

Cheshire East Council

Equality and Diversity Strategy 2017-2020



- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

There are also specific duties, which require us to publish equality objectives and equality information.

There are nine protected characteristics that are covered by the Equality Act 2010



3.2 National Context

In October 2015 the Equality and Human Rights Commission published its statutory five year report on equality and human rights progress in England, Scotland and Wales. The report concludes that there has been progress in many areas, but highlights 8 key challenges that public bodies need to address:

1. Improve the evidence and the ability to assess how fair society is
2. Raise standards and close attainment gaps in education
3. Encourage fair recruitment, development and reward in employment
4. Support improved living conditions in cohesive communities
5. Encourage democratic participation and ensure access to justice



6. Improve access to mental health services and support for those experiencing (or at risk of experiencing) poor mental health
7. Prevent abuse, neglect and ill-treatment in care and detention
8. Tackle targeted harassment and abuse of people who share particular protected characteristics

3.3 Local Context

The Equality and Diversity Strategy is not a stand-alone strategy, it represents a framework and a set of guiding principles, that then facilitates and supports the work of the Council. There are many other strategies and policies that can equally demonstrate our commitment to this important agenda as outlined below.

3.3.1 Cheshire East Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020

The Council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020 consists of six outcomes that demonstrate how Cheshire East Council will put its residents first in the way that services are provided. These are:

- Outcome 1** Our local communities are strong and supportive
- Outcome 2** Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy
- Outcome 3** People have the life skills and education they need in order to thrive
- Outcome 4** Cheshire East is a green and sustainable place
- Outcome 5** People live well and for longer
- Outcome 6** A Responsible, Effective and Efficient Organisation

3.3.2 Connected Communities Strategy – 2016

The vision and aims of this strategy are at the heart of what we aspire to achieve in terms of our approach to equality and diversity. The strategy sets out our shared journey, to ensure we have Connected Communities across Cheshire East, where people and community organisations are embedded within local networks, providing mutual help and support. Five key themes have been identified for action:

- ***Connected to People***
helping people in communities to become more connected to others.
- ***Connected to Services***
delivering services differently, with more community outreach services.
- ***Connected to Neighbourhoods***
strengthening networks and partnerships across neighbourhoods, towns and villages.
- ***Connected to Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector organisations***
developing the VCF sector infrastructure and our links to thematic communities.
- ***Connected to decision making***
local people influencing decision making, policy and the way we commission services.



3.3.3 Cheshire East People Plan - 2016-2017

This is the Council's internal human resources and workforce development plan. There are 8 strategic workforce priorities, with equality and diversity being a golden thread running throughout them all.

- HR Business Development
- Organisation Design
- Recruitment, Resourcing and Retention
- Leadership
- Employee Development
- Engagement and Wellbeing
- Employee Rewards
- Service Delivery

Equality objectives 3 and 4 will be delivered and monitored via this plan.

4. Our Profile

We recognise that accurate and up to date information is important to help us understand the profile of our population and our workforce.

To support this strategy we have used data available on all nine protected characteristics from the 2011 ONS Census, and the information held within our workforce database (Oracle) as of November 2016. Where information was from a different source this will be stated.

We do recognise that there are gaps in our information; this will be addressed as a priority within this strategy.



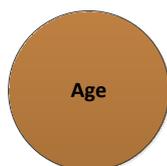
In 2011, 49% of the population in Cheshire East were male and 51% female.

23.7% of our workforce (excluding Schools, casuals, ASDVs, Academies etc.) workforce are male, and 76.3% are female.



This table shows the profile of our population by age. (Rounded to the nearest hundred).

Age Band	Males	Females	Total (2011)
0-4	10,400	9,800	20,200
5-9	10,200	9,600	19,700
10-14	10,900	10,500	21,400
15-19	11,600	10,500	22,100
20-24	9,500	9,100	18,600
25-29	9,500	9,500	19,000
30-34	9,600	10,000	19,500
35-39	11,800	12,400	24,100
40-44	13,800	14,600	28,400
45-49	14,700	15,100	29,800
50-54	13,000	13,200	26,100
55-59	11,600	11,700	23,300
60-64	13,000	13,400	26,400
65-69	10,400	10,700	21,100
70-74	8,100	8,800	16,900
75-79	6,200	7,300	13,500
80-84	4,200	6,000	10,200
85+	3,100	6,500	9,700
Total	181,400	188,700	370,100



This table below shows the age profile (age 16+) of the Cheshire East workforce in comparison to our residents (based on the 2011 Census).

	Employees		Residents	
16 to 17	3	0.1%	9,249	3.6%
18 to 19	21	0.6%	8,398	3.3%
20 to 24	108	2.9%	18,615	7.3%
25 to 29	217	5.9%	19,020	7.5%
30 to 34	300	8.1%	19,532	7.7%
35 to 39	389	10.6%	24,129	9.5%
40 to 44	453	12.3%	28,386	11.2%
45 to 49	603	16.4%	29,831	11.7%
50 to 54	689	18.7%	26,124	10.3%
55 to 59	554	15.0%	23,275	9.2%
60 to 64	280	7.6%	26,443	10.4%
65 to 69	65	1.8%	21,074	8.3%
Total	3,682		254,076	




 Race

93.6% of our residents who class themselves as White British, this compares to 87.2% of the Council's employees. 8.8% of employees have not disclosed their ethnicity.

