

Notice of Meeting

People, Performance and Development Committee



Date and Time

Monday, 9
September 2024
10.30 am

Place

Surrey County
Council, Woodhatch
Place, 11 Cockshot
Hill, Reigate, Surrey,
RH2 8EF

Contact

Joss Butler
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Committee Members:

Tim Oliver OBE (Chairman), Denise Turner-Stewart (Vice-Chairman), Eber Kington, Sinead Mooney, Mark Nuti and Fiona White

If you would like a copy of this agenda or the attached papers in another format, e.g. large print or braille, or another language, please email Joss Butler on joss.butler@surreycc.gov.uk.

This meeting will be held in public at the venue mentioned above and may be webcast live. Generally the public seating areas are not filmed. However, by entering the meeting room and using the public seating area or attending online, you are consenting to being filmed and recorded, and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If webcast, a recording will be available on the Council's website post-meeting. The live webcast and recording can be accessed via the Council's website:

<https://surreycc.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

If you would like to attend and you have any special requirements, please email Joss Butler on joss.butler@surreycc.gov.uk. Please note that public seating is limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

AGENDA

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 22 JULY 2024

(Pages
1 - 4)

To agree the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members present are required to declare, at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter

- (i) Any disclosable pecuniary interests and / or
- (ii) Other interests arising under the Code of Conduct in respect of any item(s) of business being considered at this meeting

NOTES:

- Members are reminded that they must not participate in any item where they have a disclosable pecuniary interest
- As well as an interest of the Member, this includes any interest, of which the Member is aware, that relates to the Member's spouse or civil partner (or any person with whom the Member is living as a spouse or civil partner)
- Members with a significant personal interest may participate in the discussion and vote on that matter unless that interest could be reasonably regarded as prejudicial.

4 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

To receive any questions or petitions.

Notes:

1. The deadline for Member's questions is 12.00pm four working days before the meeting (3 September 2024).
2. The deadline for public questions is seven days before the meeting (2 September 2024).
3. The deadline for petitions was 14 days before the meeting, and no petitions have been received.

5 ACTION REVIEW

(Pages
5 - 8)

The Committee to review the Action Tracker.

6 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages
9 - 12)

The Committee to consider the Forward Work Programme.

- 7 PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2024-2025** (Pages 13 - 34)
- The People, Performance and Development Committee is invited to recommend the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/2025 to the next meeting of full Council on 8 October 2024 for publication on the Council's external website.

- 8 UPDATE ON EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) AT SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL** (Pages 35 - 108)
- This paper provides a progress report to the People, Performance and Development Committee on the Local Government Association (LGA) equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) peer review and the three Surrey County Council (SCC) EDI Employee Experience Reviews which were commissioned in 2023. It also outlines the approach taken to incorporate recommendations into the 2024/25 EDI Action Plan and People Strategy Delivery Plan.

9 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Recommendation: That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

PART TWO – IN PRIVATE

- 10 AGENCY & INTERIM SPEND 23/24 AND QUARTER 1 24/25 FINANCIAL YEARS** (Pages 109 - 116)
- People and Change reports monthly on the percentage of agency spend within the total staffing pay bill, as part of the regular Key Performance Indicator (KPI) reporting.
- This report provides a more detailed analysis of the agency and interim spend for the last financial year 23/24, and the first quarter of the 24/25 financial year.

11 SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL REDUNDANCY AND PENSION PAYMENTS FOR AN SCC EMPLOYEE

(Pages
117 -
122)

To report to the People Performance and Development Committee compulsory redundancy payments for one employee in the Service Delivery Central Team in Adults, Wellbeing & Health Partnerships (AWHP), where the combined pension strain cost and redundancy payment exceeds £150,000.

This report is being brought to the Committee in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation which requires any severance payments totalling more than £150,000 to be approved by this Committee.

12 PUBLICITY OF PART 2 ITEMS

To consider whether the item considered under Part 2 of the agenda should be made available to the press and public.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of People, Performance and Development Committee will be on 4 November 2024.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive
Published: 30 August 2024

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY AND FILMING – ACCEPTABLE USE

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Thank you for your co-operation.

QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

Cabinet and most committees will consider questions by elected Surrey County Council Members and questions and petitions from members of the public who are electors in the Surrey County Council area.

Please note the following regarding questions from the public:

1. Members of the public can submit one written question to a meeting by the deadline stated in the agenda. Questions should relate to general policy and not to detail. Questions are asked and answered in public and cannot relate to “confidential” or “exempt” matters (for example, personal or financial details of an individual); for further advice please contact the committee manager listed on the front page of an agenda.
2. The number of public questions which can be asked at a meeting may not exceed six. Questions which are received after the first six will be held over to the following meeting or dealt with in writing at the Chairman’s discretion.
3. Questions will be taken in the order in which they are received.
4. Questions will be asked and answered without discussion. The Chairman or Cabinet members may decline to answer a question, provide a written reply or nominate another Member to answer the question.
5. Following the initial reply, one supplementary question may be asked by the questioner. The Chairman or Cabinet members may decline to answer a supplementary question.

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MINUTES of the meeting of the **PEOPLE, PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE** held at 3.00 pm on 22 July 2024 at Surrey County Council, Woodhatch Place, 11 Cockshot Hill, Reigate, Surrey, RH2 8EF.

These minutes are subject to confirmation by the Committee at its next meeting.

Members present:

Tim Oliver OBE (Chairman)
Denise Turner-Stewart (Vice-Chairman)
Eber Kington
Sinead Mooney
Mark Nuti
Fiona White

11/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS [Item 1]

None received.

12/24 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - 9 APRIL 2024 [Item 2]

The minutes were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

A Member noted that the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Resources and Performance Select Committee were due to be invited to a future meeting of the People, Performance and Development Committee for when it considers an update on the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy.

13/24 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST [Item 3]

There were none.

14/24 QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS [Item 4]

One Member Question was received from Cllr Eber Kington. The question and response was published in a supplementary agenda.

Cllr Kington thanked the Chairman for the response and stated that he was committed to speaking to the new Chief Executive to outline that the council needed a leaner senior leadership structure and that the balance of the number of directors managing front line services, compared to internal organisation services, needed to be addressed. Cllr Kington asked the Chairman whether he would also make this commitment which was agreed. The Chairman added that work was underway to consider the structure in a number of areas across the organisation.

15/24 ACTION REVIEW [Item 7]

Officers:

Shella Smith, Director – People and Change

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. Officers noted that Members of the Committee would consider a periodic report on agency workers and the actions put in place to address the LGA peer review recommendations relevant to staffing at the People, Performance and Development Committee meeting in September 2024. In regard to the agency workers report, Members noted that the report would contain data from the previous financial year and the first quarter of the current financial year.

Actions / further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

16/24 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME [Item 5]

Officers:

Shella Smith, Director – People and Change

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The Chairman introduced the report and provide a brief overview.
2. The Committee noted detail on the reporting process for reports to be considered by the People, Performance and Development Committee. In regard to the Transgender+ Policy, a Member sought detail on the reporting history and stressed the importance of Member review before publication.

Actions / further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

17/24 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC [Item 6]

RESOLVED: That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information under the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

18/24 SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL PAY AND TERMS & CONDITIONS OF SERVICE [Item 12]

Officers:

Paul Smith, Interim Project Manager Pay & Reward

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The report was introduced by officers. The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the officers present before moving to recommendations.

Actions / further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Committee agreed to note the report.

19/24 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT COSTS [Item 8]**Officers:**

Shella-Marie Smith, Director of People & Change

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The report was introduced by officers. The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the officers present before moving to recommendations.

Actions / further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

The Committee agreed to note the report.

20/24 REDUNDANCY AND PENSION PAYMENTS FOR A SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL EMPLOYEE [Item 9]**Officers:**

Shella-Marie Smith, Director of People & Change

Key points raised during the discussion:

1. The report was introduced by officers. The Committee asked a number of questions which were responded to by the officers present before moving to recommendations.

Actions / further information to be provided:

None.

Resolved:

See exempt minute – E-14-24

21/24 PUBLICITY OF PART 2 ITEMS [Item 10]**22/24 DATE OF NEXT MEETING [Item 11]**

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting would be held on 9 September 2024.

Meeting ended at: 3.45 pm

Chairman



People, Performance and Development Committee
9 September 2024

Action Review

Purpose of the report:

For Members to consider and comment on the Committee's actions tracker.

Introduction:

An actions tracker recording actions and recommendations from previous meetings is attached as **Annex 1** and the Committee is asked to review progress on the items listed.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to monitor progress on the implementation of actions from previous meetings.

Report contact: Joss Butler, Committee Manager

Contact details: joss.butler@surreycc.gov.uk

Annexes:

Annex 1 – People, Performance and Development Committee Actions Tracker

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People, Performance & Development Committee – ACTION TRACKER
9 September 2024

ONGOING ACTIONS

Number	Meeting Date	Item	Action	Action by whom	Action update

COMPLETED ACTIONS

A6/23	14 November 2023	Forward Work Programme	Officers to include relevant budget details related to senior appointments within the periodic report on agency workers which is due to be considered by the People, Performance and Development Committee.	Director of People and Change	The item has been rolled back to the September meeting.
A7/23	14 November 2023	Forward Work Programme	Officers to submit a report to the committee which provides an overview of any actions put in place to address the LGA peer review recommendations relevant to staffing.	Director of People and Change	The EDI report is due to be considered in September 2024.

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People, Performance and Development Committee
9 September 2024

Forward Work Programme

Purpose of the report:

For Members to review and comment on upcoming items due for consideration by the People, Performance and Development Committee.

Introduction:

A Forward Plan recording agenda items for consideration at future People, Performance and Development Committee meetings is attached as **Annex 1**, and Members are asked to review the items listed on the Forward Plan.

Recommendations:

That the People, Performance and Development Committee review items that it is due to consider at future meetings (Annex 1).

Report contact: Joss Butler, Committee Manager

Contact details: joss.butler@surreycc.gov.uk

Annexes:

Annex 1 – People, Performance and Development Committee Forward Work Programme

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People Performance and Development Committee Forward Work Programme



November

Item title	Surrey Pay
Report author	Shella Smith, Director of People and Change
Item Summary	To review the Trade Union pay claim and agree the timetable and principles for the offer for discussion with Corporate Leadership Team.

Item title	Surrey Arts Tutors Pay & Terms and Conditions (Part 2)
Report author	Shella Smith, Director of People and Change
Item Summary	To receive a report on the Surrey Arts Tutors Pay & Terms and Conditions.

January 2025

Item title	Surrey Pay
Report author	Shella Smith, Director of People and Change
Item Summary	To agree the pay offer in principle in order for negotiations to commence

March / April 2025

Item title	Surrey Pay
Report author	Shella Smith, Director of People and Change
Item Summary	To approve the Surrey Pay Offer (timetable may vary depending).

Item title	Officer Code of Conduct
Report author	Shella Smith, Director of People and Change
Item Summary	To complete an annual review of the Officer Code of Conduct

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Senior Officer Appointments will be scheduled as and when required.



People, Performance and Development Committee
9 September 2024

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Pay Policy Statement 2024-2025

Purpose of the report:

The People, Performance and Development Committee is invited to recommend the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/2025 to the next meeting of full Council on 8 October 2024 for publication on the Council's external website.

Recommendations:

The People, Performance and Development Committee (PPDC) is asked to recommend publication of the Pay Policy Statement (Annex 1) to the next Surrey County Council full Council meeting on 8 October 2024.

Introduction:

1. To comply with Section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 and related guidance under Section 40 provided by the Secretary of State, all local authorities are required to publish a Pay Policy Statement, approved through decision by full Council effective from 1 April each year.
2. The main points that must be covered include:
 - the remuneration of Chief Officers.
 - the responsibilities of Surrey County Council's (SCC) remuneration committee (the People, Performance and Development Committee) for determining the terms on which Chief Officers are employed; and
 - the Council's current policies on equal pay, redundancy, and severance.

3. The Statement has been updated following the Surrey Pay annual review for 2024/2025 and has been written as though it has already been agreed by full Council.
4. The key changes outlined in the Pay Policy Statement reflect the outcome of the 2024/2025 pay negotiations with UNISON and GMB in respect of Surrey Pay and terms and conditions for schools and non-schools.
5. The inclusion of a Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS) in Section 15 is also a new addition to the Statement in 2024/2025, following its approval by PPDC in January 2024. The scheme was launched as a pilot to Communications and Engagement, SFRS and the Emergency Management Team and subsequently to People and Change. In total 6 applications have been approved and there are 4 more underway in People and Change. The scheme is currently paused, and no further applications are being considered.
6. The Statement has been drafted to reflect the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014 as well as guidance published by the Department for Communities and Local Government on Openness and Accountability in Local Pay 2012, to comply with Section 40 of the Localism Act 2011. Account has also been taken of the final report and the recommendations made in the Hutton Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector 2011.
7. The Pay Policy Statement should be updated and published each year to reflect any changes to the Council's reward strategy.

The Statement will include hyperlinks to:

- (i) Documents already published on the Council's website:
 - Councillors and committees (which sets out the role of the PPDC as the Council's remuneration committee).
 - Statement of Accounts, which relates to senior staff salaries
- (ii) Additional documents available via the Council's website including:
 - Equalities Statement.
 - Gender Pay Gap report
 - Surrey Pay rates
 - Pay Multiple

Conclusions:

8. Financial and value for money implications

The cost of the 2024/2025 pay award balanced the economic context with the need for an affordable pay offer and meets SCC's desire to pay the National Living Wage for all staff.

9. Equalities and Diversity Implications

The pay award provides for a greater percentage pay increase in

respect of employees in in the lower pay groups where there is a high representation of female employees.

The bottom loading of pay increases over the past 2 years has been a major contributor to the reduction in the Councils Gender Pay Gap.

10. Risk Management Implications

The Pay Policy Statement is referred to the Committee to ensure there is appropriate probity and transparency applied to the Council's reward strategy.

Next steps:

Once approved by full Council on 8 October 2024, this Pay Policy Statement will be published on Surrey County Council's external website.

Report contact:

Emma Lucas, Head of Business Partnering and Employment Practice

Contact details:

emma.lucas@surreycc.gov.uk

Annex 1 – Pay Policy Statement 2024/2025

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Surrey County Council

Pay Policy Statement 2024-2025

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1. Introduction

This Pay Policy Statement was approved by a meeting of the full County Council on 8th October 2024 and is effective from 1 April 2024. It is published to comply with the requirements of Section 38(1) of the Localism Act, 2011 and related guidance under Section 40 provided by the Secretary of State.

This Statement includes information relating to the terms and conditions that are determined locally by the council and are referred to as 'Surrey Pay.' The Council's reward strategy is based on the local negotiation of Surrey Pay terms and conditions of service. Pay, including terms and conditions, are reviewed annually with any changes agreed by the People, Performance and Development Committee, (PPDC). The Council recognises two Trade Unions, the GMB and UNISON, for the purposes of negotiating Surrey Pay and collective bargaining.

In addition, there are a number of National Agreements produced through collective bargaining arrangements for different groups of local government staff. The main negotiating bodies relevant to the council's workforce and their scope are listed below. Surrey County Council operates these national conditions as amended by local agreements.

Terms and conditions determined on a national basis by independent organisations or arrangements include:

- Fire fighters: whose pay and conditions are determined by the National Joint Committee for Local Authorities Fire and Rescue Service.
- Teachers: whose terms and conditions are determined by the Department for Education and governing bodies.
- Educational psychologists: whose terms and conditions are determined by the Soulbury Committee.
- Youth and community workers whose terms and conditions are determined by the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC).

This Statement does not include details of the terms and conditions of council employees that have retained terms and conditions following a transfer under Transfer of Undertakings and Protection of Employment Regulations.

This Pay Policy Statement will be updated as soon as possible following any pay changes and at least annually.

2. Further Details

Specific details may be accessed via the links indicated below. Full details of 2024/2025 pay scales can be found in Annex 1, attached.

The council publishes details of staff earnings in accordance with legal requirements on transparency. Further information is contained in the [Annual Report and Accounts](#) in accordance with the Audit of Accounts legislation, as well as within the Transparency section of Surrey-I (see section 5 of this Statement).

3. Governance

- i. [The People, Performance and Development Committee](#) (PPDC) acts as the County Council's Remuneration Committee under delegated powers in accordance with the Constitution of the County Council. Pay, terms and conditions for all employees except Centrally Employed Teachers and those employed on Soulbury, and national Committees are determined by the PPDC including the remuneration of Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers.

- ii. **Backdating the Surrey Pay award.**

The Surrey Pay award is effective from 1 April each year, where the pay award is agreed and implemented after 1 April it will not normally be retrospectively applied to anyone who has left the council's employment between the effective date of the award and the agreement date, (i.e. the date that any collective agreement with the trade unions is signed or in the absence of a collective agreement, the date of PPDC approval to implement).

The exception to this process normally only applies to employees who leave due to compulsory redundancy and their leaving date is between the effective date of the award and the agreement date. These employees will receive arrears of pay for this period upon request to the Council [although, employees will not be entitled to a recalculation of redundancy pay based on the post pay award rates of pay]. However, due to the configuration of the MySurrey payroll system, for 2024 the Surrey Pay award, will be backdated to 1 April 2024 and paid to all employees irrespective of whether people have left our employment in the period 1 April to 8 May 2024.

The practice of not paying arrears to staff who leave prior to the pay award being agreed will resume in 2025.

4. Definitions

For the purpose of this Pay Policy Statement the following definitions will apply:

- i. **Lowest paid employees**

Surrey County Council defines its lowest paid employees as those who are paid on the lowest Surrey Pay grade, PS 1/2. As of 1 April 2024, this equates to £22,599 per annum for full time staff.

- ii. **Full time**

A full-time post is based on a 36-hour working week for staff on main Surrey Pay

- iii. **Chief Officers**

The majority of statutory and non-statutory Chief Officers of the County Council report directly to the Chief Executive as the Head of the Authority's paid service. In addition, for the purposes of this Pay Policy Statement, this group also includes the majority of posts who report to a Chief Officer, (Deputy Chief Officers).

- iv. **Surrey Pay salary ratios**

The publication of the pay multiple as a determinant of the relationship between the pay of Chief Officers and that of the rest of the workforce was recommended by the Hutton report on Fair pay. This is a calculation in the form of a ratio between the median



earnings across the organisation and the highest paid employee. [The pay multiple](#) is published separately on the County Council website and monitored annually.

5. Salary Transparency

Surrey County Council is committed to openness and transparency to demonstrate to its residents and local taxpayers that it delivers value for money. As part of the national and local government transparency agenda it publishes information on its website detailing Surrey Pay ranges, expenditure over £500 and contracts with a value of £50,000 or more.

To continue this commitment, and in line with the Local Government Transparency Code 2014, the Council has published details of salaries paid to senior staff on its website. This information is updated on an annual basis and covers senior positions with annual salaries of £50,000 and above.

In addition, the 'pay multiple' will be calculated each year and will be published on the County Council's website. Historical information will be retained in order to monitor the pay multiple over time.

