

## Board 8 December 2009

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### Equality Framework for Local Government

Report by Chief Executive

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#### For Decision

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#### 1. Background information

- 1.1 This report gives an update on the recent review undertaken that established YHN's approach to reaching the Achieving Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG). (Appendix 1 gives an overview of the Framework and its implications for YHN and what needs to be demonstrated as successes at each level of the framework).
- 1.2 Progress on the Equality Framework had previously been reported to the Governance & Personnel Committee. Committee members appreciated the amount of work that had gone into analysing what the organisation was currently doing and what needed to be done to improve the service. However at the last meeting of the Committee members were concerned that too much effort could be put into the development of the framework/action plan and not enough resource and effort invested in what was important for tenants. So as a consequence we decided to move forward with an early gap analysis to gain feed back.
- 1.3 With the gap analysis and its supporting evidence gathered an independent assessor was sourced. The brief was to support YHN in reaching the Achieving Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government. The review sought an assessment of achievement against both the Achieving Level of the EFLG and Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG). A principle aim of the review was to support the organisation through the migration from the old standard to the new. The resulting final report would provide guidance and recommendations for taking action to reaching the Achieving Level of the Framework.

## **2. The Review**

### 2.1. Methodology

2.1.1 To carry out the review the organisation appointed Dr Julian Clark, Research Fellow from Edge Hill University, Lancashire. Julian was one of the original developers of the Equality Standard for Local Government and has undertaken at least 21 such formal assessments and validation reports across the sectors of housing, health, fire and transport on the Equality Standard for Local Government. He is well versed in the business of equality standards and frameworks and has much of his works published.

2.1.2 The preliminary assessment consisted of three related parts:

- Critical examination of YHN's equality self-assessment and a sample from a portfolio of documents supplied by YHN
- Telephone interviews with the Chair of the Board, Chair of SIAG, staff and external stakeholders to test the self assessment across YHN
- Examination of documentary evidence for consistency with self assessment and interview findings
- Board members need to have in mind, that the following is based upon Julian's perceptions – some of which may change following further investigation and debate.

### 2.2 Assessment against the Framework

#### 2.2.1 The Emerging Level

YHN has carried out a detailed and thorough GAP analysis for the emerging level of the framework. The self-assessment document, interviews and documentary evidence support the claim that the general criteria of the emerging level have been met.

#### 2.2.2 The Achieving Level

To attain this level of the framework YHN has to show a number of factors (appendix 1 gives the full details). These factors translate into the specific elements of the Achieving Level that are grouped under the five headings:

- Knowing your community and equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and Customer Care
- Modern and diverse workforce

#### 2.2.3 Numerical ratings of elements

A rating system has been used to support the findings of each element of the Achieving Level. The scoring system is consistent with the approach taken by the Audit Commission in Best Value Reviews and the Equality Mark assessments against the Equality Standard. Scores 4,3,2,1 have been used. 4

in place and effective (the highest score) 3 in place but needs improving, 2 currently being established and 1 not in place (lowest score).

#### 2.2.4 Key findings

The attached report gives the full detail of the assessment. Main aspects are:

##### The Equality Framework

- YHN is currently working at the Achieving Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government in four out of the five main areas
- The exception is 'Modern and Diverse Workforce' where there is still considerable work to be done as some areas were unable to be scored as there was either not enough evidence to satisfy the required criteria or it was unclear as to what progress has been made if any
- The other main area that requires attention is procurement/contracting The main issue here being the updating of the Pre-Qualification Question and the lack of equality monitoring on contracts
- Customer profiling is good but can be taken to a higher and more useful level. Making improvements will underpin further service improvements.

Overall the following elements within the framework have scored:

- Knowing your community and equality mapping 3/4
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment 3/4
- Community engagement and satisfaction 3/4
- Responsive services and Customer Care 3
- Modern and diverse workforce 2/3

##### Equality documentation

- YHN have produced a good quality self assessment however there is a lack of critical reflection
- YHN has an appropriate range of statutory equality documentation
- There is a good Diversity Guide and Equality and Diversity Briefing Notes
- There is sound guidance for carrying out EINA's

##### Managing equality improvement

- There is good historical evidence that Equality and Diversity has been managed well within YHN
- The development of the Strategic Independent Advisory Group is welcomed
- The overall governance structure for Equality and Diversity has recently been changed, (Equality & Diversity is reported directly to Board) yet YHN has retained its project approach to equality improvement via the Service Improvement Programme. However operating in such a way YHN should consider the following questions:
  - Is the new equality management structure actually going to be able to manage equality improvement effectively?

- Will a formal assessment find the absence of a steering group or its equivalent a major flaw in the equality management structure?
- Is the absence of a steering or planning group going to hamper YHN's future plans for getting to the Excellent Level of the Equality Framework?
- There are still a number of policy areas i.e. employment and social cohesion where YHN is still tied closely to Newcastle City Council. This has left YHN's policy and procedure position unclear in some areas.

### **3. The Business Implications**

- 3.1 Progression through the framework will underpin the delivery of our mission statement and our strategic objectives and will result in YHN continuing to provide services that are relevant to our customers needs.
- 3.2 The framework allows a much more flexible approach to achieving equality. The framework incorporates the public duties on race, disability and gender and provides a common performance framework for compliance. This should enable us to comply with public sector equality duties and allow a greater contribution towards community cohesion.
- 3.3 The failure to progress through the framework would have adverse implications for YHNs reputation in the area of Equality and Diversity.

