

Report title: Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2024-27

Meeting	Cabinet
Date	10 September 2024
Cabinet Member (if applicable)	Cllr A Pinnock
Key Decision Eligible for Call In	Yes Yes
Purpose of Report: To approve the Inclusion and Diversity (I&D) Strategy 2024-27	
Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the strategy be approved Reasons for Recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council is under a statutory duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish one or more equality objectives every four years. To date we have fulfilled this requirement through our Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) Strategy. For several iterations of our I&D Strategy, the Council has also identified various elements of inclusion and diversity as strategic priorities beyond the core requirements of the legislation. For this reason, our recent strategies have all sought to deliver 'beyond compliance', meaning there are commitments in the strategy that relate to our ambitions as an authority and the strategies are decided more frequently than required to ensure they remain relevant to these ambitions. The new strategy appended to this report builds on the learning and progress made in previous strategies and sets out priorities that support a wide set of outcomes for communities in Kirklees and our workforce. 	
Resource Implication: At this point in time the implementation of the strategy will be taken forward within existing resource allocations and draw upon the established capacity across the organisation	
Date signed off by <u>Executive Director</u> & name	Rachel Spencer-Henshall 2/9/24
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?	Kevin Mulvaney 30/8/24
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	David Stickleby 29/8/24

Electoral wards affected: All

Ward councillors consulted: Members of Executive Board and Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Public or private: Public

Has GDPR been considered? Yes. The strategy and report contain no personal information relating to individuals. Pictures are GDPR compliant.

1. Executive Summary

The Council is under a statutory duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish one or more equality objectives every four years. To date we have fulfilled this requirement through our Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) Strategy.

As well as complying with our legal requirements, this strategy is about ambition. The Council has identified various elements of inclusion and diversity as strategic priorities beyond the core requirements of the legislation. For this reason, our recent strategies and this one seek to deliver 'beyond compliance'.

Our vision for inclusion and diversity is to be an organisation that provides equal access to opportunities and resources for our people and those we work with, and that values them for who they are.

We believe that recognising, supporting, and celebrating the diversity of our communities and our workforce will improve our organisational cohesion, innovation, and effectiveness, and deliver better outcomes for everyone. We also believe that inclusion and diversity are vital for our organisational sustainability, by helping us to recruit and retain staff, enable all staff to contribute to organisational success, and helping us engage with our diverse communities.

The proposed strategy sets out the four elements of our role as a Council with inclusion and diversity:

1. **Compliance:** how we comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010
2. **Ambition:** how we achieve our ambitions for inclusion as one of our organisational values (as set out in the Council Plan) through four priority themes from the Local Government Association's Equality Framework:
 - Understanding and working with our communities
 - Leadership, partnership, and organisational development
 - Responsive services and customer care
 - Diverse and engaged workforce
3. **Partnership:** how we enable inclusion more broadly in Kirklees:
 - Being a responsible anchor organisation, recognising our impact as a large, locally-rooted employer and spender and how that affects partners
 - Being a co-ordinator and facilitator, supporting partners' efforts where they align with our own and leading through partnerships
 - Delivering for partners through our services and programmes
 - Representing and advocating for the district through regional and national connections, where this will support better outcomes locally

Underpinning all of these are our 'always on' priorities: understanding impact, understanding diversity, and understanding equity.

2. Information required to take a decision Background

The Council is under a statutory duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish one or more equality objectives every four years. To date we have fulfilled this requirement through our Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) Strategy.

For several iterations of our I&D Strategy, the Council has also identified various elements of inclusion and diversity as strategic priorities beyond the core requirements of the legislation. For this reason, our recent strategies have all sought to deliver 'beyond compliance' and are decided more frequently than the four-year statutory requirement.

Our last strategy, entitled Recovery through Inclusion, recognised the adverse impact of the global Covid pandemic and focussed on a recovery phase, ensuring the correct strategic focus to support both communities and the workforce.

Key areas of progress from the last strategy include changes to Integrated Impact Assessments, the creation of the Inclusion Learning Framework, and new approaches to supporting a diverse workforce and employee networks.

New strategy

Our new vision for inclusion and diversity is to be an organisation that provides equal access to opportunities and resources for our people and those we work with, and that values them for who they are.

