

Equalities and Inclusion: Our Corporate Story

Suffolk County Council
Annual Report 2014-15

Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Foreword | 3 |
| Our corporate priorities and equality | 4 |
| Meeting our responsibilities | 5 |
| Due regard | 6 |
| Corporate equalities priorities | 7 |
| Support for staff and councillors | 9 |
| Staff networks | 10 |
| Providing support to those in need | 12 |
| Working with children and families | 13 |
| Activities across the organisation | 14 |
| Working with communities | 15 |
| Looking ahead | 16 |

Foreword

Suffolk is a very special county where there are strong communities whether in the smallest rural location, our urban centres or communities who share a similar background or interest. Our schools provide an example of the county's changing communities: 40 years ago there were few children with disabilities in mainstream schools and non-White British pupils were in very small numbers. Today our schools are a vibrant mix of nationalities, faiths, different backgrounds and as many children as possible with additional needs, which reflect the communities they are set in.

This third Equalities and Inclusion annual report provides an overview of how Suffolk County Council seeks to respond to the county's diverse population and support our staff. You will find examples of how equalities is embedded into the day to day activities undertaken across the organisation as well as how we consider equalities as part of the process of reshaping services and working in new ways with partners and individual service users.

Our staff are a key part of everything we do and while they put their efforts into delivering great services to the public in Suffolk, we are also pleased to include in this report information about the support that staff can access; whether that is through the vibrant and enthusiastic staff networks that committed staff run themselves, or via the staff policies that are in place to support staff at times of need.

Some of the positive work that you will find out more about includes the development of a definition of 'co-production' to ensure that we are involving service users and representative organisations in designing and reviewing services; extending the supported discharge from hospital service; developing an integrated pathway for children and young people with sensory and communication needs; working with bus operators re the use of low floor buses; and commissioning voluntary sector organisations to deliver targeted services to communities, such as that undertaken by the Suffolk LGBT Network for Public Health.

In the year ahead we will continue to work with communities to both help them to find solutions to the issues they face as well as working with wider partners to find collaborative solutions. Both for our staff within the County Council and for people across Suffolk we would like everyone to feel a sense of belonging; where they can be themselves and have positive aspirations for the future as part of a growing, thriving county.

Cllr Sarah Stamp
Cabinet Member responsible for
Equalities and Inclusion

Chris Bally
Corporate Management Team
Lead for Equalities and Inclusion

Our corporate priorities and equality

Our vision is to make Suffolk a better place to live and work, with strong communities where vulnerable people access the care they need, where there is economic growth, and where there is support for raising educational attainment and skills levels.

There is a strong link between meeting our corporate priorities and fulfilling our statutory equality duty. Considering the needs of people with protected characteristics underpins all key decisions about the provision of services and policies affecting the residents of Suffolk as well as our staff.

Under the Equality Act we have a specific duty to publish equality information in January each year. The 'Our Equality Information 2015' report was published together with the workforce equality information and can be seen on the County Council website [here](#).

Suffolk County Council first demonstrated its commitment to equalities and human rights in 2011 through signing up to the Equality and Human Rights Commitment Charter. This commitment was renewed in January 2014.

The following sections in this report demonstrate how alongside meeting our corporate priorities we ensure equalities and inclusion is embedded in the work of the County Council as well as some of the outcomes for the people of Suffolk.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 identifies nine characteristics to be protected from discrimination:

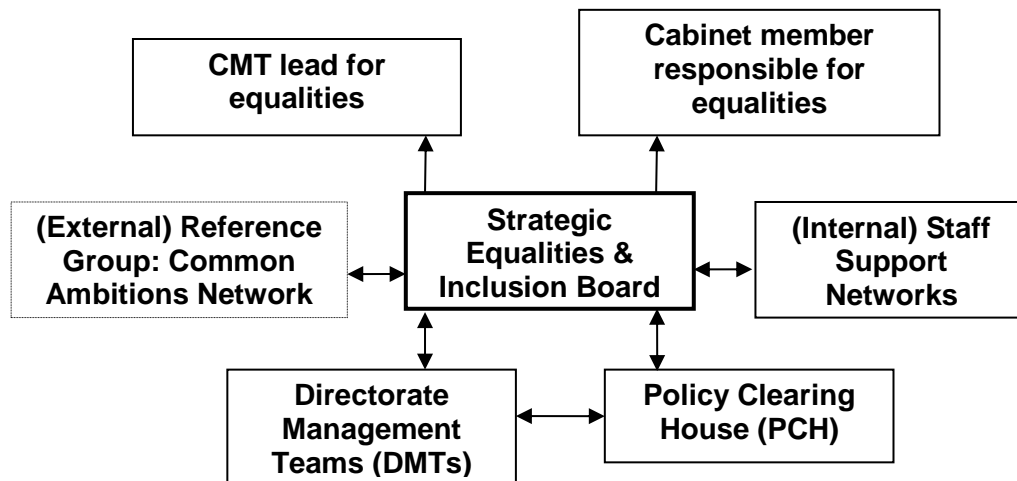
- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

Within the Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies, including the county council, to have due regard to the needs of the protected groups when designing, commissioning and delivering services in order to:

- Eliminate discrimination
 - Advance equality of opportunity and access
 - Foster good relations between different groups in the community
-

Meeting our responsibilities

The diagram below demonstrates how equalities and inclusion is linked into all parts of the organisation.



The Strategic Equalities and Inclusion Board drive the equality agenda for the County Council and includes representation from Councillors, directorates, unions and staff networks. The Board provides a steer to the organisation in terms of responding to the particular needs of people from the different protected groups.

The Corporate Management Team continues to receive quarterly performance monitoring reports and offer challenge on the progress being made across the organisation in relation to the corporate equality priorities.

The Policy Clearing House helps to ensure that we are meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) by reviewing the Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) for key changes to policies and service provision.

Due regard

Case law

There have been a number of cases in the last two years where the decisions of statutory bodies have been challenged on the basis of not meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) or lack of consultation. As a result of these judgments guidance to ensure SCC decision makers are not open to challenge on this basis has been updated.

Decision makers must be able to demonstrate that they have considered any equality implications before coming to a decision. Evidence that other officers have considered this is not sufficient. However, as long as the decision maker has paid 'due regard' then the court will not challenge the decision made even if the court would have given greater weight to the equality implications of the decision than did the decision maker. Key points:

1. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) outcomes and actions identified should be at the heart of decision making.
 2. Consideration of the impact that a decision may have must take place before the decision has been made, at a formative stage.
 3. There is a critically important interface between assessing impact and engagement.
 4. The EIA should be informed by the product of that engagement.
 5. The decision maker should be aware of the facts and their duty to pay due regard.
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Having due regard is about informed decision making. To do this, it is necessary to **understand the potential impact of decisions on people with different protected characteristics** and to identify what steps could be taken to reduce or remove any adverse impacts.

A key component of having due regard is that any likely impact on equality must be considered before decisions on policies or services are made. At Suffolk County Council we have decided to continue to use the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process to gather evidence at the planning stage of any new or proposed changes to policies or services.

The EIA process provides an opportunity to look at the positive and potential negative impacts on the different protected groups and to explore whether there are opportunities to mitigate against any adverse impacts.

Our Equality Impact Assessments are published on the Suffolk County Council website and can be accessed via this page: <http://www.suffolk.gov.uk/your-council/plans-and-policies/equality-and-diversity>

Each Directorate Management Team is responsible for ensuring that an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out before decisions about service changes and policies are made.