### **4 Areas of improvements/review identified against the specific elements of the Achieving Level of the Equality Framework**

- 4.1 Main aspects identified (the attached report gives full details)
- Knowing your community and equality mapping
- It is not clear what methods are used for updating the profile and at what intervals this will happen
  - There is a need to cross reference gender, age, ethnicity and single parent households
  - There is a need to continue to improve customer profiling/mapping and ensure that partners have access to the same up to date information.
- 4.2 Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Priorities need to be identified that will address equality improvements within YHN's equality plans and strategies
  - Clearer guidance is needed on how equality outcomes are monitored
  - There is a need for more detailed monitoring/scrutiny reports to be produced
  - There is a need to consider whether YHN develops its own community cohesion strategy which is based on the specific needs of the organisation and its communities.
  - As part of YHN's procurement procedure the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire needs to be reviewed

#### 4.3 Community engagement and satisfaction

- This policy area needs to be reviewed and thought needs to be given to the relationship between people belonging to equality categories and those regarded as vulnerable
- The analysis of perceived and real conflict of interest could be more explicit at a corporate level

#### 4.4 Responsive service and customer care

- It is unclear how areas of work are decided up and prioritised
- There is a need to systematically develop and implement monitoring processes across a wider range of service outcomes
- The aspects of Human Rights needs to be built into YHN's policies and practices

#### 4.5 Modern & Diverse Workforce

- When comparing the self assessment against the gap analysis for this area of work, there is little evidence to substantiate the actions taken
- There is little evidence to establish if the Dignity and respect Work Policy is monitored
- It is unclear as to progress made on the equal pay review and how the procedure has reached agreement with unions
- Equality and Diversity to be included in the Performance Appraisal Handbook

### 5 Recommendations

The Board are asked to:

- note the information in this report
- comment on issues identified in section 2.2.4 of the report
- agree to a formal assessment in March 2010

### 6. Implementation

On approval of this report we will:

- evaluate the content of the assessment report – with particular emphasis placed on the areas for improvement.
- produce an update on the findings of the above evaluation
- work on the identified improvements will start with immediate effect with a focused emphasis placed on Modern and Diverse Workforce
- seek to undertake a formal peer assessment against the Achieving Level of the Standard by March 2010
- Work in partnership with the working group established by the Improvement Development Agency to develop a housing sector specific Equality Framework.

**Background Paper:**

Report to Governance Personnel Committee 4 August 2009

**Contact Officer:**

If you have any questions about this report that you would like clarifying before the meeting, you can contact Simone Doyle by telephone on 0191 2784390 or email [simone.doyle@yhn.org.uk](mailto:simone.doyle@yhn.org.uk)

## Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG)

The Equality Standard for Local Government (ESLG) was introduced in 2001 to help local authorities to mainstream equality issues into service delivery and employment. Since this time weaknesses have been identified with the Standard and, at a national level, there has been new thinking on how we understand equality as well as changes to the improvement framework for local government.

The new Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) has therefore been developed to:

- Simplify our work to mainstream equality (the Framework is less process orientated and more flexible than the previous Equality Standard)
- Enable us to comply with public sector equality duties and good practice on community cohesion and migration
- Take account of the new definition of equality proposed by the Equalities Review

### Key changes

The new framework will consist of three levels rather than five. The three levels are:

- Emerging
- Achieving
- Excellent

Authorities who are currently using the ESLG will migrate under the new framework as follows:

- Authorities at levels 1 and 2 will be treated as Emerging
- Authorities at level 3 will be treated as Achieving
- Authorities at level 4 will be treated as 'Moving towards Excellent'
- Those at level 5 will be treated as Excellent

There are five areas against which authorities measure their performance:

- **Knowing your community – equality mapping** (the use of local and national data to understand the profile of communities and measure inequalities)
- **Place shaping, leadership and partnership** (understand the importance of equality in visions of place, political and officer leadership, working with partners to challenge inequality)
- **Community engagement and satisfaction** (involving diverse groups in decision making and assessing satisfaction)
- **Responsive services and customer care** (providing personalised services that meet the needs of people from different backgrounds,

reflecting different needs in commissioning and procurement, measuring access)

- **A modern diverse workforce** (measuring the diversity of the workforce, setting appropriate objectives to improve performance, equal pay and flexible working)

**A new definition of equality** - the new framework uses the definition of equality set out in the Equalities Review which emphasises equal life chances for all. This includes groups who currently have legal protection from discrimination and other groups such as looked after children:

**“An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish.**

**An equal society recognises people’s different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and can be.”**

**Evaluation** - critical self assessment and peer challenge will be the method of evaluating progress against the Framework rather than external assessment. Authorities who have successfully undergone peer challenge will be awarded a kite mark.

**Timescale** - Authorities will be able to start using the Framework from April 2009.

Implications for YHN

The key implications for us are:

- 1) New work; while much of the new framework is consistent with the work we have carried out under the existing Equality Standard, we will need to undertake some new work such as the equality mapping/knowing your community activity.
- As we are working towards Level 3 of the standard, we technically migrate over to the framework as an achieving authority, however as there are new areas of work in the framework it has been necessary for us to also consider the requirements of a development authority. Consequently both levels will be worked through simultaneously in order to ensure that we fulfil all requirements of the revised framework.
- 2) Partnership; the emphasis on working with partners (other public service providers and the voluntary sector) to challenge inequality could have implications – at the time of writing I am unclear as to our membership with local strategic partnerships etc and the role of such a partner would involve.
- 3) Peer review; the use of peer review to evaluate performance raises questions about the consistency of approach and the training needs of peer reviewers.
- 4) Resources; we are expected to look to the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership for improvement resources in this area.

In order to be assessed as an emerging organisation YHN needs to demonstrate:

- Board members and staff understand the significance of equality of opportunity in creating local areas that people want to live and work in. They visibly lead partnerships that address inequality.
- Clear plans to undertake equality mapping and understands the profile and needs of communities of interest within its locality.
- It has publicly committed to improving equality outcomes and the elimination of discrimination in both service delivery and employment based on race, gender, disability, age, religion and/or belief and sexual orientation and other areas of disadvantage.
- It is compliant with all legal requirements, including having all the public duty equality schemes in place.
- It has systems in place at corporate and service/unit levels to ensure the delivery, review and scrutiny of its equality and cohesion priorities.
- Key internal and external stakeholders and community members are involved in and consulted on equalities issues.
- It has earmarked specific resources for improving equality practice.
- It is carrying out both retrospective and prospective equality impact assessments.
- It is clear about its workforce profile and has plans to ensure equal pay and to improve representation where appropriate.

In order to be assessed as an achieving organisation YHN has to demonstrate:

- Board members and staff take direct and personal responsibility for promoting greater equality and test themselves on progress by the outcomes they achieve.
- It has undertaken equality mapping and has a good understanding of its communities, including the extent of inequality and disadvantage, and used the information to inform corporate and service priorities.
- It has set stretching equality priorities in consultation with partners in the public and voluntary and community sectors and these are reflected in its sustainable community and other relevant strategies, local and multi-area agreements, and local targets.
- It works with partners in the public and voluntary and community sectors to develop joint equality strategies.
- It uses equality impact assessments to review all major corporate and service changes in policy and regularly conducts service and employment.
- It has set appropriate corporate and service/unit objectives to address persistent inequalities and to narrow the gap related to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion and/or belief, or other areas of inequality for service delivery. This is based on impact assessments and consultation with internal and external stakeholders and partners.