The proposed strategy sets out the three elements of our role as a Council with inclusion and diversity:

1. **Compliance:** how we comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010
2. **Ambition:** how we achieve our ambitions for inclusion as one of our organisational values (as set out in the Council Plan) through four priority themes from the Local Government Association's Equality Framework:
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Underpinning all of these are our 'always on' priorities: understanding impact, understanding diversity, and understanding equity.

Always on priorities

All our objectives depend on continuing to deepen our shared understanding of inclusion and diversity. Our three 'always on' priorities describe what is required and what we will do to do this.

Understanding impact is about how we use data and intelligence to support our decision-making, especially through our integrated impact assessments.

Understanding diversity is about how staff can feel confident engaging with diverse communities, especially when it comes to understanding people's different experiences and perspectives.

Understanding equity is about recognising that some people and groups face more disadvantage than others or different kinds of disadvantage, and this means some people or groups need different support to achieve similar outcomes.

Compliance

General duties

The aim of the Equality Act 2010 is to protect people from disadvantage and harm as a result of having a particular protected characteristic. Every single person has a protected characteristic, so we are all protected through the Act.

The Act sets out three aims that public authorities, including the Council, must deliver in carrying out our activities:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act also stipulates that we must do this by:

- Removing or reducing disadvantages suffered by people because of a protected characteristic.
- Meeting the needs of people with protected characteristics.
- Encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in public life and other activities.

The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Specific duties

Public authorities also have specific duties under the Equality Act to help them comply with the public sector equality duty.

Public authorities with 250 employees or more must do the following:

- Publish information on general duty compliance at least once a year to show how they have complied with the equality duty in respect of both people affected by their policies and practices and their employees.
- Prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years.
- Publish gender pay gap data by 31 March each year.

Our compliance

Our Inclusion and Diversity Strategy sets out our equality objectives as required by the duty, and various forms of reporting show how we are complying with the requirement to publish compliance information.

The information is provided on our website. You can find out more about how we are delivering on our ambitions around inclusion and diversity here:

<https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/delivering-services/inclusion-and-diversity-strategy.aspx>

The Council annually publishes workforce profile data and produces a gender pay gap report. It is also anticipated that both disability and ethnicity pay gap reports will be published in future. An annual report is produced detailing how the organisation has performed against its equality objectives, which is scrutinised by councillors and published online.

Ambition: our objectives for 2024-27

For an effective, innovative, and inclusive organisation, we need a diverse and engaged workforce delivering responsive, accessible services with support from the organisational leadership. This means we have to recruit and retain talented staff as well as enabling all these staff to contribute fully to organisational success. It also means ensuring that we have to weave considerations about inclusion and diversity into everything we do. Alongside this, we need to work with our partners, including local community organisations, to continuously improve our understanding of communities.

Across all this work, we need to work with partners and communities to provide equal access to opportunities and resources for all people and remove barriers, discrimination, and prejudice. Recognising, supporting, and celebrating the diversity of our communities and our workforce will help us do this.

The I&D Strategy includes a set of objectives for achieving our ambitions. They are set against the four themes of the LGA Equality Framework for Local Government. You can find out more about this here: <https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/equalities-hub/equality-framework-local-government>.

The themes and objectives are:

Understanding and working with our communities

- Embedding our commitment to the Inclusive Communities Framework.
- Higher quality integrated impact assessments more broadly used.
- Working closely with ward councillors as local place-leaders, enable place-based responses to the unique challenges and opportunities in each place, such as conversations between faiths and supporting leadership programmes for underrepresented groups.
- Understanding poverty and mitigating the inequitable impact of cost-of-living pressures.
- An inclusive approach to loneliness.
- Enhanced support for care-experienced people.

Leadership, partnership, and organisational development

- Embedding our commitment to inclusion through Our Council Plan and key partnership strategies.
- Use the social model of disability to promote inclusion for people with disabilities.
- Organisational improvement and transformation of our day-to-day work.
- Developing champions and a community of practice.

- The development and use of data and intelligence, benchmarking, and looking for best practice to inform planning and decision making
- Responding to regional and national opportunities and challenges that affect our objectives, including legislation and funding

Responsive services and customer care

- Embedding our commitment to inclusion through our Access to Services Strategy.
- Developing our data about our residents and customers.
- Promoting inclusive customer access to services.