6. Equal Pay

The Council is committed to ensuring that its employment policies and practices comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. This includes the application of a robust job evaluation process to ensure that all staff receive equal pay for work of equal value.

i. Grading Structure

The allocation of Surrey Pay grades to jobs is determined by (HAY) job evaluation or in accordance with a job family underpinned by (HAY) job evaluation. The Surrey Pay grading structure covers all jobs from the lowest grade to Chief Officers, including the Chief Executive, on the highest grade.

ii Remuneration on Appointment

Newly appointed or promoted staff are normally appointed to the minimum salary on a grade unless there is clear business reason to appoint at a higher salary within the grade range.

Where it is necessary for a newly appointed employee to relocate in order to take up a post, the Council may make a contribution towards the reimbursement of relocation expenses in line with the Relocation Policy.

ii. Supplements

Managers may make a business case for an additional supplement to be paid above the maximum for the particular grade under specific circumstances or if it proves exceptionally difficult to recruit at the rate advertised. Such supplements must be supported by a business case, approved by the Director of People & Change in conjunction with the Chair of the PPD Committee in the case of Chief Officers, or by the Director of People & Change under delegated powers for all other staff.

7. Remuneration for Chief Officers

Chief Officers are appointed within the leadership pay model at a spot salary within the appropriate pay band range.

Annual salary reviews for Chief Officers will take into account any agreed adjustments to senior management pay rates (if any) as determined by the PPDC and the JNC pay award for Chief Officers pay for local authorities. Details of the remuneration paid to all members of the Council's Leadership Team are available in the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts.

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8. Remuneration for employees who are not Chief Officers

Apart from the differences in pay scales and pay models, there are minimal differences in entitlement to remuneration between Chief Officers, Deputy Chief Officers, and the rest of the workforce as the county council is working towards harmonisation of terms and conditions of service between staff groups.

i. Surrey Pay staff

Surrey Pay comprises pay grades PS1/2 to PS14 and pay grades for senior managers PS15 to Chief Executive.

Surrey Pay roles are aligned to a defined pay model as follows:

- Spot Salary Pay model
- Job Family Pay Model
- Career Pay Model
- Leadership Pay Model

Surrey Pay is reviewed annually to come into effect from 1 April each year and staff will progress through the fixed pay points for their grade until the maximum of the grade is reached.

Any increases to the pay points for Surrey Pay grades PS1/2 to PS14 as part of the annual pay review will take into account the NJC pay award for local government employees.

Annual individual pay progression will be subject to:

- Staff being in post at their current grade level on 1 October (or the first working day of the week) in the previous year. Staff appointed between October and March will receive their first increment after six months in role and will then fall in line with the April annual review.
- Performance in the role, and
- Scope being available within the individual pay grade until the top of the grade is reached.

Employees subject to career grade schemes will progress in line with the arrangements for that position.

ii. Apprentices

Apprenticeship pay is aligned to the main Surrey Pay rates as follows:

- The salary for level 2/3 apprenticeships is equivalent to the starting salary in grade PS1/2 in year one, rising to the minimum pay point for PS3 in year two.
- The salary for level 4/5 apprenticeships is equivalent to the starting salary for grade PS3.
- Apprenticeships at level 6 and above will be paid the rate for the role as evaluated.

iii. Former Buckinghamshire County Council Trading Standards staff

On 1 April 2015, staff from Buckinghamshire County Council's Trading Standards Service were transferred into the employment of Surrey County Council under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment Regulations.

There is no adjustment made to the pay bands for 2024/2025. A 4% performance-related pay progression will be applied to staff employed on Buckinghamshire County Council terms and conditions with effect from 1 July 2024, subject to successful performance and available headroom with the pay range.

In addition, in accordance with their terms and conditions:

- For an "exceeding" performance rating a contribution-based pay increase applies, based on 35% of the difference between the top two pay points: and
- For an "outstanding" performance rating a contribution-based pay increase applies, based on 70% of the difference between the top two pay points.

iv. Tutors - Surrey Arts and Community Learning & Skills

Tutors within Surrey Arts and Community Learning & Skills are paid a spot salary. There is no pay progression within this pay model. Salary increases are aligned to the annual review of Surrey Pay and pay changes are implemented from 1 September each year.

v. Political Assistants

SCC employs Political Assistants on Surrey Pay contracts to support political groups. These Assistants work directly for the political groups rather than as mainstream officers within the officer structure of the Council. These are unique posts and have a set maximum salary determined by The Local Government (Assistants for Political Groups) (Remuneration) (England) Order 2021. This is currently capped by the maximum pay point for Surrey Pay grade PS9 or NJC pay point 38, if lower.

vi. Staff Employed on National Conditions

Annual pay awards for centrally employed teachers and those on Soulbury or JNC Committee conditions will be in accordance with those agreed by the respective national bodies.

- **Centrally Employed Teachers'**
Details of the national pay scales for Centrally Employed Teachers are available on the [Department for Education's website](#).
A locally agreed pay policy is in place, which sets out the pay progression arrangements for centrally employed teachers in line with the national scheme.
- **Soulbury and JNC Employees**
Employees covered by the Soulbury and JNC Agreements are eligible to receive annual increments on the 1 September or 1 April respectively each year until they reach the maximum for the grade of their position.



9. Other elements of remuneration

A copy of the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document is available on the [Governments website; Gov.uk](#). Copies of the conditions of service for all other employees covered by this statement can be obtained from [the Local Government Employers](#).

The following details apply to Surrey Pay employees and in the absence of any national agreement have been adopted by other employee groups:

i. Employee Benefits

The Council does not provide any grade related benefits in kind, such as annual leave, private medical insurance, or lease cars. Chief Officers receive the same allowances as other members of staff and have access to the same voluntary benefits scheme.

ii. Additional Payments

In order to ensure sufficient flexibility to reward staff who are undertaking additional responsibilities the Council's reward policy provides for acting-up payments or a one-off honorarium payment to be made in specific circumstances.

The definition of honoraria payments includes the ability to apply a financial recognition payment of up to £1,000 per person per annum in order to reward:

- excellent, exceptional achievement over a sustained period, or throughout the year in which performance is being assessed
- excellent exceptional achievement for a particular task or project
- innovation that significantly enhances productivity or that notably contributes to organisational effectiveness

The decision to award a recognition payment to a Chief Officer is taken by the Chief Executive and in the case of the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council.

For employees required to be on-call, the Council operates a corporate on-call scheme up to Surrey Pay grade PS13. Payments are either processed monthly or on an ad-hoc basis depending on the requirement to be on-call. Additional hours and overtime are paid at plain time, and an allowance is paid per shift to employees who are required to "sleep

in” on the premises as part of their duties. Details of these provisions are set out in the Councils Reward Policy.

iii. Unsocial hours payment

Payments for working unsocial hours are paid to the LGV Engineering Technicians (on Surrey Pay grade PS8) who provide 24-hour on call cover to enable the safe and efficient running of the Fire and Rescue Service. In addition, payments are made to the Highways Lab and Survey Technicians, Senior Technicians & Project Managers (on Surrey Pay grades PS7 to PS9) who provide laboratory sampling and surveying at nights and weekends. Details of these enhanced payments are set out in the Councils Reward Policy.

Employees in Adults and Children’s Social Care Service areas who are employed in roles graded at PS8 and below employed to work overnight (i.e., all of their working hours between 8pm and 8am) on a waking night basis will receive an enhancement of 50 percent (time and a half) as part of their contractual terms and conditions.

Employees who work an overnight shift as above on a non-contractual basis will also receive payment of time and a half in respect of these shifts worked. In addition, the enhancement of 50 percent (time and a half) will be applied to all hours worked on a Saturday, Sunday, and each Bank Holiday.

Bank Holidays include all bank holidays designated by SCC. Currently there are 8 such days in a calendar year, but from time-to-time additional days may be so designated for which the above payments would apply.

All payments are in complete recompense and no additional compensatory time off will be given.

iv. Travel and Expenses

Where authorised to do so, employees are entitled to be reimbursed for additional mileage they incur whilst discharging their official duties. The rate of reimbursement will depend on the mileage incurred. Employees who have to use public transport to travel for business travel are entitled to reclaim the full cost of the transport under the council’s expenses policy. Any expenditure on business travel is reimbursed at the same rates for all grades.

Out of pocket expenses incurred during the course of employment will be met by the council provided that the expenses are directly related to employment and are approved as reasonable.

v. Professional Fees

The council will reimburse the cost of professional fees for roles where there is an essential requirement to hold a professional qualification and be a member of a relevant professional institution.

Employees will be required to repay a proportion of the cost of professional fees should they leave Surrey County Council employment during the period covered by the payment. Repayment will be managed via payroll from final salaries, however where an employee leaves the council’s employment due to redundancy or ill health, repayment will not be required.

vi. First Aid Allowance

Employees who are designated ‘first aiders’ are eligible to receive an allowance.

10. Pension Benefits

- **Teachers’ Pension Scheme.**

All Centrally Employed Teachers are eligible to join the Teachers’ Pension Scheme. Employees within Surrey Arts and Adult Learning Service may also join if their role gives eligibility to join the scheme. The scheme is a statutory scheme with contributions from employees and employers. Details of the scheme can be found on the [Teachers’ Pension Scheme website](#).

- **Local Government Pension Scheme**

All other employees under the age of 75 are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme. The scheme is a statutory scheme with contributions from employees and employers. Details of the scheme can be found on [Surrey Pension Fund website](#).

11. Remuneration - Contract for Services

The council encourages the direct employment of staff and pays them via the payroll system. In circumstances where it is more appropriate to engage people on a contract for services, the council follows HMRC guidelines to ensure that the correct employment status is identified.

When a need arises for an ‘interim’ appointment, recruitment is normally secured via the council’s temporary staffing agency frameworks. Individuals contracted via an agency will in most instances be paid at a rate consistent with the pay of directly employed staff performing a comparable role. The council will consider any relevant market factors to support payment of a premium rate necessary to secure appropriate levels of skills and expertise.

12. Salary Protection

Details of the Council’s salary protection provisions that apply to employees who are redeployed into a new post as a result of organisational change can be found in the Council’s Managing Reorganisations & Restructures Policy. The provisions relating to safeguarding (pay protection) set out in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) apply to centrally employed teachers. Other Council employees are eligible to receive salary protection for a period of up to one year if they are redeployed into a lower-graded post, with the amount of protection depending on the difference between the grades of their former job and new job.

13. Early Retirement and Severance

The Council’s terms for granting redundancy or severance, including access to benefits under the Local Government and Teachers’ Pension Schemes, are the same for all staff on Surrey Pay contracts including Chief Officers, as well as for teachers working in maintained schools across Surrey.



In cases of redundancy, an employee will not be entitled to a redundancy payment or a severance payment if, before leaving the Council, they accept an offer of employment with another local authority or associated employer contained in the Redundancy Payments (Modification) Order 1999 and commence the new employment within four weeks of their last day of service as the employment would be deemed to be continuous.

Normally the council will not re-employ or re-engage employees who have been made redundant with an enhanced severance payment for a period of 12 months following their leaving date. However, in exceptional circumstances and subject to a business case and Chief Officer approval, the council may re-employ employees. Re-engagement includes contracts of employment, consultancy arrangements or through an agency.

14. Termination of Employment of Chief Officer

Any compensation payments made to Chief Officers and Deputy Chief Officers on ceasing to hold office or to be employed by the authority will be made on the same basis as any other employee in line with the council's Early Retirement and Severance policies.

In the event of an employee being made redundant or applying for voluntary severance, the council's Managing Reorganisations & Restructures Policy contains details of the circumstances in which a redundancy payment is payable. The Local Government Pension Scheme regulations provide for access to pension benefits without reduction from the age of fifty-five in the event of an employee being made redundant.

15. Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme [MARS]

The Council operates a Mutually Agreed Resignation Scheme (MARS), designed to support periods of change and the drive for workforce efficiencies. This scheme is voluntary and employees, with agreement may choose to leave employment in return for a severance payment.

The scheme may be advertised for a time-limited period only or restricted to specified grades/areas within the Council. Outside the publicised periods MARS would remain closed. The Council reserves the right to determine whether or not an application will be approved and there will be no right of appeal on the part of those employees whose applications are not successful.

Surrey Pay

Applies to all schools and non-schools based Surrey Pay staff.

Table 1: Job Family Pay Scales – effective from 1 April 2024

		1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025					
Pay Model	Grade Name	Pay Scale					
		Point 1	Point 2	Point 3	Point 4	Point 5	Point 6
Job Family Pay Model	PS1/2	£22,599		-	-	-	-
	PS3			£23,576	-	-	-
	PS4		£24,275	£24,690	£25,112	£25,543	£25,993
	PS5		£26,777	£27,241	£27,715	£28,199	£28,686
	PS6		£29,697	£30,220	£30,755	£31,299	£31,848
	PS7		£32,512	£33,126	£33,753	£34,010	£34,654
	PS8		£35,730	£36,425	£37,134	£37,858	£38,585
	PS9		£40,296	£41,082	£41,884	£42,702	£43,735
	PS10		£45,680	£46,574	£47,485	£48,416	£49,588
	PS11		£52,047	£53,275	£54,533	£55,823	£57,125
	PS12		£59,868	£61,291	£62,750	£64,245	£65,755
	PS13		£68,774	£70,420	£72,108	£73,836	£75,583
	PS14		£79,260	£81,168	£83,123	£85,129	£87,153
Leadership Pay Model	PS15	£87,561					£98,431
	PS16	£98,432					£121,552
	PS17	£121,553					£145,464
	PS18	£145,465					£174,157
	CEX	£223,822					£248,017

Career Pay Grades

Table 2: Social Wellbeing – effective from 1 April 2024

Social Wellbeing – 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025				
Job Family	Pay Model	Grade Name	Pay Point	Salary
Social Wellbeing	Career Pay Model	PS8SC	N/A	£36,817
		PS9SC	Point 2	£40,929
			Point 3	£42,331
			Point 4	£43,735
		PS10SC	Point 2	£46,399
			Point 3	£47,994
			Point 4	£49,588
		PS11SC	Point 2	£52,942
			Point 3	£55,034
			Point 4	£57,125
		PS12SC	Point 2	£60,033
			Point 3	£62,458
			Point 4	£65,755

Table 3: Finance CIPFA Trainee Scheme – effective from 1 April 2024

Finance CIPFA Trainee Scheme – 1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025				
Job Family	Pay Model	Grade Name	Pay Point	Salary
Finance Trainee	Career Pay Model	PS7F	Point 2	£32,512
		PS8F	Point 2	£35,730
		PS9	Point 2	£40,296
	Point 3		£41,082	
	Point 4		£41,884	
	Point 5		£42,702	
	Point 6		£43,735	
	Job Family Pay Model			

Table 4: Community protection, Transport & Environment – effective from 1 April 2024

Scheme 1: PS5HT - PS7*					
Job Family	Pay Model	Grade	Point	Salary	
Regulation and Technical	CT&E Career Pay Model	PS5HT	Point 1	£26,777	
			Point 2	£27,504	
		PS6HT	Point 1	£29,697	
			Point 2	£30,516	
	Job Family Pay Model	PS7			
			Point 2	£32,512	
			Point 3	£33,126	
			Point 4	£33,753	
			Point 5	£34,010	
			Point 6	£34,654	

Scheme 2: PS6HT – PS8*					
Job Family	Pay Model	Grade	Point	Salary	
Regulation and Technical	CT&E Career Pay Model	PS6HT	Point 1	£29,697	
			Point 2	£30,516	
		PS7HT	Point 1	£32,512	
			Point 2	£33,472	
	Job Family Pay Model	PS8			
			Point 2	£35,730	
			Point 3	£36,425	
			Point 4	£37,134	
			Point 5	£37,858	
			Point 6	£38,585	

Scheme 3 PS7HT - PS9*					
Job Family	Pay Model	Grade	Point	Salary	
Regulation and Technical	CT&E Career Pay Model	PS7HT	Point 1	£32,512	
			Point 2	£33,472	
		PS8HT	Point 1	£35,730	
			Point 2	£36,817	
	Job Family Pay Model	PS9			
			Point 2	£40,296	
			Point 3	£41,082	
			Point 4	£41,884	
			Point 5	£42,702	
			Point 6	£43,735	

*Applies to staff on the CT&E Professional Development Programme (PDP)

Table 5: Lawyers Career Scheme – effective from 1 April 2024

Job Family	Pay Model	Grade Name	Pay Point	Salary
Business Function	Career Pay Model	PS10L	Point 1	£45,680
			Point 2	£47,485
		PS11L	Point 1	£52,047
			Point 2	£54,533
			Point 3	£57,125

Table 6: Twelve 15 Education Catering - effective from 1 April 2024

1 April 2024 - 31 March 2025			
Position	Grade	Pay Point	Starting Salary
Catering / Chef Assistant	PS1/2	N/A	£22,599
Trainee Chef Manager	PS3	Point 3	£23,576
Chef Manager	PS4	Point 2	£24,275

Table 7: Political Assistants – effective from 1 April 2024

Grade	Pay Scale					
	Point 1	Point 2	Point 3	Point 4	Point 5	Point 6*
PS9(PA)		£40,296	£41,082	£41,884	£42,702	£43,735

*These are unique posts and have a set maximum salary determined by The Local Government (Assistants for Political Groups) (Remuneration) (England) Order 2021. This is currently capped by the maximum pay point for Surrey Pay grade PS9 or NJC pay point 38, if lower.

Table 8: Planning Officers – effective from 1 April 2024

Job Family	Pay Model	Grade	Pay Point	Salary	
Regulation & Technical	Career Pay Model	PS7PG	Point 1	£32,512	
			Point 2	£33,753	
		PS8PG	Point 1	£35,730	
			Point 2	£37,134	
	Job family pay model	PS9			
			Point 2	£40,296	
			Point 3	£41,082	
			Point 4	£41,884	
			Point 5	£42,702	
			Point 6	£43,735	

Table 9: Apprenticeship and internship pay rates – effective from 1 April 2024

Apprenticeship	Apprenticeship Level	Year	Annual Salary
Intermediate and Advanced	2	Year 1	£22,599
		Year 2	£23,576
	3	Year 1	£22,599
		Year 2	£23,576
Higher*	4+	Year 1+	£23,576
Internship	N/A	N/A	£23,576

*Apprentices at level 6 and above will be paid the rate for the role as evaluated under the Council's job evaluation scheme.



Table 10: Surrey Adult Learning Tutors: 1 January 2024 – 31 August 2024

Role Level	Surrey Grade equivalent	Surrey Adult Learning Tutor Grade	Basic Hourly Rate	Total incl. hourly rate & preparation allowance ¹	Total Hourly Rate Inclusive of Holiday Pay ²		
					Less than 2 years service (15%)	More than 2, and less than 5 years service (16%)	More than 5 years service (17%)
Adult Learning Standard (ALS) Community courses which are non-qualification based	PS7	ALS A	£16.74	£23.69	£27.24		
		ALS B				£27.48	
		ALS C					£27.71
Adult Learning Higher (ALH) Accredited courses which are qualification based	PS8	ALH A	£19.48	£27.57	£31.70		
		ALH B				£31.98	
		ALH C					£32.26
Adult Learning Top (ALT) Highly specialist subject areas	PS9	ALT A	£21.05	£29.79	£34.26		
		ALT B				£34.56	
		ALT C					£34.86

¹ Preparation allowance is 41.5% of the basic hourly rate.

