



Social Inclusion Policy

Version: Final V1.1
Policy Date: November 2018

Document Control

Organisation	Copeland Borough Council
Title	Social Inclusion Policy
Version	V1.1
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Filename	
Owner	Amanda Starr, Strategic Housing and Social inclusion Manager
Subject	Social Inclusion
Protective Marking	None
Review Date	April 2023

Revision History

Version Reviewed	Date Reviewed	Reviewed By	Description of Revision
V 0	November 2018		Updated policy produced
V1.0	October 2019	Social Inclusion Board	Minor amendments made as per Social Inclusion audit recommendations
V1.0	April 2021	Social Inclusion Board	Review and minor updates

Document Approval

Version	Approved By	Date
1.0	Human Resources	N/A
	Corporate Leadership Team	
	OSC	6 th December 2018
	Trade Union Consultation	N/A
	Executive	16 th April 2019
	Full Council	25 th June 2019

Document Distribution

This policy is to be distributed to all staff and elected members of Copeland Borough Council and placed on the Council’s Intranet Site. A copy must also be provided to contractors and 3rd parties undertaking work on Copeland Borough Council premises.

Contributors

Social Inclusion Board	
Corporate Leadership Team	

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Purpose

SOCIAL INCLUSION IN COPELAND

Social inclusion is the process of ensuring that everyone has the means and ability to readily access the services they require to participate fully in society. Copeland Borough Council recognises there are many barriers to inclusion, but will work to reduce or remove them where possible through the implementation of this policy which covers a range of issues relevant to the services offered by the Council.

Whilst many residents within the borough enjoy a good quality of life, significant numbers do experience some form, or even multiple forms, of deprivation. For instance, members of low-income households may be unable to afford services most people take for granted. Low income may be a result of a lack of employment opportunities, which in turn may be a result of a lack of educational opportunities, transport problems or poor health. Conversely, a lack of employment itself can affect not only income levels, but also health and well-being. The Council, therefore, has a duty in the short term to work with partners to put in place enabling schemes to prevent exclusion due to income deprivation, whilst at the same time working again with partners in all sectors towards the long term improvement of the economic prospects for its residents.

Policy Benefits

Through the implementation of this policy, Copeland Borough Council seeks to contribute to preventing social exclusion occurring in the first instance, re-integrate those who have become excluded whilst maintaining at least minimum standards through its services for everyone.

Introduction

The unique economic situation in Copeland provides challenges and opportunities with high wages within the dominant nuclear sector and relatively low wages in the rural agricultural and tourism sectors. Our residents identify with high levels of worklessness and poverty in some of our neighbourhoods along with higher than Cumbria average of long term youth unemployment and under 25 year olds identified and not in education, employment or training (NEET). This leaves Copeland with a significant level of income deprivation amongst its resident population.

This has been compounded by the national welfare reform policy changes which have impacted significantly in some of our super output areas with high levels of multiple disadvantage and recorded poverty levels. Alongside the high pockets of worklessness, which adversely affect social inclusion, the low level of educational attainment relative to the national average is also significant, as are the relatively high levels of poor health, poor quality housing and inadequate transport provision in our rural communities and some of the more deprived areas.

Rural isolation can also impact negatively on social inclusion, particularly where accessing largely urban-based services involves additional travel costs which, for some, can prove prohibitively expensive. This isolation is significant in Copeland as it is a largely rural borough and, whilst the majority of its 70,000 residents live in the four main urban areas of Whitehaven, Egremont, Cleator Moor and Millom, there are disadvantaged and low-income families living in

rural areas. In addition, some of the more remote areas are poorly served by public transport and broadband infrastructure making access rather than cost the main barrier.

The Care Act 2014, which came into effect from 1st April 2015, represents the most significant reform of care and support in more than 60 years, putting people and their carers in control of their care and support and making it easier for the public to understand why things happen in a particular way. It sets out, amongst other expectations, a greater emphasis on prevention where local authorities and other providers of support will encourage and assist people to lead healthy lives, which will reduce the chances of them needing more support in the future. Our rural setting, levels of ill health and ageing population combine to challenge agencies with reducing budgets to ensure services can deliver to meet social, health and wellbeing needs.

Scope

Whilst complete in itself, this policy does not sit in isolation. It is both complementary to, and gives support to other Council policies and should be viewed as integral to achieving the Council's Corporate Strategy and Plan.

Both the Social Inclusion Checklist and Equality Impact Assessment are essential tools used to ensure that the principles of the Social Inclusion Policy are put into practice in the work of the Council.

The Council seeks to support those who have protected characteristics and those who are excluded through circumstance, for example mental or physical ill health, substance misuse or dependency, rural isolation, domestic abuse, etc.