Diverse and engaged workforce

- Embedding our commitment to inclusion through the People Strategy.
- Promoting inclusion through workforce planning, including pathways for underrepresented groups that enable better representation in our leadership positions
- Enhancing our workforce data, with a focus on race and disability.
- Being an inclusive employer of choice.
- Supporting Employee Networks to play a bigger role in promoting inclusion and supporting the organisation's priorities.
- Continuing to develop our excellent learning and organisational development offer to promote inclusion.

Partnership

The Council has an important role enabling inclusion more broadly in Kirklees, supporting partnership working with other organisations. To summarise, our role is:

- Being a responsible anchor organisation, recognising our impact as a large, locally-rooted employer and spender and how that influences partners
- Being a co-ordinator and facilitator, supporting partners' efforts where they align with our own and leading through partnerships
- Delivering for partners through our services and programmes, from business support and community capacity building through to planning and investment
- Representing and advocating for the district through regional and national connections, where this will support better outcomes locally

All of these create opportunities to promote inclusion and diversity in Kirklees.

In carrying out these responsibilities, the Council is committed to its role working with other partners to deliver our shared vision for Kirklees: for it to be a district that combines a strong, sustainable economy with a great quality of life – leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity and low inequality where people enjoy better health throughout their lives.

We achieve our vision by delivering improvements in our shared outcomes. Our shared outcomes are long-term commitments agreed with partners and which frame our planning in the short to medium term. They help the council and local partnerships focus on the impact we want to have for people and communities in Kirklees, collectively prioritise and plan, and monitor the impact of regional, national, and even international events. More information on these outcomes is available in Our Council Plan:

www.kirklees.gov.uk/councilplan.

At the heart of our partnership working is our set of strategic partnership strategies, consisting of the Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Inclusive Economy Strategy, and the Environment Strategy, and supported by the Inclusive Communities Framework, which provides an approach to working with

communities, supporting activity in all areas to contribute to more inclusive communities and a sense of belonging. Interdependences have been mapped across all these strategies. These make it clear that inclusion is a 'golden thread' that runs through all of them. The following shows ways in which our inclusion and diversity commitments support our partnership ambitions:

Inclusive Economic Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Our role as an inclusive employer of choice, creating quality jobs for members of our diverse communities
Health & Wellbeing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An inclusive approach to social connectedness leads to improved health outcomes and sense of belonging
Environment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting fairness, inclusion, diversity and accessibility in areas such as access to greenspace and mitigating the impact of climate change on disadvantaged communities
Inclusive Communities Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By enabling place-based responses to the unique challenges and opportunities in each place, we can connect better with underrepresented communities

3. Implications for the Council

3.1 Council Plan

The I&D Strategy will support the delivery of our overall policy framework, including the Council Plan and our top-tier partnership strategies: Kirklees Inclusive Economic Strategy (once adopted), Environment Strategy (once adopted), the Kirklees Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the Inclusive Communities Framework.

Fair and balanced priority

Robust I&D plans support fairness in our financial plans.

Transforming services priority

The 'golden thread' of inclusion is woven throughout many other significant transformation activities across the organisation, such as Our Kirklees Futures, the Access to Services Strategy, the People Strategy, and the Data & Insight Strategy.

Greener and healthier priority

Climate change is an integral part of the Integrated Impact Assessment process; embedding the new process across the entire organisation and continuing with robust quality assurance measures will be crucial to the success of inclusion becoming more of a reality in service planning and delivery.

Investing for the future priority

Robust I&D plans can help to ensure our investment plans benefit a wide variety of communities.

People, partners, and place

The essence of the new strategy is about improving outcomes for those who live and work in Kirklees, particularly those who are impacted by inequalities.

As set out above, working in partnership is one of the three key roles we have in delivering our I&D Strategy. It will be crucial to the effective implementation of the strategy – not least in terms of utilising partnership-based data and intelligence in order to tackle inequalities.

If we are to understand better the needs of our communities and work more collaboratively with them on solutions to inequalities, this will have to be done in a place-based manner, given the district's diversity. This strategy will build on and support the principles in the Inclusive Communities Framework, enabling communities to lead the responses to the unique challenges faced within their places.

3.2 Financial Implications

At this point in time the implementation of the strategy will be taken forward within existing resource allocations and draw upon the established capacity across the organisation.

