

# Emerging findings from the gap analysis

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# Emerging findings from the gap analysis

## Section 1: General overview

The literature review identified that a number of the questions posed by the tender document cannot be answered on the basis of existing literature. These questions may need to be explored further in the case study phase. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the gap analysis reveals a disproportionate amount of literature on ethnicity and gender equality. Disability and age are less well covered, while information in relation to religion and sexual orientation is very limited at present.

We suggest including more detail about why diversity and equality is important and what benefits they may bring to local authorities in the three areas.

Information about structures, committees and staff is more comprehensive than for service procurement, delivery and impact and – to a lesser extent – representation, participation and leadership. Information on religion and sexual orientation tends to be very limited; the same is true, to a lesser extent, of age. Information and data tend to be more about process, less about impact. Little information is available where it is not a statutory requirement to collect the information (for example, on sexual orientation and religion).

While there is substantial data on numbers, profiles etc, there is far less ‘soft’ information about what works, pressures on different minority groups, etc. This points to the need for further in-depth qualitative research to understand the dynamics and pressures facing under-represented groups, individually and collectively.

## Section 2: Representation, participation and leadership

### Gaps in the research

There is a substantial amount of statistical data detailing the profiles of local councillors in terms of ethnicity, gender, disability and age. However, our review did not find any comparable information in terms of religion and sexual orientation of local councillors.

There was little information across the range of categories about the impact of legislation, or whether councillors are working effectively.

There is considerable information on the barriers preventing black and ethnic minority individuals and women from participating as councillors in local government. There is limited information of this sort about people with disabilities. With respect to age, the literature tends to be quite general, with references to the general apathy among young people that prevents engagement in political processes and structures. We found no information regarding religion or sexual orientation.

There is considerable information about the general and specific demands faced by black and ethnic minority councillors, although there is no comparable information on the other categories.

Information on the importance attached to perceived differences in leadership and participation styles across the different groups is limited, although some information is available for minority ethnic and women councillors. There is some information about the importance attached to achieving proportionate representation by councillors across the groups, particularly in relation to black and ethnic minority councillors, as well as mechanisms that might be used to improve current representation by black and ethnic minority councillors.

There is little information on strategic-level issues, such as recruitment, organisational positioning etc. Information on citizens and community participation is also limited, although research shows poor voter turnout among black and ethnic minority groups and younger voters. Research also shows considerable problems in terms of access to polling for disabled voters.

### **Section 3: Structures, committee organisation and staff**

Our review found comprehensive information about the statistical profiles of local authority staff across all groups, as well as on legislative initiatives and monitoring requirements. There is also substantial information on barriers to promotion for black and ethnic minority and female officers, but none relating to the other groups.

We found little information about an expectation that specific under-represented groups will undertake particular roles, nor on the importance for local communities of representativeness, consultation and participation among under-represented groups.

There is substantial information about the structures of local authorities in respect of ethnic minorities and women, but none regarding the other groups.

Audit Commission data provides information about harassment and discrimination issues in respect of ethnic minorities and women. We found little information on support mechanisms for under-represented staff, apart from positive action training initiatives in some authorities for women and ethnic minority officers.

Overall, the information on structures, committee organisation and staff, particularly for women and ethnic minorities, is more comprehensive than for other areas.

### **Section 4: Service procurement, delivery and impact**

General information on service procurement, delivery and impact was found to be very limited. Institutes such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation have, however, carried out considerable research at a more specific level, looking at service delivery, in particular service areas for particular client groups, such as housing for disabled people. Considerable research has also been carried out into the success of efforts to involve black and ethnic minority communities in regeneration initiatives, tenant participation schemes, neighbourhood renewal, LSPs etc.

MORI polls provide substantial information about service users' satisfaction with local services, in terms of ethnicity, gender, disability and age. They also include information about the suitability of services in relation to need, and experiences of discrimination.

Monitoring of service delivery in respect of the CRE Standard, and increasingly the Equality Standard, also provides valuable information about service delivery and impact. Best value requirements will also improve data in this area.

The literature review identified a number of questions posed by the tender document that cannot be answered on the basis of existing literature. These include

- Do the services meet the needs of the local population (with the exception of ethnic identity)?

- How are the services monitored in terms of equality and diversity? Is this explicit in the Best Value plan (again, except ethnic identity)
- The authorities' success in managing equality and diversity.

Research looking at the factors that contribute to local citizens' satisfaction with council services shows a correlation between deprivation and dissatisfaction levels. Service provision is harder in deprived areas, as residents have more complex needs. People living in deprived areas may also feel more dissatisfied generally, and so feel that their authority is not doing enough to help them. The challenge is for councils to continue to focus on meeting the needs of all sections of their local community, while being aware of the disparities in satisfaction arising from deprivation levels, ethnicity and other equality considerations. MORI surveys in 1998 and 2000 showed that men, people without disabilities, and those from black and ethnic minority communities were less satisfied with a range of council services, such as the handling of complaints, processing benefit applications, local authority recycling facilities, household waste collection and civic amenity sites. Black citizens were more likely to say that public services fell a long way short of their expectations, while women and disabled people generally had a more positive image of public services.