



The Prince's  
Responsible  
Business Network



Surrey County  
Council

# 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.

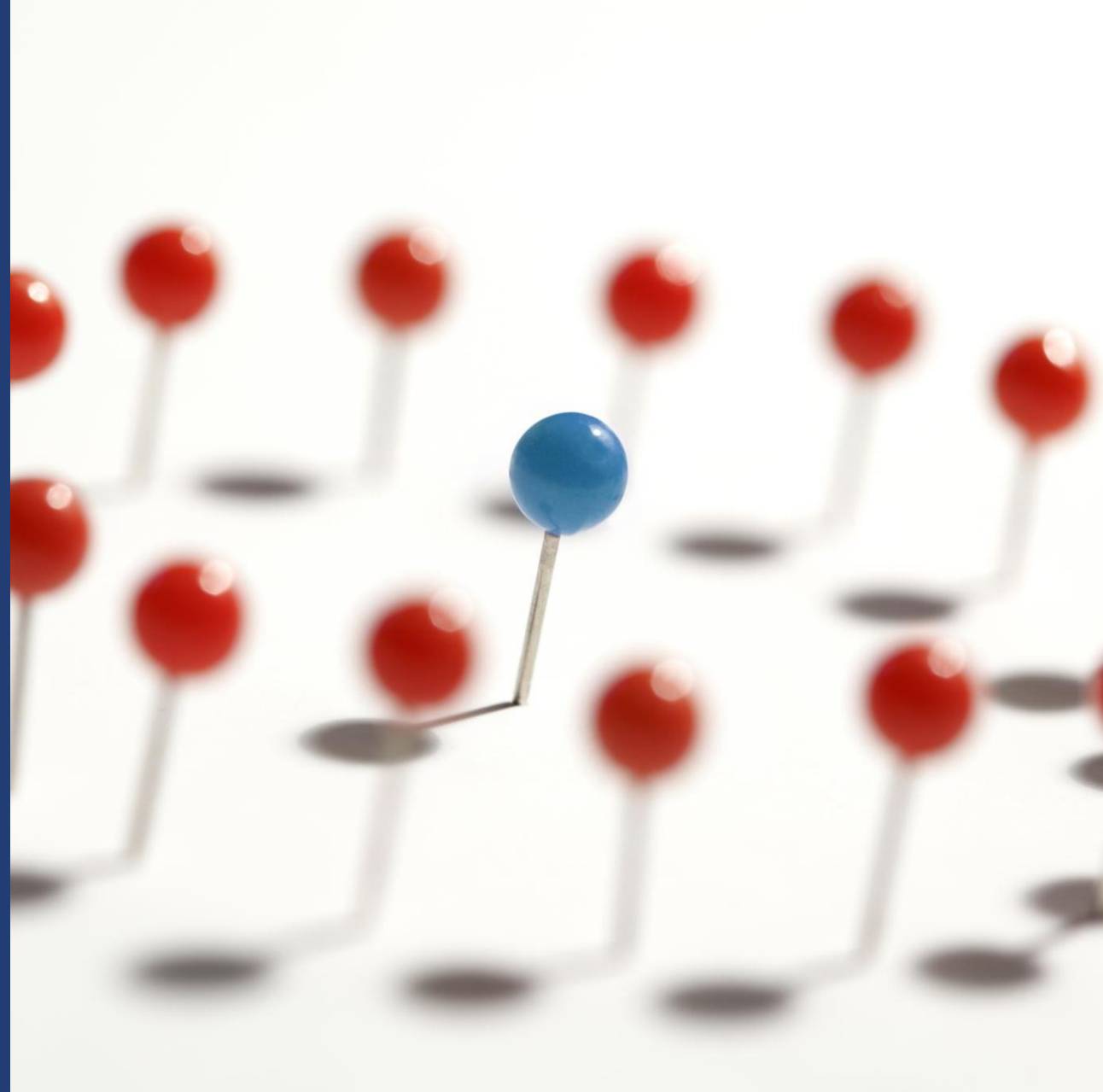
The output of the work summarises findings and provides recommendations for enhancements across the employee life cycle, from recruitment to development and progression. Our outlined priorities and practical suggestions will inform your strategy and action plan.

# 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

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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.

