

Appendix G

Equalities Analysis Assessment Voluntary Sector Accommodation Implementation Plan

Name of proposal	Voluntary Sector Accommodation Implementation Plan
Lead officer	Liz Dart (Head of Cultural and Community Development Service)
Other stakeholders	
Start date of Equality Analysis	12 June 2015
End date of Equality Analysis	22 June 2015

1. Background

This document is the Equalities Analysis Assessment for the proposed Voluntary Sector Accommodation Implementation Plan. It considers how the proposed plan might affect different groups in the community and assesses whether these effects are positive or negative. It also outlines the activity that the Council will take to ensure that equal opportunities are promoted and that no group is disproportionately discriminated against.

2. Voluntary Sector Accommodation Plan

Currently the Council supports a number of VCS organisations to access certain facilities (i.e. Council owned assets). There are currently 50 Council assets within the community premises portfolio including 23 community centres, 3 sports grounds and 24 buildings housing VCS organisations. In addition there are other properties that house VCS organisations that are not part of the community premises portfolio but are within the Council's estate.

Across these assets occupancy levels vary greatly, though the average of approximately 30% occupancy within the community centres portfolio, shows that there is real potential to manage usage more effectively. Additionally there are currently a wide range of different lease and management agreements for occupants. This situation is potentially inequitable for organisations and makes the management and maintenance of these assets more complicated.

As part of the Council's fundamental review of all its budgets, it has been looking at the costs of maintaining its range of assets and the potential income that these assets could generate for the Council that could be used to fund other services. In order to release substantial revenue savings and therefore safeguard frontline service delivery, the Council is in the process of reducing the number of its public buildings. This work has already commenced with the transfer of staff working in the Catford complex into Laurence House, and the changed use of the Town Hall.

In April 2015 Mayor and Cabinet considered the outcome of a three month consultation with the voluntary and community sector on a new framework for the council's use of assets to

support the sector. This framework was agreed by Mayor and Cabinet and sets out four categories for VCS assets as follows:

Sole occupancy of a building (not at full market rate) – This would be a building, wholly or predominantly utilised by one VCS organisation. In order for an organisation to have sole occupancy of a building it would need to demonstrate a need for specialist facilities that could not be provided elsewhere and/or within a shared facility. The organisation would need to demonstrate that it can't afford full market rate. The organisation would also need to be delivering services that meet our priorities.

Voluntary and Community Sector Hub – This would be a shared building with all inclusive affordable rents. This would be the preferred category for organisations that are providing services that meet our priorities (and cannot demonstrate the need for specialist facilities above). The Hubs will provide office and meeting space. Activity space where appropriate and possible may also be provided, otherwise this would need to be hired elsewhere.

Community Centre – This would be a neighbourhood based facility with activity space that is predominantly geared towards providing services at a neighbourhood level. Community Centres currently have a range of different terms and conditions, some are on full repairing leases, some directly provided and others managed by Premises Management Organisations (PMOs) but with Repairs & Maintenance provided by the Council. Many community centres are currently underutilised and we would be looking to rationalise the number of centres taking into account what other community facilities are available in the area. As the number of centres is reduced we would work to reduce the overall financial burden to the Council and put in place equitable arrangements across the portfolio.

Sole occupancy of a building at full market rate – This would be for larger VCS organisations that can afford to pay full market rates, for those that are not delivering services that meet our priorities or for organisations that are delivering services that meet our priorities but that do not wish to be housed within one of the VCS hubs. These organisations would still be able to access buildings (where available) on the Council's standard letting terms and conditions.

Following the adoption of the framework the next step was to develop an implementation plan to demonstrate the impact of the framework on the existing portfolio of community premises. The following principles that were agreed as part of the framework were used to guide the development of the implementation plan:

- Demand for subsidised space will always outstrip the available resources and it is therefore essential to have a process for allocating support that is open and transparent.
- Lease and hire arrangements should be equitable.
- Council Assets used by VCS organisations need to be fully optimised to ensure the Council is achieving best value for its' residents.
- The overall cost to the Council of assets used by VCS organisations should be reduced in order to release savings.
- The model for the use of Council assets to support VCS organisations in the future should allow some flexibility for changing needs.
- The model should support the Council's partnership approach
- Enabling VCS organisations to access Council assets is a way of supporting the sector.
- The model should help the sector to help themselves by optimising the use of their resources.

