Case Study 1: 
Working to support children and young people with speech, language and communication needs

“This is a valuable resource and diagnostic tool and it has already given us some useful information and ways of setting targets” 
Sally Cass, Inclusion Manager, Lord Grey Secondary School

Overview
Outcomes for children and young people with speech, language and communications needs have traditionally lagged behind those who are more able. The Council developed a group with representatives from universal, targeted and specialist services from the Council and health, working across the 0-19 age range.

Over a number of years the group worked together to develop the First Access Communication Tool (FACT), which unified the approach across Milton Keynes. The FACT helped practitioners in schools and settings to identify and support children and young people with Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLCN).

The tool has ensured that they consider the child’s SLCN whenever any additional learning or behaviour is present, to raise awareness that a child might have unrecognised SLCN. This is particularly important with Looked After Children whose needs may present as emotional behaviour or whose mobility may make assessment more challenging.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
- Each service had its own procedure for identifying and supporting children with SLCN
- No Standard way to agree on a child’s level of need
- No agreement on who should be responsible for meeting of needs
- Schools and settings had no way to describe the needs of children with SLCN
- They did not know when a child’s needs warranted support from outside professionals across Milton Keynes

Key Activities
- Pilot study was completed in 2011
- The FACT was published and launched in September 2011
- Workshops in all schools embedded the FACT into normal practice.

Impact
The FACT has been rolled out to all mainstream schools (primary and secondary) and schools with specialist provision (for SLCN and learning difficulties).

86% reported an increase in their confidence in making provision to meet SLCN needs.

57% reported that practitioners in their schools were modifying their practice to meet the children.

71% reported that their school had become more communication-supportive. There was also increased satisfaction with the clarity of the proposed system of outside agency support in 86% of cases.
Overview
The Council has a good history of making provision for Gypsies and Travellers in Milton Keynes. It provides and manages two sites (at Calverton Lane and Willen Road) and has allocated 3 new sites in its Local Plan (at Fenny Lock, Bottle Dump and Newton Leys). The census shows there are 72 people with a Gypsy or Traveller ethnic background. For a number of years the Council had the ambition to develop a third Council site for local travellers. This was based on perceived need as revealed in the regional figures. A site at Fenny Lock had been identified, which became controversial and required the Council to think carefully about the needs of one group in the context of the housing needs of many different groups.

An Equalities Impact Assessment was first published in November 2010 to accompany the cabinet (21 December 2010) decision to provide site facilities at Fenny Lock. Consultation with Milton Keynes Gypsy & Traveller community showed that they do not thrive in conventional housing and long to live in pitches in communal accommodation.

After a Scrutiny Committee asked the Cabinet to review the decision, the Cabinet decided to look at housing needs in its wider context. This Fenny Lock review and subsequent more comprehensive Equality Assessment were considered by the Cabinet, Executive Committee and finally by a full Council. The decision was to meet the needs of Travellers in Band One Housing need which was 3 families, but also to develop adapted homes for people with a disability.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
There were significant implications for equalities and diversity in the proposals. The provision of good quality sites plays an important role in promoting community cohesion and sustainability whilst ensuring that local areas are inclusive for all irrespective of their background.

Set against this is the pressing need faced by the 363 households who are in “Band 1”, which is the highest level of housing need. The Council also has a further 160 homeless households in temporary accommodation and its Comprehensive Equality Scheme 2010 – 2013 set out a target to reduce the number of homeless households in temporary accommodation to 70.

Key Activities
• Cabinet decided to invest the £1.2m in new Council-owned ‘wheelchair standard’ bungalows, targeted to release social rented family homes units for households in the highest level of need (i.e. “Band 1”).

• It also decided, that the needs of the 3 gypsy and traveller households in the highest need (“Band 1”) be met by making a more cost-effective bid to the Homes and Communities Agency to refurbish/expand the existing site at Willen Road.

