

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING

Did the equality frameworks for local government support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming programme between 2001- 2014?

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ABSTRACT

This study critically analyses the following research question: 'Did the equality frameworks for local government support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming programme between 2001- 2014?' To date, the literature has not considered the contribution that equality frameworks have made to equality and diversity mainstreaming. Thus, this thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge in this area. The concept of equality and diversity mainstreaming emerged in the 1990's and poses challenges on several levels. Not least, that there are varying definitions of equality and diversity mainstreaming; and that differing views exist as to how equality and diversity mainstreaming can be measured or assessed.

The research uses a post-positivist qualitative paradigm, which includes mixed methods, including: survey of fourteen local authorities who had achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework for local government; documentary analysis; and case studies, involving three local authorities that agreed to take part in the study. To help answer the research question, six analytical questions are used to provide more focus to gathering data amongst the three local authorities. This reveals that the equality frameworks did offer the three local authorities a performance 'tool' to progress their equality and diversity mainstreaming work, and that all three local authorities can demonstrate progress against the various performance areas of the Equality Framework. However, the findings also reveal that the equality frameworks did not support local authorities to fully achieve equality and diversity mainstreaming as they were expected to do, largely due to differences in how each authority interpreted equality and diversity mainstreaming. Moreover, the performance management review schemes that the local authorities are using have limitations in their applications. Both of these findings clarify why equality frameworks are not achieving all of their stated aims. As well as suggestions for future research, the findings will be of interest to academic and policy actors, with the cross case study analysis providing a foundation to better understand the role equality frameworks can make to equality and diversity mainstreaming.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research question for this thesis and its rationale, which offers original contribution to knowledge relating to equality frameworks and equality and diversity mainstreaming. This would be achieved by answering the following research question:

“Did the equality frameworks for local government support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming programme between 2001 - 2014?”

To help answer the research question, six analytical questions are used, which provide an opportunity to delve further to answer the research question. The six analytical questions are:

- Analytical question one: What journey had the local authority taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, incorporating the challenges of different demographics, structures and policies?
- Analytical question two: How did the local authority assess their equality and diversity mainstreaming, and support employees' to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance?
- Analytical question three: What performance management review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective?
- Analytical question four: Had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems encountered by the local authorities when doing this?
- Analytical question five: What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?
- Analytical question six: What ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?

The first two analytical questions will examine the journey and assessment of progress by the local authorities towards equality and diversity mainstreaming. The next two analytical questions will examine the performance management review schemes used by the local authorities and whether equality and diversity competencies have been integrated within these schemes and any problems that the local authorities faced when attempting this. The final two analytical questions will examine how the local authorities met the five performance areas of the Equality Framework and whether they perceive this is supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity.

Original contribution to knowledge

Equality frameworks for local government have been in existence since 1995, and for the period of the research for this thesis 2001-2014, there existed the Equality Standard for local government, which was the first time that local government in England had developed a generic equality framework. Whilst the CRE's Standard came earlier in 1995, its focus on just one equality strand: race, limited its scope to how many local authorities saw it as useful for them, especially if the local authority had a small Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic population. Between 2001- 2014 the Equality Standard for local government was implemented by local authorities in England, and there were several updates to the Standard in order to make it more 'fit for purpose'. However, during this period, and indeed up to 2020, there has not been a critical examination of the impact of the equality frameworks on equality and diversity mainstreaming. The original purpose of the equality frameworks was to support local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity in all areas of their work, covering both workforce and employment issues as well as how well the local authority provided services to its communities. The Equality Standard offered a 'tool' which would guide the local authorities in what they should be doing with regard to equality and diversity. The fact that there has not been any detailed research in this area seems to suggest that there is an 'assumption' that the equality frameworks by its very nature contribute to equality and diversity mainstreaming, and any local authority progressing through the various levels of the frameworks inherently will achieve greater equality and diversity mainstreaming. This may be the case, but there is no research to demonstrate this.

Therefore, this thesis presents the first comprehensive piece of research which critically examines the following:

“Did the equality frameworks for local government support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming programme between 2001 - 2014?”

The research for this thesis was undertaken between 2013- 2014, and therefore this was the upper time limit for the research and the natural start was 2001, when the Equality Standard for local government was launched. The research could have been started earlier to incorporate the CRE Standard, however, research has already been undertaken on this by Clarke and Speeden (2000), therefore my research would not have added much more than the comprehensive research already undertaken. Another unique feature of this research and further original contribution to knowledge is the focus on performance management review schemes, and in particular the use of equality and diversity competencies, and whether local authorities were using this to help it achieve progress in the equality frameworks and equality and diversity mainstreaming and this been one of the lasting legacies of this research with the Equality Framework for local government explicitly incorporating equality and diversity competencies within the updated Equality Framework for local government in 2014, and the work undertaken for this thesis provided feedback for this to occur (Local Government Association (LGA), 2014).

Theoretical underpinnings to the research

Equality frameworks for local government were first introduced in 1995, with the Commission for Race Equality's (CRE) 'A Standard for Racial Equality in local government' (Race Equality Standard), which focused on race equality (CRE, 1995). Subsequently, the Employers Organisation introduced in 2001, the Equality Standard for local government, which covered the equality strands of gender, disability and race. This Standard operated until 2010, when it was updated and renamed the Equality Framework for local government and underwent further updates in 2014 and 2018. Whilst the Equality Framework for local government is still being used by local authorities, there has not been any research into its impact on equality and diversity mainstreaming. This thesis is the first known piece of research on the equality frameworks that were used by local authorities between 2001– 2014 and significantly contributes to knowledge in this area.

Local authorities have been at the forefront of work to improve equality and diversity for more than fifty years and significant progress had been made by local authorities towards equality and diversity mainstreaming of policies and practice, which contributes to them being seen a good practice proponents in the services they provide and as an employer. However, the concept 'equality and diversity mainstreaming' has resulted in debates as to what constitutes 'equality and diversity mainstreaming'. The emergence of the discussions on mainstreaming equality and diversity are relatively recent and the Scottish Executive (2003) felt that after Britain joined what was then the European Community in 1973, Europe became a new force for equality development in the UK. Within this development, equality and diversity mainstreaming gained its current high profile as a concept and a strategy for taking forward equality work as a result of developments at international, European and UK level. At global level, the United Nations explicitly endorsed and promoted the concept of gender mainstreaming in the 'Platform for Action'¹, which was adopted at the end of the 1995 United Nations fourth world conference on women at Beijing. The principles of gender mainstreaming were expanded to include other dimensions of discrimination as a result of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) which put equality between women and men, and amongst different social groups, as a core objective. It committed European Union member states to combat discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation (Scottish Executive, 2003).

O' Cinneide (2003:6) argues that the political impetus that had driven the introduction of comprehensive gender mainstreaming had not been present in respect of many of other grounds, and throughout the European Union (EU), the mainstreaming of ethnic or minority perspectives in particular had been implemented only via very ad hoc procedures involving consultation with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). The UK remained the exception in this respect, with race equality mainstreaming having been introduced at local and national levels of government from the early 1990s, through the development of the Commission for Racial Equality's 'Racial equality means quality' Standard in 1995. (CRE, 1995). Additionally, at local government level in the UK, mainstreaming was initially promoted by the statutory equalities agencies: the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), all of which later merged into the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), following the Equality Act 2006 (O' Cinneide, 2003:6).

¹ The 'Platform for Action' was an agenda for women's empowerment (Scottish Executive, 2003).

Whilst the concept of equality and diversity mainstreaming is fairly new, another challenge for this thesis was to define what is meant by 'equality and diversity mainstreaming'. Commentators, such as Yeandle et al (2008) note that there is a conceptual confusion around the topic of mainstreaming equality and diversity and that mainstreaming, as a term, is used loosely and vaguely. Sometimes, it is referred to as a strategy or approach and sometimes it is referred to as a method. These confusions can be overcome if mainstreaming is understood, as it had been promoted by the European Commission, as a dual strategy. It needs simultaneously to provide both the strategy and methods for achieving equality (Yeandle et al, 2008). A number of organisations have been working to establish definitions and to draw upon developing practice and experience to outline frameworks or guidelines for mainstreaming equality and diversity. The most widely known definitions were all primarily concerned with gender mainstreaming. The Council of Europe (2008:15) adopted the following definition of gender mainstreaming: 'Gender mainstreaming was the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that gender equality perspective was incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making'.

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC, 1995) framework document on 'mainstreaming gender equality in local government' notes that 'Mainstreaming is the integration of equal opportunities into all policy development, implementation, evaluation and review processes...mainstreaming involves making equal opportunities the responsibility of a wide range of actors including politicians and external partners' (EOC, 1995). There were debates and disagreements about what a mainstreaming strategy might entail and the relative merits and drawbacks of having such a strategy. In particular, it had been identified as a strategy that can without care degenerate into tokenism, where public commitment is given in principle, but where in practice little concrete or specific results were achieved. Rees (1998:3-4), states that mainstreaming equality is generally defined as 'the incorporation of equal opportunities issues into all actions, programmes and policies from the outset, which in turn would lead to the improvement in services and employment practices'. Therefore, in order to develop a mainstreaming strategy, there needed to be a thorough understanding of the definition of equality and diversity mainstreaming.

For Rees (1998:3-4), the barriers faced by people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, disabled people and women can be different. For example, a barrier to work for a BME person might be that English was not their first language, for a mother it might

be a lack of child-care provision and for a disabled person it may be inaccessible premises. It could also be that the needs of different groups (or even of different members within each group) did not coincide and that the barriers to equality they confronted were fundamentally unlike and required differing forms of intervention. By removing barriers for some people, it may create barriers for others. If so, to mainstream equality for all would present significant challenges, generating a competition between equality groups where some would benefit and others would lose out.

While the 'Platform for Action' had understood equality and diversity mainstreaming to be about gender equality only, its real potential lay in the fact that it could be implemented so that it addressed inequalities based on all nine protected characteristics, as described in the Equality Act 2010². Riddell et al (2005:1-2) state that although governments and some political groups are in favour of mainstreaming equality and diversity, a number of questions have been raised about its practicality and legitimacy. These include a lack of clarity about the concept of mainstreaming and what it might entail, with some proponents defining it as a strategy, whilst others see it primarily in terms of the universal principles which should be applied to all aspects of equality policy. Another challenge for this thesis was how equality and diversity mainstreaming is either measured or assessed. The Audit Commission (2010) developed a set of performance indicators to measure how local authorities were performing on equality and diversity. These performance indicators did not appear to cover the whole spectrum of equality and diversity and seemed somewhat random in their selection. Within these indicators, there was a mixture of those that could be measured and those that were mainly assessed. An example of an indicator to be assessed was 'the level the local authority had achieved in the Equality Standard for local government', whilst an indicator that could be measured was 'over 65's helped to live at home'. The latter being a numeric assessment, whilst the former involved 'subjective' as well as 'objective' assessments. A more detailed discussion of this is undertaken in chapter 2 of this thesis.

Whilst the debates on what equality and diversity mainstreaming is and how it should be achieved developed, there was also developments in how the public management and governance of local government occurred. McLaughlin et al., (2002:7-9) describe the late nineteenth century as the first stage of the development of public management. Government provision was seen as minimal, with the majority of public services located in

² The nine protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 are: Age, Sex, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion & Belief, Race, Gender re-assignment, Marital status or civil partnership, and Pregnancy or maternity (EHRC, 2010).

the charity sector, or through private provision. The second stage of public management, commencing in the early twentieth century, is best characterised as that of unequal partnerships between government and charity sectors, where the government provided a basic minimum of essential provision. The third stage is that of the 'welfare state', which in the UK began in 1945. The final stage for McLaughlin et al., (2002:7-9), from the late 1970s is that of the 'pluralist state', which was critical of the 'welfare state', which was now seen as the inefficient and ineffective provider of services, and the solution was the privatisation and marketisation of these services. Chandler (2009:13-29) also identifies the development of local government from the 19th century as starting piecemeal and then gradually increasing in size and responsibility through various legislation, and which was only reversed post 1979.

Towards the end of the 1970s, Rhodes (1999:13) observed that Britain has been subject to local governance, rather than local government. This was to emphasise that local authorities do not have a unique role in supplying the needs of their communities. The government of a locality involves many non-elected agencies such as health trusts, education academies, and housing associations. Also, private as well as public agencies are also involved in the provision of public services through the supply of services such as gas, water and electricity. This transition was to develop further in the 1980s and for Bovaird and Loeffler (2009:15), public expenditure in the UK increased rapidly after 1945, as the 'welfare state' in its various forms became widespread. However, by the late 1970s, budget deficits provided a major motive for public sector reforms.

In the 1980s, the drivers of change, particularly the financial pressures, led Britain towards a focus on making the public sector 'lean and more competitive while at the same time, trying to make public administration more responsive to citizen's needs by offering value for money, choice flexibility, and transparency. This movement was later known as 'new public management' (NPM), which is described as having seven doctrines: a focus on hands on and entrepreneurial management; explicit standards and measures of performance; an emphasis on output controls; the importance of the disaggregation and decentralisation of public services; a shift to the promotion of competition in the provision of public services; a stress on private sector styles of management and their superiority; and the promotion of discipline and control in resource allocation (Hood, 1991). However, following the recession of 2008, a number of authors became more critical of NPM. Rhodes (2015) reflecting on NPM and New Public Governance (NPG) argues that there has been a shift from the New Public Management

(NPM) to the New Public Governance (NPG), and reform after reform, with no time for the intended changes to take effect, no evaluation, and no clear evidence of either success or failure. Rather, 'we are left with the dilemmas created by the overlapping residues of past reforms. So, we need to take stock of where we have come from. We need to look back to look forward'. This is further examined in chapter 3.

The developments in public management and governance also shaped the way local authorities managed their services and staff and from the 1980s, the development of performance management and reviews, as well as competency frameworks provided the tools for human resource managers to usher in a new phase of performance management. For Whiddett and Hollyforde (2005:75) competencies can make significant contributions to each area of a performance appraisal, such as establishing levels of performance, identifying needs for performance improvement, identifying development potential and discussing career interests/direction. Whiddett and Hollyforde (2005:77) further state that competencies provide a format for collecting evidence of behavioural performance and that competency based job profiles should be developed through discussion with existing job holders and their managers. If a competency based job profile already exists, the job holder and manager should discuss and check that this is still relevant.

With regard to the use of performance management review schemes within local authorities, this had generated much discussion and tensions within the multiple agendas and purposes of appraisals. Boswell and Boudreau (2000: 283-299) made a clear distinction between two types of functions for performance review schemes. Firstly, there were many tensions within the multiple agendas and purposes of performance reviews and its evaluative functions, including its use for salary administration, promotion decisions, retention/ termination decisions, recognition of individual performance and identification of poor performance. This suggests the appraiser having to take the role of the 'judge'. Secondly, its developmental functions include the identification of individual training needs, providing performance feedback, determining transfers and attachments, identification of individual strengths and weaknesses. For this developmental function, the appraiser assumes the role of a coach or mentor.

A 2005 Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) performance management survey in the UK highlights that, while there has been a broadening in purpose and the linking of some of these different processes designed to impact on performance, the main purpose of the performance management process largely revolves around personal

objective setting and appraisal against objectives. This is included in the process in 90 per cent of cases. For Armstrong and Baron (2004), the focus of performance management is primarily on aspects such as recognition, constructive feedback, personal development and career opportunities. However, there will always be tension within management which has to satisfy both the interests of the organisation and those of the employee. Employees' may demand a career where there was scope for development and progression, whilst organisations may need to ensure they have the right people in the right jobs and are building a talent pool for the future.

In contrast to this, Coens and Jenkins (2002) highlight the problems with performance review schemes, which had led them to call for the abolition of the process or a renewed focus on its core elements. Their experience in North America led to them calling for the abolishment of performance reviews, citing regular failings in development planning, objective setting and 360 degree feedback as their main reasons. Instead, Coens and Jenkins (2002) advocate broader performance management approaches focused on customer outcomes and a simplification of the complex mix of processes often tied up inside performance appraisal. However, Gratton and Ghoshal (2002) argue that the emphasis should be on the core of the performance review and development process, which was about 'improving the quality of conversations', rather than going through 'dehydrated rituals', with open and honest leaders setting the example for a learning culture within the organisation.

Furthermore, Cunneen (2006:1) highlight the issue of managers and employees' simply going through the motions of the performance review schemes when he stated: 'Not only do managers dislike carrying out performance appraisals but many admit that it is the most dreaded task in their calendar. Too often, it led to a shallow discussion, with both parties colluding to meet the organisation's prescribed administrative procedure and, in doing so, avoiding the more fundamental issue of performance improvement'. These potential failings of appraisals had led to the development of new approaches to performance management. Hurst (2009) outlines two strands in the performance management approaches, firstly, a very structured and controlled backward-looking review approach which is 'done' to employees' and a much more inclusive, forward-looking approach involving the employee which supports their development and links into the organisation's needs and values. But as Cannell (2006) argues, there will still need to be a conversation to both reflect on past performance and to look forward. Armstrong and Baron (2004) also note the shift in terminology from performance appraisal to performance management, which they believed indicates a wider shift in the philosophy

and content of the process: 'Performance appraisal has a reputation as a punitive, top-down control device, an unloved system. Performance management is a holistic, total approach to engaging everyone in the organisation in a continuous process, to improve everyone and their performance, and thereby the performance of the whole organisation'.

Another problem in performance management is highlighted by Colville & Millner (2011:35), who recognise that 'a trap that organisations can fall into is not recognising that the implementation of performance management is a change process. Too often, organisations 'just look over the fence at what others are doing and do the same'. They argue that this practice is reasonable but it needs to be coupled with an understanding of how the process will 'deliver organisational strategy and vision'. In order to achieve this, they argue human resources officials need to have an awareness of the 'current state', the 'desired state' of the organisation and 'its processes'. Grint (1993) is even more scathing of the implementation of performance appraisals '*Rarely in the history of management can a system have promised so much and delivered so little.*' In addition to Grint (1993), there are plenty of criticisms in other standard performance management texts, such as: Armstrong and Ward (2005); Armstrong and Baron (2004); and Fletcher (2001). The key criticism of these authors is focused on the process design, the execution of the process, and the managers who conduct the process.

This then posed further challenges for this thesis, in that, the above named authors feel that performance management review schemes have not delivered what they set out to do and leads to the question 'how would performance management reviews contribute to equality and diversity mainstreaming, when they have been seen to fail to deliver on performance improvement of employees?' However, critics of performance management reviews tend to be silent on what should replace them and according to Redman and Wilkinson (2009:188), performance appraisals will continue to be used, although they will need to be continually reviewed to ensure its effectiveness. Despite the issues raised by the critics of appraisals, there is evidence that performance management and reviews are here to stay, probably because of its centrality to day-to day management. Many problems cited by critics have largely been resolved and over 70 per cent of employees now use annual appraisal. More than half of respondents in the Industrial Relations Survey (IRS) survey (2003) had planned to improve the system by altering the documentation and many thought that it was an essential management tool, so long as it was under continual review (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2006:199).

Whilst performance management reviews and equality and diversity competencies are now being incorporated in local authority performance management processes, there also emerged over the last twenty five years a performance management tool that was designed to support local authorities to achieve equality and diversity mainstreaming. This performance management tool was the equality frameworks for local government. In the mid-1990s, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) (1995) developed its 'Racial equality means quality' Standard, which attempted to assist local authorities to mainstream race equality into their day to day work. This concept of having a Standard with varying levels that help local authorities to progress through achieving various actions was further developed with the introduction in 2001 of the Equality Standard for local government (Employers Organisation, 2001). This Standard was the first attempt to provide local authorities with a way to mainstream equality and diversity policy and practice across more than one protected characteristic in a systematic way and with guidelines to assess progress.

Local authorities subsequently went about trying to implement the Equality Standard, and over a period of time some local authorities managed to achieve the highest level of the Standard (which by 2014, had undergone a few updates to make it more streamline and with fewer levels to achieve). By 2014, when research for this thesis was being undertaken, fourteen local authorities had achieved the highest level 'Excellent' of the Equality Framework (formerly Equality Standard). The achievement of the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework demonstrated to the Framework's guardian's, the Local Government Association (LGA) that the local authority had developed sufficient equality policies and practices, and achieved significant progress to warrant the award of being an 'Excellent' local authority, which had developed equality and diversity policy and practice, in the way it employed people and the services it provided (LGA, 2014).

Prior to 2014, the Equality Framework did not specifically include a criterion for using equality and diversity competencies within performance review schemes. However, as a result of the work on this thesis by the author, the representatives within the LGA who oversaw the administration of the Equality Framework felt that the use of equality and diversity competencies within performance management reviews needed to be incorporated within the updated Equality Framework and following the review of the Equality Framework in 2014, there was an inclusion of a criterion for local authorities to demonstrate how they were incorporating equality and diversity competencies within their performance management review schemes. This was a significant achievement for the research being undertaken for this thesis, in managing to get recognition that it was

relevant for the Equality Framework to include a requirement for local authorities to include equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes. However, the question still remained that 'did the equality frameworks for local government support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming programme between 2001 - 2014?' The completion of the research for this thesis would significantly add to the limited data that exists around the impact of the equality frameworks in supporting local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity, and in particular the use of performance management review schemes and equality competencies to support the implementation of the equality frameworks.

Methodological considerations

The research for this thesis was underpinned by a number of methodological considerations, which Creswell (2013) argues comprises three main categories with which research approaches are organised, and include: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods of research. Dumke (2002) believes that research philosophy is mainly characterised by two views: positivism and phenomenology and Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) go further and mention that under a qualitative positivist paradigm, the research focuses on meanings, trying to understand what is happening, looking at the totality of each situation and developing ideas through information from data. To achieve this multiple methods are used to establish different views of phenomena by having small samples investigated in depth over time. However, due to the restrictions in time and the exploratory purpose of the research, it would not be possible for me to undertake the depth of research required and comparative analysis of different hypothesis that Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) describe. Therefore, I will use a post-positivist qualitative philosophy using mixed methods approach to answer the research question of this thesis.

Subsequently, A rationale was developed to determine the methods for undertaking the research, which includes how many and which local authorities would form part of the research for the thesis. The method I used was identifying those local authorities that had achieved the highest level of the Equality Framework for local government during February 2013 - November 2014 and approach them to take part in the research. As of November 2014, fourteen local authorities had been externally assessed to have achieved the highest level of the Equality Framework, the 'Excellent' level (LGA, 2014). Of these, four local authorities agreed to take part in the research, although, one had to withdraw early in the process, and the methodology for undertaking the research with the

remaining three local authorities is further described in chapter 6 and includes adopting a case study approach, using the six analytical questions highlighted earlier in this chapter. Chapters seven, eight and nine present the findings of the case studies, and chapter 10 presents a cross case study analysis of the responses to the six analytical questions and provides an answer to the research question.

Personal interest in this thesis

A major motivation for me undertaking the thesis in the subject area chosen was when as a lead officer for equality and diversity within a local authority, I came across the CRE's 'Race Equality Standard' and set about using the standard to improve the local authority's equality and diversity performance and mainstreaming. Whilst the CRE standard only focused on race, I expanded this to incorporate the two other equality and diversity strands, that of gender and disability. After two years of self- assessing against the CRE standard, the local authority I worked for reported that we had achieved level two (with level 5 being the highest level). A few years later in 2003, I joined the Employers Organisation for local government, and one of my tasks was to support local authorities to implement the Equality Standard for local government. I was there at the very start of this process, as local authorities were reporting what level they had achieved and were continuing to use the equality framework to improve their equality and diversity mainstreaming.

In 2006 when the Employers Organisation (EO) for local government embarked on producing a national competency framework for local authorities, some employees from local authorities also requested guidance on how to embed equality and diversity within competency frameworks. The EO subsequently undertook further consultations with local authorities to determine how best equality and diversity competencies could be incorporated into performance management review schemes and help support the implementation of the Equality Standard for local government. However, the EO was disbanded soon after and progress on this work halted. So, when the opportunity arose to undertake a PhD, I was keen to follow up on the two issues that interested me: how well the equality frameworks were helping local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity; and whether equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes could also assist this mainstreaming. An initial literature review undertaken highlighted that there was very little information on these areas and

therefore the thesis would contribute to new knowledge on the research question for this thesis.

Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 analyses the emergence of equality and diversity legislation after the 1960s to the current day and the chapter then provides various discussions around defining what is meant by equality and diversity, in particular those that align to the liberal egalitarian approach and those that support the multicultural and managing diversity approaches, as well as those that advocated for a generic equality and diversity approach. The chapter continues by analysing the emergence of equality and diversity policy and practice in the 1990s, initially around gender mainstreaming and subsequently expanding to cover other protected characteristics. The chapter continues by examining the development of equality and diversity mainstreaming in local authorities through the introduction of equality standard/frameworks and the emergence of questions of how to assess or measure the mainstreaming of equality and diversity. Furthermore, Chapter 2 highlights the limitations in the use of the terminology around mainstreaming, as there does not appear to be a universally recognised definition of what mainstreaming is and how to assess it. There is also the difficulty of what methodology a researcher uses to assess or measure something that was not easily defined. In order to address this question, this thesis will examine the different definitions that exist and attempt to present a definition that could be widely accepted. Also, the thesis will attempt to identify how best to assess or measure equality and diversity mainstreaming. This thesis will only examine the equality and diversity mainstreaming within local authorities, primarily due to the amount of work since the 1990's they had undertaken and the experience that the researcher has acquired by working in and with local authorities over the last 25 years. Most of this period being spent either leading equality and diversity work within a local authority or enabling the mainstreaming of equality and diversity in work streams within local authorities that the researcher was involved with.

Chapter 3 examines the emergence of the role of local government since the last century and in particular post 1979. The chapter traces the emergence of public management and governance concepts that shaped the way local government delivered its services, and how this substantially changed post 1979 when new public management and new public governance were the prevailing political theories that shaped the way local government's role in delivering and managing services was undertaken. The chapter reviews how local

authorities post 1979 went from being 'direct' deliverers of services to becoming 'enablers' of services. The chapter also presents the argument that new public management has not achieved what it set out to do and that a new public governance is shaping the way local authorities are delivering and managing services, especially after the 2008 global recession.

Chapter 4 critically examines the way performance has been assessed or measured within organisations and examines the development of performance review schemes, including the advantages and disadvantages of their application. The chapter also critically analyses whether equality and diversity has been embedded within performance review schemes within local authorities and whether this offered a way forward to mainstreaming equality and diversity. The chapter further explores the use of performance management review schemes, starting with early measures of performance and an analysis of the development of performance management review schemes, and whether equality and diversity competencies have been embedded within these. The chapter presents the criticisms of performance management and appraisals and suggests how performance management review schemes could be implemented more effectively. Chapter 4 also traces the emergence of competency frameworks and how they were introduced within businesses to improve the performance of employees. The chapter then examines the inclusion of equality and diversity competencies within competency frameworks and whether this can contribute to mainstreaming equality and diversity. The chapter concludes by examining the strengths and weaknesses of using competencies and competency frameworks and discusses the future of performance management and review schemes and competencies and whether they are here to stay or whether they will disappear.

Chapter 5 explores the emergence of equality frameworks and the rationale for these and how they have been constructed and what they are designed to achieve. The chapter then reviews the Equality Standard for local government and its subsequent replacement the Equality Framework and critically analyses whether this offered local authorities a way to mainstream equality and diversity. The chapter also critically examines the limitations and successes of the equality frameworks.

Chapter 6 outlines the methodological and ethical approaches to the research and critically examines the theories underpinning the post-positivist qualitative mixed methods epistemological position that was adopted for the research and the different methods that were adopted. The chapter also explains why the case study approach was used and

how the three local authorities were selected to take part in the research. The local authorities taking part in the case studies were asked to provide information against six analytical questions, which would initially enable an examination of each of the local authorities against the six analytical questions, and subsequently a cross case study analysis to be undertaken, which would lead to the answering of the research question.

Chapter 7 presents an examination of the case studies in relation to the first two analytical questions: What journey had the local authority taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, incorporating the challenges of different demographics, structures and policies?; and how did the local authority assess their equality and diversity mainstreaming, and support employees' to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance?

Chapter 8 presents an examination of the case studies in relation to the next two analytical questions: What performance management review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective; and had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems encountered by the local authorities when doing this?

Chapter 9 presents an examination of the case studies in relation to the final two analytical questions: What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?; and what ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?.

Finally, chapter 10 presents a cross case study analysis of the six analytical questions and provides a critical analysis of how this answers the research question. The chapter begins with an overview of the emergence of equality frameworks and how these were shaped by the political developments occurring in local government. The chapter then provides a detailed cross case study analysis of each of the analytical questions, and then proceeds to answer the research question, offering a critical examination of the findings from the research. The chapter also outlines how this thesis has made an original contribution to knowledge, and makes suggestions on what further research could be undertaken to add to the knowledge presented by this thesis.

2.0 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY MAINSTREAMING THEORIES AND APPROACHES

Introduction

This chapter will critically analyse the discourses around equality and diversity in the last century, outlining the legislation, policy and practices that shaped how equality and diversity would be viewed and implemented in England. The chapter examines the concept of 'mainstreaming equality and diversity' and what factors led to its introduction and subsequent ways of being implemented. The chapter also critically examines whether the implementation of equality and diversity mainstreaming is as successful as it had been intended.

The multiple inequalities agenda emerged in the UK around 2003, marking a third phase in Britain's equality institutional framework. The first phase had focused on anti-discrimination measures, while the second took on gender mainstreaming responsibilities as part of a twin-track approach. Between 1975 and 1997, the UK's equality regime was characterised by an equal treatment and anti-discrimination legislative framework designed to remedy group discrimination, introduced in preparation for joining the European Union. The UK also introduced the Equal Pay Act of 1970, the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 (SDA), and the Race Relations Act (RRA) of 1976, which fell into the anti-discrimination perspectives. The election in 1997 of a Labour government ushered in a second twin-track phase in UK equality legislation in which gender and race continued to be the focus on equality laws and institutions, but which witnessed the augmentation of anti-discrimination legislation by gender mainstreaming. This was echoed, in relation to race, with the introduction of policies to address 'institutional racism' following the publication of the Macpherson report in 1999. The Macpherson report followed an inquiry into the Metropolitan police's investigation of the murder of a black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, in April 1993 (Squires, 2009).

The principle of gender mainstreaming, which was launched at the UN conference on women in Beijing in 1995, required policymakers to reorganise, develop and evaluate policy processes in order to incorporate a gender equality perspective (Council of Europe, 1998). The institutional manifestation of the UK commitment to gender mainstreaming was to be found in the creation of the Women's Unit (WU) and a Minister for Women in 1997. Whereas the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), a quasi-autonomous state agency, was charged with working to end sex discrimination, the WU, a cross-cutting unit

within Whitehall, was created to ensure a coordinated approach to gender equality across government departments (Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2002).

However, both forms of mainstreaming were subsequently eclipsed by the 'The Equality Institutions Review', launched in 2002, whereby the UK manifested a growing concern with diversity and a move towards an integrated approach to multiple-equality strands. This shift inevitably entails the demise of a distinct legislative and institutional focus on race and gender equality and with it the justification for separate policy agencies. Since the introduction of the SDA and RRA in the mid-1970s, and the creation of the EOC and CRE to oversee these laws, the UK's equalities system had been characterised by a twin focus on sex and race that developed in parallel, but pursued distinct agendas and developed separate equality guarantees. The introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 and the establishment of the Disability Rights Commission in 2000 added a third strand to the UK equality framework, but also signalled the beginning of the end of this separate strand approach, compelling the Government to rethink its equality institutions and law (Squires, 2009).

Following extensive consultation, the Labour Government announced in October 2003, that it planned to establish a single equality body, which would replace the three existing equality commissions, bringing together work related to several different aspects of equality, including age, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion and gender, and for the first time provide institutional support for human rights. The suggestion was clear: moving from separate equality commissions to a single equality body would improve recognition of 'intersectionality' (Squires, 2009). The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a non-departmental public body, formally opened on 1 October 2007. Squires (2009) notes that the EHRC has the aim of:

- championing equality and human rights for all
- eliminating discrimination; reducing inequality
- ensuring that everyone has a fair chance to participate in society.

Squires (2009), also observes that the introduction of new equality legislation was primarily to implement European employment directives that outlaw discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability and age in employment and vocational training in the UK. This includes the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations of 2003 and the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations of 2003. This legislation was further supplemented by the Equality Bill (published 19 May 2005), which not only defined the purposes and functions of the new single equality body,

but proposed that discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief be unlawful, and recommended the creation of a duty on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity between women and men, and to prohibit sex discrimination in the exercise of public functions. The gender equality duty was introduced following the amendment of the Race Relations Act in 2001 to give public authorities a new statutory duty to promote race equality, and the subsequent establishment of the Disability Equality Duty, which came into effect 5 December 2006. The EOC saw this as the most significant change in sex equality law in the 30 years, since the Sex Discrimination Act came into force (EOC, 2004).

A further key change takes the form of the simplification of equality legislation via the establishment of a single equality bill, which would simplify discrimination law. To make this happen, the Discrimination Law Review (DLR) was launched in February 2005. It was led by the Government Equality Office (GEO) and culminated with the publication in June 2007 of the consultation paper 'A Framework for Fairness: Proposals for an Equality Bill for Great Britain', which outlined the DLR's proposals to simplify, modernise and increase the effectiveness of discrimination law (Squires, 2009). The consultation focused on the scope for harmonising and simplifying current law, its terms of reference stressing that a key priority was to seek to achieve greater consistency in the protection afforded to different groups and that that different legal approaches may be appropriate for different groups (GEO, 2008). Its work resulted in the publication on the 24th April 2009 of an Equality Bill, and subsequently the Equality 2010 (EHRC, 2017).

Equality & diversity policy and practice

Hoffman and Graham (2009:58) argue that equality policy and practice is a fundamental political concept, albeit a very complex one. While the core idea of equality is that people should be treated in the same way, there are many different principles of equality. To provide a coherent understanding of equality policy and practice requires the separating out of the various principles and explaining what it is that is being 'equalised'. Is it income, wellbeing or something else that is being considered? Equality or particular principles of equality must then be reconciled with other political values or principles, such as freedom and efficiency.

A differing opinion is presented by Squires and Wickham-Jones (2004:81-98), who argue that debates about equality policy and practice amongst political theorists have tended to

focus on discussions between liberal egalitarians. These are characterised, not by a debate between equality of opportunities and outcomes, but on different sorts of equality of opportunity. Squires and Wickham-Jones (2004:81-98) further argue that having distinguished between two understandings of equality: treating people *equally* and treating them as *equals*, liberal egalitarians go for the latter and then focus debate on what would count as treating people as *equals*. Squires and Wickham-Jones (2004:81-98), note that a narrow reading of equality of opportunity has been widely criticised and instead a wider understanding has been recommended. Rawls (1972:108) describes this approach to equality policy and practice as an 'equal chance to leave the less fortunate behind in a personal quest for influence and social position.' Following on from this, many liberal egalitarians based their approach not on talent, but on effort and ambition. Even socialist egalitarians such as Cohen (1989:90) advocate 'equal access to advantage'. This move from defining equality of opportunity in terms of talent to defining it in terms of effort has been extremely successful because critics suggest it incorporated the key concerns of the anti-egalitarian right, that of choice and responsibility. Equality has become something which people must learn and whether someone does will depend upon their 'choices'. Equality becomes a discretionary privilege, which will be granted only if the individual measures up (Armstrong 2003:415). Whilst Squires and Wickham-Jones (2004:81-98) argue that this liberal egalitarian literature assumed a distinction between talent and ambition and that people can be relatively sure which part of their life is the result of their own choices and which part is not. It also focused on rewarding desirable characteristics in people, rather than focusing on making institutions more equal in their policies and practices.

As Young (1990:22) notes, many discussions of social justice often assume specific institutional structures that produced just or fair outcomes. Furthermore, liberal egalitarians are increasingly likely to advocate the free market as the best route to egalitarian justice. For Armstrong (2003:421), this means that they are concerned with material and financial distributions, rather than distributions of power or status (focusing on distribution rather than recognition), whilst failing to call for material redistribution. In place of a convincing account of inequality, liberal egalitarianism worked with an economic theory of rational individualism, which saw money as something everyone wanted, thus resulting in the absorption of all fields of human activity by the market. Liberal egalitarianism requires equal treatment under the law and a fair distribution of opportunities. Redistribution, in the form of giving people extra resources was permitted on grounds of need (such as disability) but not in response to religious belief, or cultural attributes, as these must be applied universally, without exemption for cultural groups.

Barry (2000:39) offers a strong defence of this form of liberal egalitarianism with reference to principles of equal treatment. He depicted all those who advocated a 'politics of recognition' in addition to a politics of 'redistribution' as basically illiberal. This view of liberalism was increasingly challenged by the perception amongst some political theorists that what it means to treat citizens as equals is not self-evident in a culturally plural society, and that this had to be worked out through democratic discussions in which different points of view were represented. Squires and Wickham-Jones (2004:81-98) argues that liberal egalitarians were primarily concerned with equal treatment, where standard rules created identical choice sets, ensuring that opportunities are equal.

As a critic of this approach, Kymlicka (1995) questions whether it was sufficient that the rules were applied uniformly, without consideration of their development. If some people were structurally marginalised from the rule-formation process, then the rules that emanated from it were likely to be systematically distorted. Furthermore, Kymlicka (1995) insists that liberal egalitarianism has privatised cultural, religious and other differences, which the state should recognise and take into account in its laws, institutions, practices and policies. Treating citizens as equals does not mean treating them equally. The argument being, that laws may legitimately grant exemptions to some groups and not to others. However, it is worth noting that Barry (2000:39), a key defender of liberal egalitarianism against the multicultural challenge, suggests that the alternative is to work out some less restrictive form of the law that would adequately meet the objectives of the original one, while offering the members of the religious or cultural minority whatever is most important to them. Meanwhile Parekh (2003:13), who Barry (2000) considered to be one of the main multicultural challengers to liberal egalitarianism, argues that principles of distribution could only be achieved by means of a democratic dialogue. No single language could sufficiently capture or express all the diverse experiences of and insights into the structures of justice and injustice. Religious communities, cultural and ethnic minorities, women and others should be able to bring to wider discussions their respective views and experiences. If these views and experiences are not heard, then people need to seek them out and ensure they are adequately represented in the discussions.

Squires and Wickham-Jones (2004:81-98) argue that key supporters of both a liberal egalitarianism and a politics of recognition appear to accept a role for democratic discussion. Their recommendations reflect a mainstreaming strategy, which has been developed within gender theory and been widely implemented across European institutions, but which have not been considered by 'mainstream' political theorists.

Though the process they recommended was not discussed in terms of mainstreaming, Squires and Wickham-Jones (2004:81-98) suggest that it might be useful to integrate the gender literature on mainstreaming into these debates. According to Goss (1995), it was usually accepted that to get an equal opportunities culture established within an organisation, it was not sufficient to rely on policy discussions or the threat of disciplinary action in cases of unacceptable behaviour. These steps needed to be complemented by awareness training to change (rather than merely suppress) 'hostile' attitudes towards under-represented groups wherever possible.

For Ross and Schneider (1992:50), employers have resisted equal opportunities legislation precisely because it has been imposed upon them. They argue that the law has enshrined the moral case for equal opportunities and has therefore given employers the responsibility to create a fair and equal society. Indeed, if they did not do this then they faced legal action. They further argue that imposed change is likely to be resisted and causes a 'backlash'. For Ross and Schneider (1992:51), equal opportunities needs to be seen as business-driven in order to be attractive to employers, which was clearly a different case from that of fairness, justice or group equality. Given the problems with the equal opportunities approach it was not surprising that an alternative approach emerged called 'managing diversity', which was based very clearly on the business case for diversity.

According to Storey (1995), the business case focused on the benefits that employers built up through making the most of the skills of its employees'. Subsequently, the business case is mainly linked to strategic human resource management, where the human resource are seen to give the company a competitive edge. Also, it was crucial that equal opportunities initiatives were seen to link in with the overall strategic direction of an organisation. A business case saw achieving equality as essential to achieving organisational goals. It is worth examining the differences between the model based on the business case and traditional models of equal opportunities. Kandola and Fullerton (1998:13) propose that equal opportunities was externally initiated and driven and focused on numbers and problems, whilst diversity was internal and business needs-driven and focused on qualitative data and opportunities. Equal opportunity approaches tended to assume assimilation and were reactive, whereas managing diversity approaches assumed pluralism and were proactive. Finally, equal opportunities approached a particular set of differences, usually gender, race and disability, while managing diversity approaches focused on all differences.

McDougall (1996:5-6) suggests that managing diversity should not be seen as something instead of equal opportunities, because the equal opportunities issues may be lost in the general search for valuing all aspects of differences. In reality they were often considered as being linked, with managing diversity seeking to value individual differences and equal opportunities seeking to ensure that specific groups and sub-groups were not discriminated against. For Millmore et al (2007) managing diversity remains a theoretical concept instead of a strategic reality, which combines equal opportunity and managing diversity approaches. Whilst the business case advocated in a managing diversity approach includes:

- a better public image for the organisation
- a satisfying working environment for employees
- improved employment relations
- increased job satisfaction and higher employee morale, leading to increased productivity and for the organisation
- improved competitive edge.

Case study evidence found conflicting evidence of systematic business impacts of diversity from workplace studies and impacts seemed to be moderated by organisational context and management processes. Moving towards more diverse workplaces could impose costs on firms. There was some evidence that these can be avoided if appropriate equality and diversity policies were put in place. These equality and diversity approaches could facilitate the changes of workplaces into diverse environments that were more diverse. There was then a potential for the securing of business benefits for the firm (DBIS, 2003).

Emergence of equality & diversity mainstreaming

In his paper 'Unequal Britain: Equality in Britain since 1945', Thane (2010:1) argues that in 1945, inequalities of age, race, gender, sexual orientation and disability were ingrained, taken-for-granted facts of British culture, which were rarely openly discussed or challenged even by most of those who suffered from them. Subsequently, there had been a significant growth in the recognition that these inequalities exist and are unjust and that some protected characteristics have acquired legal rights, social respect, entitlements and cultural recognition to a degree unthinkable in 1945, though substantial inequalities

still remain. Furthermore Thane (2010:1) argues that much has changed for the better since Attlee's Labour government was elected in 1945. The Government prioritised economic inequality over other social forms of equality because the facts of mass poverty were so stark and by the 1960s, the extreme manifestations of poverty had been eliminated and other inequalities became more apparent.

Thane (2010:2) continues by stating that in the 1960s, groups who were at best, objects of philanthropic concern and at worst, criminalised and persecuted, began organising and speaking for themselves as never before individually and through organisations. The very existence of these organisations, and their increasing visibility in the 1970s, suggested that the previous lobbying of their quieter predecessors had certain success and that cultural shifts were in progress internationally, which gave them all the confidence to 'come out'. A key signal of this was the run of equality legislation in the late 1960s. The Race Relations Act 1965 set up the Race Relations Board to investigate complaints of unlawful discrimination. In 1968, local authorities were required to provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers, following reports of persecution. 'Homosexual acts' were partially decriminalised in 1967, when abortion was also legalised, a long-standing demand of women's groups. A response to the demand for gender equality was the Equal Pay Act 1970 and in the same year the Chronically Sick and Disabled Act required local authorities to register disabled people and publicise services for them. Cash benefits for disabled people and their carers were introduced and improved community services was encouraged (Thane, 2010:163). Thane (2010:189) further argues that this introduction of legislation acknowledged and began to address fundamental inequalities and brought them into the public arena, but this did not eradicate inequalities.

The Scottish Executive (2003) observe that after Britain joined what was then the European Community in 1973, Europe became a new force for equality in the UK. Within this development, mainstreaming gained its current high profile as a concept and a strategy for taking forward equality work as a result of developments at International, European and UK level. At global level, the United Nations explicitly endorsed and promoted the concept of gender mainstreaming in the Platform for Action which was adopted at the end of the 1995 United Nations fourth world conference on women at Beijing. In particular, the Platform for Action stressed the need for the dissemination of gender statistics for planning and evaluation and the application of gender impact analysis in the development, monitoring and evaluation of all micro and macro-economic and social policies. Subsequently, many countries adopted a national plan for gender mainstreaming, although there were no guidelines in how to develop and implement this

policy. Furthermore, driven by the European Commission which had adopted mainstreaming principles in its policy making and funding programmes. The third (1991-95) and fourth (1996-2000) community action programmes on equal opportunities sought to integrate, or mainstream, the objective of gender equality into all policy areas, in the context of the single market in Europe. Member states were also required to gender mainstream policies and programmes which received structural funds. The principles of gender mainstreaming were expanded to include other dimensions of discrimination as a result of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) which put equality between women and men, and amongst different social groups, as a core objective. It committed European Union member states to combat discrimination based on gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion, disability, age or sexual orientation (Scottish Executive, 2003).

