

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Employment Committee
Date: 27 June 2022
Report for: Information
Report of: Angela Beadsworth, Interim Director of Human Resources

Report Title

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in employment update

Summary

This report provides an update on progress that has been made and further work planned around our approach to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in employment.

Recommendations

That the content of this report is noted.

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	This report supports all corporate priorities
Relationship to GM Policy or Strategy Framework	The Strategy and Action Plan is in line with GM and national equality strategies and frameworks
Financial	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.
Legal Implications	Outlined in the body of this report.
Equality/Diversity Implications	The aim of our approach to EDI is to meet our equality duty.
Sustainability Implications	None.
Carbon Reduction	None.
Staffing/E-Government/Asset Management Implications	Being an inclusive employer will make us more attractive and may improve retention rates.
Risk Management Implications	This reduces the risk of the Council being exposed to discrimination claims caused by failure to demonstrate compliance with equalities legislation.
Health & Wellbeing Implications	Being an inclusive employer where staff are comfortable in bringing their whole selves to work can improve mental wellbeing - which can impact on physical wellbeing as well.

Health and Safety Implications	None.
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Summary of key stakeholders involved in report production:

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1. Background

- 1.1 Trafford Council is committed to challenging inequality, discrimination and disadvantage and we have in place a Corporate Equality Strategy for 2021-2025. The Equality Strategy outlines the work being done to improve equality of opportunity for our residents, colleagues and partners.
- 1.2 As a provider of services and an employer, we must act in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This means that public authorities, in carrying out their functions, must have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:
 - (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.
- 1.3 To ensure transparency, and to assist in the performance of this duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities, to publish:
 - equality objectives, at least every four years
 - information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty.
- 1.4 Essentially the aim of the PSED is to ensure that we think about the needs of staff who are disadvantaged or experience inequality when we make decisions about policies, workforce schemes, learning and development etc. This is particularly in relation to those who are protected under the Equality Act because they have a protected characteristic. However, our focus should go further than this and consider other groups who may face evidenced disadvantage, such as care leavers, ex-services people etc.

- 1.5 As well as ensuring that we meet our legal obligations around equality, diversity and inclusion, we strive to have a workforce that better reflects our community simply because this is how it should be - we can provide better services if our staff are representative of our service users. Our people matter, and we all should have equal opportunity to develop, progress, and be rewarded and recognised at work.
- 1.6 This report provides details of how we meet our duty and the work we are progressing to improve our offer and the experiences of both current and prospective employees.

2. Workforce Equality Objectives

- 2.1 The Council is legally required to publish key Equality Objectives and have four which are included in the Equality Strategy. Two of these relate to our workforce.

2.2 Equality Objective 1: Inclusive and Informed Leadership

- 2.2.1 This objective is to ensure that senior leaders use their influence to promote equality, diversity and human rights and are effective in the delivery of this agenda across the Council. Without senior managers showing consistent leadership, we will not see the changes we need. Promotion of the message 'Equality is Everybody's Business' will ensure that everyone takes ownership to promote equality in all aspects of service delivery.
- 2.2.2 The EPIC Manager- Equality and Diversity / Inclusive Leadership course is being rolled out to all people managers which numbers around 450. Since the launch of the Equality Strategy, 80 managers have undertaken the training which is around 18% of the targeted cohort of those with line management responsibilities. In addition to this, 5 elected members have attended a session.
- 2.2.3 The HR Organisational Development Team have developed and are delivering our EPIC manager programme that will support the achievement of our Corporate Priorities. Learning and Development events such as Carbon Literacy, Values Based Recruitment (VBR), Health and Wellbeing, and our inclusive leadership course form some of these core modules.
- 2.2.4 Regarding future training plans, the Organisational Development team are co-ordinating a programme to align the training, communications and engagement plans for both employee Health and Wellbeing and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion activity. This is in recognition of the fact that a great inclusive environment supports an employees' health and wellbeing. The plan will bring together the ideas and interventions from staff groups, Equality Working and Steering groups ensuring that any campaigns and activity aligns

to relevant strategies and the Council's corporate priorities. The work will also look at the evaluation and impact of initiatives through feedback and culture change.

2.3 Equality Objective 2: Improving Equality Workforce Data Collection and improving the representativeness of our workforce

2.3.1 The Council is required to hold data on the protected characteristics of our staff. Having comprehensive and accurate information is vital if we are to understand whether we reflect our communities and establish if there are inequalities within our workforce, and to take effective steps to address these.