In addition the following factors have been considered in developing the implementation plan:

- Usage levels
- Other facilities in the locality
- Impact on council's ability to meet its statutory duties
- Existing lease arrangements
- Potential for redevelopment
- Potential for shared use
- Condition of the asset

The Implementation Plan is a live document that sets out the proposed way forward for each of the buildings within the Community Premises Portfolio. The plan spans three years and will be reviewed and updated during this period.

In light of the changes identified within the implementation plan, in particular the closure of certain Community Centres and office buildings an in-depth Equality Analysis was needed. This will allow the impact on protected characteristics to be assessed in the light of the above changes, with a particular focus on older and younger people who are most likely to be affected by the rationalisation of community centres.

3. Equalities Context

Public bodies such as local authorities are legally required to consider the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (set out in the Equality Act 2010) and document their thinking as part of any decision-making processes. The Act sets out that public bodies must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share that characteristic; and
- foster good relationships between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share that characteristic.

The following equalities characteristics are 'protected' from unlawful discrimination in service provision under the Equality Act 2010: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion and belief; gender; and sexual orientation.

The duty continues to be a "have regard duty", and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.

The Human Rights Act came into effect in the UK in October 2000. It means that people in the UK can take cases about their human rights as defined in the European convention on Human Rights to a UK court. At least 11 Articles of the European Convention on Human Rights have implications for the provision of public services and functions. This EIA assesses whether the proposed recommendations are in line with duties established by this Act.

Against the backdrop of the of the Equality Act 2010, Lewisham's Comprehensive Equalities Scheme (CES) was developed and agreed by the Mayor in 2012. The CES is the council's overarching equalities vision statement. It specifically describes how the Public Sector Equality Duty will be addressed through five overarching objectives:

- tackling victimisation discrimination and harassment
- closing the gap in outcomes for citizens
- improving access to services
- improving mutual understanding and respect
- improving participation and engagement

4. Equalities Assessment of the Voluntary Sector Accommodation Implementation Plan

4.1 Age

Age refers to a person belonging to a particular age or age range. As an employer and a provider of services the Council is required to ensure that it does not unlawfully discriminate against a person on account of their age. A summary of data on age is set out in the box below.

Data summary for age:

- according to the 2011 Census some 70,100 Lewisham residents are aged between 0-19 (25% of the population), whilst some 179,800 residents are aged between 20-64 (65% of the population). By contrast there are some 26,200 older people aged 65 and over (9.5%).
- according to the 2013 Sub National Population Projections by 2021 the number of Lewisham residents aged 0-19 is expected to rise to 79,570 (25% of the population), whilst the number of people aged 20-64 is expected to reach 208,190 (65% of the population). By contrast the number of people aged 65 and older is expected to increase to 30,570 (10% of the population).
- Ward profiles suggest that a greater number of older residents (65+) live in the south of borough in areas like Downham or Grove Park; whilst younger residents (0-19) are spread throughout the borough more evenly.

