

1. Introduction

This is the third Race Equality Scheme for Cheshire Probation Area. It may be read in conjunction with the Area's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy, which is an overarching document that demonstrates the Area's strategic intent. The Strategy also provides the context for the Area's Race, Disability and Gender Equality Schemes. The Scheme shows how we will be tackling race inequality, as well as meeting the Race Equality Duties (RED).

A key focus for the Service is promoting anti-discriminatory practice, promoting respect for everyone and modelling pro-social behaviour. More than meeting legal duties, it is critical that equality and diversity is at the heart of all Area activity. The Board and Senior Managers know that the lead for this must come, and be supported, from the top of the organisation. The Area is committed to addressing race inequality and the Scheme shows what the Area has been doing to promote race equality, eliminate harassment and promote equality of opportunity between everyone regardless of their ethnic origins.

During the last six years, the Area has made sure that we are able to assess and monitor the impact of our work in order to highlight any negative impact, identify actions to tackling equality, and review how well we are meeting those actions. These, along with resources to support this work have ensured a firm base from which to launch this new Race Equality Scheme. Many of the actions in the Scheme have been developed through the active involvement of the consultation panel of BME people (local Race Equality Council's) and others, who were asked to say what they thought we should be focusing on for the next three years.

We are very pleased to present this Scheme, which sets out the actions that Cheshire Probation Area will take to meet this duty to address race equality.



LESLIE ROBINSON
BOARD CHAIR



STEVE COLLETT
CHIEF OFFICER

2. Comments relating to the Race Equality Scheme

This Scheme is a living document and Cheshire Probation Area welcomes comments and suggestions from its partners, community groups, stakeholders and other interested parties. We will strive to build on strengths and improve weaknesses year on year to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnicity.

The Scheme will be formally monitored on a quarterly basis in the Equality and Diversity Action Group (EDAG) and the Diversity Panel (that includes representatives from the Board, Senior Management, union and community BME and disability groups) with an annual report to the Board. Each annual review of the outcomes of the Scheme will be published in a variety of media and will inform subsequent years' action plans in taking forward our race equality duty.

Reviews will be published in the Area staff and stakeholder newsletter EPIC, and the community newsletter, which goes out to all the organisations on the Area Directory of Resources, including local Women's, BME and disability organisations, as well as to staff, stakeholders and partners. Reviews will also be available on the Area's web-site, www.cheshireprobation.org.uk, which is fully accessible.

We welcome any comments that you may wish to make about this Scheme and action plan. Should you wish to do so please contact Kim Thornden, the Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) Interventions, Equality and Diversity or Annemarie Theilade, Diversity Manager at:

Beech House,
Park West,
Sealand Rd,
Chester
CH1 4RJ
Tel: 01244 394500
Fax: 01244 394507

We will either respond in full or acknowledge your comments in writing within 7 working days. Should we need to respond further we will let you know in the letter when we will be able to address the matter raised. All complaints that are made will be monitored.

3. Key priorities for the Area 2008 - 2011

- 3.1 The action plan at Section 9 shows the issues that the Area will focus on for the three years of this Race Equality Scheme, as well as who will be responsible for completing the actions. It shows the long-term goals and how it is intended that the actions will develop over years two and three.
- 3.2 Actions in the Scheme have been developed through a series of meetings and communications with an external consultative panel of BME people, with BME staff and others, including the Diversity Panel and the Equality and Diversity Action Group (EDAG).
- 3.3 As with all the Area Equality Schemes, and the overarching Diversity and Equality Strategy, this Scheme will be reviewed quarterly by the EDAG (see Section 2 above) and the Diversity Panel. An annual review will be submitted to the Board via the Diversity Panel, and will inform the development of actions for subsequent years.
- 3.4 The most critical priorities for the Area are:

For Year 1: 2008 - 2009

- To develop further the effectiveness of the BME consultation Panel.
- To find effective ways to impact assess functions.
- To have effective interventions for offenders convicted of racially motivated offenders in order to reduce the risk of further offending.
- To provide Diversity Awareness and Challenging Discrimination training for all staff.
- To develop the use of the Service Level Agreement Diversity Grids as a tool to identify and address negative impact.
- To ensure that agencies / organisations working with the Area can evidence how they take forward race equality in their work.

For Year 2: 2009 - 2010 and Year 3: 2010 - 2011

- These will be determined by progress made in Year 1 and developments during that period.

4. Cheshire Probation Area

4.1 Who we are

4.1.1 Cheshire Probation Area (The Area) is part of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) and covers a wide geographical area including Cheshire, Halton and Warrington (see map at appendix 3). It is one of 42 Probation Areas mirroring the same boundaries as the Police Authorities and the Crown Prosecution Service. Its statutory aims are:

- ✓ protection of the public;
- ✓ reduction in re-offending;
- ✓ proper punishment of offenders;
- ✓ rehabilitation of offenders; and
- ✓ ensuring offenders' awareness of the effects of crime on victims of crime and the public.

The business priorities for the Service and the Area are:

1. **Public Protection** – risk assessment quality, learning from Serious Further Offences (SFOs), Parole Reports, etc.
2. **Service Delivery** – Offender Management, Interventions, Compliance and Enforcement.
3. **Managing People** – Workforce planning, staff development, employee relations and reducing sickness absence.
4. **Diversity** – Ensuring compliance with equality legislation.
5. **Business Development** – Development of local commissioning, Best Value, VFM.

These will be key when reviewing and prioritising actions to meet the requirements of the Race Equality Duty.