2.3.2 We have continued gaps in this information with different levels for different protected characteristics, however generally between 25% to 33% is unknown. Where there are gaps in information provided some staff are actively choosing not to tell us as they select the option 'prefer not to state' but the majority just haven't provided the information. Having reviewed the workforce equality data published by the other Greater Manchester authorities this is not unique to Trafford.

2.3.3 We have previously used lots of communications strategies to try to improve the completion of this information. We recently decided that it was time to fully review the questions and possible responses to ensure they are up to date and the options and terminology for the descriptors is current and appropriate. We have worked up proposed changes and we have engaged with our Information Governance Team, Trade Union colleagues and the chairs of our Staff Networks to ensure that the changes will be affected in line with GDPR and are appropriate for our staff.

2.3.4 Once we have made these changes in the HR system, it is an opportunity to encourage staff to review their sensitive information in MiTrent and to add it in or make changes they would like. We are planning lots of different ways to encourage staff to provide this information including a campaign headed up by our Trade Union colleagues supported by our Equalities lead.

2.3.5 Based on the information that staff have disclosed to us we have some key protected characteristics statistics (as at 31st March 2022):

- 13.92% of our staff are from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.
- 3.93% of our staff identify as living with a disability.
- 3.4% of our staff identify as gay, lesbian or bi-sexual.

- 2.3.6 It is helpful to compare this with our community where at all possible to understand if our workforce is representative of the people we serve. In terms of ethnicity the Census 2011 indicated that in Trafford 14.5% of residents are from a BAME background. This means we are fairly representative overall, however we could then consider if there are any ethnic groups which are under represented as the next step. We do not have census information on disability or sexual orientation however we can use other data sources to provide a benchmark. ONS statistics detail that 20% of the working age population is classed as disabled. So we are very under-representative. However we have to keep in mind that we have gaps in information and also some individuals who might meet the legal definition of having a disability may not define themselves in this way. In terms of sexual orientation ONS data suggests that 2.2% of the UK population aged 16 years or over identifies as lesbian, gay or bisexual. This means that our workforce is representative.
- 2.3.7 With regards to improving the representation of the Council's workforce, the Resourcing and Organisational Development team are in the process of creating a Teams channel to continually share best practices with recruiting managers that have attended the Values Based Recruitment Training. A campaign is underway to request for volunteers across the organisation who may be able to support on a recruitment panel, either as an experienced recruiting manager or as a development opportunity. This pool of candidates will be available to recruiting managers to ensure we have diverse panels when recruiting.

3 APSE review of Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

- 3.1 The Council commissioned the Association for Public Sector Service Excellence (APSE) to undertake an independent review of our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. They acted as a 'critical friend' in supporting a review of our equalities approach; most notably the interface between corporate equalities aims, and the experiences of staff and service users, and the council's commitment to continuously reviewing progress to 2025. They produced a report on their findings and recommendations in May.
- 3.2 The review considered the Council's approach both as a service provider and employer, however for this report we will only focus on the employment aspects.
- 3.3 Their methodology included:
- Semi-structured interviews with the Chief Officers group and the political leadership of the Council.
 - Semi-structured interviews in a group workshop setting with staff and a limited number of service user groups.

- Desk-based reviews of existing and emerging policies.
- Workforce sentiment survey and analysis.

3.4 Outcomes from stakeholder engagement

3.4.1 Semi-structured discussions with staff groups took place with the Council's four staff networks:

- The BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) Staff Network
- Staff Disability Group
- Carers' Support Group
- The LGBT+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Staff Network

3.4.2 The groups are self-governing groups, and all operate differently depending on how the members want to use the time allocated. Overall, they feel that they are, despite some challenges, a supportive environment in which they can 'unload'. However, there was feedback that needs to be taken on board to improve two-way communication – this will in turn ensure that we take learning to improve our approaches and help understanding of what support staff can take-up.

3.4.3 Each group has a corporate 'sponsor' from within the Corporate Leadership Team and some groups felt that their planned interactions with their sponsor were more frequent than others.

3.4.4 It was felt that the staff groups can collate a lot of useful information and act as both formal and informal listening points for staff. This means that they hold a lot of intelligence about staff (and service users) experiences; what may be best described as 'softer intelligence'. Some groups have collated this information into data but again the formalisation of how this could be used is less well understood.

3.4.5 Whilst the majority of staff feel that managers support them, and that Trafford is a good place to work, some frustrations were expressed about inconsistencies in interpreting personnel policies and practices. This is a difficult issue. From an equalities perspective having an approach grounded in a stated policy or procedure can support fair treatment of all staff. On the other hand, this could lead, as some of the staff groups report, to a lack of sensible interpretation or managers feel restricted by a policy or procedure from applying a common-sense interpretation to that policy or procedure. The EPIC manager aspiring leadership programme was acknowledged as a resource for improving managerial capacity and empowerment, enabling managers to be more agile in day-to-day management of the workforce and being able to use discretion in a more empowering way.