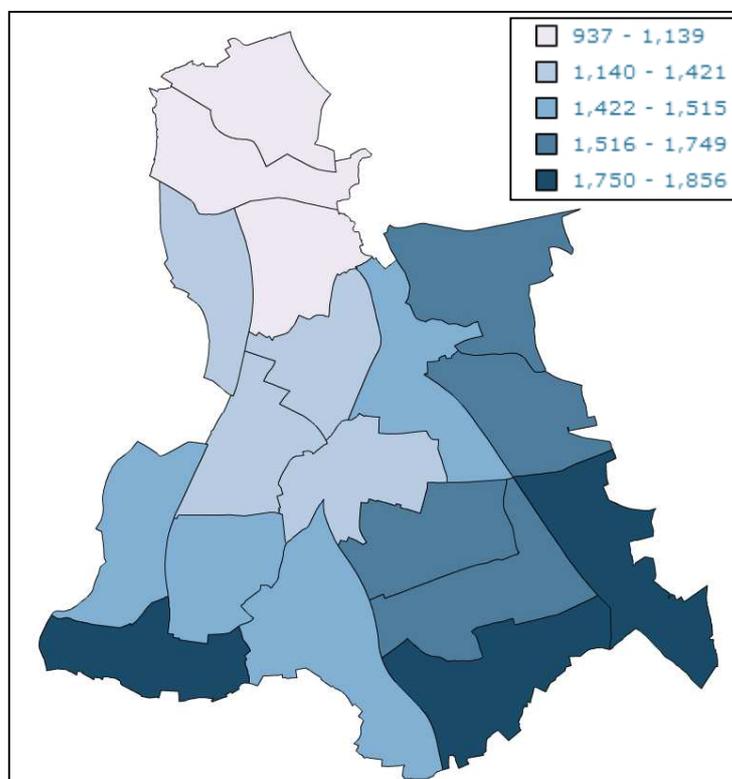
Analysis of the proposed plan's impact on the protected characteristic of age was split in to two parts: the effect on the older population, who are aged 65 and over, and on the younger population, aged between 0 to 19 years old.

4.2 Older People (65 and Over)

Within the proposed plan, the main changes that may have an effect on older people are the rationalisation of community centres across the borough, and the relocation of services from the Saville Centre, which currently houses the Lewisham Pensioners Forum amongst others.

As the data summary and map below suggests there are wards within the borough that have larger numbers of older people than others. Indeed the proposed relocation of Lewisham Pensioners Forum from the Saville Centre (in Rushey Green), should not have a significant impact on older people, so long as they remain close to accessible transport links. The proposals suggest a consolidation within the Lewisham Irish Community Centre, which is very close by, or moving into one of the Hubs – indeed the hubs (with their kitchen facilities) may be able to help Lewisham Pensioners Forum expand their provision widely, particularly through lunch clubs that help engage and bring the community together.

In terms of community centres, the rationalisation is focussed very much about creating better more relevant provision that provide for their distinct local neighbourhoods, and whilst there will be some closures, these are only proposed in areas where alternative provision is readily available. Indeed within Sydenham that has a high proportion of older people, the proposal is to create a new Community Centre that can accommodate a wider spread of the community within a new environment at the Sydenham Centre. In Downham and Grove Park where there is also a high density of older people, the only impact by the proposed plan is to re-provide in conjunction with Phoenix Community Housing) on the wider site of Wesley Halls along with housing development – which should provide a more accessible and suitable facility.



Number of residents over the age of 65

Source: ONS Census 2011

Overall, we believe that older people should not be disproportionately affected by the implementation of this plan.

4.3 Young People (0 – 19)

The assets that are utilised by this demographic are the Community Libraries, Playing Fields, Somerville Adventure Playground, Midi Music, Lewisham Toy Library, Young Lewisham Project, Lewisham Young Women's Resource Project, Platform 1, and the Community Centres and Nurseries.

The Community Libraries, Playing Fields, Somerville Adventure Playground and Midi Music have all been categorised into category 1, where there will be no change, as they are deemed to require/be specialist facilities.

Lewisham Toy Library (Rushey Green) are being assisted to move out of their current premises and are currently looking at either relocating to a community hub or community library, with Sydenham Library being an option which would actually move the service to an area with a higher density of your people, on the border of Sydenham and Bellingham, and as such shouldn't have a detrimental impact.