² Percentage uplift of basic hourly rate & preparation allowance to reflect annual leave entitlement with 8 bank holidays for 2024.

Table 11: Surrey Arts Tutors: 1 January 2024 – 31 August 2024

Role Level	Surrey Grade equivalent	Surrey Arts Tutor Grade	Basic Hourly Rate	Basic hourly rate plus preparation & travel allowances ¹	Total Hourly Rate Inclusive of Holiday Pay ²		
					Less than 2 years' service (15%)	More than 2, and less than 5 years' service (16%)	More than 5 years' service (17%)
Unqualified Instrumental Music Teacher; Qualified Instrumental Music Teacher.	PS7	SA1 A	£16.63	£24.29	£27.82		
		SA1 B				£28.05	
		SA1 C					£28.29
Assistant Teacher for the whole class; Team Support Teacher; Curriculum Lead.	PS8	SA2 A	£17.05	£24.90	£28.52		
		SA2 B				£28.76	
		SA2 C					£29.00
		SA3 A	£17.81	£26.00	£29.78		
		SA3 B				£30.03	
		SA3 C					£30.28
		SA4 A	£18.83	£27.50	£31.50		
		SA4 B				£31.76	
SA4 C					£32.03		
Group/Ensemble Conductor/Director; Lead Teacher for the whole class.	PS9	SA5 A	£20.06	£29.28	£33.54		
		SA5 B				£33.83	
		SA5 C					£34.11
		SA6 A	£22.11	£32.29	£36.98		
		SA6 B				£37.29	
		SA6 C					£37.60

¹ Travel allowance of 4.5% & preparation allowance of 41.5% applied to basic hourly rate.

² Percentage uplift of basic hourly rate & preparation allowance to reflect annual leave entitlement with 8 bank holidays for 2024.



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People, Performance and Development Committee
9 September 2024

Update On Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at Surrey County Council

Purpose of the report:

This paper provides a progress report to the People, Performance and Development Committee on the Local Government Association (LGA) equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) peer review and the three Surrey County Council (SCC) EDI Employee Experience Reviews which were commissioned in 2023. It also outlines the approach taken to incorporate recommendations into the 2024/25 EDI Action Plan and People Strategy Delivery Plan.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Committee note the progress made to respond to the recommendations from the EDI reviews.

Introduction:

The LGA Peer Review

1. The LGA undertook a Peer Review of our EDI work in 2023 against the LGA Equalities Framework. We provided a comprehensive self-assessment to the Peer Team, who also reviewed key policies and documents and conducted interviews with over 120 staff, partners and Members to assess work against four key themes:
 - Leadership and organisational commitment
 - Understanding and working with your communities
 - Responsive services and customer care
 - Diverse and engaged workforce

2. The review team recognised many strengths in our approach to EDI, noting that we have made a significant cultural shift as an organisation since this work started in 2018. They praised the strong leadership commitment that had been shown by SCC, and the commitment to reduce inequalities as expressed in our guiding mission of 'no one left behind'. The review recognised our strengths in using, collecting, sharing and analysing data, and pointed to areas of good practice where we have used co-production approaches to developing services. They supported our approach to priority neighbourhoods for tackling geographical disadvantage and recognised the benefits of our locality-based teams such as Community Link Officers and Local Area Coordinators.
3. Regarding EDI and our workforce, the team again recognised much progress has been made in recent years. They noted that we have shown clear leadership and commitment to being a more inclusive and equitable employer through the People Strategy, with a clear commitment to improving the diversity of our workforce. Some positives highlighted in terms of employee experience included our Inclusive Staff Networks, and our work to achieve nationally recognised accreditation in areas such as family, carer and disability friendly practice. They praised our new approach to providing workplace adjustments (although noting the time to implement these can still be too long) and our 'disability passport', as well as our inclusive recruitment guidance and policies on bullying and harassment. They also noted our commitment to carrying out the 3 reviews of the experience of underrepresented staff groups, which were still in their early stages when the LGA team visited.
4. The team also noted some areas where more progress is still needed in SCC. From a community-focused perspective, they noted that we do not have a shared understanding of, and strategy to reduce, inequalities experienced by our residents on the basis of things such as age, disability, ethnicity or sex. They also commented on the need to strengthen working relationships with our voluntary and community partners around EDI.
5. We are responding to this recommendation by developing a shared strategic framework which draws together the evidence we have on inequalities experienced by people in our communities. We will use this framework to bring partners together to develop shared priorities and actions to address inequalities faced by our residents.
6. In terms of our role as an employer, the team also highlighted several areas for further development. They noted that while we have good policies and strong leadership on workforce EDI, this commitment is not always consistently applied across the organisation and through all tiers of management. They recommended a review of the training provided to staff, managers and Members on EDI to ensure that we embed our ambitions in this area fully across the organisation. They noted a need for improved ways for staff to raise concerns around issues of discrimination and that some groups are overrepresented in formal HR processes.
7. These issues were also all reflected in the response to the three staff reviews and we are amalgamating the recommendations from the LGA review into the response to the staff reviews. Some key issues, notably the need for better confidential reporting of concerns and the need to improve inclusivity of

managers, are being taken forward in the delivery plan for the People Strategy in 2024/25. The remainder will be picked up in the response to the staff reviews as set out elsewhere in this report.

8. The Peer Team also noted issues around accessibility for disabled staff both in terms of the built environment and to digital and online information and services. In response to the review, we set up an Accessibility Forum to ensure that these issues are being addressed and have recently recruited a temporary (22 month) Accessibility Officer.

EDI Employee Experience Reviews

9. The 2023/24 EDI Action Plan included a commitment to commission external and independent reviews of the experiences of LGBTQ+, Disabled and Ethnically Diverse employees. The aim of these reviews was to provide SCC with clear, evidence-based recommendations that the council can take to improve the experience of these three minority groups, and for these recommendations to form the basis of the 2024/25 EDI Action Plan.
10. After procurement processes, the following organisations were commissioned to undertake the reviews:
 - Business Disability Forum: Disabled employees
 - Business in the Community (BITC): Ethnically Diverse employees
 - Business in the Community (BITC): LGBTQ+ employees
11. In line with the tender specifications, each review included: a tabletop review of workforce data; review of an agreed range of relevant SCC policies; and engagement with employees through both facilitated focus groups and surveys. To ensure maximum participation in the reviews, they were staggered over autumn and winter of 2023.
12. Each review was guided by a Steering Group, which included representation from the relevant Inclusive Staff Network, Trade Unions and EDI and People and Change colleagues. The Staff Networks and Trade Unions were instrumental in helping promote the reviews and encouraging participation by reaching out to their members. This communication was supported by corporate emails and promotion in senior leader blogs. Staff without SCC email addresses received details of the reviews by letter to ensure that all staff were given the opportunity to participate.
13. The reports for the reviews were received by the council as follows:
 - Disability Review: September 2023
 - Ethnically Diverse Review: December 2023
 - LGBTQ+ Review: February 2024
14. Each report has been presented to and discussed by the EDI Programme Board and Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and shared with the relevant Staff Networks. The reports are included as appendices to this paper.

Review findings and themes

15. Each review identified themes under which their recommendations have been summarised. Whilst each review identified specific issues related to the subject of their review, there are several shared themes, which are summarised below:

Theme	Disabled Employees	Ethnically Diverse Employees	LGBTQ+ Employees
People and Change Policies	X	X	X
Application of People and Change Policies	X	X	
Recruitment and onboarding	X	X	X
Workplace Adjustments	X		
Line Management and skills development	X	X	X
Career and development opportunities	X	X	
Organisational culture and behaviours	X	X	X
The built environment	X		
Learning and development	X	X	X
Diverse and representative leadership		X	X
Wellbeing		X	X
Strategy and action plan		X	X
Workforce data		X	X
Allyship		X	
Communication			X
Decision making and Equality Impact Assessments			X
Disclosure and authenticity			X

Conclusions:

The 2024/25 EDI action plan

16. Following receipt of all three reports, the findings, and recommendations (alongside feedback from SCC's Carer Confident and Working Families accreditation submission) have been analysed by EDI practitioners to prioritise the actions, identify whether work is already underway that will address them, and identify action leads and timescales for completion. This work has enabled us to identify how the recommendations can be responded to within the 2024/25 EDI action plan and the People Strategy Delivery Plan and support the development of the EDI Workforce Development (training) plan.
17. Key recommendations from each review which have been identified as high priority are summarised as follows:

- **Disabled Employees Review:**

- Review of policies to ensure that reasonable adjustments are considered, including Agile/Hybrid, Bullying and Harassment, Equal Opportunities and Performance Improvement. It should be noted that a process to review People and Change policies has already begun and therefore that some of the recommended actions have been completed. The Agile Working Policy was reviewed before the council's adoption of the Hybrid Working Policy, for which an equality impact assessment is being completed.
- Implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation of the Workplace Adjustment Service and development of a Workplace Adjustment Policy. The reviewers were very complementary about this service and felt that agreeing a policy to support it would enable it to be an example of excellent practice. We are already developing the policy with stakeholders and it is anticipated to be ready for ratification in July 2024.
- Organisational culture, leadership, and line manager relationships: Work is underway to design an Inclusive Leadership programme in response to feedback from all three reviews, from our Staff Networks and other sources. The report also recommended that senior leaders make personal commitments to diversity and inclusion.
- The Built Environment and accessibility: we have recently appointed an Accessibility Officer to provide subject matter expertise on these issues, and established an Accessibility Forum to ensure that accessibility issues are identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity.
- Decision making and Equality Impact Assessments: Equality Impact Assessment processes have been reviewed and promoted, whilst an e-learning module and surgeries to provide advice are now in place.
- **Ethnically Diverse Review:**
 - Organisational culture, leadership, and line manager relationships
 - Review of the Bullying and Harassment Policy
 - Decision making and Equality Impact Assessments
 - Developing under-represented staff: we are currently working on a Career Development programme and reviewing options for a bespoke leadership programme for minority and under-represented groups to support SCC's ambition to improve diversity in all levels and areas of the workforce. This will be supported by the ongoing work to ensure our recruitment processes are as inclusive as possible.
- **LGBTQ+ Review:**
 - Review of Bullying and Harassment Policy
 - Organisational culture, leadership, and line manager relationships

- Decision making and Equality Impact Assessments
- Data collection: the review identified limitations on Unit 4/My Surrey regarding the options for staff to report their gender and sexuality, and that these had contributed to the substantial number of staff who prefer or choose not to report this information. Work has already begun to review all the protected characteristics categories on My Surrey. When this work is complete, a campaign to encourage staff to review and update their personal information on My Surrey will be launched.

18. The council achieved Carer Confident Level 2 status last year, and feedback from Working Families as part of their accreditation process. Feedback from these two reviews made similar recommendations regarding line manager relationships and inconsistency in approaches to flexible working and recommended that the council reviews its Flexible Working Policy. It also highlighted the need to improve employee data collection via My Surrey. As a result, revised definitions of carer status have been added to My Surrey.

19. In summary, the LGA review has provided assurance on the progress we have made on our journey to become a fairer and more inclusive organisation but also highlighted some areas for further development. The employee reviews have provided the council with valuable insight into the challenges faced by disabled employees, LGBTQ+ employees and ethnically diverse colleagues. Together, these are the focus areas of the council's EDI action plan. Following engagement with our Staff Networks, the proposed action plan was discussed and agreed at the May 2024 EDI Programme Board.

Next steps:

20. The EDI Programme Board will oversee delivery of the 2024/25 EDI action plan to make sure the recommendations from all four reviews are addressed.

Report contact:

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Contact details:

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Sources/background papers:

[Our equality objectives 2021 - 2026 - Surrey County Council \(surreycc.gov.uk\)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/equality-objectives-2021-2026)

Appendix 1: Disabled Employees' Experience Review – Business Disability Forum

Appendix 2: Ethnically Diverse Employees' Experience Review - BITC

Appendix 3: LGBTQ+ Employees' Experience Review - BITC



Report for Surrey County Council Disabled Workers Review

Prepared by BDF Project Team

18 August 2023

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Section 1: Introduction

The Disabled Workforce Review was commissioned by Surrey County Council (SCC) to better understand the lived experience of disabled colleagues working within the Authority in order to develop its approach in this area. It was commissioned by Chris Barton, Employee Experience Lead.

The project involved a review of selected HR policies in relation to disability inclusive best practice along with primary research to gather disabled colleagues' views and experiences. This involved connecting directly with disabled colleagues, as well as the disability staff network (DENIS), Trade Union representatives and EDI leads from across the organisation.

It is important to note the nature of a report such as this tends to concentrate on areas where SCC needs to develop and improve its approach to disability inclusion. However, it should be noted that much positive work and activities already takes place and the purpose of the report's recommendations are to move these positive activities into a consistent business as usual approach.

The views of stakeholders who engaged in this review have been presented as they were expressed, whilst also protecting confidentiality where appropriate. This does not mean that the project team always agreed with these perspectives and where best practice recommendations differ from views expressed, these have been presented in the report.

The purpose of this report is to highlight those experiences, as compared to best practice (as determined by the experience and expertise of the BDF) and to make recommendations on how SCC can develop their disability inclusive practices.

Section 2: Context for the report

The discussion, analysis and recommendations included in this report as based on best practice, as determined by the BDF's experience and expertise in the field of disability inclusion as illustrated by its global leading Disability Smart Framework (www.businessdisabilityforum.org.uk). We are committed to sharing this best practice and to support organisations to move away from a legal compliance approach.

Please note for ease of reference we use the terms *disabled person / disabled people* as a term which reflects the social model approach to managing disability. In doing so we recognise the different views, preferences, and attitudes that different people hold about the use of terminology and language.

Best practice suggests the term *workplace adjustments* is more appropriate than reasonable adjustments, as this establishes it as a requirement for disabled colleagues to succeed, rather than an option to be considered. We have therefore used the term workplace throughout this report.

A broader discussion around best practice can be found at Appendix 4.

Section 3: Executive Summary

SCC has made some positive steps towards becoming a disability inclusive organisation and there are undoubtedly islands of good practice in different Directorates. However, there continues to be significant barriers being experienced by some disabled colleagues, with issues identified at each stage of the employee life cycle.

The Council lacks an overall strategic approach to disability and making the workplace adjustments disabled colleagues need, as part of a business-as-usual approach.

Such a strategic approach needs to be established by a strong and coherent commitment from senior leadership throughout the organisation and backed up by action plans to deliver on these commitments. This would have a significant impact on the organisational culture and how it views disability in general and disabled people's requirements in particular.

HR policies currently make positive commitments towards supporting disabled colleagues, but lack specific detail and guidance on how line managers should deliver these commitments. This leads to an overuse of managers' discretion which in turn creates significant inconsistencies. This then leads to a situation where line managers who are engaged and committed to supporting disabled colleagues find the right solution, whilst those who are not, provide little or no support.

The Council policies and approach to recruitment & selection and onboarding demonstrates some areas of good practice but a lack of guidance and expertise of hiring managers creates inconsistency in the experience of disabled colleagues.

A good start has been made with the Workplace Adjustment Process and this has the potential to be an example of good practice, however, it is essential that the recommendations from the Workplace Adjustment Process review are implemented, with a specific urgency around the introduction of a Workplace Adjustment Policy.

Relationships between line managers and disabled colleagues can be very positive and examples were shared with managers providing the levels of support which allow disabled people to excel in their role. However, there is a significant lack of consistency, with some disabled colleagues finding it almost impossible to get agreement for the workplace adjustments they require and this must be addressed as a matter of priority to ensure an inclusive approach and to mitigate legal risks.

This lack of consistency was also experienced by a significant number of disabled colleagues who engaged with this review in the application of HR policies. The experience of disabled colleagues was dependant on how line managers interpreted and applied HR policies, with some disabled colleagues feeling they were being 'used against them' rather than as a source of support.

The career and personal development opportunities for disabled colleagues again demonstrated a mixed response. Some felt that their disability did not impact on their opportunities to develop within their role at the Council. A significant minority felt that their

disability had an adverse impact to the point where they felt there was little point in seeking promotion or even a permanent role (as opposed to a temporary or bank role.)

This was further impacted by access to training and development opportunities. Although some disabled colleagues found that the adjustments they required were made to allow them to access training, others found that their accessibility needs were either not built into the process or were actively denied.

Accessibility of the built environment was a common theme, with a significant number of examples of barriers being shared. These included examples which should be considered a basic requirement such as access to and around buildings and inadequate access to basic hygiene facilities. It is important to note that this review did not involve an access audit and so this report presents the lived experience of disabled colleagues, rather than a comprehensive review.

Finally, we did not see any evidence of an integrated training and development programme to build skills, knowledge and confidence in supporting disabled colleagues, both for line managers and the wider employee population which further undermined individuals' ability to develop a sustainable best practice approach.

Section 4: Methodology

The methodology used in this review was based on the approach in our proposal in December 2022. This was used as the basis for the Disabled Workforce Review Project Plan. The Terms of Reference for the review are at Appendix 1.

A project review group was established by the SCC project lead, Chris Barton. The group consisted of representatives from the People and Change team, DENIS, trade union representatives, Communications and EDI colleagues and BDF project team members, details of which are at Appendix 1. This group met on a fortnightly basis throughout the review to guide the process and make key decisions on the key activities in the review.

A Communication and Engagement Plan was agreed, covering all aspects of the review. This document guided how and when both Council colleagues and BDF project team members would engage with colleagues across the organisation during the key stages of the review.

The project was split into two stages:

- Desktop review of HR policies
- Primary research into the lived experiences of disabled colleagues.

The review of HR policies focused on the:

- Absence Management Policy;
- Agile Working Policy;
- Ending bullying and Harassment Policy;
- Equal Opportunities in Employment;

- Grievance Policy; and
- Performance Capability Policy.

The purpose of the desktop review was to assess current Council HR policies against best practice and provide a benchmark in relation to disability inclusion. It also provided themes to explore during the primary research element of the review, to test out the lived experience of disabled colleagues in comparison to the stated objectives of the policy.

The primary research element of the review involved a number of different stakeholder groups, using different engagement activities. These included:

- focus groups with disabled colleagues;
- one-to-one conversations with disabled colleagues;
- meeting with DENIS members and Trade Union representatives;
- meetings with the EDI leads from each Directorate;
- meeting with HR and Employee Experience colleagues;
- meeting with the EDI Forum members.

It was recognised at the outset of the review, that it was important to connect with a wide range of perspectives to inform and influence the outcomes of the project. DENIS members and Trade Union representatives felt it was important to ensure, as far as possible, anonymity for colleagues engaging with the review to encourage people to honestly share their lived experience.

