

Appendix 1 - People Scrutiny Committee Review of Equality and Inclusion in ASCH Action Plan - 12 Month Review

R1 - Scrutiny Recommendation:

To continue to learn about and listen to seldom heard groups and people and share findings with key partners. The Department should prioritise resources to take actions and adapt services to remove barriers for these communities through:

- a) the use of internal and external forums and advisory groups and through ongoing conversations with external partners and trusted people in the communities;
- b) considering whether engagement has taken place with these communities and people by recording this in Equality Impact Assessments, where applicable;
- c) giving feedback to seldom heard communities about how responses to engagement have been utilised through appropriate approved mechanisms in a timely manner including in print and online.

Director's Response and Action Plan:

The Department is rolling out a communication plan which will share the findings and recommendations of this report with statutory and VCSE partners and will continue to engage with seldom heard communities and people. Key highlights include:

- Communication and Involvement Steering Group: 12 October 2023
- Partnership Plus: 20 October 2023
- East Sussex Health and Social Care Executive Delivery Group: 27 October 2023

The report will also be included on the Integrated Care Board's Insight Bank Database so it can be used by a wider range of partners across the Integrated Care System.

On actions and adaptation, the Department is:

- a) Reviewing membership of all our engagement mechanisms and forums and will be seeking to increase representation from seldom heard communities at internal and external forums.
- b) Working with the cross-Council Corporate Equality Diversity and Inclusion Board to clarify the definition of 'other' groups in the EqlA template to encourage consideration of people and communities who are 'seldom heard'. By doing this across the Council, we can have the greatest impact on ensuring needs of seldom heard communities are considered
- c) Using existing mechanisms to ensure we respond on how we have utilised people's feedback. We will supplement this with considering and developing additional measures to ensure that we are using contemporaneous ways to provide feedback. These include:
 - Dedicated web page to share collated feedback in the form of 'you said, we did';
 - Annual engagement report on feedback received and steps taken. This will be published online as well as printed to be shared with partners and intermediaries;
 - Informing participants in engagement and consultation about above methods and timeline of reports to ensure transparency.

The Department is developing a Community Engagement Framework which will lay out provision for our feedback on engagement so that our involvement with communities is cyclical and we close the feedback loop by informing people how we have used their feedback.

Update Notes:	Timescale
Report findings and recommendations have been shared with statutory and VSCE partners through a range of channels, including the Communication and Involvement Steering Group, Partnership Plus, East Sussex Health and Social Care Executive Delivery Group and through our engagement forums.	Complete
The report is available on the ESCC website and articles outlining report findings and recommendations have been included in To The Point, Brief Encounter and partner newsletters as well as shared with VCSE and NHS partners, amongst others. Summary of findings were also presented in learning opportunities and webinars to all staff and to various teams across ASCH.	Complete
We have reviewed membership of our engagement mechanisms and forums, to increase representation from seldom heard communities. This is an ongoing process. The Inclusion Advisory Group has broadened membership to groups representing LGBT+ people (Bourne This Way, Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance), older people (Ageing 2.0) and women affected by substance misuse and domestic violence (Oasis Project). The Disability Rights Reference Group has broadened membership to a group representing Deaf people (Surdi) who now regularly attends and contributes on behalf of D/deaf people, bringing invaluable insight to the work of ASCH. Citizens' Panel members now include people with sensory impairment, from rural areas, those digitally excluded those with low levels of literacy.	Complete
Led by our Public Health team, we have now formed the East Sussex Healthy Ageing Partnership group to prioritise health and care issues for younger older people as well as consideration of impact of intersectional identities on older people from different backgrounds.	Complete
We have set up an older people's mental health needs assessment group which is running for 9 months from Feb 2025 to November 2025. This has representation from various partners working with our older population, including East Sussex Seniors Association, Sussex Community Development Association and Age UK.	Complete
The EqIA process itself means that we routinely examine the likely impact of services, projects and policies on groups protected by the Equality Act as well as any other groups likely to be excluded or disadvantaged. The EqIA template has been updated to clarify the definition of 'other' groups. We have used this wider term to include all identified seldom heard groups. The template now explains that 'other' people includes people who are homeless or in insecure housing; in prison; with low levels of literacy; digitally excluded; experiencing, or in recovery from, drug and alcohol addiction (and their families); have or are experiencing domestic or sexual abuse; are neurodivergent etc.	Complete
A task and finish group was formed to draft the Community Engagement Framework with representatives from Adult Social Care and Health, Children's Services, Communities, Economy and Transport, and Governance Services. The group met three times in 2024 and agreed the Terms of Reference. Due to organisation-wide RPPR pressures, this work was paused until January 2025. A framework is currently being drafted and will go to CEDIB in due course.	Ongoing

R2 - Scrutiny Recommendation:

The Department to work closely with internal and external partners and trusted partners in the community, with expertise on working with seldom heard people and communities, to tackle stigma and lack of trust. Including (but not limited to):

- a) collaborating with the Homeless Inclusion Health Service to make signposting/ referral to ASCH easier and simplified.
- b) collaborating with Gypsy and Traveller Team to gain better inside knowledge into the communities they work with and to spread awareness about accessing ASCH services.

