
Inclusion Action Plan

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A pledge of commitment from the Council's Senior Leaders

Through our Equalities Objectives 2022-2026, Waltham Forest Council has publicly committed to building an inclusive workplace where our workforce, from the frontline to senior management, reflects the communities we serve, and all colleagues feel confident to be their authentic selves at work. **The Inclusion Action Plan is our route to getting there...**

Becoming a radically more inclusive and equitable place to work is a vision we want to make a reality for everyone who works here. It's a vision we want everyone to believe in and a vision we want everyone to commit to. That includes us, and as political and strategic leaders of this organisation we hold ourselves accountable for driving change.

Through our People Strategy 2021-2025 we have made positive progress and our FOREST values clearly define what is important to us as an organisation.

Fellowship. Opportunity. Respect. Equality. Service. Trust.

However, we know from what you've told us, and from our workforce data, that not everyone experiences all of these things during their time at work here.

Feeling safe to bring your most authentic selves to work; experiencing equal opportunities and support to develop and progress; and working for an organisation that celebrates, promotes, and respects diversity are all things you should expect as a bare minimum.

One of the four priorities set out in our People Strategy is to be a Diverse and Inclusive employer. We are moving in the right direction but we need to go further. We want to bring EDI issues to the front and centre, taking the lessons learned and pinpointing the steps needed to bring about long lasting and impactful cultural change that everyone feels.

This document sets out the positive action we will take to become the radically more inclusive employer we want to be. One that ensures our people, at all levels of the organisation, reflect the communities we serve and one that enables every single one of us to thrive.

Being truly inclusive should not be a nice to have, but who we are and collectively, we pledge our commitment to you in making that a reality.

Grace Williams, Leader of the Council
Vicky Ashworth, Lead Member for Jobs, Social Inclusion and Equalities
Paul Douglas, Lead Member for Resources

Linzi Roberts Egan, Chief Executive
Shazia Hussain, Deputy Chief Executive

Summary

What is the Inclusion Action Plan?

The Inclusion Action Plan is a focused three-year programme of work aimed at making Waltham Forest Council a radically fairer, more inclusive place for you to work.

The Inclusion Action Plan is not a 'tick box' exercise, it's about achieving a long-lasting change in culture, systems and mindset. To ensure that change remains relevant and impactful for you, it is guided by four firm principles:



A flexible, three-year approach

To truly become inclusive, there is no quick fix. We need to challenge ourselves to change the practical ways we do things as well as the way we behave and think – as individuals, as leaders, as service areas and as a whole organisation.

Recognising that this takes time, our action plan has a three-year approach, with realistic but ambitious measures of progress to ensure we drive accountability and positive outcomes. In order to do this, it's important that we continually monitor the success of our actions and are able to adapt as needed:



One size doesn't fit all

We want the outcomes of our plan to be felt by everyone who works here, regardless of the kind of role or service you work in. So, in everything we do, we will work closely with directorates and tailor our approaches to ensure maximum reach.

Aims

What is the Inclusion Action Plan aiming to do?

The actions included are based on what you have told us about your current experiences of working here and on where our workforce data tells us there is clear disparity.

You have told us *what* needs to change...

...*how* it needs to be different...

Inclusive Leadership and Recruitment



Fair, equitable and consistent leadership and line-management for everyone, everywhere.
Recruiting without bias at all pay levels.

Culture and Behaviours



Everyone being accountable for embedding inclusivity across the organisation and ensuring people feel psychologically safe to bring their authentic selves to work

Talent Development



Everyone being able to access good quality and suitable opportunities for learning, development and progression

Pay, Benefits & Policies



Attracting and retaining highly diverse and talented people at all levels.
Narrowing our ethnicity and gender pay gaps

Actions within each of these four main themes have been co-designed with colleagues across the organisation and can be viewed on pages 5- 10.

Image

What will each of the three years focus on?

Year One is about disrupting the status-quo and driving the development of internal practises, both council-wide and within each directorate, that fully support an equitable and inclusive working culture.

We will challenge the way we've always done things, inviting external review to help break through any deep-rooted barriers to change. We will empower our people to be, and to *want* to be, more inclusive.

