



Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

A Borough for Everyone





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Foreword – Cllr Trish Hardy, Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing



I am delighted to have the opportunity to introduce Sefton Council’s new strategy for Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion. As the Cabinet Member responsible for this area, I know that colleagues across the Cabinet and Council share my passion for ensuring inclusivity, supporting diversity, and ensuring that we address the challenges and opportunities that our organisation and our borough face in this respect.

In Sefton, we believe that our local communities will be stronger and prosper if individuals and groups are treated fairly, with respect and given support to access the services they need. The Sefton 2030 Vision sets out our commitment to see all our communities thrive in the future.

Our aim is to provide opportunities to Sefton residents, businesses and organisations to fully engage in the community and we know that for this to be achieved

everyone must understand and support equality and diversity. We will ensure that people and partners are involved in making our activities, information and services more accessible and the Council will be guided by a number of core principles to promote equality and diversity.

There is real strength in our diverse local communities where people are proud to say they live, work and take part in community life together. By placing fairness at the centre of what we do, by promoting equality of opportunity and by celebrating diversity and community cohesion, we can help to build a fairer future for all.

This document sets out the Council’s approach and commitment to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in line with the Equality Act 2010, and details how we have performed against our Public Sector Equality Duty objectives.

The Council’s commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion is further reinforced by our recent recognition of care experience as a protected characteristic as well.

This strategy comes at a hugely important time, as we continue to see inequalities and discrimination exist in different parts of the world, different parts of the UK, and on occasions in our borough as well. The evidence that underpins this strategy demonstrates that society has much to do in this respect, and this strategy is integral to ensuring that Sefton Council does everything it can to be a safe, diverse and inclusive place to live in, work in, and visit.

Sefton is a borough for everyone, and our vision and core values permeate through this entire strategy, and our focus on equality, diversity and inclusion will remain embedded within our vision and core values.

Our 2030 Vision and Core Purpose

The Sefton 2030 Vision, which was co-produced following consultation with over 3500 people, sets out the following themes

- Together a stronger community.
- A borough for everyone.
- Living, working and having fun.
- A clean, green, beautiful borough.
- Visit, explore and enjoy.
- On the move.
- Open for business.
- Ready for the future.

Sefton Council's Core Purpose provides an outline of how the Council will contribute to achieving the ambitions set out in the Vision 2030:

- Protect the most vulnerable.
- Facilitate confident and resilient communities.
- Commission, broker and provide core services.
- Place-leadership and influencer.
- Drivers of change and reform.
- Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity.
- Generate income for social reinvestment.
- Cleaner and Greener.

The Council will work within its Core Purpose to build better partnerships and help others to make a difference in Sefton.

This strategy is bold and ambitious, as Sefton Council always is, and it includes a wide range of challenging action areas. However, the delivery of these actions is not enough. The principle underpinning this version, and future iterations, of the strategy is one of continuous improvement. We will share our good practice and lessons learned in this area and capture it from elsewhere as widely and frequently as we can, through external benchmarking, consultation and engagement and collaborative partnership working. This work will never be "finished" – our commitment to continuous improvement in this respect will be ongoing, year on year and day by day.

I would like to thank all Council officers and stakeholders who have been involved in the development of the strategy, and consultation

on this important subject area. Notwithstanding the breadth of engagement on this strategy in advance of its publication, we believe this is an ongoing conversation and would welcome the opportunity for ongoing engagement with stakeholders and communities across the borough as we work together to make this an ever-fairer, more diverse and more inclusive place to be.



Cllr Trish Hardy
Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing, Sefton Council

Foreword – Dwayne Johnson, Chief Executive, Sefton Council



This is a hugely important strategy for our organisation and our borough. Not only does Sefton Council have an important role to play as a place leader in the area of equality, diversity and inclusion, but also as both an employer and as a commissioner of goods and services. In addition, as Corporate parents for our children in the Borough we need to ensure that we recognise their equality rights and where appropriate take account of their diversity.

While this strategy includes focus on borough-wide challenges and opportunities, and on objectives and outcomes that relate to the whole of Sefton and all of our communities, it does include an important commitment to ensuring that we meet our own high standards and expectations as an inclusive employer with a diverse workforce, that supports all employees and ensures the attraction, development and retention of a diverse and talented team that exemplifies everything to which we aspire, as articulated within this strategy.

This strategy relates to all areas of our organisation, and to everything we do. This includes, for example, adult social care, which is critical in supporting vulnerable people and also providing much-needed support to carers.

Moreover, through the procurement of goods and services across the organisation, we will engage with partner organisations on the subject of equality, diversity and inclusion – not only to reinforce the importance of these subjects, but to share best practice where we can, and of course to learn from others wherever there is opportunity to do so.

I am proud of the work and progress our organisation has made in this respect, and of the culture of inclusivity and collaboration that exists across the Council. However, we unquestionably have opportunities to get better, and I share the Cabinet Member's passionate commitment to ongoing and continuous improvement in this respect.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dwayne Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dwayne Johnson
Chief Executive, Sefton Council

Executive Summary

This strategy is intended to demonstrate that Sefton Council as an organisation, and Sefton as a place in which to live, work and visit, continues to make good progress in respect of equalities, diversity and inclusion, in accordance with the Council’s vision and core purpose and in alignment with other strategies and policies. However, there remains much area of opportunity for improvement, not least in the context of wider economic, social and cultural issues that are affecting the whole country and the whole world. Regardless, this strategy and action plan will form part of an ongoing journey of continuous improvement that will constantly be refreshed and updated – as is evident in many organisations and similar strategies across many and varied sectors, it is not expected that this work will ever be “finished”.

Sefton Council’s Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027 is intended to reinforce the importance of these challenges and opportunities as already demonstrated by the Council, including through such approved Council motions as the Race Equality Declaration of Intent in April 2022, and the recognition of care experience as a

protected characteristic in January 2023, but also through the ongoing operations and wide range of strategy and policy areas across the organisation. It aims to build on this determination for continuous improvement, and to outline areas of opportunity and action in this respect.

