

Equality monitoring and terminology



Equalities and Engagement Team

Information included:

- Equality Monitoring and Terminology
- Appendix 1 - Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010 Definitions)
- Appendix 2 - Customer Equality Monitoring Form

Equality Monitoring and Terminology

Equality and identity terminology matters. Language and trends change so this short note aims to provide information on equality monitoring, why specific definitions and terminology is used and the legislation that underpins it.

Sheffield City Council uses equality monitoring to ensure it is providing services that are inclusive while highlighting any gaps in delivery. Equality monitoring involves asking people to share information about themselves. This can be as part of individual records (e.g. for SCC employees or services for customers), or as questions in a survey or other engagement exercise.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

[The Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) covers councils and other public sector organisations such as the Police, health and schools.

The PSED must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a [protected characteristic](#) and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims of the general equality duty. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low

Why we collect equality monitoring information

We collect EDI information as our practice should be evidence based, rather than subjective. Good managers have to balance the sometimes-conflicting interests of different groups in communities and the workforce in an open and respectful way which simultaneously recognises that not all requests can be accommodated at all times. Decisions about EDI should be rooted in evidence as far as possible and be context-specific, rather than be based on abstract or subjective theories.

The following is taken from the recent independent panel on [D&I at work](#) which notes that:

“Gathering evidence on Diversity & Inclusion metrics confers many benefits. It allows organisations to identify context-specific problems within their own organisation, rather than

assuming that society-wide inequalities are present. It also allows employers to target interventions proportionately to address problems, while reducing the use of resources on addressing inconsequential or absent issues.”

“The evidence suggests that many organisations’ Diversity & Inclusion approaches are driven by pre-existing notions, assumptions, and pressures rather than empirical evidence.”

One representative from a large public organisation explained that “data collection, reporting, and transparency has been really powerful... The power of reporting [disparities within our workforce] and the transparency is very important; and also [helps] identifying actions that have started to make a difference”. Many agreed that large organisations can do more than small to medium sized enterprises with the data they have and use, and that small organisations would benefit proportionately more from transparent guidance on what data to collect, and a comparative evidence tool.”

Service Delivery

We collate equality information in relation to service delivery and usage (and satisfaction) including complaints as well as tracking success rates and outcomes. We use this information to:

- Establish who is accessing our services to identify whether there is any under-representation for people with different protected characteristics and other underrepresented or disadvantaged groups.
- Understand the needs of our service users and whether there is any disadvantage faced by people with different protected characteristics and other underrepresented or disadvantaged groups.
- Benchmark our performance against organisations providing similar services to identify areas for improvement.

Workforce

We are committed to ensuring that all our employment policies and practices for staff are fair, advance equality of outcome, eliminate discrimination and foster good relations.

To inform our priority areas, we gather evidence from our equality monitoring data, equality impact assessments and consultations with our staff, staff groups and Trade Unions.

We use this information to:

- Identify any potential disparities in the diversity profile of our workforce.
- Develop actions to address any perceived inequalities and barriers to equality of opportunity.
- Understand whether our employment policies, practices and procedures are equitable and are being implemented fairly, by examining under- or over-representation of staff.
- Identify differences in the outcomes or experience of staff and, where required, develop training and guidance to support our managers in managing a diverse workforce.
- Inform the development of all our people policies to ensure that they advance the three aims of the general duty.

Terminology

Collecting equality monitoring information on an individual’s sexual orientation, ethnicity (race), religion and national identity can be complex because of the subjective and multifaceted nature of the concepts. It is therefore important we use a consistent set of measures such as those

developed by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). ONS categories allow organisations and services to compare and contrast data locally and nationally to ensure they are upholding the principles of the general duty, as described above.

Therefore, there is a legal requirement for relevant public bodies to report on how they are meeting their obligations under the Equality Act. Sheffield City Council does this through compiling and publishing a range of reports including the Annual Equality Report, the Workforce Data Report and other functions including publishing Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs).

If individuals choose their own preferred terms, rather than those defined by ONS, the council would be unable to report effectively on whether it was successfully discharging the general duty. SCC prefers to use ONS terminology because it is recognised as an authoritative source, allowing comparative data sets to be analysed. *Discussions about terminology are historical, long standing and highly emotive. When completing any equality monitoring information, it is essential to highlight two potential key distinctions. There is a difference between the terminology devised by the ONS and set out in the Equality Act and used by local authorities to monitor service delivery/workforce issues and how people choose to identify themselves personally.

Sheffield City Council's equality monitoring is aligned to both [ONS](#) and [Harmonised Standards](#), but to ensure inclusivity SCC also include additional categories to reflect changes in Sheffield's demographics. For example, Yemeni and Somali have been included as options under 'Other ethnic group' and 'Black or Black British,' respectively. This has been the result of extensive consultation and is underpinned by evidence-based research. ONS regularly undertake consultations on a range of different issues and feedback can be given via their website.

Also, where respondents feel they do not personally identify with a category list within a protected characteristic, there is the option to select 'other' and self-identify, where appropriate. The use of equality monitoring to discharge the PSED is underpinned by law and subsequent case law. Importantly, however, respondents can choose to answer all, some or none of the questions; the completion of equality monitoring is voluntary not mandatory.