The social nature of the borough is also changing which is likely to present further inclusion challenges in the future. Many long-term residents are now retired whilst a relatively high proportion of young people move out of the borough to find work. Therefore, if the borough is to prosper it must encourage more young people to stay whilst attracting a range of people willing and able to take up any new opportunities created.

As a result, Copeland is becoming increasingly reliant on the arrival of both national and international migrants. In order to attract these workers and their families, the borough must meet their cultural, educational and housing needs. If Copeland is to prosper, the borough must welcome migrants and help them to integrate whilst ensuring current residents also receive the level of support they require. The Council also has a duty to support the re-integration of those who have become socially excluded through substance abuse or dependency.

Policy Details including Procedures

Internal

Copeland Borough Council will prioritise social inclusion targets when allocating resources and directly influence social inclusion through its own internal services by:

- Considering social inclusion as an integral part of all future strategies and policies, both internal and external to the Council. This will be supported through ensuring access to all through the design and delivery of inclusive services.

- Involving residents and customers in the design and delivery of services to help ensure that those offered are appropriate to identified needs, ensure equal representation of all residential groups in local decision making and encourage all sectors of the community to use the support available.
- Removing or minimising barriers which prevent access to services and activities or working where possible with partners to provide alternatives.
- Presenting all Council information clearly and simply, and in a variety of formats where required, to ensure all residents can access the information they need in line with our Customer Strategy.
- Offering services in an appropriate environment, for example ensuring privacy where appropriate, to ensure all clients are comfortable in approaching and accessing the services provided.
- Recognising limited resources, providing those on low incomes access to support services such as housing and council tax benefits, homelessness prevention support, disabled facilities grants and, when necessary, sensitive debt and arrears services.

In Partnership

Whilst recognising that local, regional and national factors influence social inclusion, Copeland Borough Council is committed to working to increase social inclusion across the borough. Through its community leadership role, the Council will seek to ensure that other agencies also have a positive impact on social inclusion, ensuring local facilities and services are available to all. To achieve this the Council will work in partnership with other relevant organisations to make provision in areas of:

- **Employment:** Increase employment opportunities to help people back into work across the borough through targeted programmes.
- **Education and Training:** Support programmes that increase access to relevant training and educational opportunities to ensure that local people are equipped with the skills they require to take advantage of job opportunities across the borough. Support early years initiatives to ensure that children are not disadvantaged and are provided with opportunities to learn and develop.
- **Housing:** Lead the Copeland Housing Strategy, which aims to ensure that the housing needs of the economy and community are met locally with good quality affordable homes available to all. As the strategic housing authority, the Council will work to achieve a balanced housing market, support economic growth and ensure housing policy and actions support the health and wellbeing of our communities.
- **Health and Wellbeing:** Support and ensure the provision of equal access to public health interventions aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles and address health inequalities as identified. Deliver and evaluate this work as part of the Copeland Health and Wellbeing Priority Action Plan. Support initiatives addressing social isolation, food poverty and child poverty.
- **Environment:** Ensure that both the built and natural environment promotes people's wellbeing and does not act as a barrier to access for all through the provision of accessible green spaces, the maintenance of local/neighbourhood environments, with

the adherence to sound planning policies and the continuing work of leisure and environmental services across the borough.

- **Crime and Community Safety:** Tackle crime and antisocial or discriminatory behaviour and increase community safety through active involvement in the Copeland Hub as part of the West Cumbria Community Safety partnership and through involvement in priority initiatives.
- **Transport:** Advocate for the provision of affordable, accessible and appropriate transport as set out in the Cumbria Local Transport Plan, ensuring that the most deprived and isolate areas are not neglected.
- **Rural Isolation:** Work with partners to ensure that those living in isolated, rural areas have access to the services they need either through improved access and use of information communication technologies (ICT) enabling access to centralise services, or by increase outreach through the provision of mobile services.
- **Governance and Democracy:** Encourage and improve democratic engagement across the borough to increase awareness of and enable people to advocate for their rights with the support of the Council through the work of the communications service, community forums and locality partnership activity.
- **Leisure and Culture:** ensure the widest possible access to all leisure, cultural and local heritage services and promote collections and exhibitions that reflect the historical and contemporary social and cultural diversity within Copeland through the work of the Beacon Museum and through our leisure contract arrangements.
- **IT and Digital Technology:** Support and, where needed, drive initiatives to improve e-access, giving residents a greater opportunity to use e-services and e-government and promote digital inclusion.