Being sure to review the impact of actions so far and considering any new factors emerging, in **Year Two** we will focus on:

- Utilising our technology and digital systems to aid inclusivity and equity
- Embedding a consistent EDI experience for all employees at every stage of their journey

In **Year Three**, we plan to focus on:

- Embedding the *new* status-quo so that equitable and inclusive practice is experienced Council-wide for the long-term
- Seeking internal and external validation for how inclusive and equitable we have become

Inclusive Leadership and Recruitment: Year One Actions

What do we want to achieve?

Fair, equitable and consistent leadership and line-management for everyone, everywhere.

Recruitment without bias at all pay levels.



What's the situation now?

Infographics will be used to present the following stats...

In our Staff Survey 2022:

- Only 56% of you (and 49% of you with a health condition) feel that our Senior Leadership Team lead by example
- If you have a health condition you feel significantly less positive about our Senior Leadership Team and are somewhat less positive than others about the leadership from your line managers
- Line management practices are seen to be inconsistent, meaning your experiences range widely
- Despite 74% of you agreeing that the Council is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace, if you identify as black, LGBTQIA+, female or disabled, you are considerably less likely to agree.

Our workforce data tells us that:

- The higher up the pay scales you go, the more under-represented Ethnically Diverse staff become and the more over-represented White staff become
- Despite making up 53.3% of the Council workforce, Ethnically Diverse staff are significantly under-represented in positions of leadership with only 22.6% earning the highest 5% of salaries.
- And, Ethnically Diverse staff only make up 32% of our Top 10% earners; 37% of our Top 20% earners; and 40% of our Top 30% earners
- In 22/23, our applications data showed that there was general equity across key characteristics at the point of shortlisting which suggests that anonymous application forms are effective, however, following the interview stage we can see that:
 - Only 9% of shortlisted applicants who declared a disability were appointed to a role (compared to 21% of shortlisted applicants without a disability)
 - And shortlisted applicants who were White were twice as more likely to be appointed following interview compared to people who were Ethnically Diverse
- We can also see from our new starter data that White and/or Male candidates are more likely to be recruited into higher paying roles than their counterparts.

So how will we start to fix it?



- By defining what an **inclusive Waltham Forest Manager** is, equipping our managers to live it and ensuring accountability is embedded in performance management frameworks
- By ensuring our **leaders continually speak and act** on the importance of driving more equality, diversity and inclusion
- By assessing how our **recruitment practices** impact applicants with protected characteristics and introducing changes from end-to-end that eradicate opportunities for discrimination and maximise opportunities for inclusivity and equality
- By **training our leaders and managers** to recruit with inclusive approaches and mindsets

And what difference will that make to you?

As an employee



- You will be able to anonymously feed back on your manager's approach and be provided with regular opportunities to have open and honest conversations with those in positions of leadership

As a manager



- You'll be better supported and empowered with a peer managers network, clear expectations on inclusive behaviours as part of your annual objectives and training on best practise.
- Our systems will ensure you attract more diverse talent when recruiting and you'll be confident in making appointments that are not influenced by conscious or unconscious bias

Year One Actions: Culture and Behaviours

What do we want to achieve?

Everyone being accountable for embedding inclusivity across the organisation and ensuring people feel psychologically safe to bring their authentic selves to work



What's the situation now?

Infographics will be used to present the following stats...

In our Staff Survey 2022:

- Only 52% of you agreed that all staff are treated equally, and there is no discrimination, and if you have a health condition or identify as black/black British you were significantly less likely to agree
- Only 65% of you said you can be your authentic self at work. This was lower if you identify as Black/Black British (60%) yet higher if you identify as White (72%), and lowest if you identify as having a health condition (56%)
- Only 54% of you said you feel a strong sense of belonging at the Council and if you have a health condition, this dropped to 46%
- 168 of you said you'd been bullied or harassed in the past two years and if you said that, you were more likely to have a health condition or identify as Asian/Asian British, and feel less able to report it.



So, how will we start to fix it?