5.1% of our residents were born outside the British Isles, with 2.7% born outside the EU. The most common non-British Isles countries for residents to have been born in are Poland and India.

3.0% of our households have members for whom English is not the main language, and, in half of these households, no members have English as their main language.


 Gender Reassignment

Based on national assumptions that 20 per 100,000 of our population are likely to be transgender, this equates to approximately 70 of our residents.

Only 1 employee has disclosed that they are undergoing and/or have undergone gender reassignment, however 70.8% of the Council's employees have not disclosed this information.


 Disability

17.5% of our residents stated that their day-to-day activities were limited a lot/little in the 2011 Census – this was below the UK average of 20.2%.

Currently, based upon November 2016 data, only 1.4% of the Council's employees have disclosed that they feel that they have a disability; however 60% of all Cheshire East employees (excluding casuals) have not disclosed whether or not they have a disability, with the remaining 38.7% of staff having declared that they do not feel that they have a disability.


 Marriage and Civil Partnership

51.6% of our residents are married; we do not have accurate information on the number of residents that are in a registered same-sex civil partnership.



As reported in the 2011 Census, the proportion of Cheshire East residents classing themselves as Christian has fallen from 80.3% in 2001 to 68.9%. In 2011, the proportion saying they had no religion doubled from around 11%-22%.



Christian	68.9%
Sikh	0.07%
Buddhist	0.24%
Hindu	0.36%
Jewish	0.16%
Muslim	0.66%
Other	0.29%
None	22.69%
Not stated	6.66%

30.4% of Cheshire East Council's employees have disclosed that they are Christian and 10.7% that they have no religion; however 58% of employees have not disclosed their religion.



In November 2013, The Lesbian & Gay Foundation (LGF), estimated that the local Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual population for Cheshire East was 18,700. This figure was calculated based on the assumptions that between 5 and 7 per cent of the population are likely to be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

40.4% of the Council's employees have disclosed that they are heterosexual and 3.6% stated that they would prefer not to say; 55% of our employees have not disclosed their sexual orientation.



In 2014 there were 4,535 conceptions to women in Cheshire East. This equates to a conception rate of 71.9 per 1,000 women (within age-group).

In 2015 there were 3,848 live births to women living in Cheshire East.

Source: ONS publications.



No employee or job applicant will receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of their gender, marital status or civil partnership, racial group, religion or belief, sexual orientation, age, disability, pregnancy or maternity.

7. Equality Objectives

In 2012 we identified four equality objectives that served to address the main priorities for improving our understanding of and response to inequalities across our organisation and all of our services. A lot of good work has been achieved over the last four years, but we recognise that there is still a lot more to do.

We have now set five objectives which will be the basis of what we want to achieve over the forthcoming years. Our equality objectives have been developed and guided by our progress in recent years and as a result of public and staff consultation.

For each objective we have set out some examples of the kind of things we will focus on doing. A detailed delivery plan will be developed by the Equality and Diversity Strategy Group on an annual basis based on current and emerging priorities.





1. Strengthen our knowledge and understanding of our communities

Rationale

Across the Council we have many services and teams that hold information and data about our communities. The challenge for us is how we ensure that our information remains up to date and is accessible. Further work is required to refresh and improve our data to ensure that we capture all information relating to protected characteristics within a council wide data set that is published and widely accessible.

Actions

- Work with teams and directorates to identify gaps in data collation and monitoring.



The Council is a large employer of around 3,600 staff; analysis of our staff profile reveals that we employ very few younger people and people with a disability. As our workforce grows older we need to plan for the future.

A representative workforce brings a diversity of needs - gaps or issues in terms of support were identified around flexible working, access to support networks and disability related absence.

We need to improve the understanding of staff needs and outcomes in terms of the effect policies and processes have on them. To do this, we need to ensure that anonymous and non-identifiable information around protected characteristics is used within internal reports. This is linked to Employee Relations, Training, Staff Survey's, sickness absence, harassment and bullying and flexible working.

Actions

- Undertake a staff census to ensure that information held on our staff is accurate and includes all protected characteristics.
- Ensure that, for all new staff members information on protected characteristics is collected and updated as appropriate.
- Initiate a staff audit to understand the skills set and training needs of staff in relation to equality.
- Improve workforce planning data that is routinely shared with Heads of Service.
- Develop directorate action plans that seek to improve on the findings of the 2016 staff survey, in particular the responses related to diversity, discrimination and bullying.

4. Demonstrate a positive culture with strong leadership and organisational commitment to excellence in improving equality outcomes, both within the council and amongst partners.

