

Sunderland City Council

Equality Update 2023/24

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The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) came in to force in April 2011 placing a duty on public authorities to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. The objectives are to – known as the General Equality Duty - are:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

There is also a specific duty place on public authorities to publish:

- equality objectives, at least every four years
- information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty

"Progress equality performance through the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)."

Equality objective agreed at Cabinet – June 2022

The Equality Framework for Local Government guides our equality improvement journey by identifying key actions that will support us to:

- Deliver accessible, inclusive and responsive services to customers and residents in their communities including those from under-represented groups
- Employ a workforce that reflects the diversity of the area they are serving
- Provide equality of opportunity for all staff
- Meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and support any aspirations to exceed these

It seeks to do this by:

- Identifying the areas of activity that councils need to address to deliver good equality outcomes
- Helping councils to understand how they can build equality into processes and practices
- Supporting organisations to become inclusive employers.
- Enabling councils to informally self-assess their progress on the equality improvement journey and determine where and how they need to improve

The EFLG requires the council to undertake a self-assessment. The framework has four modules and three levels.

- Modules:

1. Understanding and working with our communities
2. Leadership and organisational commitment
3. Responsive services and customer care
4. Diverse and engaged workforce

- Levels:

- Developing
- Achieving
- Excellent



ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE

JULY 2024

From the self-assessment, a detailed action plan was developed with nine key areas for improvement:

1. Strengthened governance arrangements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion - COMPLETE

- Established a corporate Strategic Equality Group, chaired by the Director of Smart Cities and Enabling Services.

2. City level equality data is available for services to use to inform service improvements and set stretching social value targets

- City level equality profiles are published on the council's website:

[EqualitiesProfileSunderland_July23.pdf](#)

[Sunderland Data Observatory](#)

- Development of ward level [digital inclusion dashboards](#) (to be published August 2024)
- Resident Survey (2023 report) is used to shape and inform service planning and delivery (report to be published August 2024)
- [Children and Young People's Health Related Behaviour Survey](#) (Summer 2023) informs health outcomes for children and young people

- The ["State of Ageing in Sunderland" report \(2024\)](#) will be used as a tool for organisations to consider priorities for change, ensuring people can live a healthy old age.
- A range of updated and new Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and Health Needs Assessments published including: [overarching JSNA](#), [Homelessness HNA](#), [Gambling HNA](#) and [Tobacco JSNA](#).

3. Equality profiles of council customers will be understood, providing a sophisticated view of the needs of people in the city, informing intelligence-led commissioning and decision making. All sections of the community who need our services will be able to access them.

- Adult social care undertaking targeted case file audits and engaging with under-represented groups to understand inequalities in access to services.

4. Engagement with communities and customer insight will routinely be used to inform service development

- Resident engagement through the city's Welcome Spaces provided the opportunity to gain lived experience insights of the cost-of-living crisis. These valuable insights informed the development of Sunderland's Financial Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2026.
- Delivery of the Sunderland Digital Inclusion programme 'Go Online' seeks to reduce the barriers and challenges in access to digital infrastructure and equipment and support residents to improve their digital knowledge and skills.

5. Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA) will be embedded across the council

- IIA approach launched across the council (September 23), ensuring the needs of the most vulnerable groups are considered during the development of activity.

6. There will be a strategic approach to community cohesion

- Approach under development

7. There will be a comprehensive workforce strategy, which meets the needs of the organisation and ensures the profile of the council workforce is representative of the city

- Strategy under development

8. All staff will be equipped with the knowledge and skills required to ensure services are equitable and inclusive

- Leadership and Management Competency Framework in place, setting out the expectations of all managers, including specific reference to equality and inclusion.
- Mandatory EDI in the workplace training refreshed, with an emphasis on the council's EDI aims; understanding of different forms of discrimination; and EDI roles and responsibilities in the workplace, specifically ensuring managers are not bystanders.
- Specialist training delivered to raise awareness and improve understanding of asylum seeking, refugee and migrant communities.
- Trauma Informed Practice training targeted to key service areas, ensuring that services are delivered in ways that prevent further harm or re-traumatisation.
- Cultural competency training funded for members of the Sunderland Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

9. All staff have a safe and inclusive working environment

- Supporting Employee Equality Network re-established.
- Annual Health and Wellbeing Action Plan established to support the delivery of the council's employee wellbeing strategy.
- Mental health awareness and emotional resilience training available for managers and staff.

A **NEW** key area for improvement has been agreed by the Council's Strategic Equality Group:

10. Services are designed and delivered with a focus on reducing inequalities

- Recite Me accessibility software on Sunderland Information Point and Links for Life Sunderland websites, ensuring the websites are more inclusive through a range of accessibility solutions.
- Links for Life Sunderland is about helping people live the best life they can, by creating healthy, happy communities and supporting them to link to local services.
- Active Sunderland Strategy 2024-2027 and delivery plan aims to have 'a city where everyone is as active as they can be.'
- Delivery of key actions in the Digital Inclusion Plan (see next slide)

Digital inclusion Plan progress

- Databanks offer low-income households access to free SIM cards for mobile phones, providing access to the online services.
- Social tariff rates provide households on eligible benefits to access to affordable broadband, engaged with 30,000+ residents and 140+ VCS groups to raise awareness.
- Digital Health Hubs addressing digital exclusion and health inequalities reached 16,000 Wi-Fi connections in the first 6 months.
- Go Online Sunderland website delivers a 'go to' resource hub, providing access to free tools and advice, for example, accessibility, digital confidence and skills, connectivity, e-safety, funding opportunities.
- Tech Mates (internal) programme is supporting offline employees go online, building digital confidence and increasing productivity, delivered at the recently established digital touch down zones.
- Tech Mates (external) are digitally savvy local people, who are volunteering in their community to support people with low digital capacity.
- Recycling devices campaign, aimed at reusing and recycling digital devices to gift to eligible households.
- Young People with cared for experience, are receiving access to digital devices and connectivity.

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