- It has set appropriate corporate and service/unit employment and pay related objectives for race, gender, disability and age, religion and/or belief and sexual orientation.
- Equality objectives are integrated into the ALMO's business and service planning processes.
- All relevant data on service access is monitored against the equality strands.
- There are good practices of delivery in all the sections of YHN with few adverse impacts found in impact assessments. Where adverse impacts have been found these have been mitigated.
- Key stakeholders and community members, including those who are vulnerable and marginalised, are able to scrutinise and challenge performance on equalities issues.
- It has developed information and monitoring systems that allow it to disaggregate data where appropriate and to assess progress in achieving objectives and targets. It reviews them in the light of changing needs, when necessary.

**Your Homes Newcastle**  
**Pre-assessment evaluation**  
**Achieving Level of the Equality Framework for Local**  
**Government**  
**Julian Clarke**  
**Centre for Local Policy Studies**  
**Edgehill University**



Edge Hill University



# 1. Introduction

This report provides a preliminary assessment of Your Homes Newcastle (YHN) against the Achieving Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

Following a brief discussion of the assessment methodology, there is a review of context that includes policies and plans, management structures, self-assessment and other reports including recent inspections and assessments. Section 5 comments briefly on Developing Level of EFLG. Section 6 contains the detailed commentary for the Achieving Level.

**Having taken into account the self assessment, documentary evidence and interviews with staff and stakeholders we feel that YHN is currently working at the Achieving of the Equality Framework for Local Government with respect to service delivery and customer satisfaction. There is major work to be done in the area of employment as has been recognised in the GAP analysis. We had some problems obtaining up to date information and were unable to assess fully whether YHN is working at Achieving Level in this regard.**

# 2. Methodology

The preliminary assessment consists of three related parts:

- Critical examination of YHN's equality self-assessment and a sample from a portfolio of documents supplied by YHN
- Telephone interviews with the Chair of the Board, Chair of SIAG, staff and external stakeholders to test the self assessment across YHN  
Examination of documentary evidence for consistency with self-assessment and interview findings

Where specific examples of good practice are referenced in this report, it simply reflects the areas sampled for documentary review and interview. It is not meant to imply that good practice does not exist in other parts of YHN

## 3. Context

### 3.1 Your Homes Newcastle

YHN is one of about 70 Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) set up by local authorities to (independently) manage local authority housing stock. Over the past ten years they have been one of the types of organisation through which Decent Homes finance has been channelled to improve local social housing. YHN was set up in April 2004 by Newcastle City Council to manage its council housing stock of over 30,000 rented properties and over 1,000 leasehold dwellings.<sup>1</sup>

The formal agreement with Newcastle City means that YHN provides:

- housing management and tenancy enforcement;
- housing investment and repairs reporting and commissioning;
- tenant consultation and participation;
- rent collection and arrears;
- Your Choice Homes allocations and lettings service;
- caretakers, concierge and security porters;
- supported housing service including warden services (sheltered and mobile),
- furniture service, asylum seekers' accommodation and the relocation service;
- and
- leasehold management and Right to Buy administration.

The City retains:

- housing policy and strategy;
- private sector and housing association liaison; and
- homelessness and housing advice.
- maintenance of the housing register

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<sup>1</sup> The figures for number of tenancies varies in reports and plans between 28,000 (Self Assessment)

YHN is managed by a board made up of six elected tenants, six council nominees and six independent people. Three area boards are also made up of one third tenants, one third council nominees and one third independents. The day-to-day running of the company is carried out by a management team headed by a chief executive. It employs nearly 900 staff. In addition to managing and maintaining the existing housing stock, YHN has a new build programme and is engaged with partnerships that provide services that extend far beyond straightforward housing management.

### **3.2 Newcastle City**

Mid-year estimates for 2008 indicate that Newcastle has a population of 273,600 of whom 138,700 are females and 134,800 are male. The two largest age cohorts are the 20-24 and 25-29 age groups. Almost half of an increase of nearly 6,000 since 2003-4 is accounted for by international migration. Newcastle is ranked 37th most deprived local authority by IMD (2007). It was 20th according to IMD (2004). This change is evidence that Newcastle has become relatively less deprived over the last three years. This represents an improvement over a three year period. *'In 2007, less people in Newcastle were living in the most deprived areas nationally than in 2004 (66,300 compared to 81,500)...Newcastle is improving at a rate consistent with the other Tyne and Wear District authorities, and at a faster rate than many Core Cities.'* (Newcastle City Council website).

Under current definitions, it is estimated that 22%+ of the population has a limiting long term illness, which provides a measure of disability within the City. We were unable to find a profile of the distribution of disability type.

Newcastle has a 6.9% BME population according to current definitions:

*People of South Asian ethnicity (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Other Asian [i.e. excluding those from East Asia]) increased from 2.9% to 4.4% of the population. Those from a Black ethnic group (Black Caribbean, Black African and Black Other) remained the same at 0.4% of the population. Other groups (Chinese and other ethnic groups) increased marginally from 0.9% to 1.2%. All Asylum seekers should have been counted in the Census, and are coded according to their ethnicity and not their asylum seeker status. As a general rule*

*it is unwise to include these people as if they were ethnic minorities.* (Newcastle City Council website)

### **3.3 Your Homes Newcastle**

YNH provides housing for more than a quarter of the Newcastle population. This is more than double the national average. YHN has detailed equality data for over 28,000 tenants. It is not clear, however, from documentation how many people live permanently in these dwellings nor what the equality status of the total resident population is. There is striking disparity between the proportions of male and female tenants

Nearly 60% of tenants are women; just over 40% are male. The future implications of this difference may be worth review. Between 17% and 18% of tenants are disabled, which is below the overall proportion in the City. Detailed work needs to be done on disaggregating the specific needs of disabled tenants because this is known (at least at a corporate level) for only 30% of these.

In contrast YHN has compiled a very detailed profile of tenants by ethnicity and by language. The BME tenant totals closely match the overall totals in the City population. YHN has done a good job in profiling its tenants/customers. It has comprehensive equality information on over 80% of tenants and leaseholders except for sexual orientation where it has no specific information but where future work is planned.

