

Shropshire Council
Service User Diversity Report 2014/2015

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I. Introduction

A. Geographical and demographical context

Shropshire is a predominantly rural unitary authority, where no area is without inhabitants but where the population is just under one person per hectare (0.96 persons; source Office for National Statistics (ONS) mid year estimates 2014).

With a terrain that covers 319,736 hectares, the county size is approximately ten times that of all the Inner London Boroughs (31,929 hectares; source ONS Census 2011). However, whilst all inhabitants expect equitable access to services, facilities, learning and training opportunities, and support and advice mechanisms, including online, the reality is that digital connectivity remains an issue for the county as for other rural counties.

This is not least as around 35% of the population lives in villages, hamlets and dwellings dispersed throughout the countryside, where for example mobile phone coverage is inconsistent or non-existent. The remainder of the population lives either in one of the 17 market towns and key centres of varying size, including Ludlow in the south and Oswestry in the north, or concentrated in Shrewsbury, the central county town located by the River Severn.

Transport also poses practical challenges within Shropshire and across its borders to Cheshire and Staffordshire to the north, Wales to the west, Herefordshire and Worcestershire to the south and east, and across its eastern flank to Telford and Wrekin and the West Midlands. This is due to dependence on key arterial road routes that are liable to flooding, limited public transport, and nature of the often hilly terrain.

High transport costs and service delivery costs arise accordingly, given these digital and physical challenges, not only for householders and businesses but also for commissioners and providers of services including adult social care and community mental health care.

B. Organisational context

This report sets out to share information and statistics about the diversity of Shropshire Council's service users and communities. It is published on an annual basis. It is intended to act as a complementary report to diversity information also published on an annual basis about the workforce, which is largely drawn from local communities.

The report forms part of efforts to continue to increase the depth, breadth and focus of the evidence base about the people who live and work in Shropshire. This helps the Council to maintain its strategic and service area level data in order to be positioned to meet future ambitions, challenges and changes such as public sector reform.

Service delivery arrangements in Shropshire involve opportunities to ensure that service usage data can be systematically recorded by Council colleagues in service areas across the ten groupings of people whose needs Shropshire Council thinks about in particular in its decision making processes, including the nine groupings termed Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. *For more detail on these groupings, and examples of service area data, please see the appendices to this report.*

The Rurality and Equalities Specialist, based in Commissioning Support Services, liaises with colleagues who are specialists in the fields of data acquisition, customer insight, performance and intelligence to collate the equality and diversity information that is collected, and to collectively analyse what the data is telling us about our communities and about the diverse groupings within our communities.

This helps the Council to understand likely barriers to accessing services, and to plan how to respond to and cater for the diverse and changing needs of diverse and changing communities.

For example, an individual's sexual orientation is not a barrier to physically gaining entry to a Customer Service Point. However, someone who describes themselves as having a limiting long term illness, perhaps involving use of a wheelchair, is clearly someone for whom physical entry to a Customer Service Point needs to be achievable, comfortable and dignified. Physical access considerations therefore need to be built into design of the space available.

II. Where we were in 2014: strategic actions planned

In 2014, we planned a number of actions in relation to equality and diversity and social inclusion, around the following three areas:

- Publish more visibly
- Collect and analyse more proactively
- Work more jointly

These are detailed in Shropshire Council's Equality Objectives Action Plan, for which a year end progress report was produced to show the position of the Council as at 31st March 2015. This is publicly available on the Council website via the following link:

<http://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/1449034/Shropshire-Council-Equality-Objectives-Update-201416-Year-End-Update-March-2015.pdf>

III. Where we are in 2015: progress made

Progress is perhaps best demonstrated via the following case studies:

A. Publish more visibly

Case study: equality impact assessments

In order to better understand the impact of policies and decisions on all issues relating to equality, and to do this in a consistent way across the Council, equality impact assessments are carried out. This helps service areas and the Council as a whole to demonstrate that what is termed **due regard** is taken of equality aims in decision making processes, as required under the Equality Act 2010. The assessments are completed using standard templates to help identify whether or not any significant changes to services, including policies, procedures, functions or projects, may have an adverse impact on a particular group of people, and whether the human rights of individuals may be affected.

