



# **Epsom and Ewell Borough Council's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework**

**2021 – 2024**

To support action promoting Community Cohesion, Anti-Racism, Equity and Justice

## **Epsom & Ewell's Long-term Vision – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

The Councils vision for Epsom & Ewell to be a creative and vibrant place can only be achieved through a strong commitment by the Council and Epsom & Ewell's residents, to encourage diversity and recognise and celebrate difference within the context of equity and fairness.

Part of the Council's long term vision, is to create a place that offers an excellent start in life, as well as ongoing opportunities and social/economic prosperity whatever a person's background. Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion matters is essential to achieving the long term vision.

This Council holds a vision for Epsom and Ewell of a borough where people support each other and work together to build a fair, inclusive and safe place for everyone. This vision will help to create excellent starts in life for everyone within the borough, as well as a culture of equitable opportunity and prosperity.

We believe that working together and demonstrating a strong community spirit is a sure way to deliver the spirit and letter of our Vision. Actively promoting inclusion and diversity is integral to our vision and the success of our communities

We believe that Epsom and Ewell should be a place where everyone can thrive.

However, we recognise that this is not always the case, and that some people experience discrimination for a wide range of reasons. Through our interactions with our residents, we recognise that many people in Epsom & Ewell are held back because of inequality, discrimination and the lack of opportunity connected to one or more of the characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010. We also recognise that there are other causes of inequality or exclusion such as people being excluded because they have a low income, are socially isolated, live in poor housing or due to poor health. At the Council, we do not think that this is acceptable. The Council is fully committed to the elimination of unlawful and unfair discrimination and values the differences that a diverse community and workforce brings.

We will do everything in our power to create equity of opportunity in our communities. This framework affirms our commitment to tackling inequality not just because it is our legal duty but also because in doing so helps create a more successful Borough.

Issues relating to other forms of inequality or exclusion are considered through other strategies and areas of Council work such as our Health & Wellbeing Strategy and HR & OD Strategy.

### **Valuing Epsom & Ewell's Diversity**

Epsom & Ewell is becoming ever more diverse. This is one of its great strengths and being a more inclusive organisation will help the Council to:

- Understand our communities well and listen to them more closely
- Make decision which are informed by different points of view
- Develop and deliver the best possible services for all

The [Borough Profile's](#) provide information and insight to the makeup of the Borough.

## **Harnessing the Benefits of Epsom & Ewell's Diversity**

To harness the benefits of diversity we are building an inclusive organisation that actively recognises the contribution of people from different backgrounds, in all aspects of the Council's plans and work.

Being inclusive is not just about inviting different contributions but also tackling inequalities and advancing greater equality, as well as fostering good relations between people.

**Diversity** refers to the traits and characteristics that make people unique.

**Equity** refers to fairness and equality in outcomes, not just in support and opportunity.

**Inclusion** means refers to the behaviours and social norms that ensure people feel welcome.

**“Conversations”** with our communities are vitally important and during the period of this framework the Council is committed to developing these conversations in different forms.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty**

As a public body, we have a specific duty under the Public Sector Equality Act 2010 to publish equality objectives that demonstrate how we are meeting our responsibilities.

Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 places a general equality duty on the Council to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

The characteristics protected under the Act are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership

As outlined in the [Technical Guidance](#) on the Public Sector Equality Duty, compliance with the duty will result in:

- Better informed decision making and policy development
- A clearer understanding of the needs of service users, resulting in better quality services which meet varied needs
- More effective targeting of policy, resources and the use of regularity powers
- Better results and greater confidence in, and satisfaction with public services
- A more effective use of talent in the workforce
- A reduction in instances of discrimination and resulting claims

More information about the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty please see the [Equality and Human Rights Commission website](#).

## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework**

The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework outlines the Council's commitment and approach to eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations in Epsom and Ewell over the next three years.

The Framework supports the key priorities set out in Epsom & Ewell's Four Year Plan. In a post COVID environment with significant budgetary challenges and an increase in demand for services, the Framework will enable the Council to develop services to meet resident's needs and to assess how changes in service delivery will impact residents.

## **Our Principles**

- To be a learning organisation, working to make improvements
- To learn from our mistakes and experience
- Engage with communities, partners and stakeholders
- Fulfil our duty under the Equalities Act 2010
- Require our contractors to abide by the Equalities Act 2010

## **The Council's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Approach**

### **Theme 1 - Developing Inclusive Communities and creating Community Cohesion**

- This theme is about developing a greater focus on promoting social inclusivity across all the Council's services and developing good community relations. The Council's long term vision is to create safe and healthy communities brimming with opportunity and prosperity. This means communities in which everyone regardless of their background, beliefs, personal situation or identity feels welcome and able to prosper.

### **Theme 2 - Engagement and Accessible Services**

- This theme is about ensuring that Council services, information, consultation and engagement opportunities remain accessible to all residents, particularly those with protected characteristics. As a public body, we need to make sure

all our residents are able to access our information and services. Not everyone is able to do this in the same way, so we need to make sure there is a range of options available.