One of the key statistical relationships for YHN from an equality perspective, apart from the characteristics of existing customers, is between the existing customer base and the waiting list (Housing Register). This requires review.

These issues will receive further comment in section 6 of the report.

### **3.4 Your Homes Newcastle: Audit Commission inspections**

The Audit Commission report from 2005 found that while YHN was positively oriented to equality improvement, there were a range of shortcomings that needed to be addressed. The report from 2008 was much more positive and

indicated that strengths outweighed weaknesses. Many areas of good practice were highlighted. Three areas of concern, however, were mentioned

- Customer profiling
- Representative workforce
- Active contractor equality monitoring

The following also required consideration

- taking proactive steps to reduce the overall length of time that disabled tenants wait for adaptations (Audit Commission Report 2008:10)

We will consider these points later in this report.

The Audit Commission reports comment in relation to the housing and integration of asylum seekers and do not comment on human rights at all.

The Investors in People report from 2007 indicates that senior management have a good understanding of equality improvement. Equality training was judged to be good by staff. Staff felt also that training opportunities were available for all staff

## **4. Your Homes Newcastle approach to equality improvement**

### **4.1 Equality documentation**

YHN produced a good quality self-assessment and like many other public sector organisations produced one that represented their achievements in detail. But, there was also a lack of critical reflection (and reluctance to use the word weakness) and critical insight into some aspects of the equality improvement process and its outcomes for service users. Without such reflection it can be difficult to work out why certain improvement action has worked and some has not. It also becomes more difficult to present to tenants and other stakeholders a

useful account of why changes in policy and practice have taken place and why it may be difficult to meet certain needs.

YHN has an appropriate range of statutory equality documentation. There is a clearly written Equality Policy. There is a detailed Corporate Equality Plan. The Single Equality Scheme is a detailed document that indicates how statutory duties will be carried out. Much of the material in these two documents is duplicated and they contain two quite different kinds of equality plans. There is also a Diversity Action Plans that relates specifically to Audit Commission KLOEs. Unifying these documents so that assessors can see easily the overall equality planning structure might be a useful development. If this is impractical a guide to the different equality plans could be included for a future assessment.

There is a good quality Diversity Guide and Equality and Diversity Briefing Notes. There is also sound guidance for carrying out EINAs. The sample of complete assessments indicate that this work has been taken seriously and had yielded worthwhile change objectives. There are also some good examples of scrutiny/monitoring reports.<sup>2</sup>

We found it quite difficult to work out how the full range of future work actions (as laid out in the self-assessment document) has been arrived at. Some have clearly come from the EINAs and some from other sources that need to be better specified in the documentation. This is not a criticism of the nature of the future work, simply a question that seeks clarification about the reasoning supporting each action. Assessors are likely to ask the same question.

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<sup>2</sup> We are gratified to see that YHN calls its assessments EINAs and not EIAs. The needs element that was contained in the original Equality Standard designation (Impact Needs and Requirements Assessment) has been preserved.

## 4.2 Managing equality improvement

Management of YHN's equality improvement work is directed by its Equality Policy. Initially responsibility for oversight was delegated to the Governance Committee which would:

*monitor our equality targets and make sure a wide group of stakeholders are involved in improving our policy and service delivery in this area. (Equality Policy: 10)*

Also expressed was an intention to create:

*a Corporate Equality Planning Group to support the work of Governance Committee. (Equality Policy: 10)*

A Diversity Project was established following the Audit Commission Inspection of 2005. This had a number of workstreams, which met:

*on a regular basis, and each workstream leader completes a monthly report on progress. These progress reports are discussed on a monthly basis at meetings of the Diversity Project Board, attended by the workstream leaders and the diversity project leader, who chairs the meetings.*

*Progress is then reported by the project leader to meetings of the Programme Board, Governance & Personnel Committee and YHN Board for final approval.*

The overall structure was changed in 2009:

*In the original proposal, it was proposed that Equality and Diversity report to Performance Committee. However, because of the workload for this committee there are concerns that this area of work will not receive the level of scrutiny that it requires.*

*It is recommended that Equality and Diversity reports directly to Board.*

A project approach to equality improvement has been taken over the past three years, which has been guided by an Equality and Diversity Project Board  
YHN should consider the following questions.

- Is the new equality management structure actually going to be able to manage equality improvement effectively?
- Will a formal assessment find the absence of a dedicated steering group or its equivalent a major flaw in the equality management structure?

- Is the absence of a steering or planning group going to hamper YHN's future plans for getting to the Excellent Level of the Equality Framework?

The development of SIAG is to be welcomed. The existence of an independent critical friend is extremely important to the equality improvement process and ensuring that it is generating worthwhile outcomes for customer. It should be noted that, despite the fact that SIAG is a volunteer based organisation, it will need to be appropriately resourced.

There are still a number of policy areas, especially in employment policy and procedures and for social cohesion where YHN is still tied closely to Newcastle City Council. This has left YHN's policy and procedure position unclear in some areas. Before a formal assessment the relationship between the City and YHN will need to be clarified in relation to these areas.

## **5. The Equality Framework**

### **5.1 Emerging Level**

In order to be assessed as an Emerging Organisation YHN needs to demonstrate the following

- Board members and staff understand the significance of equality of opportunity in creating local areas that people want to live and work in. They visibly lead partnerships that address inequality.
- Clear plans to undertake equality mapping and understands the profile and needs of communities of interest within its locality.
- It has publicly committed to improving equality outcomes and the elimination of discrimination in both service delivery and employment based on race, gender, disability, age, religion and/or belief and sexual orientation and other areas of disadvantage.
- It is compliant with all legal requirements, including having all the public duty equality schemes in place.

- It has systems in place at corporate and service/unit levels to ensure the delivery, review and scrutiny of its equality and cohesion priorities.
- Key internal and external stakeholders and community members are involved in and consulted on equalities issues.
- It has earmarked specific resources for improving equality practice.
- It is carrying out both retrospective and prospective equality impact assessments.
- It is clear about its workforce profile and has plans to ensure equal pay and to improve representation where appropriate.

YHN has carried out a detailed and thorough GAP analysis for the developing level of the framework. The self-assessment documentation, interviews and documentary evidence support the claim that the general criteria of the Developing Level have been met.