• This was subject to a scrutiny and an Extraordinary Council Meeting where it was decided that a Commission would be established to consider the wider needs of the Traveller community.

Case Study 2: Traveller Site Needs
"We supplied what we hoped was a reasonably constructive and robust motion that would get the matter thoroughly aired - and thoroughly aired it was."
Cllr Norman Miles, Leader of the Opposition Labour Party, MKC
Overview
Milton Keynes Council’s Planning Department constantly reviews its policies and decisions for equality issues. The following examples are three ways in which they have made a difference:

Super-flexible homes
Milton Keynes Council and English Partnerships are initiated the concept of super-flexible homes at their Tattenhoe Park development. The initiative recognises that flexible dwellings are needed to accommodate diverse communities and lifestyles, for example larger families, people choosing to work from home, growing families, families with several generations living together and faith and community groups who might need additional space for social gatherings in large groups.

Super-flexible homes are easily capable of extension or adaptation to meet such changing needs over time. Examples of super-flexible housing include open roof trusses to facilitate upwards extensions, semis with attached garages to enable future first floor extensions and open or flexible floor plans. The development framework for Tattenhoe Park includes a requirement that 30% of the new houses should be super-flexible.

The White Hart Public House
An application was received to build new mental health rehabilitation unit on the site of the old 'White Hart' site (a pub that burned down and has been unused for some time). The plan was redevelop and provide a 32 bed, male only rehabilitation unit.

There has been a huge amount of discussion about this proposal, with many local people feeling that this development was unsuitable for the area suggesting that people who have mental ill health are dangerous.

The Equality Impact Assessment was used to inform the decision with the following:

- A mental health unit within Milton Keynes would provide much needed additional support
- The White Hart site is entirely appropriate for a unit and the suggestion that its proximity to schools is a risk is discriminatory, showing a lack of understanding around mental ill health
- Linking mental illness to sex offending is unhelpful and should be challenged strongly by everyone.

The impact of the assessment was to communicate and provide reassurance and the permission was granted.

Urban Design
People with disabilities were involved in the development of the new Urban Design Guide. This guide is an important tool to help developers understand how they can plan for inclusion. This guide includes the following principles:

- Involving people in design of neighbourhoods – people from the disability community and the older residents
- Places without barriers - making Milton Keynes barrier free for the elderly, people with a disability and families with small children reduces the barriers for everyone;
- Make reasonable adjustments
Overview
Fishermead was developed at a higher density than that of housing in other areas of Milton Keynes. In this scheme the residential density range is 219-224 people per hectare. At one time the property prices were rock bottom and people were not prepared to live here unless there was no other available option. The economical factors have made this estate a ‘honey-pot’ for recent Somalian migrant population in Milton Keynes.

In May 2011 an estate in Fishermead experienced a double murder; consequently both the victims and perpetrators were from the Somalian community. Following on from this a number of community tensions became obvious and the statutory agencies became aware very quickly that work needed to be done to improve social cohesion and prevent further division amongst the communities in Fishermead.

A multi-agency group was established that involved the Local Authority, Thames Valley Police, The Parish Council and community groups and leaders. The main objective was to support the community through this period and minimise community tensions. From this group a smaller working group was formed supported by the Community Safety Partnership and became known as the Fishermead Action partnership.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
In his blog local architect Iqbal Aalam has described the task faced by the Council seeking to regenerate parts of Milton Keynes, looking at how the infrastructure has led to housing and community relations tensions.

“Once again the original dream of housing a burgeoning middle class community with ‘Habitat’ furnishings and ‘comfortable’ living had a head on crash with the arrival of ever-changing disadvantaged communities struggling to survive.”

Key Activities
The Fishermead Action Partnership highlighted three key priorities, in order to achieve a safer and improved Fishermead, promoting positive community cohesion.

- Work with young people to address their issues.
- Work with the local community to address issues of housing; the physical environment & safety.
- Influence service delivery to meet the current & future needs.

