

Equality and Diversity Strategy

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Contents

A.	Equality and Diversity	2
B.	The Council's Values.....	2
C.	Strategy Statement.....	2
D.	Employee Development	3
E.	Equality Act 2010 and its Public Sector Equality Duty	3
F.	Equality Information.....	4
G.	Publications	10
H.	Equality Objectives	10
I.	Service Equality Impact Assessments.....	10
J.	Action Areas	11
K.	Roles and Responsibilities	13
L.	Review.....	13

A. Equality and Diversity

For this Strategy, equality is about providing everyone with equal access to services and diversity is about providing services in the way people would like to have them delivered, as far as possible.

The Council's Customer Service Strategy aims to make it easy for all customers to access services by making sure that the appropriate channels are available and are promoted.

As an employer the Council is committed to equality and valuing diversity within its workforce. The Council's Workforce Strategy sets out the high level objectives for the workforce, identifying performance measures by which progress can be judged and puts forward a range of priorities which provide a work programme of future activity with regard to workforce development.

B. The Council's Values

The Council's values are set out in the Local Code of Corporate Governance as openness, support and respect; shared values; supported by officer (employee) and Member codes of conduct; and anti-corruption policies.

The Council's values are demonstrated through day-to-day behaviours, by openly stating expectations of conduct and respect for everyone; setting service standards and monitoring performance; monitoring customer complaints and making any necessary adjustments; and continuously reviewing services taking customer feedback into consideration and future service design where possible.

The Council will not discriminate against anyone, in particular but not exclusively under the Equality Act 2010, on grounds of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex or sexual orientation.

C. Strategy Statement

The Council promotes equality and diversity by treating everyone fairly and with respect.

The Council aims to ensure that everyone has equal access to services and opportunities and will ensure that employees and Members are aware of their role in delivering this Strategy.

The Council will not tolerate discrimination and will deal with any breaches through existing procedures.

D. Employee Development

Every person working for or serving the Council has a responsibility for implementing and promoting these principles in their day-to-day dealings with everyone – including members of the public, employees, Members and partners. Inappropriate behavior is not acceptable.

The Council believes it is important that its entire workforce contributes to the achievement of all of the Council's objectives. All employees are given equal access to corporate training and development opportunities and individual requirements are identified via the Council's Appraisal Scheme.

Equality and diversity briefing events for employees will be held annually, delivered by an external specialist.

E. Equality Act 2010 and its Public Sector Equality Duty

This strategy is designed to improve the delivery of all the Council services for all of its customers and also to ensure the Council has a committed, skilled, well-supported and representative workforce. In particular the strategy addresses the requirements under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

The specific duties require the Council to publish equality information and equality objectives.

The Equality Act 2010 Act clearly states that the Council must have due regard for advancing equality:

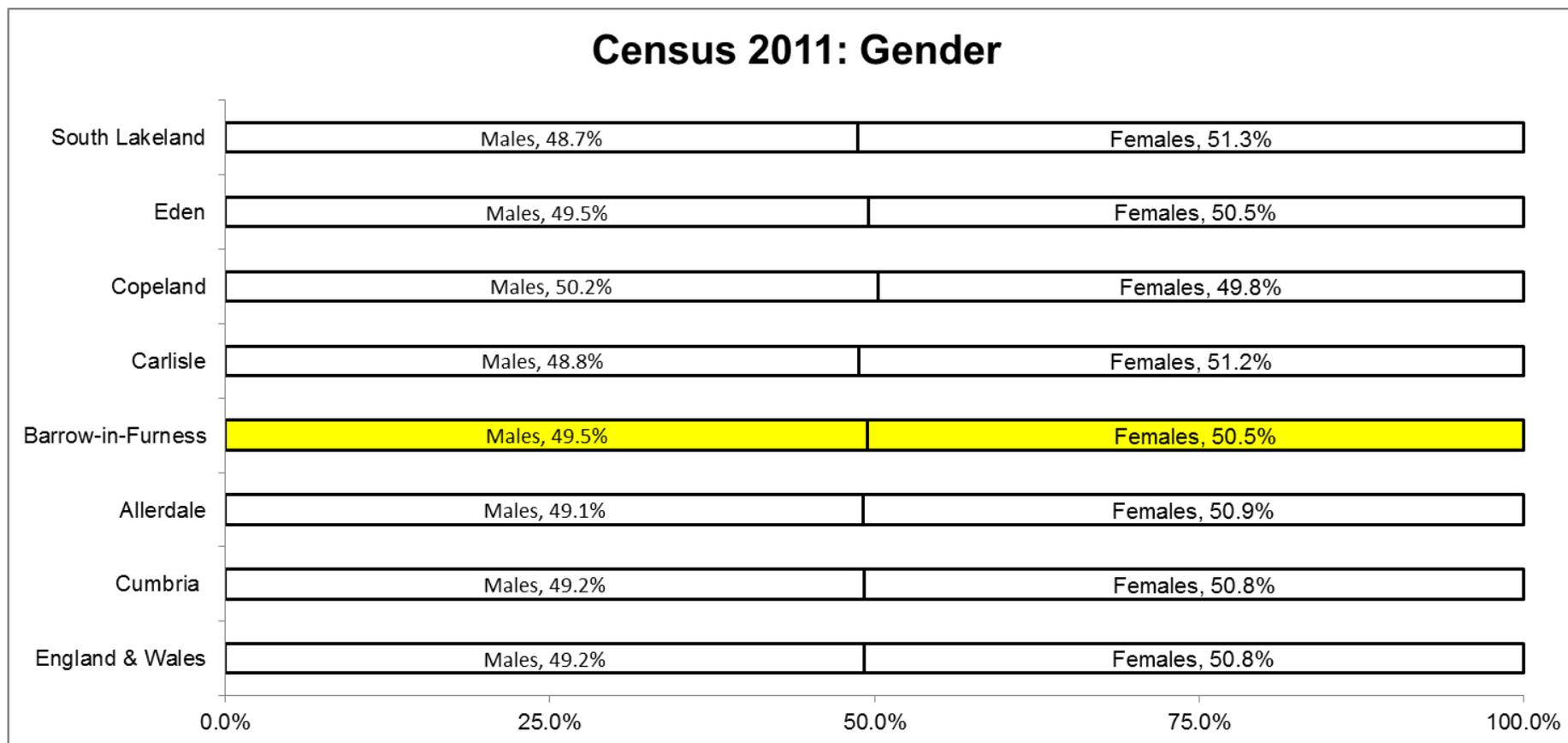
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low. It describes fostering good relations as tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups.

