

Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2023-2028

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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our Vision

Our Vision

To be an employer who embraces, and welcomes diversity, who's truly inclusive and who demonstrates equality for all. We'll go the extra mile so that our approach is representative of the communities we serve and each other. What we'll do will set us apart from others and we'll encourage others to follow our lead, because it's not just the right thing to do, or because the law requires us to, it makes for better outcomes for the Council, the community we serve and our people.

Our Vision is About:

- Leading a culture where all our people are truly inspired, regardless of their characteristics because we respect individuality knowing that diverse talent brings creativity and innovation, which can only benefit us all.
- Ensuring we have a working environment that if everyone expects more, they can achieve more.
- Developing a work experience where people love coming to work knowing that being individual is something to be proud of.
- Building a brand which is recognised by our future employees as an employer that wants them to bring their best selves to work, knowing that they'll feel valued and welcome, because what they do and how they do it is all that matters to us.
- Ensuring we have an environment where our people feel able to be themselves , challenge poor behaviours and encourage everyone to be accepting, welcoming and at home at Gateshead Council
- Having inspirational leaders who role model what great looks like, being inclusive, treating everyone as equals and applauding diversity
- Establishing ways of working that ensures that our practices, process, systems, policies, and procedures support our ambition to be an exemplar for equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Providing opportunities for people to grow, learn, develop, and help others
- Ensuring that Gateshead Council is a great place to work where people want to come, and people want to stay

- Having a workforce which is representative of the community we serve
- Achieve significantly more diverse representation across each level of job role in our workforce
- Design ways of working that are aimed at improving opportunities for personal growth and progression
- Design ways of working that are aimed at removing unintended barriers which hinder and/or prevent individuals from challenged socio economic backgrounds from entering, retaining and progressing their employment
- Not only meeting our obligations in line with the Equality Framework for Local Government, but exceeding them
- Meeting our obligations and complying with our duties to:
 - eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - advance equality and equity of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic, those who do not and those whose socioeconomic background creates unintended barriers for them; and
 - foster good relations - including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding, between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not



Defining Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Equality

Equality is about fairness. A society where individuals or groups of people are not treated less favourably, and where everyone can participate and have the same opportunity to fulfil their potential.

However, we know that equality is not always enough. For some individuals we recognise there are difficulties to them being able to access opportunities fairly. In order to achieve equity, we must do more and provide additional support to remove the barriers that some people face.

Diversity

Diversity is about recognising and respecting the value of difference. It means considering and appreciating all the unique characteristics that make people who they are. This includes, but is not limited to; national origins, language, race or ethnicity, disability, sex, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and family structure. Diversity also includes diversity of thought and life experiences.

Inclusion

Inclusion is about creating and maintaining a culture where people feel welcomed, respected and valued for who they are as an individual or groups.

Equality, diversity, and inclusion are tangible things, and they are critical to our success as an organisation. The combination of the three give greater impact and change.

Equality – Equal outcomes, treatment, opportunities, health, and wellbeing etc. for all.

Diversity – Everyone is individual and different.

Inclusion – A sense of belonging, feeling accepted and valued for who you are; feeling supported as you bring your authentic self to work.



Our Equality Statement

Gateshead Council are committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion as we believe it is fundamental to ensuring that our people, the community we serve and our future workforce know that we respect and embrace a culture which is supportive, where everyone is treated equally and fairly and where our people are empowered to be the best version of themselves and truly respected.

We continue to build an inclusive environment where opportunities are open to all, diversity is valued, and where everybody can reach their full potential without fear of harassment, prejudice, or discrimination. Every person in our organisation has a responsibility for making it a safe and inclusive environment where our people feel welcome and are able and supported to be who they want to be.

We want to help all our employees to not just thrive, but to flourish, prosper and succeed by putting people at the heart of everything we do. We'll recognise great behaviours and challenge poor ones to ensure that we continually build a culture which we're proud of and others want to be like.

Thrive

Our strategic approach, 'Thrive' has ambitions to make Gateshead a place where everyone thrives, including our people, many of which live in Gateshead. It drives our major policy decisions, aiming to redress the imbalance of inequality and championing fairness and social justice.

Our Five Steps to Success: Gateshead's Maturity Model

Our strategy is themed around measurable outcomes based on our five steps to success, Gateshead maturity matrix which can be seen in Fig 1. Our matrix sets out where we want to be, which is underpinned by our strategic approach, and is where we'll focus our efforts.

Our action plan will set out the activities that we'll deliver to drive the changes needed so that we can evolve and mature as an employer, who's sustainable culture is one which welcomes diversity, is truly inclusive and has equality for all.



Fig. 1

LEVEL 1 **BASIC**

We talk about equality, diversity and inclusion, and, know it's important, but there are no strategies or plans that define our desired outcomes beyond those required by legislation.

LEVEL 2 **FAMILIER**

Being an employer who is inclusive, diverse and respects equality is increasingly seen as an organisational benefit by all. It's acknowledged as a culture which can unlock further success for our people and our communities. Initiatives are developed and rolled out.