## **5.2 The Achieving Level**

The rest of this pre-assessment evaluation considers the evidence presented for each of the elements of the Achieving Level. We have identified, where relevant, the areas for review and improvement for the individual elements. Comments and recommendations arising from the interviews and meetings held with the assessors have been included, where we felt that this added value to the summary and each area of improvement

### **5.2.1 Adaptation of the Achieving Level of the Equality Framework for an ALMO**

Where elements of the framework refer to councillors and officers, we have referred to Board members and staff. Some other minor changes to the wording of the Equality Framework have been made to align it with the organisational context.

To attain the Achieving Level and organisation has to show that:

- Board members and staff take direct and personal responsibility for promoting greater equality and test themselves on progress by the outcomes they achieve.
- It has undertaken equality mapping and has a good understanding of its communities, including the extent of inequality and disadvantage, and used the information to inform corporate and service priorities.
- It has set stretching equality priorities in consultation with partners in the public and voluntary and community sectors and these are reflected in its sustainable community and other relevant strategies, local and multi-area agreements, and local targets.
- It works with partners in the public and voluntary and community sectors to develop joint equality strategies.
- It uses equality impact assessments to review all major corporate and service changes in policy and regularly conducts service and employment.
- It has set appropriate corporate and service/unit objectives to address persistent inequalities and to narrow the gap related to race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion and/or belief, or other areas of inequality for service delivery. This is based on impact assessments and consultation with internal and external stakeholders and partners.
- It has set appropriate corporate and service/unit employment and pay related objectives for race, gender, disability and age, religion and/or belief and sexual orientation.
- Equality objectives are integrated into the ALMO's business and service planning processes.
- All relevant data on service access is monitored against the equality strands.
- There are good practices of delivery in all the sections of YHN with few adverse impacts found in impact assessments. Where adverse impacts have been found these have been mitigated.
- Key stakeholders and community members, including those who are vulnerable and marginalised, are able to scrutinise and challenge performance on equalities issues.

- It has developed information and monitoring systems that allow it to disaggregate data where appropriate and to assess progress in achieving objectives and targets. It reviews them in the light of changing needs, when necessary.

These outline criteria translate into the specific elements of the Achieving Level that are grouped under five headings

- Knowing your community and equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and Customer Care
- Modern and diverse workforce

### **5.3 Numerical rating of elements**

A numerical rating system may be used in a formal assessment to support findings for each element of the Achieving Level. The scoring system is consistent with the approach taken by the Audit Commission in Best Value Reviews and Assessments and Equality Mark assessments against the Equality Standard. Scores are 4,3,2,1 with 4 being highest and 1 being lowest. The scores are likely to summarise qualitative judgements of an organisation's performance in relation to that element. The quantitative part of the evaluation assigns number to each element.

Scores:

- 1 - Not in Place
- 2 - Currently Being Established
- 3 - In place but needs improving
- 4 - In place and Effective

We have estimated what we think are likely scores for each element. The scores assigned have taken into account the contents of the self-assessment document; documentary evidence and results of interviews with Board members, managers, staff and tenants and other stakeholders.

To estimate whether YHN is working at the Achieving Level of EFLG we have used the Equality mark methodology that indicates that an average score of three means that an organisation is working at the Level.

Where we have designated a score of 2/3 or 3/4 this means that we estimate that YHN is currently working at point between the two scores.

## **6 Commentary against the specific elements of the Achieving Level**

### **Knowing your community and equality mapping**

**6.1 Relevant and appropriate information is gathered efficiently using a range of techniques, across the local community, to inform the organisation's; corporate policy and strategy, the sustainable community strategy, local area agreements and to identify key equality gaps.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has made a major and successful effort to obtain and analyse equality information about its customer group, which is central to managing equality improvement. It understands how its client base relates to the general population of Newcastle. It has used a range of techniques to collect information. It has worked well with its partners to use this information in the development of its various equality and equality related policies and strategies. A detailed profile of tenants has been produced. The housing waiting list contains fairly detailed equality data and the allocations policy has been impact assessed by Newcastle City Council.

There are also clear plans in the SES to begin a process of assessing the distribution of sexual orientations in the tenant group

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- It is not clear what methods are used for updating the profile and at what intervals this will happen
- The allocations policy EINA needs following up in certain key areas where there was insufficient data to answer some questions.
- About 5% of YHN's tenants might be classified 'non-white' or BME. The proportion belonging to this category on the housing register is more than double (>10%). Without knowing the detail of housing entitlements amongst various groups and the current proportions of allocations among different groups it is difficult to know whether this difference is of any significance. It is not commented on in the self –assessment, but it would be worthwhile for YHN to be able comment on the situation should this be queried or mentioned during a formal assessment.
- The proportion of disabled people on the register appears to be very small relative to proportions in the current tenant and City populations.

**Estimated score 3/4**

**6. 2 Information and data are disaggregated and analysed corporately and at service/unit level to monitor and assess and set equality objectives**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has comprehensive equality information on customers and uses it effectively to improve the delivery of its various services. This information is used by the service delivery teams to assess needs and to feed

information into planning and objective setting processes. Disaggregation has been done by area within the city

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Cross reference gender, age, ethnicity and single parent households
- YHN has quite good information about type of disability among its tenants. The headline figure indicates that 17.9% of customers have some kind of disability this compares with a figure of 21.6 for the City as a whole. But YHN has not compared this with the prevalence of these disabilities within the whole Newcastle population
- Although it has It has detailed information about disabled customers the analysis in the self assessment is limited. It would have been useful to cross-reference disability with the other equality strands for example, age and disability and gender and also determine where people experience multiple disabilities.
- Interviews suggest that that there is better information about the nature of tenant disability held in local offices than has been collated at corporate level. This suggests that variations in disability (impairments and the disabling nature of the impairments) are being catered for at local service level. But, it suggests also that the detail of corporate level information (for overall strategic and planning purposes) can be considerably improved.
- It would be useful to have a disaggregated assessment of disabled customers cross referenced with information on the other equality strands. This would support YHN's efforts to deal with potential multiple disadvantage and provide a fair and equal service. Secondly, it would provide a window for any external assessments on to some of the major challenges facing YHN (and all ALMOs!)