Director's Response and Action Plan:

The Department is working closely with the Homelessness Health and Support Group hosted by Public Health to ensure access to ASC services for those who are homeless is as accessible as possible. We are setting up a stream of work to specifically target better interface with homeless people and Gypsy, Roma & Traveller communities with the aim of increasing the number of clients who access care and support. We will take following steps to achieve this:

1. Targeted training/information to Operations staff about specific needs of these two communities to ensure clients from these backgrounds get informed service provision to eliminate barriers identified in the findings.
2. Improving referral systems for partner agencies to refer clients with transient lifestyles so as not to cause systemic delays in response time.
3. Working in partnership with the Eastbourne GP Surgery, Homeless Inclusion Health Service and Gypsy and Traveller team in ESCC to ensure we are reaching target communities.

Update Notes:	Timescale:
We held initial discussions with the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to explore ways to increase awareness of the initiative to relevant partners and ensure effective referral pathways are in place and understood. This is being taken forward by a joint partnership approach with the RSI and the Homelessness Health Inclusion Team to strengthen links, outline eligibility criteria and ensure an effective referral pathway is in place.	Ongoing
The East Sussex Housing Partnership Lead in Public Health now represents ESCC at the Brighton and Hove Homelessness Research Forum which brings together academic, third-sector and community researchers, to exchange ideas, develop joint projects and bring about research-led change, improving the lives of people experiencing homelessness.	Complete
<p>The East Sussex Gypsy Roma Traveller Health Inequalities Partnership group has been set up to ensure partners are better able to work together to improve outcomes and address some of the health inequalities experienced by Gypsy Roma Traveller people. The group is jointly chaired by the Community Resilience Programme Manager for ESCC Public Health and Friends, Families and Travellers. The aims of the group are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore what an informal cross-sector partnership to develop practical responses to address GRT health inequalities might look like,• Exchange learning on how best to work with and engage GRT residents,	Complete

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify opportunities for mutual support in reaching and hearing from GRT residents, • Identify opportunities to gain further insight into GRT populations and working with people and communities, • Consider good practice in cross-sector partnership working and reflect on our experiences of working together. <p>The partnership includes representation from a range of ESCC operational teams and equality leads in ASCH and Children's Services, NHS representatives and VCSE partners. The first meeting took place in January 2025 and included a training session on the support needs of Gypsy Roma Traveller people, and how to address the barriers they face in accessing social care and support. Information about this will be included in the ASCH Equality Allies spring bulletin.</p>	
Two workshops are being planned for the next financial year, specifically with helping staff understand needs of homeless people and people from gypsy roma traveller backgrounds.	Ongoing

R3 - Scrutiny Recommendation:

The Department to involve, engage and include communities by reaching out to them through community events with trusted partners in the communities in order to record, and disseminate feedback about effectiveness of services and policies within the Department to embed learning.

Director's Response and Action Plan:

The Department has started holding conversations with community based organisations who represent seldom heard communities and people. This is a six month programme from August 2023 to January 2024. We will continue to listen to and engage with trusted partners.

The Department is developing a Community Engagement Framework which will:

- List our key values, aims and plans around community engagement;
- Give clear guidance to staff around our community engagement commitments ;
- Set out our ways of working ;
- Help us be open and honest with the community;
- Support a more effective, planned approach to community engagement.