The political impetus that had driven the introduction of comprehensive gender mainstreaming had not been present in respect of many of other protected characteristics. Moreover, throughout the European Union (EU), the mainstreaming of ethnic or minority perspectives, in particular, has been implemented only via very ad hoc procedures involving consultation with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) (O' Cinneide, 2003:6). The UK remains an exception in this respect, with race equality mainstreaming having been introduced at local and national levels of government from the early 1990s, through the development of the Commission for Racial Equality's 'Racial equality means quality' Standard in 1995 (CRE, 1995). Also, at local government level in the UK, equality and diversity mainstreaming was initially promoted by the statutory equalities agencies, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), all of which later merged to become the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The Equality Act 2010's public sector equality duty attempts to 'integrate consideration of the advancement of equality into the day to day business of public bodies' (EHRC 2012). This approach is often referred to as 'mainstreaming' equality; both this duty and the previous duties on race gender and disability have been considered examples of mainstreaming (see for example Fredman, 2012).

Understanding equality & diversity mainstreaming

Commentators, such as Yeandle et al (2008) note that there was a conceptual confusion about the term mainstreaming equality and diversity, which was used loosely and vaguely and sometimes referred to as a strategy or approach and sometimes as a method. These

confusions could be overcome if mainstreaming equality and diversity was understood, as it had been promoted by the European Commission, as a dual strategy. It needed to simultaneously provide both the strategy and methods for achieving equality and diversity. A number of organisations had been working to establish definitions of mainstreaming equality and diversity and to draw upon developing practice and experience to outline frameworks or guidelines for mainstreaming.

The most influential definitions were all primarily concerned with gender mainstreaming. The Council of Europe (2008:15) adopted the definition of gender mainstreaming as 'Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making'. Whilst, the Equal Opportunities Commission (1995) framework document on mainstreaming gender equality in local government noted that 'Mainstreaming is the integration of equal opportunities into all policy development, implementation, evaluation and review processes... mainstreaming involved making equal opportunities the responsibility of a wide range of actors including politicians and external partners'.

There are debates and disagreements about what a mainstreaming equality and diversity strategy might entail and the relative merits and drawbacks of having such a strategy. In particular, it has been identified as a strategy that can without care degenerate into tokenism, where public commitment is given in principle, but where in practice little concrete is achieved. While Rees (2002) identifies mainstreaming as a 'transformatory' approach to equality others have highlighted the widespread variation in practices labelled as mainstreaming (Daly 2005, Walby 2011) and critiqued forms of mainstreaming that can be technocratic, privilege dominant groups or be interpreted as a way of achieving existing goals rather than challenging those goals. Some distinguish between 'integrationist' approaches where mainstreaming is presented as a way of delivering on existing policy goals of an organisation and 'agenda setting' which seeks to transform those goals (Lombardo 2005). Others distinguish between 'expert/ bureaucratic' approaches, which emphasise technical expertise in the analysis of gender impact and 'participatory/democratic' approaches which focus on the inclusion of affected groups in the policy making process (Beveridge et al., 2002). In 2010, the European Commission Directorate on Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities defined mainstreaming as 'the integration of the gender perspective into every state of the policy process, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting equality between women and men' (European Commission 2010).

In Rees' (2005) model of 'tinkering, tailoring and transforming', Rees discusses mainstreaming as the strategy that can deliver transformation through considering 'the ways in which systems and structures [...] cause [...] disadvantage in the first place' and 'embedding gender equality in systems, processes, policies and institutions' (Rees 2005:558). For Rees (2002), Squires (2005) and Benchop and Verloo (2011), this definition means that mainstreaming represents a 'transformatory' approach to equality. Furthermore, Rees (2005) argues that the aim is to address the organisational cultures and practices which embed inequalities and this form of mainstreaming is a tool to tackle structural inequality and can also be used to address the ways these different structures intersect, not only gender mainstreaming but other bases of inequality.

However, Walby (2011) has pointed out that while mainstreaming can have transformatory potential in practice it can take many forms which can become technocratic or be interpreted as a way of achieving existing policy goals rather than challenging those goals. Conley and Page (2015) argue that mainstreaming can lead to a loss of focus because if everyone in an organisation has responsibility for equality in practice this can mean no one is responsible and extending the focus of mainstreaming from gender to broader questions of diversity can lead to a loss of focus on gender as other issues take priority. For Beveridge et al. (2002), these divergent experiences of mainstreaming reflect a widespread variation in strategies and practices labelled as 'mainstreaming'.

Concepts of mainstreaming as 'transformation' have developed alongside a range of practices labelled mainstreaming within public bodies. Daly (2005) observes that while mainstreaming theory emerged from a desire to move beyond arguments about difference and sameness to address structures and systems, its adoption was more a response to changing circumstances, with countries adopting the term mainstreaming as the most 'modern' approach to equality and diversity. This has led to an approach to mainstreaming that is vague in definition meaning: 'everyone understands the general idea, but no one is sure what it requires in practice' (Beveridge and Nott, 2002:299).

In order to address this ambiguity, there has been various attempts to categorise different models of mainstreaming and those factors which might lead to its transformatory potential being realised. Lombardo (2005) notes one distinction that is often made is between 'integrationist' and 'agenda setting' approaches with integrationist approaches to mainstreaming addressing gender mainstreaming as a way of achieving existing policy goals more effectively. This has the advantage of making it easier to persuade policy

makers to adopt a mainstreaming approach but runs the risk that underlying inequalities remain unchallenged. Verloo (2005) describes this approach as sometimes being discussed in terms of 'strategic framing', which refers to a process through which social actors 'frame' their goals in a way that resonates with the goals of the organisation or institution they wish to influence. In contrast participatory/democratic models are based on the inclusion and empowerment of disadvantaged groups at the heart of policy making. This potentially involves consultative or participatory approaches and decision making processes. These participatory/democratic models, involving engagement with civil society can create space for groups that have previously been unheard in the policy making process to be involved (Beveridge, Nott and Stephen 2000: 278).

A way forward which draws on innovations such as citizen's juries and deliberative opinion polls in order to 'generate a model of mainstreaming that is purposeful rather than bureaucratic or consultative' is a suggestion (Squires, 2005:383). This focus on processes of democratic engagement, builds on work by Young (1990) and Phillips (1999), which emphasise the significance of democratic participation in theories of justice and equality. This goes beyond participation in elections and increasing the diversity of political representatives to processes of decision making which involve the participation of all those likely to be affected by policy in a process of discussion and reflection about the development and delivery of that policy Phillips (1999:113). Walby (2011: 84) argues that mainstreaming practice is more complex than both the integration/agenda setting and the expertise/democracy models suggest and that mainstreaming as a process of negotiation between visions of gender equality and the priorities of the mainstream are altered by contact with external pressure and rather than seeing expertise and democracy as alternatives, they are in fact often intertwined.

Rees (1998:3-4), argues that mainstreaming equality was generally defined as 'the incorporation of equal opportunities issues into all actions, programmes and policies from the outset'. Therefore, if equality issues were to be mainstreamed, there first needed to be a thorough understanding of what these were for people with different characteristics and how these issues 'fit' together. For Rees (1998:3-4), the intersectional barriers confronting people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, women and disabled people could appear very different. For example, a barrier to work for someone from a BME community might be that English is not their first language; for women it might be a lack of child-care and for a physically impaired person it may be inaccessible premises. It may be that the interests of different groups (or even of different members within each group) do not coincide and that the barriers to equality they confront are

fundamentally unlike and require radically differing forms of intervention. At worst, action to remove barriers for some may create more for others. If so, to mainstream equality for all would present significant challenges, generating a competition between equality groups, from which some would benefit, while others lost out.

Although governments and some political groups are in favour of mainstreaming equality and diversity, a number of questions have been raised about its practicality and legitimacy (Riddell et al, 2005:1-2). These include a lack of clarity about the concept of mainstreaming and what this might entail, with some proponents defining it as a strategy, whilst others seeing it primarily in terms of the universal principles which should be applied to all aspects of equality policy (Rees, 1998). Furthermore, Witcher (2003) states that a generic approach to equality which could be theoretically flawed since it was not clear all equality groups faced similar political, social and economic barriers. Even within particular protected characteristics (for example: sex, disability, race), there are ongoing debates as to whether discrimination and inequality occurs as a result of economic injustice or lack of political recognition (Phillips, 1997). However, a generic approach for a range of equality issues could reduce the political power of social movements such as the disability movement, which developed later in the 1990s (Riddell and Watson, 2003). Equal treatment, positive action and gender mainstreaming could be seen as different approaches to equality, but were most commonly seen by equality professionals as cumulative and complementary rather than competing or incompatible. For example, mainstreaming was a long-term strategy that needed to be accompanied by the secure underpinning of equal treatment legislation and positive action measures (Rees, 1998:166).

The various inequalities and barriers that exist within organisations certainly lead to equality and diversity practice not being defined as good and in order to remove these inequalities, there needs to be a realisation of what these barriers and inequalities are. Mainstreaming equality requires that inequality issues are addressed at the outset, rather than as an 'add-on' afterthought. Equality needs to be 'institutionalised' through embedding understanding and action into organisational processes, and the design of services, policies and products. If it was the case that those who are part of a dominant culture could have difficulty assessing its impact, or seeing different ways of doing things, the involvement of external stakeholders is critical. They should be better placed to reveal barriers caused by long-accepted ways of doing things and to suggest alternatives. Barriers could be 'generic' (attitudinal, environmental or communicational), but where people inhabit the same environment, yet have different characteristics they would be

affected by them in different ways, and different action would be required to remove them. Their shared experience, from their different perspectives, could either provide a more holistic appreciation of barriers or a feeling of 'it's not my problem' attitude (Witcher, 2005: 10-11).

Mainstreaming equality and diversity requires the dismantling of processes and identification of where disadvantages may occur. There needs to be clarity about all stages and how they link together to ensure coherence. For treatment to be equitable (and hence non-discriminatory), people in the same circumstances should receive the same treatment. It was clear that there were relationships between particular protected characteristics, types and degrees of risk, or experience, of disadvantage. Although all people have multiple characteristics and very different combinations of characteristics, the same structural barrier may impact in the same way on all who share a given characteristic or sometimes differently. It may be entirely reasonable, for example in an employment context that certain behaviours were required and others needed to be changed. However, it may be worth considering at what point any 'reshaping of behaviour' became oppressive. Instead, it may be about developing potential, acquiring new skills and perhaps redressing historical disadvantage through positive action. The conclusion is that individuals had absorbed repeated negative messages about their capacities (or lack of them) and to reshape behaviour (and understanding of identity) in this context would be to liberate, not to oppress these individuals (Witcher 2005: 11-12).

The Scottish Executive (2003) argue that work on mainstreaming equality should not be seen as a replacement for equality legislation or replacement for specialist equality teams. Rather, it provides a framework in which equality legislation and other equality measures, such as positive action, could be placed strategically within an organisation and a dual and complementary approach is needed. On one side, the systematic application of equality impact analysis and its continuous monitoring and evaluation of all policies and activities. On the other side, the continuation and where feasible, strengthening of the specific positive actions which are currently being applied. Both Witcher (2005:11) and the Scottish Executive (2003) argue that to mainstream equality and diversity, the various processes involved in an organisation need to be deconstructed and inequalities identified and addressed. This then would lead to improved mainstreaming of equality and diversity. According to the Women's Equality Unit (WEU) (2003), mainstreaming equality and diversity has been most effective where it has been formulated in terms of arguments for greater economic efficiency, modernisation and productivity. The WEU (2003), point out that real and substantive equality is good for

everyone. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming equality and diversity then becomes a way of thinking about users as distinct groups with differing needs, characteristics and behaviours, which matter if one was concerned about delivering customer and user satisfaction. The perspective of 'gender equality matters' is only offered by the business case of equality and diversity mainstreaming.

The Scottish Executive (2003) argue that shortfalls in knowledge, awareness and techniques are common to the experience of mainstreaming equality and diversity in most countries. Much of the innovative practice is dependent on the commitment and experience of a surprisingly small number of politicians and specialist officers, who understand equality issues very well. Despite increasing public statements of commitment to mainstreaming equalities principles by governments, public bodies and local authorities, there is as yet little evidence that the majority of councillors or public officials really understand how this might be put into effect. For example, resistance has been linked to a lack of understanding and conversely support for mainstreaming equality and diversity has grown as awareness has risen. Furthermore, the use of equality competencies amongst employees' within organisations could offer a solution to the anomalies of a generic approach. A generic mainstreaming equalities approach would need, as a starting point, to combine the following approaches: Equal treatment approaches and anti-discrimination policies and legislation (there must also be recognition that some equalities groups do not have legal protection and full civil rights); Positive action or group perspective approaches which recognised the historic and current impact of discriminating structures and practices on different social groups, including women as a social group; Gender/diversity approaches which recognise the impact of gender, the differences amongst women and amongst men, and the existence of multiple discrimination.

Development of equality & diversity mainstreaming policy and practice within local authorities

Equality and diversity policy and practice has evolved piecemeal in local authorities over the last fifty years, driven mainly by the need to conform to the various pieces of equality legislation discussed above. The reliance on equality legislation to drive equality practice in local authorities brought about its problems. For instance, Davidson and Fielden (2003:3) argue that one of the criticisms of the equal opportunities approach was that it was seen as a negative attempt to address issues of inequality because the focus was on

punitive measures for those employers who did not comply with legislation. They argue that equality and diversity policies are more likely to be seen as more positive if they recognised and celebrated the achievements of diverse groups.

For Redman and Wilkinson (2009:343 -353), the move towards making the business case for equality would enable organisations to see the positive benefits of adopting equality and diversity policies and practice. They went on to argue that the business case focused on the benefits that employees accrue through making the most of the skills and potential of all employees. The argument was that the loss or lack of recognition of these skills and potential, usually as a result of everyday discriminatory practice, was very costly. Additionally, it was crucial that equal opportunities initiatives were seen to tie in with the overall strategic direction of the local authority. A business case approach sees achieving equality as essential to achieving organisational goals. Again, in the same way that Human Resource Management (HRM) is linked into the general strategy of a firm, so equal opportunities pervades every aspect of business policy, rather than being an add-on.

Measuring or assessing the level of equality & diversity mainstreaming

McCrudden (1998) argues that equality and diversity mainstreaming in practice is at a relatively early stage of development, involving: awareness raising, establishing the need for mainstreaming; building support and alliances; and sharing ideas and good practice. There has also been the need to establish baseline data, such as, gender disaggregated statistics or carrying out auditing of services, policies and departments. In those organisations where mainstreaming equality and diversity has a longer history, there are other issues related to maintaining momentum and meeting the challenge of political and organisational change. This suggests that mainstreaming equality and diversity is a long term strategy requiring substantial investment in training and specialist support, the production of gender and equalities statistics and other 'mapping' data, and the involvement of a wide range of internal and external people, including specialist practitioners, statutory equality agencies and academics (Scottish Executive, 2003).

For O' Cinneide (2003:10-11), to be effective in equality and diversity mainstreaming, the focus has to be on the assessment and monitoring of outcomes. Process was important to ensure participation of disadvantaged groups, but process is not enough in itself. An approach designed to achieve substantive equality and diversity mainstreaming requires

that the actual results of policies be assessed and monitored, and that the emphasis be placed on securing effective outcomes that bring about real and meaningful equal treatment. This raises the question of how the equality and diversity mainstreaming can be measured or assessed. In 2010, the Audit Commission introduced a series of performance indicators for local authorities to measure equality and diversity performance, which included:

- The percentage of the population that thought people got along well with each other.
- The top five per cent earners that are women, disabled or from a minority ethnic community.
- The level achieved on the Equality Standard for local government.
- Actions taken against domestic violence.
- The number of racial incidents per 100,000 population.
- The numbers of over 65's helped to live at home.

Between 2003- 2010, local authorities were required to report progress against these performance indicators, which demonstrated a way of 'measuring' equality and diversity. However, it did not provide any clear rationale of why each indicator was chosen or whether these measurements contributed to equality and diversity mainstreaming. However, this is not extended to gender breakdowns for indicators on staff absenteeism and turnover, value of staff training and development, staff perceptions and grievances. Information is requested on the number of legal non-compliances on equal opportunities legislation as is information on the workplace profile compared to community profile for travel to work area for gender, race, disability and age.

Another way that organisations can measure or assess mainstreaming is demonstrated by achieving a ranking position in a nationwide equality and diversity scheme. Organisations such as the National Centre for Diversity (NCfD) and Inclusive Companies (IC) have introduced their 'Top 100' and 'Top 50' performers. Organisations from the voluntary, public and voluntary sectors are able to apply to be included in the respective rankings, based on the completion of a staff survey or questions in a survey. Whilst neither NCfD or IC explicitly claim that progressing higher up the rankings means greater equality and diversity mainstreaming, both assert that inclusion in their rankings means that the organisation is progressing on its equality and diversity work. An examination of both organisation's criteria shows an emphasis on different areas, although there are

some overlapping areas, such as 'commitment demonstrated by senior managers' (NCfD, 2019; IC, 2019).

As the gender equality agenda has broadened to include more groups of people, a more generic approach to equality and diversity mainstreaming has become a topic of discussion. This poses the questions of how equality strategies and indicators may retain a sufficient focus on distinctive groups, and how these interrelate with one another (Breitenbach and Galligan, 2006). It is, however, important to use both quantitative and qualitative data in evaluating policies. The development of targets, in particular, can suffer from the danger of measuring what is easy to measure, ignoring qualitative concerns, or leaving aside areas of importance less easy to measure (Mackay and Bilton, 2000). There is a need for interpretation of indicators and transparency about their use within a particular policy context. Concerns expressed in general about interpretation, and about political uses and manipulation of official statistics, apply as much to gender statistics as to other types of social statistics.

In principle, the development of gender equality indicators is not dependent on a mainstreaming approach as such, since the monitoring of equal treatment approaches such as equal pay, or adoption of positive action strategies to address women's underrepresentation in economic and political life, have also required statistical measures to both make the case for change and monitor it. Mainstreaming approaches have, however, insisted much more strongly on the need for good data and research, for the development of indicators and for methods such as gender impact assessment, than previous approaches did. Furthermore, mainstreaming entails applying this across all policy areas, rather than a selected number of areas identified as most salient to the issue of gender equality (Breitenbach and Galligan, 2006). Successful mainstreaming 'requires the development and use of gender-sensitive and/or equality indicators' (Mackay and Bilton, 2000: 36). Mainstreaming 'includes the development of mission statements, aims and objectives, performance indicators and output measures', and also includes evaluative studies and equal opportunity audits (Rees, 1998: 46). Gender-disaggregated statistics can also be an 'important tool in awareness-raising and provide a snapshot of the effect of policy on different groups' (Rees, 1998: 193) Similarly, Beveridge et al (2000) emphasise the need for target setting, for data to challenge mistaken assumptions that can arise in the absence of adequate information, and for tools for policy appraisal for making governments accountable.

While many of the types of indicators described above show the relative position of women and men across a range of policy areas, they do not provide a measure of the effectiveness of policies as such. Though high-level composite indicators may be described as giving an indicator of a country's performance on gender equality, the concept of performance should be treated with some caution. It should be an integral part of policy development to specify goals and performance indicators or measures which can be used to evaluate progress in achieving goals. These will be quite distinct from the kind of social statistics discussed here as providing a basis for gender equality indicators, though such statistics are likely to provide information relevant to the evaluation of policy performance. For example, data about the pay gap between women and men are relevant to the policy objective of reducing the pay gap. However, they do not in themselves indicate which policies or other factors such as general economic trends may have contributed to any reduction. Rather, evaluation of policy impact will depend on the development of an evaluation framework for such policies as equal pay reviews, the National Minimum Wage, and so on. The term 'indicators', then, is used in different ways, which it is useful to distinguish. Though it often appears simply to mean sets of gender-disaggregated data, it can be argued that the use of the term 'indicators' implies a selection or choice on behalf of government, government departments, or other official bodies, for the purposes of measuring (Breitenbach and Galligan, 2006).

Since the use of performance indicators became fairly widespread within government from the late 1990s, some departments were nervous that the WEU was devising a series of performance indicators by which they would be measured for progress in meeting gender equality targets that benefit women such as childcare places and breast screening programmes. Whilst others, referred to increasing women's representation in, for instance, the civil service, judiciary, or as entrepreneurs, though seldom with a precise figure being stated. There was little attempt to explain how such changes might make a difference to structural gender inequalities, and little indication of how impact or outcomes might be measured, as distinct from outputs. Thus, if a requirement of effective mainstreaming is both the provision of such data and the development of performance indicators through which policy impacts can be assessed, this requirement is being partially met. Significant methodological and conceptual challenges remain. Gaps in data need to be overcome, high-quality data need to be produced, and the technical challenge in combining data to form composite indicators needs to be met. Furthermore, there is a continuing absence in government publications of a conceptual discussion of gender inequalities, leading to simplistic forms of measurement, rather than forms which connect with and reflect the underlying causes of these inequalities. Experience so far thus

suggests that development of gender (and other) equality indicators across the range of different types will be slow, and should be regarded as a long term project (Breitenbach and Galligan, 2006).

Parpart (2013), is critical of the lack of success of equality and diversity mainstreaming, in particular relating to gender. Meanwhile, Gender mainstreaming policies continue to promise gender equality and fundamental change, while internal support and operational goals have been quietly scaled down (Verloo, 2005: 345–46). For Parpart (2013), gender mainstreaming has become another development buzz word, promising to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into institutions, programmes and policies, and even more ambitiously, to transform the global gender order. These promises have been presented as reasonable, reachable goals that simply require the right mix of technical solutions/drivers, the will to put them to work and the necessary accountability to ensure implementation. However, implementation has proven extremely difficult. The problems of achieving greater equality and diversity and the challenge of mainstreaming creates doubts about the adequacy of a common framework applicable across all grounds as a means to address intersectional considerations. Across Europe many equality advocates remain attentive to the distinctive nature of each inequality strand, avoiding an over-simplistic assumption that all inequalities are of the same order and therefore amenable to the same sort of policy response, focusing on the need for different legislative actions (Verloo, 2006).

Thus the debate remains, as to whether the equality and diversity mainstreaming can be measured or whether this can be assessed only, in which case, each assessment would have a subjective element to it, even if there was a set of criteria that the assessors were assessing against. Furthermore, there did not appear to be universal agreement of what performance indicators should be used to 'measure' equality and diversity mainstreaming. As a result of this, the 'assessment' of progress made towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, as undertaken by an external assessment against the Equality Framework presented the closest way to determine how well a local authority had mainstreamed equality and diversity. There was also the question of whether local authorities that mainstreamed equality and diversity achieved improved performance. Redman and Wilkinson (2009) argue that more evidence is needed that 'show that organisations that manage diversity are more successful than organisations that do not.' Redman and Wilkinson (2009) go further by arguing that the research needs to focus on longitudinal assessment of diversity practices, using a range of criteria from economic performance to the attitudes of those groups that the interventions have been designed to

address. Only then could claims made for the success of managing diversity be properly evaluated.

Conclusion

The emergence of equality legislation has for some, like the Scottish Executive (2003) led to an improvement in equality and diversity practices, whilst others like Ross and Schneider (1992:50) argue that this has led some employers responding unfavourably to equality and diversity practice because it is imposed on them. They argue that equality needs to be business driven in order to be attractive to employers. Within this discussion, the debate on equal opportunities and managing diversity emerged with proponents of the managing diversity approach such as Kandola and Fullerton (1998:13) arguing that managing diversity addressed this need for a focus on business needs. However, McDougall (1996) maintains that managing diversity should not be 'instead' of equal opportunities and in reality they are seen as inter-dependent.

The emergence of the discussions on equality and diversity mainstreaming was relatively recent and is seen to have largely emerged within Europe during the 1990s, driven by the European Commission, with an initial focus on gender only. Subsequently, equality and diversity mainstreaming has been expanded to cover other areas such as race, disability and more recently age, sexuality and religion & belief. There still exists a debate about the exact definition of what mainstreaming equality and diversity is and what it looks like. Commentators, such as Witcher (2003), argue for a generic approach to mainstreaming equality and diversity, whilst others, such as Rees (1998) argue that this is difficult to achieve, as barriers for one group of people could appear different to others and in extreme situations, addressing a barrier for one group may result in a potential adverse impact on another group.

For Thane (2010), equality and diversity policy and practice has evolved piecemeal in local authorities since 1945, driven mainly by the need to conform to equality legislation. In the mid-1990s, the Commission for Racial Equality developed its 'Racial equality means quality' Standard, which attempted to assist local authorities to mainstream race equality into their day to day work. This concept of having an Equality Standard with varying levels that help local authorities to progress through achieving various actions was further developed with the introduction in 2001 of the Equality Standard for local government. This Standard was the first attempt to provide local authorities with a way to

mainstream equality and diversity policy and practice in a systematic way that showed achievement across more than one protected characteristic (Clarke and Speeden, 2001).

For O' Cinneide (2003:10-11), to be effective in mainstreaming equality and diversity, the focus has to be on the assessment and monitoring of outcomes. An approach designed to achieve substantive mainstreaming of equality and diversity requires that the actual results of policies be assessed and monitored. This raises the question of how the mainstreaming of equality and diversity could be measured or assessed. The Audit Commission (2010) introduced a series of performance indicators for local authorities to measure equality and diversity performance, including: per cent of the population that thought people got along well with each other; level achieved on the Equality Standard for local government; and over 65's helped to live at home. However, these indicators do not provide any clear rationale of why they were chosen or whether these measurements contributed to equality and diversity mainstreaming. It can be argued that out of all the performance indicators, the requirement to report against the Equality Standard was the first serious attempt to get local authorities to begin equality and diversity mainstreaming through the systematic assessment of progression through the different levels of the Equality Standard. The Audit Commission (2010) indicators did not go far enough to assess all the aspects of equality and diversity mainstreaming. The question still remained of how this reflected the extent the local authority had mainstreamed equality and diversity and whether this could be measured or needs to be assessed.

The emergence of equality standards from the mid 1990' onwards, beginning with the CRE's 'Racial equality means quality' Standard and subsequent LGA Equality Framework enabled local authorities to demonstrate progress on mainstreaming equality and diversity by self-assessing against various levels of the Standards. The requirement also to have an external assessment, as was the case for the LGA 'Equality Framework' meant that the monitoring of equality and diversity mainstreaming would be through an assessment. The next chapter examines the development of public management and governance within local government and subsequently the emergence of new public management and governance post 1979 and how this helped transform how local government was organised and provided services.

3.0 PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Introduction

This chapter will begin by outlining the structure and scope of public management and governance in the UK between the late nineteenth century and 1979, which was seen as the period when local government began to develop and to the period when public management and governance undertook a radical shift towards a new form. The subsequent sections outline the emergence of concepts known as 'New Public Management', 'New Public Governance' and 'Public Value and Administration'. These developments post 1979 would largely be the contributors to the ideological positions which preceded the emergence of the equality frameworks for local government 2001-2014. This chapter will critically examine the public management and governance that led up to this period and subsequently the emergence of new public management (NPM), new public governance (NPG) and Public Value (PV), and how this has influenced the way local government services are provided and what impact it had on equality and diversity.

The number of 'principal authorities', those with major responsibilities in England, was 352 at the time that the fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken (LGA, 2014). The design of these principal authorities is based on either a single or two tier structure. Where a single tier authority is established, there is one local authority covering a particular area. If a two tier system is present, the tasks administered by local authorities are divided between a smaller district authority and a larger county, in which there will be several districts. The two tiers are not in an organisational hierarchy, so that the 'smaller' district is not subject to control by the larger 'upper' tier, as both are given a largely separate range of functions. Two tier structures only exist in England, and apart from London, cover predominantly rural areas. Another single tier structure in local government was created after the 1974 local government re-organisation, which resulted in 'unitary' local authorities being established in larger conurbations (Chandler, 2009:2-3). Justifications for local government based solely on its capacity to deliver efficient services or take some of the administrative burden from central government does not need elected, as opposed to appointed local authorities to achieve this. Service delivery can be secured by unelected agencies, such as health trusts or private businesses such as water

companies. The existence of local government must be justified by additional arguments (Chandler, 2009:8).

Public management and governance in local government: 19th and early 20th century

Local government structures began to develop in the 19th century and this section will consider early development in the United Kingdom, through to the late 1970s, when public management and governance seem to take a more radical shift. McLaughlin et al., (2002:7-9) describe the late nineteenth century as the first stage of the development of public management. Government provision was seen as minimal, with the majority of public services located in the charity sector, or through private provision. The second stage of public management, commencing in the early twentieth century, is best characterised as that of unequal partnerships between government and charity sectors, where the government provided a basic minimum of essential provision. The third stage is that of the 'welfare state', which in the UK began in 1945. Underpinning this was the belief that the charity and private sectors had failed because of the fragmentation and duplication of service provision and because of their inefficient and ineffective management. By the 1950s, a new discipline of management as an applied social science had taken root in the private sector. Its classical founding theories were developed early in the twentieth century by businessmen such as E.W Taylor and Henri Fayol who believed it that it was scientifically possible to produce greater efficiency and profitability in private businesses. These ideas led in the 1920s to the time and motion efficiency studies and the acceptance of hierarchic line management (Chandler, 2009:134). These ideas were never wholly acceptable to the public service values of local government in Britain, which were influenced by management theories that argue that efficiency was not the only measure of worth for the delivery of public services and regard had to be given to the quality of provision and concern for the wellbeing of the citizen (Thomas, 1978).

The final stage for McLaughlin et al., (2002:7-9), from the late 1970s is that of the 'pluralist state', which was critical of the 'welfare state', which was now seen as the inefficient and ineffective provider of services, and the solution was the privatisation and marketisation of these services. Chandler (2009:13-29) also identifies the development of local government from the 19th century as starting piecemeal and then gradually increasing in size and responsibility through various legislation, and which was only reversed post 1979. Bryson et al (2014) provide an outline of another form of public

management during this period, that of traditional public administration, which arose in the United States in the late 1900s and matured by the mid-twentieth century as a response to a particular set of conditions. These included the challenges of industrialisation, urbanisation, the rise of the modern corporation, faith in science, belief in progress, and concern over major market failures.

Efficiency in government operations was the preeminent value. Citizens were viewed primarily as voters, clients, or constituents. Traditional public administration in practice was always more deeply enmeshed in politics than its idealised form would suggest (Denhardt and Denhardt 2011: 6–7). During this period, Mill (1975:365) argues that participation in local government can be an important means of ensuring that citizens and politicians gain a mature education in the values required to establish a stable democracy. Furthermore, Jones and Stewart (1983:10) consider that an essential value of local government is its capacity for enhancing democracy and self-government in a society which cannot afford to entrust control over bureaucracy to some ministers and MPs. For Chandler (2009:8), Government reports have all endorsed the importance of local government for securing democracy in Britain. Furthermore, an effective democracy requires that many of its citizens participate in the political system, and therefore local government ensures that there is a much greater opportunity for people to be involved as councillors in making decisions that affect their communities.

Towards the end of the 1970s, Rhodes (1999:13) observes that Britain has been subject to local governance, rather than local government. This was to emphasise that local authorities do not have a unique role in supplying the needs of their communities. The government of a locality involves many non-elected agencies such as health trusts, education academies, and housing associations. Also, private as well as public agencies are also involved in the provision of public services through the supply of services such as gas, water and electricity. This transition was to develop further in the 1980s and for Bovaird and Loeffler (2009:15) public expenditure in the UK increased rapidly after 1945, as the 'welfare state' in its various forms became widespread. However, by the late 1970s, budget deficits provided a major motive for public sector reforms. Bovaird and Loeffler (2009:8-9) argue that although there is a general acknowledgement that public governance is different from public management, there is difference of opinion between authors on what 'public governance' is. A key aspect of public governance is its attention to how different organisations interact in order to achieve a higher level of desired results in terms of outcomes achieved by citizens and stakeholders. The processes by which different stakeholders interact are also seen to have a major importance in themselves,

whatever the outputs or outcomes achieved. Whilst public management is the approach that uses managerial techniques (often originating in the private sector) to increase the value for money achieved by public services (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2009:6).

Furthermore, Bovaird and Loeffler (2009: 6-11) argue that the concept of public management and public governance are not mutually incompatible. Public management is the approach that uses managerial techniques (often originating in the private sector) to increase the value for money achieved by public services; Public governance is how an organisation works with its partners, stakeholders and networks to influence the outcomes of public policies. Although, not all practices of public management are part of public governance, and not all aspects of public governance are part of public management. Therefore public governance and public management are separate but interconnected, however, not all aspects of both can co-exist.

New public management and governance in local government: 1979-2008

In the 1980s, the drivers of change, particularly the financial pressures, led the UK towards a focus on making the public sector lean and more competitive while at the same time, trying to make public administration more responsive to citizens' needs by offering value for money, choice flexibility, and transparency. This movement was later known as 'new public management' (NPM). Hood (1991) describes it as having seven doctrines:

- (i) A focus on hands on and entrepreneurial management.
- (ii) Explicit standards and measures of performance.
- (iii) An emphasis on output controls.
- (iv) The importance of the disaggregation and decentralisation of public services.
- (v) A shift to the promotion of competition in the provision of public services.
- (vi) A stress on private sector styles of management and their superiority, and
- (vii) The promotion of discipline and control in resource allocation.

These changes have been observed by Ashworth et al. (2012:1) as commonplace for public management scholars such as Hood (1991 and 2000), and Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004) who outline waves of reform reshaping public service delivery, such as NPM, which have been challenging the assumptions and practices of traditional public administration. Also, Denhardt and Denhardt (2000) have sought to combine these descriptive endeavours by pointing variously to a 'new public service', 'public value

management', or 'new public governance' as heralding the next chapter in the history of public management reform. Furthermore, Combe (2014:19) states that NPM is a management philosophy of the 1980s that came to prominence in response to the need for reform in the public sector. It stems from a neo-liberal ideology that places an emphasis on the market over state intervention in the way economies are managed. Whilst NPM is a broad ranging term and can mean different things to different people, the basic principles are based on seeking efficiencies in the public sector and the level of control exerted by government on the public sector. Within NPM, managers were given a much greater role in policy-making than before, essentially at the expense of politicians and service professionals (Bovaird and Loeffler, 2009:20).

As Dunleavy (1984) observes that local government in the UK has moved from being highly active in delivering productive and profitable services in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as gas, water and electricity supply, to being more of an adjunct to the welfare state. According to Combe (2014:19), the advantages of NPM are cost savings gained by dismantling large bureaucratic departments or service units into smaller more fragmented units, which would lead to increased efficiency and quality by introducing competition between public and private sector organisations for service delivery contracts. Building on a definition from Hood (1991:4-5), Rhodes (1991: 548) describes NPM as: a focus on management, not policy, and on performance appraisal and efficiency; the disaggregation of public bureaucracies into agencies which deal with each other on a user pay basis; the use of quasi markets and contracting out to foster competition; cost cutting; and a style of management which emphasises inter alia output targets, limited term contracts, monetary incentives and freedom to manage. However, it has been acknowledged above, that public governance is different to public management, Bovaird and Loeffler (2009:8-9), state that whereas new public management (NPM) places a lot of attention to the measurement of results (both individual and organisation) in terms of outputs, public governance pays a lot of attention to how different organisations interact in order to achieve a higher level of desired results. This process is seen as almost as important as the results themselves. The extent to which these values have been adopted by local authorities was far from certain, and there were differing interpretations as to how change should be secured in management practices post 1979 (Chandler, 2009:136).

The period after 1979 also saw a gradual shift away from local government being the main provider of services to a more 'enabling' role. The 1988 Local Government Act, introduced under a Conservative government was a central pillar of the 'enabling' concept

for local government, whereby local authorities had fewer councillors and senior officers, who were responsible for determining public needs and drawing up, awarding and monitoring contracts with private sector bodies which would supply these services. This process was to be known as 'compulsory competitive tendering (CCT)'. A consequence of CCT was that many local authorities divided their departments which were required to contract out services into teams that drew up the contracts and teams that implemented the services if the contract was won 'in-house'. Where the contract went to an outside body, many employees who carried out the service became employees of the private contractor rather than the local authority. The 1980s also saw the development of the 'Citizens Charter', which required local authorities to set targets for efficient standards of service delivery, which had to be approved by a section housed within the Cabinet Office. If the local authority could not meet the required targets, members of the public could expect some form of compensation and improvements in the delivery of the services (Chandler, 2009: 136-137).

A change of government in 1997 did not lead to the abandonment of the direction of policy established by previous governments, but instead the 'new' Labour government set about developing better management in local government by setting targets for public bodies with the threat that failure to achieve a required level of output could lead to an organisation losing control of the service to a potentially more successful provider, be it in the public or private sector (Chandler, 2009:138). The Labour government also stressed 'partnerships, modernisation and joined up government', rather than private sector solutions. The internal market mechanisms in the National Health Service were partly dismantled, as was the compulsoriness of contracting out local services. Nevertheless, many of the NPM thinking continued, not least performance measurement, which was further intensified. Also more public private partnerships, extension of the Private Finance Initiative and more benchmarking (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004:293). One initiative of the new government which was seen to improve performance of local authorities was 'Local Public Service Agreements' (LPSA). Boyne and Chen (2007) analysed LPSA impact amongst 147 English local authorities between 1998- 2003. Finding that each local authority attempted to hit twelve targets negotiated with central government, in exchange for maximum financial reward of 2.5 per cent of its revenue budget. The results showed that local authorities with a target performed better than local authorities without a target.

Whilst the 1988 White Paper 'Modern Local Government had set out the strategy for ensuring efficient management for local services, it was in 1999 that the Local Government Act restructured CCT into a framework for managing service delivery and

was called 'Best Value'. The principle of Best Value was that local authorities should set, or have set for them, performance targets for the efficient delivery of services. The performance targets were many and varied, and in some sectors, for example education, the national government set the targets, whilst for many other services, the targets were set by the local authorities, which although set locally had a generally common structure, making it possible to compare performance with other local authorities. Thus, a competitive element was built into the strategy to ensure that local authorities which delivered services at a lower level could be identified and pressured to improve their performance. A branch of the Audit Commission had the task of monitoring whether local authorities had set themselves appropriate targets and were meeting their targets efficiently (Chandler, 2009:138).

According to Martin (2002:131) 'Best Value' emphasised at least four of the key features of NPM highlighted by Pollitt (1995:133), namely: cost cutting; market mechanisms, management by objectives; and raising the quality of services. However, whilst there is a strong emphasis on the market, national minimum standards, league tables and performance monitoring, there is also an encouragement of local responsiveness, collaboration and innovation. The tensions this creates are not easily resolved. More significantly, the Labour government post 1997 recognised the need to enhance the capacity of local authorities to improve services (Martin, 1999). This led to the establishment of the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), which offered consultancy support to individual local authorities and oversaw two major capacity building initiatives, including the 'Local Government Improvement Project', which sought to encourage improvement 'from within' through a process of peer review (LGA, 1999). Furthermore, Martin (2002:137) argues that the Best Value regime did not herald the arrival of a new hegemonic outcome focus paradigm, nor was it a case of 'more of the same', although there was no blueprint for achieving Best Value. What Best Value began to do was challenge some of the tenets of NPM, such as the inadequacy of many supply markets and offering a start to moving beyond NPM.

Another key departure away from NPM followed the passing of the Local Government Act 1999, which emphasised increased public involvement in the planning and delivery of local services in the UK. The Act required local authorities and a range of other statutory agencies to consult not only service users and taxpayers but also anyone deemed to have a legitimate interest in the area. Subsequently, the Local Government Act 2000 substantially refocused the role of local authorities. They were now charged with powers to promote the 'wellbeing' of their area in respect to economic, social and environmental

concerns. The local authority was now seen to have a wider remit than providing a range of services largely concerned with social welfare. It was to be the lead agency in the overall economic and social development of its area. The local authority needed to lead the community by drawing other public and private sector organisations into partnerships and ensuring that the most efficient agencies, whether they be public or private, capable of undertaking a necessary service, are entrusted with supplying appropriate services (Chandler, 2009:30).

The evaluation of efficient management by local government was further extended in 2001, with the publication of the White Paper 'Strong Local Leadership – Quality Public Services', which incorporated Best Value in a system termed Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), which evaluated the overall corporate performance of the local authority (Chandler 2009:140). Research suggests that CPAs were seen by local authority managers as being more effective in driving improvement than inspections which focused on individual local government services (Downe and Martin, 2006). The CPA assessments varied from a local authority being awarded four stars for the best performance, through to no stars for a poor performing local authority. The 2007 Local Government Act replaced CPA with Comprehensive Area Assessments (CAA). Begun in April 2009, CAAs were intended to evaluate the provision of services more from the point of view of the local consumer within a specific area. Not so much from what a local authority provides, but how a range of service providers deliver services in that area. There still existed the star rating system for good and poor performing local authorities. Due to the rising costs of undertaking inspections of local authorities, the national government decided to reduce the number of targets set for local authorities, and with the introduction of Local Area Agreements (LAA), the intention was to reduce the number of targets linked to local needs. Nevertheless, in 2008, there still existed 198 performance indicators that the national government was measuring local authorities against (Chandler, 2009:140). This target element of planning regimes has attracted substantial criticism, where central government has set thousands of quantified objectives for public services (Hood, 2006).

Criticism of new public management and governance: 1979 onwards

Many of the NPM techniques were taken from private sector practices and transferred across to the public sector (Pollitt, 1995). In contrast, Rhodes (1997:55) characterises NPM as having four weaknesses:

- (i) Its intra-organisational focus.
- (ii) Its obsession with objectives.
- (iii) Its focus on results, and
- (iv) The contradiction between competition and steering at its heart.

Chandler, 2009:142) states that a further criticism of NPM is that it concentrates on the 3Es of efficiency, economy and effectiveness whilst having no regard to a further and more important 'E' word, ethics. According to Chandler (2009:143), corruption has been endemic within local government, although given the numbers of councillors and local government personnel, it is not a particularly widespread problem. Bevan and Hood (2006) were scathing of public servants who resort to a series of game playing tactics to meet targets. Whatever the reasons for implementing NPM, Combe (2014:20) feels that there was a growing realisation that public management was ineffective and costly, especially organisations such as the National Health Service (NHS), local authorities and civil service, which were seen as incapable of delivering on their goals and lacking in accountability, transparency and quality.

Further criticism is expressed by Rhodes (2015) who reflects on the transition from New Public Management (NPM) to the New Public Governance (NPG), as being seen as one reform after another and that there has been little time for the intended changes to take effect, no evaluation, and no clear evidence of either success or failure. Rather, local authorities are left with the dilemmas created by the past reforms and a way forward from this is to look at where local authorities have been and where they need to go.

Subsequently, the contemporary relevance of NPM and NPG has been questioned.

Dunleavy *et al.* (2005) claim that NPM is 'dead' in some leading-edge countries and that 'digital-era governance' has emerged. It has been a while since Osborne (2006) coined the term New Public Governance as a next-generation theory. As scholars question NPM's success and its normative grounds (Dunleavy *et al.*, 2005; Osborne, 2010) argue that a form of governance termed *collaborative governance* is a superior alternative to NPM, and this mode of governance has received extensive attention in the field of public administration. Though these developments could suggest that NPM is no longer current,

Pollitt (2016:430) holds that NPM is 'still thriving' and that in some countries it 'has made a modest come back' in terms of both discourse and practice, and that what is happening globally is 'a complex inter-penetration of different types of structure and process, resembling the bands and swirls in a piece of marble' (Aoki, 2019).

According to Waheduzzaman (2019), the newness of NPM, started to fade just before the beginning of the twenty-first century. NPM had been discredited primarily due to ineffective management and accountability systems within the public sector. Research findings indicate that the success of NPM in New Zealand, the UK and Australia was not equally replicated in other developed countries, such as the USA and Canada. Subsequently, some researchers claimed that NPM is dead (Dunleavy et al., 2005), while others argued that NPM has been transformed to public governance, or merged with good governance, or replaced by e-Governance. Although there has been a long discourse around this debate, in a nutshell, NPM was either lost or started losing ground in government systems across developed nations around the first decade of the millennium.

Failures in implementation of the NPM in most of the developed nations prompted researchers and policy makers to proclaim that developing countries should not follow NPM. Consequently, governments of developing nations ceased the application of NPM across their public sector institutions and started to implement new public governance (NPG) reforms. New Public Governance (NPG) which is defined as the processes through which citizens and state officials interact to express their interest, exercise their rights and obligations, work out their differences and cooperate to produce public goods and services. Researchers, however, argue that NPM is a transitional stage between old public management and public governance. There are some public management elements, such as decentralisation, market-based services, efficiency and accountability, which are required to be reformed first through NPM practices to create a suitable basis for the promotion of NPG (Waheduzzaman, 2019).