Council colleagues led a strong communications campaign across the organisation to inform colleagues of the review and to encourage participation. This included:

- all employee emails;
- a hard copy letter was sent to all colleagues who did not have easy access to a Council email address; and
- messages were displayed on the Council intranet and EDI hub pages.

BDF established an independent route for staff to express their interest in engaging with the review and to share their lived experience.

BDF facilitated nine focus groups which took place over 3 days and were scheduled at different times of the day, to allow people to attend these discussions within their normal working day (or outside of it if this was their preference).

In addition to the focus groups, anyone wishing to engage individually with a member of the project team were offered the opportunity to have a one-to-one conversation. This was important to offer as some colleagues were not able to attend the scheduled focus groups or felt that the experience they wanted to share was private and did not feel comfortable attending a wider focus group.

A further opportunity was offered to any colleague who wished to send their experiences and comments via email to the independent BDF email address.

Members of the BDF project team met separately with DENIS members and with Trade Union representatives to both understand their experiences and for them to share the range of disability related casework they had been involved with.

Meetings were held with Directorate EDI leads and the EDI Forum, to understand the perspective of different parts of the organisation and to ensure the review took into account all work streams across the Council.

BDF also met with HR and Employee Experience colleagues to review HR statistics, to understand the Workplace Adjustment Process and to explore which were the most relevant and appropriate HR policies to review.

Further details on engagement levels during the primary research is at Appendix 2.

The project review group continued to meet fortnightly throughout the duration of the project. The draft report was submitted to this group for initial feedback, before being signed off and shared with key stakeholders across the Council.

Section 5: Review of HR Policies

In this section, we have identified areas of best practice that we would expect disability inclusive organisations to demonstrate. This is followed by what we found at the Council, together with our recommendations for developing best practice.

5.1 Absence Management Policy

Best practice approaches to an Absence Management Policy include:

- a clear and transparent process for monitoring attendance and recording absence;
- a definition for disability related sickness absence and an explanation for how this will be monitored;
- an explanation of how disability related sickness absence will be managed, based on an individual assessment of need;
- account should be taken of different types of absence (e.g., short term unplanned, short term planned, long term unplanned and long term planned) and what ongoing contact should look like in their different situations.

Our Assessment

The Policy has an Equality Impact Statement which encourages line managers to have a conversation on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issues. This references disability specifically and states this should include undiagnosed conditions, which is good practice. This could be developed further by providing additional guidance on what this conversation involve.

The policy refers to recording and managing disability related sickness absence separately. However, it does not provide an explanation of how to determine if the absence is disability related, where to record this and how to effectively manage absence in these circumstances.

A general statement about workplace adjustments is made in the policy, which refers primarily to the legal implications of not making such adjustments and where the recommendations may come from. It would be helpful to provide managers with broader direction as to what types of adjustments may be required for disabled colleagues, including adjustments to the way the policy is applied and absence managed. This should promote making adjustments as a way to help improve or maintain wellbeing, attendance and productivity, as well as minimising legal risk.

Our recommendations

Additional guidance (either separate to or as an appendix to the Absence Management Policy) needs to be provided to line managers. This should address:

- how disability related sickness absence is monitored, recorded and managed; and
- the importance of making workplace adjustments, and how and when to make them in the application of the policy.

5.2 Agile Working Policy

Best practice approaches to an Agile Working Policy include:

- a clear and transparent explanation of the Council's approach to agile working, with an explanation of how this will work in practice;
- an explanation of how workplace adjustment requirements will be discussed, agreed and actioned in relation to both office and home working;
- a strong commitment to ensure workplace adjustments are provided in different working environments, appropriate to the context.

Our Assessment

The Agile Working Policy sets out the organisational perspective of what agile working is and how it will benefit employees and service delivery. However, there is no reference within the policy to workplace adjustments for disabled colleagues. This needs to be an integral aspect of the policy, to ensure, where appropriate, workplace adjustments agreed in the office are replicated in other regular work environments.

Line managers should be provided with guidance on the importance of ensuring workplace adjustments are discussed and agreed within the context of agile working and this are reviewed regularly.

Our recommendations

Review the Agile Working Policy to incorporate the steps line managers need to take in discussing, agreeing and actioning workplace adjustments when disabled colleagues are utilising agile working practices.

The guidance for managers should be clear about agile working as a workplace adjustment.

5.3 Ending Bullying and Harassment Policy

Best practice approaches to a Bullying and Harassment Policy include:

- a strong commitment to tackling any form of bullying and harassment, including actions relating to disabled or neurodiverse people and those with a long-term health condition;
- illustrative examples of what may be considered bullying and harassment, including issues relating to disability;
- a clear and transparent process to tackling bullying and harassment;
- the process for making adjustments to the application of the policy where this is required for disabled colleagues.

Our Assessment

There is a good overall commitment to ensuring bullying and harassment does not occur and to put a process in place for addressing situations should they arise. As referenced elsewhere in this report, the standard EDI statement is included, which would benefit from further guidance on what this could look like in practice, including how it relates to disability.

It would be useful to include additional guidance specific to disability including establishing the principle that an unreasonable refusal to discuss disability related issues (including workplace adjustments) by a line manager may constitute bullying as an abuse of power.

It may also be helpful to provide further explanation of terms such as 'ableist' and 'disablist' to ensure all managers and colleagues understand these terms. Best practice would avoid using terms such as these which can easily be misunderstood and focus on avoiding using derogatory or demeaning terms or language.

As with all HR policies, workplace adjustments may be required for disabled colleagues and this should be addressed within the policy.

Our recommendations

Review the Ending Bullying and Harassment Policy to ensure it provides sufficient guidance and protocols around supporting disabled colleagues, specifically in relation to understanding terminology, the use of language and what may constitute disability related bullying or harassment.

5.4 Equal Opportunities in Employment

Best practice approaches to an Equal Opportunities Policy include:

- a strong commitment to ensuring all colleagues within the Council are treated equitably and have access to the full range of opportunities, with the workplace adjustments they require;
- specific commitments are made towards ensuring full access to all opportunities in employment for disabled colleagues;

- a clear and transparent process for dealing with situations where colleagues feel their access to opportunities have been negatively affected by actions of the Council and its employees.

Our Assessment

The Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy has a number of sections relating to disability, which does clearly demonstrate the importance the Council places on disability inclusion. However, the Policy contains a mixture between policy and general guidance to line managers, which makes it difficult to follow at times. It would be better to separate out the strategic policy commitments of the Council and provide separate guidance to line managers on how to make these commitments a reality.

The Policy makes a commitment to 'minor' adaptations to equipment and premises where this is essential. The Workplace Adjustment Process needs to be defined and driven by the workplace adjustments a disabled colleague requires, rather than being limited only to 'minor' adaptations or those which might be considered as 'essential'. This approach opens up a potential for interpretation which is likely to lead to inconsistencies, may create legal risks and is not best practice. Given the size of the Council, the adjustment required may in fact not be 'minor' but it may be reasonable.

Significant parts of the Policy are now out of date, with references to sources of support, that have now been replaced. For example the Empowers Forum on Disability is now known as the Business Disability Forum and the 'two ticks' scheme is referred to as the Disability Confident Employers Scheme.

The Policy needs to reflect current Council policy and reflect the current workplace adjustment process and connections to Microlink. For example, it should reflect the Council's commitment to ensuring workplace adjustments are in place from day 1. Where this does not occur, probationary monitoring should not occur until they are in place.

The Policy generally takes a medical model approach, by focusing on specific disabilities and conditions, with guidance for what actions line managers need to take and what people with these conditions will need. The best practice approach is to use the Social Model, which focuses on the overall barriers a disabled person may experience and identify strategic approaches to overcoming these barriers. (See Appendix 4 for a discussion of the social model).

Some statements in the policy are clearly well intentioned, but can create a negative perception of disabled people. For example, stating that disabled colleagues do not usually require more managerial support can create a negative first impression or that disabled colleagues are more likely to be nervous when starting employment. It places the disabled colleague in a potentially different light to non-disabled colleagues.

Currently the Policy makes a significant number of high-level commitments, but does not provide an explanation of how these commitments will be delivered. For example, where disabled colleagues are under threat of redundancy, alternative employment should be

sought. There is no explanation of what actions a line manager should take to meet this commitment and suggests it is an option to consider rather than a legal requirement.

The overall policy gives the impression that disabled colleagues are a homogeneous group of people, with whom a set list of tasks need to be undertaken. Best practice would be focused on taking a strategic overall approach to ensuring disability inclusion and then a person-centred approach to the specific adjustments and support requirements each person has.

Our recommendations

Review the Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy to ensure it reflects current best practice.

Provide a strategic commitment to equal opportunities in employment, through this policy, with guidance to line managers provided separately.

5.5 Grievance Policy

Best practice approaches to a Grievance Policy include:

- a strong commitment to ensuring all colleagues have the opportunity to seek redress when they feel unfairly treated, including issues that may relate to disability;
- a clear and transparent process for addressing grievances;
- the process for making adjustments to the application of the policy where this is required for disabled colleagues.

Our Assessment

A clear process is outlined for how colleagues can raise a concern through the Grievance Procedure. As with all HR policies, it is important to acknowledge that a disabled colleague may require a workplace adjustment to the policy and to explain when this may occur and what actions a line manager should take.

The policy does refer colleagues to Trade Union representatives or another colleague for additional support. It is important to recognise that this additional support may be a workplace adjustment which the line manager may need to put in place.

The policy lists issues which may constitute a potential grievance. Consideration should be given to whether a refusal to discuss disability or workplace adjustments or to make an adjustment may be an area where a grievance may occur.

Our recommendations

Review the Grievance Procedure to ensure the need for and process to action workplace adjustment are clearly explained.

Consider whether a refusal to discuss disability or workplace adjustments should be highlighted in the policy as a potential grievance issue.

5.6 Performance Capability Policy

Best practice approaches in a Performance Capability Policy include:

- a strong commitment to ensuring all colleagues, including those with a disability are provided with the necessary support to be able to perform their roles to the required standard;
- a clear and transparent process for monitoring performance capability;
- the process for ensuring all reasonable workplace adjustments is in place, before performance capability action is taken;
- the process for making adjustments to the application of the policy where this is required for disabled colleagues.

Our Assessment

The Performance Capability Policy clearly sets out the Council's approach to supporting colleagues to deliver to the expectations of their role. However, no reference is made to the role and importance of identifying, agreeing and actioning workplace adjustments, which would allow a disabled colleague to meet the requirements of their role. This is a fundamental issue with this policy which needs to be addressed.

The Policy also appears to direct line managers to the Absence Management Policy where disabled colleagues are not meeting the requirements of their role. However, the capability issues may be unrelated to attendance but occur because the person does not have the workplace adjustments in place to allow them to deliver all elements of their role.

As workplace adjustments are not discussed as part of this policy, the process to making adjustments to the process itself is not covered.

Our recommendations

Review the Performance Capability Procedure to ensure that disability and workplace adjustments are referenced in the policy as an integral aspect of performance management.

Section 6: Findings From Primary Research

In this section, we have identified areas of best practice that we would expect disability inclusive organisations to demonstrate. This is followed by what we found at the Council, together with our recommendations for developing best practice.

6.1 Recruitment & Selection and Onboarding

Best practice approaches to recruitment and onboarding include the following aspects:

- A clear commitment in all recruitment materials in making adjustments to the process, including contact details for who an applicant can discuss the role, application and assessment approach with
- Practical evidence of the organisations commitment to being disability confident
- Alternative application methods provided

- A process for implementing adjustment requests and to ensure these are made
- Flexibility in the assessment approaches used
- Accessibility of all elements of the assessment process
- A Workplace Adjustment Process that ensures adjustments are implemented for day one of employment
- Inclusion of prompts in line managers onboarding checklist relating to adjustments and inclusion requirements
- Training and guidance for hiring and line managers on supporting disabled new hires.

Our findings

The Council's commitment to being a Disability Confident organisation attracted some applicants to apply for positions and was viewed positively. However, their experience did not always match the commitments of the scheme, with adjustments not always being provided or applicants being unclear as to what process to follow. It would be helpful to provide more detailed information to applicants on how they can request and agree the adjustments they require in the selection process. For some, it was unclear what action they should take if adjustments are not agreed or implemented. It is not possible to comment on the experience of applicants who were unsuccessful in securing a position, so the lived experience of successful applicants is presented here.

Applicants did not always know if they should tick the disabled box or understand why they should do this. It is important to ask the question in the right way. For example, some people with long term health conditions may not identify as being 'disabled' but still require adjustments to the process. Best practice would suggest asking all applicants if they require any adjustments or additional support during the recruitment process, without necessarily having to share their disability.

It was acknowledged that positive changes have been made to the accessibility of the recruitment and selection process. As an example, some recruitment panels are now providing the interview questions in advance, which supports, for example, neurodivergent applicants to be able to demonstrate their strengths and potential in the interview.

However, there were some examples of changes to the assessment process without prior warning. For example, some applicants were provided with the questions for the interview in advance, but during the interview itself, the panel asked additional and more detailed questions. This negated the adjustment the applicants had in giving time to reflect and structure their answers. It should be noted that probing questions based on the answer provided by the applicant were not viewed as additional questions. The concern raised here was about unrelated questions being asked for which the applicant had no time to consider or prepare for.

The recruitment process is viewed by some as being heavily neurotypical. This reduces the opportunity for neuro diverse applicants to demonstrate their talents and potential. The suggestion was made that neuro diverse applicants would benefit from being able to demonstrate their abilities, rather than express them, thereby enhancing their opportunities to succeed. Greater flexibility in adjustments and assessment methods would be beneficial.

There is a disconnect at times between the recruitment stage and onboarding stage. This was connected both to ensuring information the applicant has shared about their disability is passed on to relevant people and the provision of adjustments. Some applicants shared their disability at the recruitment stage, but this was not connected to the onboarding stage. This resulted in managers not always being aware of the adjustment requirements for new starters.

The process required the new starter to be proactive and assertive in stating their requirements, whereas not all new starters will feel confident in taking this approach. Our experience shows that when disabled people understand why they are being asked these questions and what the information will be used for, they are more likely to respond honestly and explain their requirements at this stage, to facilitate this focus of discussions should be on the effect of someone's disability rather than on the nature of the condition...

Workplace adjustments were not always in place from day one of employment, with some colleagues needing to wait several months before adjustments were effectively in place. This is not the commitment made by the Council, where the goal is to have adjustments in place on day one. It should be noted this could lead to an increased legal and PR risk.

It was suggested that additional information on workplace adjustments could be added to a new starters welcome pack. This would provide new starters with a clear understanding of the Workplace Adjustment process and know who to contact to explain their requirements.

Some internal applicants felt that their skills and experience, which were already known to the interview panel, should be taken into account when applying for internal posts.

Offering work trials, which allow an applicant to demonstrate their skills could be considered a workplace adjustment to provide an alternative form of assessment where an applicant (whether internal or external) would be at a disadvantage if their competencies were only tested by an interview. For example, an applicant who is neurodiverse may not be able to perform as well in such a pressured situation and therefore a comparative assessment is not possible.

It would not be good HR practice to take account of an internal applicant's previous work history with the Council as part of the assessment process, as this is not possible to achieve for external applicants. This would present potential legal risks based on the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 20210.

Illustrative Quotes

"Great experience when first joined, team underwent BSL training etc."

"Didn't declare disability when I joined. Tasks were dyslexia friendly. 2nd time round I explained at interview and had great accommodations."

"The onboarding process is so unstructured. It's the manager's responsibility but it's only as good as the manager you have."

“Culture ‘disability confident employer’ was really attractive and drew me to work for Surrey. Experience didn’t match it.”

“I want to be able to demonstrate rather than have to express what I can do in an interview. It’s very difficult for me to do the latter. I’ve only been successful in junior roles.”

“I don't consider myself as having a disability, see myself as having a medical condition - tick boxes that talk about disability don't work for me.”

Our recommendations

- Ensure the Council is fully compliant with all aspects of the Disability Confident scheme.
- Establish clear and documented protocols for how adjustments will be made in recruitment and selection process and the standards expected, which is driven by individual need
- Promote this on the careers website and all job adverts.
- Establish a system for when and how information about the disability status of a new employee will be shared with the line manager and what the process is for providing workplace adjustments for the first day of employment
- Review information shared about the Workplace Adjustment Process as part of a new employees welcome pack to ensure it provides sufficient detail for the new employee to understand what to expect and understand any actions they need to take. This should include links to the appropriate workplace adjustment provider (Microlink or others) and DENIS.
- Promote willingness to make workplace adjustments in the role at the written offer stage to encourage new hires who require them to ask in advance of Day 1.

6.2 Workplace Adjustments Process

Best practice approaches to the Workplace Adjustment Process

- Commitment - There is a top-down mandate to embed best practice in making adjustments with necessary resources & financial commitment.
- Policy - The organisation has a clear policy on workplace adjustments based on trusting disabled employees & supporting managers.
- Process - Employees follow a clearly defined and documented process that results in effective adjustments being implemented in minimal time.
- Control - The efficiency of the process, along with stakeholder and supplier performance and their quality of service is monitored against KPIs.
- Knowledge - Everyone understands the importance of making adjustments, how to request them, and how to achieve best practice in providing them.
- Service - Employees feel valued and supported through using a simple, stigma-free and customer-centric workplace adjustment service.

Our findings

The existing Workplace Adjustment Process was introduced across the Council in April 2022, with a centralised budget and external provider (Microlink). It provides a specialist

accessibility advice service and aims to provide an efficient, effective and value-based process for disabled colleagues to access the workplace adjustments they require.

The structure of this approach is based on best practice and has achieved its intended outcomes for the majority of colleagues who have used the service. It is important to note that this is not the experience of all disabled colleagues and the Council is aware of the issues that still need to be addressed, as highlighted in the evaluation report produced in 2023. The Council has committed to implementing the recommendations from this review and as such, the evaluation does not need to be discussed further in this report.

The majority of colleagues engaging with the review were aware of the Workplace Adjustment Process, although a minority were unaware of any process. It would be beneficial to increase the communication routes used for the process, so that all colleagues and line managers understand how to access the service.

In particular, managers need to be provided with clear guidance on what the Workplace Adjustment Process is and what their roles and responsibilities are within this. The Council are currently developing a Workplace Adjustment Policy and this, together with guidance for line managers, will be critical in ensuring the Council's approach meets best practice standards.

Very positive experiences were reported for some colleagues, both of Microlink and Access to Work. Comments included "Microlink put me at ease" and "Access to Work was a lifesaver". Examples were shared of recommendations being immediately accepted and acted upon, including providing counselling services.

It is important to note that Access to Work does provide an excellent service, but the application process and delays in assessments and the provision of recommendations can be challenging. It is important to ensure disabled colleagues are supported through the application process and alternative adjustments are considered whilst the assessment and recommendation process is completed.

Individual experiences were overly dependent on the attitudes of their line managers which led to inconsistency in provision of adjustments. Where managers advocated for disabled colleagues and had a solid understanding of the Workplace Adjustment Process, the experience of disabled colleagues was easier and much more positive.