This strategy focuses on each of the Council’s roles:

- As an employer
- As a provider of services
- As a commissioner of goods and services
- As a place leader

In accordance with feedback from employees across Sefton Council, via the Corporate Equalities Group, this strategy includes particular focus on the Council’s role as an employer. While the strategy and action plans include deliverables against the other three roles identified above, the intent is to ensure that the Council is demonstrating continuous improvement in all areas as a priority.



The strategy is structured around seven key objective areas, identified through widespread consultation and engagement across the organisation:

Objective 1: Increased awareness and engagement across the whole organisation - Creating an active awareness surrounding the issues facing Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion across Sefton and the wider community allows staff to understand the various needs of our service users and better target resources.

Objective 2: Increased engagement with our partners and communities – Being influencers and leaders in our community, promoting the strengths and positive nature of diversity, equality, and inclusivity, whilst further encouraging others to recognise the issues individuals and communities face in Sefton and indeed nationwide.

Objective 3: Consistent and targeted training and development - To continue working collaboratively with our staff to shape the future of work in our borough, requiring increased awareness of EDI issues and better training to address changing landscapes.

Objective 4: Strengthened support for staff – This includes support from line managers and facilitating both the personal development of staff and the development of the organisation.

Objective 5: Maximise effectiveness and inclusivity in HR processes and procedures - Ensuring that our HR processes and procedures promote equality, diversity, and inclusivity, making sure all candidates have the same opportunities and that we develop a transparent process.

Objective 6: Improved monitoring and measurement of progress – To consistently review our success against the EDI strategy, measured against several expectations. This includes reviewing ourselves against internal expectations and other employers.

Objective 7: Establish and strengthen monitoring and governance structures - Improving internal processes and adapt to changing landscapes, establishing, and strengthening monitoring and governance structures allows us to review our progress and strive for better.

This is intended to be an action-oriented strategy, with action plans included in each objective area, and internal mechanisms being sustained and strengthened to support monitoring, review, measurement of success and continuous improvement.

Notwithstanding the primacy of the Council's role as an employer in this strategy, there is also intended focus on external partnerships, particularly ensuring the capture and sharing of good practice and lessons learned from other organisations and sectors, and from accreditation bodies where available and applicable.

This includes particular partnership working with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, and collaborative focus on a range of areas, including but not limited to the Socioeconomic Duty.

Measurement of success will in some areas be quantifiable, but the strategy proposes focus on both outputs and outcomes - also ensuring measurement of delivery of the action areas identified herein, as the Council continues to work towards the shared objective of Sefton being a borough for everyone.



Introduction

As part of the Liverpool City Region, Sefton has a diverse population. There are significant inconsistencies and variances in terms of socioeconomic status, health and education outcomes across the places within the borough, and while all areas of the Council continue to make progress against the 2030 Vision, there remains much to do.

In 2016 Sefton Council worked closely alongside its residents, partners, businesses, private sector organisations, the voluntary, community, and faith sector to shape the future of the Borough over the next 15 years. The result of this commission was the Vision for Sefton 2030, a set of guidelines mapping out the Council’s culture and goals for the future. Since the introduction of this ‘Vision’, we have made great strides to protect the most vulnerable. We have become a place leader and influencer, driving change and reform. So far in Sefton, we have:

- Been awarded the Navajo Charter Mark for displaying good practice and commitment towards its LGBTQIA+ staff and community. Sefton became the first local authority to receive the charter mark in 2018 (with renewals including most recently in 2022), marking its commitment to LGBTQIA+ people across the Borough.
- Committed ourselves as Disability-Confident employers, and have signed up to the Disability Impact Pledge.
- Set up a range of active forums (both formal and informal) to give people the opportunity to have their voices heard.
- Via our Consultation and Engagement Panel, ensure that decisions are taken based on sufficient information..
- Continued to increase the number of staff and volunteers across Sefton who have undertaken Equality and Diversity training and Hate Crime Awareness training.
- Developed a Sefton Hate Crime Joint Agency Group (JAG). JAG is a multi-agency group which aims to take a strategic approach to tackling hate crime in Sefton, deal with referrals from partner agencies, and build cooperation between different agencies across Sefton and Merseyside.
- Created an Improving Information Group and Accessible Information Advocate programme to make sure that the information we put out is understandable to all.



Yet global and national challenges – austerity, recession and the Cost-of-Living crisis, Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic- have exacerbated poverty and inequality across our borough. Many are accessing council resources for the first time, as services continue to be stretched and budgets are cut. With this, the most vulnerable are put at risk.

The recent increase in poverty in the borough is only one part of the inequalities that residents face daily. As the Black Lives Matter Campaign has shown, society is still based on systems and structures that have historically discriminated against others. Recent reports published by the Home Office have shown that hate crime reporting is up by 26% in England and Wales, most notably race-based crimes and crimes against the LGBTQIA+ community. Health inequalities and other injustices that relate to higher levels of poverty have also become clear after the COVID-19 pandemic. The structures we rely on require reshaping, remodelling and creative new solutions to address the gap between the “haves” and “have nots”.

We are determined to confront these issues head-on. This strategy therefore seeks to outline the Council’s prioritisation of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and its approach to making Sefton a borough of opportunity for all. The Council hopes to continue to work with residents and partners to shape the borough into a model for others. This document sets out the approach we will take, in many cases prioritising internal actions within the organisation: **as an employer, as a place leader, as a provider of services, and as a commissioner of goods and services, our aim is to be best in class in this respect – and that includes ensuring our organisation is consistently meeting its own high standards, and working to do so on an ongoing basis.**



Our Legal Duty

Sefton Council also has a legal duty to protect its residents. The Equality Act 2010 is the legal framework that was put in place to protect individuals' rights and advance equality of opportunity. This Act provides the prime legislative basis under which this strategy operates.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the term "protected characteristics" to refer to groups that are protected under the Act. Protected characteristics are legally defined as:

- Age
- Race
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Marriage/Civil Partnership
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Religion or Belief
- Maternity & Paternity.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (created under the Equality Act 2010) is also important and came into force on the 5th of April 2011. It requires those carrying out public functions to adopt the duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunities and promote good relations between different communities. Compliance with the equality duty allows us to provide services to meet the diverse needs of our users and improve how we carry out our core business.