Corporate equalities priorities

In addition to the equalities priorities that each Directorate includes in their own annual plans, these corporately important priorities provide a focus which the whole organisation is expected to make a contribution towards.

| The eight agreed priorities for 2014-15 were: | Progress achieved: |
|--|---|
| <p>1. Raise the attainment for Mixed White Black Caribbean, Black Caribbean, White Eastern European & Gypsy/Roma children to narrow the gap with the Suffolk overall results</p> | <p>Focussed work to develop capacity in key schools; links to London School of Economics to enable Suffolk Black boys in KS3/4 to participate in a conference (autumn 2015); multiple school-based training sessions to improve staff knowledge of how to overcome barriers to attainment at all key stages; Gypsy and Roma Liaison Officers working closely with schools to improve transitions/continuity of education; all LIS advisers have been presented with local versus national gap data for all Key Stages; all schools have been asked about their attainment and progress gaps and how they improve attainment for Minority Ethnic pupils through LIS single point of contact visits. 2014 Key Stage results as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KS1 close to national for all except Gypsy Roma pupils. • KS2 results improved but still large gap for Black Caribbean and Gypsy Roma pupils compared to national. <p>KS4 results for most Minority Ethnic groups dropped with low % achieving 5 A*-C including English and Maths for Black African, Black Caribbean, Black Other, Bangladeshi, Mixed White and Black Caribbean and Gypsy Roma pupils.</p> |
| <p>2. Ensure that the outcomes of equality impact assessments (EIAs) influence the delivery of all the corporate transformation programmes</p> | <p>All transformation programmes have completed initial EIA screenings. Health and Social Care Integration (HASCI), Supporting Lives Connecting Communities (SLCC), and Making Every Intervention Count (MEIC) have completed full EIAs. Some EIAs have been undertaken for specific projects within the programmes and others are scheduled to be undertaken as the projects evolve.</p> |
| <p>3. Develop a framework to ensure Public Health and social care funding influence and leverage has the greatest impact on health and social care inequalities</p> | <p>Directorate representatives are putting plans in place to ensure that due consideration of equalities is taken when commissioning services. The framework in the Quick Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty in Commissioning and Procuring Services is being followed.</p> |
| <p>4. Improve on our staff equality information disclosure rates from 2013/2014 by 2% points</p> | <p>In 2014 there was an increase in the number of employees who did not declare their ethnicity, which is disappointing given there was an organisational objective to increase the rate of disclosure. The disclosed religion and beliefs that SCC</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>employees' have are similar between 2013 and 2014. In 2014 there was a 0.4% increase in the number of employees who declared their disability status, when compared to 2013.</p> <p>Efforts to encourage more staff to disclose have been made during the move to the new HR system and will be ongoing.</p> |
| <p>5. Roll-out equalities e-learning programme to all County Councillors alongside the face to face training and measure take up</p> | <p>There were 4 councillor equality and inclusion programmes run during 2014/15. Numbers of councillors attending:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduction to Equality & Inclusion (12 councillors) - Tackling all forms of Extremism (10) - Introduction to Staff Networks (10) - Introduction to Gypsies & Travellers (13) |
| <p>6. Support the delivery of 3 short stay Gypsy/Traveller stopping places in Suffolk</p> | <p>This piece of work was deferred.</p> |
| <p>7. SCC to fulfil the requirements of and sign the Time to Change organisational pledge as a public statement of aspiration that our organisation will tackle mental health stigma and discrimination</p> | <p>The 'Time to Change' Pledge has been signed by Mark Bee and Deborah Cadman and a day of events was held on the same day. A new training project 'Promoting Positive Mental Health in the Workplace' is being delivered to managers and a review of the SCC Mental Health at Work Policy is being undertaken.</p> |
| <p>8. Demonstrate that we are a Disability Confident organisation by increasing understanding and ensuring that disabled people have the opportunities to fulfil their potential and realise their aspirations at SCC</p> | <p>The Strategic Equalities and Inclusion Board has endorsed working towards the County Council demonstrating that we are a Disability Confident organisation. Activities to take this forward will be developed in the next quarter.</p> |

Overall, positive progress has been made against these priorities. Where issues have been identified during the year, the priority leads have sought solutions.

Support for staff and councillors

Staff policies

SCC wishes to reflect the wider population amongst our staff and aim to ensure that our staff policies support this aspiration.

The Disability Leave Policy is an example of offering support to staff with disabilities to help them to manage their health needs around their roles; while family and caring responsibility policies, including that for Shared Parental Leave, explicitly state that the policies apply to same sex couples.