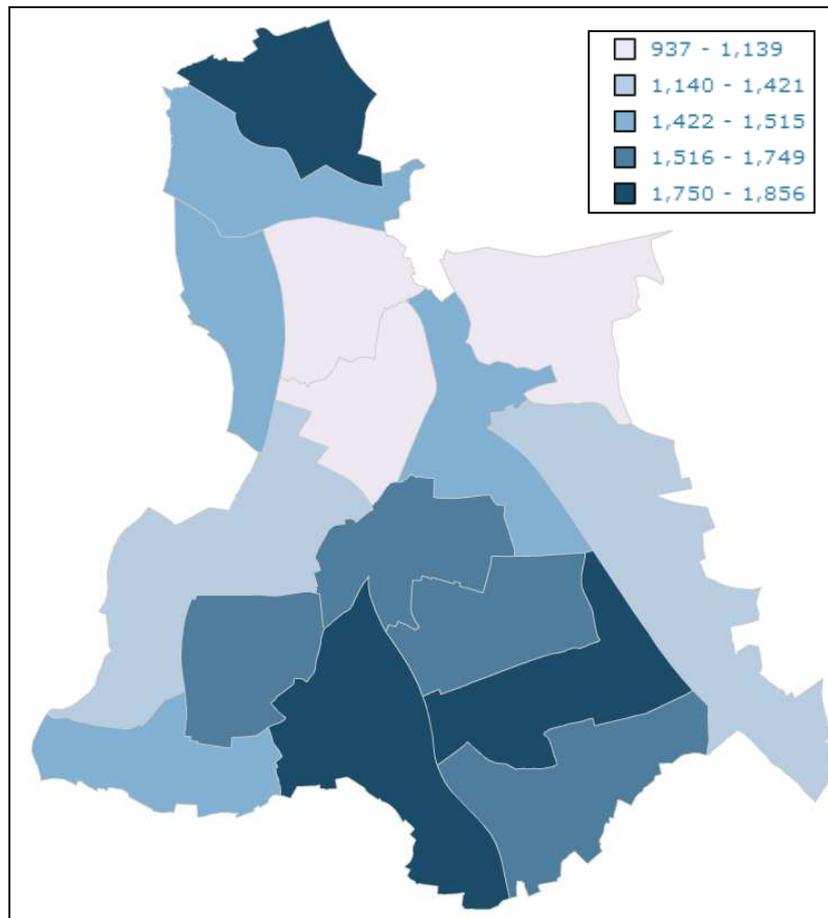
Young Lewisham (Perry Vale) project will continue to operate from their current site, with further outreach work taking place at Rockbourne Youth Centre, again widening their scope out into the community. Platform 1, have already relinquished their lease and are moving in to share premises with Young Lewisham, which should help sustain the two organisations and the provision within the Perry Vale area moving forwards.

Lewisham Young Women's Resource Project currently occupy a house in Rushey Green, with the proposal being to help them move into a hub, or move them onto a lease for their current premises. A move to a community hub that would allow them to collaborate with other service providers would potentially add benefit to the organisation and it's user group, allowing users to access other worthwhile services under the same roof.

In terms of community centres, the rationalisation is focussed very much about creating better more relevant provision that provide for their distinct local neighbourhoods, and whilst there will be some closures, these are only proposed in areas where alternative provision is readily available. Indeed the work with Strategic Housing and housing providers, around re-provision of community facilities is likely to have a positive impact on younger people more than others as the new centres will be 'digitised' and vibrant, and provide smaller spaces that allow local people to come together to share time and interests.

The other area that will be impacted by these changes is nurseries, currently most of these are within community centres, and indeed the Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are enough nursery places available across the Borough. To this end, any centres that currently have nurseries as sole users will be turned over to nursery use and marketed as such, and a number of other centres that have been proposed for closure/consolidation will also be marketed as nurseries.

Overall, we believe that young people should not be disproportionately affected by the implementation of this plan.



Number of residents ages 0 -15

4.4 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. 'Substantial' is more than minor or trivial e.g. it takes longer than it usually would to complete an everyday action such as getting dressed, whilst a 'long-term' condition means 12 months or more. Progressive conditions can also be classed as disabilities; these are conditions that get worse over time like HIV or cancer. It should also be noted that a number of older residents are likely to be eligible for disability-specific provision, for examples for services supporting dementia or individuals who are physically incapacitated. A summary of data on disability is set out in the box below.