In addition to the above, Sefton Council passed a motion in January 2023 to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic as well.



Challenges and Impacts

The impact of the challenges we face because of structural inequalities can already be seen across the borough. Political and economic uncertainty, strengthened by underlying structures of inequality have intensified anxieties across the borough.

Our Borough at a glance:

- 1 in 5 Sefton residents live in the most deprived 10% of England Lower Super Output Areas (approximately 54,500 residents)
- According to an ONS study on local income deprivation, **out of 316 local authorities, Sefton has the 2nd most clustered distribution of wealth and poverty in England.**
- 1 in 10 (or 3 in every classroom) will need support or treatment for a diagnosable mental health problem.
- 26% of Sefton children are living in poverty after housing costs.
- Sefton's most deprived populations spend, on average, 18 years less in good health than those in the most affluent areas.
- Life expectancy is 11 years lower for men and 9 years lower for women in the most deprived ward of Sefton than in the least deprived ward.
- Between January and December 2021 there were approximately 14,900 workless households, which equates to 18% of all households within Sefton, higher than Liverpool City Region, the Northwest and England.
- When looking at the average full-time employment gross weekly pay in 2022, males in Sefton were paid 15% more than females (£651.40 compared to £553.50).
- The average hourly pay for males in 2022 was £15.41, with females receiving on average £14.67.
- 3.7% (6,190) of Sefton residents aged between 16 and 64 were claiming out-of-work benefits in January 2023, the same as seen in England and lower than Liverpool City Region and the North West.
- There were 8,124 households claiming Housing Benefits as of November 2022, 6% of all Sefton rateable households.
- In 2020/21, 9,501 of the Local Authority's children are living in relative low-income families making up 16% of those aged 0 to 19. A 12% increase when comparing counts in Sefton from 2020/21 to 2014/15.
- In August 2022, there were 700 young people with Education, Health, Care plans – Young people with a Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)- aged between 16 and 24. Of these 15% are Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) this is 105 young people. Sefton has the lowest NEET & Not Known at 15% which is the best in the LCR and significantly better than North West at 38.9% and the England rate of 48.3%.
- Our NEET rate for 16 and 17 year olds has maintained at less than 4% throughout 2022 of those who are NEET 39% are in a vulnerable group.
- In February 2023, we had 92 young people between 16 and 18 who were cared for or care experienced. Of these 40% are NEET ie 37 young people.
- We have 251 young people aged between 19 and 21 who have care experience, of whom 50% or 127 are classed as NEET. Some of those (34%) who are NEET have illness or disability or are teenage parents and are not immediately available to return to study or work.
- On 31st March 2019, Sefton had a higher rate than that seen regionally and

nationally for those aged 19 to 21 who were NEET after leaving care. Rates in the Borough between 2019 and 2016 have seen fluctuations ranging from 44% to 55%.

- In a recent survey, 57% of LGBTQ+ Sefton respondents stated that they “know some LGBTQ+ people that live, work or study in Sefton but don’t feel that there is a community there”
- 87% of LGBTQ+ respondents disagree that there are lots of places in Sefton where they can socialise and meet people like themselves (i.e. other LGBTQ+ people).

Our Workplace at a glance:

As of December 2022:

- Sefton has an ageing workforce, with 56.43% of employees over 50 (53.43% in 19/20) and 20.57% aged between 40-49 (23.07% in 19/20). In contrast, only 9.24% of employees are less than 30 (9.28% in 19/20), of which only 0.66% are under 20.
- 66.56% of Sefton staff are female.
- In respect of ethnicity, the monitoring shows that the overall percentage of employees declaring that they are from minority ethnic communities is 2.42% (2.40% in 2020/21). A lot of staff did not respond to this question.
- The percentage of employees declaring they are disabled (using the definition of disability stated in the Equality Act 2010) is 3.22% (3.28% in 19/20). 20.48% of employees have declared they are not disabled. Most staff did not respond to this question.
- 1.02% of the workforce identifies as non-heterosexual (gay, lesbian and bisexual) (53.3% did not answer the question and 3.79% of participants preferred not to say).

Reflecting inward has shown that there is not a wide awareness of the make-up of the population or staff group, particularly when it comes to Black,

Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals. Though recent data was collected from staff through surveys, large numbers of staff did not answer and did not engage with the questions (or did so selectively). Demographic understanding is vital when trying to provide services to best serve our residents and to foster a workplace culture of inclusivity. What the above has proven is that we require more focused research and clarity to understand the best actions to take.

One of the challenges we face is therefore not only making up for a lack of workforce data through research but needing to educate our staff on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. This is to make sure they are better equipped to provide quality services. This includes on issues of injustice and adjusting to changing landscapes as more data is collected in newer research areas, including individuals with neuro-diversities.

Financial Challenges

We face multiple challenges that have influenced our objectives for this strategy. The pandemic has intensified the financial challenges of reduced government funding. We are seeing increasing inflation, rising hardship and financial inequality, a greater focus on racial inequality and its impact on life outcomes and changes in inward and outward migration.

The financial outlook for all local government is challenging, in the context of a tough economic climate. As a result of the Government’s austerity program, the Council’s core grant funding was reduced every year over a ten-year period between 2010/2011 and 2019/20. By 2019/2020 core Government grant funding had reduced by more than 50%. We now also face the impacts of the pandemic on the local economy and Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council itself, which continue to be extremely challenging.

