings:

A full account of potential negative impacts and the related LAA outcomes and sub-outcomes can be found in the "What are your conclusions on the impact of the proposed policy (service, plan or function) on different equalities groups?" section of stage 2.2 of the complete document (Assessing Service Delivery and Practical Outcomes).

The assessment has found the following levels of relevance with regard to specific equality groups and communities:

- Different racial (black and minority ethnic) groups - medium, but potentially high for Gypsy and Traveller communities and newly arrived migrant communities
- People with disabilities – low
- Men and women – medium for women
- People of different sexual orientation – medium
- People of different ages – low
- People with different religions or faiths (including people who do not have a religion or faith) – medium.

Conclusion:

Enabling greater capacity for colleagues and partners, when identifying LAA sub-outcomes and throughout the delivery planning stages, will provide the opportunity to provide a more circumspect consideration of the needs of Cheshire equality groups. It is anticipated the LAA refresh process ahead of April 2008, will ensure a broader understanding of needs across all populations throughout Cheshire will be made. Reflections of the Assessment will provide the impetus to re-evaluate the existing outcomes and associated indicators.

There is an identified need to create a greater learning capacity and culture with partners engaged in the design, production and delivery of the Cheshire LAA: with the aim of improving the range of consultation and engagement plans for LAA refresh. There is additional need to improve data collection and research in general, with regard to equality groups and communities throughout Cheshire for the purposes of the LAA.

The Assessment will be repeated by the end of 2007. The following actions have been identified and will be undertaken before the revised LAA is completed by the end of March 2008:

1. to publish the completed Equality Needs Impact Assessment and provide an executive summary report to the Communities of Cheshire Partnership (CCP), and
2. to forward the Equality Needs Impact Assessment to the County Council and partner's Diversity Groups for information, review and comment, and
3. to undertake a series of focus group exercises with a range of equality groups, to provide qualitative intelligence to Chairs and LAA Co-ordinators from countywide Thematic Partnerships ahead of LAA refresh delivery planning, and

4. to undertake a planning workshop for LAA outcome Co-ordinators and sub-outcome owners following the focus group exercises: in order to support and ensure the LAA refresh delivery planning processes are reflective of improved intelligence, and
5. to ensure the Equality Needs Impact Assessment findings and results are strategically integrated within the revised Cheshire LAA, and to undertake comparative analysis of LAA equality needs impact assessment in similar sub-regions and identify a suitable partner to participate in a peer challenge exercise.

Proposal:

The Communities of Cheshire Partnership acknowledge the assessment undertaken to date and approve the actions outlined in the conclusion ahead of the revised Cheshire LAA.

Decision:

Community Cohesion sub-outcome 1.4 (greater understanding of cultural diversity and needs):

The LAA sub-outcome 1.4 (i) involves securing a 'baseline of vulnerable and ethnic minority groups across Cheshire'. In completing the delivery plan for this sub-outcome it has become clear that 'vulnerable' can be interpreted in different ways by different LAA thematic blocks. For example, vulnerable in the Children & Young People context could include children with severe disabilities or within the Healthier Communities & Older Persons block, dementia sufferers.

To aid the scoping of this sub-outcome and to enable the base-lining of some of the work within the Stronger Communities strand;

It is recommended that the Communities of Cheshire Partnership agrees that the interpretation of 'vulnerable groups' within the context of LAA sub-outcome 1.4i for the next two years to be those neighbourhoods across Cheshire in the top 20% most deprived as identified in the National Index of Multiple Deprivation.

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