Data summary for disability

According to the 2011 Census:

- 7.1% (19,523) Lewisham residents indicated that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot, and 7.3% (20,212) indicated that their day-to-day activities were limited a little;
- 5.3% (14,318) Lewisham residents indicated that they are in bad health or very bad health;
- 8.1% (22,521) Lewisham residents provide some form of unpaid care. Over 5,000 Lewisham residents provide 50+ hours of unpaid care per week.
- 160 Lewisham residents indicated that sign language was their main language.

There is currently one disability related organisation housed within this portfolio, Lewisham Disability Coalition, who have recently moved into 111 Randlesdown Road, on a full lease. Whilst that building may be suitable for their current needs, and we are happy for them to stay there, the opportunity to move into one of the hubs (specifically the Leemore Hub which will have an Advice and Information focus) will be available to them should they wish to collocate their services with similar service providers.

Outside of that, it should be noted that a number of the community centres in particular were built in the 50s and 60s when there was little regard for accessibility, and have had to have modifications made to them over time. The possibility to work with housing providers to re-provide modern accessible facilities will allow greater access to people with disabilities into their neighbourhood community centres. Additionally, the two new community hubs and the new community centre in Sydenham are all current Day Centres, and have been subject to high level modifications for service users with disabilities, so opening these buildings up to the community and as bases for services should help make them more accessible than in the past. In fact, the hub model for services should also help cut down on the travel required for service users, as they'll find complementary services co-located.

Indeed it is because of these positive changes that we believe that the implementation plan will have a positive impact on those residents with disabilities.

4.5 Gender

Gender has the meaning usually given to it and refers to whether a person is a man or a woman. A summary of data on gender is set out in the box below.

Data summary for gender

- according to the 2011 Census there are 135,000 males living in Lewisham and 140,900 females;
- however, by 2030 it is forecast that the number of males would have surpassed that of females (158, 500 men to 157, 100 women);

- based on the 2013 Mid-year Population Estimates Lewisham's males are more numerous than females between the 0-19 age groups. By contrast females are more numerous than males in the 20 – 44, 35 - 59 60 -79 and 80+ age groups;
- by 2030 the percentage of males is still expected to be greater than females in the 0-19 age group. Males are also expected to be more numerous in the 20 – 44, and 35 – 59 age group. However, females will still be more numerous in the 60-79 and 80+ age groups.

The recommended plan is inclusive of both genders. The only gender specific organisation that will be impacted is the Lewisham Young Women's Resource Project (mentioned in Young People above).

The inclusive nature of all community facilities, and organisations that operate within them suggests that no specific gender should be disproportionately affected by the proposed implementation plan.

4.6 Gender Re-assignment

Gender re-assignment describes the process of transitioning from one gender to another. For individuals within this group, the Act provides protection for trans-sexual people from discrimination and harassment in various areas, such as work or the provision of goods and services. A summary of data on gender reassignment is set out in the box below.

Data summary for gender reassignment

- in 2006-07 Lewisham Council commissioned a research study of the LGBT populations who lived, worked, studied or socialised in the borough;
- of the 316 respondents, seven identified as trans people, which was insufficient to draw quantitative conclusions;
- according to the NHS Secondary User Service Admitted Patients database, there were four admissions to NHS hospitals in 2011-12 of four different individuals resident in Lewisham and having a primary diagnostic code beginning F64 (trans-sexualism or gender identify disorder). Only one of these was for a full (male to female) gender reassignment. None of the admissions were to Lewisham Hospital.
- In October 2014 the Trans and Gender Non-Conforming Swimming Group (TAGS) set up a weekly private swimming session – 20 regular swimmers have attended a week, although some may have travelled from other boroughs to Lewisham.

There are no buildings or organisations within the scope of this plan that have any positive or negative connotations for people going through the gender re-assignment process. Indeed, through the work that the Voluntary and Community Sector carry out within our buildings, we would expect there to be no discrimination of any characteristics, quite the opposite as we

would aspire to see these organisations utilising facilities to positively encourage participation from those that may feel marginalised. A good practice example of this happening within other council facilities is the Trans Swimming sessions at Glassmill Leisure Centre. Indeed the co-location of other service providers alongside Voluntary Action Lewisham in the Leemore hub, should allow VAL's Equalities work to effectively tie in wider service providers and engender a more positive, inclusive and outward looking sector.