It is also important to note that we should not ask for, collect and store personal data that we are not intending to use. However, based on evidence, we need to consider where data is needed to make accurate decisions to discharge our equality duties.

*For further information please see [Sheffield Race Equality Commission, An Independent Commission into Racism and Racial Disparities in Sheffield, June 2022 \(page 22\).](#)

Further Resources

Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

The EHRC are an independent statutory body with the responsibility to encourage equality and diversity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and protect and promote the human rights of everyone in Britain. See [Homepage | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

Public sector equality duty and data protection

For guidance that explains the relationship between the public sector equality duty (PSED) and data protection law see [The public sector equality duty and data protection | EHRC \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

Office of National Statistics

To see examples of how ONS categorise these definitions for equality monitoring purposes see [Measuring equality - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\).](#)

APPENDIX 1 – Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010 Definitions)

The Equality Act 2010 sets out definitions of the 9 protected characteristics:

Age

A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32 year olds) or range of ages (for example 18 to 30 year olds).

Disability

A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender reassignment (Trans)

Where a person undergoes, or proposes to undergo, a process for the purpose of reassigning their sex.

To be protected from gender reassignment discrimination, you do not need to have undergone any medical treatment or surgery to change from your birth sex to your preferred gender.

Marriage and civil partnership

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple.

Both same-sex and heterosexual couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

Pregnancy and maternity

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race (Ethnicity)

A race is a group of people defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnicity or national origins. A racial group can be made up of more than one distinct racial group, such as Black British.

Religion or belief

Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex

A man or a woman.

Sexual orientation

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Find out more about the [Equality Act 2010](#), which provides the legal framework to tackle disadvantage and discrimination.

APPENDIX 2 – SCC customer equality monitoring form

Tell Us About You

Sheffield City Council uses equality monitoring to ensure it is providing services that are inclusive while highlighting any gaps in delivery. Equality monitoring involves asking people to share information about themselves. This can be in relation to services for customers, or as questions in a survey or other engagement exercise.

If you do not wish to answer a question you can leave it blank.

Age

- ☐ 16-19 ☐ 20-24 ☐ 25-34
☐ 35-49 ☐ 50-64 ☐ 65-74
☐ 75-84 ☐ 85+

Sex

- ☐ Female ☐ Male
☐ Other (please state below)
-

How would you describe your national identity?*

- ☐ British ☐ Northern Irish
☐ English ☐ Scottish
☐ Welsh
☐ Other (please state below)
-

Ethnicity

White

- ☐ English/Welsh/Scottish/British/Northern Irish
☐ Irish
☐ Gypsy/Irish Traveller
☐ Roma
☐ Other White background (please state below)
-

Asian or Asian British

- ☐ Indian ☐ Pakistani
☐ Bangladeshi ☐ Chinese
☐ Other Asian background (please state below)
-

Black or Black British

- ☐ Caribbean
☐ Somali
☐ African other
☐ Other Black background (please state below)
-

Other ethnic group

- ☐ Yemeni
 - ☐ Other Arab
 - ☐ Other ethnic group (please state below)
-

Mixed/multiple heritage

- ☐ White and Black Caribbean
 - ☐ White and Black African
 - ☐ White and Asian
 - ☐ Other mixed background (please state below)
-

Sexual orientation

- ☐ Bisexual
 - ☐ Gay/lesbian woman
 - ☐ Gay man
 - ☐ Heterosexual/straight
 - ☐ Other (please state below)
-

Trans status / gender identity

Do you identify as Trans?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes – how do you identify?

- ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Non-binary
 - ☐ Other (please state below)
-

Religion/belief

- ☐ No religion
 - ☐ Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)
 - ☐ Buddhist
 - ☐ Hindu
 - ☐ Jewish
 - ☐ Muslim
 - ☐ Sikh
 - ☐ Other (please state below)
-

Caring responsibilities*

A carer is anyone who provides unpaid care by looking after or giving help or support to family members (including a disabled child), friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental ill health / disability, or problems related to old age. It does not include parents of non-disabled children.

Are you an unpaid carer?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

Care experienced*

Care Experienced relates to people that are in care or have experience of being in care at any time.

Have you been in care?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say

Disability

A disability is an impairment that has (or is likely to have) a substantial (more than minor), adverse, long-term (more than a year) effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. See [guidance](#) for more detail.

For some conditions, it can be less than a year. For cancer, HIV and MS, you are considered disabled from diagnosis. It is always important to check.