The Pandemic

The effects of the pandemic have not been felt equally across all population groups. The latest government reporting shows that those

of Black and Asian heritage, and those from poorer backgrounds, suffered significant health inequalities and higher mortality rates. Research from the Institute of Fiscal Studies in 2021 showed that the pandemic had also caused more income inequality and more inequalities in education and skills.

Our strategy aims to ask, and start to answer, the following questions:

- How can we maintain focus on making Sefton a borough of opportunity for all?
- What actions are we going to take in the future to learn from our communities and adapt to current hardships and challenges?
- What framework will guide us when creating future policy to ensure the impact of change is fully understood when it comes to the welfare of residents?
- How can we improve structures within the organisation to become a better employer?



Guiding Policy

Purpose

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027 is ambitious and aims to develop a Sefton we can take pride in. A Sefton that is transparent, celebrates its diversities, understands the value of equal opportunities and empowers inclusivity. We will continue to build a more inclusive organisation to deliver for all of our people. Maintaining a focus on actions rather than words and striving to be proactive rather than reactive will help the successful delivery of our corporate objectives.

This strategy is essential to deliver on our ambition of becoming a leading modern council where our values are to serve our communities with integrity and objectivity. Whilst seeking to be innovative and ambitious, we prioritise protecting the most vulnerable and welcoming those from all backgrounds, facilitating confident and resilient communities and driving reform to ensure that Sefton is equipped for the future.

We seek to create a Sefton Council that:

- Is transparent.
- Understands and recognises the communities it serves, drawing from lived-experience.
- Welcomes talent from all backgrounds.
- Is accessible and engages with staff, partners and residents.
- Is supportive, advocating for inclusion, diversity and innovation.



Our Approach

To realise our ambitions, we will take an evidence-led and delivery-focused approach. This strategy frames an approach where equality, diversity and inclusion are not only just ends in themselves, but integral means of delivering better outcomes for and enhancing our organisation.

We have therefore identified some fundamental principles that will shape our approach and strategic priorities: We seek to create a Sefton Council that:

- We embrace and encourage the diversity of teams
- We endeavour to create an inclusive working environment, where differences are recognised and valued.
- We stand up to and challenge inequality
- We make sure no one is left behind. Everyone in Sefton must play a role in challenging the status quo and calling out discrimination and injustice, however uncomfortable it may feel.
- We embrace change and innovation
- We embrace the opportunities that the increased use of digital and flexible working has brought us. We collaborate, test new ideas and take risks, both as an organisation and as individuals.
- We invest in our staff
- We provide accessible and universal training courses to encourage staff personal development and learning.
- We tackle bullying, harassment and discrimination
- We will continue to set up accessible reporting processes, with specific actions for departments to take in continuing to address bullying, harassment and discrimination
- We test our policies and refine them on the basis of our learning
- We will remain adaptable, maintaining evidenced-based approaches and consistent reviewing and monitoring processes.

As we prioritise getting our own house in order, we are prioritising our role as an employer, but with focus on our wider role as well:

Sefton Council as an Employer	Sefton Council as a provider of services	Sefton Council as a Commissioner	Sefton Council as a Place Leader
Leading by example as an employer of choice, attracting and retaining a diverse and talented workforce that delivers positive outcomes for all across the borough	Engagement and collaboration with service users, increasing awareness and improving dialogue, supporting enhanced outcomes for customers and maximising support for our staff providing these services	Strengthening dialogue and relationships on the subject of equalities, diversity and inclusion with partners, incorporating actions and outcomes into commissioning and procurement processes where practicable	Proactive engagement and collaboration with partners, stakeholders and communities to increase awareness, improve dialogue, and support enhanced outcomes for all communities in our borough for everyone

Sefton Council as an Employer	Sefton Council as a provider of services	Sefton Council as a Commissioner	Sefton Council as a Place Leader
Example Projects			
A proactive training and development programme focused on all staff, increasing awareness and engagement at all levels across all areas	Partnership working with external groups to maximise input into place-based project development and delivery from an inclusivity perspective	Collaborative working with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority on the £2.2m Race Equality Hub, focusing on training, employment support and business assistance	Broadening Sefton’s events calendar for 2023 and beyond, to support widening and strengthening of awareness and engagement across Sefton with all communities and stakeholders

Strategy

To deliver our policy, we need a strong strategy and delivery plan. Our seven objective areas have been developed in partnership with our various staff networks and alongside our other strategies to ensure it speaks honestly to the needs of the Council, is fit for purpose, and is realistic.

Staff networks that were consulted include the Council’s Corporate Equalities Group and range of sub-groups, as well as management across the organisation. Our actions remain flexible and can be refreshed, with a plan to review them annually.

Our seven objective areas comprise:

Objective 1: Increased awareness and engagement

Objective 2: Increased engagement with our partners and communities

Objective 3: Consistent and targeted training and development

Objective 4: Strengthened support for staff

Objective 5: Maximise effectiveness and inclusivity in HR processes and procedures

Objective 6: Improved monitoring and measurement of progress

Objective 7: Establish and strengthen monitoring and governance structures

Objective 1:

Increased awareness and engagement across the whole organisation

Creating an active awareness surrounding the issues facing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across Sefton and the wider community allows staff to understand the various needs of our service users and better target resources. We want to consistently foster an organisational culture in which all staff and residents feel welcome background and feel represented and heard across all levels of the Council. Feedback from others and the establishment of open dialogue are essential as we navigate changing landscapes.

What we will do:

- Ensure our internal and external communications are reflective and supportive of the prioritisation of this strategy in terms of quality and frequency.
- Ensure all staff are able to dedicate the necessary time to participation and engagement in the Corporate Equalities Group, training and development, and other activities emerging from this strategy and action plan.
- Further strengthen the breadth and depth of training and learning opportunities on these subjects.
- Ensure our culture and HR-oriented processes are supportive for all staff with protected characteristics, and reflect the policy of zero tolerance of abuse or discrimination against our employees.
- Strengthen our understanding of, and focus on, micro-aggressions and unconscious bias across the organisation.
- Maximise engagement and collaboration internally in delivery of this strategy and action plan, ensuring application in all areas of strategy, policy and projects.