Impact
- This work increased participation rates from a number of groups because the environmental work fostered improved community relations.
- It recognised that people often need something very practical for their involvement.
- The ‘Clean Fishermead Project’ removed all the rubbish that littered the streets of the estate, properly maintaining bin areas, cleaning up the walls.
- The building of community relations has been successful. A good example of this work can be seen on the “I love Fishermead” website run by residents

Case Study 4: Fishermead Projects

“Good luck on your campaign, I really hope that you achieve some changes. I have lived here from a young woman until now and I have seen so many changes”

Lorraine, A resident
Case Study 5:
Involving young people in the design of a new residential home

“We’ve all been involved every step of the way and everyone feels they have made a genuine contribution. The engagement will make the transition easier”
Estea Fourie, Unit Manager

Overview
The new ‘Westminster Drive’ will provide a brand new, purpose built home for up to eight of the borough’s most vulnerable children. Effective engagement has been used in the scheme to design in both the needs and wants of young people who will be residents.

An initial design workshop took place in 2011 involving young people, their parents, guardians and other potential stakeholders. The aim was to generate ideas for the external appearance as well as internal layout of the new house. Displays of different houses and gardens were set up and the stakeholders were asked to indicate which ones they liked best. These were collated and the top scoring images went forward to the design team as part of the briefing process.

The same stakeholders were then invited to attend structured feedback sessions where the most popular images chosen were presented along with the proposed house design to demonstrate how the ideas generated had influenced the external appearance and internal layout of the house.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
- Involvement of as many residents as possible, irrespective of their disability
- Focusing ideas and channelling enthusiasm – the facilitators needed to ensure the enthusiasm about the new house was channelled into solutions that were realistic and achievable
- Full involvement of a young person not moving to the new house who had so much to add and encouraged the others

Key Actions
- Follow up to each stakeholder event- it was important to ensure that each event was followed up and demonstrated how the stakeholders input had contributed
- Maintain enthusiasm and interest
- Deliver a purpose built and resident designed home.

Impact
The new facility is a high quality home, loved and fit for some of our most vulnerable young people.

Most of all involving the young people at each stage reduced the anxieties some residents had about leaving the old home and moving into their new one.

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Case Study 5:
Involving young people in the design of a new residential home

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Overview
There are 47 registered supplementary schools in Milton Keynes of which 22 are Madāris (Islamic schools). A review of supplementary schools provision in 2009 showed that 1879 children attended supplementary schools in Milton Keynes and highlighted the need for improved safeguarding procedures.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
- Increasing supplementary schools awareness of potential safeguarding issues and ensuring they are aware of the referral process and who to inform if they have concerns
- Implementation of the ‘non-statutory’ quality framework to ensure that supplementary schools operate in line with national standards
- Developing greater partnerships between supplementary schools and mainstream schools to contribute to an improvement in attainment among BME groups

Key Activities
- Delivery of training sessions to supplementary schools by the Council
- Liaison with schools and Council strength through key worker activities
- Facilitating mainstream school visits by supplementary schools teachers to observe models of good practice in teaching and learning
- Creation of supplementary school forum
- Dedicated time to support supplementary school staff on an individual basis

Impact
There are currently 15 supplementary schools registered on the quality framework award scheme. An additional four are working towards the award. 14 Supplementary School teachers who are volunteers have just received OCN Accreditation for the Effective Teaching Skills course which was delivered in May 2012 by EMASS. A further 8 teachers have just completed the current Effective Teaching Skills course and they are awaiting accreditation.

The skills they have gained has increased the quality of work of these schools in
- Effective Teaching
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
  (In partnership with Milton Keynes Safeguarding Children's Board)
- Supporting Children with Special Education Needs
- Safer Recruitment

Finally the Support and Liaison Officer with responsibility for this work won the GEM award from the Council in recognition of her work.