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you have answered 'yes', please select the box (es) below that best describe your impairment(s). The purpose of this question is to establish the types of impairment(s) you experience currently as a result of your health condition or illness. Please consider if you are affected in any of these areas while receiving any treatment or medication or using any devices to help you such as a hearing aid. Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Hearing (for example deafness or partial hearing)
 - ☐ Learning or understanding or concentrating (dyslexia, dyscalculia)
 - ☐ Dexterity (for example lifting and carrying objects, using a keyboard)
 - ☐ Communication (Full or partial loss of voice or difficulty speaking)
 - ☐ Memory (for example a form of dementia, trauma or progressive condition)
 - ☐ Mental health (for example depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder)
 - ☐ Mobility (for example walking short distances or climbing stairs)
 - ☐ Socially or behaviourally (for example associated with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) which includes Asperger's, or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD))
 - ☐ Stamina or breathing or fatigue (for example Fibromyalgia, cardiovascular disease, ME)
 - ☐ Vision (for example blindness or partial sight)
 - ☐ None of the above
 - ☐ Other condition (Long-term illness or health condition, eg cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, arthritis, chronic asthma) (please state below)
-

Relationship to Sheffield*

- ☐ I live in Sheffield
- ☐ I work but do not live in Sheffield
- ☐ I visit Sheffield for leisure reasons only

Service personnel and their families*

Are you currently serving or a veteran in the UK Armed Forces?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a member of a serviceperson's immediate family?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you a reservist or in part time service such as in the Territorial Army?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Postcode*

(First 3 or 4 digits, eg S8 0, S10 3)

Optional Monitoring Questions

These questions are optional and can be used alongside standard equality monitoring information to improve and understand services for customers or as questions in a survey or other engagement exercise which relate directly to:

- Accommodation
- Employment
- Finance – cost of living
- Socioeconomic analysis

Accommodation status

- ☐ Home owned outright
 - ☐ Home owned with mortgage or loan
 - ☐ Part owns and part rents (shared ownership)
 - ☐ Rented – housing association, housing co-operative, charitable trust, registered social landlord
 - ☐ Rented – council or local authority
 - ☐ Rented – private landlord or letting agency
 - ☐ Rented – employer of a household member
 - ☐ Rented – relative or friend of a household member
 - ☐ Other (please state below)
-

Employment status – select all that apply ie a student may work FT or PT

- ☐ Full-time employment
 - ☐ Part-time employment
 - ☐ Self-employed
 - ☐ Unemployed
 - ☐ Jobseeker
 - ☐ Retired
 - ☐ Student
 - ☐ Other (please state below)
-

Finance

This question is designed to understand the impact of the current cost of living crisis on customers accessing council services. It will help inform how we develop services to ensure we have a good understanding of our customers' needs and the support we can offer to individuals. I would describe my financial situation currently as:

- ☐ I am unable to make ends meet
- ☐ I am struggling to make ends meet
- ☐ I am just about managing financially
- ☐ I am coping okay financially
- ☐ I am comfortable financially
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Socio-economic background

This question should be used in consultation and engagement activities which seek to assess the progress in improving and promoting socio-economic diversity and inclusion initiatives. When undertaking socio-economic analysis, it is recommended the question focusing on parental occupation is used, however, there are four different options to choose from. Please see below.

Question 1: Parental occupation

What was the occupation of your main household earner when you were aged 14?

- ☐ Modern professional and traditional professional occupations such as: teacher, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, musician, police officer (sergeant or above), software designer, accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil or mechanical engineer.
 - ☐ Senior, middle or junior managers or administrators such as: finance manager, chief executive, large business owner, office manager, retail manager, bank manager, restaurant manager, warehouse manager.
 - ☐ Clerical and intermediate occupations such as: secretary, personal assistant, call centre agent, clerical worker, nursery nurse.
 - ☐ technical and craft occupations such as: motor mechanic, plumber, printer, electrician, gardener, train driver.
 - ☐ Routine, semi-routine manual and service occupations such as: postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, sales assistant, HGV driver, cleaner, porter, packer, labourer, waiter or waitress, bar staff.
 - ☐ Long-term unemployed (claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or earlier unemployment benefit for more than a year).
 - ☐ Small business owners who employed less than 25 people such as: corner shop owners, small plumbing companies, retail shop owner, single restaurant or cafe owner, taxi owner, garage owner.
 - ☐ Other such as: retired, this question does not apply to me, I don't know (please state below)
-

Question 2: Type of school attended

Which type of school did you attend for the most time between the ages of 11 and 16?

- ☐ a state-run or state-funded school
 - ☐ independent or fee-paying school
 - ☐ independent or fee-paying school, where I received a bursary covering 90% or more of my tuition
 - ☐ attended school outside the UK
 - ☐ I do not know
 - ☐ prefer not to say
 - ☐ Other (please state below)
-

Question 3: Free school meal eligibility

If you finished school after 1980, were you eligible for free school meals at any point during your school years?

- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
 - ☐ Not applicable (finished school before 1980 or went to school overseas)
 - ☐ I do not know
 - ☐ Prefer not to say
 - ☐ Other (please state below)
-

Question 4: Highest parental qualification

Did either of your parents attend university by the time you were 18

- ☐ No, neither of my parents attended university
 - ☐ Yes, one or both of my parents attended university
 - ☐ Do not know or not sure
 - ☐ Prefer not to say
 - ☐ Other (please state below)
-

For further information on this document, please contact the Equalities and Engagement Team
equalitiesandengagement@sheffield.gov.uk

*These questions are not protected characteristics defined under the Equality Act 2010 but are key areas where the Council has agreed it needs to understand the impact of its decisions on customers.