Actions

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| <p>1.1 Develop and implement a calendar of monthly themes and focus areas, incorporating specific actions where applicable. This will be used to support internal and external communications plans and training programmes, alongside other necessary areas.</p> <p>1.2 Reaffirm the importance to all management of engagement in the subject and the prioritisation of time for Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) using internal communications, using both email streams and staff social network 'Yammer'.</p> | <p>1.3 Encourage others to join CEG and fill any gaps in the organisation's representation, creating positive role models and not relying on those in protected characteristics as 'educators'.</p> <p>1.4 Sustain a programme of Organisation-Wide Inclusivity Events, ensuring continued input and engagement, with challenge and perspectives from partner organisations and guest speakers.</p> |
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- 1.5 Curate a “Book Club”/collation of useful resources (literature and videos) for staff to access free of charge. This will include a Shared Reading programme.
- 1.6 Use more inclusive language and change our terminologies to facilitate a culture change. We will respect and be guided by the views of individuals and groups when it comes to terminology.
- 1.7 Organise regular community engagement events on the subject.
- 1.8 Facilitate anonymous reporting and signposting in the organisation, making it clear where staff can find resources.
- 1.9 Develop internal webpages (the intranet) to promote EDI support, training and activities.
- 1.10 Undertake a full communications audit on the subject, identifying opportunities for improvement in our internal and external communications and engagement activity.

Case Study: Sefton Corporate Equalities Group (CEG)

Sefton has a Corporate Equalities Group made up of representatives from across the organisation. The Group, which is chaired by a member of our Senior Leadership team, supports the Council in making sure equality and diversity is at the top of our agenda, internally and externally.

Feeding back into Sefton’s Corporate Equalities Group, members offer solutions and recommendations about the issues that affect them and the organisation. This includes improving employee progression and empowerment through training and development opportunities, as well as consulting in new or existing policies, practices, procedures and strategies in areas such as Employment and Human Resources. The group continues to grow to best represent the organisation.

Key Opportunity: Book Club

Sharing resources and learning are two of the most important things when it comes to making culture changes within wider organisations. As inspired by structures in the Liverpool Women’s Hospital, an opportunity for the future is the creation of a book club specifically on the topic of equality, diversity and inclusion. Resources shared will be screened to make sure that they are accessible for all and will include a mix of written communication and video education. This will be available for all staff wanting to learn more.

Objective 2:

Increased engagement with our partners and communities

Delivering our ambitions to continue to improve life in Sefton requires more than organisational reform. We need to also raise the profile of these issues with our partners and communities to drive change. We want to be influencers and leaders in our community, promoting the strengths and positive nature of diversity, equality and inclusivity, whilst further encouraging others to recognise the issues individuals and communities face in Sefton and indeed nationwide. Whilst setting strategic priorities, as per the Equalities Act (2010), we will therefore consider how our decisions will help to reduce inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Our priority is to serve our people.

What we will do:

- Increase proactivity, consistency and frequency of our communications and engagement work regarding Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion.
- Formalise partnerships with external organisations to share and capture good practice and lessons learned from elsewhere.
- Establish a Race Equality Monitoring Group, focused on ensuring oversight and effective consultation and engagement.
- Build on the positive start made with the Caring Business Charter, helping provide employment and skills opportunities for young people with care experience.
- Using the Charter as a platform to widen business and other external engagement on the subject of other protected characteristics, via existing forums and on a relationship-by-relationship basis as well.
- Explore and implement external learning and engagement opportunities.

Actions

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| 2.1 Revitalise the website to ensure our inclusivity in related areas is explicit, for example, our Navajo feedback. | 2.5 Incorporate related discussions into informal partner engagement, building on Caring Business Charter. This includes establishing what we can share and what we can learn. |
| 2.2 Continue with our commitment to the Equalities Act (2010) and review further areas such as the Socioeconomic Duty (SED) to deliver better outcomes for those who experience disadvantage. | 2.6 Work with partners to improve employment rates, number of people recruited from our most deprived areas, quality of employment, and tackle insecure employment on a postcode basis via Sefton@Work. |
| 2.3 Establish an external communications programme, linked to the monthly themes stipulated in objective area 1. | 2.7 To provide high quality community learning opportunities for second chance learners over aged 19 through Sefton Community Learning Service. |
| 2.4 Ensure continued full engagement in Liverpool City Region working groups. | |

- 2.8 Make supporting businesses led by minorities a priority for InvestSefton.
- 2.9 Engage with partners and their EDI strategies to ensure that they align with Sefton’s values and are creating a fair and equal environment for their staff.
- 2.10 Work with partners to improve employment rates, number of people recruited from our most deprived areas, quality of employment, and tackle insecure employment on a postcode basis.
- 2.11 Develop more support groups to serve the community, including baby loss groups and supporting Children’s Services.
- 2.12 Promote the use of flexi-hours to have an impact on service delivery.
- 2.13 Continue to prioritise accessibility when considering ‘Place’ and future developments in Sefton.
- 2.14 Work with stakeholders to improve the prospects of people with offending backgrounds who experience barriers and discrimination in seeking skills, work or housing.
- 2.15 Reach out to veterans groups to ensure that ex-service people are able to thrive in all aspects of civilian life such as employment and training

Case Study: Regeneration

The Sefton 2030 Vision outlines that Sefton is “accessible for everyone”, including those with disabilities. Sefton Council are committed to making Sefton a safe and accessible place for everyone. This includes, for example, working with blind and partially sighted people to make the built environment, streets and public spaces safer and more inclusive. We continue to work to make all Council buildings accessible to all.