Conversely some colleagues had a negative experience, with examples shared of recommendations not being followed up and adjustments not being put in place. This related to recommendations provided from Microlink, Occupational Health and Access to Work.

The experiences of some disabled colleagues falls far below best practice and is not the position SCC wants to be in. This is detrimental to the employee experience which can lead to disabled colleagues leaving the organisation, along with the associated legal and PR risks.

Many disabled colleagues felt that the Workplace Adjustment Process had to be self-driven by the disabled colleague. Experiences shared included:

- feeling that the Council was ‘doing the person a favour’ by putting adjustments into place, even though the service benefited from these with the wider team;
- the disabled colleague needing to follow up and check themselves if adjustments could be accommodated;
- finding it difficult to identify the team that could provide assistance;
- managers who refused who make a Microlink referral and who did not read the subsequent report; and
- Deaf colleagues who had to source their interpreters, complete the associated paperwork and chase payment for the interpreters.

The perception from DENIS members and Trade Union representatives was that line managers did not always understand that disabled colleagues had a legal entitlement to workplace adjustments, where these were seen as reasonable. Some line managers felt they needed to prioritise workplace adjustments, alongside all other demands for time and resources. This led to a feeling that if line managers provided the degree of flexibility required for a workplace adjustment, they would need to provide the same for all members of the team. As the disability characteristic under the Equality Act is asymmetric (i.e. it gives rights to disabled people but not non-disabled colleagues) as this is not the legal position and potentially places disabled colleagues at a disadvantage as well as creating a potential legal risk to the Council.

There was a mixed experience of the Occupational Health service, with some colleagues having positive experiences both in terms of time taken for the referral and usefulness of the subsequent recommendations. There were some positive experiences around the use of a stress risk plan and how this related to workplace adjustments.

However, for others, the experience was not positive. Some disabled colleagues felt there was an over reliance on Occupational Health referrals, with this being the default response by managers to workplace adjustments requests, even when this was not relevant or appropriate.

A significant number of disabled people felt that the Occupational Health service was reluctant to recommend anything that the Council, and particularly the HR team, would not agree with. This gave the disabled person a feeling that the service was ‘on the side of the employer’ rather than providing an objective independent report and recommendations.

Access to personal data was varied, with some colleagues having to repeatedly share personal information with different stakeholders (e.g., Microlink and Occupational Health) in order to have their needs met. Where multiple referrals to Occupational Health were made (often due to the fluctuating or changing nature of a person’s long term health condition) this required colleagues to continually share their details. Some colleagues did not feel comfortable sharing these personal details, including with their line manager.

Some disabled colleagues experienced long waits to receive the equipment they required, often without getting any progress reports. This left some people feeling that nothing was

being done to address their requirements. The experience involved both Microlink and internal IT based adjustments.

A significant barrier was experienced by some disabled colleagues where an adjustment was either requested or recommended (from Microlink, Occupational Health or Access to Work) and this was not seen to be 'reasonable' and therefore rejected. This would amplify any legal risks and there would certainly need to be a strong case made as to why the adjustment was not reasonable in the circumstances. Additionally, in these situations no alternative solution was considered and the disabled colleague was given the answer that the adjustment was not possible. It is always best practice, and indeed a legal requirement, to consider alternatives where it is not possible to accommodate the original recommendation or request, and keep a record of the decision and the rationale

Challenges were experienced by a significant proportion of disabled colleagues who engaged with this review in obtaining IT based adjustments they required for their role. Challenges included:

- lack of compatibility between the IT infrastructure and the specific assistive technology they required; and
- delays in obtaining the solutions they needed from IT.

From the experience shared, disabled colleagues experienced challenges in obtaining a support worker, including BSL interpreters. These included:

- difficulties in completing the necessary paperwork for Access to Work, where support from the Council was not provided;
- problems in sourcing and then maintaining the services of the support worker; and
- challenges in ensuring support workers received timely payment for the services they provided.

It is important to have a clear process when securing the services of a support worker and ensuring that payment is made. This applies whether the Council is paying the support worker or a claim is made to Access to Work. Roles and responsibilities need to be explained and the process needs to be adequately resourced.

In general, physical adjustments were seen to be easier to access than non-physical such as flexible working patterns or additional breaks, even when these were recommendations in formal reports (such as Access to Work or Occupational Health). There was a feeling that managers did not always view these as workplace adjustments, in the same way as a physical piece of kit. A significant number of disabled colleagues engaging with this review found it difficult (and in some cases not possible) to agree this type of adjustment.

This challenge has been recognised by the Employee Experience team, who are implementing a new stage of the workplace adjustment process, where line managers are required to provide an explanation of why a non-physical adjustment cannot be provided. It will be important to ensure this is effectively followed up and discussions held with the disabled colleague and their line manager to agree what is possible.

Another common theme was disabled colleagues, particularly for neurodivergent people, was finding it difficult to complete the necessary administration to access support. This included completing the Access to Work application process and having to complete the administration required for these adjustments in their own time. Additional support for these activities would be beneficial and would avoid disabled colleagues needing to complete this during non-working hours.

Illustrative Quotes

“Microlink encouraging and put you at ease.”

“A2W recommended accessories and Surrey paid for it all. Counselling was helpful and team aware of some adjustments through attending team meeting.”

“I feel that they have an attitude of doing you a favour by making adjustments, rather than them realising that it can work for everyone involved. My adjustments were minor and actually benefitted the service.

“Microlink recommended a piece of software, but access was denied.”

“I found overall experience is a difficult one to find the suitable team to assist you further with your job and equipment you might need. Some of colleague I work with everyday and the manager currently have are extremely supportive but I do need adjustments and I am having to bring these from home to help me do my job.”

“Self referred to Microlink as manager wouldn’t allow any adjustments. Don’t think manager read the reports.”

“Managers had previously refused providing me with a work station at home and at work so I am now in discomfort - because it cost too much money.”

“Humiliating experience: asked where the disabled toilet was and given guided tour of all disabled toilets in the building after reception had shouted to facilities manager that I needed the toilet. Raised issue, but not sure what is actually being done to ensure this kind of thing doesn’t happen again.”

“I feel like the work that DENIS is doing with the workplace adjustment passports could be positive. Saves repeating the process”

“Even when Microlink said my line manager needed to speak with me around reasonable adjustments - none were agreed. OH recommended a stress risk plan which was breached - managers do not understand processes, policies and procedures themselves and makes situations worse.”

Our recommendations

- Complete the implementation of the recommendations of the Workplace Adjustment Process review.

- As a matter of priority establish a Workplace Adjustment Policy with specific guidance for line managers on the workplace adjustment process including roles and responsibilities of managers, guidance on determining what is reasonable and a clear explanation of the process.
- Senior leadership to promote and reinforce key messages on the importance of ensuring the Workplace Adjustment Process is understood and followed by line managers, positioning this as a productivity and wellbeing tool, in addition to being a legal requirement.

6.3 Line Manager Relationships

Best practice approaches to effective line manager relationships include:

- open, honest and proactive conversations between line managers and disabled colleagues on adjustments and support requirements;
- line managers understand the Workplace Adjustment Process and what their roles and responsibilities are within this;
- adjustments and support required for disabled colleagues are seen as a wellbeing and productivity issues;
- line managers are aware of the impact of their decisions and the language they use and are committed to ensuring disabled colleagues are positively included within the team; This includes knowing what can / cannot be discussed with co-workers and seeking the understanding and agreement regarding that with the disabled colleague.

Our findings

As would be expected there was varied experiences of line manager relationships with their disabled staff members, with some being very positive and supportive, whilst others were more difficult. Colleagues who described a positive relationship provided examples such as managers who:

- were proactive in discussing workplace adjustments;
- understood the Workplace Adjustment Process and knew their role within it;
- liaised with other stakeholders (such as Microlink and IT);
- recognised the productivity and wellbeing aspects of agreeing workplace adjustments;
- made sure the agreed adjustments were implemented quickly and efficiently;
- agreed workplace adjustments relating to flexible working, as well as pieces of kit;
- agreed innovative working patterns that worked well for both the disabled colleague and other members of the team;
- followed up to ensure the adjustments were meeting the disabled colleagues needs; and
- with the wider team, understood the specific needs of the disabled colleague, thereby adapting to their requirements, which led to a more harmonious and productive team.

The experience of a significant minority of disabled colleagues was negative. There was a feeling that the onus was on the disabled person to identify and source the adjustments that they required. Where managers were not supportive, disabled colleagues did not always know where to seek support from if their manager did not engage proactively or

productively with the process. This was particularly reported where disabled colleagues had a non-visible disability, including neurodiversity. There was a feeling that this was treated as a problem.

Some managers took the approach that the disabled colleague 'knew what was best for them and so needed to get on and find what they needed'. Although this may have been perceived by managers as a positive approach, the majority of disabled colleagues engaging with this review found it dismissive and lacked an understanding of the amount of time and effort finding the right solution took.

Lack of knowledge and understanding by line managers, in some cases, led to misinformation; for example, a disabled colleague with dyslexia was told that this was not considered to be a disability under the Equality Act 2010. This can lead to workplace adjustments being denied, as the view is taken that the person is not covered under the Equality Act, whereas this may not be correct.

Importantly, whether a disability is considered to be covered by the Equality Act is complex and usually determined by a Tribunal. This means, in reality, the definition of a disability should not be the driving force when determining workplace adjustments. Best practice focuses on whether the person needs us to do something differently and how we can make this work, rather than the legal compliance of focusing on the law.

Not all line managers appeared to be aware of the Workplace Adjustment service, or their role and responsibilities within this process. They therefore did not always understand the priority and importance of workplace adjustments, what they needed to do to support the disabled colleague or where to signpost for further advice and guidance. The perception of DENIS members and Trade Union representatives was that they needed to step in on occasions to support the disabled colleague, due to a lack of understanding on the part of the line manager, which was disadvantaging the disabled colleague.

In a small number of cases, disabled colleagues felt they were made to feel guilty about their workplace adjustment needs or seen as a 'nuisance', including comments such as "how do you think your absence affects your colleagues?". This approach felt like it lacked empathy and understanding.

There was a specific example of a basic requirement to maintain the persons hygiene and personal dignity which was not met. This should not have been treated as a workplace adjustment request at all, but a basic entitlement within the workplace.

It is important to ensure that both direct line managers and those with 'dotted line' responsibility for the performance of a disabled colleague, understand their needs in terms of workplace adjustments and the same support is provided.

This equally applies when disabled colleagues have an agile working pattern, both attending the office and working from home. It is important to ensure workplace adjustments are provided in both working arrangements. Some disabled colleagues have experienced managers agreeing workplace adjustments in the office, but not supporting those required to work from home, regardless of the amount of time this equates to. This issue needs to be

clearly addressed in the Workplace Adjustment Policy to set the policy position and reinforced in the guidance provided to line managers. The guidance specifically needs to address what would be considered 'reasonable' in terms of providing adjustments both in the workplace and when working from home. This will depend upon the context, as a colleague working infrequently from home may not require the same adjustments as a person working consistently from home.

Line managers do need more support in having potentially sensitive conversations, as the experience of some disabled colleagues was that managers did not have the skills or knowledge about how to do this. This led to all parties feeling uncomfortable and issues not being identified and addressed effectively. On occasion, disabled colleagues felt this led to an escalation into a more formal process, rather than having an informal discussion to address concerns from either side. Guidance would be helpful on how to balance the needs of the employee and the manager and what could be considered reasonable. Clear guidance and training needs to be provided for line managers on how to have these potentially sensitive conversations.

Illustrative Quotes

"If job allows you to WFH things are easier."

"Worried about appointments. Miss appointments Haven't taken time off for appointments
"This is my normal, these things happen" Flexibility would be helpful."

"Be good if absence conversations were more exploratory 'we've noticed that you have had these types of absences, what's going on?' "

"I was pestered when I was signed off. It felt like I was being pushed out. I ended up moving to another team."

"I can no longer take time off, as exhausted the processes of AIP, stage 1 capability process, and next stage is stage 2... so I am scared of having another 'crisis' and then getting the sack. This does cause a lot of stress if I'm having a 'dark day' as adds more pressure"

"Lots of linking to stress due to lack of understanding of my condition (the stress is what they're causing me)"

"I don't feel AIP are beneficial to staff with disabilities, ive been told its a supportive measure but it is in fact a punitive measure"

Our recommendations

- Establish clear expectations for line managers in for how disabled colleagues are expected to be supported and ensure these are well communicated.
- Hold line managers accountable for the delivery of these expectations via work objectives and performance appraisals.
- Provide mandatory training for managers around the workplace adjustment process and wider disability confidence training, including how to have potentially sensitive

conversations. This should be coproduced with DENIS and Trade Union representatives to ensure it addresses the types of situations they have encountered.

6.4 Application of HR Policies

Best practice approaches to the application of HR policies include:

- clear and well communicated HR policies which explain how the policy would be applied to disabled colleagues, where differences exist (e.g., how disability related sickness absence should be recorded);
- an organisational commitment, described in each policy, to ensure that adjustments for disabled colleagues are made, where this is appropriate;
- guidance and training for line managers on how policies should be applied and adapted to ensure disabled colleagues are not disadvantaged;
- where ‘managers discretion’ is referred to, guidance on what should be taken into account is provided.

Our findings

There was a general acceptance from the stakeholders who engaged with the review that the HR policy itself was generally sound, but challenges were experienced in the application of these policies.

There appears to be a significant degree of confusion and inconsistency in the interpretation of how disability related sickness absence is recorded and monitored. Some disabled colleagues were confident that disability related sickness absence was recorded separately from other sickness absence and that this did not have a disproportionate impact on their attendance record.

For other colleagues, they did not believe their disability related sickness was recorded separately and that this led to an increased probability of them being subject to the formal attendance management process. To some extent, this is backed up by the HR statistics that shows that 3.9% of disabled colleagues were subject to the formal attendance management process in 2022/23, compared to 1.1% of non-disabled colleagues.

A high proportion of disabled colleagues who engaged with this review reported a sense of fear in relation to the attendance management process, which led some to attend work when in reality, they were not well enough to do so or missing important medical appointments. Words used to describe the process included “punitive” and “accusatorial”. Trade union representatives reported some disabled colleagues feeling scared to take sick leave when they needed it or being told that no further sickness absence was permitted during a specified time. This did not take account of the fluctuating nature of their long-term health condition. This was particularly the case in relation to Attendance Improvement Plans, with some colleagues feeling these were used too quickly and often instead of taking an informal approach first. In some cases, it was felt that AIP’s were used instead of having a constructive conversation around workplace adjustments, which would actually have resolved the attendance issue. This raises a potential legal issue for the Council, if disabled colleagues are more likely to be subject to a formal process than non-disabled colleagues.

It is important to note that some disabled colleagues also have some misunderstanding around the attendance management process. There was a view amongst some people that where absence was recorded as disability related, then this did not count in any way towards attendance management, and there could be no escalation to an AIP and the only action a manager could take was to hold monthly wellbeing meetings. This is not a correct interpretation of best practice or the law and this needs to be articulated in appropriate HR policies to avoid this misunderstanding.

It is important for both managers and colleagues to have a clear understanding of how to record absence (disability related and other) and how this information will be used to support and manage attendance. There needs to be a balance between the individuals needs and those of the service.

A common theme in relation to all HR management practices was concern over the phrase 'managers discretion'. It was felt this led to inconsistencies in the application of HR policies. Where managers were informed and engaged in supporting the disabled colleague, discretion was used positively.

Where managers were less positive, it was felt this discretion was used against the disabled colleague and could be used to escalate situations in order to exit the person from the organisation. Whether this is a reality or not, it is still the perception of some disabled people in the Council. The inconsistency experienced by disabled colleagues could become a legal risk for the Council.

In relation to performance management and specifically the application of the formal process, there was some concern that managers were more likely to address issues formally for disabled colleagues. This, to some extent, is also backed up by the statistics held by HR which indicates in the previous 12 months (2022/23), 1.5% of disabled colleagues have been subject to the formal performance management process, compared with 0.6% of non-disabled colleagues.

Similar figures are reported for disciplinary action, with 1.5% of disabled colleagues being subject to the formal process, compared to 0.9% of non-disabled colleagues.

It should be noted that the HR statistics used here are simply an indication that disabled colleagues may be subject to formal HR processes more frequently than non-disabled colleagues. It is not intended as evidence that inappropriate action is being taken against disabled colleagues. It is, however, worthy of comment and further investigation by Council HR colleagues.

There was a concern expressed that managers continued to expect full performance levels from disabled colleagues and held them accountable to this, even when workplace adjustments had not been agreed or provided. Again this is problematic and may led to a legal risk.

Illustrative Quotes

“In total, I think that my team understand and that we have open conversations about health and wellbeing. I manage 2 people who both have health conditions and I think it has created better mutual understanding.”

“Good manager - he’s not perfect. Don’t expect him to be an expert. He did the leg work getting adjustments in place.”

“New line manager is open - but puts the responsibility for knowledge about adjustments onto me ‘let me know what you need. It would be nice if there could be check in’”

“Asking for accommodations in my department is difficult because of attitude of senior manager.”

“Experienced quite intimidating phone calls when off sick. Pressured into coming back before I was ready. Had to move teams. Neither manager knew how to do stress risk assessment.”

There can be a cultural element about how disability is viewed with certain colleagues (*example of being slapped on leg when viewed as talking too much*)

“I would say that a lot of managers struggle with a lack of understanding and empathy towards disability. Workers feel that they are not listened to and supported and at times judged and deemed not able to carry out their tasks”

“It would help me if I felt I was treated like a human being not a diagnosis. Stop treating me like a problem, have fair workspaces and procedures. Sadly this also extends to service users.”

“I have a supportive manager, but sometimes the higher you go, the less understanding/tolerant managers are of people with a disability. I think more training is required”

“I have underlying conditions (dyslexia and hearing aids) and found it hard to understand my job. I was told I needed to go on an English course to learn English.”

Feels like it can depend on the personality of managers. Some make a change for a week and then go back to what it was like before. There’s a view that if you have ADHD or dyslexia you’re stupid

“Now asked - are you able to do your job effectively due to your issues - before disclosure no one asked these questions - so Managers are very biased and actually discriminatory.”

“Managers roll eyes when saying someone is still off sick. MH issues are unsupported. There should be an independent person to talk to when you are suffering.”

Our recommendations

- Undertake an internal review of HR cases related to attendance, performance and disciplinary policies to determine whether disability has been an influencer in these cases. Best practice recommendations should follow from this review.
- Review and update HR policies to ensure they reflect current best practice in relation to disability inclusion and provide specific guidance for supporting disabled colleagues in the application of these policies.
- Provide guidance and training for managers on the application of HR policies, specifically as they relate to disabled colleagues,
- Provide managers and colleagues with clearer guidance on what constitutes disability related sickness absence, how this will be used and how to record this.
- Monitor performance in these areas in future to ensure the issues are being addressed

6.5 Career and personal development

Best practice approaches to career and personal development would include:

- disabled colleagues are provided with the adjustments and support they require to access the full range of career and personal development opportunities;
- training resources, activities and venues are accessible and where this is not possible, an appropriate alternative is provided;
- disabled colleagues feel supported and empowered to access opportunities and do not feel their adjustment requirements would be a barrier;
- opportunities are provided for disabled colleagues to address their personal barriers and to be supported and encouraged to develop into more senior roles within the Council.

