

Dudley Council

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy

2022-2025



Glossary of Terms

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the term protected characteristics to refer to the different ways that individuals can be treated unfairly because of an identifying factor.

In this strategy and the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion action plan we use the most inclusive, proportional language possible. We refer to groups, and collectives of individuals as “protected characteristics.”

For clarity, the protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Where we use the terminology BAME, we are referring to those who are grouped as Black, Asian and/or Minority Ethnic. This is a term that can collectively group people, regardless of the colour of their skin, inclusive of Travellers for example. We understand that some people have reservations about the term Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), however, due to the nature of the data available on this subject we have used it in the mentioned articles for accuracy and consistency.

Please note we also use “gender” as well as “sex” as it is more inclusive of different identities. Currently, The Equality Act 2010 defines sex as “a man or a woman” which is not inclusive of those who identify as non-binary and/or intersex. We also use the term “they” where it is not clear what “sex” is being referred to.

With this considered, we would like to make it clear that we understand legally, our duty is to consider the protected characteristic of “sex” as we are bound by The Equality Act 2010, however, we feel using the word “sex” as well as “they/them” makes us a more inclusive council.

The Equality Act 2010 also protects people who are married or in a civil partnership from discrimination whilst at work.

We recognise that there are a range of other groups that may face additional disadvantage and discrimination. These include carers, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, substance misusers, homeless people, looked after children, (ex) armed forces personnel and people on the autistic spectrum.

Where and when possible, we shall also consider those impacted by social mobility and socio-economic impact factors.



Foreword by the Chief Executive

We are very pleased to introduce Dudley Council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2022-2025 which sets out our commitment for progressing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in our Borough and workforce over the next three years.

The basis of our strategy and drivers for change are explored throughout this strategy which are in place to demonstrate our commitment to the requirement of inclusivity, with a view to improve our current offering and to create a deep understanding of the communities we serve. We shall ensure this understanding is reflected in decisions made and by valuing every person who works for us, as well as all of those affected by any decisions we make as a Local Authority.

Our commitment to equality and diversity is paramount; we endeavour to ensure our commitment is firmly embedded across the whole of our organisation through its services, workforce, training, offering, policies, practices, and procedures.

We aim to deliver appropriate services that are accessible for our changing Borough and responsive to all our customers, at the right place and ultimately at the right time.

We must implement robust policies that will ensure equity in the recruitment, training, and development of our employees through their life cycle with us, regardless of their position or protected characteristic. We shall continue to work with our communities to find a way to support them within the available resources.

Finally, we would like to express our commitment to this strategy. Our commitment has already been demonstrated by the preliminary steps we have taken such as an independent review around race Equality, signing the Race at Work Charter, being a Disability Confident Employer and joining the Stonewall Diversity Programme.

As a collective, we look forward to seeing the positive and measurable outcomes with benefits to our output from its implementation, particularly due to the focus on leadership accountability. We must lead as a bias-mitigating organisation.

Why Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matter to Dudley Council and our vision

We are incredibly proud of our Council and the Borough it serves; it is unique and a special place to live and work. We wholeheartedly value our communities alongside our workforce and must use their lived experience to shape the future Council.

We are committed to the equality of opportunity, progression, elimination of discrimination and promotion of good relations between all people regardless of age, disability, race, ethnicity, sex, gender re-assignment, religion and belief, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status.

We have key behaviours and values that are integral to everything we do, and these will help us to achieve excellence in equality.

Below, is our Vision setting out what we aim to achieve. Our vision demonstrates our commitment to Equality, diversity. Putting Equality at the heart of everything we do.



Putting Equality at the heart of everything we do

In order to become a leader and a champion for equality, diversity and inclusion, we need to ensure it is at the heart of everything we do. We need to centre equality in all of the decisions we make, which includes our policies, procedures and practices. We are committed to true equity and will promote equality and inclusivity in all aspects of our work by:

- Being a service provider that meets the various needs of our residents and employees, regardless of protected characteristics.
- Being our borough's largest employer and setting the standard for other local organisations. We must ensure fair recruitment, have a diverse and inclusive workforce and provide a work environment that is safe, accessible and free from bullying, harassment and discrimination.
- Being community leaders through our elected members and working with communities, partners and colleagues in the statutory, voluntary and private sections to improve the quality of life for the borough at large.



Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion journey since our last strategy update:

Since the last strategy, many steps have been taken to improve our equality offering. An independent assessment by Inclusivity Global commenced in May 2020 to ascertain Dudley Council's position in relation to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty placed on the Council.

The review, which was completed in July 2020 also assessed our progress in developing and embedding equality and inclusion practice across the Council.

The independent assessment by Inclusivity Global included one-to-one interviews with the leaders of both political parties, the Chief Executive, directors, heads of service and other key senior officers agreed by the project sponsor. Interviews with staff with equality and diversity responsibilities also featured as well as work to check HR strategies, policies, and other key documents.

