

## **Why does the council ask me personal questions?**

### **Introduction**

Whenever you have contact with the council and other public authorities we ask you about who you are. We want to know your age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief, whether you're disabled or not and whether you are transgender.

#### **1. What do you do with this information?**

Bristol City Council is committed to ensuring that we make the best use of your money and resources. We also have a legal duty to make equality a reality in the provision of all our services. The answers to these questions help us to find out whether everyone in the city is accessing the services to which they are entitled. We need to know who is using our services, what they think of them, and what their needs might be in the future. This information will enable us to direct our energies and services to where they are most needed and to make sure we are getting it right.

#### **2. But should I be telling the council such personal information about me?**

We know that you are told to be careful who you share personal information with. The data we collect is confidential and is used only to ensure that everyone is treated fairly and to ensure we are continuously improving our services. In almost all cases the data is used anonymously and we will not know that it is you.

#### **3. But you know my name and address?**

This is true, but in almost all cases such information will be dealt with separately from your personal information - the rest is just used for statistics. Where it is appropriate to keep such information on your file, for instance that you need information sent to you in large print, then it will only be retained to ensure that you are receiving an appropriate service.

#### **4. But how can I know can I trust you?**

There are very strict laws about how such information is held. The council has a duty to protect such information and to ensure it is kept anonymous or confidential and not shared with anyone.

#### **5. Give me an example of why it helps to know this information?**

We ask council tenants about their satisfaction with our housing services. Then we check whether women or disabled people or people from other communities are as satisfied with our services as everyone is (the overall satisfaction rate). Another example is we collect information about young people who are not in education, training or employment to see whether young people from a particular community are over-represented.

If we find out some people are less satisfied with our services or more likely to be unemployed, then we try to find out why this is. We can then take positive action to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to benefit from services or employment opportunities.

**6. But some of the questions seem very personal and do not seem very relevant?**

The council has decided that it is best to ask all of the equalities monitoring questions on all of its forms because we cannot assume that any of our services are perfect for any group of people. We check service uptake for all our services once a year for all communities. If we find that not many people from a particular community are using a service we can decide whether we need to provide specific information for them or if there are particular difficulties for that group of people in accessing our services.

In addition, we particularly do not have enough data concerning the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities and they have told us that they are keen for us to collect data whenever we get the opportunity. This is not being nosy, we are not interested in you personally, it is about collecting information so that we know who our communities are so that we can continue to ensure that we are providing appropriate services to the right people.

**7. But this is all about services, I work for the council and I am also asked these questions as an employee?**

The reasons are the same as for the delivery of services. The council wants to ensure that it reflects the community that it serves. This means trying to ensure that people from all backgrounds and communities are represented in its staff. The data collected is protected by the same strict laws that cover the collection of all other monitoring data. The information is published on the council's intranet.

**8. I still don't think I want to answer these questions.**

That's fine. All the questions we ask are voluntary and you will still receive a service from us whether or not you answer them. However, if you do answer them you will help us to ensure that our services are fair and accessible to everyone who is entitled to them. If we do not receive such information from the people who use our services we do not know who you are and we will find it more difficult to get it right and to meet your needs.

The council publishes its equalities data annually, and this can be found here: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Community-Living/Equality-Diversity/data-on-uptake-of-council-services-by-equalities-communities.en>  
Workforce data: <http://www.bristol.gov.uk/ccm/content/Jobs-Careers/Careers-Advice/bristol-city-councils-workforce.en>

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