Case Study 6: Supplementary Schools

“The council has provided training, information, as well as continuous support answering questions.”
Ayser Alijawad, Milton Keynes Arabic Language School
Overview
The MKi (Milton Keynes intelligence) Observatory is a local information system that provides up-to-date information and data related to health and future growth of Milton Keynes and the surrounding area to all partners, policy makers, researchers and members of the public.

www.mkiobservatory.org.uk

Originally developed as a bespoke system in 2004, the MKi Observatory holds in-depth analysis of the Borough. The system provides data analysis tools to enable officers to define their own catchments, to thematically map and graph results and a mapping facility to provide users access to spatial information. The system employs a devolved model for managing content - with strategic partners able to contribute to the site directly. The system is supported by Milton Keynes Council's Research & Intelligence team, a multi-disciplinary team who has experience in research, analysis, GIS, monitoring and information technology.

The Equalities Evidence micro-site can be found on the MKi Observatory, as can the library of Equality Impact Assessments covering all major decisions, projects, programmes and brief overviews.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
As the MKi Observatory contains a wide range of data and information, ensuring that resources are accessible is a priority. The system has been developed to meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines standards (v1.0 and v2.0) and data held within the system is available in alternative formats.

The Research and Intelligence team are committed to helping users to use and understand data from the system and support is provided to all users. In addition, regular user group meetings and drop-in sessions enable users to directly approach the team for help or support.

To aid in the accessibility of data, the team have produced a range of 'In Brief‘ guides which summaries key points from data to help people to understand data quickly and effectively.

Key Activities
- Maintaining data – a schedule for updating the datasets on the system is produced each month to make sure all the data on the site is the most recent data available.
- Quarterly user group meetings with external engagement partners - to assist in the future development of the system and the data held on the system. Users are encouraged to share case studies on how they have used the system or data on the system in tasks and projects
- Quarterly drop-in sessions – open session for anyone requiring help or support in using the system or using data from the system
- Quarterly newsletter - aims to keep users up-to-date with new developments and data that can be found on the system.
Overview
The Milton Keynes Children and Families Partnership has launched a Commission on Ethnic Diversity. This is the second commission held by the partnership.

With one in five children in Milton Keynes living in poverty, the Child Poverty Commission was formed in 2011 to gain a better understanding of the nature of poverty in Milton Keynes.

The Ethnic Diversity Commission is exploring how local services respond to the needs of an increasingly ethnically diverse population. There is a particular focus on issues relating to families with children under the age of eight in Milton Keynes, due to the significant representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups amongst that age group.

Dr Umut Erel from The Open University, whose expertise lies in migration, ethnicity, culture and representation, is chairing the Commission and is joined by a number of representatives from local organisations and key services.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
Data shows that the BME population has consistently grown in Milton Keynes:

- Census data shows that the BME community in Milton Keynes has grown from 13% in 2001 to 26% in 2011; this is higher than the proportion in England at 19%.

- Data from the 2012 School Census shows that, overall in Milton Keynes, BME groups represent 34% of pupils; however, for nursery and reception, this represents 40%.

There are three main areas that form the focus of the Commission, looking at the targeted age group:

- Maternity services
- Childcare provision
- Schools (nursery to reception)

Key Activities
- Consultation is taking place with local communities, including families, to ensure that a wide range of views are heard.
- This is combined with consultation with professionals within the three main service areas.
- They will also be holding hearings with key stakeholders and decision makers.

Impact
The Child Poverty Commission helped local communities by looking at how support such as debt, benefits and careers advice can be best targeted.

The Ethnic Diversity Commission will review the information received and produce a report and recommendations that will be presented to the Children and Families Partnership and will be used to inform multi-agency service provision in the future.
Overview

The Disability Advisory Group is an Umbrella Engagement Group that looks at disability issues in Milton Keynes. The group started in 2009 and includes: people with physical disabilities, the blind, those who are profoundly deaf, neuro-autistic, and those with learning, mental and motor-neurone impairments. Members of the group are there as representatives of service user groups and their organisations.