Equality Allies

Officers and Councillors across the County Council can demonstrate their support to equalities by pledging to be Equality Allies. There are no set criteria about what people should do; it's just about how they interact with other people on a day to day basis.

e·qual·ity al·ly

noun

An Equality Ally is...

Someone who recognises that their colleagues from all backgrounds are better able to undertake their roles if they feel able to be themselves at work. Equality Allies create a culture within their own teams and SCC to make this happen. Whether in a leadership or support role anyone can contribute to making SCC a place that feels inclusive to everyone.

Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

Participation in this process allows us to benchmark our performance as employers of LGB&T staff against over 400 other organisations in the country. We remained in the Top 100 employers in the 2015 index at position 98. This was in the light of more stringent criteria and more organisations entering submissions.

Feedback from Stonewall stated that we should be proud of many excellent areas of work and in particular the outstanding work of the LGB&T Staff Network.

Learning and development

Councillor development:

Councillors had the opportunity to attend sessions on the following topics during 2014-15:

Introduction to equality & inclusion
Introduction to staff networks
Tackling all forms of extremism
Introduction to Gypsies & Travellers

Feedback from those that attended was that the sessions had provided a useful insight into these topics which they would recommend to colleagues.

For 2015-16 the Councillor Development Working Group has requested further sessions about tackling all forms of extremism and sessions about working with different communities.

E-learning:

This module, now called 'Equality Essentials', has been revised to meet both the needs of new starters and any existing staff who wish to refresh their knowledge.

Participants access key equalities information they need for their work and links to further advice and support.

Staff networks

The enthusiasm and dedication of the staff who contribute to the work of each of the staff networks should be acknowledged. The range of activities they undertake include: providing advice and support to others, providing training, putting on events and helping the organisation to address issues faced by staff.

The Corporate Management Team have endorsed the value of the staff networks and continue to encourage managers to release staff to participate in meetings and events organised by the staff networks. Feedback from staff demonstrates the valuable support that the staff networks provide for them; in some cases helping them to address issues they are facing so that they can continue to work in their roles.

The Working Well for Suffolk Strategy has led to a number of initiatives for staff that have taken place across the council; many of these have been in co-operation with the staff networks. Topics include raising awareness and reducing stigma of mental health; Positive Ageing for carers and encouraging more women to cycle.

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) Staff Network

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) Staff Network is open to all staff and Councillors, offering support and championing LGB&T issues for new and existing LGB&T colleagues. The network offers peer support to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender colleagues and allows staff to network across directorate and team boundaries, socially and in a work context.

The range of activities undertaken by the LGB&T Staff Network received high praise from Stonewall and scored 21 out of 22 in the submission to the Workplace Equality Index 2015.

Women's Network

This network provides an opportunity for female staff to share experiences about topics including career development and juggling work-life balance. The highlight of their year was the big debate for International Women's Day called 'Subtle Sexism in the Workplace: does it still exist?' Amongst those who took part in the debate were Deborah Cadman, Chris Bally and Mark Hardingham.

Christian Fellowship

The Christian Fellowship is a workplace support network, open to all staff interested in discussing Christianity and related issues. Participants do not need to be a Christian to attend the events. The fellowship is also open to retired staff, partners and Councillors. Speakers are also invited to share their thoughts. Recently Inspire Counselling were invited to Ipswich to talk about supporting mental health through counselling.

Throughout the year, the network mark Christian festivals. Joint events with Ipswich Borough Council included a Christmas carol event in Grafton House and an Easter Service in Endeavour House. The West Suffolk House group meets each week and is run jointly with St Edmundsbury Borough Council staff. There is also a weekly meeting at Landmark House, Ipswich. It is hoped that a joint meeting with Waveney

District Council will begin with the move into the Riverside Campus in Lowestoft. The Fellowship collected over 100 charity shoe boxes at Christmas and collected food donations for the charity Families in Need at harvest time.

