

# Parker House closure - Equalities Analysis November 2013



1. A full equalities analysis of the asset rationalisation programme was undertaken in February 2012. The report analysed the asset rationalisation proposals being considered by Mayor & Cabinet, including community facilities. The Equalities Analysis looked in detail at the impact of the closure of Parker House. Extracts relevant to Parker House are detailed in appendix 1.
2. The equalities analysis outlined the demographic make-up of users of the organisations present in Parker House as at February 2012 in order to understand the potential impact of the closure. This is the most recent demographic data available. There is not considered to have been any significant change in the profile of the users of these organisations since this time.
3. The equalities analysis found that closing Parker House would likely have an impact on a number of clients using the services provided; particularly BME (and specifically Black African and Caribbean) clients. The analysis does note, however, that the proposal was to close the building from which these organisations operate and not close the organisations themselves. It recognises that there will be a need for these organisations to relocate, and that alternative accommodation would mitigate against any negative impact.
4. The equalities analysis states that officers in community services will provide advice and reasonable assistance to aid the transition of these organisations.
5. Community Services officers have been working with the organisations over the last 18 months to offer advice, identify alternative premises and generally support the organisations in question to relocate. This support has included:
  - Meetings with the organisations to understand their needs and budget
  - Advice around alternative approaches such as sharing facilities and downsizing space requirements to widen opportunities available to them
  - Potential alternative premises have been identified and suggested to the organisations
  - Information on the council's commercial property database and own advertised lettings

## Appendix 1: Extracts from the Asset Rationalisation Programme Equalities Analysis, February 2012

### 1. Introduction and summary

- 1.1 The aim of the Council's asset rationalisation programme is to ensure that the Council's buildings and other assets are fit for purpose. The delivery of the programme is also intended to make savings of £1m from the revenue costs of the

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corporate estate between 2012 and 2014.

- 1.2 Work to refine and finalise proposals for the rationalisation and reorganisation of the corporate estate has been in progress since outline proposals were presented to Mayor and Cabinet in November 2011.
- 1.3 As an integral part of the development of plans for the programme, officers have been considering equalities implications.
- 1.4 This report sets out the equalities analysis of the current proposals in order to inform the wider decision making process around the rationalisation programme objectives.
- 1.5 The report finds that, although the analysis process identified the potential for adverse impact in a number of areas, the recommendation to proceed with rationalisation proposals can be continued, taking into consideration the overall objectives of the programme and accounting relevant mitigating actions for adverse impacts.

## 2. The Equality Act

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 became law in October 2010. The Act aims to streamline all previous anti-discrimination laws within a Single Act. The new public sector Equality Duty, which is part of the Equality Act 2010, came into effect on the 5 April 2011.
- 2.2 The new equality legislation covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. It also applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only in respect to eliminating unlawful discrimination and only in relation to employment. For more information on the protected characteristics, refer to Appendix 1.
- 2.3 The Equality Duty has three aims. It requires public bodies (including local authorities) when making decisions to have due regard to the need to:
  - I. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
  - II. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
  - III. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- 2.4 Lewisham's commitment to promoting equalities is held in partnership and at the highest level. Shaping our future – Lewisham's Sustainable Community Strategy establishes an overarching principle for all activity in the borough of 'Reducing inequality – narrowing the gap in outcomes for citizens.'
- 2.5 This commitment is reiterated in the Council's corporate priority to ensure that all of its services are delivered in an efficient, effective and equitable manner to meet the needs of the community.