The templates used in Shropshire are referred to as **Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessments (ESIAs)**. They were revised in 2014 to include an emphasis on social inclusion, and to combine guidance and evidence into one document for ease of access and usage. The resultant template was tested out in three different service areas as at February 2015, to seek to ensure it was as user-friendly as possible before publication. Minor iterations have continued in the course of the year, to reflect use made of the template by service areas.

There is a growing online resource library to which to refer, whilst the Rurality and Equalities Specialist also provides external support to the service areas as a 'critical friend' in the process. The library of ESIIAs is published in one place on the website together with the refreshed guidance, in order to help internal and external audiences to understand what is expected and why, and in order to show use made of these impact assessments in decision making.

B. Collect and analyse more proactively

The majority of the equality and diversity information that the Council holds relating to service users is collected and monitored within service areas. They use such data in order to help develop and refine policy and strategy, and design services, as well as to assess and improve performance and make best use of resources.

The case studies for this action area set out to demonstrate, firstly, our understanding of the equality and diversity data that we hold in service areas, using the example of children and young people; secondly, our efforts to work with partners on collection of equality data to gauge involvement of people from Protected Characteristics groupings in public consultation and engagement events, using the example of Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly (VCSA) events; and thirdly, our efforts to encourage comparable and comprehensive data collection at national level, using the example of a corporate response made to a recent Office of National Statistics consultation.

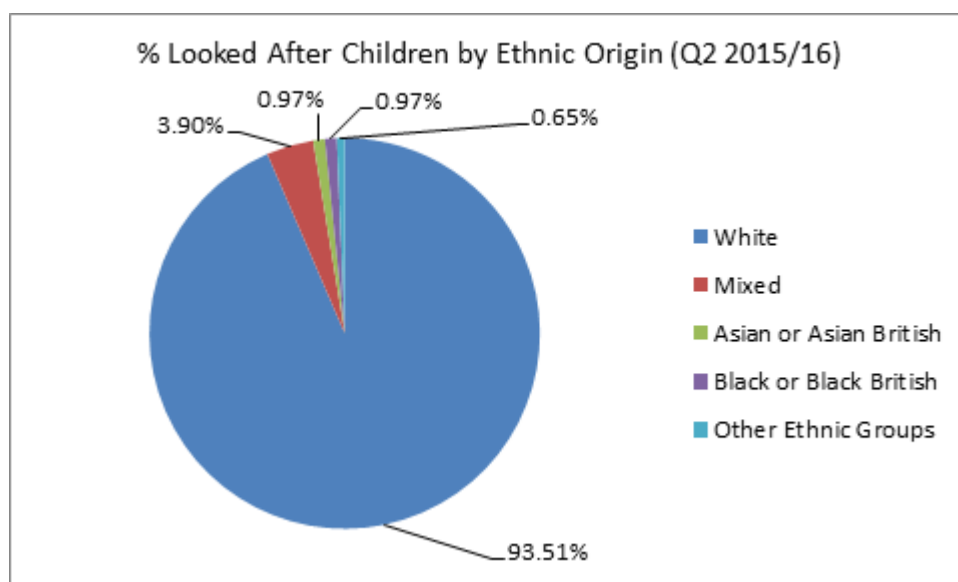
Case study: service area level equality and diversity data: Shropshire children

Shropshire has approximately 66,400 children and young people under the age of 19 years. This is 21.4% of the total population (source ONS mid year estimates 2014). The proportion entitled to free school meals is 10%, which is below the national average but in line with similar local authority areas.

Information is collected and reported on by Ofsted with regards to **ethnicity data**, and this is accordingly reported below as an example of the data we hold about children in Shropshire for the Protected Characteristic grouping of Race.

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for approximately 6.1% of the 0-19 population, compared with the English average of 24.2%. (source ONS Census 2011).