The Mental Health Group

This group were the driving force behind Cllr Mark Bee and Deborah Cadman on behalf of the organisation signing the Time to Change pledge on the Wold Mental Health Day on 10 October 2014. Following on from that, the group have worked with partners including ACAS to offer Positive Mental Health Management in the Workplace workshops for managers.

The group has organised a number of events and workshops over the year, such as 'Time to Talk' Day (05/02/2015); Mental Health Awareness Week (May 2015); 8 sessions of Mindfulness at two locations (April-June 2015) recordings of these are available on the intranet; and around 5000 leaflets about stress (11/2014), mental health (02/2015) and information on support (04/2015) have been send to all SCC locations.

The Mental Health at Work Policy is being updated in collaboration with Unison, Nina Bickerton (chair of the Mental Health Staff Network until 2014), Lisbeth Thorsen and Krisztina Nemeth (co-chairs of the Mental Health Staff Network from 2015).

Young Person and Apprentice Staff Network

This network is open to all staff at Suffolk County Council between the ages of 16 and 25, including those who are apprentices. The purpose of this network is to offer a united voice for young people within Suffolk County Council and to provide a central contact for young people throughout the Council.

Members of the network have been involved in the development of the Rising High in Suffolk programme which offers work experience, apprenticeships, internships, industrial placements or a graduate programme for young people. The network is currently focusing on developing an induction programme for young people starting at the Council.

Disability Network

The Disability Network is for all disabled staff and their managers and those that have an interest in disABILITY, to promote the ABILITIES of what society classifies as disABLED colleagues, offer support, guidance and advice (including resolving any workplace issues), to influence policies and services affecting their working lives and to work towards making SCC a disABILITY friendly exemplar and confident organisation.

The group is open to all staff including those working for our strategic partners that are affected by disability issues, including those who are newly diagnosed with a long term health condition, physical or mobility impairment, visual or hearing impairment, lifelong developmental disability or cognitive impairments (including early on-set dementia). We have a particular focus on "hidden disABILITIES", but no one is excluded! The Network positively welcomes associate membership from carers and all those staff who have a responsibility for disability service provision.

Providing support to those in need

Knowing our communities

Out of a current population of 735,900 in Suffolk 158,000 are aged over 65 and of those 22,100 are in the over 85 age bracket. This means that Suffolk has proportionately more older people than the average across England and Wales.

Office for National Statistics data for Suffolk indicates that day-to-day activities of people of any age are limited a lot for 57,336 (7.9%) and limited a little for 73,353 (10.1%).

Within the 16 to 64 age range the profile is: limited a lot for 21,611 (4.8% of people in this age group) and limited a little for 31,982 (7.1% of people in this age group).

During 2014 closer collaborative working developed with the Suffolk Coalition of Disabled People (SCODP) and a number of other organisations whose work supports people with disabilities and their carers including: ACE Anglia, Suffolk User Forum, Suffolk Family Carers, Healthwatch Suffolk, Parent Carer Network and Community Action Suffolk. A key piece of work that the group developed together was the Principles of Co-production. The aim of these principles is to ensure that service users are involved throughout the process of designing and commissioning services. This group is now known as the **Suffolk Co-production Network** (SCoNe).

Another positive development during the last year has been the creation of an **Experts by Experience** panel which is co-ordinated by the Suffolk Coalition of Disabled People. Members of the panel can specify which topics they are willing to be contacted about. SCC officers can request feedback from the panel about their experiences of using services, get their feedback on proposed service changes, or invite people to take part in focus groups or surveys. SCODP plan to develop the panel further during 2015. Information about it can be seen on their website [here](#).

During 2014 the service to provide holistic **supported discharge from hospital** was revised and extended to 7 days a week. The service offers practical and emotional support for anyone 18 and over who does not have friends or family to provide such support; ensuring that people being discharged from hospital return to their homes safely and their chances of re-admission are reduced.