Our findings

There were positive experiences reported of disabled colleagues being supported to fulfil their potential and to apply for alternative roles within the Council, including promotion opportunities. In these cases, workplace adjustments were made, development opportunities were offered and disabled colleagues felt they had the support of their line manager.

In other examples shared, disabled colleagues felt trapped in more junior roles or those on a temporary or bank status, as they did not have in place the things they needed in order to progress. There was a concern that adjustments had not been put in place for their current role and so would not be in place for a more senior role, which led people to not apply for other roles. For example, if additional rest periods were not accommodated in their current roles, some disabled colleagues felt there was little point in applying for more senior roles and their required rest periods were even less likely to be accommodated.

Examples were shared of disabled colleagues not being able to effectively participate in training (both during induction and as part of their role) as adjustments were not accommodated. In some situations, this led to disabled colleagues attending training alone, rather than as part of the wider group, which reduced learning and networking

opportunities and undermined the development of an inclusive culture and might create a legal risk.

In a small number of situations, disabled colleagues were told that no adjustments could be made and no alternative was considered. This resulted in the person not being able to participate in the training offer. This is potentially a breach of the Equality Act 2010, as it places the disabled colleague at a disadvantage in terms of their ability to perform their role and future career or personal development.

Best practice would recommend having a clear, transparent process for the planning, design and delivery of training across the Council which ensures, wherever possible, that this is accessible for disabled colleagues. There needs to be clear roles and responsibilities and a process in place to ensure this happens as a matter of course.

It is recognised that not all training can be made accessible for all (e.g. some aspects of e-learning). However, an alternative must be identified and provided which is discussed and agreed with the disabled colleague. Where adjustments are possible, the training coordinator or other identified officers should have a proactive responsibility to identify and make any workplace adjustments that are required prior to the training intervention being delivered.

Illustrative Quotes

“Applied for 2 roles and got them”

“Neurodiversity training helped to remember that there can be positives to the condition. You’re so often told what you can’t do.”

“I’m stopping myself. “I wouldn’t be qualified to do anything more - I’d be letting down colleagues. Feel I’m letting the team down”

“I don't feel I can look at career development as my condition fluctuates so much which is a shame, as if I was supported more I might be able to consider it.”

“A big thing for me is that I am constantly having to tell people my disability and to ask for documents/ presentations etc to be provided by email at training and meetings so I can see them and its embarrassing to say in front of all attendees - trainers/ meeting chairs should be asking in advance if anyone has accessibility needs so it can be arranged beforehand”

Our recommendations

- Review all Council training initiatives, including induction and onboarding, to ensure they are accessible by design and where possible and that alternatives are well established when they are not.
- Establish accessibility protocols for the development of all future training and personal development activities, to ensure they are accessible by design.

- Consider the feasibility of positive action initiatives to support disabled colleagues to develop in their career, including personal development coaching, mentoring, work shadowing and secondment opportunities.

6.6 Other Themes

Organisational Culture

The overall culture of an organisation and how it views its approach to disability related issues has a significant impact on outcomes for disabled people. The view of multiple stakeholders engaging in this review (including some EDI leads, DENIS members, Trade Union representatives and disabled colleagues) was that SCC was developing a more positive attitude and approach towards disabled colleagues. However, it was also recognised that there was a low baseline and that the positive improvements were not yet the experience of all disabled colleagues.

Examples of taking steps to build a disability inclusive culture included:

- Disability related lunch and learn sessions;
- EDI intranet hub where information is shared;
- ‘Touch base’ sessions at monthly team meetings;
- Involvement of DENIS in key initiatives, including accessibility reviews;
- Positive feedback on the role of staff support networks; and
- A ‘Zen’ hour at the beginning of the day for neurodivergent people.

It should be noted that involvement with and engagement of DENIS members has not always been constructive. Examples were shared of DENIS members being told to ‘stop speaking’ during an accessibility forum. This type of communication does not value or respect the lived experience that disabled colleagues have and can valuably share with the Council.

The involvement of and coproduction with DENIS is important, but should not be viewed as a substitute for formal accessibility audits and testing.

It was reported that some disabled colleagues continue to feel nervous about sharing their disability and workplace adjustment needs for fear that this will be ‘used against them’ or be a catalyst for seeking to exit them from the organisation. Whether this is a reality or not, the perception and fear is real amongst some colleagues.

There was a view that historically, all colleagues were expected to perform in their role to a maximum standard, without any adjustment for the impact of disability or long-term health conditions. There was an acknowledgement that this was a hangover from the past, but there was a concern that with some managers, these expectations remain today. This is not to suggest that line managers should be expected to accept lower levels of performance, but rather workplace adjustments must be in place and working effectively, before an assessment of performance levels is made. This may include a lower quantity of work as a workplace adjustment.

It was also recognised that a lack of consistency across the organisation lead to disabled colleagues having very different experiences as employees. Some disabled people were respected and received the support they needed in order to succeed. Others experienced inflexibility and a lack of value for the contribution they did (or could with the appropriate workplace adjustments) make to the team and overall Service.

There are attitudinal barriers that were highlighted. Indeed There were some negative attitudes expressed towards some disabled colleagues, who were seen as a cost, inconvenience or 'the weak link'. Although these were by far the minority, there were sufficient experiences shared to make it appropriate to raise this as a concern.

A greater proportion of people engaging with this review reported attitudes may be driven by positive intent, but result in negative outcomes for the disabled person. These are attitudes that disempower the disabled colleague and minimise the expectations other have of them. Examples include:

- “ahh poor you” when talking to a person who is a wheelchair user.
- “you’ve done well for yourself despite having a disability”.

In order to encourage disabled colleagues to share their disability and to ask for the workplace adjustments they need, organisations need to proactively build a positive culture where colleagues feel comfortable to share their needs and line managers are supportive and view workplace adjustments as a productivity and wellbeing tool. This requires a move away from the medical or charity model approach to disability and to adopt the social model. Please refer to Appendix 4 for an explanation of these models.

Illustrative Quotes

“We have a very open team culture where disability and wellbeing in general is spoken out honestly and confidentially. Where I have been open and honest about my own struggles, it has allowed others to do the same where they feel comfortable. Wellbeing being a priority in 121s too has helped as it's brings the person and the role together. We definitely have a lot to learn and not perfect- but I think this is helping as I take it seriously for those I manage”

“The culture is trying to shift but the drive for greater inclusivity, accessibility and understanding (i.e. avoiding unconscious bias) for visible and especially hidden disabilities is not followed up on a regular basis or made mandatory, which means it doesn't stick and gets forgotten.”

“Fantastic values. Doesn’t always filter down to individuals. Multiple line managers can have different approaches.”

“In my experience people can speak before they think and really should think about how what they say can devastate someone and knock their confidence - especially in a return to work meeting/wellness meeting. Needs to be supportive and mindful.”

“In my department all have mindset where understanding disability isn’t prioritised - I feel very alone.”

“My personal experience is that you are either well/fit enough to do your job or you aren't but this also depends on what mood your team leader is in on the day!”

“I feel that is something that is avoided, hidden and discriminated by the council (for me local team was good but by higher management and HR). It is a subject that I feel they do not care a great deal about as it they see employees as not "useful" or a burden”

“I find that hidden disabilities get overlooked as colleagues and managers cannot 'see' your condition etc. My health fluctuates daily and as we are so busy, you cannot really have an off day!!”

“The culture is to appear to be interested/ caring but only to tick a box and not actually follow it through”

“Surrey constantly focusses on Money and impact on Service - not how the employee might feel.”

Colleagues “we’re very conscious of the stigma, and mask a lot to avoid it. things are rough for everyone, so when we’re inconvenient because we’re disabled, our colleagues don’t tend to have much patience for it, and sometimes are pretty mean. it feels sometimes like it doesn’t matter how great we are at most of our jobs, it’s the little things we *can’t* do that define us.”

Our recommendations

- Ensure each Directorate has a senior leader with clear responsibility for the strategic approach to disability inclusion within their work area and to have associated work plans to deliver these outcomes.
- Appoint Champions within each Directorate with a plan of activities to actively discuss and promote disability inclusion.
- Encourage Directorates and teams to be more proactive in developing and promoting opportunities for disability inclusion and wellbeing to become a mainstream activity, which everyone engages with.
- Provide training for line managers (within the recommendations included in this report) to provide an understanding of the attitudinal barriers experienced by some disabled colleagues and develop strategies for addressing these.
- Establish an expectation, supported and promoted by senior leadership, that managers are expected to take proactive steps to build a disability inclusive culture, where discussing disability and workplace adjustments are a core element of business as usual.
- Undertake a communication campaign encouraging colleagues to disclose their disability, neurodivergence or long-term health condition, which includes why the data is being collected and what it will be used for, in terms of developing the disabled employee experience.

The Built Environment

A common theme which was identified from each group that was engaged with through this review (i.e., focus groups, one-to-one meetings, DENIS, Trade Union representatives and EDI Directorate leads) was around accessibility of Council premises issues in a number of Council buildings.

Examples of barriers included:

- only being able to access the ground floor of a building, even though the persons role required them to access multiple areas of the building (e.g., needing to access other floors to attend meetings;
- lack of step free access;
- not being able to access parts of a building outside of core hours;
- ineffective emergency evacuation arrangements in place;
- lack of accessible toilet facilities;
- lack of understanding and empathy from non-council workers regarding accessibility, e.g., receptionists.

Significantly, there were examples shared of disabled colleagues not being able to perform their role independently, due to such accessibility issues. They had to rely on other colleagues to perform some tasks on their behalf, only because they were not able to gain access to the specific room they needed to.

Woodhatch was an example frequently quoted of a building where a significant number of people experienced accessibility barriers.

It is important to highlight that this Disabled Workforce Review was not commissioned to undertake an access audit and therefore this report is presenting anecdotal feedback from the lived experience of disabled colleagues. Nevertheless, the amount of feedback provided around lack of accessibility to buildings does suggest that a further piece of work, specifically to undertake an access audit on all or some of the buildings across the Estate, would be highly beneficial to be able to address these ongoing issues.

Connected to this is the importance of ensuring a robust procurement process, which takes account of accessibility when making future estates purchase. This will avoid buying premises which have inherent barriers, which brings liability and costs, in the future.

Our recommendations

- Undertake an accessibility audit for Council premises that do not have one and review existing audits against accessibility best practice guidelines.
- Review procurement protocols (including for the purchase or lease of premises) to ensure accessibility is a core criteria of the purchase

Disability Confidence Training

It was recognised by all stakeholders involved in this review that Disability Confidence training needs to be provided to both managers and staff across the Council.

A lack of empathy and understanding around the lived experience of disabled colleagues, for some disabled people, has a significant detrimental impact on their overall employee experience. There is a recognition that in the majority of cases this is driven by lack of understanding, rather than malicious intent. However, the impact remains the same. As an example, there was a feeling that managers and colleagues did not always understand the impact their language and actions (or lack of) could have on a disabled person, which could be long lasting.

This review has identified training gaps in:

- line managers' understanding of the Workplace Adjustment Process and specifically what their role and responsibilities are within this (including how to determine what is considered 'reasonable');
- supporting managers in being proactive, confident and empathetic in having potentially sensitive conversations with disabled colleagues;
- hiring managers and the adjustments they would be expected to make during the recruitment and selection process, together with how information shared about an applicant's disability should be used and shared during the process;
- specialist support for HR teams in balancing the needs of disabled colleagues with overall service delivery, to ensure the application of HR policies do not discriminate against disabled colleagues for a reason connected to their disability;
- disability Confidence training for colleagues across the Council to build a stronger awareness and understanding of the needs of disabled colleagues.

It is important to avoid taking a medical model approach to training solutions, by focusing on conditions and delivering specific training around this. However, some specialist training interventions would benefit specific groups of colleagues. These could include:

- understanding and supporting neurodivergent colleagues;
- Deaf awareness, including some element of British Sign Language;
- raising awareness of mental health and the links to mental ill-health.

Illustrative Quotes

"I think there is extremely poor organisation-wide knowledge of disability and that there is no mandatory training about disability. I have no idea who I would turn to if I have a disability-related problem that wasn't being addressed by my manager."

"It's not always that people don't want to help, it's just that they don't have the right tools"

Our recommendations

Establish and implement an organisation wide Disability Confidence training programme, to include:

- Disability Confidence for Line managers;
- Disability Inclusion for colleagues involved in recruitment;

- specialist training for HR colleagues to ensure advice and guidance provided to others is based on disability inclusion best practice;
- wider disability awareness for all staff, including those who are working on Council sites who are not directly employed (e.g., receptionists);
- interventions for specialist areas (e.g., neurodiversity, deaf awareness, supporting our mental health);
- disability awareness training for procurement colleagues, to ensure accessibility and inclusion are well established in buying specifications;
- confidence building for disabled colleagues as a positive action initiative.

Section 7: Recommendations

HR Policy Review

Absence Management Policy

- Additional guidance (either separate to or as an appendix to the Absence Management Policy) needs to be provided to line managers. This should address:
- how disability related sickness absence is monitored, recorded and managed, and
- how and when to make workplace adjustments to the application of the policy.

Agile Working Policy

- Review the Agile Working Policy to incorporate the steps line managers need to take in discussing, agreeing and actioning workplace adjustments when disabled colleagues are utilising agile working practices.
- The guidance for managers should be clear about agile working as a workplace adjustment.

Ending Bullying & Harassment Policy

- Review the Ending Bullying and Harassment Policy to ensure it provides sufficient guidance and protocols around supporting disabled colleagues, specifically in relation to understanding terminology and what may constitute disability related bullying or harassment.

Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy

- Review the Equal Opportunities in Employment Policy to ensure it reflects current best practice.
- Provide a strategic commitment to equal opportunities in employment, through this policy, with guidance to line managers provided separately.

Grievance Policy

- Review the Grievance Procedure to ensure the need for and process to action workplace adjustment are clearly explained.

- Consider whether a refusal to discuss disability or workplace adjustments should be highlighted in the policy as a potential grievance issue.

Performance Capability Policy

Review the Performance Capability Procedure to ensure that disability and workplace adjustments are referenced in the policy as an integral aspect of performance management.

Recruitment & Onboarding

- Ensure the Council is fully compliant with all aspects of the Disability Confident Scheme.
- Establish clear and documented protocols for how adjustments will be made in recruitment and selection process and the standards expected, which is driven by individual need
- Establish a system for when and how information about the disability status of a new employee will be shared with the line manager and what the process is for providing workplace adjustments for the first day of employment
- Review information shared about the Workplace Adjustment Process as part of a new employees welcome pack to ensure it provides sufficient detail for the new employee to understand what to expect and understand any actions they need to take. This should include links to the appropriate workplace adjustment provider (Microlink or others) and DENIS.
- Promote willingness to make workplace adjustments in the role at the written offer stage to encourage new hires who require them to ask in advance of Day 1.

Workplace Adjustment Process

- Complete the implementation the recommendations of the Workplace Adjustment Process review.
- Establish a Workplace Adjustment Policy with specific guidance for line managers on the WPA process including roles and responsibilities of managers, guidance on determining what is reasonable and a clear explanation of the process.
- Senior leadership to promote and reinforce key messages on the importance of ensuring the Workplace Adjustment Process is understood and followed by line managers, positioning this as a productivity and wellbeing tool, in addition to being a legal requirement.

Line Manager Relationships

- Establish clear expectations for line managers in for how disabled colleagues are expected to be supported and ensure these are well communicated.
- Hold line managers accountable for the delivery of these expectations via work objectives and performance appraisals.
- Provide mandatory training for managers around the workplace adjustment process and wider disability confidence training, including how to have potentially sensitive conversations. This should be coproduced with DENIS and Trade Union representatives to ensure it addresses the types of situations they have encountered.

Application of HR Policies

- Undertake an internal review of HR cases related to attendance, performance and disciplinary policies to determine whether disability has been an influencer in these cases. Best practice recommendations should follow from this review.
- Review and update HR policies to ensure they reflect current best practice in relation to disability inclusion and provide specific guidance for supporting disabled colleagues in the application of these policies.
- Provide guidance and training for managers on the application of HR policies, specifically as they relate to disabled colleagues,
- Provide managers and colleagues with clearer guidance on what constitutes disability related sickness absence, how this will be used and how to record this.

Access to career and personal development opportunities

- Review all Council training initiatives, including induction and onboarding, to ensure they are accessible where possible and that alternatives are well established when they are not.
- Establish accessibility protocols for the development of all future training and personal development activities, to ensure they are accessible by design.
- Consider the feasibility of positive action initiatives to support disabled colleagues to develop in their career, including personal development coaching, mentoring, work shadowing and secondment opportunities.

Organisational Culture

- Ensure each Directorate has a senior leader with clear responsibility for the strategic approach to disability inclusion within their work area and to have associated work plans to deliver these outcomes.
- Appoint Champions within each Directorate with a plan of activities to actively discuss and promote disability inclusion.
- Encourage Directorates and teams to be more proactive in developing and promoting opportunities for disability inclusion and wellbeing to become a mainstream activity, which everyone engages with.
- Provide training for line managers (within the recommendations included in this report) to provide an understanding of the attitudinal barriers experienced by some disabled colleagues and develop strategies for addressing these.
- Establish an expectation, supported and promoted by senior leadership, that managers are expected to take proactive steps to build a disability inclusive culture, where discussing disability and workplace adjustments are a core element of business as usual.
- Undertake a communication campaign encouraging colleagues to disclose their disability, neurodivergence or long-term health condition, which includes why the data is being collected and what it

The Built Environment

- Undertake an accessibility audit for Council premises that do not have one and review existing audits against accessibility best practice guidelines.
- Review procurement protocols (including for the purchase or lease of premises) to ensure accessibility is a core component of the purchase

Provision of Disability Training

Establish and implement an organisation wide Disability Confidence training programme, to include:

- Disability Confidence for Line managers
- Disability Inclusion for colleagues involved in recruitment
- Specialist training for HR colleagues to ensure advice and guidance provided to others is based on disability inclusion best practice
- Wider disability awareness for all staff
- Provide training interventions for specialist areas (e.g. neurodiversity, deaf awareness, supporting our mental health)
- Disability awareness training for procurement colleagues, to ensure accessibility and inclusion are well established in buying specifications.

Section 8: Conclusion

There are many examples of good practice in relation to disability inclusion at the Council. However, these appear to be driven by individuals at all levels of the organisation, who have a strong personal commitment to 'doing the right thing' for disabled colleagues. On an individual level, this can create positive experiences and successful outcomes.

What the Council lacks is an overall strategic approach to disability inclusion across all aspects of the employee life cycle. The BDF Disability Smart Framework provides a structure to be able to assess the Council's policies and approach and takes this strategic approach.

Policies exist which reference disability, but the overall approach lacks a coherent strategic thread which draws these policies together and leads to a consistent experience for disabled colleagues.