The population of children in care in Shropshire broadly reflects the ethnic origins of the whole Shropshire population, as per Council Social Care Data. The following chart illustrates the breakdown:



Efforts are being made to strengthen the evidence base readily accessible at Council level about the data held within this service area on Protected Characteristic groupings such as Gender, Disability, and Religion and Belief. The Specialist for Children's Social Care, Early Help and Strengthening Families is assisting this work.

Case study: partnership level equality and diversity data: VCSA events

The Council is making efforts to collect demographic data on diversity of the population through use of a standard monitoring chart at public events. The Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly (VCSA) has kindly acted as a pilot in this regard. 18 people completed the chart at the VCSA Annual Assembly held in May 2015, and 28 people completed it at the "Shout About Social Value" VCSA event held in November 2015.

Whilst these are small numbers, and it may be that some participants simply did not complete the forms, the data does indicate participation predominantly by women, with more of a mix of age categories at the latter event. Low self-reporting on disability may indicate that perhaps more may usefully be done to promote the accessibility of venues, so that potential participants are encouraged to be aware that events are access-friendly for physical disability and sensory disability.

The standard diversity monitoring chart has previously been used to great effect as an interactive and non-intrusive way to gather such information from members of the community in upwards of 40 community toolkit events within rural parishes and market towns. It was also adapted for use in adult social care consultation events involving service users and carers, where again it was used as an interactive tool with use of stickers.

The two Protected Characteristic groupings of Gender Reassignment and Sexual Orientation had not been included as reporting categories on the diversity monitoring chart in its first two iterations. This was on the basis that if a person was undergoing or had undergone gender reassignment, this would not in all likelihood affect their ability to take part in such an event. A person's sexual orientation was similarly not thought to be a barrier in itself to participation in a public event.

Transgender has now been added to the Gender reporting category on the chart, in order to enable use of the chart in recording a wider range of equality data at public consultation events. An example would be leisure services consultation on provision of any new or upgraded facilities, where gender reassignment could affect participation in leisure facility usage and it would therefore be useful to gauge likely numbers who might be affected.

A degree of self-reporting by participants at the VCSA events suggests that it might be viewed acceptable and non-intrusive to also now add a category for the Sexual Orientation grouping.

A further grouping not enquired about at community toolkit and adult social care events was Religion and Belief. This was also added to the revised chart trialed by the VCSA, as it is a gap in data from public events that is otherwise collected through a number of service user channels. Whilst numbers completing this box indicate a largely secular participation in the VCSA events, similarly they indicate no real caveats over actual voluntary recording of religion and belief. The chart enables freeform recording on this Protected Characteristic category.

Case study: national level equality and diversity data: Census categories

Equality and diversity information is collected, analysed and monitored centrally by the Council, from both internal and external sources. This is particularly the case with Census 2011 data, which is published in aggregated form by ONS. The Performance, Intelligence and Policy Team within Commissioning Support Services has used this data to publish a number of ONS Census profiles online, giving commentary on data for groups of people in Shropshire who share Protected Characteristics.

Alongside efforts to encourage proactive and systematic collection of equality data at service area and partnership level, the Council also endeavours to influence national policy.

This year, the Council made a detailed submission to ONS with regard to content being considered for the national 2021 Census. The Council shared this submission across the Marches Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) comprising the three local authorities of Herefordshire, Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin and business leaders. A cohesive corporate response was submitted through the Performance, Intelligence and Policy Team.

The initial summary of responses, published by ONS in November 2015, includes an emphasis that conclusions should not be drawn as yet from ONS analysis of the 1,095 responses received. However, the response demonstrates that Shropshire Council was not alone in the views that we expressed.

We can therefore be said to have added our weight to others in efforts to strengthen the equality, diversity and social inclusion evidence base at national and local level as well as at local authority level. We were one of 117 local authority responses.

The response made by Shropshire Council was set out using the topic area headings from ONS. It covers areas where the ONS were looking for further information on user need, where data has previously been collected through the Census, eg type of central heating, and areas where data has not previously been collected, eg gender reassignment. The following corresponds to the text submitted on rurality and equality.