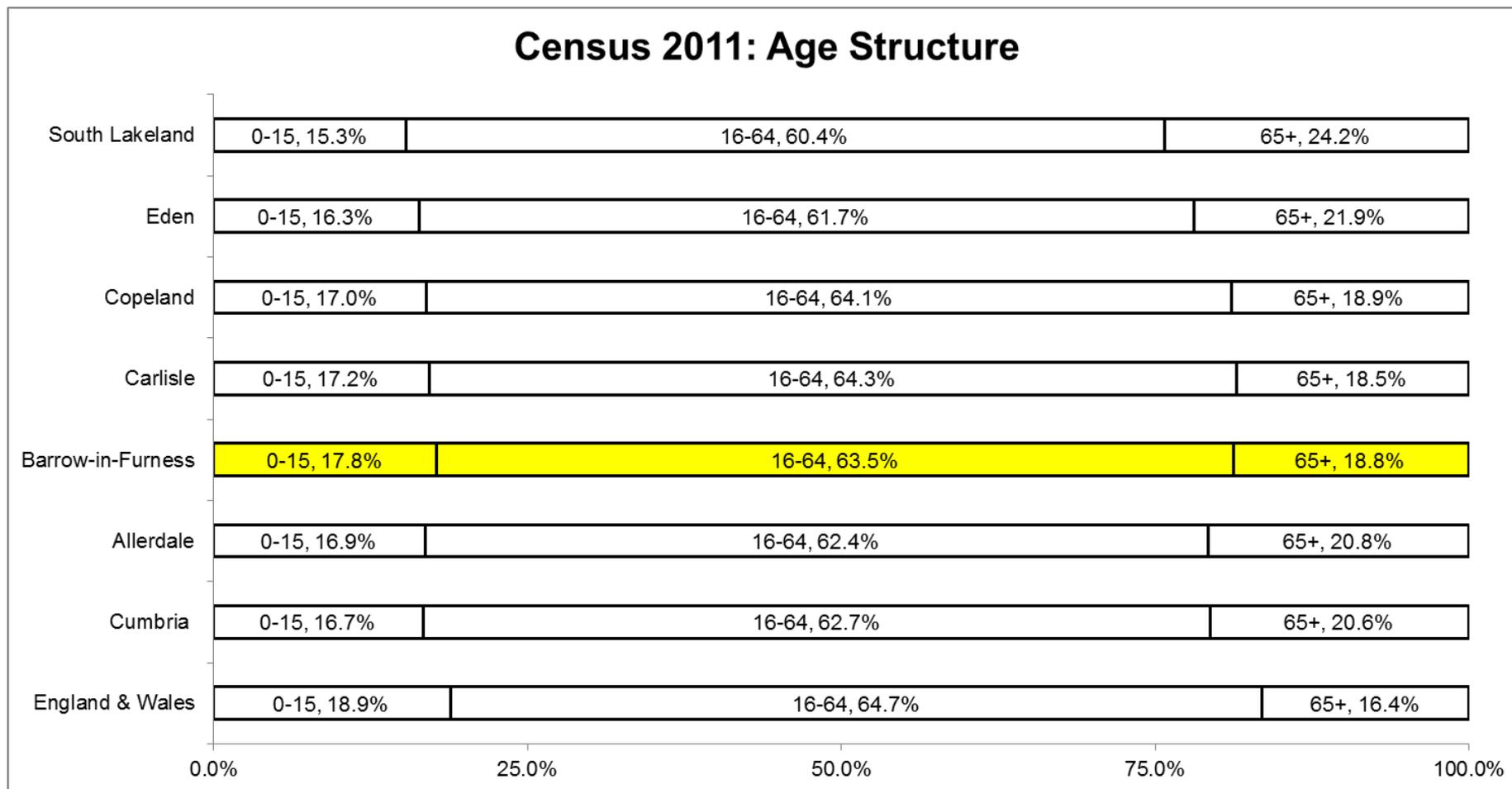
Compliance with the duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others.

The Council wishes to continue to fulfil its legal duties in a way which embeds equality and diversity into everything it does and is transparent, on-going, adds value, is relevant and fit for purpose; this way it will make sense to customers and employees, enhancing the Council's effectiveness and adding value to the lives of our customers, employees and partners.

