

There is a general feeling that Solihull's population is far more diverse than statistics suggest, particularly in the daytime, with people travelling into the borough to work, study and shop.

To help local Third Sector groups keep up with these changing demands, SUSTAIN is offering free support to help keep your services accessible.

Why it matters

Better engagement with and understanding of the demography of Solihull is set to become ever-more crucial as national government policy pushes for all organisations wishing to run public services to apply equality standards to their work.

If you are planning to get involved in commissioning processes, you will need to have at least a basic understanding of the single equality framework and be actively making sure you are reaching out to marginalised groups, and have the evidence to back this up.

Are you ready for the Single Equality Framework?

Many organisations will be familiar with the 'seven strands of diversity' – **age, gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, transgender, disability and faith**. These have been part of the legislative framework for ensuring equality in policies and practices for a number of years.

Fast approaching is the Single Equalities Bill, which is an evolution of this framework. Each individual is a combination of these seven strands, and the concept of Single Equality reflects the need to consider each person as a whole.

As service providers and employers committed to equality we should be preparing to:

- 1. Implement a Single Equality Scheme fitting the new legislation which replaces current equality and diversity policy**, once the new bill has been passed. The new scheme/policy should be developed around the current social make-up, with an action plan to reach out to whole of the community.
- 2. Put in place a framework for recruitment that is proactive in ensuring our workforce reflects the community we serve.** There is also a need for effective measurement which provides evidence to external bodies that equality has been practiced when recruiting for the post.
- 3. Ensure that staff have a good understanding of the concept of single equality and a basic understanding of cultural practices**, eliminating any ignorance and preconceptions about practices and beliefs.

How SUSTAIN can help

Gulbag Singh, SUSTAIN's Community Cohesion Manager, is available to offer:

- **Cultural awareness training** – free sessions exploring faith and culture in Asian communities and providing best practice for dealing with service users from different backgrounds
- **Advice, information and guidance** – free one-to-one support with equality issues and improving your organisation's inclusiveness and accessibility

For more information call **0121 711 3148** or email **diversity@solihull-sustain.org.uk**.