

## Heart of the South West (HotSW) Productivity Strategy

### Equality Impact Assessment

#### **Describe the piece of work you are assessing and the reason it is being carried out:**

The assessment relates to the draft Productivity Strategy for the HofSW Partnership. The strategy has been drafted to double the economy over 20 years and in doing so, improve the productivity of businesses across the region to maximise world-class potential, provide better jobs and generate increased prosperity for communities. The aim is for businesses, in whatever place or sector, to realise the benefits of becoming more productive which, in turn, will lead to increased prosperity for communities.

#### **Who is leading on the piece of work being assessed?**

The strategy is being led by HotSW Joint Committee. This assessment has been completed by the Programme Management Office on behalf of the partnership.

#### **What are the timescales for completing the work? Are there any committee deadlines?**

The final draft is due to go before the HotSW Joint Committee on 23<sup>rd</sup> March. The strategy is a high level document that sets out the future vision for productivity and inclusive growth across the region. Sitting beneath the strategy will be a delivery plan and investment framework. It will be the delivery plan which identifies the specific programmes that will deliver the vision and objectives within the Productivity Strategy and once agreed, these will also need to be assessed in terms of their impact on those people with protected characteristics.

#### **What are the aims and objectives of this work? How do these link to wider council or strategic objectives?**

Businesses are at the heart of creating prosperity and the three key objectives of the strategy are:

- Connectivity and infrastructure
- Leadership and knowledge
- Working and learning

The HotSW Productivity Strategy is reflective of the government's wider ambition to boost productivity and earning power throughout the UK.

### **Who will be the main beneficiaries of the piece of work and in what way?**

The Strategy aims for businesses, in whatever place or sector, to realise the benefits of becoming more productive which, in turn, will lead to better jobs and generate increased prosperity for all communities across the HotSW region.

### **Do you have any data on how different groups will be affected by this work?**

We are not aware of a breakdown of business across the HotSW in terms of protected characteristics. For example, we do not know how many businesses are owned by people with protected characteristics and we do not know the workforce profile of the businesses in terms of employees with protected characteristics. Census data can provide a breakdown across the region in terms of ethnicity, religion, health problems or disability and deprivation but this has not been cross referenced across different business sectors.

The partnership should consider collating this data so that it can ensure that people with protected characteristics benefit from the outcomes of the Productivity Strategy. The partnership could also use the data to determine whether specific interventions are required, as part of the delivery plan, to ensure that people with protected characteristics benefit in the same way as those people who do not.

### **Have any research studies or reports been carried out in other areas of the country or nationally that provide information about the likely impact of your work on equality groups?**

The Government's Industrial Strategy sets the overarching vision for driving growth across the UK. The strategy focuses on the five foundations of productivity – ideas, people, infrastructure, business environment and places. The strategy recognises that businesses that have diverse, inclusive workplaces brings improved productivity and that more should be done to address the under-representation of other groups in the labour market and support employees to stay in work.

The strategy makes specific reference to the McGregor-Smith review which put the potential benefit to the UK economy from full representation of BME workers, through improved participation and progression, at £24bn a year. It also recognises that organisations with the highest levels of gender diversity are 15 per cent more likely to outperform their rivals, yet female employment continues to be below that of men. The strategy also states that in mid 2017, just under half of working age disabled people were in employment, compared with 81 per cent of working age non-disabled people.

The Race Disparity Audit may help to identify areas that require extra work to help those from BME backgrounds into the workplace.

The Government will publish shortly a plan for improving social mobility in England, which will set out how the education system will expand equality of opportunity. Further steps include:

- Working with business to develop an action to make flexible working a reality for all employees across Britain and to inform the evaluation of the Right to Request Flexible Working Regulation.
- Supporting people to return to work after time out for caring,
- Publishing plans to achieve the Government's ambition to see one million more disabled people in employment in the UK by 2027 and also help those with mental health conditions to enter, progress and remain in work.

The strategy also recognises that there are disparities in the education system depending on region.

Cornwall and Isles of Scilly have produced a Strategic Economic Plan 2017-2030 and the West of England have prepared a Strategy which is currently out for discussion. Neither of these makes reference to the representation of people with protected characteristics in the labour market.

The partnership should consider whether it wants to measure progress in delivering against these national targets. It should also consider how it can work with the business community to promote practices to help under-represented groups benefit from predicted growth across the region. Monitoring of this data on an ongoing basis will help the partnership to determine whether specific interventions are required, as part of the delivery plan, to ensure that people with protected characteristics benefit in the same way as those people without.

### **What consultation has taken place or is planned with customers (individuals and groups) from equality groups?**

A series of consultation exercises have been conducted throughout the development of the draft Productivity Strategy. This has included:

- Publication of the draft Strategy (hosted on the Torbay Council website and available on via partners' websites)
- Online survey open for the duration of the consultation period
- Written representations accepted via [engagement@torbay.gov.uk](mailto:engagement@torbay.gov.uk)
- Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership Conversations held in Devon and Somerset
- Discussion at the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership Annual Conference (including completion of questionnaires)
- Engagement event held for economic development, housing and transport portfolio holders from each of the local authorities in the Partnership
- Engagement events held across the region: Eastern Somerset, Western Somerset, Exeter and East Devon, Northern Devon, Torbay, and Plymouth and South West Devon
- Engagement event with the Devon Association of Local Councils and Somerset Association of Local Council

Targeted consultation with customers from equality groups was not undertaken because the strategy is aimed at business.

**What does the consultation indicate about any differential positive or negative impact(s) of this piece of work?**

Addressing inequalities in the gender pay gap.

Increasing the level of support into work for those with health issues both physical and mental.

Strategies to support women, the elderly and disabled persons, plus wider help for disadvantaged children such as universal free school meals.

No mention of social mobility, however it is implicit in many responses and none of the respondents disagreed with the ambition to deliver inclusive growth.

Better skills progression for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Include elements in support of women and disabled people.

Implications of an ageing population.

**If there are any gaps in your previous or planned consultation and research are there any experts/relevant groups that can be contacted to get further views or evidence on the issues? If so, please explain who they are and how you will obtain their views.**

Yes, see above. More work required to get a better understanding of the current workforce profiles of the businesses across the region.

**Could there be a positive or negative impact on community relations or equal opportunities?**

Closer monitoring of the workforce profile across the HotSW area would help to ensure that people with protected characteristics are able to benefit from the increased prosperity predicted in the strategy.

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