Sefton Council worked with independent groups for people with disabilities and charities such as Thomas Pocklington Trust to deliver visual impairment awareness sessions for Council staff and elected members. This training raised awareness of the barriers faced by blind and partially sighted people, and what actions are needed to improve access and safety.

Key Opportunity: Procurement

Through the commissioning and procurement of goods and services across all areas of the Council, there is opportunity to strengthen and widen engagement with partner organisations. This is regarding the borough’s and the organisation’s challenges and opportunities in respect of equalities. This may include the incorporation of measured deliverables from providers as part of procurement processes, to provide a platform for collaboration with partners who share the vision and values of the organisation. This is already underway with the incorporation of the Caring Business Charter into our Social Value Policy (with its signature a requirement for bidding organisations who wish to work with Sefton Council), and can be widened further.

Objective 3:

Consistent and targeted training and development

To succeed in all of our priority areas and achieve our ambition of a fairer future for everyone in the face of such massive challenges, we must pull together and work as a solid team across every service area and at every level in the Council. We will continue to work collaboratively with our staff to shape the future of work in our borough, requiring increased awareness of EDI issues and better training to address changing landscapes.

What we will do:

- Undertake an audit of all EDI training to ensure it is fully accessible, and delivering against all objective and action areas within this strategy.
- Increase the breadth and depth of training and education on EDI and the subject areas therein.
- Widen discussion on the subjects via a Shared Reading programme – including internal sessions and via an external programme.
- Explore related mentoring opportunities for managers and leaders on EDI.
- Maximise the shared learning opportunity from external partner organisations.

Actions

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| <p>3.1 Continue to promote mandatory online training. This includes scrutinising current operations and systems to drive the completion rate and sustain it.</p> <p>3.2 Deliver the same training via other means. This includes reviewing options for those not working online, including formal and informal training methods and small classes.</p> <p>3.3 Finalise and implement a training module, with a specific focus on middle management, facilitated by Equaliteach.</p> <p>3.4 Offer and encourage EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) training to all Cabinet Report authors.</p> | <p>3.5 “The next level” – agree on focus and approach to further training, linked to strategy, Council motions, and key themes identified above.</p> <p>3.6 Include elected members in training.</p> <p>3.7 Open training up to community groups.</p> <p>3.8 Offer bespoke learning offers including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bystander culture (Being an active bystander means being aware of when someone’s behaviour is inappropriate or threatening and choosing to challenge it).• Allyship (An ally is someone who is not a member of a marginalised group but wants to support and take action to help others in that group). |
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- Psychological safety (Psychological safety is the ability to share one’s thoughts and feelings without risk of damaging one’s reputation or standing).
- 3.9 Return to face-to-face training where possible, encouraging and allowing for debate, challenge, and questioning.
- 3.10 Develop and implement a Shared Reading programme available to all staff members, particularly managers and leaders.
- 3.11 Undertake an audit of all training offers to ensure accessibility, consistency and effectiveness.
- 3.12 Develop and implement a reciprocal mentoring programme between our organisation’s leaders and managers, and people with one or more protected characteristics, ensuring the development and maintenance of mutually-beneficial learning relationships.
- 3.13 Facilitate Restorative Supervision meetings to support enhanced dialogue between managers and staff.

Case Study: Equality and Diversity Awareness

All Sefton Council employees are required to complete mandatory Equality and Diversity Awareness eLearning. The course is core to the Council’s Mandatory Training programme.

Compliance at the beginning of January 2022 was less than 10% across all service areas, this had increased to 67% by the end December 2022. This represents a significant increase in the number of staff completing their mandatory Equality and Diversity Awareness eLearning and we expect this trend to continue. Managers are also required to complete Equality and Diversity for Managers mandatory eLearning and we are also seeing an upward trend for this course.

Key Opportunity: EqualITeach Training

Representatives from the Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) have been working with neighbouring authorities since late Autumn 2021 to commission a training provider called EqualITeach, and to work with local stakeholders to develop a high-quality bespoke race equality training product, with the aim of building a collective level of racial literacy and inclusivity.

Two, 3-hour, face-to-face pilot sessions took place during October to help shape the content and this included representation and attendance from our Senior Leadership Board. Both pilots were very well received and the feedback will inform the on-going design, development and delivery of the programme.

Objective 4:

Strengthened support for staff

Creating a fairer, more equal and inclusive borough starts with doing work within. Strengthening support staff and making Sefton Council a better place to work not only helps us with recruitment and retention but facilitates both the personal development of staff and the development of the organisation. Making people feel empowered when working is a priority.

What we will do:

- Establish a targeted mentoring programme for staff members with protected characteristics.
- Embed process relating to reasonable adjustment passports.
- Undertake a process review across HR to identify areas of opportunity for improvement and increased inclusivity (with particular focus on recruitment, and such opportunities as diverse interview panels, blind applications, an approach of “we want to hear from you anyway” to job advertisements that ensures openness to all).

Actions

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| 4.1 | Draft and establish a policy of zero tolerance on staff abuse. This policy is to be displayed at all public-facing locations. | 4.6 | Develop a programme of nominated support staff to approach for a ‘safe discussion’, a ‘Guardians of Support’ group. |
| 4.2 | Review and strengthen processes in case of incidents. | 4.7 | Undertake a HR process review to ensure capture and implementation of best practice as an inclusive recruiter and employer. |
| 4.3 | Review and strengthen incident reporting mechanisms. | 4.8 | Develop and implement a targeted mentoring programme for staff members with protected characteristics. |
| 4.4 | Create and encourage new staff groups, including a neurodiversity group and a menopause support group. | 4.9 | Supportive employment - aspiring to be a good employer with flexible arrangements for support for people with caring responsibilities including childcare and eldercare |
| 4.5 | Make clear to staff that EDI policy is not just a tick-box exercise, but endeavour to celebrate inclusion from the top down. | | |

Case Study: Staff Groups

Sefton Council is committed to supporting the diverse needs of all employees and the communities we serve. In line with our One Council values of listening, valuing and respecting each other’s views, as well as developing a culture of challenge, ownership, innovation and improvement, the Council has established a number of staff networks for colleagues to join.

