



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

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

## **Introduction**

Our framework sets out our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion priority themes, which have been established following a review into how the Council should discharge its public sector equality duty (April 2011): [guidance for public authorities](#) published in December 2023 by the Government as well as those by the Equality and Human Right Commission, Local Government Association and in consultation with Members, Leadership Team, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Group.

## **Delivering for our Community**

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

- Lead by example across the Council.
- Take a strategic approach to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion with a specific action plan.
- Listen to communities and individuals about their lived experiences regarding all forms of inequality and exclusion and using this information to make informed decisions.

## **Epsom and Ewell's Vision – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The Council's Vision for Epsom and Ewell 'to be a creative and vibrant place' can only be achieved through a strong commitment by the Council and Epsom and 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 socio-economic prosperity whatever a person's background. Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion matters and is essential to achieving the long-term vision.

This Council holds a vision for Epsom and Ewell as 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 an excellent start 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 and 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 because of low income, social isolation, poor housing conditions or due to poor health. At the Council, we believe that this is not 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 possible to promote equity of opportunity in our communities. This framework affirms our commitment to tackling inequality not just because it is our legal duty but also in doing so helps create a thriving Borough.

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

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

Epsom and Ewell's diversity is growing, 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 decisions 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**

The Council is passionate about harnessing the benefits of diversity and is building an inclusive organisation that actively recognises the contribution of people from all 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** 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.

### **The Legal Background**

The Equality Act 2010 is the legal framework by which the rights of individuals and the advancement of equality of opportunity for all are protected. As a public sector body, we are required to carry out functions in a way that gives due regards to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010).
- Promoting equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't.
- Encourage good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't.

The non-protected characteristics protected set out in the Equality Act (2010) are:

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

Whilst the Equality Act (2010) does not include socio-economic duty, it is the Council's position that members and officers are required to consider the impact of their decisions on people who are less fortunate because of their social/economic background.

As a public body, we have a specific duty under the Public Sector Equality Act 2010 to publish:

- Equality information relating to people with protected characteristics (employees, service users and residents) every year, including reporting and publishing of gender pay gap information about our workforce.
- A clear set of equality objectives every four years setting out what we need to achieve to fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act (2010).

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.

The Framework supports the key priorities set out in Epsom and Ewell's Future 40 Vision. In a post pandemic 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**

**We have the following three thematic objectives:**

### **Thematic objective 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.

### **Thematic objective 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.

### **Thematic objective 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:

- Lead by example across our whole organisation.
- Take a strategic approach to promoting equity and inclusion with a specific action plan.
- Listen 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.

## **Equality Impact Assessments**

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) help us to consider how policies, services or processes might affect the different groups protected by law. We use EIAs to identify and mitigate barriers. This also helps us consider how best to provide help and support to 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 and included in relevant Committee reports. This is to aid decision making and ensure that they do not have unintended consequences on any protected characteristic.

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.

## **Data and Evidence**

We will continue to improve our equality data including the use of local intelligence and data insights 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.

## **Financial and Resource Implications**

There is no identified budget for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and all activities related to this Framework and action plan will be met from within existing resources. However, there is identified budget to enable reasonable adjustments to be made to ensure the Council complies with the Equality Act (2010). Financial sign off is required by the

Head of People & 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 (2010) and it 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 Framework and action plan are implemented effectively to ensure that compliance is reached and maintained.

## **Responsibility and Ownership**

Elected Members, Senior Leadership Team, Heads of Services, managers, teams, staff, contactors, partners, stakeholders, and residents all have a shared responsibility and ownership for realising and encouraging equality, diversity and inclusion.

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

The Senior Leadership Team, Corporate Leadership Team, and Managers will lead by example using the Framework to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion matters in all aspects of the Council's work. Leaders and Managers 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 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Group is chaired by the Director of Corporate Services and the Group includes colleagues from across the organisation. Membership also includes a representative from Unison, a representative of the Staff Consultative Group and the Head of People & OD. The group meet regularly at least four times a year. The purpose of the Group is to ensure that the Council's services are accessible to residents and that any changes to policies and services do not disadvantage or discriminate against residents and staff with protected characteristics. It also supports the Council to maximise the positive benefits of change and foster good community relations.

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 anticipates that its residents will show mutual respect for one another.

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

## **Monitoring and Reporting**

The Council's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Framework will be reviewed on an annual basis. If there are any major changes to the Framework, it will be resubmitted to the Strategy and Resources Committee for approval.

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

An Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis, with an annual report submitted to Audit and Scrutiny Committee to demonstrate progress against each of the thematic objectives. This progress report will also be published on the Council's website.

Progress will also be monitored through the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Group and the Senior Leadership Team.

As part of the monitoring process annual workforce profile information will also be published on the Council's website [Annual Workforce Profile](#)