

Final update on the Council's Equality Objective: 2017-2021



Equality Scheme 2017-2021

- The Equality Scheme helps demonstrate compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty
- It goes beyond the ‘protected characteristics’ to consider issues that are important in our city e.g. poverty, carers and veterans
- It sets out the council’s one equality objective, focussed on improving the quality of data and intelligence:

‘Maximise the collection and use of quality data and intelligence to support effective equality policy and practice’

- It also sets out the outputs and milestones identified to help achieve this objective

Equality objective outputs

1. Increase employee monitoring declaration rates for gender identity sexual orientation and religion and belief from 35%, 41% and 41% respectively to 75%.
2. Improve understanding of equality in employment, specifically recruitment and retention; training and development; and pay and grading.
3. Determine perceptions and experiences of fairness and equality in the workplace.
4. Increase the diversity of people involved in the council's consultation and engagement processes
5. Increase understanding of, and respond to, community tensions.
6. Council policy and practice maximises the use of equality intelligence to ensure decisions are robust

Output 1: Increase employee monitoring declaration rates

- A workforce wide data collection exercise was undertaken to improve data (2017-18)
- A move to Employee Self Serve on the payroll system enabled people to update their own information confidentially and improved response rates further (2019)
- All Employee Self Serve users were messaged about the importance and purpose of monitoring to encourage completion (2019)
- The response rates exceed 75% for all categories (76-78%)
- Declaration rates (excluding those who prefer not to say) are between 74-75%

Output 2: Improve understanding of equality in employment

- Workforce Diversity Report was expanded to include recruitment data (2020)
- An employee survey was undertaken with key findings reported to Chief Officers Group (2018)
- A follow up employee survey was undertaken in (2021), with data analysed in 2022

Output 3: Determine perceptions and experiences of fairness and equality in the workplace

- The Supporting Equality Network's views informed the design of the employee survey, which included a section on fairness and equality (2018)
- The Supporting Equality Network continue to share good practice and views to improve equality in their workplaces
- Additional employee insight sessions were undertaken to gain further information in relation to employee survey results (2019)
- Following the 2018 employee survey there was focus on three key priorities: improved employee engagement, a new employee appraisal and recognition approach and new agile working guidance

Output 3: Determine perceptions and experiences of fairness and equality in the workplace (2)

- A new appraisal and recognition process was launched (2019) and refreshed in 2022
- New Agile Working Guidance was launched, followed by a survey to assess its effectiveness (2019)
- During the Covid pandemic there was further focus on agile working and a new flexible working hours scheme was introduced (2021)
- There has been a focus in improving internal communications, with ongoing regular clear leadership messages

Output 3: Determine perceptions and experiences of fairness and equality in the workplace (3)

- Equality focused communications has included:
 - lunch and learn sessions (stopped during lockdown),
 - #NoBystanders relaunch (2019)
 - Time to Change focus and Mental Health First Aider ‘roadshow’ (2018/19), followed by ongoing mental health and wellbeing messaging (particularly through the pandemic)
- A new biennial employee survey was launched in (2021) with questions aimed to understand perceptions of equality
- A working group will respond to any issues raised in the survey

Output 4: Increase the diversity of people involved in consultation and engagement

- Consultation system registrations increased by 229% (2017-19) due to a large response to the core strategy in 2017.
- The system was replaced by 'Let's Talk Sunderland' in 2019 when there was an increased focus on resident engagement. Let's Talk was subject to equality analysis and the work informed Neighbourhood Investment Plans.
- There has been a focus on strengthening relations with communities and the Voluntary and Community Sector, particularly throughout the pandemic.

Output 4: Increase the diversity of people involved consultation and engagement (2)

- Engagement with the city's Equality Forums and networks continues (BME network, Disability Independent Advisory Group, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Forum, Refugee and asylum multi-agency forum, Sunderland armed forces partnership, Sunderland Interfaith Forum and the Veteran's forum)
- A Residents' Survey was undertaken in 2018 and repeated in 2021 with analysis of results by protected characteristic where possible
- A [Community Wealth Building Strategy](#) was approved (2020) and a delivery plan for 2021-22 is in place
- Covid champions provided important community links and communications throughout the pandemic
- A new customer centred approach to project management involves increased research to understand customer experience
- Area based health conversations and a health summit informed the Director of Public Health annual report 2019 and the Healthy City Plan 2020-2030.

Output 4: Increase the diversity of people involved consultation and engagement

Together for Children support a range of consultation and engagement for children and young people including:

- Five engagement groups: Sunderland Youth Council, Health and Happiness, Change Council (young people who are cared for and care experienced), STARS (young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), Cozmic Epiphany (young LGBTQ+ people)
- City wide engagement with the British Youth Council's Make your Mark Vote – giving 11-18 year olds the chance to have a say on the issues facing young people
- State of the City debate (2020 and 2021 cancelled due to Covid)
- Wear Here For You Bus – allowing engagement with young people and families and signposting to services. The bus attends community events and school settings
- Holiday Activity and Food mobile provision, engaging with young people and families (Starting summer 2021)

Output 5: Increase understanding of, and respond to, community tensions(2)

- A bi-monthly Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring Group allows partner organisations to share understanding of patterns of hate incidents and determine action to tackle the underlying causes
- The council work with the police to promote hate crime awareness training across the city so that people understand what constitutes a hate crime and to encourage reporting
- The Safer Sunderland Partnership (SSP) Delivery Plan is informed by the Partnership Strategic Intelligence Assessment (PSIA)
- The PSIA has a Prevent action plan embedded within it - this will be reviewed with the SSP to include all statutory partners for 2022

Output 5: Increase understanding of, and respond to, community tensions

- The Council were highlighted as good practice in the Commission for Counter Extremism's report to Government, Challenging Hateful Extremism (2019)
- The Home Office Channel Panel assurance process has resulted in a judgment that the panel is demonstrating good practice
- 26 people were trained in civic mediation and creative dialogue sessions were held (target of 40 missed due to Covid)
- Sunderland analysis of the Casey Review published (2018)
- SARA project, based in Southwick brings partners together to tackle community tensions. This is being replicated in Hetton (HALO) and is being used as a good practice model regionally

Output 5: Increase understanding of, and respond to, community tensions(2)

- Funding was secured for a 'connecting communities' project to build cohesion and integration with a focus on refugees and asylum seekers (2019). Although face to face activity was limited due to Covid, a range of work was undertaken e.g. welcome packs, co-ordination of ESOL provision, use of football and community based sports, Census involvement and connecting heritage stories (2020-21)

Output 6: Council policy and practice maximises the use of equality intelligence to ensure decisions are robust

- The City Plan 2020-2030 is intelligence led, accounting for the results of the Residents' Survey and other data and local insight
- The Partnership Strategic Intelligence Assessment informs the Safer Sunderland Partnership Delivery Plan annually
- A Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) suite is published on the council's website. The over-arching JSNA is refreshed annually with specific thematic JSNAs for the Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities
- Quality assurance of Equality Analysis takes place on a risk basis – the approach will be reviewed in the next equality objective period to ensure the approach is robust
- The residents' Survey 2018 and 2021 was analysed by protected characteristics

Conclusion and next steps

- There has been significant progress to “maximise the collection and use of quality data and intelligence to support effective equality policy and practice”
- An intelligence led approach is fundamental to the way we work and is part of our business operating model
- In 2021 there was Chief Officer agreement to use the Equality Framework for Local Government and as such will continue to focus on:
 - Collecting and sharing information
 - Analysing and using data and information
 - Effective community engagement
 - Fostering good community relations
 - Participation in public life