
Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion - Strategic Framework

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Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion – Developing a strategic approach

Harrow prides itself in being one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse Boroughs in the country with people of many different backgrounds and life experiences living side by side. However, we recognise that the Council can do more to enhance the lived experience and better outcomes for all staff, service users and communities. A robust strategic approach is required that will cover all protected characteristics. However, in light of the murder of George Floyd, and the Black Lives Matter protests, coupled with the Public Health England report evidencing the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on people from a BAME background, we will focus our work initially on race and ethnicity.

The council has developed three corporate equality objectives to address Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), which will be enhanced through working closely with a range of local agencies, statutory partners and the voluntary sector. These are:

1. *Addressing inequality in life outcomes*

Using the Borough Plan, a comprehensive medium-term strategic vision, which we developed with partners and in consultation with the people of Harrow to ensure that our borough is a place where everyone, regardless of background, can reach their full potential.

2. *A review of our services*

Senior leadership will head a thorough review of the way we provide our services. We'll speak to service users and examine issues of cultural sensitivity, accessibility and any unconscious bias that may affect outcomes for different groups.

3. *Action as an employer*

To ensure senior management is representative of our communities, examine pay gap issues, put programmes in place to nurture black and multi-ethnic talent and review our internal HR policies and practices to ensure they are fair and equitable.

How we will do this – A strategic framework

Our work on equalities will be shaped by a phased approach which will involve the following:

- **Evidence and Insight**
Analysing evidence and the lived experiences of staff, service users, and the community to inform recommendations and actions so they are evidence based. This will include desk-based research into current workforce and resident data, as well as an externally conducted staff survey, and a series of staff consultation forums through the appointment of an external consultant.
- **Consultation and Partnership working**
Establishing a robust model of partnership work both internally in the council and externally, to enable and broker the discussion around equality, diversity and inclusion.
- **Developing a strategy**
Co-producing Harrow's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and its associated action plan in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Equality Framework for Local Government which feeds into the ambitions of the Borough Plan as well as ensuring all other council strategies embed EDI within their respective strategic approaches.
- **Communicating our strategic approach**
Communicating the strategy through a variety of channels and ensuring opportunities for further consultation are made available to staff, residents, key stakeholders, and members of the community.
- **Development of an Action Plan / Delivery Plan**
Identifying and developing realistic and measurable deliverables that will achieve the aims of the EDI strategy which are ultimately accountable to the Corporate Strategic Board and Cabinet.
- **Implementation**
Actively investing in the delivery of objectives outlined in the EDI strategy, through resource allocation and working with key partners to ensure consistency across the borough.

A collaborative approach

Our strategic approach towards developing a robust response to equality, diversity and inclusion in Harrow will be a collaborative one, delivered in partnership with key stakeholders across the borough and within the council, which puts the voice of residents and our staff at the centre. We will do this by:

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- Working across boundaries to ensure that work on equalities, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of what we do;
 - Ensuring dialogue is constructive in order to engage in debate with truth and integrity to build consensus on this agenda;
 - Upholding respect and professionalism and challenging language or behaviour that incites hatred, discrimination or racism.

The forthcoming EDI strategy and delivery plan will be developed in partnership with the following key stakeholders:

- Residents
- The Harrow Strategic Partnership
- Voluntary sector and Community groups
- Council staff
- Council Elected Members
- Staff networks
- Trade Unions
- Departmental leads
- London Councils
- West London Alliance

1. Addressing inequality in life outcomes

This strand of work will extend the commitments made in the Borough Plan to ensure that our borough is a place where everyone, regardless of background, can reach their full potential. Working alongside key partners in the community, we will work to:

- Build on the strategic objectives of the Borough Plan, and ensure that all work on equalities, diversity and inclusion are representative of the borough's diverse population, including specific areas for improvement, such as education, crime, and health inequalities.
- Ensure that work around the borough's regeneration plans consider the impact of equality and diversity on our population, paying specific regard to reasonable adjustments for disabled members of the community.
- Establish strong partnership working and collaboration between partners, including a wide range of diverse community leaders, faith groups, VCS organisations and those working with children and young people.
- Recognise and celebrate the contributions of all our residents, which involves exploring how we use our community hubs, art centres, and libraries more effectively.
- Promote hate crime reporting across the borough.

Stakeholder management and consultation

This strand of work will be undertaken in consultation with the following partners:

- Residents
- Statutory partners via the HSP
- Community and faith groups
- Voluntary and community sector organisations
- Cross-party member group
- London Councils
- West London Alliance

2. A review of our services

One of the key areas where we can truly make a difference is by reviewing the way we provide our services. Working alongside senior leadership teams, we will speak to service users and examine issues such as cultural sensitivity and explore unconscious bias that may affect outcomes for different groups. This work will primarily include:

- Reviewing the Equalities Impact Assessment process
- Establishing a methodology for service reviews to enable us to objectively and robustly assess our services against a defined set of criteria and best practice standards to examine cultural sensitivities and unconscious bias;
- Examining our current procurement processes with suppliers and contractors, and contract management procedures to check for any biases in the system and to propose remedial action where this does occur.

Stakeholder management and consultation

This strand of work will be undertaken in consultation with the following partners:

- Service users
- Voluntary and Community groups
- Council staff
- Staff networks
- Members
- Cross-party member working group
- Local Government Association/West London Alliance

3. Action as an employer

There has never been a more pertinent time to address inequalities in the workplace. This strand of work will examine our current workforce, not just to make sure that our workforce is representative of our community, but to ensure that representation is at the right levels of the organisation. We will look closely at our workforce data, create new systems to monitor staff experiences, examine pay gap issues, put programmes in place to nurture black and multi-ethnic talent, and review our internal HR policies and practices to ensure they are fair and equitable and sign the Race at Work Charter. The two main strands of work will be to:

- Championing an inclusive and accessible workplace and a workforce that is representative of the community it serves and feels confident to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into each member of staff's objectives as well as in working practices.
- Developing an approach to staff learning and development and to actively participate and encourage staff involvement in order to lead best practice on equality, diversity and inclusion;

The Race at Work Charter will set the foundations for a strategic response to workplace inequalities that will ultimately support all protected characteristics, based on the five key principles outlined in the Charter, which are to:

1. Appoint an Executive Sponsor for race - *This will be the Chief Executive*
2. Capture ethnicity data and publicise progress – *Work to examine our workforce profile is already underway, this not only includes our routine monitoring of data, but will also explore trends in recruitment, internal promotions and 'acting up', and blockages for progression.*
3. Commit at board level to zero tolerance of harassment and bullying – *As part of our work to build an evidence base using our staff data, we are now examining trends in grievances, this will enable us to focus on particular groups that may be disproportionately represented. The BLM Staff Group have also begun a package of reverse mentoring for Corporate Strategic Board members.*
4. Make clear that supporting equality in the workplace is the responsibility of all leaders and managers - *We have already appointed an external consultant to undertake engagement work with all staff and are working closely with the BLM Staff Group to ensure staff views are put at the heart of this work*
5. Take action that supports ethnic minority career progression – *We are developing a specific development programme aimed at BAME frontline staff, as well as a diversity talent programme*

Stakeholder management and consultation

This strand of work will be undertaken in consultation with the following partners:

- Council staff
- Staff networks
- Trade Unions
- Cross-party member working group
- Members