New Public Management is, and continues to be in many cases, the dominant pattern of organising and reforming the public sector, it has been, and continues to be, challenged from a number of directions. The most basic challenge is that governments should just forget the tenets of NPM and go back to good old-fashioned bureaucracy (Peters, 2017). While scholars such as Olsen (2006, 2008) have not argued for a complete dismantling of the apparatus of public management, they have demonstrated the virtues of more formal and legalistic versions of public administration. As already discussed, the foundations of

this challenge rest primarily on political and normative grounds. The main criticism has been that NPM has undermined the accountability of public services to their communities, and it has failed to deliver the promised efficiency and effectiveness of public services. Critics have also questioned the extent to which there is a single model of the NPM which can be deployed as a tool for comparative analysis let alone suggesting reforms and provide an alternative to public administration as either a theoretical construct for academic research or an approach to the management of public services (McLaughlin et al., 2002:11).

In addition to the option of simply dismissing the NPM remedies for governing, there are alternative conceptions such as the 'New Public Governance,' or 'New Political Governance' (Peters, 2017), and the 'Neo-Weberian State' (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004) that have been advocated as alternative visions of how to make government perform better. These alternatives to NPM are not merely attempts to return to some golden age of traditional public administration, but rather represent an attempt to integrate some of what are perceived more virtuous elements of NPM with some other less managerial values about the conduct of the public bureaucracy (Peters, 2017). For Aucoin et al (2013), the concept of NPG represents yet another alternative to NPM. The argument being advanced here is that while NPM, to some extent, denigrated political leadership, and other changes in governments – especially parliamentary governments – have been exaggerating the power of those officials. The movements, sometimes referred to as 'presidentialisation' (Poguntke and Webb, 2007), have been used to empower prime ministers at the expense, even of Cabinets, and to impose strict political controls over the actions of public administrators.

Levy (2010) notes that the reforms of New Public Management appear to fall by the wayside in a number of cases during the financial crisis beginning in 2008. According to Peters (2017) perhaps the most important difference between public management, as manifested in the NPM movement and the conception of governance, is that NPM was focused on the internal functioning of public organisations, and indeed largely focused on the performance of one organisation at a time. The fact that these organisations happened to be within the public sector was largely irrelevant for understanding their performance. On the other hand, governance studies tend to be focused more outside of the public sector itself, and, although it may begin by thinking about a single policy area, generally will adopt a broader conception of the public sector, public policy, and of governing. This difference in perspective in the public sector, in turn, produces very different ideas about how we should consider public administration. On one hand, public

administration is an integral component of a larger set of governance institutions and processes. In the more traditional, and perhaps also more modern, perspective on public bureaucracy, the individuals involved in those processes utilize their often substantial talents to work with political officials and with social actors of all sorts to make and implement policy. These tasks are much more than conventional management and involve a range of political and policy skills that exceed those expected of most managers.

Bryson et al (2014) argue that critics of public value say that it has been used as a rhetorical strategy to protect and advance the interests of bureaucrats and their organisations. A further criticism was that the Conservative governments of 1979-97 were not enthusiastic about mounting large scale evaluations of their management reforms. Ministers tended to take the line that reform was essential and self-evidently desirable, and that formal, public evaluation might prove a delay and distraction. Internal management reviews were more common. The Labour government since 1997 was more committed to formal evaluation (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004:296). Developments outside the control of the UK government would lead to a further departure away from NPM.

Financial crisis and its impact on local government: Post 2008

During 2007- 2008, there was the global financial crisis, which was in part blamed on the USA and UK governments regulation of the financial sector. The reforms introduced to address the crisis and its causes may be viewed as a continuing part of the NPM/Public Value (PV) model, but one that has recognised the limitations to the way in which the previous governments have implemented it. Therefore, although some observers have argued the 'death' of NPM has occurred (Dunleavy et al., 2005), the Public Choice/NPM approach continues to dominate official methods to public sector reform, even after the initial crisis has passed and whether these approaches can provide the trust in its system and the people who operate is to be seen. A return to a more interventionist approach to regulation, a prescriptive public policy with regard to what the private sector may or may not do, does not represent a disavowal of liberalism and NPM. It is a mature reflection that a free economy requires a strong state to balance between deregulation for economic growth with regulation for the public good, which requires improved policy capacity and good governance. It also requires public administrations staffed with competent, honest officials skilled in the art of statehood. The story of the financial crisis and how we got there tells us best how to avoid future dangers, but the influence of

persistent public management reforms demonstrated a preference for liberal authoritarianism (Massey 2019).

Bryson et al (2014) advocate that just as New Public Management supplanted traditional public administration in the 1980s and 1990s as the dominant view, a new movement is now under way that is likely to eclipse it. The new approach does not have a consensually agreed name, but many authors point to the need for a new approach and to aspects of its emergence in practice and theory (see for instance: Moore 2014; Osborne 2010). While efficiency was the main concern of traditional public administration, and efficiency and effectiveness are the main concerns of New Public Management, values beyond efficiency and effectiveness are pursued, debated, challenged, and evaluated in the emerging approach. In this regard, the emerging approach re-emphasises and brings to the fore value-related concerns of previous eras that were always present but not dominant (Denhardt and Denhardt 2011). This renewed attention to a broader array of values, especially to values associated with democracy, makes it obvious why questions related to the creation of public value, public values more generally, and the public sphere have risen to prominence.

Moore (2014) develops the philosophical foundations of his approach to public value as a prelude to establishing what he calls “public value accounting.” He makes three assertions: First, a public collectively defined through democratic processes is the appropriate arbiter of public value when collectively owned assets of government are being deployed. Second, collectively owned assets include not only government money but also state authority. Third, assessing the value of government production relies on an aggregation of costs and benefits broadly conceived, as well as on collective determinations concerning the welfare of others, duties to others, and conceptions of a good and just society. The public sphere as ‘a democratic space’ that includes the ‘web of values, places, rules, organisations, knowledge, and other cultural resources held in common by people through their everyday commitments and behaviours, and held in trust by government and public institutions.’ It is ‘what provides a society with some sense of belonging, purpose, meaning, and continuity, and which enables people to thrive and strive amid uncertainty.’ Furthermore, the public sphere is thus the space that psychological, social, political, institutional, and physical, within which public values and public value are held, created, or diminished. Public Value includes what adds to the public sphere (Bennington, 2011:31-43).

Equality & diversity within public management and governance: 1979 onwards

Having provided an overview and critique of new public management and new public governance, it is necessary, given the broader aims of this thesis to consider how equality and diversity was shaped by these developments leading up to the introduction of the equality frameworks. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, public service organisations have experienced significant changes since 1979, with the introduction of markets and extension of contracting out, a new emphasis on efficiency goals and 'value for money'. Despite some notable exceptions, equality goals became subordinated to business and efficiency goals (Newman and Ashworth, 2009:299). However, there has been a resurgence of interest in the possible benefits of diversity strategies for organisations across the private and public sectors (Fischer, 2007). This has been underpinned by a 'business case' that advocates the enlargement of the recruitment pool so staff can be more representative of society and therefore more responsive to societal needs (Rees, 2005).

The links made between diversity and organisational effectiveness potentially place equality agendas at the core of organisational strategies, rather than consign them to the backwaters of human resource management. Also, despite the centrality of equality in public services over many decades, there seems to have been little achieved. These are explained at three levels: institutional; organisational; and individual. At the institutional level, equality policies and programmes may be partly ceremonial, with their function being largely to secure legitimacy in the institutional environment. A delicate balance is struck between being seen to be supporting equality, while not allowing it to get in the way of operational efficiency. At an organisational level, the focus is on the organisational culture which creates the disadvantage, such as discussions on working hours, access to flexible working and language used. The culture in the organisation may create barriers to a more diverse working environment and may not be consciously held, but lead to an institutional approach which prevent greater improvement in equality. Changes in mission statements, corporate goals may not be enough to bring about the cultural change amongst managers. Culture change programmes need to be supported by 'harder' organisational change strategies such as equality audits, targets linked to performance indicators, careful use of disciplinary procedures to signal behaviours that are unacceptable, and rewarding positive outcomes, monitoring and evaluation of outcomes (Newman and Ashworth, 2009:302-303). Finally, at a personal level, it is the way in which individual's experience the implementation of equality policies. Enacting the equality agenda through one's own behaviour is threatening, not only to established power bases

but also to workers' views of their own competence and professional expertise (Lewis, 2000). Only in organisational cultures that acknowledge the emotional, as well as the managerial, dynamics of change, and where there is a culture of learning rather than blame, can these fears be confronted and addressed (Newman and Ashworth, 2009:303).

Equality is not an unchanging and universal principle of public management. Equality legislation and equality policies are the products of struggles by particular groups to overcome patterns of structural inequality. In recent years there has been an increasing emphasis on diversity, that is, a recognition of the need to respond to difference and to pursue a more active and dynamic concept of social justice. As diversity becomes seen as contributing to business effectiveness, equality agendas are more frequently to be found at the core of organisational strategies. However, it remains the case that equality and diversity are contested ideas. This may be part of the reason why less has been achieved than hoped for in recent years. Recent developments at institutional, organisational and personal levels include new legislative duties and a movement to 'mainstreaming', but progress has so far been judged to be patchy (Newman and Ashworth, 2009:307). Some academic evaluations have appeared, and these suggest there has probably been substantial though not spectacular efficiency gains, increased responsiveness to service users, but significant loss of equality (Boyne et al. 2003).

During the 'New Labour' government 1997-2010, the Employers Organisation for local government introduced in 2001, the Equality Standard for local government. This Standard required all local authorities to adopt this 'performance framework' which would enable them to make progress on 'mainstreaming' equality and diversity by working through a set of objectives to be achieved across various levels of performance. The Equality Standard was subsequently amended in 2010 and renamed the Equality Framework for local government. The discussions on public management and governance seemed to have shaped this new Equality Standard, and subsequent chapters will examine further in what ways the emerging NPM and NPG themes shaped and influenced the various equality frameworks that the government and its agencies developed between 2001- 2014 (LGA, 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the emergence of local government and how its role has evolved over the last century and in particular since 1979 during which public management and governance underwent a significant transformation towards what authors such as Hood (1991) described as 'New Public Management' (NPM). This resulted in the governments scaling back the responsibilities of the state and local government, by increasing competition for the provision of services, in order to bring about more efficiency and value for money.

The 'New Labour' governments of 1997-2010 did not alter the direction of travel that the previous government had started, but instead sought to adapt the approach to include more public involvement and partnerships. Between 1997- 2010, there was also the emergence of 'Best Value' and performance indicators, both designed to enable local government to become more efficient and effective, and therefore delivering services identified by local communities. During this period, the traditional approach of NPM gave way to New Public Governance (NPG), with its focus on greater involvement of citizens, alongside partnership working with either private or voluntary sectors. The financial crisis post 2008 placed more pressure on the UK governments to continue with the public management reforms, but in a climate of budget deficits, which meant a greater focus on ensuring more efficiency and effectiveness. Authors such as Bryson et al (2014), Benington (2011) and Moore (2014) argue that a new form of public management is emerging called 'Public Value', which in essence builds on the concepts of NPM and NPG, but places them in the context of the financial situation that the UK finds itself in, as well as a need to meet the needs of its citizens.

During the period 1997 onwards, whilst the public management and governance reforms were taking place, there emerged an Equality Standard, which was designed to assist local authorities to 'mainstream' equality and diversity. The Standard was seen as a performance management tool, which not only helped local authorities to progress through different levels of improvement, but also allowed local authorities to benchmark against one another. The next chapter outlines how local authorities sought to develop its workforce in order to implement the public management reforms through the use of performance management schemes and competency frameworks.

4.0 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REVIEW SCHEMES AND COMPETENCIES

Introduction

This chapter will examine the emergence of performance management within local authorities and how performance review schemes and competency frameworks also developed during the period of research for this thesis. The chapter will also critically examine the potential benefits of performance review schemes and how equality and diversity had been integrated within these schemes. The chapter also examines the criticisms levelled against performance review schemes and concludes by offering an analysis on how performance review schemes could incorporate equality and diversity competencies to make them more effective.

This chapter also critically examines the development of competencies and the rationale for their emergence within management circles. The chapter further outlines what competencies are within a system of appraisals, and according to Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003), who differentiate between competences and competencies, whereby competence was about tasks and competencies was about behaviours. Furthermore, the chapter presents an outline of the national competency framework that the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) (2006) developed and discusses the component parts of the framework. The discussion around how equality and diversity had been viewed within competency frameworks and whether it should be seen as a competency area in its own right or embedded within other competency areas is also explored. Also presented in this chapter is a series of criticisms that have developed regarding the use of competencies. Finally, the chapter presents an overview of how equality and diversity could be incorporated within a competency framework.

Performance management has been described as ‘a process by which organisations set goals, determine standards, assign and evaluate work, and distribute rewards’ (Varma et al., 2008). In the UK, 90 per cent of organisations formally assess managers via a performance management system, whilst comparable figures are 88 per cent in Greece, 84 per cent in Sweden and 81 per cent in Germany (Brewster et al., 2007). Performance management systems could enable local authorities to assess how well they are mainstreaming equality and diversity. A local authority may have aspirations on how it should perform in relation to equality and diversity. To assess this and improve the

performance of its employees' in relation to equality and diversity, most local authorities had introduced performance review schemes. Redman and Wilkinson (2009:187) highlight that whilst formal reviews/appraisals have had a shorter history, informal systems of performance review schemes have been around for as long as people have worked together. Furthermore, Randell (1994) identifies its first use through the 'silent monitor' in Robert Owen's textile mills, where a block of wood depicting a colour was hung over the employee's workspace to show their performance the previous day. Owen also recorded a yearly assessment of employees' in a 'book of character'.

For Chapman (2013:1), performance reviews are essential for the effective management and evaluation of staff and reviews also help develop individuals, improve organisational performance, and feed into business planning. Whilst the importance of performance reviews may be supported, its application draws mixed responses. The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD, 2009) highlight that whilst more than 80 per cent of Human Resource (HR) practitioners carry out performance reviews, their popularity was questioned. Management consultancy, Hay Group (2012) found half of public sector workers and one-third of business leaders describing performance reviews as a box-ticking exercise (Jozwiak, 2012). According to Cole and Kelly (2011:7) the classical approach to management is primarily concerned with the structure and activities of formal or official organisation. Issues such as the division of work, the establishment of a hierarchy of authority, and the span of control were seen to be the utmost importance in the achievement of an effective organisation. Two of the greatest exponents of this classical approach were Fayol and Taylor. Between them, they laid the foundations of ideas about the organisation of people and work and the organisation of work itself.

Developments in performance management theory progressed in the 1920s to what was referred to as the human relations approach to management. Mayo (1975) is a leading proponent of this and his 'Hawthorne studies' during 1927-1932 provided an enormous impetus to considerations of the human factor at work. Many of the issues raised by Mayo (1975) were taken up in the post-World War Two years by social psychologists, such as Maslow (1943) and his work on motivation, based on a hierarchy of human needs. Other important contributors include Herzberg (1966). The work of these theorists led to further developments in performance management thinking.

Defining performance management

By the late 1960s, the theorist Vroom began to challenge the dominance of the human relations and psychological theories, advocated by proponents such as Mayo and Maslow. Vroom viewed organisations as complex systems of people, tasks and technology and the dynamics between them also affected the performance of the individuals (Cole and Kelly, 2011:8). Cole and Kelly (2011:489) define performance management as a continuous process for improving the performance of individuals by aligning actual performance with that desired and with strategic goals of the organisation through a variety of means such as standard setting appraisal and evaluation both informally, day-to-day, and formally/systematically through appraisal interviews and goal-settings. For Neale and Northcraft (1991:12), performance management has four steps, which include determination and setting of individual objectives which support the achievement of the overall business strategies, a formal appraisal centred on what was achieved against these pre-arranged objectives and the last two steps which could include a performance related pay scheme where the level of pay increase was based largely on the actual level of achievement made against the pre-arranged objectives and an organisation capability review which focused on the total organisational capability of each part of the organisation to achieve future business strategies.

Whilst the terms 'performance management' and 'performance review' are often interchangeably used, it is argued that they are different. Performance management 'tends to be associated with developments in areas such as coaching, 360 degree feedback, competency-based appraisal, performance related pay and more recently, employee engagement, whilst performance management review is an activity within performance management (Mone and London, 2009). The Employers Organisation (2004) argue that to ensure a local authority has an effective performance management system it needs to develop business plans which clearly stated the local authority's budget, priorities, corporate, service and team objectives and established what aspects of performance need to be measured or assessed, including any indicators. The local authority should also set up systems to monitor and evaluate corporate services, individual performance against indicators, plans and objectives. This meant collecting performance data in an appropriate format to record progress, achievements and resources used. Furthermore, the local authority needed to define the general performance expectations of employees' through the use of competencies, policies and procedures and agree specific performance objectives for service teams and individuals.

The CIPD (2009) argue that in simple terms, 'performance management is the means by which many organisations make certain that managers ensured people knew what they ought to be doing, had the skills to do it and complete it to an adequate standard'. Performance management therefore established a shared understanding about what is to be achieved and provided a system through which organisations set work goals, determine performance standards, assign and evaluate work, provide performance feedback, determine training and development needs and distribute rewards (CIPD, 2009).

Another purpose for performance management was outlined by Armstrong and Murlis (1991:190), who argue that an effective performance management system should include a clear statement of mission and values, a procedure for establishing individual performance 'contracts', a clear process for establishing individual improvement programmes, performance indicators and critical success factors and a performance review mechanism. The result, Goss (1995:26) suggests, was a system which worked as a continuous cycle. A further definition was provided by Armstrong (2002:373), who defines performance management as 'a means of getting better results from organisations, teams and individuals. It is about the agreement of objectives, knowledge, skill and competence requirements, and work and personal development plans. The focus was on improvement, learning, development and motivation. Performance management processes could be used as a means of distributing rewards, either through performance-related pay (PRP) schemes or through promotion'. Most performance management systems are broadly similar, in that they each link together strategy and planning with employee socialisation, monitoring and review of progress, reinforcing performance standards and supporting individuals to achieve performance expectations (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2006:188).

Criticism of performance management

According to Brewster et al (2007), 90 per cent of UK organisations formally assessed managers via a performance management system. However, Redman and Wilkinson (2002:189) argue that there was criticism of performance management systems, in terms of them being seen to add more pressure and little regard for the welfare of employees, which may hamper organisational performance over the long term. Often, they were implemented in a very prescriptive fashion and often 'borrowed' from other organisations, which may not suit the organisation that has 'borrowed' the information. Case studies of

its practices report that the motivating forces in organisations are chief executives and human resource departments with often questionable ownership and commitment from line managers, who are most likely to be critical of the performance management, which detracts from its successful implementation.

Redman and Wilkinson (2002) argue that perhaps more damning was the view that they were ineffective. The main driver of performance management was improvement of overall organisational effectiveness. However, there was little support from various studies that performance management improved performance. Furthermore, Redman and Wilkinson (2002) feel that there was a difference between performance management systems and individual appraisals. Individual appraisals were part of a performance management and there was the possibility that an organisation may have a good performance management system, which trained all managers to undertake appraisals and had performance review schemes in place to record the results of individual appraisals and act upon them. However, individual managers may not carry out the procedures for undertaking appraisals properly and this in turn would lead to an ineffective appraisal, despite there being appropriate training in place for the managers. If the performance management systems also had in place ways to identify this situation, then it could take steps to re-train the manager and reduce the likelihood of this happening.

Defining performance management review schemes

According to Cole and Kelly (2011:490), performance management is an ongoing or continuous process whilst performance review is done at discrete time intervals. Performance review was the systematic description of an employee's job, relevant strengths and weaknesses. Performance reviews (incorporating individual appraisals) provide an analysis of a person's overall capabilities and potential, allowing informed decisions to be made in the process of engaging and managing (controlling) employees and are used to ensure an individual's performance was contributing to organisational goals. According to Marchington and Wilkinson (2006:192), the IRS survey (2003)) found that the main reasons for performance management reviews are:

- to identify training/development needs (89 per cent)
- to evaluate individual performance (82 per cent)
- to identify and acknowledge good performance (32 per cent)

- to ensure managers and staff communicate (31 per cent)
- to help to make reward decisions (19 per cent); and to measure the standard of people management (5 per cent).

For Chapman (2013) formal performance management reviews should generally be conducted annually for all employees in the organisation. Each employee is appraised by their line manager, with Directors usually appraised by the Chief Executive Officer, who is appraised by the chairperson or company owners or in the case of local authority, leading councillors. Annual individual appraisals enable management and monitoring of standards, agreeing expectations and objectives, and delegation of responsibilities and tasks. Employee appraisals also establish individual training needs and enable organisational training needs analysis and planning. Individual appraisals are also typically fed into organisational annual pay and grading reviews, which commonly coincide with business planning for the next financial year. Individual appraisals generally review each individual's performance against objectives and standards for the trading year, agreed at the previous appraisal meeting.

Furthermore, Chapman (2013:1) argues that performance appraisals are also essential for career and succession planning - for individuals, crucial jobs and for the organisation as a whole. Individual appraisals are important for employee motivation, attitude and behaviour development, communicating and aligning individual and organisational aims, and fostering positive relationships between management and employee. Individual appraisals also provided a formal, recorded, regular review of an individual's performance, and a plan for future development. Individual appraisals are much more productive if the manager meets team members individually and regularly for one-to-one discussion throughout the year. Meaningful regular discussion about work, career, aims, progress, development or whatever makes appraisals so much easier because people then know and trust each other which reduced all the stress and the uncertainty.

Criticism of performance management review schemes

Performance review schemes also have their critics, such as Longenecker (1989:76-82) who claims that they are expensive, cause conflict between the manager and employee and have limited value and may even be dysfunctional in the improvement of employee performance. Furthermore, Longenecker (1989:76-82) argues that one reason given was that most managers were not naturally good at conducting individual appraisals.

According to Lawler (1994:16-28), if managers are not trained properly, then the individual appraisal meetings could be short lived, ill structured and bruising encounters. The appraisal ratings could be manipulated to suit an individual or organisational priority. Furthermore, Lawler (1994:16-28) states that moving to more objective forms of performance review schemes could overcome some of the problems encountered through subjective analysis. Legal challenges have encouraged the move away from personality-trait based systems to objective based systems, although these too can have problems.

The bureaucratic nature of individual appraisals could also give rise to extra burdens on managers and often this results in the process being simplified and losing real purpose. According to Barlow (1989:499-517) performance review schemes became little more than a 'routinised recording of trivialities', where manager and employee go through the motions, sign the documents and these are sent to a central personnel department where they are stored, without using them in a meaningful way. Evenden and Anderson (2002:228) describe a survey undertaken with the help of an external consultant to conduct a survey of employee attitudes towards performance reviews and individual appraisals. The key findings from the survey (not untypical of the kind of results in other organisations conducting this type of survey) were that most employees' welcomed the idea of regular individual appraisal and that most felt its objectives should primarily focus on improving employee's job performance, and on identifying training and development needs to assist employees' in developing themselves. However, the survey also found that there were mixed views on whether individual appraisal should be linked to decisions on pay and rewards, and whether this should be used to identify the potential for an employee's promotion. Most employees' sought active involvement in the scheme, and felt it should assist in communicating their views to management. Their main concerns were that individual appraisals might not be totally fair, because of the possibility of subjective assessment being made and managers adopting inconsistent standards. According to Redman et al (2009), performance review schemes were more widespread than at any time in its history and organisational resources allocated to it were enormous. At the same time, the critics of it also grew. Strebler et al (2001) pointed to the problem of performance review schemes with their multiple objectives of setting targets, giving performance feedback, assessing potential, discussing development needs and determining performance-related pay increases. These schemes, therefore, often required a considerable commitment in terms of organisational resources, in order for them to be implemented successfully.

Redman and Wilkinson (2009:177) mention that there were different methods of undertaking individual appraisals. Some of the more common were; upward appraisals, which was a relatively recent addition within performance review schemes in the UK. The process was anonymous and involved employees' providing feedback on manager's performance. Criticism of this has largely come from managers, and for that reason the application of it has been relatively low. Another method is the 360 degree appraisal, which was increasing in popularity. The 360 degree method usually had an anonymous survey involving peers, subordinates, supervisors and occasionally customers, who were asked about a particular employee via questionnaires which were either structured or open-ended. However, there was criticism of the 360 degree method relating to whether the data gathered was accurate, valid and meaningful. Furthermore, by giving all respondents the same questions may not yield accurate assessments, as each person might have had a different interaction with the employee. Customer appraisal involved organisations using feedback from customers to change the way they deliver services. Whilst feedback from customers was used to inform organisational change, it was less used to feedback on an individual's performance. Finally, competency appraisals, which have been one of the major human resource themes since the 1990's (Redman and Wilkinson (2009:177)).

A supporter of performance review schemes, Chapman (2013:1) argues that if performance review schemes were administered without training for managers or proper consultation within employees' and conducted poorly, this would be counter-productive and a waste of everyone's time. Furthermore, well-prepared and well-conducted performance reviews (including individual appraisals) provided unique opportunities to help employees and managers improve and develop, and thereby also the organisations for whom they work. Redman and Wilkinson (2009:187) also note that since the early days of performance review schemes, they have become a standard practice in Human Resource Management (HRM), although personnel managers have tended to be keener on them than other managers in their organisation. Conducting individual appraisals was particularly prominent in some industrial sectors in the UK, such as financial services and it had rapidly grown in the public sector more recently.

Whilst there was criticism of performance review schemes, critics have been silent on what should replace them and according to Redman et al (2009:188), performance review schemes and individual appraisals will continue to be used, although they will need to be continually monitored to ensure its effectiveness. The issue lied more with its implementation rather than the review process. Redman and Wilkinson (2002:188) further

argue that performance review schemes, consisting of the review of the employee's performance typically conducted by the immediate line manager, had grown rapidly in the UK since the early 1990's. One key driver of the growth of performance review schemes had been the increasing popularity of the Investors in People (IiP) initiative. For example, the Workplace Employee Relations 2002 Survey data found that organisations that were recognised as Investors in People were significantly more likely to have performance review schemes. Gradually, performance review schemes had been introduced in schools, hospitals, universities, local authorities and civil service. New forms of individual appraisals had also emerged, including competency-based appraisal systems, staff appraisal of manager, team-based appraisal, customer appraisals and the so called '360' process (Redman and Wilkinson, 2002:188).

Implementing performance management review schemes effectively

The E-reward survey 2005 (Chubb et al, 2011) highlight a number of conditions for success in performance reviews, showing that simplification and the use of competencies were among the most common measures applied to improving existing schemes. Murphy (2004) equally recognised that in many organisations, performance review schemes were expected to fulfil numerous functions including: feedback; coaching; goal setting; skill development; pay determination; legal documentation; employee comparison; layoff selection; and 'no performance review scheme could meet all these ends'. Furthermore, Marchington and Wilkinson (2006:196) argue that a development framework for performance review schemes would only be successful if it was introduced into an open culture of trust and it could not be expected to provide a universal panacea for motivating the workforce.

In terms of adopting a good process for undertaking performance management reviews, authors such as Chapman (2013), and Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), outline what should be involved when carrying out performance reviews. Chapman (2013:2-4) favours the following steps in undertaking a performance review: prepare for the individual appraisal and inform the employee; identify an appropriate venue; undertake individual appraisal; agree specific objectives and action plan; agree necessary support; invite any other points; close positively; and record the main points. Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006)

go further than Chapman (2013), by providing a six step model that offers more detail as to how to develop a performance management review scheme. This involves:

- (i) Development of the business/corporate plan.
- (ii) Development of directorate/ service/ team plans.
- (iii) Development of individual Plans, whereby individuals come up with between 5- 8 individual objectives.
- (iv) Identification of competencies and training needs.
- (v) Six monthly review.
- (vi) Full year review.

According to Cole and Kelly (2011:493), there is no such thing as a universally correct appraisal form which would incorporate all aspects of an appraisal. However, generally desirable features included: simplicity; relevancy; descriptiveness (including evidence and enabling understanding by parties not present in the interview); adaptability; comprehensive; clearly defined competencies (where applicable); and having a past and future orientation. Aguinis (2009) recognises that an important component of the performance review stage was the use of appraisal forms, which are used to document and evaluate performance. Appraisal forms usually include a combination of the following components: employee information – job title, department; key dates; objectives; competences and indicators (if a behavioural approach had been adopted); major achievements; developmental needs; stakeholder input; employee comments and signatures. Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003:89) argue that the purpose of most appraisals is not to discuss behavioural performance but to use the discussion to arrive at an overall view of performance, which then leads to some form of action. A good performance review scheme will not, by itself, either make poor manager good or a poor appraisal process good. For Redman and Wilkinson (2002:187-188), there is a wide range of methods used to conduct performance management reviews, from the simplest of ranking schemes using objective, standard and competency-based systems to complex behaviourally anchored rating schemes. The nature of the organisation's appraisal scheme is largely a reflection of managerial beliefs, the amount of resources that it had available to commit, and the expertise it possessed.

Sillup et al (2010:42) argue that usually, individual appraisals were completed once a year and often included a mid-year discussion, but they argued that research had indicated this was too infrequent because managers faced problems with remembering

what employees did over the previous months. Sillup et al., 2010:42) find that organisations with monthly or quarterly meetings between manager and employee outperformed competitors on every financial and productivity measure and got positive feedback from employees about the fairness of their performance review scheme. For Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), individual appraisals should be positive experiences. The performance review process provides the platform for development and motivation, so organisations should foster a feeling that individual appraisals are positive opportunities, in order to get the best out of the people and the process. Holding regular informal one-to-one review meetings greatly reduce the pressure and time required for the annual formal performance review meetings. Holding informal meetings at least once a month was ideal for employees.

Furthermore, for Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003), the 'fear factor', often associated with formal performance management reviews, is greatly reduced because people become more comfortable with the process. Relationships and mutual understanding develop more quickly with greater frequency of meetings between manager and employee. Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006) continue by offering guidance on what should occur during performance management review meetings. At the initial meeting, the manager and employee need to identify a set of tasks/objectives that the employee would focus on. The agreement of tasks/objectives would also include identification of how performance will be measured in the future i.e. what the task/objective would look like if achieved. Subsequent review meetings would require the manager and employee to review performance against each of the tasks/objectives. At the mid and full year appraisal meetings, the manager and employee would exchange views and scores/ratings on each task and come to an agreement. If agreement cannot be reached through discussions, then the manager's assessment would stand. Wherever possible, this kind of disagreement should be avoided as the individual review is intended to be a discussion which enhanced working relationship between managers and employees' and not one that was confrontational. The discussion of tasks now switch to looking forward. Both manager and employee should consider what areas of work are likely to feature in the next period prior to the next performance management review discussion.

Mollander and Winterton (1996:116) further argue that wherever possible, targets should be limited to perhaps five or six achievable goals and that these were quantifiable and expressed in precise terms so that it was possible to measure performance at a later date. The performance review process should not rule out the setting of objectives that were not quantifiable, otherwise many worthwhile objectives would not be pursued. For

Cole and Kelly (2011:494) the culmination of the performance management review process results in the annual review interview, which was the formal face-to face meeting between the job-holder and their manager at which the information on the appraisal form is discussed and after which certain key decisions are made concerning salary, promotion and training.

The future of performance management and performance management review schemes

Despite problems, there is considerable evidence that performance management was here to stay, probably because of its importance to day-to day management. Redman and Wilkinson (2002:188) note that trends suggest that the more judgemental and 'harder' forms of performance review schemes were on the increase and that 'softer' largely developmental approaches were declining. Therefore, performance management review schemes were either used for career planning and identifying future potential or used to improve current performance and allocating rewards. Whilst performance management review schemes had gained popularity within human resource management, critics of performance reviews, such as Longenecker (1989:76-82) and Lawler (1994:16-28) argue that often managers may not be adequately trained to undertake good performance reviews and individual appraisals could be manipulated to suit an individual or organisation priority. Despite this, according to Marchington and Wilkinson (2006: 199), performance review schemes are here to stay for the immediate future, as no real suitable alternative had been presented. According to Chubb et al (2011) performance management reviews and related employee development have a major impact on service outcomes, and large employers almost universally have some type of performance management review scheme. A significant proportion of large UK employers have changed their schemes and many plan further changes.

For Sparrow (1994), the inclusion of competencies offer a clear focus for individual appraisals because both manager and employee are able to determine what competencies are required for the employee to perform well in their job. Connock (1992) describes performance review schemes as one of Human Resource Management's 'big ideas'. A consequence of the development of organisational competency models had been that employers had increasingly extended their use from training and development, selection and rewards uses into the area of individual appraisal. During the 1990's, further innovation was achieved when performance review schemes were linked to competency

frameworks (IRS, 1999). Furthermore, Chubb et al (2011) argue that common changes and apparent keys to improvement in appraisal and development processes externally, highlighted in research, included: simultaneously focusing more broadly on organisational performance and on initiatives required to support that, whilst also simplifying and speeding the core processes; providing more support and training in the use of the scheme to line managers and ensuring senior management commitment and example-setting; giving employees' higher levels of understanding and involvement and allowing them to drive and shape the process to a much greater extent; focusing on development and performance outcomes and measuring and demonstrating them; allowing for greater adaptation and flexibility to tailor a simpler common framework to suit diverse local needs and cultures.

Defining competency frameworks

The concept of competencies emerged during the early 1980s, in the private sector, as a response to organisational changes and drives for higher performance levels. American academic Richard Boyatzis' (1982) book '*The competent manager: a model for effective performance*' has considerable influence on the Human Resource (HR) profession. During the subsequent decades, competency frameworks had become an increasingly accepted part of modern HR practice (CIPD, 2016:4). These changes included a requirement for flatter organisational structures and employees' being required to show more flexibility in the jobs they could do. Difficulties in implementing competency frameworks often arose from a lack of understanding or lack of agreement about what a competency is (Whiddett and Hollyforde, 2003).

For Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003), the definitions of competence are a description of work tasks i.e. what a person had to do in a job. These are usually referred to as a 'competence' (plural competences) and description of behaviour i.e. how a person does their job. These have evolved from the work of researchers and consultants specialising in managerial effectiveness. These are usually referred to as a 'competency' (plural competencies). For Armstrong and Taylor (2014:112), the term 'competency' refer to an underlying characteristic of a person that resulted in effective or superior performance. In the past, HR professionals have tended to draw a clear distinction between 'competences' and 'competencies'. The term 'competence' (plural, competences) were used to describe what people needed to do to perform a job and was concerned with effect and output rather than effort and input. 'Competency' (plural, competencies)

described the behaviour that lay behind competent performance, such as critical thinking or analytical skills, attitudes and values that people bring to the job. More recently however, there had been growing awareness that job performance required a mix of behaviour, attitude and action and the terms were now more often used interchangeably (CIPD, 2016:3).

In 2005, Whiddett and Hollyforde were commissioned by the Employers Organisation for local government to develop a national competency framework, which would assist local authorities to refine or develop their competency frameworks. During the development of a national competency framework, discussions between the author of this thesis and Whiddett resulted in the series of workshops organised to explore how equality and diversity competencies could be incorporated within the development of the national competency framework. The results of these consultations are presented in this chapter. Hogg (2005) argues that competencies are a signal from the organisation to the individual of the expected areas and levels of performance. Furthermore, Hogg (2005) observes that originally competency frameworks consisted mainly of behavioural elements, which were an expression of the softer skills involved in effective performance. Increasingly however, competency frameworks have become broader and more ambitious in scope and include more technical competencies.

More recently, the CIPD (2016:4) argue that while competency frameworks originally consisted mainly of behavioural elements, which are an expression of the softer skills involved in effective performance. They later became broader and more ambitious in scope and included more technical competencies. This development has been given greater momentum by advances in technology. One recent variation was the use of 'strengths-based' approaches to recruitment and assessment. Early applications of competencies and competency frameworks focused mainly on performance management and development, particularly of more senior staff. More recently, according the CIPD (2016:6), it is recognised that an effective competency framework has applications across the whole range of human resource management and development activities. The approach has become more popular in recruitment. Competency frameworks are now seen as an essential vehicle for achieving high organisational performance through focusing and reviewing each individual's capability and potential. Furthermore, the CIPD (2016:6), state that employers most commonly use competency frameworks with the aim of achieving the following goals: fair performance reviews/reward, enhanced employee effectiveness; greater organisational effectiveness; better analysis of training needs and enhanced career management (CIPD, 2016:6).

According to the IRS study (1995:6-13) the most popular concepts found in employer competency frameworks were, in order: team orientation; communication; people management; customer focus; results-orientation and problem-solving. For Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003: 48-130), competencies are used to select employees, review their performance or determine their pay scales. In addition, when local authorities are considering introducing competencies into their performance management review processes, they need to consider some important principles to make them effective. Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003:35) outline three key principles that should be followed when producing, extending, updating or adapting a competency framework. The principles include: involving the people who will be affected by the framework; keeping people informed about what is happening and creating competences which will be applicable to all the people who the framework will apply to as well as meeting organisation needs. Furthermore, Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003) also argue that some of the most widely used competency headings include: team orientation or team working; communication skills; people management and customer focus.

There were several models of competency framework and deciding which one that would be most suitable would depend on the organisation's size and employees'. Some organisations opt for one competency framework for all employees across the organisation, which is often known as a 'core framework'. This has the advantage of being simple and easy to communicate, but has the drawback in terms of how relevant it is for all employees. Core frameworks tend to be very general and sometimes this can result in employees not seeing the competency framework as relevant to them. Other organisations prefer instead to develop a core framework and supplement it with role specific competencies for different employee groups. Another option that organisations adopt is to have a competency framework which offers a list of competencies, which the employee selects from, in discussion with their manager (EO, 2006). The number of competencies contained within frameworks had reduced. Whiddett and Hollyforde (1999) comment that whereas it was once common to find frameworks that contained 30 or more competencies, it was now more usual for frameworks to contain no more than ten, although many local authorities found between six and 12 competencies to be the most useful range for a framework.

The CIPD (2016:6), provide further guidance on developing competency frameworks and state that competencies should be arranged into clusters to make the framework more accessible for users. The framework should contain definitions and/or examples of each competency, particularly where it dealt with different levels of performance for each of the

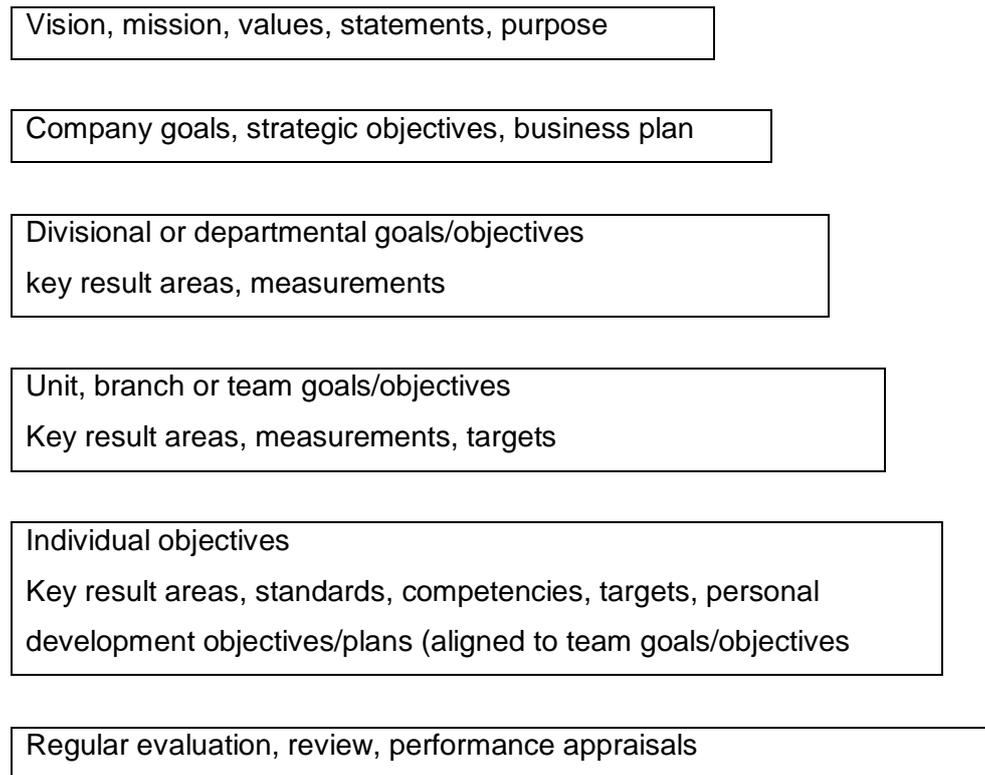
expected behaviours. A critical aspect of all frameworks is the degree of detail. If a framework was too broad (containing only general statements about individual competencies), it would fail to provide adequate guidance either for employees as to what is expected of them or to managers who had to assess their employees against these terms. If, on the other hand, it was too detailed, the entire process becomes excessively bureaucratic and time-consuming and may lose credibility.

Whiddett and Hollyforde (2005) describe the types of competencies that should not be included in competency frameworks, as they were not behaviours. The three common types of competencies were, firstly, '*Task or Activity statements*', which describe what a person does in their job. These competences are usually written from the point of view of what the job needs. For example 'collect and accurately file information' or 'answer telephone enquiries promptly'. Secondly, '*Value/Driver*' competencies, which describe the organisation's values, principles and/or key goals. For example 'committed to the principles of fair provision of services to all users' or 'capitalises on opportunities to promote continuous improvement'. Thirdly, '*Characteristic*' competencies which describe the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a person needs. For example 'has awareness of equality policy' or 'is open to new ways of working'. Furthermore, competencies '*should be comprised of simple, jargon free language*', with the language easily understood by all who would use or be affected by the framework. The competency should be observable and the competency should describe one example of behaviour. It should not be possible for a person to be good at one part of the competency and poor at another part of it (see Appendix A) (Employers Organisation, 2006).

Incorporating equality & diversity within performance management reviews

Naisby (2002) outline a performance management cascade, which describes the relationships between an organisation's vision/values through to individual objectives, underpinned by regular evaluation and appraisals (see Figure one). The IDeA (2006) built on Naisby's description by offering a further description of a performance management framework (see Appendix two), which describe where competencies could be positioned and the relationship between the personal objectives of an employee and how these relate to the values/drivers of the organisation. The IDeA performance management framework also references how training/development and performance reviews link to the personal objectives and the relationship between the various elements that made up an organisational performance structure.

Figure one: Performance management cascade (Naisby, 2002)



The previous sections outline the performance management review process and how organisations should implement these. According to Whiddett and Hollyforde (2005), for competencies to be effectively implemented, individual performance management reviews must focus on what an individual did (outputs) and how they did it (behaviour). Competencies provide a useful focus for obtaining information on how a person went about their work. Cheung-Judge (2000:2), argues that whilst competency frameworks may attempt to identify successful performance, there was a danger that this may reinforce gender and ethno-centric views of 'acceptability'. Cheung-Judge (2000:4-5) further argues that anyone designing a competency framework needs to be aware of this issue of acceptability and in the preparation of the competency framework, inclusion of a wide range of employees across the organisation, including those with equality and diversity specialism should be undertaken. This would ensure that a cross section of views can be taken on board prior to the development of the competency framework.

Research undertaken by the Bernard Hodes Group (2012:13), found that few public sector organisations use key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure diversity and inclusion. In all, only 40 per cent of respondents state that their organisation use specific KPIs. For those using KPIs, the main uses were representation/demographic data (81 per

cent) and employee survey results (73 per cent). There are no responses on how equality and diversity is assessed within performance review schemes. Sparrow (1997) asserts that the assessment of competencies (including equality) in the performance management review process has a number of benefits. The evaluation of competencies identified as central to a good job performance provide a useful focus for analysing the progress an individual is making in their job, rather than the static approach of many ability-or trait- rating schemes. Thus competency based assessment was especially useful in directing employee attention to areas where there is scope for improvement. For Sparrow (1997), this latter benefit overcomes one of the problems of traditional objective-based performance management review schemes, in which the manager is often at a loss as to how to counsel an employee on what they should do differently if the appraised objectives have not been achieved.

For Goss (1995:164), it is usually accepted that to get an equal opportunities culture established within an organisation, it is not sufficient to rely on policy exhortations or the threat of disciplinary action in cases of unacceptable behaviour. These steps need to be complemented by awareness training to change (rather than merely suppress) 'hostile' attitudes towards under-represented groups wherever possible. As defined by Straw (1989:86), such training 'aims make one set of people aware of the needs and abilities of another set of people'. Clements and Jones (2008:73) find that long-term and substantial attitudinal change was unlikely to occur as a result of short-term awareness training, which is typically concerned with increasing knowledge and understanding. Clements and Jones (2008:74) further state that attitudinal change was one of the most difficult outcomes to achieve through the delivery of training. Very often diversity training would consist of one or two days of awareness training and attitudinal change was frequently beyond the scope of this sort of training event.