3.4.6 The lack of diversity at a senior level within the higher management tiers of the Council was raised. Although it was acknowledged that Trafford has a number of women within its leadership teams, the group discussions tend to centre on the predominance of white British managers, a lack of managers

from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicities, and a perceived lack of disabled people or LGBT+ people within the most senior roles. It was however also acknowledged that staff at all levels, whether within senior management roles or not, may not wish to disclose if they identify themselves in any particular way; for example, living with a disability or consider that they are a part of the LGBT+ community or indeed may have Carer responsibilities that others may be unaware of.

3.5 Outcomes from desk-based policy reviews

3.5.1 The feedback was generally positive in that there is an overarching theme of easy-to-read accessible documents, which are generally comprehensive. However, as the policies have been developed over a period of time, the style and consistency varies and some have a more mechanistic approach, rather than a warmer more engaging style.

3.6 Outcomes from the survey

3.6.1 The survey was conducted between July and August 2021 and a total of 213 responses were received with an 88% full completion rate. The sample size from our total workforce is valid and in line with industry standards for a sentiment survey of this nature.

3.6.2 The data where possible was filtered to remove any issues of inherent bias. For example, the predominance of White British respondents all saying they 'feel valued' skewing the dataset if there is an underlying different experience amongst, for example, BAME employees. The sample size is significantly reduced when the predominant group of respondents (White British) is removed, however the proportionality of responses to the overall response, where it can be measured does not suggest an overall poorer experience.

3.6.3 The responses to the survey were filtered to provide a triangulation of data and used to support assessment of the sentiments expressed within the roundtable discussions.

3.6.4 The overall responses from the survey provide some positive news. There is clearly a workforce recognition of the Council's commitment to equality and diversity issues; this is widely shared by staff feeling respected by their managers; feeling they belong within Trafford and feeling that they can raise their concerns. There is however a cohort of respondents who have had a less positive experience, some which appears to be due to their own personal experiences. Fairness in pay and rewards is also an area of concern (which is supported by some sentiments expressed in the staff discussion groups) and opportunities for progression. Narrative responses to the survey suggest that managers need to be more empowered to sensibly interpret decisions and again this was reflected in the discussion groups.

3.7 The Equality Steering and Working Groups will consider the report and its' recommendations and will agree which areas require most focus and incorporate into an Equality Strategy Action Plan. The Equalities Steering Group will monitor the action plan and work programmes to ensure that plans to support improvement are captured and delivered in a timely manner.

4. Pay

4.1 Gender Pay Gap

4.1.1 In March 2022 we reported our Gender Pay Gap for 2021 – the fourth year of reporting for the public sector.

4.1.2 Trafford Council's overall mean pay gap is 8.14% and the median is 10.77%, both in favour of male employees. This is an improvement as compared to the previous year when we had a mean pay gap of 9.75% and a median pay gap of 15.46%.

4.1.3 There are a number of influencing factors which are the same as in previous years. The most significant ones are firstly that we employ a large proportion of part-time roles (49%) which are on lower bands and tend to attract females and secondly occupational segregation – the fact that some types of job are more traditionally undertaken by females and some by males. We will be exploring our gap further to consider what measures we can put in place with the aim of reducing it further.

4.2 Pay Ratios

4.2.1 We report our pay ratios/multiples annually in our pay policy statement – this helps us to understand the differentials in pay between our lowest, median and highest earners.

4.2.2 This year the ratio of pay of the top earner i.e. Chief Executive and that of the median earner is 6.92:1 - this is the same ratio as last year. The ratio between the lowest paid employee and average Chief Officer is 5.55:1 - this is a positive change from last year when it was 5.76:1

4.3 Pay Progression

4.3.1 We would like to better understand whether staff who share different protected characteristics have fair promotion opportunities within the Council - we are working on a report to obtain some data on this. Once we have evidence as to whether there are any barriers to progression for different

groups, we can consider appropriate action to improve colleague experiences in this area.

5. Policy, guidance, and support

5.1 Working Well Passport

5.1.1 We are putting in place a new support measure for staff – it is a document which can be used by staff to detail information about their individual needs and any support/reasonable adjustments that have been agreed by their manager. Then if the member of staff has a change of manager, they don't have to 'tell their story' again.

5.1.2 The passport can be used for many scenarios including: disability and long-term health conditions; mental health issues; learning disability/difficulty; for employees with caring responsibilities; for individuals who wish to observe religious festivals such as Ramadan or daily prayers; for those going through a personal type of change, such as assisted fertility treatment, the menopause or gender reassignment.

