



10 ENSURING PEOPLE ARE TREATED FAIRLY
AND CAN PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY



10.0.1 *‘Just Connect!’* aims to make sure that people are treated fairly and can participate fully in society. Social exclusion occurs when an individual is prevented from participating in any of the key economic, social and political activities in the society in which they live. Social exclusion can result when people or areas face a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, discrimination, poor skills, low incomes, poor quality housing, high crime, poor health, and family breakdown. Despite relative economic success, the South West contains a number of communities recognised by the IMD as being at risk from social exclusion. In developing this Draft RSS representatives of hard to reach groups, Age Concern, Equality South West, the Youth Parliament, South West Racial Equalities Councils’ Network, South West Council of Faiths and other partners have been engaged at key stages to ensure that the equalities implications of policies are considered and assessed.

10.1 Social Inclusion

10.1.1 The existence of poverty and deprivation limit the region’s potential growth and means not everyone shares in its success. Homeless people, refugees, asylum seekers, people with mental health problems, ex-offenders, young people leaving care, and Gypsies and Travellers often feature amongst the most deprived and excluded people in the region. Even with general economic prosperity and historically low unemployment, the disadvantage reported in Section 9 is felt disproportionately by these and other groups that face discrimination. For example, disabled people are much more likely to be out of work, as are black and minority ethnic groups (BME) (in the South West around 80% of white people of working age are in employment in comparison with about 69% of BME people of working age). In addition, many older people have lower personal incomes than average and women typically have lower incomes than men. The economic disadvantage experienced by many older people poses a significant challenge for the region, given the trend of demographic ageing in the South West.

- 10.1.2** Local authorities must ensure that, when planning development at a sub-regional level (following Development Policies A to C in Section 3, and the sub-regional Spatial Strategies in Section 4), consideration is given to identifying social groups that represent an above average percentage of the constituent population. For example, the average BME population in the South West is under 3%. In some communities, this statistic will be much higher, for example the percentage of BME groups living in Bristol is 8.2%. Similarly, the average percentage of the region's residents who are of statutory retirement age is 22%. This figure is much higher in areas such as Christchurch (33% of residents are of statutory retirement age), West Somerset (31%), East Devon (30%) and East Dorset (also 30%). Policies must ensure that the specific needs of such groups are identified and incorporated into policy decision-making and implementation.
- 10.1.3** A key measure of success for the RSS will be to reduce the number of people in the South West suffering from deprivation, social exclusion and discrimination, and to improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable, not just those with economic choice, and in so doing help to ensure that people are treated fairly.

10.2 Equality and Diversity

- 10.2.1** Equality underpins the aspiration for a more sustainable, just, inclusive and prosperous South West. Effectively delivering equality of opportunity for all sectors of the community, regardless of geographical location, age, gender, race, faith, sexuality or ability is essential to the long-term success of the region. Inequality and social exclusion have multiple dimensions and it is important to start to break down the many stereotypes that exist in order to tackle unfairness and disadvantage and create a more successful region, and one which allows active engagement of all communities. Extending opportunities for all, means addressing social and economic barriers and celebrating and building upon the diversity of the South West's population as an asset.
- 10.2.2** This Draft RSS aims to contribute to eliminating discrimination arising as further growth happens and as planning policy is implemented in future. It is important to ensure that policy is sensitive to the needs of different groups within the South West so that all people in the region have the opportunity to benefit from the rising prosperity this strategy seeks to achieve and the opportunities enabled by positive planning.
- 10.2.3** Section 9 sets out the Statement of Priorities for Addressing Deprivation and Disadvantage in the South West. Local authorities should promote and enhance understanding of the relationship between improving quality of life, social cohesion and strengthening communities and economic performance. Community development principles and community-based mechanisms, such as Development Trusts, should be incorporated into programmes and projects to address economic and social needs and help achieve community ownership of issues and assets.
- 10.2.4** When developing policies or programmes, public sector organisations should be mindful of relevant legal frameworks such as the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), Disability Discrimination Act (2005), Race Relations Act (1976) and Race Relations Amendment Act (2000), future Age Discrimination Legislation (expected in 2006), and the Commission for Equality and Human Rights (expected in 2007), as well as EU Equalities Directives. Consideration must be given to the ways in which implementation will affect specific groups of people.



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10.2.5 LDDs should set clear objectives and determine priorities to address equality and diversity issues and to promote the diversity of communities as a key regional asset.

SI1 Equality Impact Assessment

Local Authorities will recognise that development and transport policies in LDDs do not affect everyone in the same way, and will ensure that, at an early stage, policies will not have unfavourable effects on some groups by conducting Equality Impact Assessments and by taking steps to mitigate negative effects. Public authorities should develop policies in full recognition of the diverse needs, circumstances and concerns of the people who will be affected by them.

SI2 Taking Account of the Needs of All Groups in Society

The needs of all groups in society will be taken account of when planning the development of communities in the South West to ensure that all members of society are able to benefit from growing prosperity and improving quality of life in the region.

10.3 Consultation – Engagement in the Planning Process

10.3.1 This Draft RSS has been prepared in the context of a thorough process of engagement and consultation which was set out in the Statement of Public Participation at the beginning of the process. Local authorities and partners should endeavour to pursue an open and collaborative approach to consultation when dealing with planning applications and LDF development. An active, inclusive and creative approach to consultation on policy and delivery in the region should be pursued by all regional partners.

10.3.2 Local authorities, regional bodies and other partners must make a clear distinction between consultation, where there is a genuine opportunity to change or influence policy, and communication and sharing of information about a strategy or policy where there is little or no opportunity to effect change. Best practice techniques in consultation and participation should be followed in order to ensure meaningful engagement of hard to reach groups.

10.3.3 The Assembly is joint signatory to a Regional Compact with the South West Forum (the regional network of voluntary and community groups representing over 200 organisations) aimed at improving partnership working and public and voluntary/community sector relationships within the region. The voluntary and community sector should be encouraged to continue to play a key role in helping to shape LDFs and regional strategies through engaging in consultation activities and in regional policy making.