Incorporating equality & diversity competencies within competency frameworks

The IDeA (2006) research amongst local authorities found that most competency frameworks include competencies on equality and diversity. These are usually included within various competency headings or in some cases as a competency area in its own right. Discussions around integrating equality/diversity within other competency areas or having a clearly definable competency area of work labelled 'equality and diversity' were ongoing amongst equality/diversity professionals. Proponents of the integration of equalities/diversity within all competency areas of a local authority argue that only by

doing this, would real improvements be made and equality/diversity issues being taken seriously and not seen as an 'add on' or 'afterthought'.

Furthermore, the IDeA (2006) found that whilst proponents of the separate approach support this view, they argue that whilst this is what local authorities should strive to do, in most instances when mainstreaming of equalities/diversity was attempted into other work areas, equalities/diversity either got diluted or in most instances lost altogether. For this reason, the advocates of a separate area of work around equality/diversity competencies state that there should be a recognised and visible area of work that shows what the local authority is doing to tackle inequalities that exist. Local authority diversity professionals point out that by doing this, it re-enforces the view that equalities is separate to the mainstream activity of an organisation and that in many instances equality officers/teams are seen as being responsible for undertaking the equality/diversity work in a local authority. The key issue is not whether there is a separate focus or individual officer, but that there is commitment from the senior management to achieving change around equality/diversity.

Strengths and weaknesses of using competencies and competency frameworks

Competencies, like other aspects of performance management have their strengths and weaknesses. Strengths of competencies are: employees have a set of objectives to work towards and are clear about how to perform their job; appraisal and recruitment systems are fairer and more open; there is a link between organisational and personal objectives and processes are measurable. Weaknesses of competencies are: they can be over elaborate; language used may be off putting, if too much emphasis is on inputs rather than outputs; they can become out of date with pace of change; some behavioural competencies are basically personality traits which an individual may be unable (or unwilling) to change and it is not reasonable to judge someone on these rather than what they actually achieve (Whiddett and Hollyforde, 2003).

Competency frameworks, when done well, can increase clarity around performance expectations and establish a clear link between individual and organisational performance. When developing and implementing a competency framework, care needs to be taken to balance detail with flexibility and avoid an overly prescriptive and non-inclusive approach (CIPD, 2016:1). Competency frameworks can be extremely useful in a number of settings from recruitment through development, talent spotting and

performance management. However they can only be successful in supporting decision-making if they accurately reflect the needs of both the job and the organisation in terms of skills, experience and behaviours. They should therefore take account of job and person specifications and the organisation's medium and long-term needs for talent, as well as reflecting the organisational ethos and values. They should contain a mix of job-specific and organisation-specific behaviours and reflect the need to build a diverse workforce, a broad talent base and complementary team roles (CIPD, 2016:2).

Furthermore, CIPD (2016:6), outline that criticism of competency based systems tend to be that they are over-elaborate and bureaucratic and that the language used to describe competencies may be off-putting. Also, it is difficult to strike the right balance between reviewing the competencies often enough for them to remain relevant but not so often as to become confusing. If too much emphasis was placed on 'inputs' at the expense of 'outputs', there is a risk that it will favour employees who are good at theory but not at practice and will fail to achieve the results that make an organisation successful. The main criticisms of competency frameworks usually suggest that they: focus on the past and therefore cannot keep up to date with rapidly-changing environments; fail to deliver on anticipated improvements in performance; are unwieldy and not user-friendly. While such criticism has been levelled with justification at poorly-developed competency frameworks, they also reflect a lack of understanding of competencies. The criticism does not so much detract from the need and usefulness of competency frameworks as highlighting the need for care and understanding when developing and implementing such frameworks (CIPD, 2016:6).

Despite this, Whiddett and Hollyforde (2005) argue that many organisations develop a competency/behaviour framework with a view to managing performance and progression more effectively. However, many managers and individuals find it hard to use the competency frameworks to help achieve their goals and, therefore, the goals of the organisation. The most common reasons for this are that people did not see the benefit of the competency framework and there are no clear links to what the business was aiming to achieve; and many competency frameworks were a mix of different concepts, which made them unwieldy.

Conclusion

According to Redman and Wilkinson (2009:187) informal schemes of performance management have been around for as long as people have worked together, from its early days in Robert Owen's textile mills, where the 'silent monitor' management was applied. Although, definitions of what performance management varied, with Cole and Kelly (2011:489) defining performance management as a continuous process for improving the performance of individuals by aligning actual performance with that desired and with strategic goals of the organisation. The Chartered Institute for Personnel Development (CIPD, 2009) argue that in simple terms, performance management was the means by which many organisations made certain, that managers ensured people knew what they ought to be doing, had the skills to do it and completed it to an adequate standard.

Redman and Wilkinson (2002:189) argue that criticism of performance review schemes arose from them being seen as adding more pressure and with little regard for the welfare of employees and that perhaps more damning was the view that they were ineffective. However, Cole and Kelly (2011:490) make a distinction between performance management and performance review schemes. For Cole and Kelly (2011:490) performance management is an ongoing or continuous process, whilst performance review was done at discrete time intervals and was the systematic description of an employee's job relevant strengths and weaknesses. Whilst there was criticism of performance management review schemes, critics tended to be silent on what should replace them and according to Redman et al (2009:188), performance management review schemes will continue to be used, although they will need to be continually reviewed to ensure its effectiveness. The issue lies more with its implementation rather than the review process.

In terms of adopting a good process for undertaking individual appraisals, there were authors such as Chapman (2013) and Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), who argue for what should be involved when carrying out individual appraisals. For example, Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006) outline a six step model which offered more detail as to how an appraisal process should be developed and implemented. However, according to Cole and Kelly (2011:493), there was no such thing as a universally correct appraisal form or process. Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003:89) continue by arguing that a good appraisal requires a good appraiser, who could effectively: prepare performance information for discussion; evaluate the information against benchmarks and measurable targets;

explore (with the employee) any personal and/or organisational factors that may be affecting performance; integrate output and behavioural information with personal and organisational factors; and arrive at an agreed and fair assessment of overall performance.

One of the criticisms in the application of individual appraisals relates to the frequency of carrying out appraisals. Sillup et al (2010:42) argue that individual appraisals were completed once a year and usually included a mid-year discussion, but the research they undertook has indicated that this was too infrequent because managers faces problems with remembering what employees did over the previous months. Campbell et al (1970) find that organisations with, at least, monthly or quarterly review meetings 'outperformed competitors on every financial and productivity measure and got positive feedback from employees about the fairness of the performance review scheme.' Whilst individual appraisals have gained popularity within human resource management, critics of performance review schemes, such as Longenecker (1989:76-82) and Lawler (1994:16-28) argue that often managers may not be adequately trained to undertake good performance reviews and individual appraisals could be manipulated to suit an individual or organisation priority.

An innovation in performance review schemes in the 1990s was the linking of appraisals to competency frameworks (IRS, 1999). According to Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003: 48-130), competencies can be used to select employees, review their performance or determine their pay scales. The early applications of competency frameworks were focused mainly on performance management and development, particularly of more senior employees. Furthermore, Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003:35) outline three key principles that must be followed when producing, extending, updating or adapting a competency framework. The principals involve the people who would be affected by the framework, keep people informed about what was happening and create competences which would be applicable to all the people who the framework would apply to as well as meeting organisation needs. Once developed, the process of assessing the success of the competency framework has led to authors such as Sparrow (1997), to argue that the assessment of competencies (including equality) in the appraisal process has a number of benefits, from analysing the progress an individual is making in the job to directing employee attention to areas where there is scope for improvement. However, the benefits must be set against the development and running costs involved and the wider critical debate surrounding the 'competency movement' in general.

Despite the criticisms, Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006) argue that many organisations develop a competency/behaviour framework with a view to managing performance and progression more effectively. However, many managers and individuals find it hard to use the frameworks to help achieve their goals and, therefore, the goals of the organisation. The most common reasons for this are that people do not see the benefit of the framework and are not trained adequately or there is no clear links to what the business is aiming to achieve and many frameworks are a mix of different concepts which make them unwieldy (CIPD, 2016:6). The next chapter begins to explore how local authorities have tried to mainstream equality and diversity through the use of equality frameworks and how they were developed to support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming.

5.0 EQUALITY FRAMEWORKS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES: 2001- 2014

Introduction

The previous three chapters provided a critical examination of the development of equality and diversity mainstreaming, public management and performance management review schemes and competencies. From the 1980's onwards, local authorities, influenced by public management and governance changes had continued to implement performance management systems which incorporated competencies. During this period, local authorities were also attempting to mainstream equality and diversity. The Office for Public Management (OPM) (2003) survey amongst local authorities found that many of the individuals they interviewed expressed concerns, that while they had some understanding of the thrust of current legislative requirements, they did not fully understand how to translate this into concrete actions and outcomes in their local authority. Several interviewees stated that there was insufficient guidance on how to integrate equality and diversity into existing practices, particularly in the area of service delivery. The question of when and how to mainstream equality and diversity was an area where people were particularly lacking in skills. The introduction of equality frameworks would go some way to answer these concerns. This chapter examines the introduction of equality frameworks post 1995 and considers how they were constituted, identifies the intentions and seeks to understand how they would assist local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity.

Emergence of the first equality framework in 1995

The Commission for Race Equality's (CRE:1995) 'A Standard for Racial Equality in local government', attempted for the first time to offer local authority's a framework whereby they could assess how far they had progressed toward achieving race equality. This was done against a five level standard, with local authorities at level one, seen as starting their race equality journey, whilst local authorities achieving level five were seen at being at an advanced position in relation to race equality. This Standard further emphasised the link between equality and good business performance. Clarke and Speeden (2000:7) argue that the Standard marked a clear attempt to shift the emphasis of racial equality work from 'law enforcement' as the principal means of fighting discrimination, towards a model

based on quality management. Engaging with 'quality' was, in turn, an attempt to make racial equality a central issue for public sector management and the Standard also represented a significant opportunity to extend the scope of racial equality work beyond enforcement by establishing a framework for performance that could be adopted widely by local authorities. This did not necessarily replace the need for statutory enforcement, but it did provide a potential new set of mechanisms for implementing racial equality objectives. Furthermore, the attraction of quality management lay in the possibility of establishing a culture through which anti-discriminatory policy could be developed and applied. The creation of the Standard represented a universal measure through which local authorities could establish their achievements in moving towards established performance goals (Clarke and Speeden, 2000:95-100).

The CRE Standard was a mechanism for self-assessment and forward planning. The CRE Standard was the forerunner to many of the equality standards and frameworks that exist today and was designed to enhance employer's performance around race equality. The CRE 'Race Equality Standard' was designed to help employers develop racial equality strategies and assess their impact and covered six areas:

- policy and planning
- selection
- developing and retaining staff
- communication and corporate image
- corporate citizenship
- auditing for racial equality.

Within each of the six areas, there were five levels of achievement, with level one being the beginning and level five as the highest level of achievement (CRE, 1995). The CRE 'Race Equality Standard' offered local authorities a step by step process to develop policies and procedures which would enable them to mainstream race equality. Local authorities were able to work their way through each of the levels, which were designed to increase in difficulty as they progressed. Whilst the process was designed to be easy to follow, the Standard assumed a good level of equality and diversity knowledge amongst those implementing the Standard. It was developed as a self-assessment tool, which meant local authorities had to develop actions against each of the levels and also to determine whether they had met the requirement. This was one of its shortcomings, as local authorities were not only developing actions and but also determining whether they

had met the action. Another limitation was failing to include any criteria as to what evidence local authorities should use to demonstrate they had met each of the requirements. Finally, emphasis solely on race equality meant that for many local authorities, it did not cover all the protected characteristics that the local authority worked on, which in turn limited its appeal (Employer's Organisation, 2003).

As noted in chapter 4, a key feature of performance management review schemes from the 1980s was the incorporation of competencies and whilst there was no specific mention of competencies in the CRE Standard, there was mention of equality objectives being incorporated within personal action plans for those local authorities attempting to achieve higher levels of performance. Also, within the CRE Standard 'Policy and Planning' performance area, there was mention of racial equality objectives being built into senior managers performance indicators. Whilst this only related to senior managers, it was an early attempt to incorporate equality objectives within performance management reviews (CRE, 1995).

Equality Standard for local government: 2001- 2010

Between 1995 and 2000, the implementation of the CRE Standard had varying degrees of success. Some local authorities adopted the Standard and used it as a self-assessment tool, whilst a large number did not implement it for various reasons, as mentioned previously. Despite this mixed response, the CRE Standard set the 'blueprint' for future Standards. In 2001, the Employers Organisation (EO) for local government, in conjunction with the Centre for Local Policy Studies at Edge Hill University, and supported by the three equality commissions (CRE, EOC and DRC) developed a more generic equality standard, which was included in the Government's set of Best Value indicators. This ensured that there would be a greater requirement on local authorities to implement the Standard (EO, 2001).

The Equality Standard for local government developed by the Employer's Organisation had five levels going from level one, which represented the lowest level of achievement and demonstrating that the local authority was putting the 'foundations' in place to develop their equality and diversity work, to level five, which represented the highest level of achievement, whereby the local authority had achieved significant progress in equality and diversity mainstreaming. A key achievement of the Employer's Organisation Equality

Standard was its inclusion as a Best Value Performance Indicator³, which meant that local authorities annually had to report to the Audit Commission which level of the Equality Standard they had self- assessed against. For the first time in England, there was not only a generic equality standard, which would help local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity but also a legal requirement for local authorities to report progress against the Standard (EO, 2001).

Subsequently, the Employers Organisation did its best to provide training and advice to local authorities, in order to support local authorities to implement the Equality Standard. However, with limited resources and over 350 local authorities to support, their impact was not very far reaching. Furthermore, the self-assessment nature of the Equality Standard meant that there was no way of assessing whether local authorities were accurately reporting progress or just being generous with their interpretation of what evidence was required to meet the actions within each level (EO, 2004). In 2006, the EO was disbanded due to budget cuts and efficiency requirements, and the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), a 'sister' company of the EO took over the guardianship of the Equality Standard.

The IDeA undertook a review of the Equality Standard and feedback from local authorities highlighted the limitations of the Equality Standard, as well as recommendations as to what would help local authority's better implement the Standard. As a result of this review, guidance was developed by the IDeA to assist local authorities to demonstrate what evidence should be produced for each action within each of the levels. Also, in order to improve the accuracy of self-assessments undertaken by local authorities, there was the introduction of an external validation process. Local authorities self- assessing that they had reached level three or level five, now had to undertake an external assessment to validate their assertion of level achieved. Whilst this was seen as a positive development to ensure that there was an 'independent' assessment of achievement, and this also enabled a benchmark to be established of what local authorities should provide as evidence of achievement. However, the requirement of having to undertake an external assessment, which had a cost associated with it, had a negative outcome of seeing some local authorities reach level two and then go no further, in order to not incur any costs of progressing to level three. Despite the costs, the IDeA's own research

³ 'Best Value' was introduced in England and Wales by the Local Government Act 1999, with the aim of improving local services in terms of both cost and quality. BVPIs would enable local authority progress to be measured annually by the Audit Commission (Audit Commission, 2010).

showed that between 2003 and 2010, over 95 per cent of local authorities had implemented the Equality Standard, and approximately 25 per cent of local authorities had progressed to the highest levels (level three, four or five). During this period, there was some concern that nearly half of all local authorities had only achieved level one, with some local authorities still not progressing to level one. Local authorities pointed to the 'rigid' process and the fact that there was no penalty in failing to progress up the levels (IDeA, 2010).

Equality Framework for local government: 2011 – 2014

The IDeA faced the same fate as the EO in terms of it being disbanded in 2010, and the 'parent' body, the Local Government Association (LGA), took over the guardianship of the Equality Standard. Further reviews of the Equality Standard were undertaken in 2010/11, when the Equality Standard was updated and renamed the Equality Framework for local government. During the review, it was felt that there were too many levels and the new Equality Framework was then reduced to three levels, headed: Developing, Achieving and Excellent. Within each level, there were five performance areas:

- (i) Knowing your community – equality mapping.
- (ii) Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment.
- (iii) Community engagement and satisfaction.
- (iv) Responsive services and customer care.
- (v) Modern and diverse workforce.

The Equality Framework also incorporates the requirements of new equality legislation which has emerged since 2003. Alongside the three previously protected characteristics of gender, race and disability, the Equality Framework now requires local authorities to also address issues relating to age, sexual orientation, and religion and belief. Despite one of the criticisms of the previous Equality Standard being the cost of undertaking an external assessment to verify the achievement of level three or five, the new Equality Framework retains this requirement of a paid for external assessment, which would be required to verify achievement against the Intermediate and Excellent levels. A late change in 2010 was the Government decision to remove any requirement to report against the Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) relating to what level a local authority had achieved in the Equality Framework. This requirement had made some local authorities implement the Equality Standard, who maybe might not have done so

had it not been a requirement of Best Value. This removal as a BVPI may mean that some local authorities stop implementing the Equality Framework (LGA, 2011).

Whilst seen as a tool for assisting local authorities to further mainstream equality and diversity, the Equality Framework, like the previous Equality Standard, did not include a requirement for the inclusion of equality and diversity competencies within either competency frameworks or performance management reviews. Each of the performance areas looks at key aspects where the local authority needs to bring about positive change in order to provide effective services and be an inclusive employer. The requirement for local authorities to work through each performance area where a number of tasks are to be performed begins to get the local authorities to embed good equality and diversity practice within their day to day structures. For example, one of the outcomes of the 'knowing your community' performance area is that the various local authority departments know about the communities they serve and who uses their services. This is a fundamental aspect of the work that the local authority should be undertaking and when implementing the Equality Framework, the local authority is required to ensure that this aspect is carried out across each department. The 'internal' element of a local authority, the employment of staff is covered in the performance area relating to a modern and diverse workforce. This area requires the local authority to ensure it has non-discriminatory policies and practices when recruiting and managing staff as well as ensuring the local authority takes proactive steps to create a more diverse workforce reflecting the population that it serves (LGA, 2011).

The Equality Framework continues to have an external assessment process for local authorities to validate their progress against the Equality Framework. The external assessment involves the local authority initially self-assessing against the Equality Frameworks three levels: Developing, Achieving or Excellent⁴ and determining which level they have achieved. After which the local authority can request the LGA to undertake an external assessment and 'test' the local authority self-assessment against the 'Intermediate' or 'Excellent' level. The external assessment involves an LGA 'assessment team' carrying out a desktop review of the local authority's policies and procedures, as well as its self-assessment document, as well as carrying out interviews

⁴ The 'Developing' level was achieved when a local authority had begun the process of mainstreaming equality and diversity, whilst the 'Achieving' level showed the local authority had made good progress towards mainstreaming equality and diversity and the 'Excellent' level showed that the local authority had achieved a good level of equality and diversity mainstreaming (LGA, 2014).

with a number of staff within the local authority, including: the Leader, Chief Executive, senior managers, HR manager as well as focus groups with senior managers, front line staff and for an assessment at 'Excellent' level, a focus group with service users. Following the external assessment, the LGA informs the local authority whether they have demonstrated sufficient evidence against the level they have claimed. As at November 2014, fourteen local authorities have been externally assessed to have achieved the highest level of the Equality Framework, the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework (LGA, 2014). A number of potential criticisms exist of this process. Firstly, only a small number of staff are interviewed by the LGA 'assessment team', often no more than 25-40 staff, and secondly, different people make up the LGA 'assessment team', and therefore, different local authorities are often 'assessed' by different people, and more crucially, there is not a specific evidence criteria to show that a local authority has achieved a particular performance area, therefore, the LGA 'assessment teams' are potentially making judgements as to how well or not a local authority has met a particular performance area.

In 2014, the LGA undertook another review of the Equality Framework. The author of this thesis was able to contribute to the consultations being undertaken by the LGA during this review. The author of this thesis shared the findings of the onsite research for this thesis, and discussed how the Equality Framework is contributing to equality and diversity mainstreaming and what additional ways it could achieve this. As a result of this discussion, and for the first time, the revised Equality Framework for local government includes a specific requirement to embed equality and diversity competencies within a requirement of the Equality Framework, relating to the section on appraisals (see table one).

Table one: Equality Framework: Appraisals criteria (Performance area: A skilled and committed workforce, Equality Framework for local government, LGA, 2014)

Level	Requirement
Developing	Equality considerations for individuals are integrated into appraisal systems.
Achieving	Management and individual appraisals include specific equality objectives for the service area.
Excellent	Managers and staff can give examples of improved equality outcomes they have contributed to.

The inclusion of a specific equality and diversity competency within appraisals is now an integral part of the Equality Framework for local government. As this was the first time that any of the equality frameworks for local government have made a specific requirement to mention equality and diversity competencies, the implementation and impact of this requirement would not be known until future equality framework research is undertaken amongst local authorities. The Equality Framework introduced in 2010 was in place when the research for this thesis was undertaken.

Equality Framework for local government: 2014 onwards

Whilst outside the scope of the research for this thesis, this section is included to show how the Equality Framework is being applied in 2020, and whether it has changed from the version in place when the research for this thesis was undertaken. In 2018, the Equality Framework was further updated and there is also now a greater focus on the Equality Framework helping local authorities to meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The purpose of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) remains to help organisations, in discussion with local partners including local people, review and improve their performance for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. By using the EFLG organisations can also be helped to deliver on the public sector equality duty (PSED). Organisations using the guidance for self-assessment are likely to reference other locally appropriate characteristics evidenced as suffering inequality. The EFLG continues to encourage local adaptation with a focus on local issues and problems, and prompts learning from, and the spreading of, good practice. The Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) 2018 version still comprises five performance areas (see table two), and a comparison with the EFLG 2010-14 version shows little difference in focus (LGA, 2020).

Table two: Comparison of Equality Framework performance areas (LGA, 2020)

Performance area	EFLG 2018 version	EFLG 2011-14 version
One	Knowing your communities	Knowing your community – equality mapping
Two	Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment	Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
Three	Involving your communities	Community engagement and satisfaction
Four	Responsive services and customer care	Responsive services and customer care
Five	A skilled and committed workforce	Modern and diverse workforce

In addition, the EFLG 2018 version also still has three levels of achievement, namely: 'Developing', 'Achieving', and 'Excellent' and within the performance area 'a skilled and committed workforce', there is still a requirement to incorporate equality and diversity competencies within appraisals, with a requirement to demonstrate at 'Excellent' level that 'Managers and staff can give examples of improved equality outcomes they have contributed to' (LGA, 2020). It was observed earlier in this chapter that the BVPI requirement for local authorities to report their achievement against the Equality Framework ceased in 2010, and by 2014, fourteen local authorities had achieved the highest level of the Equality Framework. Between 2014– 2020, only another five local authorities had achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework (LGA, 2020).

Limitations of the equality frameworks

The various equality frameworks introduced since 1995 presented opportunities and limitations to local authorities, in terms of using them to further mainstream equality and diversity. A key limitation of the CRE Standard was its 'voluntary' nature and reliance of self-assessment as a means of measuring progress. This meant that not all local authorities implemented the Standard, and those that did were left to their own devices to measure and assess progress, without much opportunity to know if what they were achieving was of the appropriate requirement. There was also no means of benchmarking against other local authorities to see how they were performing or whether they could learn from another local authority, who might have achieved a higher level of performance than them (EO, 2001).

With the introduction of the Equality Standard for local government in 2001, part of this limitation was addressed, through the introduction of an external assessment requirement to validate achievement at level three and level five of the Equality Standard. Local authorities wanting to progress to level three now were required not only to self-assess to show they had met the criteria for level three, but also needed to undertake an external assessment by a team compiled by the Employers Organisation for local government. This team would comprise equality and diversity 'experts' drawn from other local authorities and relevant equality or community based organisations. Those local authorities who were motivated to demonstrate their high performance, and were willing to pay for the external assessment, were assessed and informed whether they had met the criteria for level three or five. Despite the incentive to be a leader amongst their peers, after five years of the Equality Standard being introduced, few local authorities managed to achieve level three, and even fewer had progressed to achieve level five, which also required an external assessment to verify the achievement of that level (IDeA, 2010).

Reporting annually what level a local authority had achieved in the Equality Standard for local government was a Best Value Performance Indicator from 2001-2010, however, this did not seem to drive local authorities to make progress against the Equality Standard. Part of the issue of this, was that there was no incentive to implement the Standard, nor any penalty. If a local authority reported that it was 'making progress' against the Equality Standard, then that was largely seen as sufficient for the Audit Commission. Instead, the government of the day provided funding to the Employers Organisation to support the local authorities that were not making much progress, and the Employers Organisation developed the 'Diversity in the Districts' project in 2004. This project offered district councils funding support in the form of equality consultants who would assist the local authority to improve its equality and diversity performance against the Standard. This input had some positive effect, and several local authorities which had not progressed to level one, subsequently self-assessed as having achieved the criteria for level one (IDeA, 2008). By 2014, when the case study research for this thesis was being undertaken, only fourteen local authorities out of over three hundred and fifty had achieved the highest level of the Equality Framework (LGA, 2014). This was after thirteen years of the Equality Standard/Framework having been introduced, although after 2010, the requirement to report progress on the Equality Framework to the Audit Commission each year had been removed, which meant a considerable number of local authorities abandoned its work on the Equality Framework.

A further limitation of the equality frameworks has been the 'external assessment' process to validate progress against the various levels. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the LGA 'assessment team' only interview a small number of staff, and this means that in a large local authority, a small proportion of staff could influence how well the local authority is performing. For example, it was therefore possible for large numbers of staff to be 'hidden' from the information and presentation that the local authorities offered as evidence for achieving the 'Excellent' level. Indeed, the LGA's external assessment that the local authority has to undergo to demonstrate it has achieved the 'Excellent' level only includes the external assessors interviewing/speaking to approximately 25-40 staff within the local authority. If the local authority (as was the case of local authority X) has over 10,000 employees, then this number was very small indeed, representing under one per cent of all employees'. This could mean that large numbers of the workforce could be doing very little to contribute to equality and diversity mainstreaming within the local authority (LGA, 2011).

Conclusion

Equality Standard/Frameworks emerged over the last twenty years as a way of supporting local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity in a systematic way with the first of these being introduced by the Commission for Race Equality (CRE) with its 'A Standard for Racial Equality in local government' in 1995. In 2001, the Employers Organisation for local government (EO) went further and included the protected characteristics of gender and disability alongside race, thus this was the first time that a generic equality standard was developed in England for local government (EO, 2001). Local authorities were required to annually report on what level they had reached against the Equality Standard, as part of the requirement of the Government's Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs). By 2010, only a few local authorities had progressed beyond level three of the five level Equality Standard. One of the reasons for the apparent slow progress was the self-assessment nature of the Standard and a lack of specific guidance on what evidence should be produced to meet each of the actions within the levels, as well as having no 'penalty' if they did not progress beyond level one (IDeA, 2010). Progress was still slow in 2014, when only fourteen local authorities had achieved the highest level (Excellent) of the Equality Framework. Despite this, the Equality Framework enabled local authorities to benchmark against a nationally recognised performance framework for equality and diversity mainstreaming (LGA, 2014).

In 2014, the Equality Framework for local government was reviewed again and following feedback from the author of this thesis, there was added a requirement for local authorities to incorporate equality and diversity competencies within the Equality Framework section on appraisals (LGA, 2014). Whilst there is now inclusion of equality and diversity competencies within the appraisal section of the Equality Framework, there is little data on how this requirement is implemented in practice, as it was only introduced in 2014, which was the end time period of this research, although the cases studies for this research did present an opportunity to see if any local authority involved in the case study had incorporated equality and diversity competencies within their performance management review schemes. The next chapter outlines the methodology that was adopted in carrying out the case studies amongst the three local authorities taking part in the research for this thesis.

6.0 METHODOLOGY, RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction

This chapter explains how a methodology was developed to answer the research question which is:

“Did the equality frameworks for local government support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming programme between 2001 - 2014?”

The previous chapters have examined: the role of local government in progressing the equality and diversity agenda; the emergence of the concept of mainstreaming equality and diversity; developments in local government involving new public management and governance; the development of performance management reviews; the development of the equality framework for local government, and the critical examination of the incorporation of equality competencies within performance reviews and whether this had any impact on the mainstreaming of equality and diversity. This research adopts a post-positivist qualitative approach, using a case study method to answer the research question.

This chapter sets out the methodology for this thesis and starts with a presentation of the analytical questions that would form the basis for answering the research question followed by an outline of the research design and methods. Section two provides a discussion on the philosophical underpinnings of the approach to the thesis. Section three explores the rationale in selecting the three local authorities and the timeframe in question. Section four describes the data collection methods that would be used in answering the analytical questions, as well as outlining the reasons for choosing a qualitative case study approach relating to access, interviews, documentary evidence and analysis of the data. Section five addresses the ethical issues in this research and my own position as a practitioner and researcher. The final section provides background information about the system of local government in England and a brief description of each case study.

Developing analytical questions

The previous chapters looked at the political developments that led to the emergence of a focus on performance management, and subsequently the Equality Framework for local government, which attempted to assist local authorities in furthering equality and diversity mainstreaming. In order to determine how well local authorities had managed to performance manage the mainstreaming of equality and diversity through the implementation of the Equality Framework for local government, the following six analytical questions (see table three) were developed in order to answer the research question amongst the three local authorities between 2001-2014.

Table three: The six analytical questions and their rationale

Analytical question	Rationale for this question
1) What journey had the local authority taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, incorporating the challenges of different demographics, structures and policies?	This question would analyse what the local authority had done to mainstreaming equality and diversity, taking into account the local and national challenges they faced, which are highlighted in chapter 2 and three.
2) How did the local authority assess their equality and diversity mainstreaming, and support employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance?	This question explores how each local authority developed ways to assess how well they were mainstreaming equality and diversity and how they supported employees. An analysis against the issues raised in chapter 3 is made to see how well each authority address these.
3) What performance management review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective?	This question examines whether each local authority had a performance management review scheme, and if it did, was it implemented as described in chapter 4, in order for it to be as effective as possible.
4) Had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems	This question examines whether any of the three local authorities incorporated equality and diversity competencies within their performance management review schemes,

encountered by the local authorities when doing this?	and if they did, did they follow the good practice identified in chapter 4.
5) What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?	This question examines how well the Equality Framework provided a structure for each local authority to implement actions that would lead to further mainstreaming of equality and diversity and whether the Equality Framework, as described in chapter 5 provided a performance management tool for mainstreaming equality and diversity.
6) What ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?	This question examines what the local authorities felt were the tangible ways in which equality and diversity was being mainstreamed within their local authority as a result of working through the equality frameworks. This will examine how mainstreaming was being assessed compared to the discussions outlined in chapter 5.

Research design

Best (2012:14) outlines several stages in the planning and execution of any research project:

- Defining the problem...
- Literature review
- Identifying the research design
- Identifying the population
- Ethical considerations
- Methods of data analysis
- Analysis and conclusion
- Writing up the report of the study.

A decade earlier, Iles & Thorn (1999) had argued that there was no single standardised breakdown of the stages involved in a research study, but there was a considerable amount of overlap between the descriptions put forward by various authors. Iles & Thorn (1999) further point out that put broadly any research study is likely to involve the following activities: identifying a research question; deciding on a methodology; specifying what data will be collected and how it will be collected; carrying out the research/data collection; analysing the data and presenting the findings and conclusions. Remenyi et al (1998) argue that the choice of research methodology should be determined by a number of factors, including the: nature of existing knowledge in the area being researched; the research objectives; the time and the resources available for the study.

The literature review found few conceptual and empirical studies that have focused on the concept of the Equality Framework for local government and whether this improves the performance of equality and diversity mainstreaming. Where information exists, this largely relates to an achievement against the Equality Framework for local government, where different local authorities are grouped together having achieved a particular level, but little analysis of whether the Equality Framework was the key catalyst for improving performance of equality and diversity mainstreaming. Chapter 3 outlines how new models of public management emerged in the 1980's and how this led to the introduction of performance management systems that sought to assist local authorities to improve their overall performance using standards or techniques, one of which was the Equality Framework for local government.

In order to investigate this under-researched topic, exploratory research is appropriate and has been adopted. An advocate of this approach is Hackley (2003), who acknowledged that qualitative research provides the opportunity to probe a phenomenon in more detail than is possible via the more rigid quantitative approaches. However, criticisms exist of qualitative research, such as: they are too subjective; they are often difficult to replicate; and that there are problems with generalisation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). To address this criticism, as will be outlined, the research would take significant care during data collection and analysis and ensure that it is as transparent as possible. Given the aim of the study, a case study approach has been adopted. This approach would enable sufficient information to be gained from each of the three local authorities, through a combination of analysing documentation provided and conducting focus groups and interviews with staff within the local authorities. For each of the six analytical framework questions, the evidence obtained from the three local authorities would be presented under each question, so that any comparison or difference can be observed.

With regard to question five of the analytical framework, the evidence gathered from the interviews/focus groups and documentary information would be arranged under the five performance areas of the Equality Framework:

- Knowing your community and equality mapping.
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment.
- Community engagement and satisfaction.
- Responsive services and customer care.
- Modern diverse workforce.

As each local authority is required to provide information relating to these five performance areas, this presents an opportunity to compare progress on each of these areas by the three local authorities.

Philosophical underpinnings of the approach to the thesis

In order to answer the research topic and analytical questions, an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of the approach to the thesis need to be understood. Creswell (2013) states that research approaches are plans and procedures that range from steps including: making broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection; analysis; and interpretation. The steps involved in this process are used to decide which approach should be used in a specific study which is informed using philosophical assumptions which are brought to the study. Included in this are procedures of inquiry or research designs and specific research methods that are used for data collection, its analysis, and finally its interpretation. However, Guetterman (2015) argues that the selection of the specific research approach is based on the nature of the research problem, or the issue that is being addressed by any study, personal experiences of the researchers', and even the audience for which the study is being developed for. For Creswall (2013), there are many ways in which research approaches can be customised to develop an approach most suited for a particular study. However, the main three categories with which research approaches are organised include; qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods of research. Creswell (2013:32) adds that all three approaches are not to be considered so discrete or distinct to one another and that 'qualitative and quantitative approaches should not be viewed as rigid, distinct categories, polar opposite, or dichotomies.' Lastly, a mixed-methods research resides in the middle of

the continuum as it is able to incorporate elements and characteristics of both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

Dumke (2002) believes that research philosophy is mainly characterised by two views: positivism and phenomenology, whereby positivism reflects the acceptance of adopting the philosophical stance of natural scientists. Dumke (2002) further explains that a positivist philosophical assumption produces highly structured methodologies and allows for generalisation and quantification of objectives that can be evaluated by statistical methods. For this philosophical approach, the researcher is considered an objective observer who should not be impacted by or impact on the subject of research. On the other hand, more phenomenological approaches agree with the view that the social world of business and management is too complex to develop theories and laws similar to natural sciences. Saunders et al. (2000) argue that this is the reason why reducing observations in the real world to simple laws and generalisations produces a sense of reality which is superficial and doesn't reveal the complexity of it. Easterby-Smith et al (2015) argue that positivism, which has as a key idea that the social world exists externally, should be assessed through objective methods, rather than subjectively through sensation, reflection or intuition. For Easterby-Smith et al (2015), the other tradition is that of 'social constructionism', which is part of what is observed and aims to increase general understanding of the situation and small numbers of cases are chosen for specific reasons. Under a positivist paradigm, the researcher focuses on facts, looks for causality and fundamental laws, reducing phenomena to the simplest elements and formulating hypotheses and then testing them. The methods to achieve this include the use of operational concepts so that they could be measured, often by taking large samples.

A development on the positivist approach is the qualitative post-positivist paradigm (paradigm can be described as a worldview that underlies theory), within which the researcher focuses on meanings, trying to understand what is happening, and looking at the totality of each situation and developing ideas through information from data. To achieve this multiple methods are used to establish different views of phenomena by having small samples investigated in depth over time. Whilst these are two positions at different spectrums, in reality the differences may not be as clear cut with moves to develop methods and approaches which provided the middle ground (Easterby-Smith et al, 2015). For Ryan (2006), the post-positivist paradigm is concerned with the subjectivity of reality and moves away from the purely objective stance adopted by the logical positivists. Positivist and post-positivist designs are on a continuum between the

quantitative and qualitative paradigms and positivism may still be the dominant quantitative paradigm, there seems to be a shift towards post-positivist thinking. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2009) write that post-positivists dispute the fundamental tenets of positivism by contesting their scientific theories of reality. They argue that reality is not based on positivist determinants but that research should be about true reality. Even though an objective reality is accepted, it can only be measured imperfectly as human perceptions are flawed. As with positivist research, quantitative post-positivist research also concerns observations that are rooted in theory.

However, scientists recognise that they are influenced by their own backgrounds and imperfect perceptions. Possible fallacies can be addressed with the use of data triangulation. Triangulation investigates multiple sources of data to confirm the truthfulness of results in an effort to provide the most accurate view of reality (Olsen, 2004). Crotty (1998) argues that there are a range of epistemologies, such as objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism. Objectivist epistemology holds that meaning, and therefore reality exists, as such apart from the operation of any consciousness. Constructionist epistemology rejects the view the objectivist approach holds, that there was objective truth. For the constructionist, truth or meaning come into existence in and out of the engagement with the realities in the world. For subjectivism, meaning does not come out of interplay between subject and object but is imposed on the object by the subject. Furthermore, Crotty (1998) argues that epistemology is to a large extent determined by the way in which a researcher conducts their research.

Under Crotty's (1998) category of methodology is 'ethnography', which focuses on studying cultural issues and is well suited to attempts to find out more about some aspect of the nature of management professions and disciplines. Glaser and Strauss (1967:2) introduce another methodological approach of, 'Grounded theory'; as 'the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research'. Iles & Thorn (1999) argue that 'Grounded theory' has much in common with ethnographic research, but is different for two reasons: Firstly, it was originally developed by organisational researchers; and secondly that it goes further in terms of working from the perspective of the informant rather than the researcher. In terms of the epistemological approach, theoretical perspective and methods adopted for this thesis, a number of factors affected the choices: Research question; availability of time and resources; and more importantly a willingness amongst local authorities to take part in the research, which would determine whether they took part or not. As the first five chapters have shown, there was no agreed definition or criteria for the assessment of mainstreaming equality and diversity and

application of performance management and review schemes varied between local authorities and even between individuals within local authorities. Also, whilst the Equality Framework for local government provides 'parameters' for local authorities to work towards, there still exists a subjective element in terms of interpreting what evidence to provide for each level and criteria (see chapter 5).

As Hines (2000) states about positivism: '*Researchers focus on the facts and search for cause and effect.*' Under a social constructionist paradigm, Easterby-Smith et al, (2015) argue that the function of the researcher should not be to 'gather facts and measure how often certain patterns occur, but to appreciate the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience'. However, it would not be possible to undertake the depth of research required in terms of time and comparative analysis of different hypothesis that Easterby-Smith et al (2015) describe. It could be argued that the positivistic and social constructionist paradigms represent two opposite poles of research. Thus, due to the exploratory purpose of this research, a post-positivist qualitative paradigm, using a mixed methods research (MMR) involving three case studies will be used, involving a combination of qualitative (interviews) and quantitative methods (such as in a questionnaire would be used where set responses are given and analysis is presented in numeric format).

Rationale for selecting three local authorities

Earlier chapters in this thesis have shown the concept of mainstreaming equality as relatively new, and largely pursued by predominantly public sector organisations. Therefore, the most progress in relation to mainstreaming equality would most likely be found in the public sector. The selection of local authorities was to some extent a pragmatic choice, given my own career has been in local government, within England. Thus, where I had the most knowledge of the work on equality and diversity and also where I would be able to access research participants. As a consequence English local authorities became the focus of the research.

The rationale of how the local authorities involved in the research would be identified was determined in a number of ways. Firstly, at the time the study commenced, there were 351 local authorities in England. Ideally, if time and resources permitted, research with all 351 local authorities would have been undertaken. However due to time constraints and financial resources, a more focused approach was needed. Through the initial desk

research, it became apparent that there was no national measure that showed how local authorities had mainstreamed equality and diversity and by and large this was a relatively recent development and subjective area (see chapter 2). The nearest assessment that existed was the Equality Framework for local government. This provided a framework for local authorities to progress towards mainstreaming equality and diversity by achieving various levels within the Framework, with level one seen as a local authority having started its journey towards mainstreaming equality and diversity and level five demonstrating that the local authority had made considerable progress towards mainstreaming equality and diversity (LGA, 2011).

Using the Equality Framework for local government as the basis for selecting which local authorities to take part in the research, an analysis was undertaken of which local authorities had achieved the 'Excellent' level, and it emerged that between February 2013 and November 2014, a total of fourteen local authorities had achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework (LGA, 2014). An assumption was made that the best assessment of equality and diversity mainstreaming within local authorities was those local authorities that had achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework. As such, these fourteen local authorities were approached to take part in the research. This was undertaken in two phases: As of February 2013, ten local authorities had achieved the 'Excellent' level, and these authorities were sent a questionnaire to complete (Appendix three). Two local authorities completed the questionnaire and expressed an interest to take part in the research for this thesis. Follow up meetings were arranged with these two local authorities during June– August 2013. However, one of these local authorities dropped out due the contact person within the authority moving employment to another organisation. Further communication via phone/email continued with the remaining local authority, which involved requesting information relating to the six analytical questions. Onsite interviews and focus groups were arranged with employees within the local authority during November– December 2013. The information collated from this local authority would have been adequate to answer the research question for this thesis. However, it was felt that involving more local authorities in the research would enable a comparison to be made between local authorities. Therefore, a second phase of contacting the 'Excellent' level local authorities was undertaken between April 2014 – November 2014 by sending a questionnaire to twelve councils (eight councils previously sent questionnaires and not replying plus four more councils that had achieved the 'Excellent' level since the last questionnaire was sent). Six councils replied to the questionnaire, with two local authorities expressing an interest to take part in the research for the thesis. Onsite interviews and focus groups were arranged with these two local

authorities during August 2014– November 2014. Thus, out of fourteen local authorities sent an online questionnaire to complete, a total of eight local authorities (57 per cent) completed the online questionnaire (see Appendix three for summary of responses), of which three local authorities indicated they would be willing to be part of the onsite research.

In terms of what methods would be applied, and given the discussion of the relative merits of different methodological approaches discussed above, the case study approach was identified as offering the opportunity to critically examine how each of the three local authorities had implemented the Equality Framework for local government. What is more, as each local authority was in a different location, and influenced by different populations, political considerations. The case study approach enabled these differences to be examined and whether they had any bearing on how the local authority mainstreamed equality and whether the adoption (or not) of equality competencies had any impact on this.

The rationale for choosing case studies

Shepherd et al (2003: 1-22) argue that in the social sciences and life sciences, a case study (or case report) is a descriptive, exploratory or explanatory analysis of a person, group or event. An explanatory case study is used to explore causation in order to find underlying principles. Case studies may be prospective (in which criteria are established and cases fitting the criteria are included as they become available) or retrospective (in which criteria are established for selecting cases from historical records for inclusion in the study).

According to Marchington and Wilkinson (2006:391), case studies have formed an essential part of research in a variety of disciplines. According to Yin (1981:59), the case study is an attempt to ‘examine a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context were not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence were used.’ Mitchell (1983:191) described the case study as a ‘detailed examination of an event (or a series of events) which the analyst believed exhibited the operation of some identified general theoretical principle.’

Thomas (2011: 511-521) offers the following definition of a case study ‘Case studies are an analysis of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case study that was

the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame, an object within which the study was conducted and which the case illuminated and explicated.’ Another suggestion by Thomas (2011:511-521) was that a case study should be defined as ‘a research strategy, an empirical inquiry that investigated a phenomenon within its real-life context.’

Beyond decisions about case study selection and the subject and object of the study, decisions needed to be made about purpose, approach and process in the case study. Thomas (2011: 511-521) thus proposes a typology for the case study wherein purposes are first identified (evaluative or exploratory), then approaches are delineated (theory-testing, theory-building or illustrative), then processes are decided upon, with a principal choice being between whether the study was to be single or multiple, and choices also about whether the study was to be retrospective, snapshot or sequential. The typology thus offered many permutations for case study structure. Case study research excels at bringing us to an understanding of a complex issue or object and could extend experience or add strength to what was already known through previous research. Case studies emphasise detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. Social scientists, in particular, have made wide use of this qualitative research method to examine contemporary real-life situations and provide the basis for the application of ideas and extension of methods Thomas (2011:511-521).