The key principles of this Framework have been reached through a consultation with our communities, partners and staff. These are:

Inclusiveness – we will ensure that our approach to participation and engagement encourages and promotes opportunities for all residents

Approachability – We will ensure information is accessible and that it's easy to find out more about how to get involved

Transparency – we will publish and share information about our approach and activities and ask for regular feedback on what we're doing

Accountability – we will report back regularly to those who engage and use services and ask for feedback on our approaches. We will work in partnership with residents to improve our approach and learn from feedback

Flexibility – we want to make sure our models of engagement and involvement reflect the varying needs of local communities and residents

Co-ordination - we will work to strengthen co-ordination and links across communities- both geographical and interest recognising the links and dependencies that exist

Update Notes:	Timescale:
<p>We held engagement meetings with 27 community-based organisations representing seldom heard groups across the County. This includes organisations supporting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • homeless people (Seaview project) • people dealing with substance misuse and domestic abuse (Oasis Project) • people in prison (Sussex Pathways) • people who are digitally excluded (Tech Resort) • older people (FAiR, MOPP lunch club, Rotherfield St Martin) • disabled people (East Sussex Hearing, Eastbourne Blind Society, Victoria Pavillion Support Centre) • LGBTQ+ people (Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance) • people from ethnic minorities (Lewes District Anti-racism alliance, Culture Connect Project, Diversity Resource International) • people in rural areas (Sussex Outreach Support) • people transitioning from children's services to adult social care (Amaze, Bird Aid) • people living with HIV (Lunch Positive) • people seeking refuge (Sanctuary) <p>The department gathered valuable insight through these conversations which has led to several improvements including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased representation of seldom heard groups on the ASCH Inclusion Advisory Group, Citizens' Panel and other steering groups, including Information Advice Project and forthcoming at Safeguarding Adults Board. • Increased partnership working with prisons. As an outcome of our initial meeting with Sussex Pathways, ESCC was invited to visit HMP Lewes and observe a prison release team meeting. Sussex Pathways and a range of partners were also in attendance. As a result, the Senior Probation Officer is now a member of our prison partnership, and the terms of reference have been updated to reflect this. Discharge planning and assessment pathways and partnership working have improved as a result. The ASC Assessment Policy is currently under review. Sussex Pathways is leading the review of the prison assessment section alongside the discharge and assessment pathway, and this will be shared at the next partnership meeting following sign off. 	Complete
<p>Several VCSE organisations representing older people experiencing loneliness and isolation held events as part of the Older Peoples Full of Life Festival in October 2024 (organisations include Friends Altogether and Rotherfield St Martin). We are also aiming to better engage with people in rural communities and have initially reached out to rural Good Neighbour schemes.</p>	Complete
<p>As mentioned in R1, the community engagement framework is being drafted and will go to CEDIB in due course.</p>	Ongoing

R4 - Scrutiny Recommendation:

The Department to make use of links with people associated with ASCH including Members, volunteers, People Bank and Citizens Panel members and VCSE partners to support the sharing of information about ASCH services and programmes with wider residents.

Director's Response and Action Plan:

The department will work with our volunteers, partners and other stakeholders to clearly explain what adult social care is, what we do, and how we do it.

As part of the implementation of the adult social care strategy for East Sussex, 'What Matters To You', we are developing an action plan to help us improve how we share information with residents, our clients, their carers and their families.

We will align this action plan with the 'What Matters To You' action plan to ensure we are maximising resources to achieve this recommendation.

We will:

1. Simplify information about care and support options;
2. Ensure we develop and sense-check this with our People Bank and Citizens' Panel members;
3. Make sure this information is widely available across the county with support of VCSE partners, district and borough councils, the NHS and other stakeholders, our volunteers and our staff.

Update Notes:	Timescale:
<p>As reported in the six-month review:</p> <p>Following a recruitment drive in October 2023, 15 new members joined the Adult Social Care Citizens' Panel in 2024 to increase representation of people drawing on our care and support and people we seldom hear from. The Citizens' Panel met four times in 2024 and the first meeting of 2025 took place in January. There are now 20 active members, and a new recruitment drive is underway between January and March 2025, to further diversify the panel and increase representation from seldom heard people.</p> <p>A new project focussing on simplifying our information and advice was launched in August 2024. It reports to Improvement and Assurance Board and is led by Information and Advice Steering Group, which has two lay-members from People Bank who bring invaluable insight as well as experience of belonging to rural communities and being disabled, thereby bringing insight of being from seldom heard communities to the work of the project. The project is delivering improvement to the way we communicate and provide information by simplifying language, changing the website and have developed a new language guide for everyone to use within ASCH.</p>	Complete

R5 - Scrutiny Recommendation:

The Department to work closely with ESCC's Corporate Equality Diversity and Inclusion Board to support broader approaches to community engagement across the Council through:

a) co-ordinating mechanisms for engagement with communities identified as being seldom heard;

furthering best practice through the development of a community engagement framework, ensuring all communities, including seldom heard groups, are clear on how their feedback will be used and the outcomes of engagement work.