RECOMMENDED PRIORITY ACTIONS 2021 - 2024

Whilst continuing to work towards full social inclusion, the council recognises this is an ongoing process and will not be achieved during the period of any particular corporate strategy or plan. The proposed priorities are aimed at making progress in all areas listed above. These actions will be undertaken in partnership and form our Social Investment Programme 2021 - 2024:

- Whilst the policy will be implemented across the whole borough, areas of high exclusion, particularly where people are excluded on several fronts, will be given priority for additional support, e.g. areas of particularly high unemployment and subsequently low incomes which can, in turn, contribute to poor health, poor housing and a poor living environment. These areas are nationally recognised through 'Super Output Area' deprivation scores and the Council will target those areas which score highly on this index.
- Specific groups who experience exclusion on a variety of levels, but who are not necessarily geographically defined, will also be given priority for additional support such as the vulnerable and homeless, benefit claimants, older people and women.
- Equality and diversity, particularly with regard to LGBT issues, will underpin all these priorities.

- To deliver a social investment programme using external funding to attract further match funding which will include:
 - a. Financial and Digital Inclusion: Recognising the impact of welfare reform and poverty within our families and neighbourhoods to work with a range of partners to enable financial and digital inclusion.
 - b. Skills and Work: The Skills and Work partnership to deliver opportunities and address issues at the early end of the skills and opportunities ladder for residents of all ages. Attract businesses and retain our talented young people.
 - c. Homelessness Prevention: Continue our active homelessness prevention approach in line with the Copeland Housing Strategy priorities against local need.
 - d. Community-Based Regeneration: Enable communities to take ownership of their regeneration projects and initiatives and support them to remain engaged.
 - e. Health and Wellbeing: The Five Ways to Wellbeing will be used as a focus for delivery. Work with the priorities of Copeland Health and Wellbeing Forum to deliver partnership projects. Focus on loneliness and social isolation for all ages.
 - f. Grants: Maintain a commitment to a grants programme that complements the Corporate Strategy and Social Inclusion Programme.
 - g. Women Centred Approaches including Domestic Abuse: Develop women-centred approaches to local issues, whilst recognising that men can also be victims of domestic abuse.
 - h. Early Start and Child Poverty: Support partners in their work on early start initiatives to address the high levels of child poverty in neighbourhoods within Copeland.
 - i. Access and Opportunities to Leisure, Sport, Arts and Culture: Use our contracts such as the leisure contract to ensure inclusive access to sports and leisure through the discount 'be active plus' card for residents on low income and support outreach physical activity projects throughout the borough. Use our Museum Service, its learning team and our delivery collaboration as a resource and hub for integrating STEM and Arts and Culture for residents of all ages to access.



Monitoring of Policy Adherence

The Social Investment programme will be used to implement the policy. Resourcing will be a combination of internal and external financing including existing service delivery from the Council and its implementation partners. The Programme's key purpose is:

- a. To deliver the social inclusion and investment commitments within the Corporate Strategy and associated strategies and plans and:
- b. To use our social investment programme to work actively with our partners on the wellbeing of our residents.

To ensure that this policy is actively implemented across the Council:

- Corporate Leadership team will manage implementation through the Corporate Plan and Social Investment Programme for the policy
- Support and guidance will be given to all managers and project staff on how to deliver socially inclusive services from the Social Inclusion Board
- Performance management will be measured via an evaluation cycle.

In relation to the priority actions listed above the Council will ensure that:

- All strategies and policies developed after the adoption of the Social Inclusion Policy include consideration of the likely impact on social inclusion. The Social Inclusion Checklist will be used to assist this process.
- Links are made with the Copeland Partnership 'State of Copeland' annual data set to understand social inclusion changes and impact.
- A performance report will be included in the Annual Report from the Council each May with existing corporate quarterly performance reporting picking up activities within services and joint projects.
- Governance arrangements for all projects included in the Social Investment programme will follow the requirements of the CBC Project Management Framework and/or external funders as appropriate

This policy is relevant to all departments of the Council and, as such, a coherent response is required and will be evident in the progress made towards achieving social inclusion across Copeland. However, the changing demography of the borough also ensures that this work will be ongoing as the Council responds not only to the present circumstances, but also to the changing circumstances of the future.

References

CBC Corporate Strategy 2020 - 2024

Copeland Housing Strategy

Copeland Local Plan

Cumbria Local Transport Plan

Copeland Health and Wellbeing Priority Action Plan

CBC Equality and Diversity Scheme

Planning Policy

Social Investment programme

Skills and Work Partnership Programme

Social Inclusion Priorities

Social Inclusion Checklist

CBC Annual Report

Equality Impact Assessment

Accessible Information Policy