As a result we don't believe that the implementation plan will have any impact on residents going through Gender re-assignment.

4.7 Marriage and Civil Partnership

The Equality Act protects against unlawful discrimination if you are legally married or in a civil partnership. A summary of data on marriage and civil partnership is set out in the box below.

Data summary for marriage and civil partnership

- In 2011 about half of Lewisham residents over 16 have never been married or in a civil partnership. This is higher than England as a whole.
- A third of over 16s in Lewisham are currently married or in a civil partnership (0.5% in civil partnership)
- 17% of residents (aged 16 and over) have been married or in a civil partnership but are now separated, divorced or widowed.

Consideration of the characteristic of marriage and civil partnerships need only be in respect of eliminating unlawful discrimination. In this regard, the proposed implementation plan would not in any way exclude individuals who are legally married or in a civil partnership. Again VAL through their equalities work will protect and monitor this characteristic as one of the 9 protected under the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, this characteristic should not be disproportionately affected under the proposed plans.

4.8 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. A summary of data on pregnancy and maternity is set out in the box below.

Data summary for pregnancy and maternity

- for 2013 there were about 4,827 new babies recorded in official statistics as Lewisham residents; the General Fertility Rate is notably higher in Lewisham, at 68.1 live births per 1,000 women aged 15 – 54, than in England at 62.4 in 2013.

- Lewisham has an underlying population growth arising from its excess of births over deaths. In a typical year, there are more births (approximately 4,500-5200) than deaths (approximately 1,500-1,800) in Lewisham residents.

Two elements of the proposed plan could have an impact on Pregnancy and Maternity. These are the rationalisation of community centres, many of which house parent and toddler groups, so the reduction in centres may mean that some parents on Maternity have to travel further to community centre based sessions. However, as alluded to before the proposed re-provision of a number of centres in partnership with housing providers should provide a much more appealing venue for those on maternity (and indeed in pregnancy) to visit and use.

Additionally the relocation of the Toy Library where those on maternity may go to access suitable play equipment may have an impact, though the possibility of this being co-located within a community would actually open up the access to complimentary services whereby residents are able to access suitable reading material and other engagement classes and sessions.

Therefore we should expect residents with this protected characteristic not to be disproportionately affected by the proposed plans.