Director's Response and Action Plan:

The Department took a paper to the Corporate Equality Diversity Inclusion Board (CEDIB) to discuss these two recommendations. The CEDIB has approved further development by ASCH of the Community Engagement Framework, with involvement of other departments to share good practice. The Framework as described in Action on R3 above will work to ensure different communities of interest are referred to, including seldom heard communities and people.

Update Notes:	Timescale:
As mentioned in R1, the community engagement framework is being drafted and will go to CEDIB in due course.	Ongoing
A new Feedback Project has been underway since May 2024 and is developing a framework for us to receive feedback and utilise it as well as close the feedback loop by telling people what we do with feedback they give us. This will be used alongside the forthcoming Community Engagement Framework to improve how we work with communities and how we showcase using information, insight and feedback from people.	Ongoing

R6 - Scrutiny Recommendation:

The Department to develop staff knowledge and skills through ensuring appropriate provision for:

- a) the development of peer learning opportunities to enable staff to share knowledge and experience;
- b) embedding knowledge and skills about working effectively with people from seldom heard communities into ESCC equality, diversity and inclusion training;
- c) developing the equality, diversity and inclusion training offer to staff through training by expert partners, incorporating this into staff CPD, and ensuring that training is responsive to changing local need;
- d) ensuring managers support and actively encourage staff to attend equality, diversity and inclusion training.

Director's Response and Action Plan:

The Department has started utilising peer learning in the Equality Diversity Inclusion training it provides.

The Department will develop a training specifically on the needs of various seldom heard communities and how to address their needs for ASCH staff.

This training will be available to all ASCH staff and will be incorporated in the basic EDI training to ensure there is a multi-pronged approach to training staff on this subject area.

The Department will ensure that all EDI training, including awareness about seldom heard groups is accessible to all staff and that managers prioritise their staff to attend this training for further improvement of services. We will monitor training uptake to ensure staff undertake training over the next two years.

Update Notes:	Timescale:
<p>Our training offer continues to include sessions which aim to improve staff awareness and responses to people from seldom heard groups. Seldom heard groups are referenced in all training sessions, including bespoke sessions. We currently provide 10 training courses, some of which are delivered by expert partners and include sessions on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trans Non-Binary Gender Identities: Awareness and Allyship • Cultural curiosity: working better with migrant communities • Translation and Interpreting awareness • Ageism Awareness: how to recognise and challenge ageism in the workplace and local community • Sexual orientation and access to ASCH: understanding impacts and providing effective support 	Completed
<p>We have conducted an EDI training needs analysis to ensure training is responsive to local need. We are working to create a revised training offer to equip staff with the skills and knowledge to achieve behavioural change to work effectively with seldom heard groups. We are also exploring delivery of mandatory EDI training to ensure training is undertaken by all staff.</p>	Ongoing

R7 - Scrutiny Recommendation:

The Department should ensure that it raises awareness about its services and that communication is accessible and inclusive by:

- a) undertaking further work to promote and support the use of ESCC interpreting and translation services to staff, and using this to respond to changing local need;
- b) using a variety of all available and appropriate communication media and formats to target particular groups including non-text and translated versions, and including providing newsletters and information leaflets in different formats;
- c) communicating clearly what the service and offer is in promotional material;
- d) ensuring that the priorities identified in the Digital and Technology in Adult Social Care Review are considered in communications.

Director's Response and Action Plan:

- a) Department is working to strengthen the translation and interpretation function by:
 - ensuring there is better monitoring of need and usage;
 - providing training/information to ASCH staff about this provision;
 - ensuring use of this service is streamlined.
- b) The Department will review its communication materials to ensure that these are in plain English and accessible for *all* communities and residents. Where necessary, we will create easy read and video formats of information. We will work closely with our People Bank to ensure this information is accessible and understandable to all.
- c) As above, the Department is reviewing its communication materials and will ensure that promotional materials are clear about care and support options. We will test it with People Bank members to ensure clarity and quality is achieved.
- d) The Department is working to ensure that the relevant findings from Digital and Technology review are considered when revising our communication materials as stated above.