Meeting five times a year the group includes also a cabinet member, partners and officers who present and feedback on the latest issues and developments.

Activities

Consultation with this group has resulted in:
- Changes to Station Square
- Changes to the Coach Station
- Changes to the Housing Strategy
- Community Transport Proposals
- Welfare Reform – raising awareness of the proposals
- Specification for a new sensory service

Impact

The group identifies issues of importance to the full range of disabled people, including those with a learning disability or those affected by mental illness. They help to inform the Council of good practice that members are aware of, propose solutions to identified problems and give feedback on progress made to address problems that have been identified.

It has been responsible for some detailed and important scrutiny which has changed services and informed decisions.

These are examples of minutes:

“Community Transport went out to tender early this year, with 20 suppliers expressing an interest initially, but only one contractor followed it through with a full tender, and that was £165,000 above their limit, so they could not take it further. They will ask to extend the current contract until August 2013. There are plans for a retendering in the middle of next year. DAG input will be fed in to this. They will also go to the companies that expressed interest for feedback to find out why they did not tender. Once they have that feedback, Brian will contact us so that we can have the transport subgroup involved again.”

“Paul Gibson explained about plans to build 10 to 15 wheelchair users bungalows in Stacey Bushes on the site of an old sheltered housing scheme. It is Council housing, but a housing association is doing all the work to build it to wheelchair standards and then hand it over to the Council. There are three bus stops, a shop, a community centre, and surgery nearby. The Council are evaluating three tenders for building the bungalows and hoping to decide which one to go with by November. After that they hope to get planning permission in March. These houses are purpose built for wheelchair users and so will not need later adaptations. This housing will be for people of any age. Jim Reid asked that it be checked that doors in this housing are wide enough to take different types and sizes of wheelchairs. Paul said he and Cathy Caves would be glad to come back again to work with DAG on this once they have a design identified. Ros Bloor and Jim as agreed with this.”

Case Study 9:
Disability Advisory Group

“The DAG is how we have our say. All the areas of disability not just one”
Paul Smith, Chief Executive, Spinal Injuries Association
Overview
The Council has a programme for the updating and development of employment policies and procedures on a planned basis, e.g. a new Dignity at work policy was developed to replace Harassment and Bullying in 2012. Often small, easily missed policy requirements can lead to a great risk of discrimination.

The Council’s pension discretions policy was required to be significantly updated to meet revised pension regulations. In the course of the process it was clear that there was the potential for three of the revised discretions to be age discriminatory. Therefore, a process was implemented to ensure that the content was amended.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
A range of new and revised pension discretions were required to be implemented including three that had the potential to be age discriminatory e.g. regarding the early payment of pension benefits between age 55 and 60.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was written alongside the policy draft. There was a consultation process and the draft policy and EqIA was considered by the Council’s legal department and Corporate Equality & Diversity Officer. This led to changes being made to the draft policy.

These changes may seem small but the implications could have been wide. The changes ensure that every request for flexible retirement, for example, is considered by taking account of the whole range of relevant business factors, including cost factors.

Also there was a concern with the words “case by case basis” in consideration of flexible retirements: that this could introduce indirect discrimination without a system of ensuring that a consistent approach. The policy was amended: all decisions are still made by the service Assistant Director (AD), but they would consult with the AD Human Resources: “whose role will include monitoring decisions to ensure consistency”. The policy was considered, welcomed and agreed by the Council’s Joint Negotiating Committee.