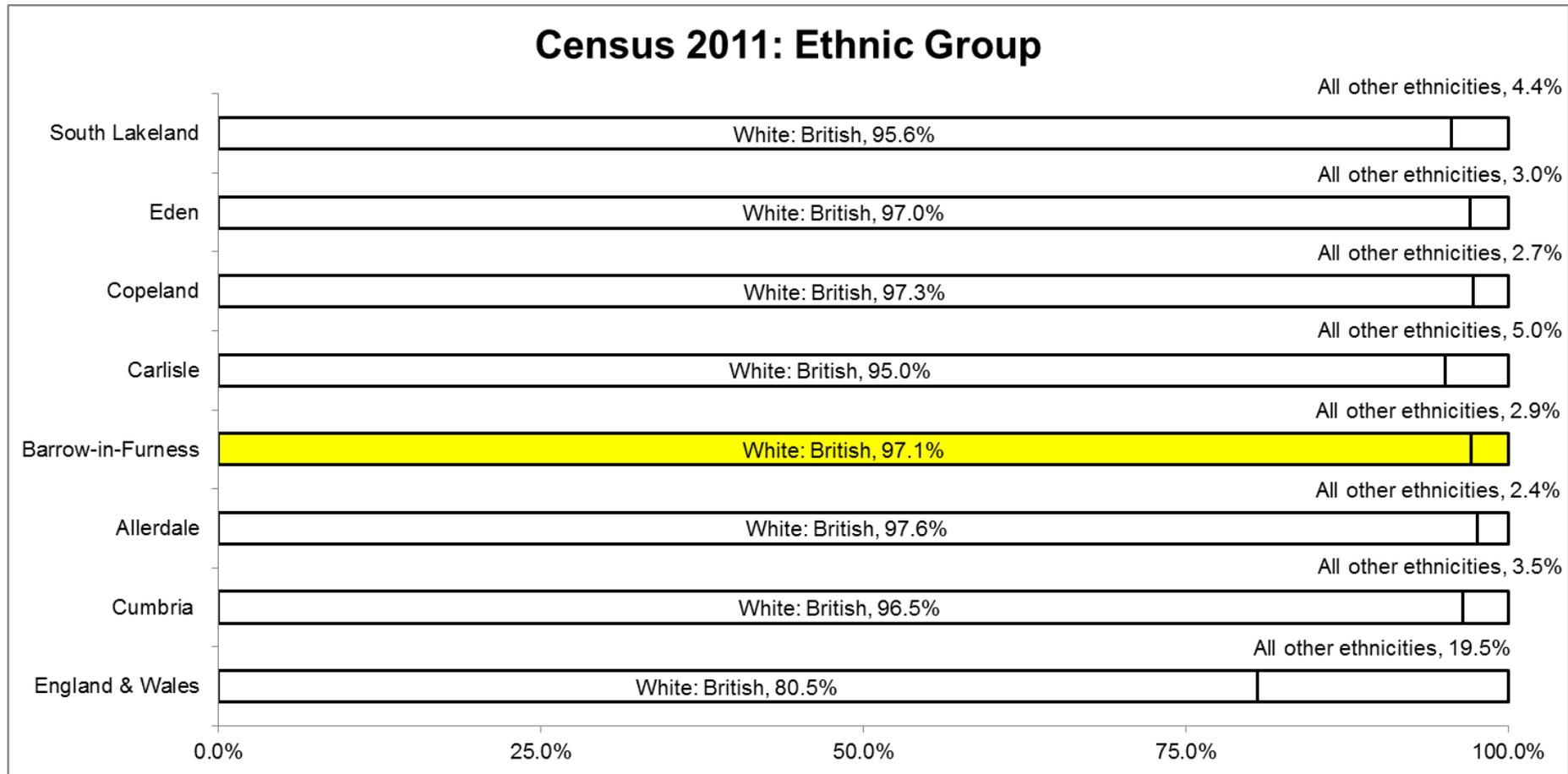
F. Equality Information

The Census 2011 equality information for Barrow Borough Council in both local and national context is set out in the following charts. The total population at the 2011 Census was 69,087 and at the 2001 Census was 71,980; a reduction of 2,893 or 4%.