Yin (1984:23) defines the case study research method as an ‘empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.’ Yin (2003:5) further argues that there are at least six kinds of case studies. In the first instance research could be based on a single case only, but multiple cases focus on two or more cases within the same study. This multiple focus would apply to the case study approach for this thesis. Yin (2003:5) then classified case studies as ‘exploratory’, which defines the questions and hypothesis, ‘descriptive’, which presented a complete description of a phenomenon within its context or ‘explanatory’, which also present data that explain how events occur and reflect a cause and effect relationship.

In addition, Yin (1994:9-11) identifies three prejudices against case studies. Firstly, a lack of rigour of case study research, in particular with researchers allowing biased views to influence conclusions. Yin (1994:9-11) argues that bias was also as prevalent in

experiments and quantitative analysis. Secondly, case studies provided little basis for scientific generalisation. Although Yin (1994:10) argues that this could also be the case for single experiments. Thirdly, case studies take time to complete and resulted in a lot of information being produced. Yin (1994:11) acknowledges that this may be the case in some instances, but with better design, this could be reduced. Merriam (1998:33) argues that a case study was a particularly suitable design for an analysis of process. Sander's (1981:44) argues that 'case studies help us to understand processes of events, projects, and programmes and to discover context characteristics that would shed light on an issue or object.' Marchington and Wilkinson (2006:392) further argue that in short, the case study method tries to capture the whole, which is intensive in nature, and is open-ended and flexible at all stages of the research process.

Multiple or single case study?

It was possible to answer the research question with one local authority participating as a case study, although, had all local authorities achieving the 'Excellent' level agreed to take part as case studies, and there was the time and resources to undertake case studies with all these local authorities, then this would have provided the most comprehensive information to answer the research question by analysing multiple case studies. In reality, the answer as to having one or more case studies was provided by the local authorities themselves. The questionnaire sent during phase one resulted in two local authorities expressing an interest to take part in the research and despite one local authority withdrawing from being a case study, the remaining case study would have been sufficient to answer the research question. However, it was felt that having one or more local authorities may offer the opportunity to compare responses to the research question from differing local authorities. Therefore, out of fourteen local authorities that were sent a questionnaire to complete, eight local authorities replied and from these, three expressed an interest in participating in the research as a case study. There was capacity to include the additional two local authorities that expressed an interest to take part in the research. This resulted in the author being able to include all three local authorities in the research, and therefore the author decided to adopt the multiple case study approach. Flyvbjerg (2006:228), argues that 'one can often generalise on the basis of a single case study.' Having multiple case studies can provide more evidence and be seen as more robust (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, Yin (2014:57) differentiates between case studies that have been selected on the basis that they would provide similar results or would provide contrastable results. Echoing Yin's approach, this research will examine whether the three local authorities had similar or different – and contrastable - outcomes

when mainstreaming equality through the implementation of the Equality Framework for local government (Stephenson, 2016:68).

Between 2013-14, there were a total of 351 local authorities in England and these were comprised of: Unitary Authorities (55); London Boroughs (32); Metropolitan Districts (36); County Councils (27); and District Councils (201) (LGA, 2014). The three local authorities involved in the research comprised the following: a Metropolitan authority; a Unitary authority; and a Unitary authority (see table four). This composition occurred as a result of the local authorities volunteering to take part in the research. Had it been possible to select the local authorities, then there would have been one local authority from each local authority type. The research to answer this question could have been possible with just one local authority of any composition/size/geography taking part in the case study. The inclusion of more than one local authority as case studies allows for similarities or differences in implementation of the Equality Framework and equality competencies to be observed.

Table four: Local authorities involved in the research

Local authority	Type and profile
Local authority X	Local authority which is politically controlled by the Labour party, with a population over 100,000, which has a diverse population, and the local authority employ over 10,000 employees.
Local authority Y	Local authority which is politically controlled by the Conservative party, with a population over 100,000, which has a smaller diverse population, and the local authority employ over 10,000 employees.
Local authority Z	Local authority which is politically controlled by an Independent party, with a population over 100,000, which has a higher than average diverse population and the local authority employed over 10,000 employees.

Data collection methods

The previous sections outlined the research topic and six analytical questions that would help provide answers to the research topic. The methodology has also been described as a qualitative post-positivist philosophy using a mixed methods research (MMR) involving three case studies. This section describes what influenced the data collection methods. Jankowicz (1991) describes a method as 'a systematic and orderly approach taken towards the collection of data so that information could be obtained from those data.' For Easterby-Smith et al (1993), there was two broad areas for gathering data: quantitative and qualitative. Using quantitative methods, there are four main approaches: interviews, questionnaires, tests/measures and observations. Van Maanen (1983) defines qualitative methods as an 'array of interpretive techniques which sought to describe, decode, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.' This thesis used a mixed methods qualitative approach through the use of case studies, desk based research and questionnaires to identify local authorities that had achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework and subsequently use of case studies, which used six analytical questions as the basis for obtaining information.

In addition, Easterby-Smith et al (1993) argue that the most fundamental of qualitative methods was that of in-depth interviewing, however, it could be complex and was often time consuming. Another method was participant observation, which has its roots in ethnographic research studies, involved researchers working or living with the people being observed. The dilemma facing researchers undertaking participant observation was that sometimes to gather information, a covert approach would be taken and often moral issues were faced. Another difficulty with participant observation was the time period often needed to undertake an observation. This method had high risk, with research often difficult to set up and needing considerable resources. Diaries, which can be either qualitative or quantitative, depending on the kind of information recorded, had a number of advantages. Firstly, they provide a useful method for collecting data from the perspective of the person completing the diaries. Secondly, a diary allows the perspective of a number of diary writers to be compared and contrasted. Thirdly, diaries allow researchers to collect other relevant data while the research was in progress and enabled much more analysis than the participant observation method was able to gain. Setting up research involved diaries also involves a considerable amount of time and effort (see table five).

Table five: A description of each of the methods of data collection for the research

Method of data collection	How undertaken
Completion of questionnaire (see appendix three).	As discussed in previous chapters, since 2001, out of 351 local authorities, fourteen local authorities had achieved the highest level of the Equality Framework for local government, that of 'Excellent' between February 2013 – November 2014. The details for these fourteen local authorities was obtained from the Local Government Association's website and individual's leading on equality and diversity within these local authorities was subsequently obtained from the officer within the LGA responsible for overseeing the Equality Framework for local government work. These individuals within the 'Excellent' level local authorities were then contacted in two phases: firstly between February – March 2013 and secondly between April 2014 – November 2014 via email/phone, outlining the purpose of the research and a request to complete the questionnaire.
Analysis of questionnaire responses	Out of the fourteen local authorities contacted, eight completed the questionnaires. A summary of the responses is shown in Appendix three.
Identification of local authorities participating in the case studies	The eight local authorities completing the questionnaire were asked if they would be willing to take part in the research by being a case study. Four local authorities responded that they would be willing to take part. However, one local authority withdrew after a few months, as the contact person

	left the local authority for another job. This left three local authorities which would be involved in the research.
Information to answer analytical questions	The Equality and Diversity/Human Resources officer within the three local authorities that expressed an interest to take part in the research were contacted and a telephone call/meeting was arranged, in order to outline the research being undertaken and what the commitment of the local authority would be: send information requested; and arrange interviews with employees. Following this discussion, all three local authorities agreed to continue being involved with the research and subsequently each of the local authorities was initially asked to supply information (where it existed) relating to the six analytical framework questions (see below).
Information used to answer analytical questions one: What journey had the local authority taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, incorporating the challenges of different demographics, structures and policies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strategic/corporate documents ➤ Interviews with employees ➤ ONS data.
Information used to answer analytical question two: How did the local authority assess their equality and diversity mainstreaming, and support employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strategic/corporate documents ➤ Learning and development plans ➤ Interviews with employees.

Information used to answer analytical question three: What performance management review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Performance management review (appraisal) templates ➤ Interviews with employees.
Information used to answer analytical question four: Had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems encountered by the local authorities when doing this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Competency framework ➤ Performance management review (appraisal) template. ➤ Interviews with employees.
Information used to answer analytical question five: What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Equality Framework self-assessment/narrative reports ➤ LGA peer challenge reports
Information used to answer analytical question six: What ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Questionnaire ➤ Interviews with employees.

Obtaining information relating to the above analytical questions is useful in that it can show a record of what the local authorities have undertaken (Savin-Baden and Howell Major, 2013:410). Yin (2014:107), argues that for case study research, this information can be used to corroborate other sources of evidence or suggest areas for further investigation if they contradict other sources of evidence. However, Yin (2014:108) warns against assuming that information provided is accurate or unbiased, stressing that the 'importance in reviewing any information is the ability to understand that it was written for a specific purpose and specific audience, other than the case study being undertaken' and that when analysing the information, researchers should always question the

objectives of those who produced the information and how this may have affected the production of the information. The information provided by the local authorities and LGA (see table six) was analysed to provide a narrative for each local authority of how they had dealt with the six analytical framework questions, as well as providing sources for potential questions to be followed up during the interviews and focus groups amongst officers within the three local authorities.

Table six: Information provided by the three local authorities and LGA

Local Authority	Information provided
Local authority X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Equality Framework narrative report (2011) ➤ Equality and Diversity Scheme (2011-15) ➤ Corporate Strategy (2013) ➤ City Report (2013) ➤ Employee engagement survey (2013) ➤ Performance management review (appraisal) template (2013) ➤ Competency Framework (2013) ➤ Council Plan (2013-17) ➤ Equality Framework assessment report: Local authority X, LGA (2014)
Local Authority Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Equality Framework self-assessment report (2011) ➤ Diversity Peer Challenge report, Local authority Y, LGA (2011) ➤ Equality and Inclusion Policy 2012-15 (2012) ➤ Competency Framework (2012) ➤ People Strategy (2012-17) ➤ Performance Development Plan (appraisal) template (2013) ➤ Workforce data report (2013)
Local Authority Z	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Council plan 2011-15 (2011) ➤ Diversity Peer Challenge report, Local authority Z, LGA (2011) ➤ Workforce Diversity report (2013) ➤ 2011 Census results: Overview Profile, Local authority Z (2013) ➤ Council Budget Proposals: Consultation document (2014) ➤ Equality Framework narrative report (2014) ➤ Managing performance workshop (2014) ➤ Performance management review (appraisal) and competency framework template (2014)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Councillor personal development plans (2014) ➤ Equality Analysis example: Recruitment & Selection (2014)
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All of the documents in table six were sent by officers within the three local authorities and LGA. The six analytical framework questions formed the basis for the research, which was undertaken between February 2013- November 2014, through a series of questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. The answers to these six analytical framework questions would also form part of the comparison between the local authorities involved in the case studies. Although, there would be limitations on comparing each local authority, as the local authorities may be different in size, employee numbers, political leadership, demographics and leadership. Despite these limitations, the thesis would attempt to draw some comparative analysis of how each local authority had approached each question of the analytical framework. The next decision that was made was what methods to apply for the case studies. Observation methods were not used as there was not the time available to observe employees within the local authorities in their day to day interactions with colleagues and members of the public, although it would have been possible to observe for short periods of time, for example one or two days. However, having a researcher observing employee behaviour may have resulted in the employee behaving differently to what they may usually behave, in order to act in a way that they feel the researcher would expect them to behave. Using diaries could yield useful information if a sample of employees collated this information. Again, this was seen as impractical as employees within local authorities would not be able to devote the time required to keep diaries over a long period of time. Choosing which method to adopt was largely determined by circumstances of the researcher and the philosophical stance being taken. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods would be used, comprising: questionnaires; documents; and semi-structured interviews and focus groups (See Appendix four).

- Onsite research undertaken at the three local authorities (involving interviews and focus groups)

Alongside the request for the local authorities to provide the documentary evidence relating to the six analytical framework questions, each of the three local authorities were asked to arrange a series of interviews and focus groups. This followed the format that the LGA used as part of its external assessment of local authorities against the Equality Framework, and this ensured that there was a consistent approach to gathering data

similar to the way the LGA did when assessing local authorities against the Equality Framework for local government. The list of people to interview also seemed appropriate as it represented a cross section of employees across the local authority and this would enable a balanced view to be formed. Those recommended to be interviewed and the rationale for this are listed below:

- Officer with responsibility for equality and diversity – Responsible for leading the work on equality and diversity and had the widest overview of the work being undertaken on equality and diversity within the local authority. They should also be able to provide detailed information on how the local authority had gone about mainstreaming equality and diversity and the activities it had undertaken to achieve this.
- Human Resources manager or equivalent – Responsible for development of employee and any performance appraisal/review systems and their implementation. They were able to provide information on the rationale for implementing their performance review scheme and how successful it had been and what support they provided to managers and employees to embed equality and diversity into everyday work that they did.
- Service managers focus group (one senior manager from each directorate) – Responsible for managing the various service areas within the local authority and implementing the policies and plans of the local authority, including equality and diversity. They would be able to say how equality and diversity had been implemented in their service areas and how they ensured their employees' embedded equality and diversity within their work programmes and how they managed this performance.
- Front line employee focus group (one employee from each directorate) – Individuals who had the greatest interface with the public and were often seen as the 'face' of the local authority. They have a view on how policies and procedures worked on the ground and whether they are having the effect that that they were expected to. They were also able to say how they felt equality and diversity is cascaded both up and down the local authority (LGA, 2014). Through liaison with the lead officers within each of the three local authorities, a schedule of interviews and focus groups was arranged, as listed in table seven.

Table seven: List of interviewees and focus groups

Local authority	Interviews undertaken (Job roles)	Focus groups undertaken (numbers involved)
Local authority X (interviews/focus groups undertaken in October - December 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Human Resources Business Partner ➤ Head of Equality ➤ Lead officer for appraisals ➤ Equality Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Managers (4 employees) ➤ Front line employees (4 employees) ➤ Equality Group Chairs (3 employees)
Local authority Y (Interviews/focus groups undertaken between July-August 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Head of equality ➤ Human Resources Manager 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Front line employees (6 employees) ➤ Managers (4 employees)
Local authority Z (interviews/focus groups undertaken in October-November 2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Equality & Diversity managers (2) ➤ Head of Human Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Managers (8 employees) ➤ Front line employees (7 employees) ➤ Equality Forum (6 employees)

In total, 51 employees were involved in either interviews (9) or focus groups (42). It was important that the lead human resources and equality & diversity officers were interviewed in each local authority, as these officers were able to provide the information to the work on equality and diversity, as well as on performance management reviews. This was achieved in all three local authorities, with local authority X making available additional employees who had specific roles in connection with performance management reviews. Within the other two local authorities, the human resources officers had oversight of these areas and were therefore deemed appropriate to answer any questions relating to this. All local authorities were able to arrange focus groups with managers and front line employees, and whilst a suggestion was made to each local authority to have up to eight employees in either manager or front line employee focus groups, the numbers attending varied, due to employees being off work on the day of the focus groups or having been called to other duties. Both local authority X and Z were also able to arrange additional focus groups with employees within their equality groups. The interviews and focus groups for Local authority Z formed part of a wider assessment that

the local authority was undertaking, and this was supplemented with interviews relating to this thesis. The interviews/focus groups for local authority Y was undertaken onsite and offsite. The numbers involved in each local authority were: Local authority X (15); local authority Y (12); and local authority Z (24). Whilst there was an ambition to have at least 18 employees interviewed in each local authority, the actual numbers overall were close to this, with individual local authorities slightly above or below this number. It was felt that with the numbers of employees involved, a good level of information was obtained which contributed to answering the research question.

The questions for the interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, as this was seen to offer the best opportunity to obtain the information required and also allowing the opportunity to probe particular answers in more depth as necessary (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). All responses to the interviews/focus groups were summarised in written form by the researcher. Whilst undertaking interviews and focus groups with local authority X and where interviewees had agreed, voice recording of the interview was undertaken and the researcher later listened to the recording to obtain any information which was not written in the interview notes. This process was very time consuming and therefore not applied to the interviews and focus groups with local authorities involved in phase two of the research. At the start of each interview/focus group, the researcher briefly outlined the purpose of the research; the confidentiality of the responses; and how the information obtained from the interviews would be used. Each of the interviews began with a general question, to make the interviewees more comfortable and asked interviewees to introduce themselves (if in focus groups) and to explain briefly what their job role was. Subsequently, the six analytical framework questions formed the basis for the questions, as well as follow up questions relating to the findings from the information provided by the local authority.

Analysis of the data collected

The final stages outlined by Best (2012) involves analysing the data. For Creswell (2003), this involves making sense of the data and preparing the data for analysis, as well as conducting different analyses to determine a better understanding of the data. Furthermore, Denscombe (2007:250-252) state that the analysis of research data tends to follow a process that involves five stages, which can be seen in relation to both quantitative and qualitative data, with quantitative approaches tending to shape their data more consciously and explicitly in the early stages of the process compared with

qualitative approaches. This is outlined by the model presented by Creswell and Plano Clarke (2007), as shown in table eight.

Table eight: The five main stages of data analysis (Creswell and Plano Clarke, 2007)

Stages	Quantitative data	Qualitative data
1. Data preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coding (which normally takes place before data collection) • Categorising the data • Checking the data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transcribing the text • Cataloguing the text or visual data • Preparation of data and loading to software(if applicable)
2. Initial exploration of the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for obvious trends or correlations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for obvious recurrent themes or issues • Add notes to the data • Write memos to capture ideas
3. Analysis of the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of statistical test, for example, descriptive statistics, factor analysis, cluster analysis • Link to research questions or hypothesis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code the data • Group the codes into categories or themes • Comparison of categories and themes • Quest for concepts(or fewer, more abstract categories) that encapsulate the categories
4. Representation and display of the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table • Figures • Written interpretation of the statistical findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written interpretation of the findings • Illustration of points by quotes and pictures • Use of visual models, figures and tables
5. Validation of the data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External benchmarks • Internal consistency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data and method triangulation • Member validation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison with alternative explanations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison with alternative explanations
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This thesis will use the data analysis approach outlined by Creswell and Plano Clarke (2007). This was felt appropriate as a qualitative post-positivist mixed methods paradigm using a case study was the methodology being used. In particular, the use of case studies affects data analysis and having an understanding of each case study is the paramount consideration in analysing the data and all the information about the case study should be brought together and needs to be organised, so that data is easily retrievable (Merriam and Elizabeth, 2015:233). This thesis will undertake case studies amongst three local authorities and in multiple case studies, there are, according to Yin (2014) two stages of analysis – within case study analysis and the cross case study analysis. The former treats the case study in and of itself, with data being gathered so that the researcher can learn as much as possible about the contextual variables that might have an impact on the case study. Once all analysis of case studies is undertaken, the cross case study analysis starts and although the particular details of each case study may vary, the researcher attempts to build a general explanation that fits all the individual case studies. Merriam and Elizabeth (2015:234) argue that as with individual case studies, one of the challenges that the researcher faces in a multiple case study approach is the management of the data collected. Ultimately, cross case study analysis differs little from the analysis of data in a single qualitative case study.

For this thesis, a quantitative approach was used to identify the local authorities that had achieved 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework for local government and subsequently, these were requested to complete a semi-structured questionnaire. The five stages outlined by Creswell and Plano Clarke (2007) was then used to analyse the responses from the eight local authorities that replied. The analysis and presentation of this data is shown in Appendix three. Subsequently, those local authorities agreeing to take part in the case study supplied documents that were requested and this was followed up by interviews and focus groups at the local authorities. This generated a significant amount of data, which was arranged using five stages of data analysis (Table eight) as follows:

- Stage one: Data preparation – A file was created for each of the three local authorities and data obtained from the questionnaires, documents and interviews/focus groups was placed in the relevant local authority file. For local authority X, audio recordings of

the interviews/focus groups were transcribed. Initially, this was done with transcribing everything that was said, but this process was very time consuming and was stopped, and instead key points being made were only written down, after listening to the audio recordings. The use of audio recordings was not used for the other two local authorities, as it was felt that making notes of key points during the interviews/focus groups served a similar purpose to the use of audio recordings, although, it can be argued that the audio recordings ensured that nothing that the interviewee said was missed.

- Stage two: Initial exploration of the data – An initial reading of the questionnaires, documents and interview notes was undertaken and where data could contribute to any of the analytical questions, this was referenced on the questionnaires, documents or interview notes. This exercise produced a considerable amount of information, which was beginning to highlight answers to the six analytical questions.
- Stage three: Analysis of the data – A more detailed analysis of the information and references made for each local authority against the six analytical questions was undertaken and key themes were identified for each local authority that would provide answers to the analytical questions. The analysis of the data from the case studies was framed around the six analytical questions and information is presented in chapters seven, eight and nine. Table eight initially related to the questionnaire sent to the fourteen local authorities who had achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework. The responses were collated and this provided some further areas to investigate during the case studies. The main focus for the case studies was finding information relating to the six analytical framework questions. An examination of the documentary information provided by the three local authorities as well as the information obtained via the interviews and focus groups was considered against each of the six analytical framework questions. The challenges this posed included different documentary information provided by the three local authorities, who had originally produced the information for a particular audience and purpose within the local authority. Whilst this presented information in different formats and content, as much as possible of the factual information was collated to answer the analytical framework questions. This allowed subjective thoughts of the researcher to be minimised, although which pieces of factual information to include still would result in some subjectivity from the researcher. Where gaps existed in answering the six analytical questions from the documentary information provided, questions were developed for the interviews/focus groups, with the intention to obtain information that

would allow comparison with the other local authority data obtained to be made. Once this was undertaken, a cross case study analysis was undertaken to examine whether similar themes were emerging or whether the responses were different for each local authority.

- Stage four: Representation and display of the data - A summary of the responses is made for each local authority under three areas: Problems in mainstreaming equality and diversity; Performance management reviews and competencies; and Equality Frameworks and mainstreaming. The presentation of data is arranged in three chapters (Chapters seven, eight and nine of this thesis), with responses to two analytical questions in each chapter. Under each analytical question, the data obtained for each local authority is presented.
- Stage five: Validation of the data – Following the presentation of response data for each local authority separately, a cross case study analysis is also presented for each analytical question. The similarities and differences to each analytical question is presented amongst the three local authorities within chapters seven, eight and nine. In chapter 10, a more detailed critical analysis is undertaken of the responses to the six analytical questions and the answer to the research question.

Ethical considerations

Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013:332) identify a number of ethical issues in social research, including: issues related to the design of the research; treatment of individuals involved in the research; transparency of process; and plausibility of the final product of the research. The ethical issues in research design include a responsibility to develop knowledge, whereby the research should have a sound methodological basis, and that the treatment of individuals in the research should include respect for them and ensuring that they have full understanding of the research they are asked to be a part of, and that they should be protected from harm and not put in a difficult situation as a result of their responses. Transparency of process also requires researchers to make clear their own position, and to conduct the research in a consistent way and present their findings in a way that allows others to evaluate them.

The following ethical issues were considered during the planning and implementation of the research: obtaining consent from participants; informing participants of the purpose of

the research and how their information would be collated and used. All participants were also assured that their responses would be anonymous and treated confidentially. Whilst there were specific questions that participants were asked to answer, they were still offered flexibility to answer as little or as much as they wished and were not forced to respond to each question (Ghuri and Gronhaug, 2002). As the researcher had worked in or with local government over the previous 25 years, and currently worked for the LGA, who administered the Equality Framework for local government, some specific ethical issues existed that needed to be addressed. During all correspondence with the local authorities, the researcher made participants aware of his position and that the researcher did not work within the team that managed the Equality Framework, but had contact with the team. The initial contact with the local authorities outlined that the contact details within the local authority were provided by a member of the LGA's Equality Framework team. Whilst it may be possible for someone to try and identify the local authorities that took part in the research, anonymity would be provided for each local authority by not including some data about the local authority which would make it apparent which local authority it was. The participating local authorities were also assured that any data collated as part of the research would be returned or destroyed on completion of the research.

One sensitive issue that needed to be considered was the researcher 'uncovering' poor practice within any of the three local authorities during the onsite research, and the ethical dilemma of whether to inform colleagues within the LGA's Equality Framework team of this, as this may impact on the local authority continuing to be considered an 'Excellent' level local authority. The researcher provided assurance to each of the three local authorities participating in the research, that any poor practice 'uncovered' would be shared with the relevant employees within the local authority only, although anonymity would be respected and the source of the information would not be revealed.

My own position as a researcher

The qualitative post-positivist paradigm being used to answer the research question for this thesis will be influenced by my position as a researcher. Creswell (2003) argues that the researcher involved in qualitative research should be aware of their own background and biases and how this may influence their interpretation of events. Having spent over 25 years working in or with local government, I had developed considerable experience of working in different types of local authorities, as well as being responsible for leading the equality and diversity work within a local authority. I had seen the introduction of the CRE

'Race Equality Standard' and local government equality frameworks, as well as working with other equality standards in the voluntary and private sectors. This provided me with a unique insight in how equality standards were assembled and implemented. However, this 'insight' could pose a problem for me as a researcher. It would be natural to assume that over 25 years, I had developed particular opinions and viewpoints of how equality and diversity should be implemented within a local authority. Indeed, for five years, I worked as an Adviser to local authorities on how to implement the Equality Framework. Therefore, would it be possible for me to separate my personal knowledge and experience and be able to adopt a 'neutral' researcher role and attempt to answer the research question? In fact, the research question emerged as a result of my years of working in local government and the questions that remained in my mind as to how equality and diversity could be mainstreamed, and this thesis would enable me to pick up where I left off in a previous job, where I was working with local authorities to examine the role equality competencies could play in mainstreaming equality and diversity.

At the time of undertaking the case studies with the three local authorities, I was employed by the organisation that oversaw the administration and implementation of the Equality Framework for local government. This was beneficial in terms of getting access to local authorities and potentially information that another researcher not in my position may not be provided with, due to the local authorities seeing me as a 'supportive' colleague', rather than an external researcher. Also, there existed the question of how 'impartial' I could be when undertaking the research, and having been involved with the development of the Equality Frameworks, could I be 'objective' in my interpretation of the information I collated? All of my paid work and voluntary activity are likely to impact on my research work, having been deeply involved in the development of the Equality Framework for local government from its inception to its many incarnations, up to 2011. Also, more recently, I have worked as a consultant, advising local authorities on improving their equality and diversity practice. This again would mean that I have seen in practice what activities work and which do not, in relation to mainstreaming equality and diversity and this would lead to me forming opinions and views, which may not be changed during the course of my research. This is something I am conscious of, and would try to limit as far as possible. As Bryman and Bell (2015) have outlined, a criticism of qualitative research is the difficulty of its replication and subjectivity of interpretation of data. This will always be a criticism, and each researcher will bring their own experiences, knowledge and views to conducting research and interpreting data. I attempted to minimise the impact of my own position by adopting the following principles: Not having a pre-conceived idea of the answer to the research question; not having a pre-conceived

idea of which local authorities were seen to be performing well on mainstreaming equality and diversity; outlining to the local authorities taking part in the case studies that the research was independent of the organisation I worked for; providing confidentiality to the individuals within the local authorities, in order to enable them to be as open as they could be; focusing the interview questions so that they related to answering the research questions; and not making assumptions about how data collated answered the analytical questions, if this was not clear.

Conclusion

This chapter presented how a methodology was developed to assist in answering the research and analytical framework questions. The research being undertaken followed Iles & Thorn's (1999) breakdown of the stages involved in a research study, involving the following activities: identifying a research question; deciding on a methodology; carrying out the research/data collection; analysing the data and presenting the findings and conclusions.

In terms of the first activity identified by Iles & Thorn (1999), the research question for this thesis had been identified. In terms of the second activity, Crotty (1998) lists four questions, which need to be answered in conducting a research project: what epistemology informs this theoretical perspective? What theoretical perspective lied behind the methodology in question? What methodology governed the choice of methods used? And what methods to use? This thesis used Crotty's (1998) analysis and explained the different elements that made up any research process and the reason for the different approaches made in attempting to answer the research and analytical framework questions of this thesis. Choosing which method to adopt would to a large extent be determined by the circumstances of the researcher and the philosophical stance being taken.

In terms of which epistemological approach, theoretical perspective and methods to use when carrying out the research for this thesis, a number of factors affected the choices: research question, availability of time and resources and more importantly a willingness amongst local authorities to take part in the research. This meant that an epistemological position such as objectivism may be difficult to apply, whilst constructionist approaches may apply more, due to the ability of individuals to interpret the same phenomena differently. In terms of theoretical perspectives, a purely positivist approach would require

local authorities to report what level they had achieved against the equality framework for local government. As Hines (2000) argues about positivism 'Researchers focus on the facts and search for cause and effect.' It could be argued that the positivistic and social constructionism paradigms represent two opposite poles of research. In reality, Easterby-Smith et al (2015) comment that 'The reality of research also involves a lot of compromises between the pure positions.' Thus, in terms of this research, mixed methods of qualitative (where responses are subjective, such as in an interview) and quantitative approaches (such as in a questionnaire) where set responses are given and analysis is presented in numeric format would be used. One such mixed methods approach to be adopted was case studies. The data to be collected from the local authorities would involve analysing the documents provided by the local authorities, as well as information derived from the online questionnaire, interviews and focus groups. Information would be gathered against the five performance areas of the Equality Framework for the three local authorities in order to assess whether the Equality Framework helped the three local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity and the problems they encountered through the introduction of equality and diversity competencies within performance review schemes.

The first task in terms of answering the research question amongst local authorities was to develop a rationale for selecting local authorities to take part in the case studies, from a total of 351 local authorities in England. Between February 2013 and November 2014, a total of fourteen local authorities had achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework (LGA, 2014). Each of the fourteen local authorities was sent an online questionnaire to complete and a total of eight local authorities (57 per cent) completed the online questionnaire, of which three local authorities indicated they would be willing to be part of the onsite research. Whilst it would have been good to have all fourteen take part in the research, having three local authorities did not detract from the information that would be uncovered. Indeed, it was possible to answer the research and analytical framework questions with only one local authority taking part. Having three local authorities offered the opportunity to examine any different approaches being adopted by the local authorities. The fourth and fifth stages of the Iles & Thorn (1999) and Best (2012) process of undertaking research involves analysing the data and a presentation of the findings and conclusions of the research. This would be done through examining the information provided by the local authorities as well as the information obtained from the desk based research. The following three chapters will present the findings and analysis of the research undertaken amongst the three local authorities, whilst the final chapter presents the conclusion to the research undertaken for this thesis.

7.0 CASE STUDY: EXAMINING ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS ONE & TWO

Introduction

The next three chapters present the findings of the research undertaken with the three local authorities that achieved the 'Excellent level' of the Equality Framework for local government and also had agreed to participate in the research. In the previous chapter, six analytical questions were identified, which would serve as the basis for answering the research question. This chapter will critically examine the first two of these questions:

- Analytical question one: What journey had the local authority taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, incorporating the challenges of different demographics, structures and policies?
- Analytical question two: How did the local authority assess their equality and diversity mainstreaming, and support employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance?

These analytical questions enable a more detailed analysis to be undertaken amongst the three local authorities. In attempting to answer these questions a number of challenges were articulated at chapter 2. For instance, commentators such as Yeandle et al (2008) note that there is a conceptual confusion and that mainstreaming, as a term, is used loosely and vaguely, sometimes referred to as a strategy or approach and sometimes referred to as a method. These confusions could be overcome if mainstreaming was understood, as it had been promoted by the European Commission, as a dual strategy. It needed to simultaneously provide both the strategy and methods for achieving equality (Yeandle et al, 2008). Another challenge related to assessing the mainstreaming of equality and diversity. In chapter 2, it was highlighted through research undertaken by the Bernard Hodes Group (2012:13), that few organisations used key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure diversity and inclusion. In all, only 40 per cent of respondents to their survey stated that their organisation used specific KPIs. For those using KPIs, the main uses were representation/demographic data (81 per cent) and employee survey results (73 per cent). There were no responses on how equality and diversity was assessed within performance review schemes.

Indeed, Redman and Wilkinson (2009) argue that more evidence was needed that showed that organisations that mainstreamed equality and diversity were more successful than organisations that did not. They went further by arguing that the research needed to focus on longitudinal assessment of equality and diversity practices, using a range of criteria from economic performance to the attitudes of those groups that the interventions had been designed to address. After which, claims made for the success of mainstreaming equality and diversity be properly made. According to Goss (1995), it was usually accepted that to get an equal opportunities culture established within an organisation, it was not sufficient to rely on policy exhortations or the threat of disciplinary action in cases of unacceptable behaviour. These steps need to be complemented by awareness training. The Scottish Executive (2003) suggest that mainstreaming was a long-term strategy (what actions will be undertaken) requiring substantial investment in training and specialist support, the production of gender and equalities disaggregated statistics and other 'mapping' data, the employment of multiple strategies and tools and the involvement of a wide range of internal and external agencies.

The need to incorporate equality and diversity within the local authority's work was directed by two drivers. Firstly, the requirements of the various equality acts, in particular the Equality Act 2010, although the Office for Public Management (OPM) survey amongst local authorities in 2003 found that many of the individuals they interviewed expressed concerns, that while they had some understanding of the thrust of current legislative requirements, they did not fully understand how to translate this into concrete actions and outcomes in their local authority (OPM, 2003). Secondly, according to Storey (1995), the business case focused on the benefits that employers accrued through making the most of the skills of its employees'. Therefore, it was crucial that 'equal opportunities initiatives were seen to tie in with the overall strategic direction of a company' (Storey, 1995).

In order to chart the journey that a local authority has made towards mainstreaming equality and diversity, a critical analysis of the local authorities structure and background including its demography and its approach to equality and diversity policy and practice and political context that it operated in would be presented as well as how their employees were contributing to the local authority's work on equality and diversity mainstreaming. This is particularly important as the external assessment of the local authority against the various levels of the Equality Framework does not require all employees to be interviewed as part of the assessment process. It is therefore possible for large numbers of employees to be 'hidden' from the information and presentation that the local authorities presented as evidence for achieving the 'Excellent' level. Indeed, the

LGA's external assessment that the local authority had to undergo to demonstrate it has achieved the 'Excellent' level only includes the external assessors interviewing/speaking to approximately 25-50 employees within the local authority. For example, if the local authority has over 10,000 employees, then this number is very small indeed, representing under one per cent of all employees. This could mean that large numbers of the workforce could be doing very little to contribute to equality and diversity mainstreaming within the local authority (Equality Framework assessment process, LGA, 2011).

The analytical context would also identify whether any sizeable minority populations or disadvantaged groups existed, who could have a bearing on how the local authority had been required to deal with race, disability or religion and belief issues within the local authority area. Research undertaken by the Employers Organisation for Local Government (2006) identified that district⁵ local authorities made up approximately two thirds of all local authorities in England and Wales and that in terms of progress against the Equality Standard between 2001-2006, the majority of district local authorities had not achieved higher than level one, whilst proportionately more metropolitan, London Boroughs, unitary and county councils had achieved level two and higher.

This then was the context in which the first two questions of the analytical framework of the research would be followed up with the local authorities. Following the responses to the online survey, further communication was undertaken with the three local authorities that had agreed to take part in the research. This involved telephone meetings to outline the proposed research and what the local authority's commitment would entail. As the thesis would be a public document and in order to ensure that the local authority participated in as open a manner as possible, it was agreed with the local authorities taking part in the research, that each local authority would not be named in the thesis, but would be identified as either local authority X, Y and Z. The research with the local authorities took place during February 2013– November 2014.

⁵ District local authorities are not responsible for all services in their locality, especially education, social services, and libraries, which are undertaken by County Councils and are usually smaller in employee composition than County Councils, Unitaries or Metropolitan local authorities (LGA, 2017).

Examining analytical question one: What journey had the local authority taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, incorporating the challenges of different demographics, structures and policies?

Local authority X

Local authority X is a metropolitan authority in England and politically is a Labour led local authority. The 2011 census showed that the local authority has over 100,000 population and includes a densely populated, inner city area with associated challenges of poverty and deprivation, as well as a more affluent suburban and rural area with villages and market towns. The local authority has a relatively young population and was an increasingly diverse city with many ethnic groups including Black, Asian and other minority ethnic populations and employed approximately 10,000 people. Both factors would lead to the local authority having to make efforts to consider it had effective equality and diversity policies and procedures (Council Plan 2013-17, Local authority X, 2013).

Within local authority X's corporate strategy 2013-17, it prioritised outcomes, which include improving the quality of life for residents, particularly for those who were vulnerable or in poverty. The outcomes were going to be delivered through six local authority objectives for the period 2013-17 which gave more detail on how the local authority would achieve these, including the objective relating to equality and diversity. Local authority X's first 'local authority' outcome provided a strategic reason for local authority X to undertake work on equality and diversity. This was largely shaped by the demographics of the city, which has a diverse population, with a large percentage of the population from a minority ethnic community, which is almost a doubling of the minority population during 2001 – 2011. This has brought about challenges for the local authority in terms of ensuring there was cohesion amongst the settled and recently arrived communities, such as those from Eastern Europe, as well as people from other parts of the world. Many of these communities also experience a degree of poverty and inequality of opportunity. Approximately 20 per cent of the population are over 60 years of age and require some form of social care services and this has put a strain on the budgets of the local authority, where significant budget cuts were having to be made due to the national austerity measures (Corporate Strategy, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority X has an established approach to embedding equality and diversity across the organisation, which has existed for many years and is primarily driven by the need to

meet the equality legislation, starting in the 1970s with the Sex and Race Equality Acts through to the Equality Act 2010, which required the local authority to include more people from the protected characteristics within the work on equality and diversity that it undertook. Equality and diversity work within the local authority focused on the 'traditional' equality strands of race, disability and gender. This included work to ensure legal compliance, such as, the production of a Race Equality Scheme and undertaking Race Equality Impact Assessments, which was a requirement of the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA) 1995. However, during interviews with employees, it was not clear that there was an agreed definition of what the local authority understood by the term 'equality and diversity mainstreaming' and this was subsequently not reflected in any of the strategic documents provided by the local authority, although some of the interviewees stated that they 'attempt to incorporate equality and diversity in all work that they undertake' (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

With the introduction of the equality standard for local government in 2001, local authority X embarked on its implementation across the local authority. The equality standard for local government continues to focus the work of the local authority on race, disability and gender. The equality standard also supported the local authority's journey to develop a consistent approach to addressing inequality across the local authority and benchmark their progress against other local authorities. Subsequently, with the introduction of further equality legislation between 2003-10, culminating in the Equality 2010, the work to embed equality and diversity within the local authority was broadened to ensure that all work had considered all nine protected characteristics: age, race, disability, sex, marriage, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, civil partnerships), religion or belief as well as any others that the local authority had prioritised themselves, for example carers.

In 2006, local authority X published their first single equality strategy, which was followed by their equality and diversity scheme 2008 - 2011. This document set out their approach to equality and diversity, which expected services to consider all protected characteristics and also identify areas of inequality, and develop actions that would remove or reduce inequalities. The equality and diversity schemes influenced the local authority's key organisational and partnership strategies and set out their key equality and diversity outcomes (Equality and Diversity scheme 2011-15, Local authority X, 2011). Local authority X continues to use the equality standard, and subsequently the equality framework for local government after 2011, to support the local authority to embed a consistent approach to equality and diversity.

In the 20 years prior to the research for this thesis, there has been changing demographic characteristics within local authority X's population, with increases in the number of people from the Eastern Europe and minority ethnic communities. This has seen emerging tensions relating to different communities living in harmony with one another. As a consequence, the local authority identified Integration and cohesion as a key improvement priority, and in October 2008 local authority X approved a new cohesion and Integration policy. Whilst it was acknowledged by councillors that the local authority had made positive progress in improving community cohesion, there was recognition that more still needed to be done. The equality and diversity scheme and the cohesion and Integration priorities 2008 – 2011 were reviewed and refreshed and the equality and diversity scheme 2011 – 2015 was developed (Equality and Diversity scheme 2011-15, Local authority X, 2011).

Local authority Y

Local authority Y is a unitary authority and has a population of over 100,000 people with the local authority being politically led by a coalition of different political parties. When compared to similar populations nationally, the local authority has a relatively large working age population and slightly below average levels of both children and older people. The 2011 census also estimate that over 3 per cent of the population were from non-White British backgrounds. This is above the regional average, but below the average for England (13 per cent). Amongst the minority ethnic populations, people of mixed race backgrounds form the largest overall percentage (1.94 per cent), and the other minority ethnic communities are generally relatively small and very diverse. However, the population profile of the local authority is changing with over 5 per cent of the local authority's residents being born outside England, which was above national levels and minority ethnic communities increased in size by approximately 35 per cent from the period 2001-2011 (against a national increase of 13 per cent) (ONS, 2011). Other significant groups across the local authority include: More than 20,000 full-time students; more than 13,000 children living in lone parent households, mainly headed by women; and national data identified the city as among the 10 per cent of local authorities in England with the highest number of homeless households (Equality Framework Self-Assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

In order to address the issues that the local authority faces in relation to its demographics, the local authority has developed an equality and inclusion policy 2012-2015, which describes their vision, objectives, key actions and measures to promote,

facilitate and deliver equality in employment and service delivery both within the local authority and the rest of the city. The policy links with the corporate, community and partner service frameworks and set out key local authority issues and their impacts on protected equality and key social inclusion groups, although there is no mention of what the local authority understands by the term equality and diversity mainstreaming. The policy objectives meet the local authority's requirements under the public sector duty of the Equality Act 2010 (Equality and Inclusion policy 2012-15, Local authority Y, 2012).

Local authority Y has an Equalities Steering Group (ESG) which meets every 6 weeks and comprises equality champions and officers responsible for leading on equality and diversity across the local authority, as well as representatives from the minority staff fora, and from the Human Resources division. These representatives provide the link into all of the service areas, using service-specific equality groups to disseminate information from the corporate group, oversee progress against the Equality Impact Assessment⁶ (EIA) timetable and Single Equality Scheme, and collect information emerging from community engagement activities and/or frontline services to pass on back to the corporate group. The ESG role is to meet, share good practice, provide leadership and strategic guidance on equalities issues, and address areas of common concern. It also discusses priority areas of work, and updates progress toward EIA programmes and implementing equality policies. The Communities and Equality Team support and facilitate this group (Equality Framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

Local authority Z

Local authority Z has a population over 100,000 and is a unitary authority and is politically run by the Conservatives. While residents within local authority Z enjoy a good quality of life, there are a number of groups and localities within the local authority which face significant challenges. For example, people living in rural areas are isolated with health, care, employment and leisure facilities not sufficiently local and access to them limited by the expense and availability of transport. Local authority Z state that they are committed to putting equality and diversity at the heart of everything they do and have developed an equality and diversity policy statement. This statement is local authority Z's formal commitment to delivering fairness and removing the barriers that limit what people can do and could be. It is also a promise that the local authority would work hard to respond to

⁶ An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a process by which an analysis of any policy, service or proposal for change is conducted, and which helps to identify and address any unintended consequence of decisions (NHS, 2017).

local challenges and tackle prejudice and improve the life chances and opportunities of those who face discrimination and disadvantage. The statement is however silent in respect of what it understands equality and diversity mainstreaming to be. In addition, the local authority has developed ten corporate equality priorities applicable to each of their directorates. To ensure that they focus their efforts where it is most needed, these priorities have been identified through interaction with their communities, councillors, employees and consideration of their local demographic data (Council Plan 2011-15, Local authority Z, 2011).

For the period 2012-2015 local authority Z's focus is to: understand and address the needs of minority groups; to provide easier access to services and information; to improve participation of under-represented groups in community life and in the democratic process; to increase the diversity of the local authority workforce; and maintain the reputation as an equal opportunities employer. These priorities, alongside other objectives identified at a directorate level, are assessed through the local authority's Directorate Equality Groups (DEGs) business planning and performance management framework to ensure progress is reported and challenged across the organisation. Local authority Z's approach to realising these priorities has been designed in a way that ensures clear organisational commitment and action across all services. The local authority has a dedicated equality and diversity manager post (job share) and strong leadership commitment from senior political leaders and officers towards making the local authority an inclusive organisation (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

Examining analytical question two: How did the local authority assess their equality and diversity mainstreaming, and support employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance?

Local authority X: Assessing equality and diversity mainstreaming

Local authority X's 'Council Plan' 2013-17 has the following equality and diversity performance measures and targets to achieve by 2017:

- 100 per cent staff have had a quality performance appraisal.
- 100 per cent decisions include equality and consultation.
- 100 per cent of important decisions include due regard for equality.

The above indicators include a reference to appraisals and the inclusion of equality in work being undertaken by employees, however, there is no reference to how equality and diversity mainstreaming was to be assessed. The local authority's equality improvement priorities set out what the local authority is going to undertake in order to remove and reduce barriers that may prevent some people from fully participating in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the city. These priorities have been introduced in order to ensure that the local authority meets its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 and sets out the local authority's continued commitment to equality and diversity. These priorities were closely aligned to the vision for local authority X, the city priority plan and the 'Council Plan', in order to ensure a more integrated approach to equality and diversity in the local authority's strategic planning framework (Council Plan 2013-17, Local authority X, 2013).