These staff networks seek to provide confidential and safe environments to support, respect and encourage members to share experiences and discuss issues that affect them.

The current staff networks are:

- Sefton Council Christian Workplace Group.
- Sefton’s Black and Ethnically Diverse Staff Group.
- Sefton LGBT+ Staff Network (set up in 2022).
- Sefton Disability Staff Network (set up in 2022).
- Sefton Women’s Network.

Key Opportunity: Zero Tolerance Policy

To become an employer of choice, and to attract a diverse workforce, we will strengthen our processes and culture to ensure absolute support of the highest standards for all of our employees. We will establish and embed a policy of zero tolerance of discrimination or abuse by any service user to any member of our staff. This is through pursuing police and legal action, and also ensuring provision of support for those affected. On top of this we will ensure training and development for all managers to facilitate the ability to provide this support. This action reflects staff feedback on the subject and identifies an area where greater consistency and continuous improvement will be beneficial.

Objective 5:

Maximise effectiveness and inclusivity in HR processes and procedures

We want to be proactive rather than reactive in ensuring that our HR processes and procedures promote equality, diversity and inclusivity, making sure all candidates have the same opportunities and that we develop a transparent process.

What we will do:

- Capture good practice and lessons learned from elsewhere, to ensure we are an employer of choice for current and potential employees (as per the action areas identified under objective 4).

Actions

- 5.1 Ensure explicit inclusivity and avoidance of unconscious bias to improve quality and consistency in recruitment advertising.
- 5.2 Ensure we use blind applications and interview panels - finalise process points as previously identified.
- 5.3 Enhance induction processes, with input from the CEG.
- 5.4 Continue to commit ourselves as a disability-confident employer.
- 5.5 Increase accessibility for interviews with the option of face-to-face or online meetings.
- 5.6 Simplify language in job adverts and take away complicated recruitment processes.
- 5.7 Work with Sefton@work to provide accessible employment routeways where this can encourage a more diverse workforce.
- 5.8 Clarify our policy on how we utilise DBS clearances, which roles these apply to and our decision making processes
- 5.9 Implement necessary changes to recruitment equalities monitoring to reflect Care Experience as a protected characteristic and identify mechanism for monitoring this

Case Study: Changing Recruitment Processes

The Council is a Disability Confident Employer which means that it is committed to removing barriers for disabled people and those with long term health conditions in employment. As part of this scheme candidates are able to apply for all non-schools vacancies under a guaranteed interview scheme. The logo is displayed on all job adverts.

So far, Sefton has been awarded Level 2 as a Disability Confident Employer and are encouraging suppliers to also become Disability Confident Employers, demonstrating leadership.

Key Opportunity: Implementing Good Practice to Increase Inclusivity

We are evaluating the use of workplace adjustment passports. A workplace adjustment passport is a live record of agreed adjustments between an employee and their manager to support the employee at work due to a health condition, impairment or disability. This is something that the LCR Combined Authority use and have used successfully. They are recommending them to other LCR authorities. This was also suggested by our disability staff group and various unions as a step in the right direction to increase inclusivity.

Blind applications are also something the council wants to progress. A procurement exercise will be conducted prior to this to seek a supplier, ensuring unconscious bias plays no role in job application processes.

Objective 6:

Improved monitoring and measurement of progress

To evaluate the effectiveness of our strategies and the actions we intend to take, we need to consistently review their success, measured against several expectations. We need to review ourselves against internal expectations and other employers. We want to be known as an inclusive company and are flexible to make necessary changes as landscapes change.

What we will do:

- Maximise our engagement with, and learning from, external bodies such as (but not limited to) Inclusive Companies.
- Establish peer review processes to capture perspective, challenge and learning in all areas of the organisation.
- Strengthen reporting mechanisms on EDI to enable evidencing of progress against this strategy and these objectives.
- Ensure focus on both outputs and outcomes (leading indicators and lagging indicators).
- Update our approach to Equality Impact Assessments, ensuring completion and review for all strategies, policies and projects, to a standard that is recognised as best in class.

Actions

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| 6.1 | Review Navajo assessment feedback and develop an appropriate action plan. | 6.5 | Support staff to have the skills to produce Council information in accessible formats, to meet the needs of the diversity of the workforce and communities and use the outcomes in the Accessible Communications Policy. |
| 6.2 | Build on 'Inclusive Companies' membership and review other potential schemes to support challenges and improvement. | 6.6 | Measure impact on workforce and communities. |
| 6.3 | Develop detailed action plan from this strategy, and review potential strategy updates and future reviews. | 6.7 | Produce a breakdown of statistics regarding the workforce. This would aid in identifying areas of support requirements. |
| 6.4 | Continue reporting at SLB, and beyond – review opportunities to widen and strengthen visibility of progress and measurement of success. | 6.8 | Gather feedback regularly from network/support groups. |

Case Study: The Navajo Chartermark

The Navajo Merseyside & Cheshire LGBTIQA+ Charter Mark is an equality mark sponsored by In-Trust Merseyside and supported by the LGBTIQA+ Community networks across Merseyside- a signifier of good practice, commitment and knowledge of the specific needs, issues and barriers facing LGBTIQA+ people in Merseyside.

In 2018, Sefton became the first local authority to receive the charter mark recognising its commitment to LGBT+ people across the Borough.

Sefton Council was again awarded the Navajo Charter Mark for displaying good practice and commitment towards its LGBT+ staff and community at the annual Navajo Awards Ceremony, held at The City of Liverpool College on Thursday 6th October 2022.



Inclusive Companies

Inclusive Companies exists to challenge the lack of diverse representation within UK based organisations. It seeks to assist employers in fostering a truly inclusive environment where they recognise and value the differences of each employee.