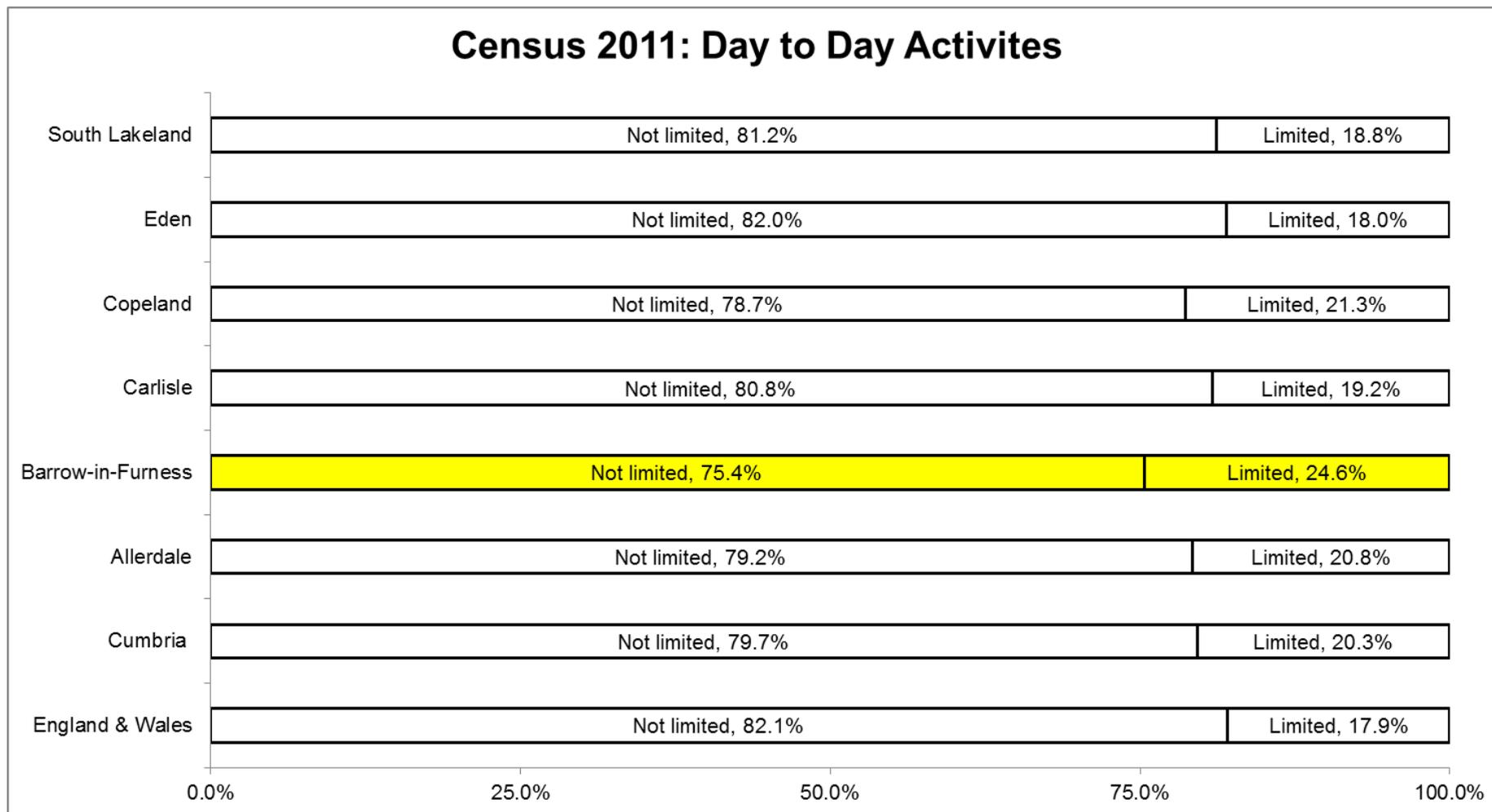




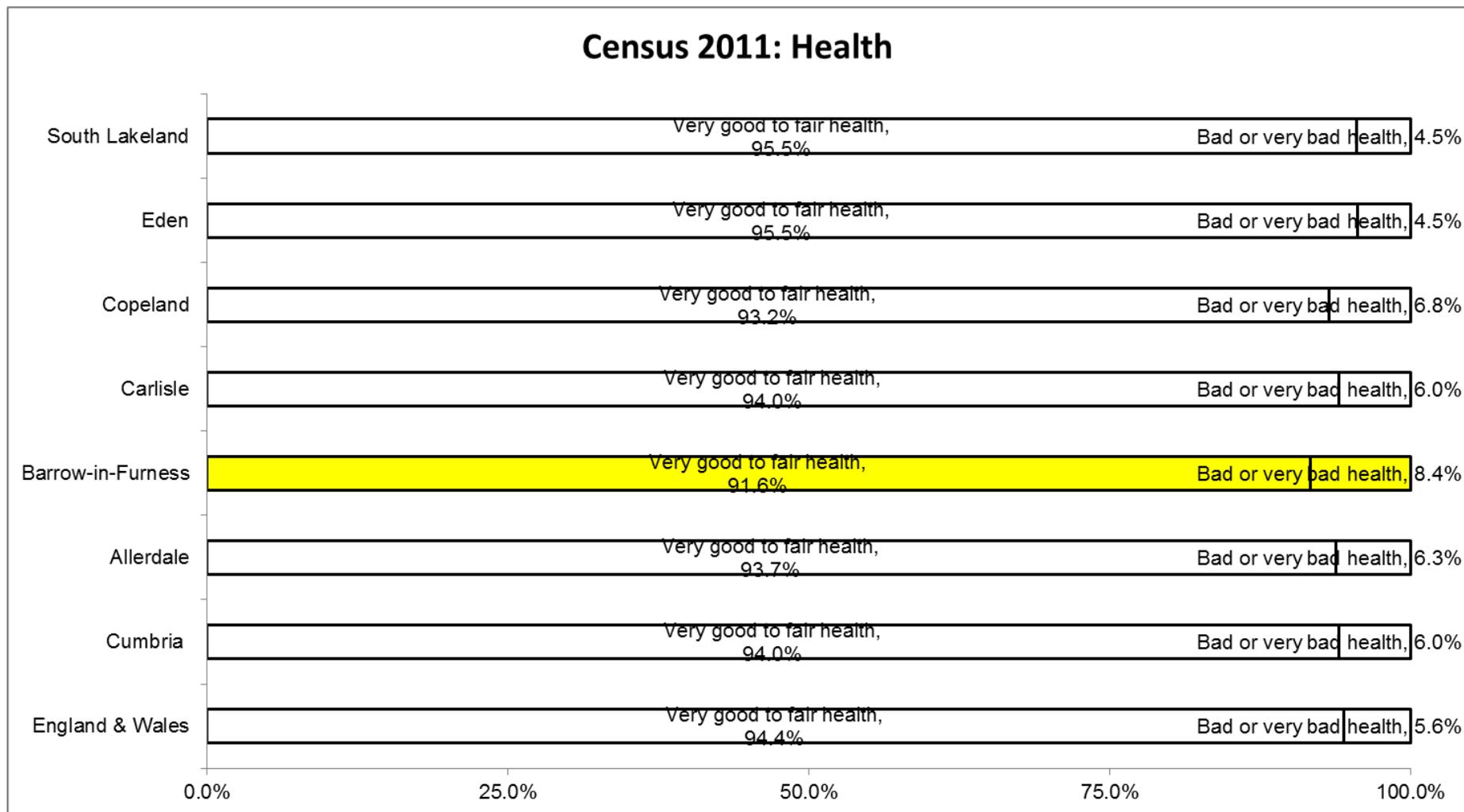
The age structure at the 2001 Census for the Borough, was 0-15 20.8%, 16-64 62.5% and 65+ 16.7%; a reduction in younger people. This shift is mirrored at the County level and national level, highlighting that England and Wales have an aging population.



The ethnicity at the 2001 Census for the Borough and the County was 98% White: British.

