

Surrey County Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2022-23

Surrey County Council's core mission is to ensure no-one is left behind. This means tackling inequality should guide everything we do, and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) needs to be integral to the council's culture.

The council's leadership has stretching ambitions for EDI, reflected in this action plan. We are committed to be **open** and **transparent** with staff and residents about our intentions and how we will take **responsibility** for achieving them. The Chief Executive and Executive Directors will be proactive and directly involved in driving this agenda, through sponsorship of staff networks, championing EDI across all council services and participation in reverse mentoring schemes. We will also support staff to have frank, open conversations about EDI, both to discuss where things are going well and where things still need to change.

If we get this right and we all play our part, Surrey's residents and our staff should see the council as a fair, compassionate and inclusive organisation that genuinely values difference and makes everyone feel respected, safe to speak up on issues of concern, valued and included.

Our staff tell us we need to do more to support them to belong so we can retain top talent and make the council a more attractive proposition to a more diverse range of prospective employees. They also want the council's leadership to be active champions for EDI so residents, Members, partners and staff understand why this agenda is important to the council.

This is something we must focus on if we want to be one of the leading councils in England and the most effective council for Surrey residents. It is:

- **Essential for residents** – local democratic arrangements and council services will be designed to be open, inclusive and accessible for all.
- **Essential for staff** – all staff should feel supported and included at the council and are enabled to use their diverse experiences and skills to improve performance and create innovative solutions to make residents' lives better.
- **Essential for the council** – developing a diverse workforce and a better understanding of residents who are being left behind means we can design more responsive services by focusing resources where they're most needed, improving both value for money and outcomes.

Doing this will also help the council to comply with its legal obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010.

Annex A – Surrey County Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2022 - 2023

This plan does not capture everything the council is doing to tackle inequality, but it will play a key part in ensuring it is an inclusive and diverse organisation for staff and how we work with residents. These are reflected by the following five themes:

- Employee experience
- Leadership
- Knowing and engaging our communities
- Communications and engagement
- Delivering inclusive services

Key actions for 2022-2023

Objective 1 - Employee Experience: Strengthen the diversity of our workforce and move to an inclusive culture that values difference, where all staff feel they belong and have opportunities to succeed

1. Develop fairer recruitment and selection processes, including accessible advertising and documentation, fair shortlisting and interview processes
2. Enable our whole workforce to fully participate and be supported with agile working
3. Working with our Employee Reference Groups (ERGs), commission reviews on experiences of LGBTQI+, disabled and minority ethnic staff who work for the Council
4. Finalise development of a Trans at Work Policy that supports the trans community and balances the need of all other protected characteristic groups
5. Agree EDI training priorities, including any mandatory training, based on a training needs analysis
6. Continue development of ERGs, including formation of new groups
7. Enhance our workforce data on protected groups by encouraging staff to report this data on the new My Surrey Enterprise Resource Planning system to inform our priorities for creating a fairer, more compassionate and inclusive workplace
8. Introduce pay gap reporting for ethnicity and disability

Objective 2 - Leadership: Members and senior officers are champions of equality, diversity and inclusion, acting as role models and demonstrating their commitment to tackling inequality.

1. Ensure representation and inclusivity is a key factor in succession planning for leadership positions
2. Make EDI central to talent development to enable diverse, representative organisational leadership
3. Design and launch a programme in June 2022 aimed at developing and supporting staff with protected characteristics to enter leadership roles

Objective 3 - Knowing and Engaging Our Communities: Using the best information available and fostering good relations with and within our communities, to work with them to address their needs and maximise local participation

1. Continue to deliver a research programme to further the council's understanding of the experiences of residents from protected groups and those experiencing other forms of inequality, such as poverty
2. Work with residents and representative groups, such as the Surrey Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Reference Group, to identify priorities for improving outcomes and services and increasing local community participation
3. Recruit Engagement Link Workers, skilled in inclusive practice, to work with communities who are less able, or willing, to participate in life in their local neighbourhoods.
4. Support a project to increase the number of young people taking part in volunteering opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing, confidence and employability prospects

Objective 4 - Communication and Engagement: to clearly communicate a radical approach to equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation especially to our residents.

1. Continue our work to make our websites accessible for all residents, staff, partners and businesses
2. Raise awareness with residents, partners and staff of the council's EDI agenda through our Communications and Engagement service
3. Develop messaging in formats, media, language and imagery that is accessible and inclusive
4. Use resident insight, data and feedback to ensure no-one is left behind when delivering messages about council services and organisational objectives
5. Provide communications and engagement support for stakeholder organisations that further evidence our commitment to EDI

Objective 5 - Delivering Inclusive Services: our services are responsive to individual needs so all residents can access services easily and have opportunities to improve their outcomes.

1. Relaunch tools, support and guidance on Equality Impact Assessments for services
2. Continue supporting the voluntary, community and faith sector to deliver inclusive services
3. Support procurement and commissioning activity to ensure social value in contracts is measured and maximised
4. Support a pilot to provide domestic abuse refuge provision for LGBTQ+, adult male, traveller and any other victims not currently well served
5. Enable development of a digital employment portal for to support disabled people to access employment opportunities across Surrey
6. Invest in services to support the mental health and wellbeing needs of groups disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, such as minority ethnic groups.

How we'll know this is making an impact

We will seek to measure the impact of our work using the following outcomes and supporting performance measures:

Outcome 1 – Staff from protected characteristic groups are supported to feel included and valued, they belong at the organisation and have the same opportunities to succeed:

- Relative likelihood of staff being appointed from shortlisting across all posts
- Relative likelihood of staff entering the formal disciplinary process
- Staff completing unconscious bias training
- Staff completing active bystander training
- Proportion of colleagues at the council who say:
 - They personally experienced discrimination at work in the last 12 months
 - They feel fairly treated by the council
 - Career progression at the council is fair
 - They feel happy at work
 - They feel able to be themselves at work
 - They believe council is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment

Outcome 2 – The council's officer leadership better represents the community it serves

- Proportion of staff from protected characteristic groups in leadership pay grades
- Proportion of staff from protected characteristic groups completing leadership training

Outcome 3 – Residents feel they have good relations within their communities and feel fully able to participate in public life

- Residents who feel strong sense of belonging in their local area
- Measures of diversity among friendship groups, wider social networks and acquaintances
- Residents who feel their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together
- Residents who participated in civic activity in last 12 months (e.g. registered to vote, formal volunteering, informal volunteering, formal culture and events)
- Residents treated unfairly in the last 12 months because of one or several protected characteristics or their socio-economic status

Outcome 4 – All residents are able to access services easily

- Service satisfaction measures, broken down by protected groups
- Complaints data on accessibility and discrimination

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