Members benefit from accessing a host of outstanding resources which allow you to connect, share best practice and ultimately improve organisational performance. As Sefton continues to improve and review its processes, membership of Inclusive Companies is an advantage, learning from others and bettering out processes.

Objective 7:

Establish and strengthen monitoring and governance structures

Improving internal processes as we continue to develop as a council is a priority. As EDI becomes more important and we adapt to changing landscapes, establishing and strengthening monitoring and governance structures allows us to review our progress and strive for better.

What we will do:

- Update our Equality Impact Assessments approach, including with training and review mechanisms, ensuring that these considerations are part of the earliest stages of strategy, policy and project development, and that progress against the issues identified in each EIA are measured.
- Finalise approach to the Socioeconomic Duty, with partners across the Liverpool City Region, and embedding required actions and opportunities into this strategic action planning process.
- Establish a Race Equality Monitoring Group to support strengthened governance and monitoring.

Actions

- 7.1 Establish Race Equality Monitoring Group (REMG), as per recommendations of the Council’s [Race Equality Declaration of Intent Motion 2022](#).
- 7.2 Review and update (where required) CEG Terms of Reference in the context of REMG and other groups.
- 7.3 Launch LGBTQIA+ group and Disability group as part of Staff Networks.
- 7.4 EIAs – establish monitoring processes to ensure in place for all Cabinet decisions.
- 7.5 Leadership to emphasise the responsibility of all staff to recognise inequalities and act in the right way, using the support available.
- 7.6 Continue review of Socioeconomic Duty with partners across the LCR, and (subject to progress and deliverability) request Cabinet approval for signing up to the Duty.

Case Study: Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment is to ensure that services, functions, policies and products that are affected by the decision do not directly, indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally discriminate against our stakeholders or employees. Where any adverse impact is found we develop objectives that tackle the impact through the development and implementation of equality action plans.

The Equality Act 2010 superseded the previous legislation and does not require EIAs. However, the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Act still requires organisations such as Sefton Council to assess the impact of policies and decisions. Evidence that this has been done has been required by case law. Sefton Council have decided to continue to use EIAs as they are an effective tool for achieving this.

Key Opportunity: Race Equality Monitoring Group

Sefton Council is working with the Combined Authority and the other Liverpool City Region (LCR) Councils to develop and deliver a Race Equality Programme that seeks to meet the shared vision of “tackling systemic injustice and inequality and driving forward positive change for our DEBs (Diverse and Ethnic Background) employees and residents - influencing the partners we work with to do the same”. Sefton Council is committed to achieve the Sefton Council Strategy vision of A Confident and Connected Borough.

The recommendation is therefore to set up a Race Equality Monitoring Group. The group will develop a Borough-wide strategy in line with the Liverpool City Regions targets of 2025/2026. It will also recommend ways we can maximise the voice of the DEBs staff group, improve retention, and promote progression into Senior leadership roles.

The Future of Sefton

This strategy has aimed to demonstrate that equality, diversity and inclusion are priorities for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council. However, it is important to recognise that this is not where our efforts stop. This strategy is a guide for future steps we will take to make Sefton a better place, as we continue to learn from our communities. Striving for better is a journey and is one we are committed to taking.

We will remain committed to standing with our communities across the borough, guaranteeing that all residents, regardless of their background, have a good quality of life. We will continue to work collaboratively with our partners and the wider city region towards common goals, sharing good practice and learning from one another's research. We are committed to speaking and working with our residents to understand lived experience and will adapt and innovate accordingly.

There has been significant economic and social improvement over the past 15 years across the region, yet approximately 88,000 Sefton residents live in the most deprived 10% of England. The Combined Authority has taken the decision that socio-economic status is considered alongside protected characteristics following stakeholder consultation and on the recommendation of the Social Mobility Commission. In voluntarily adopting the socio-economic duty, prioritising the well-being of our residents is essential and we will make strides to mitigate socio-economic disadvantage.



Education and skills are critical for people to make the most of economic opportunities, but children from low-income backgrounds achieve worse results at every stage of their education compared to those from better off homes. This deprives the region and employers of talent. It also reduces people's earning potential, reduces the tax take and increases the risk that poverty will be passed from one generation to the next. We will therefore explore strengthening and expanding work in the Liverpool City Region, undertaking activities specifically designed to tackle socio-economic disadvantage, acting in the spirit of the duty.

This includes working with partners to:

- improve employment rates.
- number of people recruited from our most deprived areas.
- quality of employment.
- tackle insecure employment on a postcode basis.



Measuring Sefton’s socio-economic background is therefore a future priority, in which recommendations from the EDG will be considered. As per the action plans herein, Sefton Council will also collaborate with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and agencies across the region, working towards agreement to sign up to the Socioeconomic Duty.

The Council will also support delivery against the approved motion to recognise care experience as a protected characteristic. This includes building on the early success of the Caring Business Charter, through which more than 50 organisations (at February 2023) have signed up to the commitment to provide employment, training, apprenticeship, work experience or mentoring opportunities to care-experienced young people in Sefton. This exemplifies and evidences the importance of, and opportunity for, partnership working in the achievement of the objectives identified herein. The Council will also consider actions and opportunities to support informal carers.

Caring Business Charter

The approach outlined in our strategy will lead us in our work over the next few years. It will be subject to an annual review as we continue to learn more about the issues our residents face and how we can best drive reform to improve quality of life. We will assess progress regularly as the landscape evolves in the borough and we come up against new challenges.

We will use this document to:

- Serve as the first port of call for more detailed plans in the future, which we will continue to visit and reshape with our partners and communities.
- Inform clear communications and engagement opportunities with local people and communities to bring people on board with our vision and approach so we can work together to achieve common goals.
- Inform colleagues of expectations when working for the Council, highlighting our goal to shape good practice.

Measurement of success will be through not only quantifiable changes and improvements, but also outputs as well as outcomes, with the review mechanisms identified and strengthened within this strategy ensuring that the Council maintains focus on these important areas of challenge and opportunity.