Update Notes:	Timescale:
The Translation and Interpreting awareness training has been running since July 2024 with good attendance and plans to continue the course over the coming year. We are working with the corporate EDI lead on shaping the next translation and interpreting framework which will come into effect after December 2025.	Complete
Several projects are underway to review and improve communication materials. A new intranet page has been published with guidance on the language we use to talk about adult social care and the people we support. It encourages staff to use plain English and to be intentional about the words that they choose, and the impact words can have on other people. We are informing staff about the existence of the guide through a range of communications.	Ongoing
The information and advice project is currently working to refresh the ESCC website. A new webpage has been published for people who fully fund their care, and this has been publicised through internal and external comms mechanisms. Other changes to website to make it more user-friendly are underway.	Ongoing
We have embedded carrying out regular user testing with our People Bank to improve resources and communications. A current example is an upcoming user testing activity for new online forms that people can use to check what care they are eligible for.	Ongoing

Members will have a go at completing the forms and providing feedback on these. Last year, we asked People Bank members to review our information leaflet on sharing feedback and making a complaint. Their comments led to changes to the leaflet so that it more clearly communicated the difference between feedback and complaints.	
The department is also represented on the Webpage Readability Project to improve accessibility of ESCC webpages. The aim is to roll out guidance, awareness raising and a wider comms campaign on how to increase and improve readability. Though the project focuses on webpages, this should have a wider impact on all ESCC communications.	Complete

R8 - Scrutiny Recommendation:

The Department to increase inclusivity at initial contact by adapting services to support the needs of communities and individuals, considering:

- a) how to support people to access services;
- b) the location, timing and staffing at meetings to support different needs, including being sensitive to cultural and religious values;
- c) how information is presented to and gathered from people.

Director's Response and Action Plan:

The Department will conduct an analysis of where and how services can be made more accessible and more responsive to the needs of our residents, particularly those from seldom heard communities. Through this analysis, we will be able to identify where we need to make changes to ensure there is better provision for people to deal with some of the organisational barriers for seldom heard people. We will do this by:

1. Conducting an EDI analysis of our assessments;
2. Conducting an EDI analysis of our complaints;
3. Conducting an EDI analysis of our client survey response;
4. And by gathering information on where service provision can improve.

Update Notes:	Timescale:
As reported in the six-month review: We have begun work on EDI analysis of our complaints and client survey response. We started sending About you form to all complainants but the return rate has been very low. We are now exploring other ways in which we can extrapolate existing demographic information of people who make complaints or enquiries. The first report to include this data will be the January-March 2025 quarterly Complaints report which will be reported in April 2025 to ASCH DMT.	On-going
We are working on a data briefing for all staff to help them understand our communities. This will include seldom heard groups where data is available. We are also working on an annual deep dive into all available equality data, the aim of which is to check whether there are any inequalities of outcomes for any groups or whether there are groups of people at risk of having unmet needs. This will compare population data with information on people using our services. This should enable us to identify where we need to make changes to ensure there is better provision for seldom heard groups.	On-going

We review all EqlAs annually in March. Work is about to begin to review 2024/5 EqlAs to identify common themes and check progress against action plans. Previous EqlA analysis has enabled us to assess how service provision can improve and identified several positive impacts upon seldom heard groups (outlined in the six month review).	On-going
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R9 - Scrutiny Recommendation:

The Department to develop a systematic way of working with a range of partners in relation to seldom heard groups by:

- a) building upon existing relationships and exploring new partnership work by regularly reviewing and expanding the list of identified VCSE partners to help build trust with seldom heard groups;
- b) supporting partners to facilitate equality, inclusion and diversity conversations through guidance;
- c) where possible, sharing data with other local authorities and groups to support people moving in and out of East Sussex.

Director's Response and Action Plan:

- a) The Department has continued its work with partners and intermediaries working with seldom heard communities and people and is taking steps to ensure we continue to enhance our knowledge and interface with those communities to build trust.
- b) The Department is exploring ways in which through our work in Partnerships team, we can enhance our offer of support to our VCSE partners on equality diversity and inclusion training support.
- c) The Department will explore options of sharing data and information to provide better continuity of support to residents moving across local authorities.

Update Notes:	Timescale:
As reported in R1 and R3, we have engaged with a range of VCSE partners that work with seldom heard groups, to strengthen relationships, enhance our knowledge and diversify our engagement forums.	Completed
We are also working with a range of VCSE partners (Rother Voluntary Action, Hastings Voluntary Action, East Sussex Community Voice, 3VA and Sussex Community Development Association) to create a voluntary 'accessibility checklist' self-assessment tool for community organisations and groups to assess how accessible or inclusive their activities are to key resident stakeholder groups, including seldom heard groups.	On-going
As reported in our six month update, our new EDI training offer includes sessions that are open to VCSE partners. Presentations have been made to various partners on the seldom heard report recommendations. While it is difficult to gauge where practice has changed, introducing the terminology of 'seldom heard' has been powerful. Having the language to talk about groups of people that face barriers to access adult social care, and the ways in which barriers can be removed, has given staff impetus to change practice to improve outcomes for seldom heard people.	Completed