- The proportion of customers from minority groups corresponds approximately to the proportion in the Newcastle population. But, the proportion of different minority groups who are tenants does not match those proportions in the City population. This reflects a nationwide set of historical developments where people of Asian heritage are less likely than other minority groups to live in local authority owned housing.
- Demographic and identity categorisation needs to be more fine grained to account for a greater range of identities than is currently revealed by YHN measures. This applies especially to multiple identities where a motor or sensory impairment may not be of the same significance to people from different ethnic backgrounds. Other documentation and interviews indicate that YHN staff are sensitive to these issues. But, they should be made explicit when discussing the way current tenants and those on the waiting list identify themselves.
- The Corporate Equality plan indicates that 17.3% of customers live in a household with at least one person with a disability or long term limiting illness long term illness (Corporate Equality Plan: 10). Does this mean that there may be a higher proportion (than 17.6) of disabled people living in YHN dwellings? As expressed here it does not compare directly with the NCC figure.
- Interviews indicate that much more detailed and fine grained data is held by YHN at a local level than is represented in the equality documentation. Analysis and use of this data at a corporate level may enable YHN to better meet the needs of customers and potential customers

### **Estimated score 3**

**6.3 Relevant and appropriate information and data (including data relating to the National Indicator Set) is mapped, disaggregated and used with partners, to assess and set equality objectives.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has comprehensive equality information on customers and uses it effectively to improve the delivery of its various services. Information has been used to develop strategies and policies that support partnership working. There is good evidence that there is effective sharing of information and partnership working in relation to Children and Young People, Racist and Homophobic Attacks, Anti-Social Behaviour and Asylum Seekers and Refugees. YHN's contribution to delivering LAA outcomes is clearly specified (though as detailed in the Plan and reports this specification probably underplays YHN's contribution)

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Continue to develop strong partnerships where the equality improvement content of service delivery is clearly specified.
- Continue to improve customer profiling/mapping and ensure that partners have access to the same up to date information

**Estimated score 3/4****Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment**

6.4 Clear organisational and partnership equality priorities have been set and are owned and understood by all key stakeholders.

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has produced a series of equality planning documents that clearly spell out what equality improvement priorities will be pursued. It has worked closely with its customers to generate service level equality priorities (and to foster a wide understanding of these priorities within its customer base). YHN works within series of strong partnerships in which the equality objectives are agreed and well-understood. Neighbourhood partnership and project working is also an important part of YHN activity.

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Although YHN equality planning document spells out a range of equality improvement priorities, it is not always clear from what sources these priorities have come and whether they are ranked in any way. It would be helpful at the very least from a presentational point of view, to produce a single equality planning document that clearly relates the high level goals to be found in Corporate Equality Plan and the detailed actions specified in the Single Equality Scheme and in the EINA reports.
- YHN has produced partnership guidance with clear equality improvement content

**Estimated score 3**

**6.5 Equality and cohesion priorities are monitored regularly by partners, the organisation's political and senior managerial leadership, and appropriate resources are being allocated**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- There is a well defined reporting structure for equality objectives and targets. YHN has produced some good monitoring reports such as those on rent arrears and Ethnicity Monitoring and YHN Customer profile.

Partnership cooperation seems to be good and the Partnership Guidance document has a short section on monitoring. There are two good examples of work to promote cohesion: young people and environmental clean-up and identification of rising tensions in multi-ethnic areas

- The SIAG has potentially a very important active role to play in monitoring and is a welcome development. It will have a specific work-plan, which will be important for progress with equality improvement.

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- There could be clearer guidance on the way in which equality outcomes are monitored in (the Partnership guidance document has a very brief section on this).
- There are good examples of cohesion work and interviews suggest that in some parts of YHN there is a good understanding of what cohesion means from a practical point of view. It is not, however, how the NCC Cohesion Strategy is interpreted at a corporate level by YHN
- YHN will have to monitor carefully whether the new equality management structure delivers an adequately detailed account of the outcomes produced by equality improvement work and whether the organisation's approach to equality improvement is sufficiently well-developed to sustain the new 'mainstreaming' approach. It is important that SIAG plays an active role in assessing the working of the new management arrangements.

**Estimated score 3**

**6.6 Action is being taken to implement commitments within the equality schemes and monitored regularly by Board members and senior managerial leadership**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- The Single Equality Scheme has clearly defined, strand (protected group) equality objectives
- The CEO has taken an active lead in developing equality improvement work. The senior management team is also engaged with this work. The Board Chairman has supported these efforts. YHN has an effective management structure (subject to queries raised above) for delivering on and tracking the progress towards the objectives set out in the various action planning documents.

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- See points made at 6.4 and 6.5 above

**Estimated score 3**

**6.7 Appropriate resources have been allocated and action has been taken to mitigate adverse impact and improve equality outcomes where shortfalls have been identified**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has developed an effective Equality Impact and Needs Assessment process and that it has produced action plan documentation. It has tested the impact of policies and procedures using through various means; for example, customer focus groups, The Equality Scheme and the Corporate Equality Action plan indicate what action is being taken to mitigate any adverse impact. Service teams are active in identifying and meeting needs. There are clearly defined equality priorities that feed into delivery and project plans. Improvement action appears to be resourced from within core budgets.
- YHN has two equality officers (this is at least one more than local authorities of comparable size)

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Making a clear connection between different equality planning documents (for external assessors)
- There are some places in equality planning documents where the column marked 'actions' contains objectives and not actions. Plans need to be made consistent.

**Estimated Score 3****6.8 Board overview and scrutiny processes review equality impacts and objectives****YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has incorporated its management of equality improvement into its corporate management arrangements. Progress is overseen both by the CEO and by the Board. SIAG provides an external critical friend dimension to scrutiny and review
- YHN has made good use of GAP analysis

**Areas for improvement/review**

- Production of more detailed monitoring/scrutiny reports
- Use of Gap analysis is good approach but does not necessarily show how well/or not something is working not why it has worked or not worked

**Estimated score 3/4****6.9 The organisation communicates effectively about its equality and cohesion priorities, how it is responding to its communities' needs and promoting good relations**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- Equality priorities are communicated well to staff, tenants and other stakeholder. YHN is proactive in this regard. It uses its website, printed material and a variety of community events to publicise and celebrate equality and other achievements

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- YHN needs to consider whether to develop its own cohesion strategy based on the specific needs of a large housing management organisation. A range of cohesion issues are well understood in practical terms (settlement of refugees and asylum seekers and the behaviour of some young people). But, it is not clear how practice is more widely guided by the NCC Cohesion Strategy.
- Improvement the level of detail about equality and cohesion on the YHN website

**Estimated Score 3/4**

**6.10 The organisation ensures that contractors, commissioned services and grant receivers regularly review their services and access to them to ensure they continue to be appropriate and accessible**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- YHN uses the NCC prequalification questionnaire, which has an equalities section. There is a good working relationship with the maintenance contractor City Build, which has strong equality credentials and has clearly done a great deal of work to ensure good customer service and equality in service delivery.