The next step for the Council is to develop this strategic approach, lead by senior leadership and underpinned by action plans that will deliver, in a tangible way, the strategic commitments made and based upon the recommendations within this report.

Appendix 1

SCC/Business Disability Forum Disabled Workforce Review Working Group

Terms of Reference

1. General info

SCC's (SCC) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) workforce annual plan

includes a commitment to understand more about our disabled staff, their experiences of working in the council and the opportunities that are available to them.

Following an extensive procurement process, the Business Disability Forum (BDF) has been commissioned to undertake this review.

The council, and its EDI Programme Board is committed to implementing the actions which arise from this review.

2. Scope

The role of the Disabled Workforce Review Working Group is to:

- receive progress updates from the BDF on implementation of the agreed action plan;
- identify and mitigate against any risks or issues affecting the implementation of the project plan;
- agree the communication plans for publicising the review and encouraging as many staff as possible to participate in its planned engagement events;
- ensure that the needs and views of disabled staff influence the implementation of the project plan;
- provide updates on the progress of the review to the EDI Programme Board and to People and Change Leadership Team;
- provide an effective means of communication for all forum representatives and other stakeholders. Technical jargon will be avoided and documents and presentations will be accessible and inclusive.

3. Responsibilities

- The Employee Experience Lead will chair meeting and ensures that the group operates in accordance with the Terms of Reference. In their absence, the Head of EDI will chair.
- The BDF project lead (or nominated representative) will provide an update on progress against the project plan (including risks to the project) at each meeting.
- The agenda for each meeting will be set by the chair. The agenda is likely to be based upon the project plan and include:

- reviewing recently completed actions;
 - planning upcoming actions;
 - discussing risks;
 - agreeing communication actions.
- The chair will share the agreed actions from each meeting with all members
 - The AD FM will ensure that all actions and minutes recorded at forum meetings are circulated to all representatives and named stakeholders

4. Meetings

The Working Group will meet every two weeks. Exceptional meetings will be organised to address any urgent issues which may arise.

5. Members

Organisation/group	Name	Role
SCC Disabled Employees Network in Surrey (DENIS)	Vikki Walton-Cole	DENIS co-chair
	Peter Shepherd-Jones	DENIS co-chair
UNISON	Russ Harland	Deputy Chair
	Emma Stephens-DuCros	Co-Equalities Lead and Comms Officer
Business Disability Forum	Clare Cromarty	Project Lead
	Rick Williams	Project member
	Graeme Whippy	Project member
SCC EDI	Nikki Parkhill	Head of EDI (deputy Chair)
SCC Communications	Elliot Small	Communications Officer
	Kirsty Collier	Senior Communications Officer
	Cat McCabe	Communications Manager
	Madeleine Pallas	Internal Communications Manager
SCC People and Change	Heidi Auld	Governance & Contracts Lead
	Molly Aldrich-Wincer	EDI Implementation Consultant
	Sofia Kotlarz	EDI Implementation Consultant
	Chris Barton	Employee Experience Lead (Chair)

Appendix 2

Summary of Engagement with the Primary Research Focus Groups

A total of 9 focus groups were facilitated, with a spread of time slots to maximise opportunities for disabled colleagues to attend.

A total of 92 disabled colleagues signed up to attend a focus group.

A total of 63 disabled colleagues attended.

Individual meetings

6 one-to one meetings were requested and offered.

5 meetings took place.

Meeting with representatives

Meetings took place with DENIS members and Unison representatives

DENs provided written feedback, via a previous recent consultation exercise.

EDI Leads in Directorates

Requests to engage with the review were sent to all Directorates. Meetings took place with EDI leads from the following Directorates:

- Children, Families and Lifelong Learning
- Adult Social Care
- Resources
- Customers and Communities
- Environment, Transport and Infrastructure
- Partnerships, Prosperity & Growth
- Surrey Fire & Rescue Service

Appendix 3

Focus Groups Briefing

Thank you for agreeing to attend a focus group as part of our Disabled Workers Review at SCC.

We wanted to give you a little more information about the session and what we will be talking about.

It will be 75 minutes and you will be able to join via the Teams link.

The session will be run by Suzi MacKenzie from the Business Disability Forum. We want you to feel comfortable sharing your views during the focus group. Please be reassured that your name will not be shared with anyone from the Council and no comments will be attributed to a specific person.

She will be asking about your experience around:

- Joining SCC
- Discussing, agreeing and actioning workplace adjustments
- How HR policies are applied to you as a disabled person
- The support you receive from your line manager, as a disabled person
- Your access to personal and career development
- Whether you feel / experience any barriers, as a disabled person at SCC
- Whether there is anything you would like to see SCC do differently in supporting disabled colleagues? What's the most important thing for you?
- How you would describe the culture of SCC towards disabled colleagues

If you have any access requirements that you have not yet shared with us, please do get in touch so we can put these in place.

Thank you again for investing your time in this focus group and we look forward to hearing about your experiences.

BDF Project Team

Appendix 4

Best practice versus compliance

Relying on the definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010 to consider the nature of disability and what actions and approaches need to be taken is likely to prove challenging. The legal definition of disability is complex and based on a range of apparently subjective tests and not on a list of conditions (there are only 5 conditions specifically covered by the Act.) A best practice approach should not rely on trying to comply with the Equality Act and by applying the definition of disability to identify whether a person is protected, but rather assess and consider the effect of the impairment and address the barriers which might be identified.

The effect of an individual's disability is a dynamic balance and is hugely variable. This means it is simply not possible to design all working practices and systems to be barrier free to all. Indeed one person's access solution might well be another's barrier. This means that there needs to be two linked elements to considering how to deliver maximum accessibility:

- design as much of the Council employment practices and systems to be as barrier free as practicable as a matter of course (inclusive design); and
- be able to make further adjustments for individuals where barriers still remain.

This is also referred to as the Social Model approach.

The models for managing disability

To implement a best practice approach an organisation needs to adopt a methodology and understanding of disability and its implications which allows inclusion to be 'business as usual' and not a 'bolt-on'. Current thinking is that this can only be achieved by using the concepts established in the social model. To understand the social model it is useful to consider earlier models which have not delivered Inclusion and access to services and social engagement.

Charity and medical models

Traditionally the way society and organisations managed disability issues was based around the 'charity' and 'medical' models.

The charity model, while no longer used in terms of policy and management, still plays a strong part in some people's attitudes towards disabled people, which then impacts on their understanding, behaviour and assessment of requirements of this group. At its core is the perception that disabled people need sympathy, looking after, protecting, and that there is little expectation that they will lead an independent and 'normal' life.

As its title implies, the medical model concentrates on disease and impairments and puts what is wrong with someone at the heart of how to address the issue; 'fixing or mitigating the problem' the individual might experience. This might be useful when dealing with health issues. However, it is less helpful when thinking about how a disabled person might access employment opportunities and excel in their role.

The limitation of the medical model is that it concentrates thinking on the conditions and its symptoms, or more likely its stereotypical symptoms, and not any barriers which might be 'designed out'. Based on these views, judgements are made about what individuals can and can't do, what barriers might exist, types of adjustments that might be appropriate and so on. It also makes it harder for an organisation to deal with disability as a mainstream issue, as it is centred on the individual impairment and not on how to identify and address the barriers an individual experiences. Given the range and the variability of the effects of impairments on individuals, this approach cannot deliver a universal solution.

The social model

The social model says it is society or an organisation which creates 'disability' by limiting access to services, products, employment and use of infra structure by the way they go about what they do. If society and organisations worked differently and developed an inclusive approach across the board, a person's impairment would not be an issue. A good example of the social model in action relates to modern buildings. They are required to be accessible and step-free to everyone. This means, if there are no steps into reception, then making a one-off adjustment is not required such as providing a temporary ramp or a separate entrance for people requiring step-free access. Everyone accesses the building in the same way. Access is mainstreamed and no one really thinks about this anymore, as it is just the way things are. In other words, the social model seeks to deal proactively with the root cause of the barriers and not their symptoms.

Barriers can be physical, like buildings not having accessible toilets, or they can be caused by people's attitudes to difference.

The social model helps us to recognise various systemic barriers which make life and employment harder for disabled people. Removing these barriers creates equity and offers disabled people more independence, choice, and control.

Under this model individuals' requirements may manifest in several ways. These can be both visible and non-visible, complex and multiple, and fluctuating. They include, but are not limited to:

- physical differences, e.g., manual dexterity, mobility limitations;
- mental health differences, e.g., depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder;

- sensory differences, e.g., blindness, loss of some or all vision, being Deafened, deaf, hard of hearing;
- developmental differences e.g., existing since childhood or triggered, developed or diagnosed later in life, which affect motor, cognitive, social and emotional skills, speech and language;
- learning disabilities and difficulties, e.g., Asperger’s syndrome, Down’s syndrome, cerebral palsy;
- learning differences and neuro-differences, e.g., dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder;
- social and communication differences, such as a speech and language impairment or being on an autism spectrum;
- complex and variable long-term chronic conditions that have both a physical and mental health impact or other complex effects e.g., chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, long Covid, chronic pain conditions, cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, epilepsy, and similar.

We recognise that the effect of an impairment on an individual is a dynamic balance between the activity, their confidence, knowledge, socio-cultural influences, and the barriers experienced.

Intersectionality with other protected characteristics

It is important to recognise that for disabled people, their disability or long-term health condition is not their only characteristic. There will also be a range of other factors affecting their life, which can create a unique set of circumstances that interrelate with each other.

For example, we know that race and disability can interact to create a further set of challenges in terms of accessibility. Disability is viewed in a variety of different ways through a cultural or racial lens which can make it more difficult for disabled people from these communities to access employment and other services. How disability is viewed by different communities can make it more challenging for people within these communities to engage with the reality of their disability or long-term health condition and therefore make accessing the support they may need more challenging.

There is also the question of connectedness between the work of the Council when considering intersectionality. For example, if a positive action employment scheme was being developed for a specific protected characteristic the approach and procedures should also ensure their accessibility and not assume the target group should be considered as a stand-alone issue.

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Ethnicity Review – Executive Summary



Introduction

Business in the Community's (BITC) Inclusion Advisory Services team guides employers to ensure they are compliant with UK Equality legislation as well as supporting them in creating inclusive workplace cultures, going beyond statutory requirements for diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI). The Equality Act 2010 is the UK's primary anti-discrimination law applicable in the workplace, covering nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. This is reinforced by the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

BITC are aware that all employers are at different stages of their journey to become more inclusive places to work. Action in this area creates a need to address organisational cultures, and culture changes take time. To this end, BITC tailors its advice and recommendations to have the most significant impact right now whilst always keeping the long-term ambition in mind.

Surrey County Council commissioned BITC to review essential information and evidence and provide recommendations on priorities and areas for development to inform Surrey County Council's approach to Racial Inclusion. BITC understands that Surrey County Council is at an early stage of this journey, so the engagement was designed to kick start a longer-term focus on Equality, Inclusion and Diversity.

The phased plan worked to engage colleagues across the organisation on its commitment to the topic and to understand the current work being done by the organisation, including exploring perceptions of Surrey County Council as racially inclusive employer. The project also investigated existing insights and data infrastructure to understand the employee makeup and advise improvements.

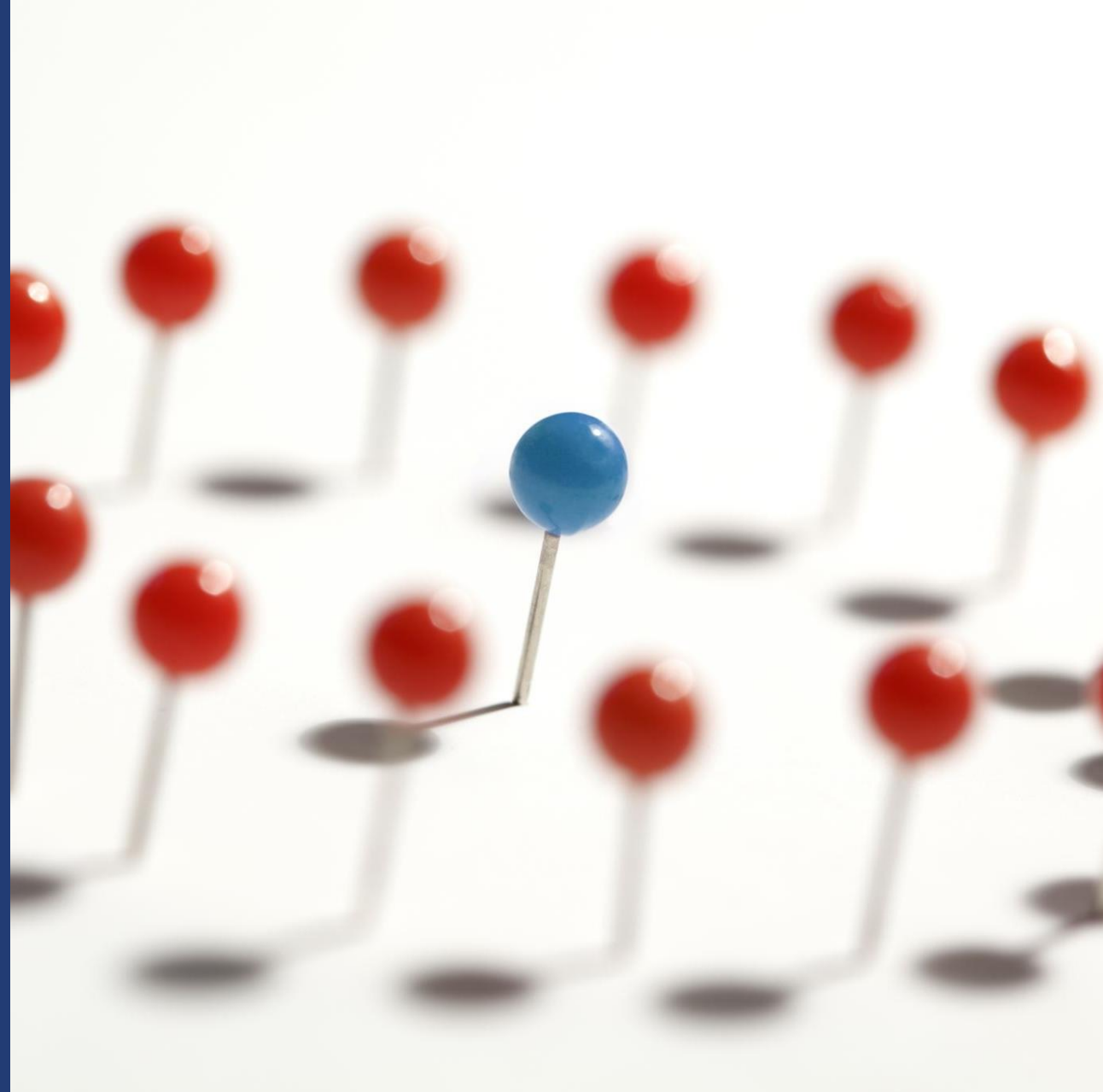
The output of the work summarises findings and provides recommendations for enhancements across the employee life cycle, from recruitment to development and progression. Our outlined priorities and practical suggestions will inform your strategy and action plan.

Sector Pre Word

Councils have vast opportunities for impact through their diversity and inclusion strategies, policies and actions. Not only can they influence their internal ways of working to help diversity and inclusion thrive through their employees, but they also have a role in improving equitable outcomes in their communities and broader society.

Councils have a unique understanding of their communities and the challenges and barriers they experience; this will differ per council. Using the particular data councils have available to them, along with the knowledge gained through community workers and stakeholder relationships, boards can run their functions and services in such a way that is not only conducive to diversity and inclusion but can challenge and reduce historical racial inequalities. Likewise, for influencing public perception and gaining support for social equity.

We have seen many councils taking their roles as arbiters of diversity and inclusion seriously. We work with several councils; for example, Westminster City Council have committed to being an anti-racist organisation.



Purpose of the report

Methodology

In line with best practices for diversity and inclusion research and to create a holistic picture of Racial inclusion at Surrey County Council, the DEI review takes a mixed methodology approach.

The research requires a deep-dive data collection exercise to determine the DEI landscape at Surrey County Council. This is performed using an analysis of employee demographic data, survey data, listening circle data, policies, strategies, action plans, and procedures supplied by Surrey County Council across five key themes:

- DEI Leadership, strategy and infrastructure
- Developing ethnically diverse talent across the employee lifecycle
- Employee communications and engagement
- Inclusive culture and behaviours
- Training, education and awareness

This report presents the findings of the Ethnicity review carried out in 2023 by BITC for the Surrey County Council in its role as an employer to provide high-quality services.

How we'll meet our commitment

Focusing on equality, diversity and inclusion is vitally important to improve the experiences of residents and staff and ensure no-one in the county is left behind. We also have a legal responsibility under the Equality Act 2010. We aim to eliminate discrimination, increase equality of opportunity and foster good relations across people from all groups protected by law*. – Surrey CC Website

The key objectives of the review are to:

- Review relevant workforce data and pertinent policy documents.
- Uncover ethnically diverse employee perceptions and experiences about DEI at Surrey County Council and
- Provide findings and recommendations for the next steps and considerations for driving racial inclusion.

Executive Summary

The objectives for this review were to investigate existing data infrastructure to understand employee make-up, understand the current work around DEI within the organisation, and capture perceptions of Surrey County Council as an inclusive employer for ethnically diverse colleagues.

BITC found that Surrey County Councils Strategy and Action Plan follows best practice and is leading in most components., efforts should be focussed on the execution of the strategy and developing internal capacity within the organisation to deliver it.

Data across the employee lifecycle revealed that Surrey County council is making great strides in analysing pertinent information across the employee lifecycle this has led to higher rates of disclosure, efforts should now be focussed on analysing workforce trends further and more intersectionally to be able to pin point high risk areas.

The review of the employee policies found that Surrey County Councils policies are compliant and well understood, however issues were identified in consistency across policies and a lack of recorded impact for the effectiveness of the policies. The policies can be tightened up and improved but more importantly the impact and scepticism about their effectiveness needs to be addressed.

Training and development is currently in its infancy and the success of the unconscious bias training needs to be built on by expanding the training offering and the training process, there is appetite to make this training mandatory and further investments I needed at the middle management level .



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What is Going Well at Surrey County Council

- 1** The EDI Strategy and Action plan is well developed
- 2** There is an upward trajectory regarding willingness to share information with line managers
- 3** The recruitment process goes beyond compliance and is leading in many areas
- 4** Policies promote a culture of respect and dignity in the workplace
- 5** High satisfaction rates for Unconscious Bias Training
- 6** Allies have a desire to have a more active role in advocating and supporting racial inclusion

Key Challenges at Surrey County Council

1

Microaggressions and Stereotypes still prevalent

2

In group dynamics hinder collaboration and communication

3

Concerns about barriers progression opportunities and inequitable restructuring

4

Leadership representation, endorsement and role modelling

5

Cultural awareness and sensitivity especially for overseas staff

6

Lack of training for Leaders and employees to be inclusive

Key Findings

Strategy and action plan

- How DEI supports transformation requires further clarification.
- The strategy is vulnerable to siloed working without seamless integration across initiatives.
- The link to service delivery needs to be strengthened.