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### 3. Community Premises

- 3.1 The premises at Parker House are used by local community organisations, who have submitted information relating to their clients and service users in February 2012. The organisations affected are the Lewisham refugee Network, Capital Training and Development Network and Action for Community Development. While the first focuses on a specific group within the community, refugees, the other organisations deal with varied members of the local community and offer a range of courses. Currently the groups do not collect all data relating to the protected characteristics specified in the Equality Act but what data they do collect has been included in this equalities assessment.
- 3.2 Lewisham Refugee Network (LRN) has stated that in terms of gender the majority of their clients are women who have child care responsibilities or are single parents. Their children go to school around the area and the proximity of the premises to the schools means parents can easily pick up their children from school after accessing LRN services. Some of the service users bring their children and use the crèche facility in the centre. Overall 79% of LRN service users attending Parker House are female. In light of this the impact of closing Parker House would have a negative impact on the female users and relocation to another area may prove difficult.
- 3.3 As the organisation focuses on refugees, the majority of their service users come from a BME and Asian backgrounds with some from the middle east. The predominant number of users are Somali, Vietnamese and French African; with the remainder coming from Sri Lanka and the Middle East and Arabic Countries. Studies undertaken by LRN show that almost 76% of refugees living in Lewisham are located in the north of the borough, especially in New Cross and Deptford. Parker House's location in Deptford allows refugees easy access to LRN's services.
- 3.4 Capital Training and Development Network (CTDN) provide support and training for other voluntary groups in the borough. They work with a range of community and voluntary organisations offering services to a diverse range of service users, including ESOL training; Employability Skills Training; Crèche provision and the premises is a Cambridge University ESOL examination centre. 68% of service users are women, especially for ESOL training, which aims to improve their employability prospects and hence become more economically independent. This is roughly in line with figure for adult learners in Lewisham for which 79% users are women.
- 3.5 The ethnicity of clients using CTDN are slightly higher for BME groups than the local areas demographics. 66% of users are Black or Black British which contrasts with 40% of the local community and 45% of adult learners from the same background. Similarly White British and White Other services users are under represented with 21% of clients compared to 44% of the local community and 37% of adult learners. Asian service users account for 13% of clients compared to 3.7% of the local population.
- 3.6 In terms of age the CTDN deal mostly with adult learners as their focus is on employability skills and the voluntary sector. 63% of clients are aged between 36 to 55, with only 28% between 16 and 35, and 9% over 55. This is comparable to the area demographics where the 30 to 59 age range account for 40% of the overall community and are the largest age cohort in the area, followed by the 15 to 29 and the over 59 age groups.

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- 3.7 Action for Community Development (AfCD) are a community capacity building organisation who aim to develop members of the community to bring about social and community improvement. Their focus is on the Black and Minority Ethnic community, who have migrated to the UK and those settled here on low incomes. They support the transition from dependency to productive sustainable living by offering comprehensive services to the BME community in the form of advice, information, casework, advocacy, counselling and training.
- 3.8 As the focus of this organisation is capacity building for BME members of the community, their clients are made up with a larger proportion of those ethnic groups. BME ethnicities make up 81% of the total clients. Of that number Black African service users making up the highest individual user group with 34% of clients followed by Black Caribbean and mixed Black groups with 14% and 10% of clients respectively. White and White British make up 19% of the clients using the service. Compared to the local area where BME groups make up 55% of the population, BME groups and Black African users make up a higher proportion of clients.
- 3.9 In gender terms there is an almost even split between male and female clients, with 53% and 47% respectively. This is broadly similar to the ward statistics which show a male/female population of 51% to 49% respectively. Regarding age, the greatest number of service users fall within the 26-45 age group with 66% of users coming from that age range. The 46-55 account for 16%, the 16-25 age range for 11% and the over 55 for 8%. These are proportionally similar in to the age breakdown of the local population though the individual percentages of population differ. The 30-44 age range are the highest population with 28% in the local community, followed by the 15-29 age range, 45-59, 60-74 and 75+.
- 3.10 Closing Parker House would be likely to have a negative impact on a number of clients using the services provided. Overall there are a higher number of BME and specifically Black African and Caribbean clients using the service from Parker House than reflected in the local area. This is due to the nature of the services offered and their target client groups being refugees and members of the BME community. Completely removing the services from the area would have a disproportionate impact on these ethnic groups.
- 3.11 There are a marginally higher number of women who use the services offered at Parker House than the ward profile. These figures broadly align with the numbers of women in adult education across the borough, which accounts for large number in education at the centre and also using the crèche facilities. Whilst female users would be more affected by the closure of Parker House, in terms of participation in adult learning women would not be significantly disadvantaged. Similarly, in terms of age there an adverse impact on clients using the service but as the numbers are broadly proportional to the ward demographics there will not be at a significant disadvantage for this protected characteristic.
- 3.12 The aim of the proposal is to close the building from which these organisations operate because it is not currently fit for purpose. The intention is not to close the organisations themselves. It will be necessary for these groups to relocate and officers will work with them to help identify alternative premises. Overall there would be a negative effect on the groups using these premises. However, the provision of alternative accommodation would provide mitigation against this impact.

