

Update on the Council's Equality Scheme: 2017-2021

November 2019



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 Scheme outputs

1. Increase employee monitoring declaration rates for gender identity (currently 35%), sexual orientation (currently 41%) and religion and belief (currently 41%) 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

Two workforce data outputs

Output 1: Increase employee monitoring declaration rates for gender identity (previously 35%), sexual orientation (previously 41%) and religion and belief (previously 41%) to 75%

Output 2: Improve understanding of equality in employment, specifically recruitment and retention; training and development; and pay and grading

Challenge:

- Useful action planning on the basis of the Corporate Workforce Diversity Report was limited by gaps in data



Two workforce data outputs: Action to date

- Workforce wide data collection exercise in 2017-18 to improve data
- Move to Employee Self Serve on the payroll system in 2019 has enabled people to update their own information confidentially and improved response rates further
- All Employee Self Serve users were messaged to encourage completion, including key messages about the importance and purpose of monitoring
- Corporate Workforce Equality and Diversity Report has been expanded to include application and leavers data.

Latest council workforce data response rates

- Gender identity: 70% response rate
- Sexual orientation: 71% response rate
- Religion / belief: 72% response rate
- (Target of 75% by 2021)

Next steps

- Further communication to improve declaration rates: targeted communication messages
- Work to ensure those who don't access Employee Self Serve are able to update their information
- Further Corporate Workforce Equality and Diversity Report restructure to include more employee insights
- Supporting Equality Network consulted regarding the insights employee intelligence offers

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

Challenge:

- The Supporting Equality Network (at the point the Equality Scheme was written) were raising concerns about the visibility and commitment to equality in their workplaces. Also perceptions of different experiences in different workplaces across the council

Output 3: Action to date (1)

- The Supporting Equality Network were consulted on the content of the staff survey. The survey included a section on fairness and equality
- Increased communication to ensure visible leadership on key equality issues linked back to employee survey findings e.g. Time to Change Employer pledge 2018, #NoBystanders relaunch 2019
- Standing item introduced to the Supporting Equality Network agenda to capture issues occurring in workplaces, where appropriate
- Increased 'lunch and learn' sessions to ensure awareness of different equality issues is raised

Output 3: Action to date (2)

- The results of the Employee Survey 2018 were communicated to employees with three key priorities in response: improved employee engagement, a new employee appraisal and recognition approach and new agile working guidance
- Additional employee insight sessions undertaken in 2019 to gain further information in relation to employee survey results
- New employee appraisal and recognition process launched 2019
- New Agile Working Guidance launched and survey in 2019 to assess it's effectiveness following implementation

Output 3: Next steps

- Continued promotion of equality messages
- Capture any issues raised in the employee Supporting Equality Network; anonymously and confidentially report to Chief Officer Group if appropriate
- Continued employee engagement, including an Employee Survey in 2020
- Increased focus on communicating and engaging with employees who do not have routine ICT access

Output 4: Increase the diversity of people involved in the council's consultation and engagement processes

Challenge:

- The diversity of respondents to corporate consultations is too low to allow meaningful analysis by equality characteristic



Output 4: Action to date (1)

- Consultation system is promoted through a range of channels, resulting in an increase of 9,036 registrations 2017-2019
- An average of 24 surveys have been completed annually with an average of 13,631 respondents per year (2017-19)
- Engagement with the city's Equality Forums
- Internally, we engage with the Supporting Equality Network
- Completed a Residents' Survey in 2018. The sample was a stratified random sample producing a statistically reliable and valid result, with analysis by various equality characteristics. Respondents were also invited to register on the council's consultation database
- Supported young people to become engaged in civic life via Together for Children (e.g. support to Youth Council and 'Make Your Mark' encouraging voting through schools. 10,402 young people voted in 2019, which is 43% of the 11-18 population)

Output 4: Action to date (2)

- Transformation and Projects implementing a new customer centred approach to project management that involves increased research to understand customer experience
- Area based health conversations and a health summit (2019) facilitated by Public Health informed the Director of Public Health annual report and the emerging Healthy City Plan
- New Let's Talk Sunderland campaign launched 2019
- Resident engagement informing the development of Neighbourhood Investment Plans
- Ongoing consultation to capture customer experience through the Customer Service Network

Output 4: Next steps

- Continue to consult Equality Forums and the employee Supporting Equality Network as appropriate
- Actively encourage Equality Forums to register on the council's e-consultation system
- Analysis of Let's Talk resident conversation sheets to support Neighbourhood Investment Plans

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

Challenge:

- To ensure we are using our data and intelligence to its best effect and respond to tensions if and when they arise

Output 5: Action to date (1)

- The Council were highlighted as good practice in the Independent Commission for Counter Extremism's report to Government (Challenging Hateful Extremism)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/836538/Challenging_Hateful_Extremism_report.pdf
- Monthly cohesion meetings with the Police
- Continued civic mediator training and creative dialogue sessions
- Routes project – targeted outreach education 13-18 years in 2018 Council and citywide Prevent action plans
- Sunderland analysis of the Casey Review in 2018

Output 5: Action to date (2)

- Secured funding (through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) for a project to build cohesion and integration across the city
- Hate Crime and Tension Monitoring Group chaired by the police with partner representation
- Over 350 trained hate crime champions in the city

Output 5: Next steps

- Continue to work in a partnership approach listen to and understand community tensions
- Continue to work with the Local Government Association and Home Office to develop responses to Far Right extremism – pilot community dialogue approach in 2020.
- Review the results of the cohesion question in the Residents' Survey. Compare 2018 data with 2020 data when the results are available in 2021
- Review engagement to ensure bi-monthly Police Independent Advisory Groups are appropriately replaced
- Review the training of civic mediators
- Implementation of MHCLG funded project to build cohesion and integration across the city

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

Challenge:

- To ensure that equality intelligence considered in the decision making process is as robust as possible in order for decisions to be compliant with the Public Sector Equality Duty



Output 6: Action to date (1)

- The new City Plan is intelligence led, accounting for the results of the Residents' Survey and other data and local insight
- Partnership Strategic Intelligence Assessment informs the Safer Sunderland Partnership Delivery Plan
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) suite on the council's website. JSNAs are refreshed annually with specific JSNAs for the Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities
- Support to develop robust Equality Analysis (e.g. MTFS)



Output 6: Action to date (2)

- Cabinet reports Equality Analysis sampled
- Analysis of Residents' Survey 2018 by characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010 and other demographic information
- Transformation and Projects are using an approach to project management that integrates equality considerations

Output 6: Next steps

- Review the organisation's needs in relation to equality analysis quality assurance, data and intelligence in preparation for the Equality Scheme Review in 2021