Representation and Demographic Data

- Nearly 10% of employees have personally experienced discrimination at work in the last 12 months.
- The majority of these experienced this from within Surrey County Council. Close to 60% from their manager, 25% from other colleagues and 13% from the wider organisation.
- Colleagues with disabilities and some ethnically diverse colleagues think Surrey County Council is not committed to building an inclusive environment.

Recruitment

- Although approximately half (49.6%) of total applicants are white, they make up three-quarters (75.3%) of those hired.
- 23.0% of total applications are from Asian people. However, they only make up 8.9% of those that are hired. Similarly, Black people make up 17.0% of total applications, but this translates to only 7.5% of hires

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“Wellbeing to be incorporated in all aspects of the organisation as a continuous discussion top down rather than a yearly review.”

“I would like to see more diversity in the interviewing process to remove unconscious bias”.

“There is a friendship group at the top. The minority ethnic group feel uncomfortable, and your progress and ability to be treated fairly, equally, and professionally are related to how well you can gel with management.”

“To progress in Surrey County Council, I was told to leave to gain experience and come back for the role.”

“In recent years, the Senior Leadership Team has become more diverse– it is promising that a diverse SLT will be able to individually and collectively role model inclusive behaviours.”

Key Findings

Inclusion Policies

- The lack of a glossary within four of your policies and the complex use of language, may make the policies difficult to understand and utilise, particularly for those who do not speak English as a first language or those who are new to your organisation or to local government.
- A lack of clarity around anonymous feedback options is evident in three of your policies. This means that colleagues are less likely to come forward and raise concerns

Learning And Development

- Feedback indicated that employees feel line managers are not equipped, enabled and invested enough to deal with diversity and inclusion.
- Training is not mandatory; therefore, there are parts of the employee population yet to be trained on diversity and inclusion topics.

Culture and Behaviours

- Experiences of racism within teams, impacting practitioners from ethnic minority groups. Many participants cited feeling uncomfortable or psychologically unsafe speaking up against non-inclusive behaviours
- Some colleagues feel that although progression opportunities exist, they may not be equally accessible to everyone
- Observations reveal that senior leadership lacks diversity

“Surrey Council may train staff, but those trainings don’t yield anything as there is no action plan.”

“Surrey Council has no dedicated continuous learning and awareness creation for staff to fall back on as a resource for D&I.”

“My points are overlooked in comparison to white colleagues. My comments aren’t even captured in minutes. I have been excluded from opportunities and not given equal opportunities.”

“(It is a) massive problem (that) investigations (are) led by white people with no understanding.”

Key Recommendations

Key recommendations across all themes

- **Address Racism and Discriminatory Culture:** Implement comprehensive anti-racism training for all staff, emphasising the importance of inclusive behaviours and zero tolerance to bullying.
- **Promote Career Progression for Ethnically Diverse Colleagues:** Develop and communicate clear pathways for career progression, with a focus on providing equal opportunities for ethnically diverse colleagues.
- **Improve Inclusivity in Recruitment Practices:** Review and revise internal recruitment practices to ensure fairness, transparency, and the elimination of biases.
- **Enhance Communication and Reporting Processes:** Establish robust reporting mechanisms for instances of racism or unfair treatment and ensure timely and effective responses.
- **Increase Representation in Leadership:** Develop and implement strategies inclusive of targets to increase diversity at all levels of leadership within Surrey County Council.
- **Continuous Education and Awareness:** Implement ongoing education programs to raise awareness about several diversity and inclusion identities and topics.
- **Wellbeing Considerations: Conduct a 'Workwell Assessment' [Workwell Self-Assessment Tool - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](https://bitc.org.uk)** with the support of BITC's Wellbeing Advisory Services to gain a holistic view of your organisational approach towards wellbeing and how it supports inclusion, with a particular focus on the experiences of your ethnically diverse colleagues

Next Steps



Overview & Next Steps

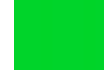
A culture of trust and transparency will enable your ethnically diverse colleagues to feel more confident using policies.

Continuous feedback will help maintain the relevance of your documents. Effective communication, transparency, and a proactive approach to DEI will also improve the grievance policy and procedure for your ethnically diverse colleagues.

Seek feedback on an ongoing basis and engage with your staff networks to make the necessary adjustments and improvements over time.

Remember, an inclusive workplace is an ongoing effort that requires continuous learning and adaptation. You'll be able to create a training plan embedded in your DEI strategy that will ultimately increase organisational effectiveness and capacity.

By implementing these recommendations, Surrey County Council can enhance inclusion for ethnically diverse colleagues, thus demonstrating the council's commitment to diversity and supporting a positive and respectful work environment for everyone.





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LGBTQ+ review – Executive Summary



Introduction

Business in the Community's (BITC) Inclusion Advisory Services team guides employers to ensure they are compliant with UK Equality legislation as well as supporting them in creating inclusive workplace cultures, going beyond statutory requirements for diversity, equality, and inclusion (EDI). The Equality Act 2010 is the UK's primary anti-discrimination law applicable in the workplace, covering nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. This is reinforced by the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

BITC are aware that all employers are at different stages of their journey to become more inclusive places to work. Action in this area creates a need to address organisational cultures, and culture changes take time. To this end, BITC tailors its advice and recommendations to have the most significant impact right now whilst always keeping the long-term ambition in mind.

Surrey County Council (SCC) commissioned BITC to review essential information and evidence and provide recommendations on priorities and areas for development to inform Surrey County Council's approach to LGBTQ+ Inclusion. BITC understands that Surrey County Council is at an early stage of this journey, so the engagement was designed to kick-start a longer-term focus on Equality, Inclusion and Diversity.

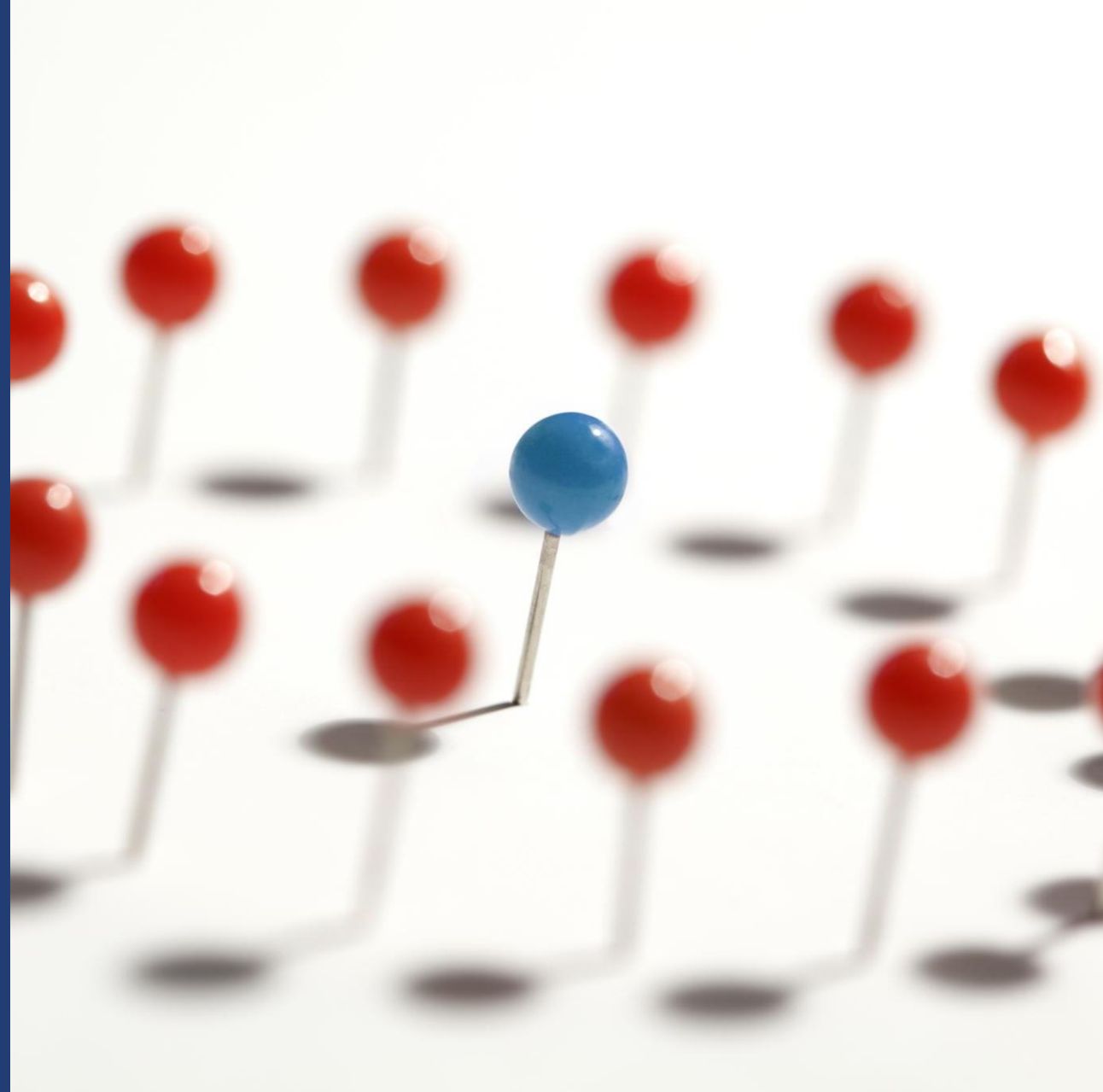
The phased plan worked to engage colleagues across the organisation on its commitment to the topic and to understand the current work being done by the organisation, including exploring perceptions of Surrey County Council as an LGBTQ+ inclusive employer. The project also investigated existing insights and data infrastructure to understand the employee makeup and advise on improvements.

Our outlined priorities and practical suggestions will inform your strategy and action plan.

Sector Pre Word

Councils have vast opportunities for impact through their diversity and inclusion strategies, policies and actions. Not only can they influence their internal ways of working to help diversity and inclusion thrive through their employees, but they also have a role in improving equitable outcomes in their communities and broader society.

Councils have a unique understanding of their communities and the challenges and barriers they experience; this will differ per council. Using the data councils have available to them, along with the knowledge gained through community workers and stakeholder relationships, boards can run their functions and services in such a way that is not only conducive to diversity and inclusion but can challenge and reduce historical LGBTQ+ inequalities. Likewise, for influencing public perception and gaining support for social equity.



Purpose of the report

Methodology

In line with best practices for diversity and inclusion research and to create a holistic picture of LGBTQ+ inclusion at Surrey County Council, the EDI review takes a mixed methodology approach.

The research requires a deep-dive data collection exercise to determine the EDI landscape at Surrey County Council. This is performed using an analysis of pulse survey data, listening circle data, policies, strategies, action plans, and procedures supplied by Surrey County Council across five key themes:

- EDI leadership, strategy and infrastructure
- Representation and data collection
- Employee communications and engagement
- Inclusive culture and behaviours
- Training, education and awareness

This report presents the findings of the LGBTQ+ review carried out in 2023 by BITC for the Surrey County Council in its role as an employer to provide high-quality services.

How we'll meet our commitment

Focusing on equality, diversity, and inclusion is vitally important to improve the experiences of residents and staff and ensure no one in the county is left behind. We also have a legal responsibility under the Equality Act 2010. We aim to eliminate discrimination, increase equality of opportunity and foster good relations across people from all groups protected by law. – Surrey County Council Website*

The key objectives of the review are to:

- Review relevant workforce data and pertinent policy documents.
- Uncover LGBTQ+ employee perceptions and experiences about EDI at Surrey County Council.
- Provide findings and recommendations for the next steps and considerations for driving LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Executive Summary

The objectives for this review were to investigate existing data infrastructure to understand employee make-up, understand the current work around EDI within the organisation, and capture perceptions of Surrey County Council as an inclusive employer for LGBTQ+ colleagues.

BITC found that Surrey County Council's Strategy and Action Plan follows best practice and is leading in most components, efforts should be focused on the execution of the strategy and developing internal capacity within the organisation to deliver it.

Data being collected about LGBTQ+ representation and the employees experiences at Surrey County Council is limited. Efforts should be focused on allowing further identification of sexuality and gender identity. Even if the data is too small to analyse, the option should be made available.

The review of the employee policies found that Surrey County Council's policies are compliant, however, issues were identified in consistency across policies and a lack of recorded impact for the effectiveness of the policies. Training and communications should be implemented to ensure that employees and more specifically managers are implementing policies effectively.

Training and development is currently in its infancy, a training action plan needs to be implemented to streamline training outputs and evaluate training uptake and effectiveness. There is an appetite to make some training mandatory and further investments are needed at senior leadership and middle management level.





What is Going Well at Surrey County Council

1

The EDI Strategy and Action plan is well developed.

2

Many components of the recruitment process are inclusive and attract a diverse range of applicants.

3

Trans+ Equity Guidance document and Policy have now been implemented.

4

Policies promote a culture of respect and dignity in the workplace.

5

There is a great appreciation for the LGBTQ+ SCC Network.

6

Overall, LGBTQ+ employees feel happy at work and their well-being is considered by their managers.

Key Challenges at Surrey County Council

1

LGBTQ+ microaggressions and stereotypes are prevalent.

2

Conflict between identities and beliefs within the LGBTQ+ community and the wider organisation.

3

Data to understand representation and employee experience is limited.

4

Leadership representation, endorsement and role modelling.

5

Policies are not being implemented appropriately.

6

Lack of training for leaders, managers and all employees to embed an inclusive culture.

Key Findings

Strategy and action plan

- Public commitment needs reinforcement to enable stakeholders to feel a stronger connection to the People Strategy and EDI Action Plan.
- The strategy is vulnerable to siloed working without seamless integration across initiatives.
- Intangible impact measures could lead to an inability to demonstrate progress.

Representation and Demographic Data

- We could not complete an in-depth analysis of the data provided for the 'LGBTQ+ Colleague Experience' review in the same way as was done for the 'Ethnicity Colleague Experience' due to the limitations of the data.
- Those who identify as 'Bisexual' disproportionately submitted that they are subject to unacceptable behaviour.
- LGBTQ+ colleagues disagreed more with the statement: 'I feel safe to speak up about anything that concerns me in SCC' when compared to their heterosexual counterparts.

Recruitment

- There is truly little data on minoritised genders outside of the binary. Without further detail, it is difficult to understand how recruitments processes impact Trans+ applicants.

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"a disproportionate number of middle class middle aged white blokes in my service are managers. I find that this results in recruitment and promotion of similar candidates"

"The senior management team is not serious about D&I as they only pay lip service."

"I am not 'Other', nor I am a '+'. The language is not inclusive."

"The leadership team should, with hands-on hearts, take responsibility to change the culture rather than employees taking the lead."

"Know of people who didn't apply for jobs because they couldn't put they were non-binary on their application form."

Key Findings

Inclusion Policies

- There were a lack of microaggression, bullying and discrimination examples specific to the LGBTQ+ community.
- A lack of explanation on how managers should be implementing policies and how they should discuss EDI and identity with individuals in their team.
- Confusion on how to use policies, how to report incidences, and how to access mediation.

Learning And Development

- Feedback indicated that employees feel line managers are not equipped, enabled and invested enough to deal with diversity and inclusion. Experiences varied dramatically.
- Training is not mandatory; therefore, there are parts of the employee population yet to be trained on diversity and inclusion topics.
- Awareness and Education provided by the network is ad hoc and not fully supported by the organisation.

Culture and Behaviours

- Experiences of microaggressions and stereotyping towards LGBTQ+ employees.
- Concerns were raised about gender-critical views manifesting in non-inclusive ways and not being adequately addressed, leading to a sense of futility in reporting.

“I worry that older LGBTQ+ people are going back in the closet in Surrey as our care provision is not inclusive.”

“Better training for managers on all intersectional identities. Clear lack of understanding for LGBTQ+ for a lot of middle managers.”

“Have previously experienced a co-worker ignoring my preferred pronouns, and constantly referring to me using the wrong set of pronouns and gendered words, despite me informing them multiple times.”

“I had some grievances, but the manager involved in dealing with the grievances has no knowledge about the policy.”

Key Recommendations

Key recommendations across all themes

- **Address LGBTQ+ Phobia and Microaggressions:** Strengthen anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies within the organisation. Ensure a clear commitment from leadership to address LGBTQ+ discrimination within the organisation.
- **Improve Inclusivity in Recruitment Practices:** Review and revise internal recruitment practices to ensure fairness, transparency, and the elimination of biases.
- **Enhance Communication and Reporting Processes:** Better communicate policies and processes in place, highlighting the mediation service available.
- **Increase Representation in Leadership:** Develop and implement strategies inclusive of targets to increase diversity at all levels of leadership within Surrey County Council.
- **Data Collection:** 'Surrey County Council Data Set' and the Pulse Survey particularly, should have an option to collect data about sexuality and gender identity outside the binary. In the first instance, this information would be helpful for the understanding of LGBTQ+ colleagues' pay and progression within Surrey County Council. In addition, it would be beneficial to understand the experience of Trans+ colleagues from pulse survey data.
- **Continuous Education and Awareness:** Implement a training programme with ongoing education sessions to raise awareness about several diversity and inclusion identities and topics. Ensure that some of the training is mandatory, particularly for managers, and some of the training is necessary, potentially run by the networks or external speakers.
- **Wellbeing Considerations:** Conduct a 'Workwell Assessment' [Workwell Self-Assessment Tool - Business in the Community \(bitc.org.uk\)](#) with the support of BITC's Wellbeing Advisory Services to gain a holistic view of your organisational approach towards wellbeing and how it supports inclusion, with a particular focus on the experiences of your LGBTQ+ colleagues.
- **Decision Making:** Ensure that all employees follow the EQIA process. Make the SLT accountable to understand how decisions may affect certain groups.

Next Steps



Overview & Next Steps

A culture of trust and transparency will enable SCC's LGBTQ+ colleagues to feel more confident using policies. Continuous feedback will help maintain the relevance of SCC's documents. Effective communication, transparency, and a proactive approach to EDI will also improve the experiences of SCC's LGBTQ+ colleagues. Seek feedback on an ongoing basis and engage with the SCC staff networks to make the necessary adjustments and improvements over time. Remember, an inclusive workplace is an ongoing effort that requires continuous learning and adaptation. When SCC creates a training plan, it should be embedded in the SCC EDI strategy. That will ultimately increase organisational effectiveness and capacity.

By implementing these recommendations, Surrey County Council can enhance inclusion for LGBTQ+ colleagues, thus demonstrating the council's commitment to diversity and supporting a positive and respectful work environment for everyone.

Further Considerations:

- What does success look like to SCC in the short-term, mid-term and long-term?
- How will the findings of the LGBTQ+ review be used to determine an action plan?
- How will the findings of the ethnically diverse colleague review be used in addition to this data?
- Who will be accountable for driving the actions that arise in the planning?
- How will other stakeholders be engaged to drive culture change at SCC?



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