The LGA's external assessment review team found that there were some areas where further work could be done by local authority X in relation to its work on equality and diversity. These were to: improve the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process; ensure that voluntary and community sector organisations and the equality hubs were consulted and involved before decisions were made; ensure that the EIA process is part of the planning process in order to identify any adverse or positive impacts. Although sharing and collating of equality and diversity data was seen as good in some areas, not all service areas were making the most of the research and information that is available to them, perhaps because they were unaware of what is available. It was also felt that this should be better communicated to ensure that this information could influence decisions

at an early stage. For example, a wider use of the information in the benefits service, including benefits take-up, could influence wider service delivery and continue to ensure that information was collected, analysed and shared with partners as well as across local authority X. The LGA external review team report also instructs Local authority X to improve communications internally, in order to share good practice that exist, particularly around decision making, procurement, use of equality data and EIAs and explore and develop opportunities with the voluntary and community sectors to input into equality mapping and the EIA process. (Equality Framework assessment report: Local authority X, LGA 2014).

Local Authority X: Supporting employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance

Local authority X undertook annual employee surveys to receive feedback and the results from the July 2013 employee engagement survey showed that 74.6 per cent of employees feel satisfied at the way the local authority engages with them on matters concerning them. This was an increase from the previous year's survey and among the top three responses was employees given the opportunity at their appraisals to have an open discussion with their manager about their performance. The annual survey also assesses the impact that the local authority's equality and diversity policies and procedures are having on the working conditions and diversity of employees. Following analysis of the findings, the results are used to identify areas for improvement and the local authority subsequently takes action to address these areas. This may include the need to carry out further research and analysis or identifying an issue, such as harassment or bullying within a particular directorate and the local authority designing and delivering a workshop to explore this further so that appropriate action can be taken to remove or reduce the problem (Employee engagement survey, Local authority X, 2013).

In terms of communicating feedback from the employee survey to employees, 64 per cent of employees reported that results from the 2011/12 survey have been shared with them. This score has decreased to 56 per cent in July 2013. This means nearly half of all employees completing the employee' survey have not been communicated with in terms of previous surveys. The local authority recognises that services and local teams needed to cascade information and discuss survey results, with particular emphasis on local, as well as top level actions that have been taken. The local authority is reinforcing with managers the need to inform all employees the results of the employee survey and what actions the local authority plan to take to address issues raised (Employee engagement

survey, Local authority X, 2013). Whilst the local authority provided equality and diversity training, front line employees taking part in this case study indicated that they had not attended any equality and diversity training/refresher courses for a number of years. This raised the issue of how front line employees, without access to computers at work or attending training courses could keep up to date with changes in the workplace. One suggestion was to have regular information posted on the notice board in their employee canteen (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y: Assessing equality and diversity mainstreaming

In terms of equality and diversity mainstreaming, local authority Y's equality performance framework outlines that equality targets are included in the performance & development planning scheme with development and training identifying equality needs. The equality team has developed corporate guidelines for equalities monitoring, a detailed guide to the aims and use of monitoring as well as a summary guide. Further work is done through the City Inclusion Partnership (CIP), where the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, changes to census categories and local demographics all inform the development of a single equalities monitoring form, which is intended to be used consistently across the local authority and increasingly adopted by the other statutory sector CIP partners. The equalities monitoring form is currently being trialled and also includes a brief guide for people completing the form, explaining why the local authority is asking for the data and clarifying some of the questions and terms (Workforce data report, Local authority Y, 2013).

Equality information relating to people appointed to vacancies is entered into the Human Resources (HR) system. Similarly as employees leave employment with the local authority, their status is updated on the system so that they are excluded from workforce profile data. Having up-to-date and complete workforce profile information is crucial if the local authority is to ensure that it achieves and maintains a workforce that was truly representative of the community it serves. In addition, this information is used to inform the local authority's recruitment and retention strategy, and succession and workforce planning. Local authority Y also intends this to enable it to better monitor the impact of its policies and procedures on its employees' (particularly minority groups) in order to ensure that they did not have a disproportionate impact on any particular protected characteristic. Local authority Y's HR team also run a validation exercise from time to time to reduce the proportion of employees for whom the local authority had incomplete equality profiles. Through the new Personal Information and Employment Resource (PIER) system,

employees now have access to their own personal information and have the facility to directly update their details including their equality information to ensure it is correct (People Strategy 2012-17, Local authority Y, 2012).

Local authority Y was assessed at the 'Achieving' level (Level 3 in the old Equality Standard for Local Government) in 2009, and the LGA's Equality Standard external reviewers indicated that in many areas, the local authority was already performing at level 4 of the Equality Standard. Local authority Y's work on equality and diversity has gathered momentum since the assessment and they have ensured that their equalities processes are implemented, monitored and evaluated consistently across all areas of the local authority. Also, the specific areas identified by them and the LGA external reviewers, as needing improvement, have been addressed. In addition, local authority Y has developed and deepened their partnership working across the statutory, community, faith and business sectors; and supported and funded the implementation of the community engagement framework for the city which has an explicit focus on diversity within and between communities (Diversity Peer Challenge report: Local authority Y, LGA, 2011).

Local authority Y has also implemented a number of actions including: scrutinising barriers faced by disabled staff and implementing its recommendations; updating their Single Equality Scheme so that its content, outcomes and actions cover all the equalities strands (now protected characteristics); and updating and further embedding their Equality Impact Assessment process and monitoring its achievements. Local authority Y further highlight gaps in their engagement with communities, specifically with groups based on religion or belief, and men's groups. The local authority has increased their range of activities with local religious groups and undertaken several projects internally to increase awareness of how diverse religions and beliefs may affect service delivery. Local authority Y's city-wide community engagement framework has also supported the consistency of approach in relation to community groups, the managing of expectations and improved publicising of events and activities. Internally, local authority Y has taken a number of actions to improve communications, including increasing their presence on the intranet and internet, through an 'equalities pledge' campaign, advertising the revised Single Equality Scheme and their achievements against it (internally and externally), and attending more local authority and external events to present their work and increase awareness of their role. Also, a refreshed equalities e-training course has been introduced for all employees, as well as a manager's course and workshop. This specifically covers legislative requirements, disability, reasonable adjustments, recruiting,

managing and retaining a diverse workforce (Equality Framework self- assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

A new Strategic Leadership Board (SLB) has been created and a group of strategic directors provide overall management and leadership to the local authority, and monitor performance against the outcomes they have agreed to deliver. The local Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF) was engaged in the pilot processes and the steering group also drew on the expertise and experience held by members of the local authority. The steering group also identified and agreed processes for how gaps in data are to be met in future and how service users and non-service users and community groups would be engaged in ongoing assessment, monitoring and review. There was also regular ongoing reporting on progress and learning to the local authority and the local authority Y strategic partnership. Issues for equalities groups have been identified and addressed throughout the needs analysis stage and can be seen in the merging commissioning priorities. This indicates that the local authority are taking the appropriate approach in mainstreaming their equalities work through this process ('Equality Framework self- assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

Local authority Y: Supporting employees to continually improve their equality and diversity performance

Local authority Y's People Strategy 2012-17 sets out a number of actions around promoting equality and inclusion within the workplace. This includes the aim to introduce a behavior and performance management framework that advocates the behavior and skill that the local authority wants employees to model. Also, there is an aim that the local authority would continue to ensure skills in working with diverse communities are embedded throughout all learning programmes (People Strategy 2012-17, Local authority Y, 2012). The local authority also provides its employees with a range of training around equalities, which includes a mandatory equalities training course for all employees' via an e-learning foundation course, with seventy per cent of employees completing this training. The local authority had also achieved national recognition over several years for its work on equalities and the local authority has shared this good practice regionally and nationally. The LGBT employee mentoring scheme is supported by the local authority's communities and equality team, whilst the local authority also provides good support to its employee forums, with each having a budget and time allocated to employees to manage the forums. Employees are also actively involved in taking part in Equality Impact

Assessments and identifying practical service improvements which are carried forward into the service plans (Diversity Peer Challenge report: Local authority Y, LGA, 2011).

One of the very practical results resulting from the LGA assessment report was that councillors championed the issues relating to disabled employees and established a disability scrutiny committee to oversee actions. This has now successfully concluded, making its recommendations, and work is ongoing to implement these. The process and outcomes are seen by the disabled workers forum as very positive and their involvement has addressed key issues of concern and has also raised their profile and contributed to their empowerment as a group and individuals. These points provide headline information on some of local authority Y's achievements (Equality Framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011). In order to ensure that policies and practices follow good practice in terms of equality and diversity, Local authority Y has set a rolling three year programme of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that each service area is assessed in accordance to priority, and service need or change. To help support this, the equality team has continued their programme of EIA training and have trained over 200 employees through EIA workshops. This has enabled managers and staff across the local authority to increase their understanding of and confidence in fulfilling the EIA process, and to share their experiences of the process (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014).

Local authority Z: Assessing equality and diversity mainstreaming

Local authority Z has not specifically outlined how it assesses equality and diversity mainstreaming, although it does include an objective in its corporate plan to create a more diverse workforce. Local authority Z has introduced an online equality and diversity course, which is designed to support employees during their appraisal process. In December 2011, local authority Z was selected by central government to be one of four pilot areas to deliver a whole place community budget - known locally as 'Better Programme'. The bid was submitted on behalf of public, private and voluntary sector partners from across local authority Z outlines how they would work together for the benefit of their communities to fundamentally change and improve local public services. It is recognised that additional governance structures are needed to support the programme's joint funding arrangements, investment agreements and integrated delivery models. As a result, a number of new boards were established, including the local authority strategy board which is an overarching governance body providing overall strategic leadership and direction to the public service governance bodies in the local

authority, chaired by the leader of the local authority (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

In 2014, local authority Z embarked on a journey to obtain the Equality Framework 'Excellent' level, having achieved level three of the Equality Standard in 2011. The local authority feels that the self-assessment process has been invaluable in recognising and benchmarking their local authority against the Equality Framework for Local Government. It has served to highlight both the excellent practice that has been embedded across the local authority and the tangible impact that the local authority work continues to have on the lives of their residents. At the same time, the process of self-evaluation against the equality frameworks has allowed the local authority to identify areas of opportunity to improve their outcomes. Local authority Z feels that they are not complacent and recognise that the journey is continuous. The needs of their residents vary according to a wide range of factors, but as a result of the increasingly comprehensive data that they hold and ever-improving links to and relationships with their communities, they are able to better understand each of them and engage with them in an effective and personalised way (Equality Framework: Excellent level submission, Local authority Z, 2014). The local authority also monitors its workforce in a number of ways, including: through internal monitoring; providing important information on the local authority's employee demographics; and providing a robust evidence source for their workforce. The local authority also undertakes deep analysis of the labour market, allowing the local authority to contrast their workforce with that of the wider local area, therefore helping to inform future recruitment strategies (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

Local authority Z: Supporting employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance

Local authority Z developed its People Strategy in 2010 to provide clarity to all employees on the future direction of the local authority. Equality and diversity is at the heart of the People Strategy, with the employee survey showing that 62 per cent of employees understood the priorities of the local authority. A number of actions have been introduced by the local authority to assist employees to incorporate more equality and diversity in their day to day work. This includes: an employee assistance programme designed to support all employees and their immediate families, by offering confidential help; and the introduction of a full suite of human resources policies and procedures, including 'dignity at work', grievance... designed to provide appropriate mechanisms to ensure employees

were fairly and effectively managed. Local authority Z also monitors the take up of training by ethnicity, age and disability, although it did not monitor by other protected characteristics, but intends to include more protected characteristics in future monitoring. The monitoring shows that take up of training was proportionate to the make-up of the protected characteristic in the workforce, apart from older workers, who have lower levels of take up. It is assumed that this is due to older workers already having undertaken the training. The local authority has recently refreshed its equality and diversity course and any employee undertaking recruitment has to undergo equality and diversity training (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

Conclusion

Commentators such as Yeandle et al (2008) note that there is a conceptual confusion with regard to the term 'equality and diversity mainstreaming', which is used vaguely and loosely, and sometimes as a strategy or approach and sometimes as a method. These confusions could be overcome, if the concept was understood as the European Commission had promoted it, as a dual strategy, providing both the strategy and methods for achieving equality and diversity. A further challenge regarding equality and diversity mainstreaming was highlighted by the Bernard Hodes Group (2012:13), who state that few organisations used performance indicators to measure equality and diversity. Despite these challenges, local authorities were required to improve their work around equality and diversity through main two drivers: Firstly, the requirements of the various equality acts; and secondly, the business case of the contribution that engaged employees could make to the local authority's work (Storey, 1995). In order to chart the journey that each of the three local authorities has taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming and also how they assessed this, as well as how they supported their employees to contribute to this, a critical examination of each local authority's structure and background, including its demographic changes and its approach to equality and diversity policy and practice was undertaken.

The contribution made by employees towards the local authority's equality and diversity mainstreaming is particularly important as the external assessment of the local authority against the various levels of the Equality Framework does not require all employees to be interviewed as part of the assessment process. It is therefore possible for large numbers of employees to be 'hidden' from the information and presentation that the local authorities presented as evidence for achieving the 'Excellent' level. Indeed, the LGA's

external assessment that the local authority had to undergo to demonstrate it has achieved the 'Excellent' level only includes the external assessors interviewing/speaking to approximately 25-50 employees within the local authority. For example, if the local authority has over 10,000 employees, then this number is very small indeed, representing under one per cent of all employees. This could mean that large numbers of the workforce could be doing very little to contribute to equality and diversity mainstreaming within the local authority (Equality Framework assessment process, LGA, 2011). This chapter presents the results of the data collated during the online questionnaire, documentary evidence presented by the local authorities and onsite interviews and focus groups, to answer the first two analytical questions

- Analytical question one: What journey had the local authority taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, incorporating the challenges of different demographics, structures and policies?
- Analytical question two: How did the local authority assess their equality and diversity mainstreaming, and support employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance?

Examining analytical question one

Local authority X

Local authority X is a metropolitan authority and according to the 2011 census has a population over 100,000, which is largely based within the inner city. The local authority also has a diverse demographic, with over 3 per cent of the population from a BAME background. Both these factors have led to the local authority ensuring that it had effective equality and diversity policies and procedures (Council Plan 2013-17, Local authority X, 2013). Subsequently, the local authority has seen further diversification of its population with the arrival of people from Eastern Europe, and along with people arriving from other countries, it has sometimes led to tensions within communities. This has also prompted the local authority to develop measures to improve the cohesion within the city (Corporate Strategy, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority X has also been influenced to develop more equality and diversity mainstreaming by the requirements of equality legislation, such as the Sex and Race

Equality Acts of the 1970s through to the Equality Act 2010, which has required the local authority to develop policies and procedures as an employer and for its service delivery. Alongside the legal requirements, the introduction of the Equality Standard for local government in 2001 enabled the local authority to further focus its equality and diversity work and provide a consistent approach to addressing inequality across the local authority's work and also enable it to benchmark against other local authorities (Onsite interview, Local authority X, 2013). In 2006, local authority X published their first equality strategy, and this has been continually developed through the publication of the local authority's equality and diversity schemes 2008- 2011 and 2011- 2015 which outline the journey that the local authority has been on and is planning to take with regard equality and diversity mainstreaming. However, the scheme does not mention what the local authority understands equality and diversity mainstreaming to be (Equality and Diversity Scheme 2011- 2015, Local authority X, 2011). During the onsite interviews, a few employees stated that for them equality and diversity mainstreaming is incorporated in everything they did (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y

Local authority Y is a unitary authority and according to the 2011 census has a population over 100,000 with over 3 per cent of the population from a BAME background and also a diverse community, and high numbers of people who have disability issues, and those on low income (Equality Framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011). In order to address the challenges posed by a diverse and perceived inequality amongst its population, local authority Y published its equality and inclusion policy 2012- 2015, which describes the local authority's vision, objectives, key actions and measures to promote and deliver equality in service delivery and employment both within the local authority and the rest of the city. The policy also enables the local authority to meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010, however, it is silent on mentioning what the local authority understands is the definition of equality and diversity mainstreaming (Equality and Inclusion policy 2012- 2015, Local authority Y, 2012).

Another way that local authority Y attempts to mainstream equality and diversity is through its Equalities Steering Group (ESG), who comprise equality champions and officers from across the local authority, and whose role is to provide a link between the service areas and the ESG, in order the policies and procedures relating to equality and diversity are disseminated across the local authority as well as feeding back information received from the service areas to the ESG, so that policies and procedures can be

amended appropriately. The ESG has also overseen self-assessment audits across the service areas when gathering evidence to submit to achieve the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework for local government (Equality Framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

Local authority Z

Local authority Z is a unitary authority and has a population over 100,000, with a small BAME background population and seen as a relatively prosperous area, although has some pockets of deprivation as well as rural isolation. These challenges have prompted the local authority to develop its equality and diversity policy statement, which states that the local authority are committed to putting equality and diversity at the heart of everything they do, although there is not a definition of what the local authority understands equality and diversity mainstreaming to be. The local authority has also developed, in conjunction with their communities, councillors and employees, ten corporate equality priorities applicable to each of their directorates (Council Plan 2011-2015, Local authority Z, 2011).

The priority for the local authority between 2012- 2015 is amongst other things to: understand and address the needs of minority groups; to provide easier access to services and information; and to increase the diversity of the local authority workforce. These priorities are overseen by the local authority's Directorate Equality Groups (DEG) business planning and performance management framework to ensure progress is reported and challenged across the organisation. The DEG is supported by strong commitment from the local authority leaders as well as supported by equality and diversity officers (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

Examining analytical question two

Local authority X

Local authority X has attempted to develop measures for equality and diversity, which reference appraisals and decision making, however, there is no reference to how equality and diversity mainstreaming is to be assessed (Council Plan 2013-17, Local authority X). The equality and diversity data that was collated and shared with partners varied between service areas of the local authority, with some service areas being good at sharing

information, whilst others were not, due mainly to them not being aware of what information was available. The LGA's external assessment team also provided feedback that the local authority should improve communications internally, in order to share good practice that exists, particularly around decision making, procurement, equality impact assessments and equality data (Equality Framework assessment report: Local authority X, LGA, 2014).

Local authority X sought to support their employees to improve their performance on equality and diversity by analysing and feeding back on their annual employee survey. The survey also enabled the local authority to assess how well their equality and diversity policies relating to employees was working and communicate back to employees what the local authority is planning to undertake to improve the situation. However, nearly 50 per cent of employees stated that they had not received adequate feedback on what the local authority had undertaken in terms of concerns they had raised, including those relating to equality and diversity. The local authority recognises that this is an area they need to further improve (Employee engagement survey, Local authority X, 2013). Front line employees interviewed stated that whilst equality and diversity training was provided, many of them had not attended any such training for a number of years, which raises the issue of how employees are kept informed of changes to equality and diversity legislation and practice (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y

Local authority Y's performance framework outlines that equality targets are included within the performance and development planning scheme with development and training identifying equality needs (Workforce data, Local authority Y, 2013). There is a process in place to monitor workforce profiles, which helps the local authority to assess if it is creating a workforce that reflects the community it serves. The local authority is intending to expand this to cover the monitoring of its policies and procedures on its employees (particularly minority groups) in order to ensure that it did not have a disproportionate impact on any particular protected characteristics (People Strategy, Local authority Y, 2012). Also, local authority Y has implemented changes proposed by the LGA peer challenge assessors, including developing greater partnerships across the statutory, community and business sectors (Diversity Peer Challenge report: Local authority Y, LGA, 2011). A Strategic Leadership Board has also been established which provides a strategic overview of the work that the local authority is undertaking, including monitoring

on how the local authority can improve customer experiences (Equality Framework self-assessment report: Local authority Y, 2011).

With regard supporting employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance, local authority Y's People Strategy 2012-17 sets out a number of actions around promoting equality and inclusion within the workplace, including the introduction of a behaviour and performance management framework that advocates the behaviour and skills that employees should model (People Strategy 2012-17, Local authority Y, 2012)). Also, a refresher e-equality course has been rolled out for all employees, as well as a specific equality and diversity course and workshop for managers. There has also been training for employees on conducting equality impact assessments, which ensures that policies and procedures are appropriate, and where they are not, employees can be supported to improve the processes. The local authority has also established a communities and equality team which aims to better integrate their approach in tackling inequality and community engagement and provides standards for the local authority as a whole (Equality Framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

Local authority Z

Local authority Z has not specifically outlined how it assesses equality and diversity mainstreaming, although it does include an objective in its corporate plan to create a more diverse workforce. The local authority has established a strategy board, which is responsible for guiding the delivery of the local authority's sustainable community strategy, which includes the need for the local authority to recognise, celebrate and engage with their diverse communities (Council Plan 2011-15, Local authority Z, 2011). The Equality Framework assessment process has provided feedback to the local authority on areas where it is performing well and where it can further improve and this has proved valuable to the local authority (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

Local authority Z developed its People Strategy in 2010 to provide clarity to all employees on the future direction of the local authority with regard to equality and diversity. As a result, a number of actions have been developed by the local authority to assist employees to incorporate more equality and diversity in their day to day work. Local authority Z has also refreshed its equality and diversity course and monitors uptake amongst several protected characteristic groups and also any employee undertaking

recruitment has to undergo equality and diversity training (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

The next chapter will examine how the three local authorities have addressed the next two analytical questions:

- Analytical question three: What performance review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective?
- Analytical question four: Had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems encountered by the local authorities when doing this?

8.0 CASE STUDY: EXAMINING ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS THREE & FOUR

Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the journey that the three local authorities have made towards equality and diversity mainstreaming and how each local authority is attempting to assess mainstreaming and support its employees to incorporate equality and diversity practice within their day to day work. This chapter will critically analyse the next two analytical questions:

- Analytical question three: 'What performance management review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective?'
- Analytical question four: 'Had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems encountered by the local authorities when doing this?'

Chapter 4 critically examined the development of performance management review schemes and competencies. The chapter also outlines what a good performance review and competency framework process should comprise of, according to Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), Chapman (2013), Aguinis (2009) and Mollander and Winterton (1996:116). This forms the basis of the analysis for this chapter and where the three local authority's performance management review schemes and competencies would be compared against the good practice identified in chapter 4. Finally, the chapter begins to explore whether the use of equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes can lead to an improvement in equality and diversity mainstreaming within the local authorities that may have attempted this.

All three local authorities have developed strategies and policies to mainstream equality and diversity, which include employees carrying out performance management reviews in relation to delivering services on equality and diversity. Difficulties in embedding performance management review schemes and competencies often arose from a lack of understanding or lack of agreement about what the stages of performance management reviews and competencies were. Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006) identify six steps when developing performance review schemes. The first two steps involved the development of the business/corporate plan and the directorate/service plans. The next step involved the

development of individual performance review plans via the use of appraisal forms, which led to the next step of identifying competencies and training needs. The last two steps involve the six monthly review and a full year review as part of the performance review process. Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006) undertook considerable work developing their guidance on what constituted a good competency statement. Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003) state that there are two main themes in the definition of competencies: description of work tasks i.e. what a person has to do in a job. These have their origins in national training schemes, such as National Vocational Qualification's (NVQs) and the Management Charter Initiative (MCI) and the description of behaviour i.e. how a person did their job. These have evolved from the work of researchers and consultants specialising in managerial effectiveness. For Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006) there are a number of factors which need to be considered, including the types of statements described below that should not be listed as competencies, as they are not behaviours:

- 'Task or Activity competency statements', which describe what a person does in their job. These statements are usually written from the point of view of what the job needs. For example 'collect and accurately file information' and 'answer telephone enquiries promptly.'
- 'Value/Driver statements' competency statements describe the organisation's values, principles and/or key goals. For example 'committed to the principles of fair provision of services to all users' and 'capitalises on opportunities to promote continuous improvement.'
- 'Characteristics' describe competency statements relating to the knowledge, skills and attitudes that a person needs for the job. For example 'has awareness of equality policy' and 'is open to new ways of working.'

Expanding on the ideas advocated by authors such as Mollander and Winterton (1996) and Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), Aguinis (2009) discusses the gathering of performance information, recognising that an important component of the performance management review assessment stage is the use of appraisal forms used to document and evaluate performance. Appraisal forms usually include a combination of the following components:

- employee information – job title, department, key dates
- objectives, weighted in terms of importance (if a result approach had been adopted) and the extent to which they had been achieved
- competences and indicators (if a behavioural approach had been adopted);

- major achievements and contributions
- developmental achievements i.e. the extent to which the employee had met developmental goals during the review period
- developmental needs
- stakeholder input
- employee comments and
- signatures.

This then outlines the good practice identified by the authors mentioned above of what a good performance management review scheme is comprised of, including the use of appraisal forms, and this chapter will use this as the basis for critically examining the three local authorities' performance management review schemes and their effectiveness.

In 2014, the LGA revised the Equality Framework for local government and by having discussions with the author of this thesis, a more explicit reference to the inclusion of equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes is made a requirement of achieving the Equality Framework. This now means that local authorities wanting to achieve the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework in the future will need to demonstrate more clearly how they have developed and incorporated equality and diversity competencies within their performance management review schemes (see table eight). Now, for the first time there is a recognition by the authors of the Equality Framework for local government that the inclusion of equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes could assist in equality and diversity mainstreaming.

Table nine: Equality Framework requirements for performance management reviews (LGA, 2014)

Developing Level	Achieving Level	Excellent Level
Equality considerations for individuals are integrated into appraisal systems.	Management and individual appraisals include specific equality objectives for the service areas.	Managers and staff can give examples of improved equality outcomes they have contributed to.

The inclusion of a specific requirement to report against equality and diversity within performance management review schemes and its impact on equality and diversity mainstreaming within the local authority would not be fully assessed until local authorities undertake an external peer assessments against the new criteria, therefore how far this specific requirement of the Equality Framework also enables the local authority to mainstream equality and diversity is yet to be fully evidenced, although, this thesis has shared new intelligence on this subject through the case studies carried out. Prior to the inclusion of an equality and diversity competency within performance management review schemes, the three local authorities had undertaken a range of activities which contributed to the improvement of equality of opportunity for employees and service users.

Prior to 2014, the Equality Framework for local government did not specifically require local authorities to demonstrate how equality and diversity is embedded within performance management review schemes, therefore local authorities X and Y have little evidence of this in their Equality Framework 'Excellent' level submissions. In July 2014, the LGA revised the Equality Framework and includes a more specific reference to equality and diversity competencies within appraisal forms. Local authority Z submitted their evidence against the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework using this criterion. However, as this is a relatively recent addition, local authority Z's evidence of how they implemented these criteria is very limited. Local authority Z did include equality and diversity competencies within their performance management review scheme; however, this has been recently introduced and sufficient time has not passed for this criteria to be assessed adequately as to its effective implementation. This thesis has provided new evidence of this aspect of the Equality Framework and provides a starting point for future research in this area.

Examining analytical question three: What performance management review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective?

Local authority X

Local authority X has been using a performance management review scheme for all employees since 2011. Prior to 2011, the local authority performance management review scheme had different appraisal forms for managers and other employees, as well as different appraisal forms for different departments. In 2011, local authority X

introduced a single appraisal form for all employees, along with a newly introduced competency framework. This was designed to simplify the performance management review scheme that existed previously and incorporate equality and diversity competencies. The local authority also introduced a new computer system to complete the appraisal process online. However, this was only available to approximately half the workforce, whilst those employees without access to a computer continued to complete the appraisal forms manually (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority X's performance management review scheme process starts with the manager and their employee meeting at the start of the working year to go through the appraisal form, when they set the employee objectives and development needs. The objectives are developed with regard to the corporate business and the local authority's priorities. Thereafter, the manager and employee have one-to-one meetings during the year, where they discuss progress against the objectives/development needs and competencies. At the mid-year review, and prior to meeting with their manager, the employee updates the appraisal form with progress they have made against their work objectives. At this meeting, the manager and employee discuss progress against the objectives, development needs and competencies (corporate values). Following the meeting, the manager completes the appraisal form and sends this to the employee, in order that they can see the feedback from their manager and act accordingly in the remaining part of the work year. At the annual performance management review meeting, the employee repeats this process and this time rates their performance. The manager also rates the employee performance. Finally, if both manager and employee agree with the comments in the appraisal form, they sign off the form and send to Human Resources (Appraisal form, Local authority X, 2013).

The employees interviewed during the research for this thesis all felt that the performance management review scheme used by Local authority X was better than the one the local authority used previously and was a significant step towards helping the local authority mainstream equality and diversity in all the work that it undertook. The appraisal form can be completed online, although the Information Technology (IT) system supporting this process sometimes breaks down and this is frustrating for employees, who cannot access their data, in order to update their appraisal forms.

There was a feeling that the system could be further improved, with one employee stating:

“It was difficult to find some information about the appraisal form on the IT system. For example, when completing the values section, it would be better if a drop down box appeared next to it outlining what the values were, rather than employees having to look for it in the IT system.”

The online performance management review system allows for the entering of data, but does not provide feedback on the quality of the response, which means that employees do not know how well they had answered the questions in the appraisal form. Managers were generally aware of the performance management review scheme and how to go through the appraisal forms with their employees. Approximately half of all employees have completed the appraisal form online, although data for employees that completed the appraisal form manually is not being compiled, other than how many employees have completed an appraisal form. Alternative ways are needed to collate responses from employees completing appraisal forms manually or find ways to enable these employees to complete the appraisal forms online. Front line employees interviewed do not receive a copy of their appraisal forms after they have undertaken their appraisal meeting with their manager. This was in contrast to those employees that completed their appraisal forms on-line and have access to them at all times. This suggests that a two-tier performance management review scheme is in operation, with manual front line employees completing their appraisal forms on paper and not receiving feedback after appraisal meetings and other employees who complete their appraisals online having access to their forms and feedback at all times (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Whilst the ideal situation is to have all employees completing their appraisal forms online, this poses financial and logistical problems to implement, due to the high numbers of employees working for the local authority and the lack of access to computers for a large section of front line employees. However, if the employee is to fully utilise the performance management review scheme then either all employees need to complete appraisal forms online or front line employees who complete appraisal forms on paper need to receive feedback after their performance management review meetings. There was also some criticism from employees interviewed regarding the performance management review process. Some respondents felt that the way the appraisal form was developed did not fully involve all employees, with the employee equality groups stating that they were not fully involved in the consultation process, although the head of equality and diversity mentions that they were involved and that employees were also involved in

the development of the local authority's corporate Values, with over 300 employees involved in the focus groups to develop the local authority's Values. As a result of this involvement, 98 per cent of employees completed their performance management reviews in 2012/13, although some people did not complete the section relating to 'Values' (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013). The appraisal form design used by local authority X follows suggestions made by Aguinis (2009) and the use of performance review schemes as described above is also one that Redman and Wilkinson (2002) outlines as increasing in popularity over the last thirty years.

Front line employees interviewed also mention that they did not receive regular one to one meetings or team meetings and often they are not fully aware of major developments within the local authority, through lack of information being communicated to them (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013). According to Chapman (2013), having regular meetings throughout the year enables the manager to discuss training and development needs of the employee and provide support to meeting competency expectations as they arise. If regular meetings are not undertaken, then training needs, underperformance would not be identified early and would subsequently arise during appraisal interviews, which has the potential ineffective outcomes arising from the performance management review mid and/or annual meetings, whereby the employee may become 'defensive' and not open about their thoughts. This then would result in the performance management review process being a negative experience for the employee and manager and not the 'open' and supportive process it should be. Furthermore, Marchington and Wilkinson (2006:196) argue that a development framework for performance management review would only be successful if it is introduced into an open culture of trust and it cannot be expected to provide a universal panacea for motivating the workforce.

Local authority Y

Local authority Y's appraisal form was concise and contains examples of how employees should complete the form. The appraisal form follows the suggestions made by Aguinis (2009) and has been developed as a result of the local authority keeping abreast of good practice development nationally (Competency Framework, Local authority Y, 2012). Whilst there is an online system to enter details of performance management review meetings, training attended and performance recorded, in practice, the completion of this data varies between managers and across the local authority directorates. Managers who oversee front line employees who work remotely or did not have easy access to computers often aggregate performance management review meeting data and

sometimes this is not entered onto the local authority computer system and records are held manually by the managers with only a summary recorded at times on the computer system (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014).

Employees that incorporate equality and diversity in their work have the opportunity to be recognised for this through local authority Y's equality award scheme. Employees are nominated by their colleagues for demonstrating good practice in equality and diversity performance. Whilst this went a little way to provide an incentive for employees to incorporate equality and diversity within their work, the process is voluntary and there is no commitment for employees to incorporate equality and diversity requirements in their work, which is another flaw in trying to get all employees to mainstream equality and diversity within their work. Local authority Y uses a computer system to manage performance, where managers enter details of performance management review meetings, appraisal forms and performance. Furthermore, Local authority Y is embarking on a training programme for all managers to enable them to carry out performance management reviews more effectively and it will take some time before the real benefits of this is felt across the local authority and in particular how equality and diversity is included within every employee performance management reviews (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014).

Local authority Z

Local authority Z's performance management review scheme was revised in 2013 and the process comprises of employees meeting with their manager at the start of the year to complete their appraisal form, which follows the guidelines suggested by Aguinis (2009). At this meeting, both the employee and their manager discuss the work objectives that the employee would undertake during the year and by when. As well as identifying work objectives, the employee identifies their development needs and what action they will undertake to achieve this and by when. Part way through the working year, there is a mid-year review. Prior to this review, the employee completes the section on the appraisal form 'How well were you doing' in relation to their work objectives, progress against development needs, progress against the values and performance against the job standards'. At the mid-year review, both the employee and manager discuss how the employee is performing and what further training or development needs to be undertaken to achieve the personal objectives and competencies of the employee. If at any point during the work year, the manager feels that the employee is not performing their job satisfactorily, they can instigate the capability procedures. At the end of the working year,

the employee repeats the process by completing the appraisal form in relation to how they performed against their objectives, development plan, competencies and job standards. Subsequently, the appraisal form is submitted to their manager prior to their one to one performance management review meetings, with the employee scoring their performance against how they performed against the competencies and overall performance, which incorporates their objectives, development plan and job standards (Competency Framework, Local authority Z, 2014).

According to Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), the performance management review scheme should enable the employee to discuss their training requirements with their manager. In practice, within local authority Z's performance management review scheme, some manager's did not follow up their performance management review meetings with a plan to address any training needs with their employees. This was clearly an area where local authority Z's performance management review scheme encounters problems, with no process for supporting employees to improve on areas identified as needing improvement. Local authority Z has a scoring system which defines an objective is met or not met and at the end of year performance management review meeting, the employee and manager discuss the performance of the employee. After which, the manager writes their views on how the employee performed and then scores the employee and returns the appraisal form to the employee. The employees has a final opportunity to comment on their manager's views and scoring and both employee and manager sign and date the form and send to the Human Resources department (Competency Framework, Local authority Z, 2014).

Local authority Z enables employees to complete their appraisal forms online, if they have access to a computer, which a significant number of employees do not. This results in a 'two-tier' system of appraisal form completions with some employees completing comprehensive details against their objectives online, whilst other mostly front line employees complete their appraisal forms twice yearly or in some cases only annually and this is done manually. The chief executive of the local authority is keen to get the performance management review scheme embedded more into the performance management framework of the local authority, as not everyone completes a performance management review. However, those employees interviewed feel that whilst there is senior management support to make the newly introduced performance management review scheme work, it is early days in its implementation to fully assess the success of the scheme and whether equality and diversity is being fully embedded in every employees work (Onsite interviews, Local authority Z, 2014).

Examining analytical question four: Had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems encountered by the local authorities when doing this?

Local authority X

Local authority X's competency framework has five competence areas: working as a team for local authority X; being open; honest and trusted; treating people fairly; working with communities; and spending money wisely. Within each of these competence areas were a list of competencies, which relate to 'everyone' and 'managers and leaders'. The competences were designed to link to the local authority's outcomes, with all the competence areas having the potential to contribute to equality and diversity, other than possibly 'spending money wisely'. Local authority X's competency framework incorporated equality and diversity competencies in each of its five competence areas. For example, within the competence area of 'working as a team for local authority X', there was the competency statement for managers and leaders of 'continuously develop teams and people to achieve their full potential, deliver priorities and results' specifically, the competency framework has two competence areas where there is a direct correlation with equality and diversity. The competence areas of 'treating people fairly' and 'working with communities' by definition need the employee to demonstrate a good level of equality and diversity behaviours and actions to achieve the competency. Within each of these two competence areas, there are a number of equality and diversity competencies, namely: 'recognise and value differences'; and 'ensure equality and diversity was built into everyone we do'. The incorporation of equality and diversity within the local authority X's work is achieved with having an assessment for equality/diversity within the strategic plan, where it states that 100 per cent of decisions demonstrate consideration of equality and diversity, and by having an Equality Impact Assessment process and equality outcomes (Competency Framework, Local authority X, 2013).

The competency framework has been developed using the local authority's current framework and then having employee consultations to ascertain what the new framework should contain. Following consultations with representatives of employees at all levels, unions and employee equality groups, and a briefing to over 2000 managers, the local authority produced their new competency framework in 2013. The involvement of employees and unions ensured that there is ownership of the competency framework from employees and a commitment to implement it. This inclusion of equality and diversity competencies enables the managers to discuss performance on equality and

diversity amongst employees. The online appraisal form offers the opportunity to collate information on completed appraisal forms and to identify where strengths, potential gaps or areas for improvement exist for employees (Competency Framework, Local authority X, 2013).

During the mid and annual reviews, there is a discussion between the manager and employee on how well the employee is meeting the local authority's competencies. This is generally an open ended discussion with the employee free to speak about as few or as many of the competencies as they wish to discuss. This means that the performance of the employee around equality and diversity could not be discussed, if both the employee and manager choose not to discuss it. This poses the problem of equality and diversity being not discussed by large proportions of employees, whose actions and commitment towards equality and diversity would not be fully known. There was also a problem in the different way some front line employees completed their appraisal forms. For front line employees who did not complete the appraisal form online, undertaking performance management reviews meant having a meeting with their manager and being asked questions about competencies and the manager completing the responses on their behalf on the appraisal form. Some front line employees mention that they did not see the completed form after their performance management review interview, so it was not clear to them what had been written about their performance on competencies. However, employees completing the appraisal forms online, local authority X was able to evaluate which competence areas employees were performing well in and which they were not, as well as identifying training and development needs. Local authority X is working towards mainstreaming equality and diversity in all the work that it undertook and embedding equality and diversity behaviours in appraisals is one way that the local authority is looking to achieve this (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

During 2012/13, the local authority managed a response rate of 98 per cent for employees completing an appraisal form, which is just short of the local authority's target of 100 per cent. However, the way performance management review meetings are undertaken varies for employees, with some managers observing the process for conducting appraisals by the local authority and other managers adopting a process different to what was outlined. For example, during the onsite interviews, it was found that some front line employees did not complete the appraisal form prior to their performance management review meeting and their manager read out the requirements of the competence areas and completed the form on behalf of their employees. There was also variation in how employees answer how they met each of the competence areas, with

some employees describing how they meet each competency within each competence area, whilst other employees answer how they meet some of the competence areas and some competencies within that. A suggestion made by employees was to have every employee comment on how they performed against each of the five competence areas (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Other ways that employees outlined that equality and diversity can be mainstreamed within the local authority and helping employees to deliver on the competences is through employee equality/diversity groups, which enable employees to come together and discuss issues affecting them and provide guidance/advice to the local authority on how to improve policies and procedures that affect employees within these groups. The employee equality/diversity groups did feel that previously they had been involved significantly when the local authority was working towards the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework and received significant support from the equality/diversity officers, although through restructuring this support had been reduced and this had affected the expertise and support available to the groups. Another way that local authority X sees itself trying to incorporate improved competency amongst its employees is through the provision of equality/diversity training, which is provided by an external company, having previously been delivered by the local authority. However, there is a need to refresh this training and a requirement for more front line employees to undertake refresher equality/diversity courses. There is also no equality/ diversity training at the introduction of the new performance management review process. Front line employees state that they have not attended any equality and diversity training/refresher courses in the previous two years. This raises the issue of how front line employees, without access to computers at work or attending training courses keep up to date with changes in the workplace. Local authority X also has other ways in which it tries to mainstream equality and diversity, such as: an equality scorecard, achievement against the equality framework; Stonewall index; and other proxy measures, such as tracking complaints and grievances. Overall, the local authority's equality and diversity team feel that the local authority has made considerable progress towards incorporating equality/diversity within the local authority's performance management review scheme (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

When comparing competencies listed in local authority X's competency framework against the Whiddett and Hollyforde (2003) criteria, it was apparent that a review of the competencies should be undertaken by local authority X annually, to ensure they are still relevant and meet the criteria of what a good equality and diversity competency should

comprise. Discussions on how employees were meeting local authority X's 'Values' varied. Some managers asked employees to demonstrate progress on each competence area, whilst others had a general discussion about 'Values'. For Goss (1995:164), it is usually accepted that to get an equal opportunities culture established within an organisation, it is not sufficient to rely on policy exhortations or the threat of disciplinary action in cases of unacceptable behaviour. These steps need to be complemented by awareness training to change (rather than merely suppress) 'hostile' attitudes towards under-represented groups wherever possible. Therefore, local authority X's performance management review meetings do not sufficiently identify equality and diversity training needs of employees, as some managers did not ask employees about their performance against each competence area. Clements and Jones (2008) argue that behavioural change can only be achieved if there is a long term provision of equality and diversity training, which is reinforced by consistent challenging of inappropriate behaviour amongst employees. In terms of the use of the specific equality/diversity related competencies, local authority X needs to review these, as some of these were relating to actions and tasks rather than competencies. Although, the local authority is to be commended for attempting to incorporate equality/diversity competencies within its performance management review scheme, albeit with the limitations highlighted on its implementation in practice.

Local authority Y

Local authority Y previously included a corporate equality objective for all employees in its performance management review scheme, which meant all employees were required to discuss how they performed on equality and diversity at their mid and full year review meetings with their managers. However, the local authority revised their performance management review scheme in 2012 and now there is no requirement for all employees to include an equality objective in their appraisal form. In its place, local authority Y requires all employees to complete an e-equality course and provided employees have undertaken this, employees are deemed to have met the requirements of their local authority in terms of equality and diversity. This appears to be a step backwards for the local authority and appears to create a situation where employees increase their general awareness of equality and diversity through completing the e-equality course, but then do not put the learning into practice by having a requirement to demonstrate a commitment to equality and diversity within their appraisal form and with their manager not required to discuss their performance on equality and diversity, there was no way of monitoring how employees contribute to the equality and diversity in their work. On joining local authority

Y, employees receive information on equality and diversity within their induction packs and subsequently, managers discuss how the employee is performing on equality and diversity. However, not all employees interviewed mentioned that their managers had discussed equality and diversity issues as part of the performance management review process (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014).

Local authority Y's competency framework has been revised in 2012 to link more closely with the local authority's vision statements (customer first, best practice and value for money). Each competence area is broken down into four levels and at each level there is an illustration of what the competency might look like in practice. Red flags give examples of behaviours that are not valuable to the local authority. Examples of positive behaviours are also provided. Each job is deemed to be at one of four levels, with level one being front line/lower graded posts whilst level four is senior management grades. At any level above level one, the employee is expected to meet competencies at the levels below their job classification, as well as competencies at their level. Employees can decide in their meetings with their managers, which competencies are appropriate for them and how they can be improved through inclusion of actions within their personal development plan. Support to achieve competencies are through attending formal training, coaching or being involved in specific projects. At the mid-year and full year performance management review meetings, managers provide a rating for the employee, taking into account performance against achieving objectives and competencies, which includes a rating of either: unsatisfactory; meets expectations; exceeds expectations or outstanding.

Local authority Y does not specifically mention an equality and diversity competency within its performance management review scheme for employees at level one, however, some employee's state that within the discussion on core values, managers and employees can discuss progress on equality and diversity by the employee. However, some employees feel that often there is no discussion on equality and diversity by manager and the employee. Within the leadership core value, there is a reference for employees at level one to ensure 'respect for others values and backgrounds', whilst at level three, managers are expected to 'champion equality and inclusiveness in service delivery'. These then offer an opportunity to managers and employees to discuss equality and diversity at their performance management review meetings, however, the requirement is not explicit as part of the performance management review process (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014).