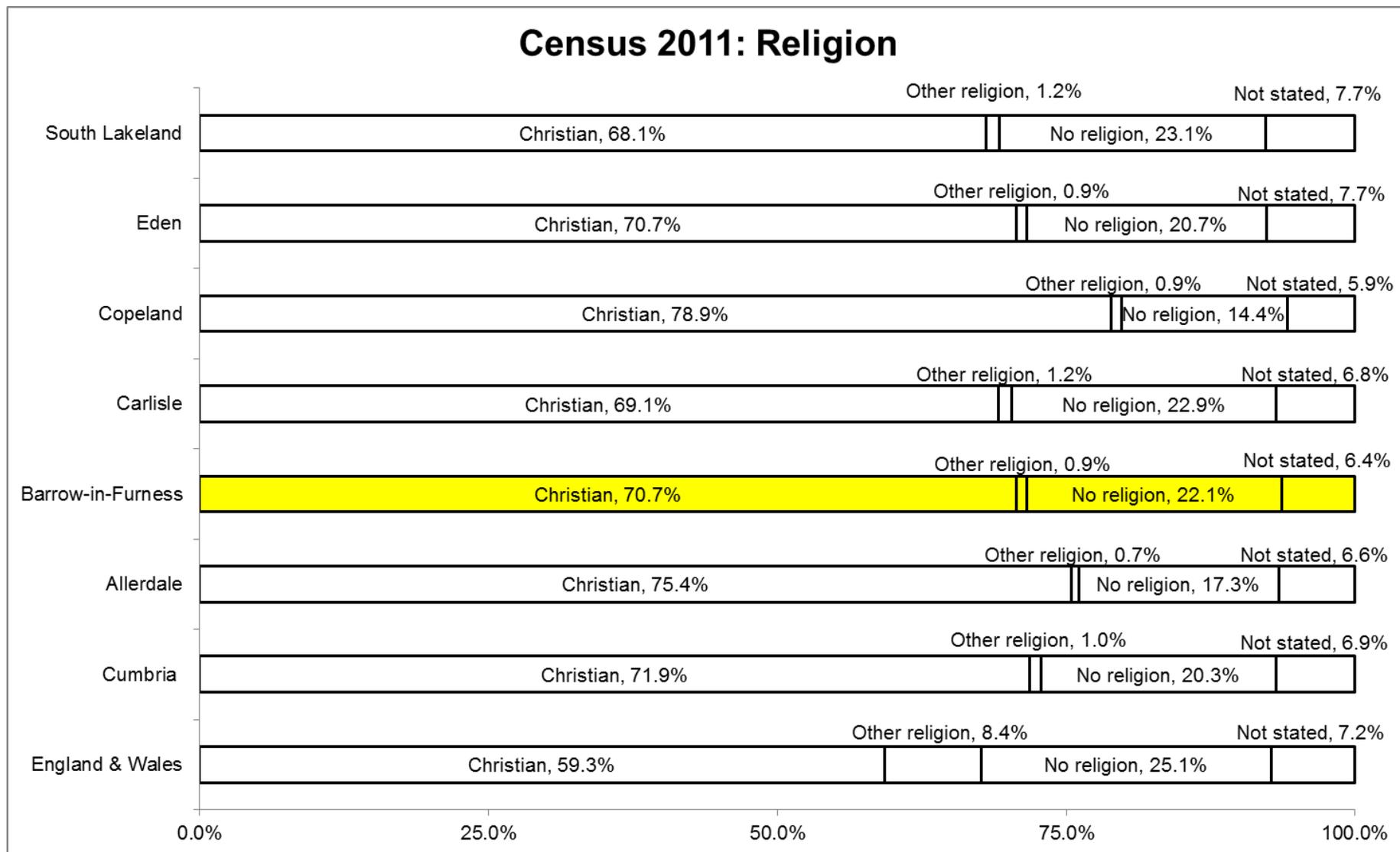


At the 2001 Census the Borough had a high percentage of people with a limiting long-term illness at 24.8%; little has changed with a reduction of 849 in number of people reported.



At the 2001 Census the percentage of people in the Borough with good or fairly good health was 86.8%; this shows improvement but remains proportionately high.

Census 2011: Religion



G. Publications

The Council is required to annually publish information demonstrating compliance with the Equality Duty.

The following data is published:

- Employee data is published on the Council's website showing the number of employees at the 31st March, the percentage of male and female, and the percentage of employees with a disability.
- Population data is published on the Council's website in the Council's Annual Monitoring Report. This provides an update on some of the Census 2011 data, including demographics and health, whilst serving its primary purpose of showing progress against the Council's Local Development Scheme and the number of dwellings delivered.
- The Cumbria Intelligence Observatory <http://www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/> also publishes Census 2011 data and updated information relating to health and wellbeing, population and housing, poverty and deprivation.

H. Equality Objectives

This strategy is designed to eliminate any equality weaknesses and build on and celebrate the Council's equality successes.

The Council is required to set specific, measurable equality objectives at intervals of not less than 4 years:

- Objective 1 – ensuring that the Council understand the needs of communities and provide equality of access to services and employment opportunities.
- Objective 2 - facilitate communities and agencies together to work in partnership to address the major issues affecting the Borough.
- Objective 3 - provide a range of customer focused services that offer value for money and meet the needs of people who live, work and visit the Borough.
- Objective 4 - ensuring that the Council supports the needs of the workforce and in doing so develop a range of skills and learning opportunities that are accessible to all.

I. Service Equality Impact Assessments

The Equality Duty requires the Council to understand the effect policies, services and procedures have on people with different protected characteristics. In order to do this an Equality Impact Assessment (Assessment) is carried out, which is a systematic way to ensure that policies, services and procedures do not have an adverse impact on a particular group of people.

In the case of new or changing policies, services and procedures, Assessments identify whether they will meet customers' needs and the Council's legal obligations. Assessments also highlight any potential positive impacts of the policy, service or procedure on groups of people, or ways in which community relations and equality can be promoted.