Work continues in collaboration between the NHS and Suffolk County Council to deliver an **integrated health and care system** that supports people to live healthy and independent lives. Management of care for people, whether they have immediate or longer term needs will be proactive, holistic, preventative and person-centred. It will put collaborative personalised care planning at its heart, so that engaged and informed patients and customers play an active role in determining their own care and support needs. It will actively involve the aspects of care and support that the voluntary and community sector provide – whether through commissioned services or otherwise. The programme has now developed into the next phase which will start to deliver the new models of care. This implementation phase is being managed through Integrated Care Networks in Ipswich and East, and in West Suffolk.

Working with children and families

Following consultation with parents, young people, partners and staff the Making Every Intervention Count service delivery model for Children and Young People's Services has been introduced. This model helps to ensure that we meet the needs of all children, young people and their families and address any additional needs related to their protected characteristics as appropriate.

Elements of this new way of working include:

1. Full adoption of **Suffolk Signs of Safety and Well-being** practice framework. This is central to 'making every intervention count' with families. Over 1300 people from CYP staff and partner organisations have now undertaken training. There is strong positive feedback from staff and families about the impact this is already having.
2. Creation of a **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** to provide decision-making around referrals to children's services. This has been fully established since August 2014 as a multi-agency partnership including Children and Young People's Services, Adult and Community Services, Police, Health, Mental Health, Youth Offending Service, Probation and Housing.
3. Creation of **Multi Agency Teams** to further focus Children and Young People's Services, partner agencies and community services in an efficient and coordinated way.

Work has also been undertaken to develop an integrated care pathway for **autistic spectrum disorders 0-25 years**. A multi-agency autism strategy group was established which mapped existing provision and identified gaps to inform future commissioning. The pathway will be further developed and web enabled to provide a signposting service. The group has been instrumental in identifying the profile of need in Suffolk and worked with a number of agencies to develop the local offer. Parent representatives have actively supported the development of special educational provision through the Free School Programme.

An action plan to develop an integrated pathway for children and young people with **sensory and communication needs** was agreed by SCC and health during the year. The proposed model will ensure that children and young people with communication and sensory needs receive a timely response to need from a local service. The aim is to develop the "local offer" to reduce the demand for costly interventions and prevent the need for children to be placed in settings some distance away from Suffolk to have their needs met.

Profile of Suffolk children

There are 167,400 children and young people aged 0-19 in Suffolk.

7,000 children in Suffolk have a disability.

The January 2014 school census data shows:

17.2% of primary pupils and 18.3% of secondary pupils have a Special Educational Need (SEN).

6.7% of pupils pre-16 and 4.5% post 16 do not have English as their first language.

There are 13.4% of pupils from a Black or Minority Ethnic background in primary schools; 17.4% in secondary schools and 11.5% in post-16 settings. (Note: higher 'not obtained' data in secondary schools).

Activities across the organisation

The Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service have undertaken some active recruitment campaigns to try to attract more women to join the service; as well as positive outreach to attract people from underrepresented groups.

As part of the process of adapting fire stations as shared response bases with other blue light services there has been active consideration of meeting the needs of people with mobility issues to be able to access the buildings.

The Highways team consider disability access when developing schemes to improve access on the road network. For instance, drop kerbs were installed at over 40 sites across the county in the last year. While the Passenger Transport Team have been working with bus operators re the use of low floor buses to improve accessibility for those with mobility problems, wheelchair users and parents with young children in pushchairs.

Public Health commission voluntary sector organisations to undertake work within their communities to address their particular health needs. This year the Suffolk LGB&T Network have been delivering 'trans' training about gender reassignment to GP and GP surgery staff across the county, some primary school teachers, Red Cross staff and volunteers. The network is currently supporting two families of primary age school children who have identified themselves as 'trans'. Further LGB&T information has been provided to the Bury branch of Suffolk Family Carers, Halesworth Dementia support project and Red Cross Ipswich have requested help with LGB&T inclusion.

The healthy living project fund is supporting health improvement work within the Chinese community through raising awareness of domestic abuse as well as the delivery of 10 forms of Tai Chi to reduce falls and maintain flexibility.