5.1.3 During the development of the passport and supporting guidance, we have engaged extensively with our staff networks, Trade Union colleagues, Epic Pioneers and our Equalities Working Group.

5.2 Anti-Racism policy and Managing 3rd party abuse policy

5.2.1 A group was set up as a sub-group of the Equalities working group to explore the experiences of our staff in terms of racism with the aim of working together to put in place robust mechanisms to reduce the likelihood of this occurring and appropriate responses when it does.

5.2.2 An overarching Anti-Racism policy is being created to make the Council's stance and response to this issue clear. Under this will sit a new policy on Managing third party violence and abuse of staff – which can be used for any type of violence and abuse, which may include incidents motivated by racism or other forms of discrimination. The policy will make it really clear that we have a zero-tolerance approach, and it will include sections on: prevention of incidents; incident reporting; post-incident follow-up actions; withdrawing services; support for employees, and; training.

5.3 Trafford Smart working

5.3.1 Capitalising on the lessons learnt from the pandemic regarding flexibility of working location we had agreement for our Trafford Smart working approach underpinned by 4 working styles.

5.3.2 For staff who use a PC for work we'd expect them to adopt the 'hybrid' work style – this means they may have different locations of work, such as home, community, office and/or partner locations. This flexibility will be beneficial for many staff, including those who share a protected characteristic. For example, staff who live with a disability who find it more challenging to get to the office on certain days and women experiencing acute menopause symptoms.

5.3.3 The Smart Working approach has also supported the completion and review of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) and homeworking assessments. This ensures we meet our statutory obligations to assess and provide safe and healthy workstation environments at home and in the office. Additional complex assessment support can be provided where required via our Health and Safety Team to staff for example those with disabilities or health needs.

5.4 Moving on from BAME

5.4.1 Since October 2021, we have had a Focus Group continuing conversations about moving on from using the acronym 'BAME', (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnicity). This was in response to guidance from the Government and GMCA advising public bodies to stop using the term 'BAME' in council documents and instead use the term 'ethnic minorities'.

5.4.2 The Focus Group have chosen to widen consultation about this very complex and sensitive issue, particularly with people from ethnically diverse backgrounds working and living in our borough. Therefore, a Citizens Survey is currently being pulled together as part of the research to find out which term people in Trafford believe should be used to describe people's ethnicity. The results of this survey will be used to help determine an acceptable and appropriate term to use in the Councils' future documents and publications. Once this has been decided the term will be adopted for our workforce as well as our community. In the meantime, Trafford Council will continue to use the term 'BAME' in the short-term – however where possible the use of more specific terms to describe ethnicity will be used.

5.5 Staff support during re-integration

5.5.1 We had a project team made up of officers from relevant services preparing for reintegration back into our workspaces when the time was right. In April 2022 we invited staff to start to come back to offices for some of their working week in line with our Trafford Smart Working approach with the key principle of 'hybrid by default'.

5.5.2 Through this we have considered the support that different staff groups might need as we know the pandemic has had differing impacts and many staff will have anxieties that continue. Some of the measures included:

- Continued measures in place to reduce the risk of virus transmission.

- Welcome pack for staff to prepare them and help them navigate in our buildings.
- Re-orientation sessions at our two main office buildings.
- Communications to managers to request that they hold returning conversations with staff at check-in meetings to consider individual needs.
- Continued guidance and individual risk assessment guidance for staff at greater risk from Covid
- Updated guidance for employees at greater risk of covid.
- Yellow lanyards for employees who would like extra space observing.
- The continued promotion of our wellbeing resources with a focus on mental wellbeing including our intranet pages, occupational health and EAP service and Mental Health First Aid Network

5.6 Financial wellbeing

5.6.1 In supporting people out of poverty the Organisational Development team have reviewed the Financial Wellbeing intranet pages to signpost staff to the support available within the council, local community and wider government and charity groups on managing finances and debt. The team are working with the Welfare Rights team to produce a lunch and learn session which is likely to be repeated in the year as forecasted challenges, particularly on energy bills, impact on health and wellbeing and are also working with schools on their wellbeing offers.

6. **Conclusion**

6.1 We have made significant progress to date. However further to the review undertaken by APSE the next steps are to consider this information plus other intelligence (including any relevant outputs from our B Heard staff engagement survey) to then identify and agree our workforce EDI priorities. These will form an action plan and relevant Officers will be assigned as leads for the different work streams.

6.3 Progress towards completion of the action plan will be monitored by the Equality Steering Group.