In terms of whether the equality and diversity competencies mentioned within local authority Y's appraisal form meet the criteria set by Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), the competence 'ensuring respect for others' values and backgrounds has two behaviour statements relating to 'respecting values' and 'respecting backgrounds', although these did contain an action, rather than a competency. This also reflects the difficulty that local authority Y has faced with not really knowing how to develop competencies that meet the good practice criteria provided by Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), which in turn results in managers and employees not effectively observing whether a competency has been met, as it is not specifically demonstrating a competency. Whilst there may be a gap in formally requiring employees to discuss equality and diversity competencies, local authority Y employees state that there is corporate commitment to embedding equality and diversity across all areas of the local authority's work and there is a considerable amount of work being undertaken corporately on equality and diversity through the corporate equality and diversity groups and employees who lead on equality and diversity work and support internal employees as well as groups outside of the local authority on areas related to improving the equality and diversity performance of the local authority. Local authority Y backs up this corporate commitment with the allocation of resources to implement greater inclusive practices across the local authority's services and employment practices (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014).

Local authority Z

Local authority Z's competency framework has six values (respect, collaboration, efficiency, openness, creativity and customer focus). There is also a set of core responsibilities that managers and employees need to demonstrate. This includes a responsibility around equality and diversity, whereby the manager is required to respect the diversity of their employees and the employees to show respect for the diversity of their managers. Local authority Z's competency framework applies to all employees, who are expected to demonstrate a commitment to the local authority's values which include 'respect for all employees and customers'. There is no specific equality and diversity competency that employees are assessed against (Competency Framework, Local authority Z, 2014).

Local authority Z has recently introduced an online system that employees use to complete their performance management reviews. However, this online systems is facing 'teething problems' in its use and application. This is currently being addressed with some employees suggesting it is difficult to find some information on the system. Not all

employees in local authority Y have access to a computer, and therefore approximately half the employees complete the performance management reviews online, whilst the other half complete this process via a paper based system. However, the onsite research again found that data on the employees that complete the appraisal forms manually was not being collated, other than how many employees have completed a performance management review. Some employees indicate that they are not having regular one to one's or team meetings (i.e. weekly, two weekly or monthly). This again shows that what Chapman (2013) has described as good practice when implementing performance management reviews is not being undertaken. Local authority Z made reference to equality and diversity indirectly within its core values, but did not specify an equality and diversity competency which employees have to incorporate within their appraisal form, therefore it was not possible to critically examine how the equality and diversity competency was implemented. Despite the inconclusive emphasis in terms of incorporating equality and diversity competencies within their performance management review scheme, local authority Z considers itself to being a leader in terms of its approach to addressing barriers to some of the nine protected characteristics. The local authority feels this has been achieved through making a strong commitment corporately to be a leader in this area and subsequently allocating resources and time to engage with employees and for employees to better understand the barriers and to then take steps to address and remove these. Local authority Z's performance management review scheme has a requirement for managers and employees to discuss performance on equality and diversity, although in practice, it is thought by some employees that this is at the discretion of the manager and employee whether they discuss equality and diversity to any great extent (Onsite interviews, Local authority Z, 2014).

Conclusion

This chapter outlines what a good performance management review and competency framework comprises of, according to authors such as Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006) and Chapman (2013) and explained in chapter 4. This forms the basis of the analysis for this chapter. The chapter also explores whether the use of equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes can lead to an improvement in equality and diversity mainstreaming. In 2014, the LGA revised the Equality Framework for local government and by having discussions with the author of this thesis, a more explicit reference to the inclusion of equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes is made a requirement

of achieving the Equality Framework. This now means that local authorities wanting to achieve the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework in the future will need to demonstrate more clearly how they have developed and incorporated equality and diversity competencies within their performance management review schemes (see table nine). This chapter presents the results of the data collated during the online questionnaire, documentary evidence presented by the local authorities and onsite interviews and focus groups, to answer analytical questions three and four:

- Analytical question three: What performance review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective?
- Analytical question four: Had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems encountered by the local authorities when doing this?

Examining analytical question three

Local authority X

Local authority X has been using a single performance management review scheme (PMRS) since 2011 for all employees, and this scheme was designed to simplify the scheme that existed previously for managers and other employees. The local authority also introduced an online process for employees with access to a computer to complete the appraisal forms, although employees without access to a computer were required to complete the appraisal forms manually. The PMRS appraisal form and guidance follows the good practice outlined by authors such as Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006) and Chapman (2013), and employees felt that the scheme was better than the one they used previously and would help the local authority mainstream equality and diversity further. However, in practice, with the use of an online appraisal form, a 'two-tier' system operated, whereby front line employees often did not receive feedback following their annual appraisal meeting, and they could not monitor their progress throughout the year. There was also some criticism from employees that they were not fully engaged in the development of the scheme, although it was mentioned that over 300 employees were involved in focus groups to develop the scheme's Values, and 98 per cent of employees completed an annual appraisal. Front line employees also mentioned that they were not

always having one to one meetings with their managers (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y

Local authority Y's appraisal form was concise and contains examples of how employees should complete the form. The appraisal form also follows the suggestions made by Aguinis (2009) with regard to what constitutes a good appraisal form (Competency Framework, Local authority Y, 2012). A 'two-tier' system operates for employees completing the appraisal forms, with some employees completing the forms online, whilst mostly front line employees complete the forms manually, which leads to recording of appraisal data being missed. A way to incentivise employees to incorporate equality and diversity within their day to day work is through the opportunity to apply for local authority's equality award scheme. Employees can be nominated by their colleagues for demonstrating good practice in equality and diversity, and whilst this goes some way in trying to embed good equality and diversity practice amongst employees, the PMRS does not require employees to demonstrate this, so it is voluntary in practice. Furthermore, local authority Y is embarking on training managers to carry out effective performance management reviews, and this has recently started, the full effect of its impact will not be felt for some time (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014).

Local authority Z

Local authority Z's performance management process and form follows the good practice guidelines outlined by Aguinis (2009) and was recently introduced in 2013. However, in practice some managers did not follow the guidance outlined in the local authority's performance management review scheme, and managers did not follow on actions relating to training needs identified for employees during the appraisal meeting. This failed to meet one of the criteria of good practice identified by Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006). Local authority Z also enables employees to complete their appraisal forms online, if they have access to a computer, which a significant number of employees do not. This results in a 'two-tier' system of appraisal form completions with some employees completing comprehensive details against their objectives online, whilst other mostly front line employees complete their appraisal forms twice yearly or in some cases only annually and this is done manually.

Examining analytical question four

Local authority X

Local authority X' competency framework was introduced in 2013 and has five competency areas: working as a team for local authority X; being open; honest and trusted; treating people fairly; working with communities; and spending money wisely. Each competency area is designed to link to the local authority's outcomes, and having the potential to contribute to equality and diversity, although there are specific references with some of the competency areas to equality and diversity (Competency Framework, Local authority X, 2013). During performance management review meetings, managers and employees discuss the performance of the employee against the competencies, although with the discussions generally open ended, it is up to the manager and employee to determine which of the competency areas are discussed. This raises the problem of competency areas not being discussed and therefore no discussion on equality and diversity could occur. Another problem occurred during appraisal meetings between managers and front line employees, where manual completion of appraisal forms had been undertaken. This resulted in managers completing the appraisal forms for some front line employees and the front line employees not seeing what was written by the manager. However, for those completing the appraisal forms online, there was the opportunity to assess the completed forms and collate any training needs identified by employees (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority is working towards mainstreaming equality and diversity in all the work that it undertakes and embedding equality and diversity competencies within performance management reviews is one way the local authority can achieve this. The local authority also undertakes other actions that assist employees to meet the requirements of the competency framework, including the employee equality/diversity groups and equality and diversity training. However, some front line employees stated they had not undertaken equality and diversity training in the previous two years. Despite this, the local authority equality and diversity team feel that they have made considerable progress towards incorporating equality and diversity competencies within the local authority performance management review scheme (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013). However, Clements and Jones (2008) argue that behavioural change can only be achieved if there is a long term provision of equality and diversity training, reinforced by consistent challenging of inappropriate behaviour amongst employees. Local authority X's performance management review scheme outlined good processes with regard to

incorporating equality and diversity competencies, however, in practice manager and employee application did not meet the expectations of the scheme.

Local authority Y

Local authority Y's competency framework has been revised in 2012 to link more closely with the local authority's vision statement (customer first, best practice and value for money). Employees can decide in their appraisal meetings with their manager, which competencies are appropriate for them and how they can be improved through inclusion of actions within their personal development plan. Local authority Y does not specifically mention an equality and diversity competency within its performance management review scheme for employees (Competency Framework, Local authority Y, 2012), however, some employees state that within the discussion on the competency area 'core values', managers and employees can discuss progress on equality and diversity. Although, in practice no such discussion takes place (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014).

Another problem that local authority Y's competency framework faces is the competency descriptions often are not in line with good practice, as outlined by Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), especially when some of the competency statements contained two behaviours, when the suggestion is to only have one, which has led to some of the problems of the implementation of the competency framework. Although, employees state that whilst there may be a gap in requiring employees to discuss equality and diversity competencies, there is a corporate commitment to embedding equality and diversity across all areas of the local authority's work and this is backed up with the allocation of resources to equality and diversity work (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014). Nevertheless, by not having a specific equality and diversity competency within local authority Y's competency framework and requiring managers and employees to discuss this during performance management review meetings means that the local has not fully incorporated equality and diversity competencies within its performance management review schemes.

Local authority Z

Local authority Z's competency framework has six values: respect; collaboration; efficiency; openness; creativity; and customer focus. There is also a set of core responsibilities that managers and employees need to demonstrate, which includes a responsibility around equality and diversity. However, there is no specific equality and

diversity competency that employees are assessed against (Competency Framework, local authority Z, 2014). The local authority has introduced an online system that allows for some employees to complete their appraisal forms electronically, whilst approximately half the employees still complete their appraisal forms manually. Those employees completing the appraisal forms manually often do not have their data collated centrally, and any training needs are therefore not collectively identified. This is coupled with the fact that some employees felt they were not having one to one meetings with their managers (Onsite interviews, local authority Z, 2014), so this was not meeting the good practice highlighted by authors such as Chapman (2013).

Whilst local authority makes reference to equality and diversity indirectly within its core values, it does not specifically mention an equality and diversity competency within its competency framework, therefore there is inconclusive evidence of whether this has caused any problems incorporating equality and diversity competencies within its performance management review scheme (Onsite interviews, local authority Z, 2014). The next chapter will examine how the three local authorities have addressed the final two analytical questions:

- Analytical question five: What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?
- Analytical question six: What ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?

9.0 CASE STUDY: EXAMINING ANALYTICAL QUESTIONS FIVE & SIX

Introduction

This chapter will analyse how the three local authorities performed against the final two analytical questions for this thesis:

- Analytical question five: What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?
- Analytical question six: What ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?

Analytical question five considers the five performance areas of the Equality Framework, namely: i) knowing your community and equality mapping; ii) place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment; iii) community engagement; iv) responsive services and customer care; and v) modern diverse workforce. The earlier discussion at chapter 5 describes how in 1995, the first of the equality frameworks developed to assist local authorities mainstream equality and diversity was launched. Specifically, the CRE's 'Racial equality means quality' Standard provided local authorities with a framework that listed the actions that local authorities should take in order to improve their equality and diversity policies and practices. As was highlighted, the CRE (1995) 'Race Equality Standard' focused solely on race equality. However, it arguably laid the foundation for the Employers Organisation for local government to develop a Standard which, in partnership with the CRE, Equal Opportunities and Disability Rights Commission covered not only race, but gender and disability. The Equality Standard for local government was launched in 2001 with the intention of assisting local authorities to 'mainstream' equality and diversity across the three equality strands. Local authorities X, Y and Z all embarked on the journey to progress through the six levels of the Equality Standard in 2001 and in 2011, when the Standard was renamed the Equality Framework for local government. At this point, the six levels of achievement were retitled 'Excellent', 'Intermediate' and 'Foundation' level. By 2014, local authorities X, Y, and Z had each attained the 'Excellent' level, placing them amongst only fourteen local authorities out of 351 in England to achieve this level. This chapter shows how each of the three authorities attained the 'Excellent' rating, with evaluative discussion against the five performance areas.

This chapter also critically examines the way in which the local authorities perceived the Equality Framework for local government was supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity. Chapter 2 outlined the developments around equality and diversity mainstreaming that had developed in the 1990s, and which subsequently led to the work on gender mainstreaming (Council of Europe, 1998). As noted above, the CRE embraced the notion of 'gender mainstreaming' and applied it to 'race'. A development that occurred against the backdrop of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry and political developments with local government influenced by New Public Management (NPM) and Governance (see again Chapter 4), developments that Hood (1991) observes as including: a focus on management; and performance appraisal and efficiency. Bovaird and Loeffler (2009:8-9) further observe that New Public Governance (NPG) pays a lot of attention to how organisations interact with one another, to achieve a higher desired level of result. The 1997 change in government, saw further policy development, including the replacement of CCT with 'Best Value', including a requirement for local authorities to develop 'Best Value Performance Indicators' (BVPIs), and a requirement for local authorities to report the level they had achieved in the Equality Standard was now a BVPI. An additional policy development included the establishment of the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), which would provide consultancy support to local authorities to improve its performance, and in 2006 would take over the management of the Equality Standard for local government (Martin, 2002: 137).

Examining analytical question five: What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?

LGA Equality Framework performance area one: Knowing your community and equality mapping

This performance area was designed to consider how well the local authority knows their population breakdown, in terms of protected characteristics. Well-developed knowledge in this area then enables the authority to assess how well it is performing in respect to service delivery and understand the diversity of its workforce in respect to the population it serves. Ideally, facilitating equal opportunity of career development.

Local authority X

Local authority X saw equality monitoring as an important aspect of understanding their communities and equality mapping. The local authority extended equality monitoring to include all equality protected characteristics at a time when some are not mentioned by legislation. Different services within the local authority are then prompted to ask themselves not 'which equality characteristics should they be monitoring?' but 'what aspect of their service/ function/ policy do they need to monitor in relation to equality and diversity and how they would use the information they collect?' There are a number of initiatives across authority X for collecting information. For example: electronic social care records within adult social care; and the use of neighbourhood index within environment and neighbourhood directorates. This information, along with census information is used to help inform the local authority's strategic priorities and service improvements. It has also been recognised that the quality, analysis and sharing of appropriate information including equality related intelligence needs to be improved across the local authority. The local authority's information knowledge management team work on the 'City report', which includes an equality perspective. Services have improved equality monitoring, undertaking consultation and engagement activities, analysing compliments and complaints, carrying out their own or using others research to help improve their service/policy provision. An important element of this has been the value being placed on understanding needs based on direct contact with customers and the experience and knowledge of employees. A challenge for services has been how this is captured in an evidence-based framework

The local authority's performance management framework covers all aspects of their work from managing strategies, to service plans and projects. This has helped provide a consistent approach to all their activities and the things that need to be considered when scoping and planning this. The timing for the development and implementation of the equality and diversity scheme 2011-15 was in line with other key strategies, such as, the vision for local authority X and the local authority's Business Plan. This enables the local authority to better align their activities and priorities and to continue to improve and monitor progress of their equality and diversity outcomes.

Previously, services have provided separate updates on how they are contributing to delivering the priorities set out in the local authority's plans and policy framework and other significant plans. These have contributed to an annual report which outlines and celebrates the local authority's equality achievements. Furthermore, there are several key

partnership arrangements in place that enable the local authority and their partners to identify how communities are changing and the impact this has on equality priorities. For example, local authority X's Domestic Violence Forum. Such partnerships are useful in debating current and future priorities, changes in community needs, agreeing future action and monitoring progress ((Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y

Within local authority Y, The City Inclusion Partnership (CIP) is the vehicle for sharing equalities data via working groups, signposting to data access, sharing information, discussing and understanding where partners lack data. The CIP has produced a new service monitoring process for partners. This would begin to show where there is good practice and would also help to develop good equality mapping of communities. The Equality Steering Group (ESG) has been looking at historical data within the local authority and is evaluating it to obtain baseline equality mapping. This is being done with an understanding of the work of the CIP and the intention would be to modify the local authority's own monitoring systems when the new criteria are introduced. Detailed information about different communities is effectively shared with partners. A good example is the study of adults with autism, commissioned by the local authority and shared with police and fire service who use this information to develop their own services for this group of people. The CIP feel that all partners need to share data on a city basis, enabling the local authority to bring together, act upon and have a better understanding of the community it serves. There is a perceived lack of communication about the work of the CIP, which can be overcome by more marketing/publicity (Equality Framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

Local authority Z

For local authority Z, the gathering and utilisation of a range of information, data and evidence from a broad mixture of quantitative and qualitative sources is undertaken and informs the local authority's priorities and actions. The local authority has also developed their knowledge of communities in partnership with local stakeholders. Local authority Z councillors have structured processes for raising and addressing issues in their community. The local authority has also established key corporate priorities and equality objectives based on their understanding of the community and can demonstrate and challenge their progress through their monitoring processes (Equality Framework

narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014). A key pledge within their 'Council Plan 2011-15' was to prioritise the views of local people:

"We are a listening local authority and continue to consult with our communities and engage with our customers as a matter of course. We take particular care to involve people from all walks of life including... people with disabilities and residents from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds."

(Council Plan 2011-15, Local authority Z, 2011)

The collection of information is achieved through a broad range of methods. The locality teams within the local authority's new localities directorate manage, plan and co-ordinate the strategic direction of matters concerning their local communities. The teams have responsibility for ensuring that all services are delivered in a way that suit the requirements of each community, without compromising economies of scale. The locality teams hold the local intelligence for the organisation and, whilst managing direct service delivery, also use their community links to contribute to and influence commissioning plans and how services are delivered across the borough. The local authority also uses a range of qualitative methods to gain information from their residents, including extensive community engagement and the use of surveys, questionnaires to ensure that residents can approach and engage with the local authority.

The use of information and data analysis has acted as a good foundation for many other actions, as shown by the work completed by the local authority Revenues and Benefits Team. Interrogating information that the local authority stored regarding benefit claimants in the local authority, the team is able to create an accurate picture of all residents who would be affected by any changes in benefit entitlement. This enables the local authority to proactively interact with these residents, visiting their homes to signpost them to services that would help with this change (such as benefits and debt advisors). Local authority Z also highlight that the next step would be to consistently review its equality and diversity priorities to ensure that they continue to make a real difference to the residents who rely on them and continue to interact with and understand their communities by way of community conversations, consultations and the work instigated by their programme (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

LGA Equality Framework performance area two: Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

This performance area examines how well the local authority has commitment from its senior politicians and officers, which result in the local authority devoting more time and resources to undertake equality and diversity work.

Local authority X

Local authority X state it has a strong commitment to improving equality outcomes from the leader of the local authority and the chief executive. This ensures that the local authority incorporates work on equality and diversity into the local authority's corporate priorities. Councillors also take a lead role in championing equality issues, for example, the PRIDE event, older people's forum, disability initiatives such as 'Changing Places' (improving the availability of accessible changing facilities), and the local domestic violence forum. There was also a proposal to have a councillor equality champion network in the future. The champions would be responsible for leading and advancing equality/diversity issues within the local authority. The chief executive also provides personal support to the internal validation process for the Equality Framework.

The corporate leadership team is chaired by the chief executive and attended by each of the directors and the two assistant chief executives. This team has taken on the role of equality champions for the organisation, demonstrating commitment to equality and diversity at a strategic level. This has enabled them to become more empowered and accountable for the day-to-day service provision within their service area. Alongside this, local authority X's Equality and Diversity Board is made up of senior officers from all directorates and ensures a forum for promoting equality initiatives and challenging progress in embedding equality in all services. The Local Strategic Partnerships (a local authority X Initiative) and Area Committees have influenced priorities across the city whilst more localised partnerships have influenced, helped improve service provision, and challenge performance. In addition, there is a variety of locality-based partnerships which focus on specific issues, for example, jobs and skills work in partnership with local employers and the voluntary sector to ensure that job opportunities for local communities are maximised (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority X, 2013).

Across the local authority, all directorates have structures in place which enable them to scrutinise and challenge their own and their partnerships' performance with regard to equality impacts and objectives. There are specific equality boards within each directorate and leadership meetings at all levels of the local authority. Using the equality framework has not only helped the local authority to benchmark against comparable others but has helped the local authority to build their confidence in providing and using internal challenge. The local authority has also developed a corporate approach which puts equality at the heart of contracts where appropriate. When reviewing and developing services which would be delivered by a third party, they recognise it is important to ensure that they act in accordance with and support their legal duties to promote equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination. The local authority takes every opportunity to help strengthen the representation of people contributing to the local authority's decision-making processes (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y

Within local authority Y, there are strong place shaping leadership on equalities from the chief executive, leader of the local authority, and senior councillors. The leader of the local authority attempts to be very accessible to community groups in the voluntary sector and the chief executive has stated that equalities is the responsibility of all employees and councillors and that equalities would only be embedded if the local authority works effectively with partners and individuals. The portfolio holder for equalities and inclusion meets informally with a cross party group of councillors to share information on equalities work and the overview and scrutiny committee plays an active role in equalities issues. The committee has investigated and called for reports on sexual violence in the community, domestic violence and employee disability issues.

The City Inclusion Partnership (CIP) is seen by the local authority as an effective vehicle for statutory partners in the city to work together on equalities related issues and the partnership has produced the city's first Equality and Human Rights Charter. The CIP has enabled better sharing of good practice amongst the statutory partners, for example, around Equality Impact Assessments. The mental health trust has been a gateway for other CIP partners to learn more about the transgender community and information and feedback has been shared with the police and fire and rescue service. Other achievements of the CIP include a new common monitoring process for service users and a project to identify the city's most marginalised groups as well as developing the city's first LGBT people's housing strategy, which was developed with partners and the

responsibility for signing off the strategy moved from councillors to the Local Strategic Partnership.

Local authority Y has also piloted a multi-agency approach to tackling difficult issues of domestic violence, drugs and alcohol and drug related deaths to maximise outcomes. The perception from the Stronger Communities Partnership (SCP) is that equality issues that arise on the ground are dealt with, however they see a disconnection at the strategic level between the local authority and equalities organisations following the disbanding of the equality forum which include community representatives. The local authority has recognised that there needs to be a more effective forum for equality groups in the voluntary and community sector to provide better links with each other and more effective pathways for engaging with the statutory partners. The local authority is planning to organise an equality assembly to consider options for a more effective forum for voluntary and community sector equalities groups. The community and voluntary sector representatives express concerns that the new senior management team does not yet fully know the city and its communities and that they have not been visible amongst community groups ('Equality Framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

Local authority Z

For local authority Z, there is a clear and strong organisational commitment to equality issues, and this is reflected in their partnership working, and the active role that they play in shaping work in the local area. This is further illustrated through appropriate mechanisms that exist across the local authority, which take appropriate actions through equality analysis to mitigate the impact of decisions on particular community groups. Furthermore, the local authority undertakes monitoring of services and takes action to rectify deficiencies when appropriate. This is supported by strong political oversight on activities which ensures progress is made on equality issues and improving outcomes as a result of partnership work and through their continuous commitment to make provisions for communities to feel safe, included and fairly treated. Having robust structures in place to ensure leadership is committed on equality issues ensures the right level of strategic leadership and service action. In addition, local authority Z's planning framework ensures that a golden thread of equality ran through the local authority

Local authority Z's whole place community budget enables the local authority to transform the way in which they interact with and serve their communities. It attempts to promote innovative delivery models and has led to collaboration between partners and a focus on

outcomes for their residents. This approach has led to decision making reflecting the needs of local communities. Together, they are seen to be tackling the root causes of longstanding problems, supporting early intervention and deploying their collective resources in the most effective way and is structured into a number of themes, each of which impact heavily on the equality and diversity needs of their population. Other initiatives that support communities include: 'work ready individuals', which is a new way of joining up the existing employment and skills delivery landscape in local authority Z for the benefit of those currently out of work, based on providing a seamless, personalised and comprehensive support service in one place; the 'Ageing Well' work stream presents a new approach to enable older adults to maintain their independence through radical changes to service delivery which involved supporting stronger communities, self-care and integrated care teams.

Local authority Z's political oversight of issues of equality is well evidenced. The leader of local authority Z held the executive portfolio for equality, ensuring that there is high level of political support for this agenda. Moreover, they also have a councillor as champion for equality and they provided political representation on the equality steering group, and also promote equality issues to residents through a broad number of events.

Furthermore, the local authority also has effective political scrutiny processes through the corporate scrutiny committee, which monitor progress of equality and diversity work. These scrutiny committees have openly challenged EA's through challenge sessions and recommended improvements. The local authority has also worked hard to improve community relations. This has been shown through the work of the 'Everybody In' campaign, which aims to raise awareness of the diversity of their communities, promote good community relations and make their commitment to equality clear to their residents and employees.

The local authority has also taken action to engage under-represented groups in public life. These actions are seen to increase the chances of all residents to interact with the authority as a political body and also includes specific targeted work with certain groups such as young people and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities to encourage more engagement with the local authority and the decision making process. Commissioning and procurement processes have been designed to take equality and diversity into account, ensuring that goods and services are sought and bought in line with the needs of our communities. The commitment and the processes that local authority Z has put in place appear to have resulted in better outcomes for residents. The positive contribution of equality analysis is shown through the assessment that took place

on budget options, which resulted in a positive impact for vulnerable people (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

LGA Equality Framework performance area three: Community engagement and satisfaction

This performance area examines how well the three local authorities engaged with its populations and to what extent this engagement is satisfactory for the people concerned.

Local authority X

Local authority X encourages all services to engage with communities of interest on all key activities through the use of the corporate community engagement toolkit and the 'Talking Point' consultation database helps to provide a consistent approach to engagement and a way of services accessing consultation activities already or planned to be undertaken. The local authority assesses employee engagement with communities by requiring employees to answer the question on the value 'working with communities' in the competency framework, which forms part of the performance management review scheme. The local authority also have a citizens panel of approximately 1800 people who are broadly representative of the population of local authority X. Alongside this, there are a number of forums established to ensure a perspective from different protected characteristics, which enables the local authority to obtain views of these groups to then help influence services and provision. Directorates and services across the whole local authority also have a range of activities for engaging with interested groups, some formal and regular forums and others more ad-hoc as and when the need arose (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y

Local authority Y has an active civic society and there appears to be a good relationship and trust between the voluntary and community sector networks across the city. The city has a very strong and professional voluntary sector, and this is key to its voice and participation with the local authority. There are over five hundred members of the Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF). The communities and equality team work very closely with a range of local community forums to consult and engage with different diversity groups, for example, local action teams and neighbourhood forums. The community engagement framework provides a city-wide approach which supports a

consistent approach to community groups. This has helped local authority Y gain a good understanding of its local communities and deliver accessible services as well as publicising events and activities. The CIP group identified a need for common language when engaging with the Gypsy and Traveller community. The work of the group led to greater understanding of Gypsy and Traveller issues amongst partners and better training for employees and production of a leaflet explaining the background to Gypsies and Travellers and the statutory responsibilities of public agencies. CIP is linked to the Stronger Communities Partnership (SCP) which includes statutory and voluntary and community sector representatives and its aim is to oversee community engagement on all areas between the statutory and voluntary and community sector. CIP members include: local authority Y; the four local NHS Trusts; the three emergency services; the local universities; a further education representative and job centre plus.

There are no large Black and Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in local authority Y. However, there are examples of what has been achieved within these communities. In 2010, the local authority funded a research project into the night time economy and violence affecting BAME residents. The most vulnerable are found to be those working in BAME takeaways. Issues include poor management, language barriers and hate crime. The local authority surveyed one hundred and fifty takeaways and working with the police, crime reduction partnership and the racial harassment forum bid for European funding on crime prevention. BAME and faith groups felt that they have a voice and could influence the local authority and the CIP on a wide range of different issues through the Community Safety Partnership. Despite the many good examples of the local authority working with all minority communities there is a danger that it is perceived to respond primarily to the largest and loudest group. Some smaller marginalised groups did not feel they have as much of a voice as larger groups.

The NHS Trust and the local authority have fundamentally different approaches to engaging on equalities issues which gave rise to difficulties for community groups. This is an issue that the CIP could address. Local authority Y's 2020 community partnership (now the local authority Y strategic partnership) has developed a Community Engagement Framework (CEF) for the city. The CEF set out the strategic vision and guiding principles for inclusive and accessible community engagement within the local authority and the priority actions in the city. The local authority feel that the development of this framework recognised that effective community engagement drove up the quality and equality of services. The Equality Framework emphasises the importance of clearly identifying diverse groups in any engagement activity and diversity within groups. It also

highlighted the fact that effective and appropriate engagement is responsive and flexible, adapting to its varied and varying stakeholders. Some examples of activities emerging from the Equality Framework includes the 'Involved Campaign', where the community engagement framework subgroup is allocated a budget to support 'widening engagement' in 'Involved' activities (Equality Framework self-assessment report, local authority Y, 2011).

Local authority Z

Local authority Z has a detailed and structured engagement process, led by the Strategic Intelligence Team, to ensure that they can measure and monitor community satisfaction, with emphasis placed on working in partnership to support seldom heard communities. The local authority also engages regularly with both communities of interest and geography. A strong focus is on ensuring the customer is put first and that any barriers to participation are challenged. Their vulnerable residents have seen a more proactive approach to encourage this involvement and participation. Service users with learning disabilities have been engaged in a sensitive way to give their views on the services they receive. A key tenet is of community engagement and satisfaction is balancing conflicting interests amongst the community. This involves ensuring that communities are kept well informed throughout the decision-making process. Vulnerable groups have also been engaged through a variety of techniques, for example, the Learning Disability Partnership Board, comprises of a variety of health partners and learning disability groups, which provide guidance, information and an advocacy service for those with learning disabilities and their families. Alongside this, local authority Z's Corporate Disability Access Forum (CDAF) was established in 2013 in response to requests from local disability access groups and Disabled People's User Led Organisations (DPULOs) to have greater involvement in the design of major new developments across the borough. As a result, more inclusive environments have been created, usable by everyone.

A local stakeholder network meets quarterly and brings together councillors, senior managers, service users and third sector organisations to discuss health and social care issues. The network has taken more control over the running and content of the meetings. Residents in local authority Z have their say about how the local councillor's budgets are spent. Local community groups pitch their ideas about how they would spend the money to improve their communities at two events.

The local authority's stakeholders state the consultation and engagement work that they have undertaken at the local authority has been well received within the area, as shown by the testimony below from a participant in the consultation:

"...We are very pleased that the local authority has been so pro-active in involving us in different events and consultation opportunities. This helps us further our efforts for equality for transgender people."

(Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014)

LGA Equality Framework performance area four: Responsive services and customer care

This performance area examined how well the three local authorities provided a service which met the needs of its populations and how they ensured that the way the service is delivered met the service expectations of the population.

Local authority X

Since developing the equality and diversity scheme and using the Equality Framework, local authority X has seen year on year improvement of equality outcomes at a strategic and service level through assessing progress against various measures, for example, the percentage of employees completing appraisals has increased. Services use the impact assessment process to give due regard to equality and diversity and integrate actions into their service plans or develop a separate equality action plan. In both instance these are monitored using the performance management framework. The local authority recognises that they have not always been successful in understanding the differences they made to their communities. The process of gathering information for the equality annual reports and collection of storyboards informed this, and the local authority's internal validation process, have both highlighted actual differences to people and demonstrate equality outcomes and responsive services for customers.

Despite the economic climate, the local authority continues to ensure communications are maintained with the wider community. The local authority's website has been independently rated by the Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM) as 'Excellent (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority X, 2013). However, the local authority recognises there are some access issues and work has already begun to improve the accessibility of the website. Intelligent commissioning is also helping local authority X to ensure that equality is embedded into service delivery. The voluntary and

community sector plays a key role and deprivation would be addressed on a community basis rather than on a ward basis (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y

Local authority Y has a policy to minimise the impact of budget cuts on the voluntary sector. The grants funding programme of £1.5m to the voluntary sector would be protected in forthcoming budget cuts and the 3-year discretionary grants programme to larger groups is also being protected. Partners are demonstrating good joint work with marginalised and hard to reach communities, for example, joint visits are made to gypsy and traveller sites by police, fire and the local authority thus avoiding the need for different agencies to visit on similar issues. Another example of effective partnership working is the 'Turning the Tide' project which has been piloted in one deprived area. The project which involves the local authority, residents and the police is around anti-social behaviour and targeted problem families, who use services the most. Information about examples of good practice on service delivery is available across the local authority.

The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) toolkit provides a consistent approach and service managers see EIAs as the driver for improving service delivery and making service changes. EIAs have also influenced equality objectives within service plans. However, Local authority Y did not seem to be effectively collecting and evaluating information from service users. Data is collated but not effectively monitored and evaluated. Data is not analysed and interpreted and fed into EIAs and other service planning processes. Members of the corporate equalities steering group are not coordinating the monitoring and analysis of data for their service area. The corporate procurement process is used strategically to support broader employment goals. The standardised questions in the prequalifying questionnaire and procurement process could also have been off-putting for small and medium sized businesses and community led organisations (Equality framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

Local authority Z

Local authority Z feels that the cumulative effect of knowing their community, working in partnership and conducting thorough and meaningful consultation and community engagement allows the local authority to shape responsive, appropriate services, giving them the knowledge and structure to provide high quality customer care. This is done through taking action to improve services for all their customers, focusing on the needs of

vulnerable residents and marginalised groups, and taking appropriate action to meet them and improving accessibility to allow all residents of the local authority to engage with services and public life. One of local authority Z's key values is to put the 'customer first'. This applies to all customers and it recognises that tailored approaches are needed to support all communities. Local authority Z's Director of Public Health, noted:

"The traditional approach is to use our 'expert' role to decide what the priorities are for communities, draw up some proposals, put them out to consultation, get the comments back and produce a final report. But I am not sure that is really the best way to hear the voice of citizens."

Services have been, and continued to be, commissioned and recommissioned to meet the needs of a diverse range of groups with particular needs, for example, housing related support which is designed to increase the equality of access to provision including discreet accommodation to meet the needs of communities. The local authority has also commissioned a number of services to engage people with a variety of disabilities, offering personal assistants, overnight and residential stays. This includes: activate arts; sessions for arts; crafts; music; dance and drama for 5-14 year olds with any disability. Focus groups are held with disabled people, volunteers and carers at the local authority's four shop-mobility schemes to better understand people's experiences of that service. As a result of that consultation, local authority Z is able to inform the future service specification according to their preferences prior to tendering the new contract (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

LGA Equality Framework performance area five: Modern diverse workforce

This performance area examines how well the three local authorities have managed to diversify their workforce and use people development methods, such as performance management review schemes to improve the performance of their employees.

Local authority X

Local authority X has a range of innovative projects and programmes of work to encourage and support wider representation in the workforce, particularly for black and minority ethnic people, women, young people and disabled people. For example, PATH (Positive Action in Training and Housing), school work experience, schools mentoring, and work shadowing all enabled people from under-represented groups to receive an opportunity to experience working for the local authority. Employment policies and

practices are in place that cover a wide range of employment issues. There is a review programme in place for existing and potential employment policies. Services also identify actions in their service plans relating to employment programmes. Employment equality data is captured to help understand the profile of the workforce. The workforce profile information is much more robust for disability, race and sex which is comparable to the information the local authority collected for customer profiles. Although sexual orientation and religion or belief is captured, this information is less robust, and work has begun to improve the quality of equality monitoring information collected across all protected characteristics and how the information is analysed. Directorates use this information to help them consider appropriate actions to deliver improved representation, for example, action is being taken to address under-representation of disabled employees (Equality framework narrative report, Local authority X, 2011).

Local authority Y

Within local authority Y, all three local authority staff forums: Disabled Workers' Forum (DWF); Black Minority Ethnic Workers' Forum (BMEWF); and 'Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Workers' Forum (LGBTWF), are supported by the communities and equality team and continue to grow and flourish. They provide a vital role to the organisation in involvement and feedback on local authority policies, strategies and procedures through the EIA process. In particular, the LGBT Workers Forum is recognised in the Stonewall annual Workplace Equality Index⁷ in recognition of the work it did towards workplace equality. In the Stonewall Index, they are recognised as among the highest local authority in the top 100 employers. The Disabled Workers Forum provide a key role in feedback to a scrutiny panel review on staff disabilities. The BME Workers Forum work with community partners to run a family and friend's fun day enabling networking and increased awareness of the local authority as a good employer for BAME people in the city and beyond. The group has also developed a buddying scheme for isolated BAME employees to seek support from others.

Employees consider that local authority Y, as an employer, invests in them. They report that they have received effective training to meet the needs of diverse communities. However, monitoring of the workforce profile is not being comprehensively compared to an up to date community profile to identify targets and areas for action. Workforce data is

⁷ The Workplace Equality Index is the Stonewall benchmarking tool for employers to measure their progress on lesbian, gay, bi and trans inclusion in the workplace (Stonewall, 2017).

not currently being broken down by equality protected characteristics by grade or by directorate, for recruitment processes or established employees. The introduction of a new HR system has resulted in a lack of up to date workforce equalities data by strands, directorate and seniority. There has also been slow progress on increasing employees from ethnic minorities throughout the organisation and at senior levels. It is felt that the use of the employee survey data could be developed to provide a much greater insight into equalities and the working culture.

Further issues include the HR Business Plan, which does not consistently reflect the actions and outcomes contained in the Single Equality Scheme. Targets for BAME workforce profiling are based on 2001 census data about the community profile which is likely to significantly underestimate the number of residents from a BAME background. Targets for the number of disabled employees' may also have underestimated the number of disabled people of working age in the community. There is a perception among employee forums that Human Resources is not particularly responsive to the concerns of the employee forums in adopting good practice. Also, the BAME and disability workers forum members did not feel they are heard as much as LGBT employees. On a positive note, the LGBT forum is happy to provide support to the other forums (Diversity Peer Challenge report: local authority Y, LGA, 2011).

Local authority Z

Local authority Z feels that it is important that the local authority's commitment to equality and diversity is reflected by a modern and diverse workforce. Key actions to ensure that they work towards this goal includes: having a People Strategy that is focused on equality and it is actively delivering positive outcomes for the local authority; using data and employee engagement to facilitate further improvements; using equality analyses to mitigate possible negative consequences of employment policies and by providing training for officers and councillors to maintain a workforce well educated in equality issues. The local authority's People Strategy is currently being refreshed, having previously been approved by the staffing committee and publicised to the whole local authority. The original strategy is underpinned by the three key values of the local authority: customer first; value for money and best practice; and would continue to be so. Key equality considerations would be built into the action plan such as equal pay, equality monitoring, training and development.

Local authority Z ensure that it monitors its workforce in a number of ways: through internal monitoring; providing important information on their employee demographics; and providing a robust evidence source for their workforce. The local authority also undertakes analysis of the labour market, allowing them to contrast their workforce with that of the wider local area, therefore helping to inform future recruitment strategies. All strategies regarding their workforce are consulted on to ensure that they are appropriate to their employees. A range of human resource policies have been informed through equality analysis, including Dignity at Work, Grievance and Discipline. Fair access to training and development opportunities is paramount to the local authority. This is also confirmed by their Investors in People (IIP) review. Furthermore, local authority Z recognises that equality and diversity training and development targeted at all segments of local authority employees and elected councillors is a vital tool, enabling them to reinforce a positive equality and diversity culture. The local authority has recognised that the good work that they have already undertaken to create and support a modern and diverse workforce could be built upon to encourage further progress in the future (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014).

Employees' within local authority Z feel that alongside the inclusion of equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes, there are other factors which contributed to the local authority achieving the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework for local government. This includes: having a corporate equality and diversity group which provides direction and oversees initiatives on equality and diversity; alongside a requirement for employees'/Directorates to undertake equality impact assessments (EIAs), which makes more employees' consider the implications of equality and diversity that their policies and practices are having (Onsite interviews, Local authority Z, 2014).

Examining analytical question six: What ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?

Local authority X

Local authority X has had an established approach to embedding equality and diversity over many years. Work has previously focused on the 'traditional' equality strands of disability, race and gender. This has also included ensuring legal compliance, in line with

requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Frameworks have helped in the local authority's journey to develop a consistent approach to addressing inequality across the local authority and benchmark their progress against other local authorities. The Equality Frameworks have also enabled the local authority to undertake self-assessments of their progress on equality and diversity and has highlighted a number of areas that need to be developed or improved further. This has resulted in action plans being put in place, which are monitored in terms of progress being made (Equality Framework narrative report, LA X, 2011). The actions were further developed within the Council Plan for the local authority, within which the local authority outlined how the actions would contribute to the equality improvement priorities, and remove and reduce barriers that may prevent some people from fully participating in the social, cultural, political and economic life of the local authority. The equality improvement priorities also ensured that the local authority meets its legal duties and provide a more integrated approach to equality in the local authority's strategic planning process (Council Plan 2013-17, Local authority X).

Respondents amongst those interviewed stated that the Equality Frameworks enabled the local authority have some direction in terms of what the local authority was required to undertake to be a leader in equality and diversity. It was felt by some respondents that the local authority had a good history of developing equality and diversity work, and even without the Equality Frameworks, the local authority would have continued to progress equality and diversity work, but the Equality Frameworks did highlight areas which the local authority may not have considered. In this regard, the Equality Frameworks did provide a more holistic approach to equality and diversity actions that the local authority should undertake. One respondent mentioned that whilst working against the Equality Framework is voluntary now, the local authority will subscribe to have another external assessment, as it is felt that having external verification of how well the local authority is performing and what areas it needs to continue improving in is a useful process of continuation improvement that the local authority is striving to achieve (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y

An influence of the Equality Framework for local government can be seen in Local authority Y's Equality and Inclusion Policy 2012-15, which outlines its commitment to developing actions and measures to promote, facilitate and deliver equality both within the local authority and the through its service delivery. The policy also meets the local authority's requirement under the Equality Act 2010. Local authority Y's Corporate Plan

also highlights that tackling inequality is one of its three priorities and the aim is for the local authority to be proactive and effective in achieving this. There is also an additional focus on community engagement and sustainability that acknowledges the importance of involving people to create stronger and cohesive communities ((Equality and Inclusion Policy 2012-15, Local authority Y, 2011).

The local authority were assessed at the 'Achieving level' in 2009, and the assessment provided the local authority with further actions to improve their equality and diversity performance. As a result, the local authority developed and deepened their partnership working across the statutory sector, community, faith and voluntary sector, and supported and funded the implementation of the community engagement framework, which has the explicit focus on diversity within and between communities. There has also been considerable interest from senior managers and councillors following the previous equality framework assessment, which has enabled the local authority to accelerate their progress in achieving the actions identified. The local authority has developed an improvement plan which has detailed a considerable number of actions to ensure that the local authority achieved the 'Excellent' level at their next assessment. This included: Increasing the range of activities with religious groups and undertaken several internal projects to raise awareness of diverse religions; the community engagement framework supporting the consistency of approach in relation to community groups; internally, improving communications advertising the single equality scheme and achievements against it; a refreshed equality e-training course being introduced for all employees to complete; and councillors establishing a disability scrutiny committee (Equality Framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011) .

During the onsite interviews, the influence of the equality framework on the equality and diversity work that the local authority undertook was captured in the following statement:

"We have built on the feedback from the equality framework peer assessment in 2009 and taken steps to address the areas where we were seen to be not meeting the excellent level." (Onsite interviews, Local authority Y, 2014))

Local authority Z

For local authority Z, the Equality Framework for local government provides an opportunity to have a 'genuine and honest' evaluation of their performance, highlighting how they have mainstreamed equality and diversity into their organisation. In 2011, the

local authority was assessed at the 'Achieving' level of the Equality Framework. This not only highlighted the progress that the local authority had made, but also gave an independent steer and direction for further improvement journey (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014). Feedback from the local authority included:

"The Diversity peer challenge process enabled us to assess and celebrate our achievements in relation to the equality and diversity agenda..."

"The judgement of the peer assessors provides us with valuable external and independent assessment of the areas for improvement...The challenges we face have been heightened by budgetary and economic pressures. However, we are confident that our continued efforts to integrate equality and diversity throughout our services will provide us with the best possible path to excellence." (Diversity Peer Challenge report: Local authority Z, LGA, 2011).

The local authority acted on the feedback and implemented greater equality and diversity initiatives and subsequently by 2014 felt they had progressed sufficiently to apply to be assessed against the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework, which they achieved. Another way the local authority feels that the Equality Framework has helped them is that the process has been invaluable in recognising and benchmarking their local authority against the 'Excellent' level and with other local authorities. The Framework has highlighted both the excellent practice that has been embedded across the organisation and the tangible impact that their work continues to have on the lives of their residents. The process of self-evaluation has also allowed the local authority to identify areas of opportunity to improve their outcomes and that this is a continuous journey (Equality Framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014). During the onsite interviews, an interviewee felt that the Equality Framework provided the local authority with 'a focus on what they should be doing in a subject area that can be very broad, continually changing and at times difficult to understand for many people' (Onsite interviews, Local authority Z, 2014).