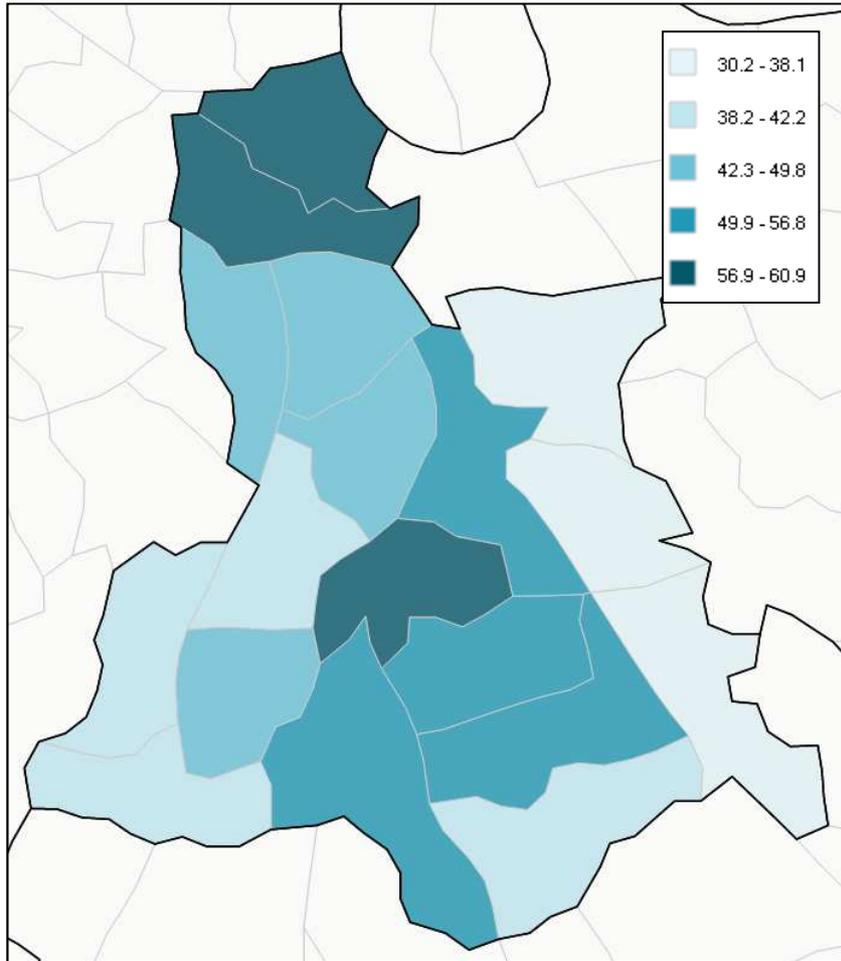
4.9 Race

Race refers to the equality group of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. A summary of data on race is set out in the box below.

Data summary for race

- according to Census data from 2011, 53.6% (147, 686) of all Lewisham residents are white (White British, White Irish and White European);
- currently people from a Black Caribbean, Black African and Black other ethnic background represent 27.2% (74,942) of the population.
- Profiles indicate that the majority of black and minority ethnic residents live in the North and Centre of the borough in wards such as Evelyn, New Cross and Rushey Green.

The data in the table below shows that there is considerable demographic variation across the borough when it comes to BME communities with a number of wards having a BME majority.



Percentage of the population from a BME community

A number of organisations that deliver services specifically aimed at BME communities are currently utilising community premises, and as such are within the scope of this plan.

Specifically, there is Action for Refugees in Lewisham based at Leemore, Lewisham Multi-lingual Advice Service who currently share office space with Age UK, SSLC and FORVIL within Evelyn Community Centre, IRIE! at the Moonshot Centre, REMEC at Scotney Hall and Lewisham Somali Community Organisation.

Firstly, a number of these buildings and users will stay as they are within the plan. These are; Action for Refugees in Lewisham, SSLC, FORVIL, IRIE! and Lewisham Somali Community Organisation.

REMEC (who are a faith organisation that focus on the BME community) will be offered the opportunity to move into the Mulberry hub in New Cross, as we recognise the demographics across the borough show a high level of BME communities within the Evelyn and New Cross area, and so should stay within that community.

Lewisham Multi-Lingual Advice Service have expressed an interest in moving into the Leemore hub that will allow them to be co-located with the wider Advice and Information sector there and so allow their service users better access to complimentary services.

Additionally of course, the community centres rationalisation will also have an impact in areas where there are high concentrations of BME communities. Within the Rushey Green area where there is a high percentage there isn't a reduction in community centre provision, however in the Evelyn/New Cross area there are a number of centres that have been earmarked as surplus, specifically; Scotney Hall and Woodpecker Community Centre. However this needs to be looked at in relation to the number of alternative venues that are available for hire (Appendix F), as well as the fact that a new Community Hub will be created at Mulberry, and the new community spaces that will be available upon the completion of the Surrey Canal development in the far north west of the borough.

Overall the co-location of services coupled with the alternative facilities that are available within areas where community centres are planned to be closed means that the proposed plan is considered not to have a disproportionate impact relating to Race. Officers within the wider Cultural and Community development team will also work with grant funded organisations (a number of whom are within the scope of this project), and specifically those working primarily with particular communities to build positive race relations and promote community cohesion/ mutual understanding and respect. This is one of our comprehensive equalities scheme objectives.

4.10 Religion or Belief

Religion has the meaning usually given to it, but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition. A summary of data on religion and belief is set out in the box below.