- By **raising deeper and wider awareness** of the lived experiences and needs of colleagues with a protected characteristic
- By **ensuring our managers are equipped** to create supportive, safe and empowering work places for *all* employees
- By making our corporate **expectations on inclusive behaviours clear** to everyone who starts working here
- By providing a variety of **safe routes and forums** for people to raise concerns about their experiences at work and access the best kind of support for them

And what difference will that make to you?

As an employee



- You'll hear from a range of external thought-leaders and high-profile speakers, that represent a range of protected characteristics
- If you have a disability, you'll be able to request the practical adjustments you need knowing your manager is equipped and accountable
- You will be encouraged and enabled to speak up about your concerns, knowing you will be heard
- New colleagues will be clear on organisation expectations on inclusive behaviours

As a manager



- You'll have access to the right tools, training and guidance to support the needs of diverse members of staff, enabling them to thrive and deliver the best outcomes for the business

Talent Development: Year One Actions

What do we want to achieve?

Everyone being able to access good quality and suitable opportunities for learning, development and progression



What's the situation now?

Infographics will be used to present the following stats...

In our Staff Survey 2022:

- If you are Female, Black or Asian, or have a health condition you were significantly less likely to agree that the Council is a place where staff with whom you share a protected characteristic are given equal opportunities for career progression
- Only 55% of you agree that the Council is a place where you can develop your career, and if you are Female or have a health condition you were less likely to agree

Our workforce data shows us that:

- In 2022, 104 of you were either acting up or on a secondment, and more than half of these positions were filled by ethnically diverse employees. However, we know from the last three years that these opportunities tend not to lead to permanent promotion and for the small % of you that do secure promotion, it takes an average of 15 months to do so after returning to your substantive role.



So, how will we start to fix it?

- By ensuring that **anyone who is keen to develop and/or progress is supported** to do that, whatever their role or background

And what difference will that make to you?

As an employee



- You'll have access to a programme of personal development and motivational masterclasses delivered by diverse and inspirational people from within and outside the Council
- You'll have access to career coaching and job application support when you need it
- If you deliver a front line or resident facing service, you won't miss out as we will work with services when designing schedules to ensure you can access them too

Image

Year One Actions: Pay, Benefits and Policies

What do we want to achieve?

Attracting and retaining highly diverse and talented people at all levels.

Narrowing our ethnicity and gender pay gaps



What's the situation now?

Infographics will be used to present the following stats...

Our workforce data shows us that:

- In 2022/23, staff members receiving a pay increase into upper pay scales were slightly less likely to be ethnically diverse.
- There is inequity across directorates when it comes to positive and negative appraisal scores, indicating inconsistency in approaches to carrying out appraisals and also in rewarding strong performance and addressing poor performance.

It also shows that we still have large ethnicity and gender pay gaps:

- When you take the mean average salary of all male employees and compare it with the mean average salary of all female employees we can see we have an overall gender pay gap of 11.9%. We can see that the Gender Pay Gap varies across different directorates:
 - Deputy Chief Executive's Directorate = 12.5%
 - Resources = 10.3%
 - Strategic People=12%
 - Strategic Place = 8.1%
 - Neighbourhoods and Environment = 3.4%
- When you take the mean average salary of all White employees and compare it with the mean average salary of all Ethnically Diverse employees we can see we have an overall ethnicity pay gap of 16.69%. We can see that the Ethnicity Pay Gap varies across different directorates:
 - Deputy Chief Executive's Directorate = 19.6%
 - Resources = 16.8%
 - Strategic People= 17.3%
 - Strategic Place = 13.7%
 - Neighbourhoods and Environment = 12.8%

So, how will we start to fix it?



- By increasing declarations of protected characteristics and analysing our pay gaps in each directorate so we can understand the different causes and co-design targeted actions to address them
- By seeking recommendations from external EDI experts on how we can improve our HR policy and practise so that chances for inequity are eradicated, including annual appraisals
- By developing diverse and innovative ways of applying traditional and non-traditional flexible working options to more people

What difference will that make to you?