LEVEL 3 **RECOGNISED**

Our leaders and managers sponsor, encourage and role model the right behaviours because they see the benefits for our people and the communities we serve. Being an equal opportunities, inclusive and diverse employer is becoming part of our DNA, how we do things around here.

LEVEL 4 **EMBEDDED**

Equality, diversity and inclusion practices and culture are embedded into day to day activities across the Council. Everyone is committed to creating an environment where our people can bring their best selves to work, feeling valued and welcome, because what they do and how they do it is all that matters to us.

LEVEL 5 **SUSTAINED**

Our culture is recognised as one where we are a role model to others. Everything we do to enhance our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion is part of business as usual. The impact on the employee experience, customer satisfaction and organisational performance is evident.

Our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategic Approach

Our approach will take account of our obligations in line with legislation, our workforce strategy, and what we want to do/have committed to so that we grow a sustainable culture which welcomes diversity, is truly inclusive and has equality for all. We'll do the right thing.

We'll deliver the change that's needed through focussing our activities on making sure that we engage, enable, educate, empower, and encourage our people work and think differently to ensure that Gateshead is an employer that consistently demonstrates equality, inclusion, and diversity. We'll work to embed these behaviours, ways of working etc, and we'll evaluate what we've learnt and evolve.

Fig. 2

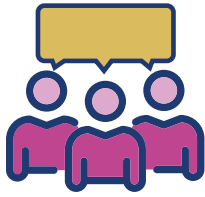


Our plan, our priorities

Everything we aim to achieve will be targeted at not only meeting our obligations in line with the Equality Framework for Local Government, we'll aim to go further and exceed expectations, which includes but is not limited to:

- Workforce diversity and inclusion
- Inclusive strategies and policies
- Collecting, analysing, and publishing workforce data
- Learning, development, and progression
- Health and wellbeing

Engage



We'll make it possible for people to know what we're trying to achieve and why by:

- Creating an employee communication plan that underpins what the strategy is aiming to achieve
- Participating in national inclusion campaigns
- Creating an engagement framework which allows employees to have a voice and influence what we do as an employer
- Conducting an employee survey
- Sharing our strategy, our vision, and our plan

Enable



We'll make it possible for our people to behave in a way that supports equality, diversity, and inclusion at work by:

- Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in our people policies and procedures
- Training our people on how to use our policies and procedures
- Helping our managers be role models
- Supporting our leaders and managers to embed positive working practices that enable equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Keeping it simple

Educate



We'll provide opportunities for our people to grow and learn, using a blended learning approach because we recognise that how you learn is individual, like our people by:

- Developing a rolling program of key learning activities
- Delivering meaningful training and learning activities
- Helping our people know the law regarding equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Explaining people's role and responsibilities
- Outlining the potential consequences of not treating all colleagues as individuals and with dignity and respect

Empower



We'll help our people feel confident and capable enough to make choices that positively impact on others by:

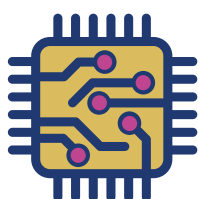
- Creating a culture where people have the authority to make decisions that have a positive impact on colleagues and customers
- Designing a framework which allows our people to contribute to decisions
- Allowing our people to take ownership and to organise their own equality, diversity and/or inclusion related activities/programme
- Developing a programme that recognises positive contributions/change
- Providing opportunities for our people to become equality, diversity and inclusion champions.

Encourage **We'll help our people be more likely to do something, or to make something more likely to happen by:**



- Removing perceived or real barriers
- Listening and hearing what our people are saying and act
- Inspiring our people to do the right thing
- Sharing great stories of when others have taken positive action
- Being open about what's gone well and what's not gone so well

Embed **We'll ensure that being an equal opportunity, diverse and inclusive employer is integral to who we are as a public service employer by:**



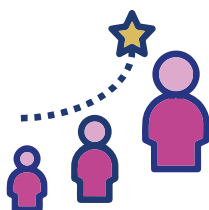
- Ensuring that EDI features in our Corporate Strategy and Service Plans
- Reviewing and auditing our strategic approach and action plan
- Encourage people to challenge poor behaviours and holding people to account
- Build EDI into our annual employee appraisal process
- Ensuring that every employee has been trained in the basic principles of EDI at Gateshead Council

Evaluate **We'll check if what we've set out to do is having the impact we want by:**



- Collecting relevant employee data in line with GDPR
- Checking our progress against our 5 steps to success
- Benchmarking against others
- Using the data to help inform decision making
- Reporting in line with our statutory requirements

Evolve **We'll know what we need to change/do differently by:**



- Checking what the data is telling us
- Understanding if what we're doing is making a difference
- Horizon scanning
- Listening to our people
- Working with our key stakeholders, partners and experts



Our Five Year Plan

We recognise that being a true EDI employer may take longer than five years and we also know that having a plan is how we'll understand what we've got to do and when. We also know that there's lots to do and embedding change takes time. We don't want our people to have change fatigue and not engage with what we're trying to achieve, so our plan will be measured and aimed at making incremental changes that allow people to learn and embed new ways of working, so that being an equal opportunity, inclusive and diverse employer is just something else Gateshead are brilliant at.