An independent external review was also carried out by BRAP (Birmingham Race Action Partnership) during 2021 into race equality across the council. The findings and recommendations of the review have been accepted and communicated to employees and elected members and an action plan for the improvement of racial inequality is currently being developed by HR, OD & Inclusion services, in conjunction with trade unions.

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy.

To create an inclusive Dudley Council and Borough, we must integrate equality and inclusion into all that we do.

This strategy highlights the key areas of work that must be approached proactively to advance our position on equality. It has been developed in line with the Local Government Associations Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG), which is used to help organisations in discussion with local partners including local people, review and improve their performance for people with characteristics protected by The Equality Act 2010.

The strategy is focused on four key themes:



Theme One

Understanding our diverse residents, colleagues and customers.

Theme Two

Demonstrating inclusive leadership and accountability for delivering EDI outcomes across the organisation.

Theme Three

Ensuring the integration of equality objectives are integral to the commissioning, procurement and delivery of services.

Theme Four

Engaging a workforce that reflects the diverse community we serve.

Theme One

Understanding our diverse customers and residents.

Dudley has a diverse, multicultural, proud, and ever-growing population, as a local authority, understanding who lives and works in our Borough, and within our Council, enables us to plan and deliver effective services that meet people's needs more effectively; whilst being accessible and appropriate for all who need to use it.

Using the latest available census data, and our most up to date staff equality data, will enable us to understand our community demographic better, and identify the changing needs of our communities. This in turn will ensure changes are made as needed to ensure responsive public services.

We will:

- Use data to inform policy and strategy, and to improve the monitoring and analysis of equality data.
- Undertake an evidence-based review (on release of the latest census data) to inform and improve our community engagement activity.
- Collect and share information on our communities, benchmarking against others to see how we compare, whilst using and analysing this data in service planning, commissioning and decision making.
- Developing the appropriate skills in our workforce to be able to actively engage with diverse residents and partners.
- Consult with our community groups on the strategic action plan to support the implementation of this strategy through years 2023-24 and 2024-25.

We will achieve this by:

- Analysing equality data to gather more information about our service users.
- Continuing to develop the diverse range of ways for people to engage and have their voice heard.
- Reviewing our use of language.
- Working with all directorates across the council, ensuring equality impact assessments are completed correctly.
- Improving the current equality impact assessment that is used, introducing a new toolkit to ensure those completing the assessments have the right level of knowledge and understanding to complete the assessments with fair consideration.
- Creating staff focus groups from the newly formed staff networks, to view policy/procedure to measure impact across all protected characteristics and gain lived experience feedback.

Theme Two

Demonstrate Inclusive leadership and accountability for delivering EDI outcomes across the organisation.

We know that the right leadership, both political and managerial – is key to establishing a strong vision for equity and improving equality outcomes because it is where accountability for our organisation must sit.

All staff, managers and elected councillors have a vital role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the Council's performance and strategic aims, ensuring there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality.

We will:

- Improve and drive forward our leader's inclusion ambitions and visions, upholding the highest standards of integrity and valuing difference.
- Challenge how leadership mindsets, strategies, and actions can support, secure, and sustain progress in Dudley Council's strive to achieve an inclusive workplace.
- Integrate equality objectives into service planning and decision making.
- Ensure leadership promises are upheld, such as a "zero-tolerance approach" to behaviours.
- Ensure our four new leadership development programmes contain equalities leadership modules.
- Introduce mentoring programmes to develop and enhance leadership skills and capability through organisational development, in the support of the creation of reverse mentoring for marginalised staff across all characteristics.
- Provide training on equality impact assessments with creation of a toolkit to all Council and management teams to ensure personal accountability for the identifying any equality impact arising from project initiatives or proposals.
- Identify the ways leadership development can play a key role in building the necessary leadership capabilities for creating inclusive cultures.

We will achieve this by:

- Working towards improving our "management development offering" ensuring key areas of diversity and inclusion are included in this including cultural competence, how to support diversity in the workplace, codeswitching, and conscious/unconscious bias training.
- Improving the mandatory e-learning offering, ensuring the EDI module(s) are up to date.
- Evidence that equality considerations inform decision making.
- Take steps to counter negative stereotypes, historic to our organisation, that can affect marginalised groups' experiences whilst working at Dudley Council.
- Performance monitoring through our Corporate Equalities Group and scrutiny of progress through the Future Council Scrutiny committee alongside this strategy.

Theme Three

Ensuring the integration of equality objectives into the commissioning, procuring and delivery of service

We must ensure that procurement and commissioning processes and practices take account of the diverse needs of customers, and that providers understand the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

By 2025, we will be able to proactively demonstrate that commissioned/procured services are helping us to achieve our equality priorities resulting in the integration of equality objectives into planned service outcomes.