Rurality

i. Type of central heating

Shropshire Council view was that there continues to be a need for this data to be collected through the Census, due to the essential information that it provides about the type of heating used in our rural and more urban households, and the locations where households live off the mains grid. This data is not readily available from other sources.

It is also known from housing data that a significant percentage of the rural housing stock is old and poorly insulated, and we need the heating data to cross reference with this housing data and aid us in service delivery, particularly to households living in fuel poverty.

This local and national comparable evidence is also used in collaboration with other rural authorities in efforts to minimise fuel poverty, encourage equitable energy supply, and promote use of renewable technologies.

ii. Cars or vans

Shropshire Council view as a large and sparsely populated rural authority, with a geography that presents physical transport challenges, was that there continues to be a need for this data to be collected through the Census.

The Census data provides essential information about transport usage by rural households to access facilities and services and consequent need for access to fuel by rural households. This will include those who work from home. In addition, the limited public transport outside the principal market towns means that for rural households to own two or more cars rather than one is a practical necessity.

The Council has a continued need to have data on this topic at a local and nationally comparable level, to support infrastructure and transport planning and to support the case for the retention of rural garages.

iii. Access to services

The Council requested an additional topic under Travel, of access to facilities and services, in order to aid better decision making about location and provision of facilities and services. The new topic area would ask households to record how far they travel to access a) health and social care services, b) leisure and sport facilities, and c) shopping facilities.

The Council obtains some data at local level in neighbourhood plan activity, but this does not cover all wards, neighbourhoods and parishes. True comparability is required for locality commissioning and service redesign purposes such as primary care and childcare provision, and for physical and digital infrastructure planning purposes such as supply and allocation of land for housing, and utilities provision.

In addition, information on distance travelled to such facilities and services will aid overall policy development on provision and location of services in liaison with other public sector providers and across local authority boundaries.

Census data of this nature would also help in collaborative efforts with other rural authorities to make informed decisions at local level and cogent arguments at national level about the cost of service provision and delivery in rural areas.

Equality

We require as much quality demographical evidence as we can about our communities at as local a level as we can, particularly for the groupings of people described under Equality Act 2010 legislation as having one or more of the nine Protected Characteristics.

This will help us to ensure compliance with our statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) by making use of evidence on all the Characteristics in our decision making processes such as through Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessments.

It will likewise help us to make effective and equitable decisions on service redesign and delivery through filling gaps in evidence with this data, which is not readily available from any other source.

i. Ethnicity

The Council agreed with proposals for continued inclusion of questions on ethnicity and on national identity. As an authority which borders with Wales, information on the latter is useful for health and social care service planning and delivery.

The Council has requested an additional recording category, under Ethnicity, of 'White European'. This has emerged as a gap in our local evidence base and is hindering our efforts to carry out Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessments for service redesign and policy development purposes, eg swimming pool provision, eg social care and childcare support to families, and our efforts to support economic growth in the land based sector in what is an agricultural county. Evidence is not readily available from other sources.

The Polish community has already been identified as a significant grouping in Shropshire following the Census 2011, and we have some local evidence from 2008 from companies in the north of the county employing people who are Bulgarian and Portuguese. It would greatly aid ease of access to data and therefore aid better decision making processes if there was a self-identification category of White European as well as the catch-all category of White Other.

ii. Gender reassignment

Shropshire Council requested inclusion of recording of "gender reassignment", in the Census. It is one of the nine Protected Characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010, and otherwise we do not have a complete picture of households where an individual may consider that they belong to this grouping.

iii. Sexual orientation

Shropshire Council requested inclusion of recording of sexual identity in the Census, using the term "sexual orientation" rather than "sexual identity". This was to state the case for ensuring a clear match with the terminology used in equality legislation to describe this Protected Characteristic.

C. Work more jointly

The Council collects and uses equality and diversity data as part of a range of partnership and corporate approaches towards meeting the needs of service users. These approaches involve consultation and engagement with current and potential service users, communities, and stakeholders such as housing developers, social care providers, the Marches LEP, and voluntary and community sector bodies.