### **Areas for improvement/review:**

- The Equality section of the PQQ is out of date and refers to organisations that no longer exist. The questions are derived from a set that is probably twenty years old. Although the EHRC is still empowered to do formal investigations, it does them rarely and no longer in a way that the Commission for Racial Equality did them in the 1980s and early 1990s (CLPS produced a report for the CRE almost ten years ago, which we can provide and which will support this comment if you need further information.) This part of the PQQ needs updating!
- Although the contract with City Build appears to have delivered equality improvement and YHN has (for the most part) sound procurement documentation, it is not clear what monitoring and reporting there is on other contracts.
- Should YHN change its maintenance contractor to one without the public sector background of City Build, it will have to put a major effort into ensuring that the new contractor delivers the same level of equal customer service as City Build does currently.

### **Estimated Score 2/3**

#### **6.11 Work is being undertaken to promote equality of opportunity in terms of the participation of under-represented groups including elected representatives**

##### **YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has made major and persistent efforts to involve tenants through a range of initiatives and has developed a systematic approach to tenant capacity building. Customer representation is constitutionally built in at

Board level. It has set out and action plan to diversify and make representation more equal. Efforts are guided by two important documents: the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy and the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Compact

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Continue existing efforts and developments!

**Estimated score 4**

**6.12 The quality of community relations and harassment and hate crimes are monitored and analysed regularly. Appropriate action is taken to address the issues that have been identified.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has a specialist Anti Social Behaviour Team that has as one of its improvement priorities to develop the experience of the team in dealing with Hate Crime and Domestic Violence. Evidence was provided during interviews of a substantial effort in both the areas of domestic violence and hate crime. YHN facilitates the City wide harassment reporting system (ARCH)

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Pursue developments in line with existing improvement plans. Interviews provided evidence that both domestic violence and hate crime in YHN properties were taken seriously and structures have been set up to report and taken actions. This might be an appropriate subject for a more detailed equality impact assessment that expands on work previously done and explores in detail the equality dimensions of domestic violence and/or antisocial behaviour.

**Estimated score 4**

## **Community engagement and satisfaction**

### **6.13 Community engagement structures are working efficiently and effectively**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- The range of means that it uses to engage customers is working well. These are clearly documented in the self-assessment. The Tenant and leaseholder involvement Annual report 2007-2008 details clearly how engagement /involvement is actually working. YHN takes a self-critical review of success in this areas and keeps it under review

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Continue existing efforts and developments!

**Estimated score 4**

### **6.14 Involvement and consultation influences and informs equality priorities and feedback is given to those consulted.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It uses a range of mechanisms to involve and consult customers. The self assessment indicates that:
- Customers have been involved with the generation of project priorities and feedback mechanisms are clearly indicated.

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- The way in which equality priorities in are formulated could be more effectively documented and in particular reviewed

**Estimated score 3**

**6.15 Consultation influences and informs equality priorities in relation to vulnerable and marginalised groups and feedback is given to those consulted.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It takes consultation with vulnerable/hard to reach people seriously. This is shown by the Hard to hear report that says:

*The involvement of hard to hear communities is crucial if we are going to deliver services which meet the needs of all our tenants. By offering a wide range of involvement opportunities and support mechanisms we try to ensure that involvement is accessible to all (p.1)*

The report details a number of initiatives that have been taken in order inform and generate priorities for hard to hear people

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- This policy area should be reviewed and thought needs to given to the relationship between people belonging to equality categories and those regarded as vulnerable. Disability/ learning difficulties and vulnerability are clearly cross referenced. But, a review needs to consider whether members of other equality categories are vulnerable in other ways

**Estimated score 3/4**

**6.16 Partners work together to balance diverse, but sometimes conflicting interests in the locality**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It recognises that the distribution/allocation of social housing is one of these potential sources and elsewhere in the documentation provided that the current economic downturn may aggravate the situation. It recognises also that choice based lettings could generate ethnic and religious segregation. There is good evidence from both documentation and interviews that YHN has worked very hard on potential conflicts interest. In particular work with asylum seekers seems to represent current good practice

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Analysis of perceived and real conflict of interest could to be fuller and more explicit at the corporate level and may require the development of a dedicated cohesion strategy by YHN.

**Estimated score 3**

**Responsive services and Customer Care**

**6.17 A set of equality outcomes/ objectives/goals have been produced at service/unit level to meet the needs of identified equality target groups, and those who are most vulnerable.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- Its business units have extensive equality improvement work programmes. There are detailed action plans with actions specified. It is clear from both documentation and interviews that there is a strong and real focus on meeting customer needs. At local level there seems to be a well defined focus on vulnerable tenants
- The Preventing Evictions Protocol explicitly states that:

*social landlords will meet with those support agencies to work together to support the person to remain in their home. (p.3)*

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- We had some problems with working out how areas of work were decided on and prioritised. This may be simply a presentational issue but it would have been helpful if the source of the actions contained in the work programmes was specified (or example: derived from an EINA, coming from corporate priorities, from tenants' requests or complaints). The way in which business unit equality improvement priorities are decided may be a focus for a formal assessment
- If has not done so already YHN needs to develop a corporate approach to defining what combinations of characteristics makes a person vulnerable in specific circumstances. This relates to comments made at 6.2 and 6.3 above
- Is there reporting on how the Preventing Evictions Protocol has operated?

**Estimated score 3**

**6.18 Appropriate resources have been allocated and action has been taken to mitigate adverse impact and improve equality outcomes where shortfalls have been identified**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- Improvement actions have been derived from EINAs and other sources. Business unit work plans for equality improvement are detailed in the self assessment. The Equality and Diversity Project Board supported this process between 2006 and the end of 2009

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- See 6.17

**Estimated score 3**

**6.19 Mechanisms are in place to ensure that service equality objectives are delivered by contractors and providers through contract management, and that they are monitored properly**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- See comments at 6.10 above

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- See comments at 6.10 above

**Estimated score 2/3**

**6.20 Equality and cohesion objectives are monitored regularly by the Board and management team(s)**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has produced some good quality monitoring reports. Reports are made to the Board very six months. Interviews show that service delivery staff are of the importance of monitoring outcomes. It is on the way to developing a strong equality evaluation, monitoring and review culture.