A diabetes DVD specifically aimed at the African and African Caribbean population is currently in its final stages; this has been delivered in partnership with CSV Media, Ipswich Diabetics Team and the African and African Caribbean Group.

Working with communities

Key dates in the year provide us with an opportunity to demonstrate our support for different communities. Keep the Memory Alive was the theme for Holocaust Memorial Day on 27 January 2015. Events took place in Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft and Ipswich. The main event was held at the Waterfront Building, University Campus Suffolk where there was an exhibition and an Act of Remembrance event which included the lighting of a candle at 4.30pm timed to coincide with candles being lit at events around the country.

There were a number of activities that took place as part of African History Month in October 2014; which included an art and writing competition for children and young people to enter. There was an interesting range of entries on the theme of Black/African Heroes and Sheroes who had inspired them. A selection of the entries was displayed in Endeavour House.

We supported Suffolk Pride on 21 June 2014 which after a parade through the town held celebrations along Ipswich waterfront which brought together people from the LGB&T and wider community.

We recognise the great contribution that organisations who work with people from different protected characteristics make. As well as directly supporting people in the community, leads from those organisations work with us to help improve our understanding of the issues facing those communities. One way that we have taken this forward in the last year is to form the Common Ambitions Network made up of voluntary and community sector organisations representing people with protected characteristics. Core members are: Suffolk Coalition of Disabled People (SCODP), Ipswich and Suffolk Council for Racial Equality (ISCRE), Community Action Suffolk; Suffolk LGB&T Network and Suffolk Inter Faith Resource (SIFRE). Members of the group have also found value in collaborating together on topics that cut across their specialisms.

The Supporting Minority Communities project is in its third and final year of Reaching Communities lottery funding. There are four strands to the project. The mentoring strand for BME young people and white working class boys has 89 mentors and more are being recruited. Requests for mentors from schools continue to be high. The English for Speakers of Other Languages strand fills gaps in provision for entry level learners and to develop their speaking and listening skills. Over 200 learners have benefitted from this provision. The migrant drop-in strand has specialist advisers from the migrant community who speak Polish, Spanish, Portuguese and Lithuanian who offer information, advice and guidance to migrants at the Saturday sessions in Ipswich, Brandon and Newmarket. There have been over 7,500 individual interactions since this service started in October 2010. The fourth strand supports the development of supplementary schools, which offer educational opportunities for children and young people outside mainstream school provision. As a result of the teaching received at their supplementary school some young people achieve GCSEs and A levels in their home language. Whilst grant funding options are being investigated, the future of these 4 projects beyond September is currently uncertain.

Looking ahead

We continue to implement our transformation programmes, reshaping and improving services as we change the nature of demand through supporting individuals to remain independent for longer. Considering the needs of people with different protected characteristics is a thread running through this process as service provision changes and evolves.

Our corporate equality priorities for 2015-16 reflect our commitment to considering equalities in both the work that we do for the people of Suffolk and our staff:

- Incorporate the guidance re meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) into commissioning, procurement and contract management practice as the PSED is non-delegable.
- Ensure that Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken to enable decision makers to demonstrate that any equality implications have been considered and 'due regard' has been paid.
- Improve on our staff equality information disclosure rates from 2014/2015 by 2% points.

We will seek to involve people with an understanding of the different protected characteristics to be involved in the reshaping of services, using the principles of co-production as defined by the Suffolk Co-Production Network (SConNe):

Co-production is people, carers and professionals working together as equal partners to: design, develop, commission, deliver and review services, information and advice.

This will often be facilitated by voluntary and community sector organisations who will link commissioners with people. Co-production is central to achieving the objectives of personalising services and increasing choice and control for users and carers.

We will continue to work with partners across Suffolk to respond to equality and inclusion issues as they emerge and to support communities to help themselves.

As Suffolk continues to grow with more children and older people; more people from minority backgrounds; more people living their lives with disabilities; and more people feeling able to live their lives openly as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender; more of us either fit into one of these categories ourselves or know people who do helping to build tolerance, understanding and more resilient communities as a result.