All Executive Committee reports include details on equality implications of proposed recommendations, so that Members are aware of them when taking decisions.

J. Action Areas

The Council will focus on delivering the stated equality objectives by setting three action areas:

Action Area 1: embedding equalities into all areas of the Council's work.	
The Council will do this by:	The Council will measure success by:
Having a customer focus, understanding customers better (internal and external) and involving them in the decision making process when making changes to service delivery.	Good quality equality information which explains the impact of Council services and employment practices on people who have protected characteristics. Fewer queries about why the Council are asking questions and more customers and employees answering all the questions.
Improving equality monitoring and explain why it is important.	A streamlined Equality Analysis process attached to all reports. Analysis information is accessible.
Streamlining an Equality Analysis process so it is less bureaucratic and easier to use – checking that it is used and attached to all reports.	Equality considerations included in the strategy development template and all service plans.
Integrating equality considerations into service planning.	
Publishing equality information as part of core council data on an on-going basis.	Equality information on the website updated at least annually.
Celebrating successes.	Equality good news celebrating our successes in council publications and on the website.
Having an equality focus in every service.	All services report on achievement against their equality objectives.

Action Area 1: embedding equalities into all areas of the Council's work.

The Council will do this by:	The Council will measure success by:
Improving equalities leadership where councillors and managers champion and monitor equality proactively.	Leaders (Councillors & managers) championing and monitoring equality proactively.
Assigning all services an equality improvement objective.	
Updating the council's website to support the equality strategy.	Website updated to support the equality strategy.

Action Area 2: being a strong partner and actively seeking to collaborate with partners to meet its public sector duties.

The Council will do this by:	The Council will measure success by:
Improving the quality and relevance of equality information we gather.	Equality information on the website updated at least annually with partners contributing. Filled the gaps in equality data.
Sharing information with partners.	A clear list of local groups who represent people from all the protected characteristics with whom the Council has established links.
Sharing approaches to delivering the Public Sector Equality Duty and best practice.	
Carrying out joint working on engagement.	
Working with groups who represent people who have protected characteristics.	
Proactively supporting local equality groups.	Increased involvement with local equality.

Action Area 3: further organisational development to ensure that Members and employee in order to deliver the Councils equality strategy and are representative of the community being served.

The Council will do this by:	The Council will measure success by:
Analysing our employee profile and creating strategies for improving representation.	A strategy and action plan for improving representation of under-represented groups in the workforce.
Training employees, embedding equalities into customer service training and the induction process for employees.	An updated online equality training program for all employees designed in line with this equality strategy.

Action Area 3: further organisational development to ensure that Members and employee in order to deliver the Councils equality strategy and are representative of the community being served.

The Council will do this by:	The Council will measure success by:
Ensuring all employees understand and demonstrate expected behaviours when dealing with customers (internal and external) who fall within the protected characteristic groups.	All employees will complete the updated equality training course so they understand and demonstrate expected behaviours when dealing with customers (internal and external) who fall within the protected characteristic groups.
Being clear on what behaviours are expected and challenging these when they are not adopted.	All new employees will have equality induction training.

K. Roles and Responsibilities

The Council has a Member Spokesperson for Equalities and Diversity and the Executive Director is the lead Chief Officer; however all Members and employees are responsible for ensuring that equality and diversity principles are reflected in all of the Council's services and that any complaints or incidents are responded to in a positive and pro-active way.

The Human Resources Manager monitors equality and diversity in respect of employee make-up, recruitment, training and other workforce related issues.

The Corporate Support Manager monitors equality and diversity in respect of corporate non-Housing customers; Housing customers are monitored by the Assistant Director of Housing.

The Assistant Director of Community Services monitors equality and diversity in respect of leisure and public amenities, and the Assistant Director of Regeneration and the Built Environment monitors equality and diversity in respect to development and environmental services.

Overall, the Council's Management Board and Full Council are responsible for ensuring that the equality and diversity principles are robustly applied and the set objectives are met.

The Council is a corporate member of the HQN Equality Exchange which provides managers with equality and diversity briefings, and employee training.

L. Review

This Strategy will be reviewed at least every 4 years and each time the objectives are set.