Additional partnership approaches include liaison work through the local voluntary and community sector, examples of which would be the South Shropshire and Shrewsbury inter faith forums, and the Fairness, Respect, Equality Shropshire (FRESH) Community Benefit Society or community co-operative. FRESH is active in a number of areas around equality, and is currently leading key hate crime reporting research on behalf of the Shropshire-wide inter agency Hate Crime Reporting Group, chaired by Councillor Mrs Jean Jones for Shropshire Council. Details and outline timescales are contained in the Council's Equality Objectives Action Plan.

The Council also seeks out good practice in the field of equality and diversity policy from public sector bodies, such as NHS Foundation Trusts and other local authorities. Examples of good practice include Cornwall, Cumbria, Gloucestershire and Leicestershire local authorities.

A key example of how we have worked with partners during 2015 is as follows:

Case study: National Holocaust Memorial Day, 27th January 2015

A number of Holocaust memorial activities have taken place in Shropshire this year, which was the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz from the Nazis. It is also 20 years since the genocide in Srebrenica in Bosnia. This year's national theme was to 'keep the memory alive'. The local activities reflected this, with candle lighting, interfaith services, a national touring exhibition visiting schools, colleges, churches and other locations, and a special tree planting ceremony.

Involving primary schools

Children at Mereside CE Primary School took part in a first National Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) tree planting ceremony here in Shropshire. The cherry tree, a British fruit variety called the Black Oliver, was planted near to the school, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz death camp from the Nazis.

Shrewsbury Town Council as landowner gave swift permission for the tree to be planted near Mereside primary school, and helped in the preparation of the ground as well as committing to future maintenance along with the primary school.

Thank you letters to the four children representing the school were sent by Councillor Mike Owen as portfolio holder for assisting him in planting the tree. Joining the ceremony was local Councillor Jane Mackenzie; Mr Mark Michaels, member of the Jewish community in South Shropshire and the South Shropshire Interfaith Forum, and members of the Shrewsbury Interfaith Forum.

Councillor Mackenzie told the children about how her grandfather had personally saved more than 250 Jewish children from death camps, and Mr Michaels told them about what the commemoration of the liberation meant to him as a member of the Jewish community.

A candle was also lit by Mr Michaels with the help of the children, which had been lit in commemoration at a previous ceremony at Church Stretton School the day before. Mr Michael then conducted a memorial prayer in Hebrew and English.

The candle, designed by Anish Kapoor, was one of just seventy being lit at locations across the country to commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz. It was later lit at an interfaith service in Church Stretton later that day and students from Church Stretton School subsequently took it to Germany to the site of a concentration camp near Berlin.

The tree planting ceremony was one of a number of Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) activities in Shropshire, which also included events in Church Stretton and a national touring exhibition entitled "Righteous Muslims". The exhibition arrived in Shropshire in January for a six week tour that included schools, colleges and churches. It finished with a residency at the Redwoods Centre in Shrewsbury from 9th to 13th February 2015, which is operated by the South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

Next steps

The hope from the beginning was that it would be possible to plant a cherry tree in another part of the county with the involvement of another primary school in 2016. In time, with this practice planned in for subsequent years, it will be possible for in effect an entire cherry tree orchard to grow across Shropshire, ensuring that we do not forget the Holocaust or subsequent genocides.

This adopts the good example of Southend Borough Council, where a tree is planted each year on Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Council is currently planning the 2016 event, to mark the 2016 theme of "Don't Stand By". The aspiration is for all Shropshire primary schools to benefit from the shared learning of the resource pack developed by Mereside Primary School, and for a further primary school to plant a tree with the support of both the inter faith forums.

An ecumenical service is accordingly being envisaged for Mereside and the next school, to in effect hand on the baton of increased knowledge, awareness and understanding about the Holocaust and all genocides, in ways that are appropriate to this younger age grouping.

IV. Where we aim to be in 2016: strategic actions to achieve

The Council uses a wide range of customer feedback mechanisms and information exchange mechanisms, including social media, to facilitate open feedback from a range of audiences and stakeholders. The views, issues and learning from people living and working in Shropshire are welcomed and encouraged via this ongoing engagement basis as well as through specific consultation exercises.