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Equalities category	Assessment of potential impact – (positive/negative/nil)	Reason for this assessment
Gender	Negative/medium	79% of users of the Lewisham Refugee Network are women. 68% of CTDN users are women
Race	Negative/medium	Refugee network exists to support members of the refugee community – all are part of protected groups A disproportionately high number of CTDN clients are from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic groups. AfCD users from the black community
Disability	Negative/low	On average 16% of users identified themselves as being disabled, lower than the service average of 22% and similar to ward demographics for each Library.
Age	Negative/medium	Under 18s represented an average of 44% of service users in the five libraries compared to a service average of 39%. In addition some libraries had a larger proportion of older users than the service average. Overall this area was rated to have a medium impact due to the larger proportion of younger and older users who would be affected.
Sexual orientation	Negative/low	5% of service users identified themselves as being LGBT, in line with the service average of 6%.
Religion and belief	Negative/low	The religion of service users for each individual library was in proportion to the service average which in itself is similar to the ward profiles in each area. Roughly 60% of users identified as Christian, 30% stated no religion with Muslim service users accounting for around 5%.
Pregnancy/ Maternity	NA	NA
Gender Reassignment	NA	NA
Marriage/ Civil Partnership	NA	NA

### Further Action

Officers in Community Services to provide advice and reasonable assistance to aid the transition from Parker House.

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### 4. Overall assessment

4.1 Following the scoping of the assessment and identification of potential areas for discrimination, analysis of data and research and consultation, the assessment has checked whether, in any of the areas identified:-

- there is unlawful discrimination
- there is an adverse impact on one or more equality categories
- the service fails to promote equality of access or opportunity
- some equality categories are, or may, be excluded from service benefits
- some equality categories are disadvantaged

4.2 The overall assessment is that the services covered in this assessment do not discriminate. Where adverse impacts have been identified they have been highlighted and mitigating actions have been proposed, in the context of wider decision making processes. There are also opportunities now and in the future to take actions which will ensure better access to service, and to ensure that services make a real contribution toward promoting equal opportunities through ensuring mobility and access for all.

### 5. Equality analysis: proposed actions

#### Community premises

5.1 Further work will be required to ensure that the users of Council buildings proposed for closure will be able to find suitable alternative office accommodation. Officers in Community Services to work with third sector organisations to provide advice, support and reasonable assistance to aid the transition from Parker House before its closure.

## Appendix

### 1. Equalities analysis team

Kplom Lotsu	Project Manager Asset Strategy & Development
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### 2. Protected characteristics

Available from the EHRC site online at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/new-equality-act-guidance/protected-characteristics-definitions/>

The following characteristics are protected characteristics

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;

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- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

### **Age**

Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).

### **Disability**

A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

### **Gender reassignment**

The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

### **Marriage and civil partnership**

Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

### **Race**

Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

### **Religion and belief**

Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

### **Sex**

A man or a woman.

### **Sexual orientation**

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes

More in-depth definitions of these protected characteristics are available the Office of Public Sector Information website