### **Theme 3 - Workforce Inclusivity**

- This theme is about continuing to seek opportunities to build inclusivity into the Council's internal policies and procedures. The Council is committed to being an inclusive organisation providing opportunity for all.

### **Delivering for our Communities**

We want people and organisations in Epsom & Ewell to see the Council as a community leader in addressing equality and inclusion. Our aspirations in delivering equity and inclusion are to:

- Leading by example across our whole organisation
- Taking a strategic approach to promoting equity and inclusion with a specific action plan
- Listening to communities and individuals about their lived experiences of all forms of inequality and exclusion and taking what is said into account when we make decisions

### **Impact of COVID-19 on BAME Groups**

There is clear evidence that COVID-19 does not affect all population groups equally. Many analyses have shown that older age, ethnicity, male sex and geographical area, for example, are associated with the risk of getting the infection, experiencing more severe symptoms and higher rates of death.

Public Health England produced [a report](#) to help better understand the impact of COVID-19 on BAME Groups.

The pandemic has highlighted inequalities that exist and there are many challenges faced by residents in the Borough as the pandemic continues. As part of the Borough's recovery our community needs to be stronger and more resilient than before and the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework will help the Borough to achieve this.

### **Data and Evidence**

We will continue to improve our equality data, and using local intelligence and data insight to inform future service planning and formal decision making. We need to make sure our services are sensitive to, and reflect the needs of our residents. We can only do this by understanding what those needs are. We can use data to help us do this, and make sure that the right information is available to those who are involved in planning and taking decisions about service delivery.

### **Responsibility and Ownership**

Elected Members, Leadership Team, services, managers, teams, staff, contactors, partners, stakeholders and residents all have shared responsibility and ownership for realising and encouraging equality and diversity.

Members must fulfil their statutory responsibilities under equalities legislation to promote good community relations and as community leaders promote the framework through their work.

The Leadership Team will lead by example using the Framework to embed equality and diversity matters in all aspect of the Council's work. The Leadership Team will be active in the promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion and ensure that robust Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are undertaken where required.

Teams across the Council will ensure development and implementation of service inclusion and diversity actions ensuring completion of EIA.

The Inclusion & Diversity Group is chaired by the Head of HR & OD and includes other senior members of staff. The group meet regularly at least four times a year. The purpose of the Group is to:

- be the lead for inclusion and diversity in the Council
- review the framework and annual action plan as well as related policies
- will act as an advisory group to support with raising awareness of inclusion and diversity matters
- support and deliver of inclusion and diversity events to help raise awareness
- providing oversight of the delivery of EIA
- ensuring compliance with equality legislation

The Council's Behaviour Framework outlines that staff should be respectful and appreciate diversity. Staff should demonstrate a commitment to equalities which is further outlined with the Council's People Framework through a number of procedures.

Residents play a vital role in creating community cohesion and inclusive communities. The Council expects its residents to also be respectful to each other.

The Council is committed to creating equity, a place free from discrimination, harassment and victimisation and work with residents to address inequality.

## **Equality Impact Assessments**

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA's) help us to consider policy, service or process and how it might affect the different groups affected by law. We use EIA's to find and remove barriers. This also helps us consider how best to provide help and support those who need it the most and to plan services that are as accessible and fair as possible.

EIA's are completed by relevant departments when new services are developed, there is a review of a service or a proposed major policy change. This is to make sure that they do not have unintended consequences for anyone with protected characteristics.

As part of the action plan a review of EIA guidance and forms will be undertaken to ensure that Heads of Service and Managers are clear of expectations and training provided to show how they should be used. This will also include a screening process which will allow the Council to determine when an EIA is required.

## **Financial and Resource Implications**

There is no identified budget for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and all activities related to this strategy and action plan will be met from within existing resources. However there is identified budget to enable reasonable adjustments to be made to enable the Council to comply with the Equality Act 2010. Financial sign off is required by the Head of HR & OD for all reasonable adjustments where funds cannot be identified from within existing service budgets.

## **Risks**

The Council has a legal duty placed on it to ensure compliance with the Equality Act and may be open to legal challenge if it is unable to evidence its approach and how it meets these requirements.

It is therefore imperative that this strategy and action plan are implemented effectively to ensure that compliance is reached and maintained.

## **Engagement**

Our Framework sets out our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion priority themes, which have been put together following a review of how the Council should discharge its equality duty, using guidance published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Local Government Association and in consultation with, Members, Leadership Team, Inclusion & Diversity Group, Staff and Residents.

## **Monitoring and Reporting**

The Council's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Framework is a three year framework which will be approved by Strategy and Resources Committee.

The Framework will be published on the Council's website to ensure that equality objectives are accessible to the public in line with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Action Plan will initially be for a one year period and will be reviewed on an annual basis, with an annual report submitted to Strategy and Resources Committee to demonstrate progress against each of the themes. This progress report will also be published on the Council's website.

Progress will also be monitored through the Inclusion & Diversity Group and Leadership Team with regular reporting on progress.

As part of the monitoring process annual workforce profile information will also be published on the Council's website.