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Systematically develop and implement monitoring processes across a wider range of service outcomes

**Estimated score 3**

**6.21 The identified needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups are addressed and services are designed to ensure that customers and citizens are treated with dignity and respect.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- See 6.15 above

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Much of the good practice the YHN engages in meeting the needs of vulnerable people is implicit. Reporting should specify what groups or categories of people are considered to be vulnerable and in what way they are vulnerable and how their needs are met.
- It is not clear to the how the Housing Register, for example, identifies people in housing need as vulnerable, how these needs are planned for, nor how properties are allocated to them.

**Estimated score 3**

**6.22 Human rights issues are considered and addressed when delivering services to customers and clients.**

Human Rights legislation is referenced in the self assessment, but its implications for YHN do not seem to be discussed further.<sup>3</sup>

**Estimated score (unable to score)**

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<sup>3</sup> The equality team at the IDeA does not appear to provide guidance on this element. It is also not clear if this element requires YHN to be 'compliant' with the Human Rights Act

**6.23 Access to and appropriateness of services is monitored regularly by the Board and management team(s)**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

See 6.20 above

**Areas for improvement/review:**

See 6.20 above

**Estimated score 3**

**Modern and diverse workforce**

**6.24 The equality aspects of the workforce strategy are implemented and monitored**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- The 2006 HR Strategy contains detailed workforce monitoring data. A detailed range of employment equality improvement measures are detailed in the self assessment and in other plans. There is a good range of documentation with equality improvement content

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Need for systematic and detailed account of current work

**Estimated score (insufficient information)**

**6.25 Employment objectives have been set based in internal monitoring staff consultation and the assessment of the local market and barriers**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It is currently undertaking a systematic review of Recruitment Methodology

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Need for systematic and detailed account of current work

**Estimated score (insufficient information)**

**6.26 YHN regularly monitors, analyses and publishes employment data to fulfill statutory duties**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It claims that it monitors and publishes employment data and has set out its intentions for fulfilling its statutory duties

**Areas for improvement/review:**

*We have achieved our target for the number of YHN staff from an ethnic minority within the top 5% of staff and the number of YHN staff who have a disability within the top 5% of staff. However levels are not representative of the community. (Performance Monitoring Report for April 2008 to March 2009:15)*

- Need for detailed information to support the above claim

**Estimated score (insufficient information)**

**6.27 All employment procedures have been impact assessed and action has been taken to mitigate adverse impact and promote equality outcomes.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- Employment procedures are subjected to EINA in line with policy. There some worthwhile equality improvement actions detailed in the employment EINA
- A range of other actions are reported in the self-assessment

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- The results from the EINA as reported in the self-assessment cover a very narrow range of employment concerns. More documentation required to support claims about equality improvement action.

**Estimated score 2**

**6.28 YHN has made significant progress on its equal pay review and is working towards reaching agreement with unions.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- According to the self assessment a job evaluation plan has been agreed. According to the Achieving Level GAP analysis YHN is going through phase 2 of the Single Status process, which will be reported at the beginning next year.

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- This is an area where urgent work is required because most local authorities have completed this work and are implementing equal pay agreements. No mention is made in the GAP analysis of discussions with the appropriate unions

**Estimated score 1/2**

**6.29 It delivers a range of learning and development opportunities to support Board and officers to deliver equality outcomes.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- It has a well developed equality and diversity training programme and that it has delivered training to support its equality objectives. Training and development support has specifically been undertaken to improve equality planning. This has including EIA training. It has provided training that

meets specific requirements for meeting the needs of priority groups  
Training is provide for both staff and board members

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Monitor outcomes and evaluate training development support to establish that the work has achieved changes in equality outcomes at service delivery level; for example, improved SMARTer equality targets and actions.
- Evaluate Board development training and ensure that future training meets requirements of changing policy and legal framework for equalities.

**Estimated score 4**

**6.30 Harassment and bullying incidents are monitored and analysed regularly. Appropriate action is taken to address the issues that have been identified.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

It has a Dignity and Respect Work Policy that deals with harassment and bullying. The policy also provides guidance about logging and reporting incidents

**Areas for improvement/review:**

It is not clear how or whether the policy is monitored or reported

**Estimated score 2/3**

**6.31 Equality implications inform the setting of objectives in management and individual appraisals.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- There is a detailed Performance Appraisal handbook. This is supported by a detailed Dignity and respect at work policy. There is also a draft policy that deals with assessment of capability, containing detailed equality guidelines

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- There is no mention of equality and diversity in the Performance Appraisal Hand book, so it is difficult to tell what part (if any) they play in the setting of individual staff work plans. At the very least this needs to be clarified before a formal assessment.

**Estimated score 2**

**6.32 Staff are engaged positively in service transformation and in developing new roles and ways of working.**

**YHN can demonstrate that:**

- Staff interviewed as part of the evaluation demonstrated a high level of commitment to equality and diversity and making to improve equality outcomes
- They are also highly motivated to understanding customers and meeting their specific needs. Staff felt that they were informed about the direction that YHN was moving in and what it was striving to achieve.

**Areas for improvement/review:**

- Continuation of current positive developments

**Estimated score 4**

## **Conclusion**

It is our view that YHN is working at the Achieving Level of the Equality Framework for Local Government in four out of the five main areas. The exception is area 5 'Modern and Diverse Workforce' where there is still considerable work to be done. The main other area that requires attention is procurement/contracting. Customer profiling is good but can be taken to a higher and more useful level. Making improvements will underpin further service improvement.

Since the formation of the ALMO, a vast amount of work has been done on equalities and diversity. It is evident to us that the leadership of the organisation wants the YHN to translate its headline values into everyday practice. There is a genuine commitment to involving customers in meaningful ways. This has been confirmed in comments by frontline staff and people from the customer groups that we met.

YHN has undertaken two GAP analyses, one for the Developing and one for the Achieving level. The Equality Framework is being used as a guiding performance measure and it is being used properly, as a tool to mainstream equality and diversity.

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