As an employee



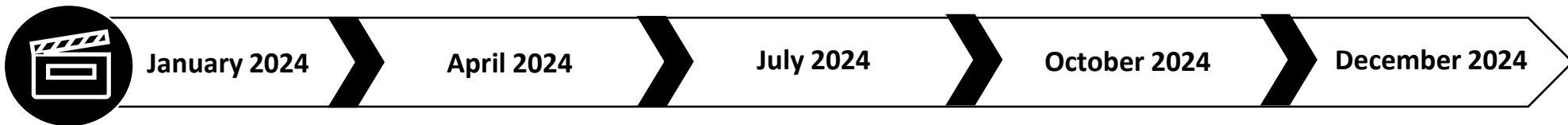
- You'll benefit from practises and policies that have been scrutinised by external groups representing people who are ethnically diverse, disabled, LGBTQIA+, parents or carers, and be able to access them all in one place
- You'll have clear guidance on your rights around requesting flexible working and on which traditional and non-traditional options can be applied depending on the nature of your role (office, front line etc)
- If you are a woman, you can expect to see the introduction of a comprehensive policy that ensures you have support at all stages of the female health cycle
- If you are disabled or identify as LGBTQIA+ you will have more reliable statistics to highlight any inequities

As a manager

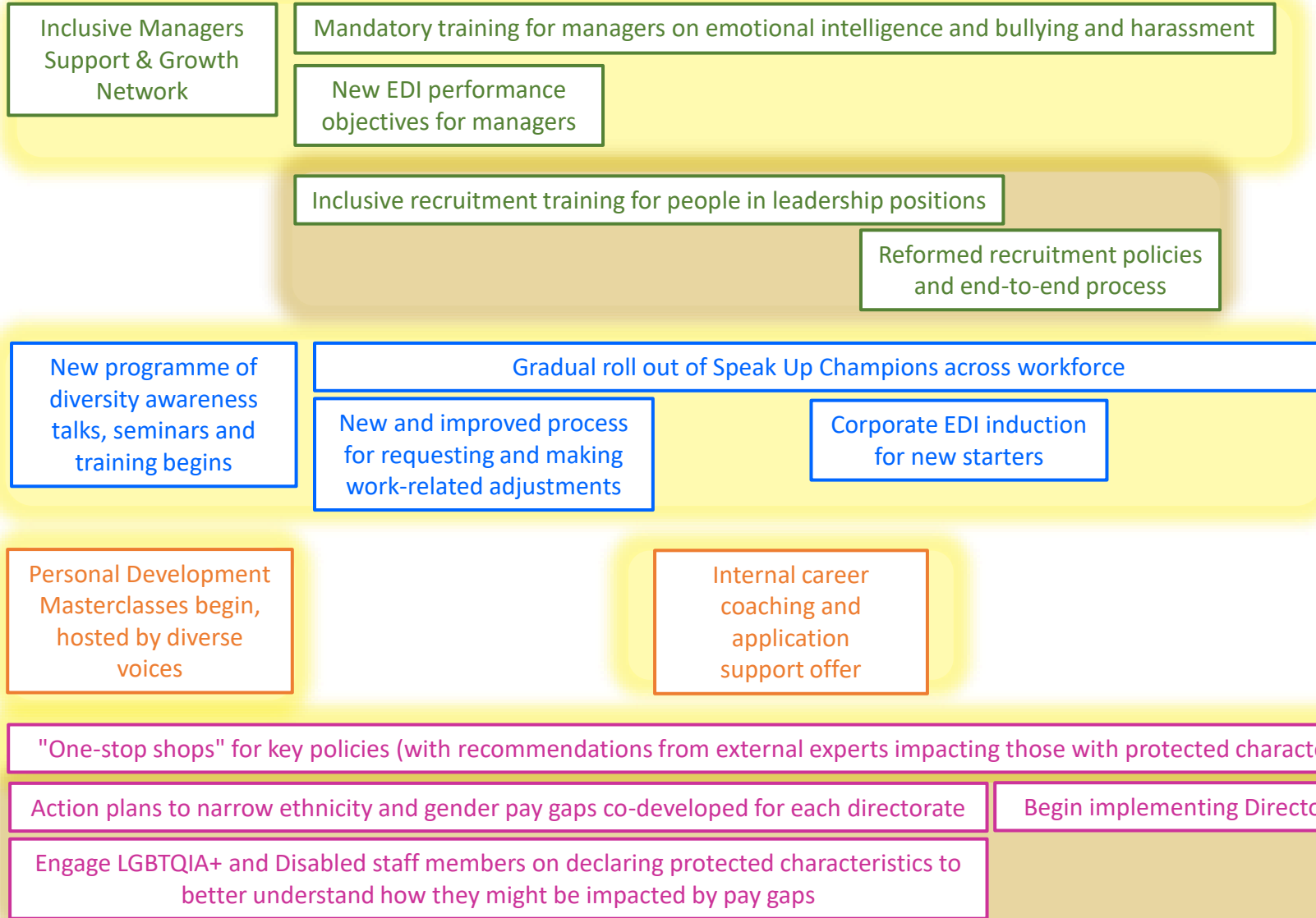


- You'll have clear guidance and any training necessary to put new policies into practise

What will we deliver in Year One and when?



- Inclusive Leadership
- Inclusive Recruitment
- Culture and Behaviours
- Talent Development
- Pay, Benefits & Policies



Primary impact on:

- Your experience at work
- Our workforce data



Inclusive Leadership and Recruitment: Measuring progress

Quarterly Measures

We will monitor progress by looking at our workforce data

We want to see an increase of:

- Ethnically diverse staff in our top 5% - 30% of earners
- Shortlisted applicants who identify as ethnically diverse or disabled being successful at interview
- New starters with a protected characteristic coming in at the higher pay scales
- Equity across directorates when it comes to positive and negative appraisal scores

We will hold focus groups to seek the views from groups who our current insight tells us...

Are less likely to feel positive about management and leadership at the moment, ranging from various services and pay scales to test consistency in experience

Are less likely to be successful at interview (internal and external applicants) to understand their experiences in applying for vacancies

Annual Measures

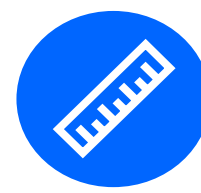
We will repeat our full staff survey in 2024 and 2026

We want to see an increase of staff agreeing that:

- The Council is a place where they can develop their career (particularly female employees and employees with a health condition)
- SLT lead by example (particularly staff with a health condition)
- The Council is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. (particularly those with a protected characteristic)

We will test ourselves externally

We will mystery shop our application experience and benchmark our workforce data against other local authorities



Measuring progress: Culture and Behaviours

Quarterly Measures

We will monitor Fairness at Work cases (including bullying, harassment) and other concerns being raised formally and informally

We will monitor the themes of incidents and concerns being reported to HR, Speak Up Champions and employee networks, ensuring anonymity is protected

We will monitor the protected characteristics of the people reporting incidents and concerns

We will hold focus groups to seek the views from groups who our current insight tells us...

...are less likely to feel this is a workplace that is free from discrimination or inequity and like you can be your authentic self at work or feel a strong sense of belonging

Annual Measures

We will repeat our full staff survey in 2024 and 2026

We want to see an increase in staff with protected characteristics agreeing that:

- All staff are treated equally, and there is no discrimination
- They feel a strong sense of belonging at the Council
- They can be their authentic self at work

We want to see a decrease in staff saying they've been bullied or harassed in the past two years and a decrease in % of those individuals having a health condition or identifying as Asian/Asian British.

We want to see an increase in those same groups feeling able to report such incidents.



Measuring progress: Pay, Benefits and Policies

Quarterly Measures

We will monitor progress by looking at our workforce data

We want to see an ongoing narrowing of ethnicity and gender pay gaps, where it's possible, in each directorate and Council-wide

We want to see an increase in ethnic diversity amongst the people who receive a pay rise in to upper pay scales