We have undertaken analysis of all the 17 objectives in the strategy. Of these:

- 13 will be delivered from within existing resource allocations.
- Two are partly resourced but require further resources to deliver on our ambitions in this area. These are 'developing our data about our residents and customers' and 'being an inclusive employer of choice'.
- Two are currently not resourced, but we will seek to resource them in the lifetime of the strategy. These are 'use the social model of disability to promote inclusion for disabled people' and 'developing champions and a community of practice'.

3.3 Legal Implications

The Council is under a statutory duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty to publish one or more equality objectives every four years. We are fulfilling this requirement through our Inclusion & Diversity (I&D) Strategy. The Equality Act 2010 also sets out a number of other duties and responsibilities. This strategy sets out what we are doing to fulfil these. Further details are provided in the 'Compliance' section of this report and the strategy itself.

3.3 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)

To deliver our I&D Strategy, ongoing communication and engagement will be essential. To this end, on an ongoing basis:

- We will communicate our equality objectives and outcomes to our staff and other stakeholders. To support this, we will produce a one-page summary of the strategy that highlights the key objectives and outcomes, and how they align with our vision and values.
- We will showcase our achievements and demonstrate our commitment to I&D in everything we do through a series of online success stories that showcase the impact of the strategy on our services, communities, and workforce. These stories will be updated regularly and shared online to respond to our duty to report on progress against the objectives.
- To support the delivery of the strategy we will ensure there is a wide range of engagement activities with our staff and key stakeholder groups, such as the I&D hub, the steering group, and the delivery partners. These activities will involve periodic updates, feedback sessions, and collective problem-solving to support delivery.

This will complement the work of the steering group, responsible for managing the delivery of the strategy.

Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA)

An IIA has been completed and can be found on the council's website here:

<https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/delivering-services/integrated-impact-assessments>

Our assessment is that the I&D strategy will have a positive impact across all the protected characteristics and other groups considered (staff and residents), neutral effects on the environment, and positive benefits for access to services.

4 Consultation

Structured consultation has taken place with various leadership teams and employee networks across the organisation, requesting comments on the draft proposals. These have informed this final version of the strategy.

On the 2nd August 2024, Overview & Scrutiny Management Committee received an earlier draft of the strategy and were asked to provide any comments on the draft strategy to assist in the development and eventual delivery of the strategy's outcomes. The Committee recommended that:

- More detail be provided on how performance and impact will be monitored and understood
- Reference should be made to the role of elected members and how they could contribute and add value in terms of delivery of the aims of the strategy
- That the data in the draft strategy be reviewed, to ensure we have considered and included the latest available data.

Following this feedback, further details on understanding performance and impact have been added to the 'delivery' section of the strategy. A review of the data and intelligence has also taken place, and all figures have been updated where newer data was found to be available. There are now clear references with the data, to provide assurance around this. This has not affected the priorities in the strategy. Finally, there is now an objective under 'understanding and working with communities' around working with ward councillors, referencing their roles as place leaders in enabling place-based responses to opportunities and challenges. How this is done in each place will differ and will be supported by the unique strengths and assets in each area.

5 Engagement

This new strategy has been developed through an enhanced engagement process across both internal and external stakeholders. Through this engagement, we were able to add additional context to some of the data around inequalities across the district and explore the practical aspects of the delivery of our priority objectives. By speaking with officers across the organisation, we have gained a broad understanding of the challenges faced in both service delivery and in supporting colleagues. This evidence base has driven the content of our objectives.

6 Options

6.1 Options Considered

Scope of the strategy

1. A basic strategy complying with the legislative requirements
2. A more developed strategy relating to our organisational ambitions.

Option 2 was decided after discussion with the Leader, Portfolio Holder, and senior officers.

We also considered a number of activities for the strategy. The ones chosen are considered the most important and cost-effective.

6.2 Reasons for recommended Option

The objectives set out in the strategy were chosen because of their importance and because they are mostly already resourced. In some cases, these actions are legally required.

7 Next steps and timelines

- This is the final stage of approval for this strategy.
- If the proposed strategy is approved, an action plan will be finalised in the Autumn setting out the stages of delivery over the lifetime of this strategy
- The strategy will be delivered with monitoring arrangements as set out in the strategy

8 Contact officers

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9 Background Papers and History of Decisions

The last Inclusion & Diversity Strategy is available on the Council's website.
[Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2021-2023 | Kirklees Council](#)

10 Appendices

Appendix 1: Inclusion & Diversity Strategy 2024-2027

11 Service Director responsible

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