Rationale

The Council recognises that equality and diversity is everyone's business. There are many good examples of the Council's commitment to equalities both within and outside of the organisation. Further work is required to embed and further promote equalities leadership and support a culturally competent workforce.

Actions



- Develop a network of “Champions” that promote and drive forward continual improvement in equality and diversity.
- Develop a Communications and Media plan to ensure there is proactive promotion of Equality and Diversity across the council’s activities.
- Offer training and support to staff, councillors and members on the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Undertake a baseline assessment of the Council’s position in relation to Equality and Diversity using the LGA Equality Framework.

5. *Ensure that the Council’s services are responsive to different needs and treat service users with dignity and respect.*

Rationale

Commitment to equality and diversity is integrated into our business planning and delivery, including service level procurement and resource allocation. Further work is required to ensure that the impacts of all policies and services on all communities are assessed and understood in order to deliver positive outcomes for residents and service users.

Actions

- Review and refresh the Council’s approach to Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that this is embedded across the organisation.
- Improve staff understanding and skills in relation to Equality Impact Assessment.
- Ensure that Equality Impacts are considered and evidenced in all aspects of the Council’s strategy and policy development and that there is robust challenge by the Council’s officers and members.

8. Reporting and decision making structures

The main responsibility for scrutiny of equalities work internally lies with the Council’s Equality and Diversity Strategy Group, Corporate Leadership Team and Cabinet. We will produce an annual report on our progress in meeting the three general equality duties and the report will be submitted to these meetings.

Responsibility for equality has been assigned to two named Cabinet Lead Members. The Council’s Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) is ultimately responsible for our



equality and diversity, and human rights policies and practices, including this strategy. CLT will monitor the Councils progress and performance on all of these important issues. The Equality and Diversity Strategy Group provides the strategic direction for all equality, diversity and human rights policies and practices and is accountable for any equality related activities and initiatives that the Council undertakes. It is chaired by the Chief Operating Officer and consists of representatives across the Councils services and teams who have taken on the role of “Equality Champions”.

It is expected that a number of working groups will be established to progress the work of the annual delivery plan. They will report into the Equality and Diversity Strategy Group and will have clear terms of reference to outline the key roles and functions of the group.

9. Equality analysis of our policies and procedures

As a Council, it is important that we consider all individuals when carrying out our day-to-day work. To ensure we do this, we must provide equality analysis for everything we do as a way of considering the effect on different groups protected from discrimination by the Equality Act 2010.

9.1 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process

Undertaking equality analysis will enable us to have ‘due regard’ to promoting equality of opportunity, eliminating discrimination and fostering good relations. We need to be sure that what we do meets the needs of individuals in our communities.

We need to be confident that the policies we develop do not disadvantage a particular group of people on the grounds of their protected characteristics or where they live in our borough. We need to ensure that all of our services, in terms of their design and delivery, are fair and accessible to everyone and that there is equality of outcome for all. We have developed a process that enables us to check everything that we do for its impact on equality and diversity and consider if what we are doing will be fully effective for all individuals and communities across Cheshire East.

We have called this process an Equality Impact Assessment or EIA. The EIA process will help us to consider if there are any unintended consequences for each of the ‘protected characteristics’ of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, maternity and pregnancy, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

An EIA will be carried out on:

- new functions, policies, procedures and services as they are developed
- significantly altered functions, policies, procedures and services
- Overtime, on existing functions and policies.



We monitor the equality outcomes of our EIAs as part of our performance process and we embed these outcomes as part of our business and service planning process. Improvements in equality outcomes are delivered as a result of effective equality analysis across the Council.

10. Procurement and Commissioning

Ensuring that equality and diversity considerations are embedded into the procurement process, taking the opportunity to secure relevant wider community benefits, and making sure that our suppliers comply with employment law (as well as ensuring that their employees receive the right training and have the right skills to do their job) are all key priorities for the Council.

We will ensure that equality considerations are built into all stages of the procurement process, and commit to the following:

- we do business with suppliers who meet their obligations under equality legislation.
- we will conduct Equality Impact Assessments for all our commissioning and procurement activities.
- we will require suppliers to provide appropriate equality monitoring information.
- where appropriate, we will include social clauses as special conditions in terms of the performance of a contract.
- we will consider ethical sourcing issues as part of our normal procurement practice.
- we will continue to maintain the highest standards of safeguarding when commissioning services for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

11. Engaging and consulting with our communities

It is important that we engage and consult with our communities so that we understand our customers and can ensure that the services we design and deliver are appropriate and meet the needs of all.

We aim to encourage and empower underrepresented groups and individuals to participate in society, their community and work; and to encourage underrepresented groups to play an active role in the Council's decision making processes.

12. Conclusion

We recognise that the diversity of Cheshire East's communities is a huge asset that should be valued and that we face both opportunities and challenges as we try to build and support our communities.

This strategy reinforces our responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure equality of opportunity for all sections of the community and our workforce. We are