Key Activities
- Identifying the possibility of discriminatory impact of policy
- Consider the risks within EqIA
- Consultation
- Amend policy to ensure that risk of discrimination is avoided or minimised
- Agreement of the Joint Council Committee obtained

Impact
The Pension Policy is just one example of HR policies that has been updated with equalities issues considered and the policy amended. These include policies that have an immediate impact on employees e.g. absence and grievance. However, as the pension discretions policy has only recently been agreed and there are relatively few applications made in a year the impact has been not yet been felt.
Case Study 11:
Health Needs Assessment

Overview
Recognition that health needs assessments were needed to capture the changes in Milton Keynes led to work between Milton Keynes Council and Public Health (now a service of the Council) on two Health Needs Assessments: for the Black and Minority Ethnic and LGBT communities.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
It is recognised that there is a lack of knowledge about Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities in Milton Keynes and their specific health needs. Along with this driver, national evidence citing specific needs and poorer health outcomes, of BME populations, when compared to the general population, along with local anecdotal evidence that micro populations within the BME group may be experiencing barriers to accessing health care and a lack of real insight and understanding of these issues, is the rationale for this health needs assessment.

It is often assumed that LGBT people’s health and well-being needs are the same as their heterosexual counterparts, except for specific needs relating to sexual health. However, the evidence base suggests this group experience discrimination on a wide range of levels. This can lead to a range of health problems, such as alcohol and drug abuse, depression, suicide and self-harm, as well as problems around housing and employment.

Key Activities
• A comprehensive health needs assessment of the LGBT population within Milton Keynes including evidence based recommendations based on local qualitative and quantitative research. Broken down by sexual orientation/identity and age
• A comprehensive health needs assessment of the BME population within Milton Keynes including evidence based recommendations based on local qualitative and quantitative research

Impact
These Health Needs Assessments have been completed with local community group participation. It has highlighted issues within the community and led to a great awareness from the wider community.

The addition of these health needs will be included in the JSNA and this will inform Clinical Commissioning decisions.

Milton Keynes Health and Well-being Strategy (2012 -21015) includes strategic aims to improve wellbeing, reduce deaths and tackle major diseases and reduce health inequalities. It is impossible to meet these strategic aims without fully understanding the needs of different groups within the population.

As a consequence one of the key principles underpinning the strategy is to better identify and respond to the needs of different groups within our population. This has led to greater inclusion in well being projects and greater scrutiny of for example; leisure participation data.
Overview
Milton Keynes Council recognised that there is a group of people who incur greater necessary day to day living costs than others due to either the characteristics of the individual (such as a disability or their age), the household or the nature of the property itself and that these people may require additional support.

Challenges: Analysis and Barriers
Earlier assessment highlighted three groups who would not necessary be able to work themselves out of the vulnerability:

- People with a disability who were on the support element of Employment and Support Allowance
- Lone parents with a child with a disability
- Lone parents with a child under 3 years old

However these groups are not homogenous and there are examples of people even amongst these most vulnerable groups being able to work and support themselves.

The Council considered are two different approaches to vulnerability supported by equality activity.

One is the approach that works with broad groups, advancing equality through positive action. This is the approach that some councils have taken to their support scheme. However this approach can itself result in inequalities; the needs of one group are considered, whilst people falling into another group are excluded, not on the basis of need but on the basis of their being a part of a group. This could lead to discrimination based on disability, age, or gender.

However the Council took the view that vulnerability could not be adequately encapsulated by providing for a reduction for a whole group of people, but must be considered on an individual basis so that support can meet the needs of those who have exceptional individual circumstances or hardship, rather than it being linked to a criteria or characteristic.

Key Activities
- Council adopted the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme with a discretionary fund
- The Council’s scheme takes the view of vulnerability by individual circumstances rather by group.
- The approach was backed up with an intense communication campaign and easy to read documents.

Impact
This approach is proving to meet the needs of those in severe difficulties whatever their individual characteristics.

A discretionary fund has been set up also for Housing Benefit which means that the Council can be flexible with people circumstances. For example a person in a adapted home will not be forced to move.

However, this policy is only a couple of months old and while an open definition of “exceptional financial hardship and personal circumstances” has been adopted, monitoring of the impact continues.