



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy

2022 - 2025

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Foreword

Paul Robinson, Chief Executive



We are committed to achieving continuous improvement and equality across all of our service areas for the benefit of both our employees and the residents of Worcestershire. We aim to deliver services that are equally accessible for all Worcestershire residents and to implement robust policies that will ensure equality in the recruitment, training, and development of our employees. We aim to always be inclusive, encourage equality and celebrate diversity. As part of this process our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) Strategy aims to ensure we embed equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Our EDI Strategy 2022 to 2025* is a working document, which with the support of our Equality Champions across the Council, will be constantly under review. We welcome any comments and feedback which may inform this process. We will report annually on the progress we have made and will review our strategy on an annual basis.

Finally, we would like to express our support for and commitment to this strategy and look forward to seeing positive outcomes and benefits emerge from its implementation. I look forward to working with you all to deliver this.

Chief Executive, Paul Robinson



*Our EDI Strategy 2022-2024 has been successfully embedded across the organisation, and had some powerful impacts since its launch in September 2022. With significant changes to the restructuring of our workforce, a number of external factors including moving colleagues and operations from County Hall, as well as some key programmes of work and initiatives driven by the strategy, it was agreed to extend our current strategy to September 2025. Doing so allows us to continue our commitment to the objectives in place, carry on with the important work being delivered in our Directorate Equality Groups, and importantly, gives us an opportunity to thoroughly engage, collaborate and improve our approach to the new EDI Strategy development, ensuring we produce a meaningful plan that is aligned with our other strategic works, and ready for September 2025.

Introduction



Belonging is at the heart of what we do and is one of the elements of culture - which sets out who we are as an organisation and how we are expected to work, lead and act to deliver our services.

We aim to collaboratively create an environment where everyone is engaged, supported and able to thrive in Worcestershire. Where people are listened to, valued for their experiences, backgrounds, and ideas and where we treat each other with respect and celebrate our differences and the value they bring. We want to empower, inform, and engage with communities, and provide an inclusive workplace where everyone has the opportunity to perform at their best and support the delivery of our goals for the benefit of the communities we serve.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is for all of us. The objectives within it will help guide us as a Council to not only meet our statutory and legal requirements, but also enable a sense of accountability in all areas of the Council. It will support our progress on our inclusion and diversity journey and enable our local communities to succeed and flourish.

Our legal duties

The Equality Act 2010 came into force on 1st October 2010 with further provisions being enforced on 6th April 2011. The new Act has been simplified to bring all existing discrimination laws together into one piece of legislation that addresses employment, provisions of goods and services, and property. The Equality Act 2010 benefits everyone in society, not just those who are marginalised.

The Act includes the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which has been extended to address age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership and pregnancy and maternity. These are referred to as 'protected characteristics'.

The first is commonly referred to as the 'Three Aims'

- The General Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) requires the Council to have due regard to the need to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- To advance equality of opportunity, the council must have due regard to the need to:
 - removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low
- This includes treating some people more favourably than others to redress existing inequality and taking into account the needs of disabled people.

The 'Specific Duties', are legal requirements designed to help the Council meet the general duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

They are:

- Publishing its own equality objectives by 6th April 2012. These objectives must be based on equality evidence and analysis, they must be specific and measurable, and be reviewed and revised at least every four years.
- Publishing equality information on its workforce and service in an accessible manner.
- Publishing evidence of equality analysis (formerly known as equality impact assessment) undertaken and information used to establish whether policies, practices, and decisions further the equality aims of the general duty or have an adverse effect on different groups. If there is evidence of the latter, the council should consider whether there are ways of mitigating any adverse impact identified.
- Publish information about engagement with people who have an interest in furthering the three aims of the general duty.

Our objectives

Details of how we can define, measure and action these objectives can be found in **Appendix 1**.



1. Build a resilient, empowered and engaged community that thrives in all of Worcestershire



2. Prioritise and embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at all levels



3. Ensure fair, positive, and proactive measures are taken to attract and retain diverse talent and skills, and development planning is in place for future leaders



4. Collaborate effectively in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion scheme of work and plans across the Council.

Measuring our objectives



Equality Impact Assessments

An Equality Impact Assessment, or EIA forms part of our legal duty as a Council, to show that we have considered the effect a decision or change the Council is making, or might make, will have on people across the county. Ensuring we have considered everyone, means we can make informed, fair and appropriate decisions, that are free from discrimination.

Each assessment considers the protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010. These are age, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy and maternity, religion and belief, sex and race.

How does this work? We identify a policy, practice, or decision; consult the people it effects if appropriate; gather and analyse information; complete the assessment; use the assessment to inform Council decisions; publish the assessment and the result of the decision (where appropriate).

Measuring our objectives

Governance

We have a devolved model of equality, diversity and inclusion work at the Council, which means all employees have a shared responsibility for acting on, progressing and being accountable for matters of equality, diversity and inclusion across each of our service areas and directorates. We work collaboratively to ensure fair outcomes, and take actions to promote positive outcomes for Worcestershire.