The Council's intelligence sources, national data, and the efforts of exemplar authorities, clearly demonstrate that there can be challenges in finding out more about the needs of individuals in communities. Individuals may not wish to self-identify unless the need actually arises for medical reasons, eg a person experiencing an episode of poor mental health that they do not wish to be known about in what may be a very small rural community.

Creating opportunities to identify and collect service user equalities data, in ways that respect confidentiality whilst helping to produce robust information and quality intelligence, will assist in targeting available resources. It will also help in seeking a fair and equitable share of central government funding, and accessing other funding, e.g. EU funding for social inclusion, which is a strategic activity through the LEP.

The Council therefore very much welcomes any data that people in Shropshire may feel able to share, and will observe confidentiality and anonymity in so doing, as well as using this report narrative to explain why completeness of data matters.

For example, systematic collection of postcode data helps bring real insight to data. Best practice is to state the reasons we are collecting the full postcode. This gives people an informed choice as to whether they want to provide the postcode or not.

It is worth adding that full postcode data was sought from VCS participants in the "Shout About Social Value" event held by the VCSA on 17th November 2015. Of 28 respondents, 26 gave full postcode details and only one gave partial postcode. This indicates that, provided it is explained to people why an item of data is being collected, its actual collection does not appear to be an issue.

We will continue to target our efforts at finding out where there are gaps in equality and diversity data, and in finding out where there may be barriers to accessing particular services, for people with one or more of the Protected Characteristics and for people who are at risk of social exclusion.

How to find out more:

Please see our web pages on www.shropshire.gov.uk, and at the following address:

Equality, diversity and social inclusion – Shropshire Council

Please also contact Mrs Lois Dale, Rurality and Equalities Specialist, via telephone 01743 255684, or email her at lois.dale@shropshire.gov.uk

Table one: this is a table to show the ten groupings of people whose needs Shropshire Council thinks about in particular in its decision making processes

Main definitions source: Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

Protected Characteristic	Definition
Age	Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).
Disability	A person has a disability if s/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	The process of transitioning from one gender to another.
Marriage and civil partnership	In England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple. [1]. This will also be true in Scotland when the relevant legislation is brought into force. [2]. Same-sex 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	Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Protected Characteristic	Definition
Religion and belief	Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). 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.
Social inclusion (additional grouping in Shropshire)	Families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people considered to be vulnerable, ie having complex needs and/or requiring additional support

[1] Section 1, Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013; [2] Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act 2014.

Table two: this is a table to show the ten groupings in Shropshire, along with examples of information sources for service areas.

Protected Characteristic and other groups in Shropshire	Examples of information sources for service areas
Age (please include children, young people, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group eg young person with disability)	Adult social care data; Blue Badge records; Census 2011 profiles; children's centre data; concessionary fare records; housing services data; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Disability (please include: mental health conditions and syndromes including autism; physical disabilities or impairments; learning disabilities; Multiple Sclerosis; cancer; HIV)	Adult social care data; Blue Badge records; Census 2011 profiles; concessionary fare records; housing services data; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Gender re-assignment (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Customer complaints and comments data; national proxy data
Marriage and Civil Partnership (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Housing services data; Registrar records
Pregnancy & Maternity (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Housing services data; Registrar records
Race (please include: ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, gypsy, traveller)	Adult social care data; Census 2011 profiles; children's centre data; concessionary fare records; housing services data; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Religion and belief (please include: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Non conformists; Rastafarianism; Sikhism, Shinto, Taoism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)	Adult social care data; Census 2011 profile; Housing services data; Registrar records
Sex (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)	Adult social care data; Blue Badge records; Census 2011 profiles; children's centre data; concessionary fare records; schools data; leisure facilities usage
Sexual Orientation (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)	Customer complaints and comments data; drug and alcohol service customer records; national proxy data
Other: Social Inclusion (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; people with health inequalities; households in poverty; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities; people you consider to be vulnerable)	Adoption and fostering data; Adult social care data; benefits customer data; children's centre data; housing services data; leisure facilities usage; planning policy records eg Place Plans