Data summary for religion or belief

- the most up to date information on religion or belief in Lewisham is from the Census of 2011. This revealed that nearly 64% of Lewisham residents described themselves as having a faith or religion, whilst around 27% of residents described themselves as having no faith or religion;
- amongst those residents that described themselves as having a faith or religion some 52.8% identified their faith as Christian, whilst 6.4% described themselves as Muslim;
- of other religions, Hindus represent 2.4% of the population, whilst Buddhists represent just over 1.3% of the population;

This characteristic is mainly highlighted through the community centre rationalisation section of the proposed plan, as a number of centres currently house church groups. Indeed whilst none of the centres and/or user groups should be discriminating against those with religious beliefs, the hosting of church groups themselves also need to be inclusive to the needs of that particular neighbourhood, and a proper balance that serves the local community needs to be found.

The rationalisation of the community centres will likely result in some church/religious groups having to seek alternative accommodation, but the individual plan for each affected centre will include assistance and information to help groups relocate to other local facilities that may be available (Appendix F).

As such it is not believed that the proposed plan would have a negative impact on this characteristic.

4.11 Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is defined as whether a person's sexual attraction is towards the opposite sex, their own sex or to both sexes. A summary of data on sexual orientation is set out in the box below.

Data summary for sexual orientation

- There are no accurate statistics available regarding the profile of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) population either in Lewisham, London or Britain as a whole.
- The Greater London Authority based its Sexual Orientation Equality Scheme on an estimate that the lesbian and gay population comprises roughly 10% of the total population.
- At the 2011 census 2% of over 16 year olds were cohabiting with someone of the same sex or were in a civil partnership, this is higher than both the England and London averages (0.9 % and 1.4% respectively).
- in the 2015 Annual Resident Survey, a question on sexual orientation found that 3% of respondents identified as lesbian or gay.

The make up of users and residents across the borough that may be using the services and community provision offered within the premises identified within this plan are unknown. Indeed there is only one clearly identifiable organisation that will be operating from within these buildings that explicitly has provision for the LGBT community is Voluntary Action Lewisham who will be moving into the Leemore hub. The expectation is that by more cohesive working practices across VCS organisations within the hubs that effective positive outreach work will begin to be properly coordinated. As such this model could have a positive impact on the LGBT community.

As a result it is not anticipated that this proposed plan will have a negative impact upon the LGBT community.

Overall Mitigation

According to the 2012 Sub-national Population Projections (ONS) the total population of Lewisham was 290,000, an increase of 52,000 since the 2001 Census. This is the 12th

highest population of all London boroughs. ONS forecasts that the population is set to rise to 315, 000 by 2020, an increase of 9%. Putting further pressure on already stretched resources.

Indeed it must be said that whilst the proposed plan will help to bring key organisations together to share space, costs and help provide more joined up services; allow the borough to provide newer and better quality community spaces that are fit for the 21st century; and help the council provide the school places and houses that the borough so desperately needs; the plan will also help elicit some savings by bringing some commercially viable buildings back into the commercial portfolio, allow for the disposal of certain buildings and help the council meet it's savings targets.

The partnering with Voluntary Action Lewisham to help the council liaise with the sector on this, having them become an anchor tenant within the Leemore hub as well as the funding as a strategic equality organisation will also help mitigate any negative impact on protected characteristics. They will work with the Metro centre to research, monitor, protect and advocate equality for all nine protected characteristics. Specifically, Voluntary Action Lewisham will work as a co-ordinator with local organisations to understand and remove barriers to inclusion. This should improve the provision for protected characteristics within funded organisations across the borough, many of whom are the organisations that we support through use of our premises, and improve the range of individuals accessing services within the borough by highlighting and combating barriers to inclusion.

When considering the impact of the proposed plan across the nine protected characteristics, the two main areas for concern were the impact on older and younger people, and those from the BME community. However, having considered the mitigation and demographic profile of the borough alongside alternative local facilities the impact on these groups is not felt to be negative, and indeed if the hub model and re-provision of buildings through partnerships with housing providers is successful then long term there will be a positive impact.

Overall, the spread of facilities that are being proposed, alongside the new ways of working and alternative hireable spaces the implementation plan is considered to be fair and equitable.