Our governance structure looks like this:



-**Equality Champions** are colleagues who champion equality, diversity and inclusion throughout their relevant service areas. They share initiatives, ideas, updates, communications and events, best practice, support their service area colleagues with relevant resources, identifying training and support across a variety of issues and topics. They inform our ED&I strategy and are members of our Directorate Equality Groups.

-**Directorate Equality Groups (DEG)** consist of 4 separate groups, which cover our different directorates. These are: People, Economy and Infrastructure, Commercial and Change, and Worcestershire Children First. This group is Chaired and lead by a senior member of the leadership team, and all Equality Champions from each directorate attend the DEG meetings. This is where the objectives are measured, work is planned and core elements of our equality, diversity and inclusion work come to life.

-**Strategic Diversity Leadership Group (SDLG)** has the Chairs from our Directorate Equality Groups, (who are Chief Officer Group members), the Assistant Director for HR and Organisational Development, and members of our Senior Leadership Team. It is chaired by our Chief Executive. This group leads on ensuring the decisions we make are fair, the progress we make is measured, the legal requirements and compliance around equality, diversity and inclusion is clear and adhered to, and above all drives the important message of equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation at all levels, leading by example.

Measuring our objectives



Reporting

To ensure we can measure our progress, successes and ongoing challenges in equality, diversity and inclusion work at Worcestershire, we have developed a robust reporting structure. The objectives within this strategy will be assessed quarterly at the Directorate Equality Groups, lead by the Chair for that group, and a summary report from each group will be shared with Strategic Leadership Diversity Group, to allow feedback on any issues arising, and in order to highlight any challenges.

Annually, and as part of our statutory duty in reporting on our workforce demographics, we will publish a report which shows what work has happened within Worcestershire County Council, to achieve the objectives set out in this strategy. It will confirm any work complete, ongoing or opportunities to make improvements.

Appendix 1

Detailed below are some ways in which we will capture, measure and analyse our objectives, and highlight through our annual report on how we have achieved and met these objectives, or where we have further opportunities for improvement.

1. Build a resilient, empowered and engaged community that thrives in all of Worcestershire

1.1 Engaging and encouraging participation between the communities we serve and Council services and staff.

- Through effective communication online or when interacting with service users (complaints & customer service for example) and making services accessible
- Community project work- Initiatives and grants, funding etc.

1.2 Support training, development and employment initiatives; countywide

- Collaborate with partners to ensure access to learning and employment across WCC area
- Develop or review our external relationships and build forums / platforms that regularly engage with groups currently under-represented or who have been historically excluded

1.3 Colleagues contribute, collaborate and drive inclusion forward

- SCULPT accessibility model is used ensuring a consistent and informative approach in our communications, contact with customers, clients and colleagues
- In line with the Workforce Strategy, colleague satisfaction and engagement is monitored and measured
- Staff network groups are developed

2. Prioritise and embed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at all levels

2.1 Implementing a governance structure for EDI

- 3 groups, meeting quarterly reviews of actions to ensure progress and accountability
- Create and publish an annual report to share updates on the EDI Strategy

2.2 Colleagues at senior levels are visible in driving inclusion and challenging behaviours

- Robust reporting framework to eradicate discriminatory behaviour (whistleblowing / policy work)
- EDI groups are supported with time, resources and regular involvement from SLT

3. Ensure fair, positive, and proactive measures are taken to attract and retain diverse talent and skills, and development planning is in place for future leaders

3.1 Removing barriers within our recruitment process

- Anonymised application and shortlisting and reviewing our accessibility / functioning
- Mandated EDI training for managers

3.2 Attract skilled diverse talent to WCC

- Develop and utilise a positive action plan to enable a representative workforce
- (Continuously look to improve our) rewards and benefits

3.3 Proactive future proofing and development opportunities for groups historically excluded, or who had barriers to leadership roles

- Initiatives: mentoring, coaching / workshops, application and interview support, leadership qualifications or learning programmes
- Collaboration with schools, colleges and universities for apprenticeships, work experience etc. opportunities

4. Collaborate effectively and empower our employees to be accountable for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion approach across the Council

4.1 Building confidence & skills in our colleagues leading on EDI work (Equality Champions)

- sharing best practice amongst governance groups (set meetings), enhanced and ongoing support for EDI training
- utilise intranet site for any relevant comms, training and resources available

4.2 Encouraging regular updates of colleagues' personal data (in line with current GDPR, privacy policy and Data Protection)

- collating and analysing workforce data to ensure our services and policy / process etc are relevant and meet the needs of our workforce, and share findings across the council

4.3 Communications promote inclusion and belonging; our diverse current and potential workforce are valued, respected, and celebrated

- Colleagues receive important and relevant communications in a way that is easily accessible for them; through email, intranet, or their line managers (in team briefings or 1-2-1s etc.)
- Key events, celebrations, awareness days, and days of observance are highlighted
- Terminology and language is built around allyship and inclusion, with input and collaboration from Equality Champions