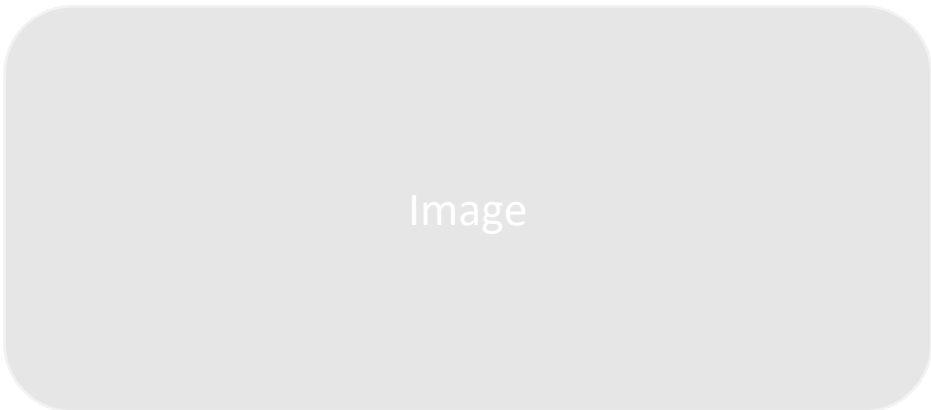
We want to see increased equity across directorates when it comes to positive and negative appraisal scores

We want to see an increase in staff declarations on disability and sexuality

Annual Measures

We will test ourselves externally

We will compare our pay gaps with other London local authorities with a similar make up of service areas



Measuring progress: Talent Development

Quarterly Measures

We will monitor progress by looking at our workforce data

We want to maintain the high levels of ethnically diverse people accessing secondments and acting up opportunities and see an increase in people with other protected characteristics accessing them

We want to see an increase in the number of secondments and acting up opportunities leading to permanent promotions

We will hold focus groups to seek views

From people who our current insight tells us are less likely to feel like this is a workplace where you have equal chances to develop your career

Annual Measures

We will repeat our full staff survey in 2024 and 2026

We want to see an increase of staff agreeing that:

- The council is a place where they can develop their career (particularly women and those with a health condition)
- The council is a place where those with whom they share a protected characteristics are given equal opportunities for career progression (particularly for Black, Asian, Female staff and those with a health condition)

What will happen after Year One?

Following the delivery of our actions for Year One, we will review the impact and effectiveness of the steps taken so far. This will help inform an action plan that is co-designed with you, with the aim to accelerate our journey further into 2025.

IF YEAR ONE IS ABOUT DISRUPTING THE NORM, THEN YEAR TWO IS ABOUT DEVELOPING A *NEW* NORM...

Year Two is all about building on progress of Year One and ensuring an inclusive and equal culture is supported and even enhanced by our digital HR systems. It's also about looking at the EDI experience for all employees at the point of joining the council and each stage of their employment journey thereafter, and ensuring this is consistent for everyone.



Image



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...AND YEAR THREE IS ABOUT MAKING IT WHO WE ARE. NOW AND IN THE FUTURE.

Again, we will review our progress, letting you and our data do the talking and then, we will deliver co-designed actions that build even further on the culture change achieved so far, ensuring it's change that will last and remain progressive.

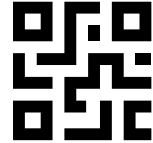
We will test our success externally, benchmarking with other London Councils, inviting peer review from EDI Thought Leaders and applying for accreditation with outside experts in inclusivity and specific protected characteristics.

We will focus on embedding the new status-quo so that equity and inclusivity is felt Council-wide and is fully future proof.

The Inclusion Pledge

We know that achieving the aims set out in this action plan is no easy task but we also know that working in collaboration and honesty with each other is critical to us having a chance to succeed. That is why we are inviting you to take the Inclusion Pledge which is formed around our six FOREST values.

Just visit [xxxxx](#) where you can pledge to uphold the Council's commitment to build an inclusive and fair workplace free from discrimination or prejudice.



Fellowship: I will do my best to combat prejudice and speak out against all forms of discrimination, including examining my own behaviour and preconceptions and seeking to learn from my mistakes.

Opportunity: I will embrace the Council's ambition to become an inclusive, fair and non-discriminatory employer with equal opportunities for all.

Respect: I will listen to others, treat everyone with dignity, and recognise that others' experiences will be different to my own.

Equality: I will treat others with kindness and understanding, as I would hope to be treated.

Service: I will treat all customers and colleagues fairly, equitably and with compassion.

Trust: I will encourage an open and transparent culture that enables people to raise concerns about prejudice or discrimination.

Join our employee network chairs and take the pledge...

Quotes from network chairs with photographs to follow