Conclusion

The Equality Standard for local government was launched in 2001, and comprised six levels that local authorities could report against from level 0 through to level 5. The Standard was subsequently revised in 2011, and renamed the 'Equality Framework for

local government'. The six levels of achievement were also revised to now comprise only three levels: Foundation; Intermediate; and Excellent. By 2014, local authorities X, Y, and Z had achieved the highest level of the Equality Framework, that of 'Excellent' level. Thus out of over 350 local authorities in England, only fourteen had achieved the 'Excellent' level by 2014. The revised Equality Framework for local government has five performance areas: Knowing your community and equality mapping; Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment; Community engagement and satisfaction; Responsive services and customer care; and Modern diverse workforce. Following the change in government after the 1997 General Election, CCT was replaced by 'Best Value', which required local authorities to develop 'Best Value Performance Indicators'(BVPIs), and one of these BVPI's was the requirement for local authorities (after 2001) to report what level of the Equality Standard they had achieved. This chapter presents the results of the data collated from the: online questionnaires; documentary evidence presented by the local authorities and LGA; and interviews and focus groups and examined to answer analytical questions five and six:

- Analytical question five: What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?
- Analytical question six: What ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?

Examining analytical question five

Local authority X

Local authority X has demonstrated they met the five performance areas of the equality framework through various strategic documents, such as the 'City Report' and its submission for assessment against the 'Excellent' level of the equality framework. The local authority sees monitoring of equality data as an important part of understanding the needs of their communities and whether they are responded to these effectively. Local authority X's leader and chief executive are seen to demonstrate commitment to equality and diversity through their support for initiatives, such as the development of a councillor equality champion and a senior management team chaired by the Chief Executive which provides direction on equality and diversity for the local authority. The local authority also

supports partners to come together and share and develop good practice around equality and diversity.

Local authority X encourages all services to engage with communities of interest on all key activities through the use of their corporate community engagement toolkit and the consultation database, which helps provide a consistent approach to engagement and a way of services accessing consultation activities already or planned to be undertaken. The local authority also has a citizen's panel of approximately 1800 people and other forums through which the local authority seeks views on service provision and future needs. Since developing their equality and diversity scheme and using the equality framework, local authority X has seen year on year improvement of their equality outcomes at a strategic and service level. In terms of creating a modern diverse workforce, local authority X has a range of innovative projects and programmes to encourage and support wider representation, such as: the positive action in training and housing scheme; school work experience; work shadowing; and schools mentoring. Employment data is also captured to help understand the profile of the workforce, although the data collected on certain protected characteristics is not as robust as for other protected characteristic areas.

Local authority Y

Local authority Y has established a city inclusion partnership (CIP) which has become the vehicle through which data collection and sharing of good practice occurs. There is also a strong place shaping focus on equalities from the chief executive, leader and senior councillors, who see partnership working as a key role of the local authority in promoting greater equality and diversity practice in the city. Local authority Y has piloted a multi-agency approach to tackling various issues across the city, including tackling domestic abuse, drugs and alcohol abuse. Although, some community groups have expressed concerns that the some new senior managers within the local authority have not fully understood the needs of the various community groups in the city.

Local authority Y has an active civic society and there appears to be a good relationship and trust between the community networks across the city. The local authority has developed a good understanding of community needs through liaising with these networks. However, the local NHS Trust and the local authority have fundamentally different approaches to engaging on equalities and this has given rise to difficulties for community groups. Local authority Y ensures it has responsive services through the use

of its equality impact assessment toolkit, which provides a consistent approach to service provision, although, some community respondents have stated that further work is required to ensure service provision is fully meeting the needs of communities. Local authority Y has established employee forums for disability, BAME and LGBT which provide feedback on ways to improve the work experience of employees and also how to further diversify the workforce.

Local authority Z

Local authority Z undertakes a number of ways to gather information about its communities, which involve both qualitative and quantitative methods, including through outreach methods through its service teams. This information is translated into relevant policies and strategic documents that the local authority produced, such as the 'Better Council Plan'. The local authority also has a clear and strong organisational commitment to equality issues, which is reflected in their partnership working and the active role the local authority plays in shaping work in the local area. The whole place budget also enables the local authority to transform the way they interact with and serve their communities. Furthermore, local authority Z's political oversight of issues of equality is well evidenced, with the leader holding the portfolio for equality, which ensures that there is a high level of political support for this agenda.

Local authority Z has a detailed and structured engagement process, led by the Strategic Intelligence Team of the local authority. A key aspect that the local authority strives to keep on top of is balancing conflicting interests amongst the different communities. This involves ensuring that communities are kept well informed throughout the decision making process. There is also a mechanism for local residents to have a say in how their local councillors budgets are spent. Local authority Z feels that the cumulative effect of knowing their community, working in partnership and conducting thorough and meaningful consultation and community engagement allows the local authority to shape responsive, appropriate services, giving them the knowledge and structure to provide high quality customer care. Local authority Z is undertaking a number of initiatives to develop a diverse workforce, including: having a People Strategy focused on equality; using data and employee engagement to facilitate further improvements; and using equality analysis to mitigate possible negative consequences of employment policies. There is also a process in place to monitor workforce diversity.

Examining analytical question six

Local authority X

Local authority X has had an established approach to embedding equality and diversity over many years. This has focused mainly on ensuring legal compliance, with various equality acts, including the Equality Act 2010. The equality frameworks have helped in the local authority's journey to develop a consistent approach to address inequality across the local authority and benchmark their progress against other local authorities. The equality frameworks have also helped the local authority to undertake self-assessments of their progress on equality and diversity, and this has highlighted a number of areas where the local authority needs to progress further with equality and diversity initiatives and these have been included in various strategic plans of the local authority.

Respondents within the onsite interviews stated that the equality frameworks provided a steer for the local authority to be a leader in equality and diversity and highlighted areas for improvement that the local authority may not have considered, and also having an external verification provided the local authority with assurance that it was on the right track (Onsite interviews, Local authority X, 2013).

Local authority Y

The influence that the equality frameworks have had on Local authority Y can be seen in the strategic documents of the local authority, such as the 'Equality and Inclusion Policy 2012-15' and 'Corporate Plan', where greater importance is given to equality and diversity, in particular its commitment to community engagement and sustainability (Equality and Inclusion Policy 2012-2015, Local authority Y, 2011). The local authority has also indicated that the equality framework external assessments have provided the local authority with independent feedback on where they are performing well and where they need to improve further with regard to equality and diversity. One such area has been the local authority undertaking more work in consulting its partners in the statutory, faith and community sectors. The equality framework external assessments have also enabled officers and councillors within the local authority to renew their focus on equality and diversity, and which has included the development of an 'improvement plan' which details a number of actions that the local authority will undertake to continue on its journey to achieve and maintain 'Excellent' level in the equality framework. (Equality framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011).

Local authority Z

For local authority Z, the equality frameworks have provided an opportunity to have a 'genuine and honest' evaluation of their performance, highlighting how they have mainstreamed equality and diversity within their organisation. Subsequently, the local authority has acted on the feedback they have received following the external assessment and implemented greater equality and diversity initiatives to enable them to progress to the 'Excellent' level of the equality framework for local government. Another way that the local authority feels that the equality framework has helped the local authority mainstream equality and diversity is through the ability to benchmark their performance against other local authorities and to both highlight the good practice they are undertaking and areas where they can further improve (Equality framework narrative report, Local authority Z, 2014). Respondents to the onsite interviews undertaken felt that the equality framework provided the local authority with 'a focus on what they should be doing in a subject area that can be very broad, continually changing and at times difficult to understand for many people' (Onsite interviews, Local authority Z, 2014). The next chapter will provide a cross case study analysis of the six analytical questions and how these contribute to answering the research question.

10.0 CROSS CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Introduction

This thesis set out to offer an original contribution to knowledge by answering the following research question:

“Did the equality frameworks for local government support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming programme during 2001-2014?”

The Equality Standard for local government was launched in 2001 and was the first equality framework that offered a step by step process to support local authorities to improve their performance on equality and diversity mainstreaming with regard to gender, disability and race (Employers Organisation, 2001). By 2014, the three local authorities involved in the case studies analysed here for this thesis had achieved the highest level of the Equality Framework (previously Equality Standard) for local government. In theory, this demonstrates that the three local authorities have mainstreamed equality and diversity. A challenge with this assertion is that there is no independent analysis as to whether this is the case. This thesis offers the first real analysis of whether the equality frameworks, introduced in 2001, were achieving what they were intended to do, that of providing a performance tool to enable local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity. Local authorities have been at the forefront of work to improve equality and diversity for their communities and as employers for over fifty years. The 1990s saw the emergence of the concept of ‘gender mainstreaming’. However, Yeandle et al (2008) note that the term ‘mainstreaming equality and diversity’ is conceptually confusing and is sometimes referred to as a strategy or approach, and sometimes referred to as a method. Rees (1998:3-4) offers a way forward by stating that mainstreaming equality is ‘the incorporation of equal opportunities issues into all actions, programmes and policies from the outset, which in turn would lead to the improvement in services and employment practices. Another issue that potentially posed a challenge in answering the research question is how equality and diversity mainstreaming is assessed or measured. Various attempts have been made over the years to come up with potential measures or assessments, including the Audit Commission’s (2010) set of performance indicators. This is further explored in chapter 2 of this thesis. This continues to demonstrate that even in 2019, there still isn’t a definitive way to assess or measure equality and diversity

mainstreaming, and therefore it appears to remain as elusive as it was in the 1990's.

The development of the equality frameworks were not in a vacuum, local government by its nature is influenced by political and social developments, and McLaughlin et al., (2002:7-9) describe four stages in the development of public management, beginning in the late nineteenth century with minimal provision of services by local government, and the subsequent two stages leading up to 1979, where local government continue to increase services it provides, including the 'welfare state', post 1945, leading to the fourth stage post 1979, when government policies lead to local government going from a 'direct' provider of services to a more 'enabling' role. Hood (1991) was among the early authors to label this transition as 'New Public Management' (NPM). Rhodes (1991:548) describes NPM as 'a focus on management not policy, and on performance appraisal and efficiency...' The influence of this can be seen in the equality frameworks, which placed considerable emphasis on the performance management of equality and diversity.

Amongst this backdrop, the Equality Standard was launched in 2001, and was included as a Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI), and from 2003 onwards, there was a requirement for all local authorities to report what level of the Equality Standard they had reached. Also, a requirement of the Equality Standard was for local authorities to have an 'external assessment' to verify that they had achieved level 3 or level 5 of the Equality Standard. This kept in with the ethos of performance management and continuous improvement (Employers Organisation, 2003). Whilst the work by the IDeA on developing equality and diversity competencies and their potential linkage to the Equality Standard did not progress as mentioned in chapter 4. There were no responses on how equality and diversity was assessed within performance review schemes. However, a lack of information did not mean there was no benefit in assessing equality and diversity as part of the performance management review scheme. For Whiddett and Hollyforde (2005:75), competencies could make significant contributions to each purpose of a performance management review scheme, such as: establishing levels of performance; identifying needs for performance improvement; identifying development potential and discussing career interests/direction.

Cross case study analysis

In order answer the research question, the following six analytical questions were developed, which would provide more in-depth analysis of the various aspects of the

research question and these were examined in chapters seven, eight and nine. The five main stages of data analysis outlined by Creswell and Plano Clarke (2007) in chapter 6 has been used to undertake a cross case study analysis against each analytical question and the results are presented below:

- Cross case study analysis of analytical question one: What journey had the local authority taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, incorporating the challenges of different demographics, structures and policies?

All three local authorities have witnessed demographic changes as evidenced through the 2001 and 2011 census data, which has required the local authorities to address issues of inequality, deprivation and cohesion. The local authorities have seen rises in the number of older people, and people arriving from other countries. Also, in local authority Y, a gradual increase over the years of people from certain protected characteristics. A result of these demographic changes, which has been highlighted by respondents in all three local authorities, is the demands made by people from these communities to receive better services from the local authority. For example, local authority Z has received comments about a lack of appropriate services to disabled people and the local authority has responded by establishing a consultation forum involving local authority employees and disabled people. The result of which has been the local authority receiving feedback on their provision and how they could improve services and the local authority and disabled people commenting on an improvement on services for disabled people. This is a requirement of the Equality Framework and demonstrates that requiring a local authority to better understand its community demographic composition and then having to consult and engage with them has supported the local authority to improve its equality and diversity provision.

Each of the three local authorities X, Y and Z have developed equality and diversity policies and procedures over a long period of time to address the challenges that they face with changing demographics and the legal requirements of various equality legislation, including most recently the Equality Act 2010. This has ensured that all three local authorities have sought to improve their work on equality and diversity mainstreaming by developing objectives and actions to further equality and diversity mainstreaming to cover both employment within the local authority and services they provide. Within this context, the equality frameworks have helped the local authorities to focus their work on improving their equality and diversity mainstreaming as well as enabling them to benchmark their performance against other local authorities.

The analysis of data from interviews and literature review within local authorities X, Y and Z shows that the local authorities have not explicitly outlined what they understand by the term 'equality and diversity mainstreaming', although through interviews with employees, it was mentioned that it was about 'including equality and diversity considerations into everything they do.' Therefore, whilst local authorities X, Y and Z do not set out what 'equality and diversity mainstreaming' is in specific terms, the local authorities do outline their aim of improving the quality of life for their residents and ensuring that all sections of the population have an equal chance to benefit from the local authority's services and to fulfil their potential. This reflects the theoretical underpinnings mentioned in chapters 2-4.

- Cross case study analysis of analytical question two: How did the local authority assess their equality and diversity mainstreaming, and support employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance?

All three local authorities state that performance on equality and diversity mainstreaming was assessed in a number of ways. Firstly, through monitoring the diversity of the workforce and ensuring that the workforce reflects the population the local authority serves. Secondly, whether they are an inclusive employer for the employees that work for them, in terms of having inclusive working conditions and providing an environment where ability was recognised and rewarded. In terms of assessing equality and diversity mainstreaming, local authority X has included in their strategic plan indicators to assess this, which includes a reference to appraisals and the inclusion of equality in work being undertaken by employees. This meets some of the ways highlighted within this thesis as potential options for assessing equality and diversity mainstreaming that relate to employment. However, there was no reference to ways in which equality and diversity mainstreaming is assessed for service delivery. Local authority Y's equality performance framework outlines that equality targets are included in the performance and development planning scheme with development and training identifying equality needs. These mainly refer to employment and the local authority trying to be a diverse employer. Equality and diversity mainstreaming relating to service delivery focuses mainly on trying to engage with the broad diversity of groups within the local authority through a variety of engagement mechanisms. Local authority Y's 'People Strategy 2012-17' sets out a number of actions around promoting equality and inclusion within the workplace. The local authority provides its employees with a range of training around equalities and the local authority has also achieved national recognition over previous years for its work on

equalities for LGBT employees. The local authority also provides good support for its employee forums.

Local authority X uses the results of their annual employee survey to identify areas for equality improvement and subsequently requires employees to discuss issues with their managers, which lead to the local authority taking steps to address issues raised during the employee survey and discussion with managers. However, employees in local authority X feel that the local authority needs to improve the way it provides feedback to employees following the employee surveys. Whilst local authority X provides access to equality and diversity training, the front line employees involved in the case study for this research state they have not attended any equality and diversity training for a number of years. These same employees also indicate that they did not have access to online information, which leads to the issue of how they are kept up to date with changes in equality and diversity legislation or concerns. One suggestion made by employees to overcome this is to put equality and diversity information on the noticeboards in the employee canteen.

Local authority Z has few specific targets or measures to demonstrate it is mainstreaming equality and diversity, although, it developed its People Strategy in 2010 with equality and diversity at the heart of the strategy, with an aspiration to have a diverse workforce. A number of actions have been introduced by the local authority to assist employees to incorporate equality and diversity in their day to day work. Local authority Z also monitors the take up of training by ethnicity, age and disability. It does not monitor by other protected characteristics, but intends to include more protected characteristics in future monitoring. The monitoring shows that take up of training was proportionate to the make of the protected characteristic in the workforce apart from older workers, where take up was lower. With regard to service delivery, local authority Z has fewer ways to assess its equality and diversity mainstreaming, and relies mainly on initiatives to encourage different protected characteristics to engage with the local authority through consultative methods and attendance at activities it organises.

The research findings show that whilst the three local authorities involved in the case studies made good progress on equality and diversity mainstreaming, as evidenced by their achievement of the 'Excellent' level of the LGA's Equality Framework, the contribution made towards this achievement by all their employees varied. The external assessment of the local authority against the various levels of the Equality Framework did not require all employees to be interviewed as part of the assessment process. It was

therefore possible for large numbers of employees to be 'hidden' from the information and presentation that the local authorities presented as evidence for achieving the 'Excellent' level. Indeed, the LGA's external assessment that the local authority had to undergo to demonstrate it has achieved the 'Excellent' level only includes the external assessors interviewing/speaking to approximately 25-50 employees within the local authority. If the local authority (as was the case of local authority X) has over 10,000 employees, then this number was very small indeed, representing under one per cent of all employees. This could mean that large numbers of the workforce could be doing very little to contribute to equality and diversity mainstreaming within the local authority.

- Cross case study analysis of analytical question three: What performance management review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective?

In respect of the performance management review schemes and appraisal forms used by the three local authorities, Local authority X, Y and Z's performance management review process and appraisal forms were concise and followed good practice outlined by authors such as Whiddett and Hollyforde (2006), Chapman (2013) and Aguinis (2009). Managers in all three local authorities were generally aware of the new performance management review schemes and how to go through the process with their employees. However, there are a few areas where the three local authorities do not fully adopt good practice. One of these areas is ensuring that all employees receive one to one meetings or support throughout the year from their manager. In two of the three local authorities (Local authority X and Z), some employees mention that they did not have one to one meetings with their manager during the year, and instead they have team briefings. Another area where the three local authorities do not meet good practice guidelines is around the completion of the appraisal forms. In all three local authorities, employees either completed their appraisal forms online or manually. This 'two-tier' approach leads to some employees not receiving the same level of support or guidance on how to complete the appraisal forms, in particular those front line employees completing the appraisal forms manually. In local authority X, the front line employees do not have access to computers and only have an annual appraisal, when their manager asks them a series of questions and then the manager completes the appraisal form and submits this form to their Human Resources team, without the front line employee seeing the final signed off appraisal form. Within local authority Y and Z, a similar approach existed, whereby managers and front line employees often did not follow up on actions arising from annual appraisal meetings, especially relating to training needs identified.

Whilst the guidance on conducting performance management reviews followed good practice in all three local authorities, managers and employees in all three local authorities struggled to apply the schemes as they are intended to be applied. This is largely due to managers not following the procedures laid out in their performance management review processes and/or having different ideas of how to undertake appraisals. This is partly due to the fact that all three local authorities have introduced new performance management review schemes in 2012 or 2013 and their application is still in its early stages and proper review of this process has not been undertaken yet of how well the schemes work in practice. Respondents during the onsite interviews within Local authority Y admitted that managers are still being trained on how to undertake effective performance management reviews, and whilst this occurs, there will be variances in the quality of reviews being carried out.

- Cross case study analysis of analytical question four: Had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems encountered by the local authorities when doing this?

All three local authorities X, Y and Z have developed competency frameworks, with local authority X having specific equality and diversity competencies listed within their competency framework. Local authority Y does not mention a specific equality and diversity competency, but has indirect references to equality and diversity within its core value statements, whilst local authority Z also does not have any specific equality and diversity competencies within their competency framework, although there was an indirect reference to equality and diversity in their core values. Whilst, local authority X has equality and diversity competencies within its competency framework, it was optional whether the employee and their manager decide to discuss progress on how the employee performed on equality and diversity during their mid or annual performance management review meeting and employees completing the appraisal forms manually faced even fewer opportunities to discuss equality and diversity, as they often did not even complete the forms prior to their meeting. Employees within local authority Y state that despite the option to discuss equality and diversity whilst covering the local authority's core values, in most cases equality and diversity is not discussed by the manager and the employee. This is similar with Local authority Z who make an indirect reference to equality and diversity within its core values but have no specific reference to the inclusion of equality and diversity within the performance management review process, so it is left to individual managers to ask questions on equality and diversity

performance amongst their employees. Therefore, only local authority X had incorporated equality and diversity competencies within its competency framework, and it faced considerable problems in getting managers and employees to have a meaningful discussion on the equality and diversity performance of the employee.

Part of the reason why local authorities Y and Z have not included equality and diversity competencies within their competency frameworks and local authority X has only recently introduced this requirement is due to the fact that the equality frameworks prior to the summer of 2014 made no requirement to incorporate equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes. Therefore, when undertaking the research for this thesis, none of the three local authorities involved in the case studies had done this when they achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework. Employees within the three local authorities recognise the contribution that equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes could make, although employees from all three local authorities felt that the mere inclusion of an equality and diversity competency within each employee appraisal form would not be sufficient on its own to guarantee further equality and diversity mainstreaming by them through the course of the year. For the employees: firstly, there needs to be an effective equality and diversity training programme that enables the manager to understand the role of appraisals; how to undertake them effectively; and also for managers to have a good level of understanding of what equality and diversity is and how this could be incorporated within their employees work programmes; secondly, the employees themselves need to have an understanding of what equality and diversity is and how they could embed the principles of this in their day to day work; thirdly, the local authority needs to have an effective performance management review reporting mechanism which captures the results of all performance reviews and identifies any gaps in equality and diversity knowledge and performance; and fourthly, the local authority needs to develop further equality training and support for the manager and employee to address the gaps identified.

Following conversations between the author of this thesis and the Equality Framework team at the LGA, there was an acknowledgement by the Equality Framework team that including a requirement for local authorities to include equality and diversity competencies within their performance management review schemes would further support equality and diversity mainstreaming. Subsequently, the LGA included this in the revised version of the Equality Framework (see table ten). This is a significant achievement for this thesis and offers an opportunity for future research to investigate the impact of this inclusion.

Table ten: Equality Framework requirements for performance management reviews (LGA, 2014)

Developing Level	Achieving Level	Excellent Level
Equality considerations for individuals are integrated into appraisal systems.	Management and individual appraisals include specific equality objectives for the service areas.	Managers and staff can give examples of improved equality outcomes they have contributed to.

- Cross case study analysis of analytical question five: What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?

Local authorities X, Y and Z embarked on the journey to progress through the five levels of the Equality Standard in 2001 and with the revisions of the Equality Framework reducing the levels from five to three in 2011, all three local authorities achieved the ‘Excellent’ level by 2014, making them among only fourteen local authorities out of 351 local authorities in England to achieve this level (LGA, 2014). All three local authorities have good systems in place to gather information about their communities and develop an understanding of their communities. This in turn led the three local authorities to have equality and diversity embedded within their corporate strategies and policies and how they would meet the needs of different communities. All three local authorities also have strong commitment from their senior councillors and officers towards improving performance on equality and diversity.

Furthermore, all three local authorities have identified councillors and officers who lead on equality and diversity work and this is supported by having corporate equality and diversity groups as well as external consultation groups which comprise people from some or all of the protected characteristics. This ensures that there is regular dialogue both within and outside the local authorities on issues to improve equality and diversity performance. Despite having these groups, there is some comment from employees and external groups that more could be done to improve equality and diversity mainstreaming and performance. All three local authorities have developed engagement mechanisms to liaise with their communities, including local authority X having a citizen’s panel, local authority Y having a multi-agency approach, and local authority Z having a Strategic

Intelligence Team which ensures the local authority adopts a detailed a structured engagement process. All three local authorities also have processes in place to attempt to develop more diverse workforces. Local authority X has a range of positive action initiatives, such as school work experience and mentoring scheme, whilst local authority Y uses its employee forums to identify ways to improve working conditions for these groups as well as finding ways to further diversify their workforce. Local authority Z has developed a People Strategy focusing on equality and uses equality analysis to mitigate possible negative consequences of employment policies. Despite being seen to have met the criteria for 'Excellent' level, the LGA's external assessment teams and the local authority's own self-assessments show that there are still areas where the local authority has to continue improving against the five performance areas of the equality framework.

- Cross case study analysis of analytical question six: What ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?

Local authority X, Y and Z have all indicated that the equality frameworks have helped them to further mainstream equality and diversity within their local authority in a number of ways. Firstly, the equality frameworks have enabled all three local authorities to undertake self-assessments and receive an external assessment of their performance, which has enabled them to assess where they are undertaking good equality and diversity practice and what areas they need to further improve on. Secondly, the equality framework external assessments have enabled each local authority to benchmark their performance against other local authorities, which has enabled local authority Y officers and councillors to renew their focus on equality and diversity, and which has included the development of an 'improvement plan' which details a number of actions that the local authority will undertake to continue on its journey to achieve and maintain 'Excellent' level in the equality framework. (Equality Framework self-assessment report, Local authority Y, 2011). For local authority X and Y, the benchmarking has enabled them to incorporate the good practice they are undertaking and further work they need to carry out within their key strategic documents, such as the corporate plan or equality and inclusion policy. Thirdly, all three local authorities have felt that the equality frameworks have enabled them to have a more consistent approach to equality and diversity initiatives within their local authorities. This has in the case of local authority X, helped them to meet their legal requirements, whilst for local authority Y, this has meant developing a more consistent approach to working with their partners, and for local authority Z, this has meant having more clarity on what equality and diversity mainstreaming should involve.

Answering the research question

Having undertaken a cross case study analysis of the six analytical questions, the results against each analytical question are used to help answer the research question as follows:

- The equality frameworks for local government **did** support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming programme between 2001-2014

The findings from this research shows that the equality frameworks did offer the three local authorities a performance 'tool' to progress their equality and diversity mainstreaming work, and all three local authorities could demonstrate progress on activities and initiatives they have undertaken against the various performance areas of the Equality Framework for local government. The requirement of the equality framework performance areas guided the local authorities to improve their consultation mechanisms with their local communities, and this was particularly important as all had seen changes in their demographic compositions during the period of this thesis timeline. The equality frameworks also assisted the local authorities to develop some monitoring criteria to assess whether they were mainstreaming equality and diversity, and this largely was focused on the local authority as an employer.

All three local authorities used performance management review schemes with appraisal forms and overall these were designed in line with the good practice highlighted by authors such as Whiddett and Hollyforde (2005) and Chapman (2013). There was also the inclusion of equality and diversity competencies within one of the local authority's performance management review schemes and there was also a commitment amongst the local authorities to require all employees to undertake annual appraisals. In order to prepare for the equality framework external assessments carried out by the LGA, each of the local authorities had undertaken a self-assessment of their performance against the five performance areas of the equality framework. This enabled the local authorities to systematically work through the requirements of the equality framework and put in place initiatives which addressed every performance area. If the local authority was not undertaking any work in a particular equality framework performance area, this prompted them to start undertaking work, which enabled them to improve their equality and diversity performance and mainstreaming. The feedback from the external equality framework

assessments also supported the local authorities to identify areas which they needed to do more work on to continue their equality and diversity journey.

However;

- The equality frameworks **did not** support local authorities to improve the performance of their equality and diversity mainstreaming programme between 2001-2014 to the extent that they could have done

The local authorities had incorporated a commitment to equality and diversity within their strategic documents, however, there was not a consistent understanding of what equality and diversity mainstreaming was or how this would be assessed. This resulted in each local authority developing different equality measures or targets, which mainly focused on employment, and did not fully cover service delivery. This was particularly problematic as all the local authorities had seen demographic changes to their local populations, with an increasing diversity amongst their communities, which resulted in the local authority's reacting to requests from their communities rather than being proactive in meeting the needs of their communities. This was partly as a result of the local authorities not having a clearly defined understanding of what equality and diversity mainstreaming was and how it should be assessed. Another aspect of the local authorities work on equality and diversity which did not fulfil its expectations was the implementation of their performance management review schemes. Whilst the design of the schemes, including the appraisal forms generally followed good practice guidelines, the application of the schemes did not meet good practice criteria.

All three local authorities had recently introduced performance management review schemes and this was probably a cause of them not being applied uniformly. Some problems included: managers not undertaking one to one meetings with their employees; during annual appraisal reviews, some employees, especially within local authority X not receiving any feedback and some employees not even completing their own appraisal forms prior to their review meeting. Another feature which detracted from the success of the performance management review schemes was having some employees completing the appraisal forms online, whilst other employees completed the appraisal forms manually. This had the result that employees completing the forms online could also review and amend their forms throughout the year and also see the feedback from their managers, whilst those employees completing the forms manually did not have this

option. Training needs identified during the review meetings were also better followed up with employees completing their forms online.

The inclusion of equality and diversity competencies within the appraisal forms also varied. Local authority X and Y had included equality objectives within their competency frameworks, but local authority Y had subsequently removed this when they reviewed their competency framework. Local authority Z also did not have a specific requirement within their appraisal form to include equality and diversity competencies. Even with local authority X, managers interpreted the requirement to discuss equality and diversity competencies differently, with some managers discussing with employees how they met the equality and diversity competencies, whilst other managers did not discuss this. Part of the problem of this occurring was the equality frameworks not having a requirement for local authorities to include equality and diversity competencies within appraisals as part of the requirements to achieve the various levels of the equality frameworks. This was included in the revision of the equality framework in 2014, which meant that for this thesis, it was not possible to examine the success of its inclusion in the equality framework.

Whilst the equality frameworks provided a focus and 'tool' for local authorities to work through different levels and performance areas, there was little guidance on what evidence would be sufficient to demonstrate that the local authority had met a particular performance area. This was left largely to the LGA's assessment teams to interpret, and with different individuals making up teams that assessed local authorities, there was the prospect of different 'assessments' between teams and an element of subjectivity existed. A potentially major factor of why the equality frameworks did not achieve as much as they could to support local authorities was the assessment process itself. The assessments against the various equality framework levels only required approximately 25-50 employees being interviewed, and often a local authority had over 10,000 employees working for them, and in essence the number of people contributing to the assessment was very small, and further ways needed to be found to assess how well the equality framework had mainstreamed equality and diversity amongst all employees.

Original contribution to knowledge

Between 2001 – 2014, which is the time period for this thesis, and even up to 2020, there has not been a critical examination of the impact of the equality frameworks on equality

and diversity mainstreaming. The original purpose of the equality frameworks was to support local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity in all areas of their work, by offering a 'framework' which would guide the local authorities in what they should be doing with regard to equality and diversity. The fact that there has not been any detailed research in this area seems to suggest that there is an 'assumption' that the equality framework by its very nature contributes to equality and diversity mainstreaming, and any local authority progressing through the various levels of the frameworks inherently will achieve greater equality and diversity mainstreaming. This may be the case, but there is no research to demonstrate this. Therefore, the research question for this thesis presents the first comprehensive piece of research which critically examines this assumption. Another unique feature of this research and further original contribution to knowledge is the focus on equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes, and whether local authorities were using this to help it achieve progress in the equality frameworks and equality and diversity mainstreaming. A contribution of this thesis has been to support the incorporation of a more specific requirement within the Equality Framework (after 2014) of local authorities having to demonstrate how equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes are contributing to equality and diversity mainstreaming.

Limitations of the thesis

This research has the aim of providing new evidence whether the equality frameworks for local government supported three local authorities to improve their performance of equality and diversity mainstreaming during 2001 – 2014. No information exists looking at this subject area, and so the first limitation was lack of previous literature to draw upon and develop hypotheses of what to research. Despite this, I was able to formulate a research question and analytical questions, and subsequently develop a methodology to obtain the information to enable me to answer the research question. The Equality Framework for local government is hierarchical and identifies those local authorities that have achieved its highest level, and this presented me with local authorities to approach, however, out of fourteen local authorities approached, only eight responded and out of these four agreed to take part in the research, although one dropped out soon after agreeing to be a case study. Under ideal conditions, I would have had all fourteen responding and I would have chosen the 'best' fit local authorities that would enable me to carry out the research or indeed if time and resources permitted, I would have involved all fourteen in the research, providing a wide range of data to examine. Despite this

limitation, I feel that even having one local authority would have been enough to answer my research question, and even this would have provided a new contribution to knowledge relating to the equality frameworks and their application between 2001 - 2014. Having three local authorities, and of differing locations and population/political mixes, enabled some comparison to be made, and further 'new' sources of knowledge.

Another limitation related to the analytical questions relating to equality and diversity competencies. Whilst four of the eight local authorities responding to the initial questionnaire sent to the fourteen local authorities indicated that they were using equality and diversity competencies within performance management review schemes when they achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework, when the research was undertaken with the three local authorities, it became apparent that the application of this varied, and in two of the three local authorities, the use of equality and diversity competencies had been removed or was only referenced indirectly within their performance management review schemes. The third local authority who did include equality and diversity competencies applied it in a way that not all employees were required to answer any questions relating to it, and for half the employees without access to completing the appraisal forms online, there was little or no data collated on their responses.

Suggestions for further research

Possible areas for further research include examining how local authorities have addressed the issue of the Equality Framework requirement relating to incorporating equality and diversity competencies within performance management reviews. It has been over five years since this criteria was introduced in 2014 into the Equality Framework and research of this would demonstrate whether the inclusion of this requirement has made local authorities cascade equality and diversity mainstreaming to more of their employees. Another possible area for research is examining what other sectors are doing in terms of equality and diversity mainstreaming. Several equality frameworks exist in the voluntary, private and public sectors, and a comparison of whether these have enabled organisations to achieve more equality and diversity mainstreaming compared to the equality frameworks for local government would provide useful learning across sectors.

Conclusion

The findings from this research present new knowledge relating to the equality frameworks for local government that were in use 2001-2014, and shows that the equality frameworks did offer the three local authorities a performance 'tool' to progress their equality and diversity mainstreaming work, and all three local authorities could demonstrate progress on activities and initiatives they have undertaken against the various performance areas of the Equality Framework for local government. What the findings also show is that the equality frameworks have not helped local authorities to mainstream equality and diversity to the extent that they were designed to do, and this has been due to a number of factors, including: differences in how each local authority interprets what equality and diversity mainstreaming is; and the performance management review schemes that the local authorities are using have limitations in their applications. Although, with the recent revision to the Equality Framework for local government incorporating a requirement for local authorities to embed equality and diversity competencies within their performance management review schemes, there is the possibility of equality and diversity mainstreaming permeating through the local authority, but this would only be effective if the local authorities could determine how their performance management review schemes applied uniformly to all employees. Finally, as my journey on this thesis comes to an end, the findings of this research offer the opportunity for further research to continue the discussions on equality and diversity mainstreaming and how to achieve this.

Appendix one: Features of good competencies

According to Whiddett and Hollyforde (2005) good competencies had some of the following features:

- **Competency should be clear and easy to understand**
 - The language must be unambiguous, simple and straightforward
 - Users must be able to relate the behaviours to their jobs
 - Behaviour statements should only appear in one place in the framework
 - All the behaviours necessary for effective performance in the jobs for which the framework was designed should be included
 - Behaviours must describe observable examples of competency
 - Each behaviour should contain an 'action'
 - Each behaviour should contain enough contextual information to describe why the action is necessary
 - The behaviour statements must describe behaviours rather than personal characteristics such as knowledge, technical skills and abilities.
- **Competency should be necessary and appropriate**
 - Behaviours should be based on good procedures and safe practices
 - Behaviours should help to enhance and/or ensure effective performance.

- **They should be Unambiguous**

Different people should interpret the statement to mean the same thing. This is hard to achieve with statements that contain reference to vague statements. For example: Sets high standards for their work; Doesn't let obstacles affect their work.

- **They should be comprised of simple, jargon free language**

The language should be easily understood by all who will use or be affected by the framework. Language should also reflect the organisation and its culture and values. The behaviour should be observable - The statement should describe one example of behaviour. It should not be possible for a person to be good at one bit of the statement and poor at another bit of it.

- **Competencies should relate to one behaviour**

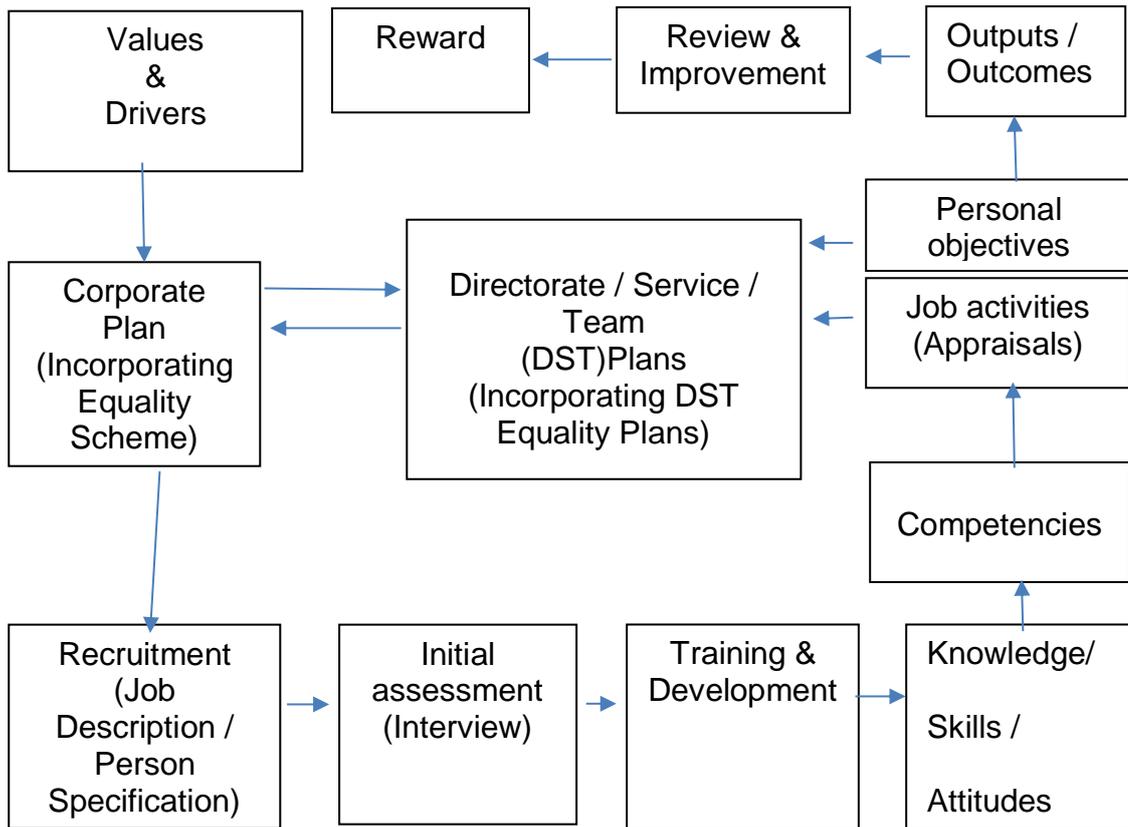
It is very common for behaviour statements to contain several examples of behaviour. It is important to split these into separate statements. For example: Provides clear, logical and concise proposals supported by a clear rationale and facts with recommendations for action while remaining sensitive to the needs of others. Three distinct behaviour statements can be produced from the above statement, which need to be separated.

- **Should contain an 'action'**

Competencies should have an 'action' that employees' are required to undertake. This can be achieved by using words such as the following: Challenges; Ensures; Monitors; and Provides.

('National Framework', Employers Organisation, 2006)

Appendix two: Performance management framework (IDeA, 2006)



**Appendix three: Questionnaire sent to local authorities achieving the
'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework and responses**

<p>Background details: Name of local authority: _____ Contact person: _____ Job title: _____ Email/telephone: _____</p>	
<p>Questions</p>	<p>Responses made</p>
<p>Q1. When did your local authority achieve the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework?</p>	<p>2011: 3 (37.5%) 2012: 2 (25%) 2014: 3 (37.5%)</p>
<p>Q2. Does your local authority currently use a performance management review scheme/appraisal? Yes or No</p>	<p>Yes: 8 (100%) No: 0</p>
<p>Q3. Was your local authority using a performance management review/appraisal system when it achieved the 'Excellent' level of the Equality Framework? Yes or No</p>	<p>Yes: 8 (100%) No: 0</p>
<p>Q4. Which employees in your local authority complete a performance management review/appraisal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All staff - Senior managers - Middle managers - Front line employees 	<p>All staff: 8 (100%)</p>
<p>Q5. Does your performance management review/appraisal scheme include equality and diversity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yes, for all staff - No - Yes, only for senior/middle managers - Yes, only for front line staff 	<p>Yes, for all staff: 6 (75%) No: 2 (25%)</p>
<p>Q6. How is equality and diversity performance measured within performance management review/appraisal process in your local authority? (Tick all answers that apply)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All staff required to discuss progress with managers - Staff have to write what they have done around equality and diversity - It is up to staff and managers to discuss if relevant for them - We do not require staff to discuss equality and diversity in performance management reviews/appraisals 	<p>6 (75%) 0 4 (50%) 0</p>

<p>Q7. What do you think are the three biggest reasons why your local authority achieved the 'Excellent' level in the Equality Framework?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership and commitment (4) • Ongoing training and awareness for all staff and councillors (2 responses) • Staff being able to see the improvements • Community engagement/service user outcomes (5) • Effective Performance management (2) • Embedding Equality Impact Assessments/equality into planning/decision making processes (3) • Allocating resources • Action planning.
<p>Q8. What role do you think that the performance management review/appraisal process can play in your local authority?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area where we need further work to undertake • Can reinforce expectations and establish a baseline for performance, and introduce an element of consistency across the local authority (3).
<p>Q9. Do you have any other comments about how performance management review/appraisals can help mainstreaming equality and diversity within your local authority?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are making very good progress and councillors are very supportive • Would allow management to challenge staff where there are issues of discrimination • Offers an opportunity for improved learning on equality and diversity • I think the most appraisal schemes can do is codify behaviour but beyond that it is difficult to always show the impact on behaviour change. • Appraisals are one

	aspect of staff performance management, training and development, so other complimentary tools should be applied to provide a holistic approach.
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Appendix four: Interview and focus group questions

The questions listed below relate to interviews and focus groups undertaken:

Analytical question	Interview questions	Focus group questions
<p>Analytical question one: What journey had the local authority taken towards equality and diversity mainstreaming, incorporating the challenges of different demographics, structures and policies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you understand by the term ‘mainstreaming equality and diversity?’ • What future plans does the local authority have to mainstream equality and diversity? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you understand by the term ‘mainstreaming equality and diversity?’
<p>Analytical question two: How did the local authority assess their equality and diversity mainstreaming, and support employees to continually improve on their equality and diversity performance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the local authority understand equality and diversity mainstreaming to be and how is this assessed? • What support is provided to managers to enable them to support equality and diversity performance in themselves and their employees? • What support is provided to employees to meet equality and diversity behaviours? • What training (if any) is provided to employees in understanding the appraisal process and equality and diversity? • How do you support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you rate your local authority’s performance on equality and diversity as an employee? • How would you rate your local authority’s performance on equality and diversity as a service provider?

	employees that have identified equality and diversity as a development need?	
Analytical question three: What performance management review scheme did the local authority use and whether it was effective?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did you introduce the current appraisal form (performance management review scheme) and why has it been designed the way it has? • During the previous year, what % of employees completed an appraisal? • How would a manager measure successful performance against the equality and diversity behaviour within the competency framework? • What happens to information from mid and annual reviews, and how do you identify equality and diversity issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are you all involved in performance management review schemes (appraisals)? • What training have you received for carrying out or undertaking appraisals/ performance management reviews? • How effective do you think the performance management review/appraisal process is, and how could it be improved?
Analytical question four: Had equality and diversity competencies been integrated into the performance management review scheme and any problems encountered by the local authorities when doing this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What role does appraisals play in contributing to the vision equality and diversity in the local authority? • How is equality and diversity incorporated within the appraisal process, now and previously? • Do you think that the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your performance management review/appraisal form include equality and diversity competencies? • How do you discuss your performance on any equality and diversity competencies?

	<p>equality and diversity behaviours within appraisal forms can lead to equality and diversity mainstreaming? If yes, how?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you submitted the equality framework 'excellent' level submission, what appraisal process existed and what role did the inclusion of equality and diversity competencies play in this? 	
<p>Analytical question five: What ways did the local authorities demonstrate they met the five performance areas of the equality frameworks?</p>	<p>Evidence submitted by the local authority and received from the LGA for the Equality Framework 'Excellent' level assessment was used to answer this analytical question</p>	<p>Evidence submitted by the local authority and received from the LGA for the Equality Framework 'Excellent' level assessment was used to answer this analytical question</p>
<p>Analytical question six: What ways did the local authorities perceive the equality frameworks were supporting them to mainstream equality and diversity?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the local authority progressed since undertaking the equality framework peer challenge? • How did the equality framework support your local authority to mainstream equality and diversity? • What other ways do you think equality and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has contributed to the local authority progressing its work on equality and diversity?

	<p>diversity mainstreaming can occur besides appraisal forms?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What would help your local authority mainstream equality and diversity more?	
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