4.1.2. The Area has six offices where offenders report for supervision, to attend Accredited Programmes (group work) and other work related to addressing their offending behaviour. Some of the Unpaid Work (Community Punishment) offices are based at the same sites. The Area has 2 Approved Premises and staff also work out of the 3 Crown and 6 Magistrates' courts. A number of other staff are seconded to work in the Prison Service in HMP Risley, HMP Styal

and Thorn Cross Young Offenders' Institution, and with the Youth Offending Teams.

4.2 What we do

- 4.2.1. The Cheshire Probation Service, as a key criminal justice agency, plays an integral part in working directly with, and having an influence on, work with offenders. Other key criminal justice partners are Police, Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Her Majesty's Court Services, Youth Offending Teams (YOTS) and HM Prison Service.

Cheshire Probation Area is a law enforcement agency delivering community orders, and supervising and working with offenders according to the terms set by the Court and Parole Board.

The headquarters of National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is based in the Ministry of Justice, from where the Director answers directly to Ministers. The 36 Local Probation Boards and 6 Local Probation Trusts deliver the NOMS' business, aims and objectives in the local areas and by doing so are directly responding and working to central government aims, specifically:

Aim 3: To ensure the effective delivery of justice;

Aim 4: To deliver custodial and community sentences to reduce re-offending and protect the public;

Aim 7: To support strong and active communities in which people from all ethnic backgrounds are valued and participate on equal terms.

Within Cheshire Area, at any one time, nearly 4050 offenders are subject through the courts to community sentences or are on post-release licenses from prisons and supervised in the community; in addition staff prepare approximately 3500 court reports (reports submitted to assist sentencing) for Magistrates' and Crown Courts. (Appendix 3 shows the 'key processes' of Cheshire Area.) Cheshire Area aims to ensure that all services – to victims, offenders, the public and stakeholders (see Appendix 2) – are designed and delivered with a focus on individual need and the needs of the diverse communities served.

- 4.2.2. The Area works with offenders from across the whole geographical area, aiming to provide a fair and equitable service that meets individual needs.

- 4.2.4 The Area also has a statutory duty to work with those victims of sexual or violent offences where the offender is sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment or more. The purpose of this contact is to keep each victim informed of the various key stages of the prisoner's sentence, and to seek their views, in relation to the impact upon them, of the offence. We offer the opportunity to voice concerns and contribute to proposals relating to the offender's eventual release, this may include arrangements for the victim's protection.
- 4.2.5 In addition to the work outlined above the Area is an employer of staff and it purchases and commissions services.

4.3 Cheshire Probation Area's commitment to diversity

- 4.3.1 The Area is working to embed and mainstream equality and diversity in everything it does and has put resources into enabling this to happen. This is reflected in having a Diversity Manager and supporting this at every level of the organisation from the Board through SMT, middle management and staff who are in EDAG and in the diverse staff support networks.
- 4.3.2 The Area has a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Strategy, which overarches the three Equality Schemes and identifies actions relating to other diversity strands that sit outside the equality duties. The Panel reviews the progress of the Strategy and Schemes. The Chief Officer, senior managers, Chair of the Board and of the Panel, as well as the other Board members, engage with local communities of Cheshire publicly demonstrating their commitment to diversity principles. The Area also holds consultation events with BME people around policy and practice issues and will continue to increase involvement with BME organisations.
- 4.3.3 All new staff attend the Area staff induction which covers diversity issues including: race equality and the other equality duties; rights, responsibilities and equalities law; understanding the Area's expectations about behaviour at work including anti-bullying and -harassment, discrimination and its impact on people. Staff are also provided with packs of information to support and reinforce this learning. From 2008 all staff will attend mandatory diversity awareness and challenging discrimination training.
- 4.3.4 The Area is also developing an electronic resource for staff that will provide instantly accessible information about diverse issues to assist staff working with offenders from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds,

cultures and religions. This information includes contacts for different BME voluntary organisations with which staff can link to assist and support offenders in considering how to change their offending behaviour.

- 4.3.5 All offenders are asked at court if they have any relevant specific needs that need to be taken account of or could be a barrier to them completing the Order made by the courts. This is recorded on a form (PREM1) and on CRAMS (Case Records and Management System), to ensure that anyone working with that offender can know. Offenders are given an induction into the Area in their first meeting, which lays out the requirements of their Order, behaviours the Area expects including that discriminatory behaviour won't be tolerated and how they can make a complaint. Any offender for whom English is an additional language will have an interpreter present to ensure their understanding.

4.4 How the Scheme will support Area business

- 4.4.1 The Scheme will help the Area to identify how effectively service provision fairly meets the appropriate needs of service users from all ethnic backgrounds to enable all offenders to:
- be able to fairly access education, training and employment opportunities;
 - reduce re-offending; and,
 - be provided with effective support to comply with court orders.
- 4.4.2 The Area already monitors many aspects of service delivery and staff employment by age, sex, and ethnicity and is developing disability monitoring of service users and staff. That information and further development will enable the Area to:
- understand and remove barriers to equal access in Area policies, practices and procedures;
 - assess and address where there is multiple discrimination;
 - achieve a more representative workforce;
 - attract, recruit and retain staff with the relevant skills and experience;
 - appropriately support and value all staff;
 - improve staff morale and productivity;
 - improve staff management;
 - identify and develop good practice;
 - avoid claims of unlawful discrimination;

- develop effective partnerships with a range of different voluntary, community and faith sector organisations; and,
- ensure purchasing and commissioning of services reflects race equality and anti-discrimination practice.