We will:

- Introduce standard equality clauses for contracts, to ensure when procuring services, the needs of protected groups are taken account of.
- Allow for service users to have opportunities to comment on how services are planned, whether this be in person or virtually. The opportunity to comment must be accessible.
- Monitor and evaluate access to, take up and appropriateness of services regularly, including by protected characteristic.
- Ensure applicants' and residents' communication needs are checked.
- Create structures to ensure equality outcomes are integrated into business objectives.
- Quality EDI analysis is fed into planning and assessment of service plans. These objectives are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely).

We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring adverse trends, identified from monitoring and analysis of data, are acted upon proactively, rather than reactively.
- Ensure that the organisations we purchase or commission services from have a commitment to equality and diversity.
- By creating the appropriate guidance for our suppliers on the equality requirements for the procurement and commissioning process.
- Ensure the money we spend on services protects and promotes equality in employment.
- Ensure our services are accessible to everyone through our Senior Executive Board, decision makers, and Corporate Equalities Group chaired by our Chief Executive.
- Ensure that equality and diversity is built into our processes and procedures around procurement and commissioning.
- Ensure by 2025, our services will be re-assessed to identify access needs, working collaboratively with our differing directorates who each take sole responsibility for certain accessibility features.
- Monitor the relative satisfaction levels of people with different protected characteristics with our services.

Theme Four

An engaged workforce that reflects the diverse community we serve.

To deliver the best services we can, we must employ a workforce that is reflective of the community we serve.

We know we need an engaged diverse workforce for many reasons, but predominantly, because we respect that workplace diversity brings different perspectives on how to approach tasks creating a wealth of ideas. We will work to create an inclusive environment for a diverse range of people to work in, valuing their health and wellbeing.

We will:

- Change our recruitment practices to encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds.
- Focus on continually improving performance; and succession/workforce planning.
- Introducing a holistic attraction and retention strategy inclusive of talent pathways for under-represented groups.
- Foster an inclusive culture providing a safe environment for all, whereby inappropriate behaviors are not tolerated, supported through appropriate policies such as “dignity at work”.
- Encourage people to be their “whole self” in the workplace to be able to flourish, free of worry of judgment and unfair treatment.

We will achieve this by:

- Reduce the proportion of ‘unknown’ equality data we hold on our employees.
- Work with our staff networks and trade unions to reduce the numbers of grievances related to discrimination.
- Work towards achieving national Disability Confident Leader status, as opposed to employer.
- Ongoing monitoring of recruitment equality information.
- including the introduction of blind recruitment.
- Workforce planning – Using our workforce plans to identify areas of under-representation and opportunities to address these via succession planning, i.e., growing our own.
- We will continue to report our statutory requirements and obligations i.e., on gender pay gap. However, by 2025, we will include intersectionality, focussing on best practice such as ethnicity pay gap reporting and use the Government’s voluntary reporting framework for disability, mental health, and wellbeing.

Roles and Responsibilities

Everybody has a role to play in helping us to achieve this strategy and our equality vision.

All staff:

- Being aware of the Council's legal equality duties and our organisational commitments with what they mean practically for them in their roles and responsibilities.
- Ensuring they are aware of policy updates, our code of conduct with expected behaviours and are up to date with their mandatory e-learning modules.
- Treating service users, colleagues and residents with dignity and respect whilst responding appropriately to meet diverse needs. This is underpinned by our Dignity at Work policy that has been created by the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Manager as of 2022.
- Challenging and reporting to managers incidents where equality practice has not been followed, including discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
- If they do not feel comfortable raising this with their direct line manager, raising this to another senior member of staff, or the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team who can support them.
- Supporting; and attending staff network groups to add your input into issues that may affect you, as a characteristic holder or an ally, if you wish to do so.

Managers:

- Ensuring all staff understand they are responsible for of their personal responsibilities in relation to equality.
- Ensuring continued improvement and equality outcomes in relation to the accessibility and delivery of services to residents.
- Creating an inclusive workplace culture in which all staff can thrive, being their whole selves and reaching their full potential.
- Ensuring all staff are supported and referred to appropriate training so that they can perform their jobs effectively and to the best of their ability.
- Managing all staff fairly and equitably through the consistent and fair application of HR policies and procedures, such as grievances and disciplinaries.
- Setting clear standards of behaviours which fall in line with our values, dealing with any instances of inappropriate behaviour including discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

Elected members:

- Championing equality within the Council.
- Undertaking a scrutiny role to ensure that equality considerations are integrated in the decision making and governance of the Council.
- Leading, supporting and advocating for the diverse people and communities they represent in their prospective constituencies.

Further Information

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For copies of this information in a different language, or a different format, please contact the EDI Team.

Arabic

Bengali

Hindi

Punjabi

Urdu

Polish