

Progress update: Race Equality Action Plan

Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to:

- Acknowledge achievements and support the planned next steps to further advance race equality and commit to a 'zero tolerance' approach to racism;
- Acknowledge the wider achievements and support the next steps in relation to wider Equality Agenda and the Equality Commission work; and
- Receive future updates in relation to the work of the Equality Commission on a six monthly basis.

2) Background / Introduction

The Race Equality Audit was published in January 2022. The purpose of the audit was to enable the council to understand the impact of structural racism within the organisation and its effect on our ethnically diverse staff.

In carrying out the audit, we recognised that racism was a problem in society and that our organisation reflected that wider society. It is noted that, nationally, hate crime has increased. Benchmarking has also illustrated that many organisations are meeting similar challenges to DCC.

Devon County Council is taking steps to become an organisation which enables its ethnically diverse staff to feel safe, included and welcomed. An inclusive and diverse culture increases motivation, trust and confidence, improves recruitment and retention, and helps all our staff feel valued and respected, increasing innovation and creativity. Our work will also lead to service improvement and better community outcomes.

As previously agreed at the meeting on 24 March 2022, CIRS Scrutiny will monitor progress and be provided with a report detailing progress every six months. The first progress report was presented on 24 November 2022.

Since that time, the Cabinet agreed to the establishment of an Equality Commission (to consider and deal with all Equality considerations) on 25 February 2023 and Full Council ratified the appointment of a cross section of Elected Members to the Commission on 25 May 2023. It is anticipated that the Equality Commission will progress on all areas of equality, and they will monitor the actions from the Race Audit and progress. The first introductory meeting of the Equality Commission was on 13 June 2023. The meeting will occur bi monthly and they will agree and establish an Equality Agenda, Equality action plan and annual programme.

The Senior Leadership team, lead by the Chief Executive are actively championing good behaviour and zero tolerance of all discrimination and they have visited many staff in different locations and ran a number of staff sessions. There has been an increase in staff members who are feeling safe and able to report any issues to Management, Senior Leadership, the Chief Executive or the Monitoring Officer.

3) Race Equality Action Plan Progress

Objectives and actions are structured under four organisational themes:

1. strengthening resources, governance and accountability;
2. creating a safe and inclusive working environment;
3. shaping organisational culture; and
4. building better understanding through data and insight.

The plan is published as a 'live and interactive' dashboard for reporting progress. This is part of our commitment to be open and transparent about the steps we are taking.

[Race Equality Action Plan - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/race-equality-action-plan)

Progress at 1st June 2023:

55 per cent actions complete

21 per cent actions in progress

Completed actions

[Strengthening resources, governance and accountability](#)

We have:

1. Increased the equality budget.
2. Established an influential Race Equality Staff Group.
3. Established a Race Equality Delivery Group to co-ordinate activity.
4. Committed to six-monthly reporting to the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee and monthly reporting to the Strategic Leadership Group.
5. Published a Race Equality Action Plan with real-time progress reporting.
6. Delivered three Members' briefings on "the Legal and Moral Duties to represent the minority" with an attendance rate of nearly 80 per cent.
7. Appointed an additional member of staff to create an equality, diversity and inclusion team, with more appointments to the team due in 2023. The team now reports to Maria Price, Director for Legal and Democratic Services who has Strategic Leadership responsibilities for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
8. There is strong corporate oversight of the Equality agenda. The Chief Executive, Director of Legal and Democratic Services and the Director of People and Culture attend the Race Equality Staff group.
9. The Chief Executive has had whole briefings and specifically referenced race discrimination, zero tolerance and assistance to employees.

and 254 people have signed the anti-racism commitment.

Creating a safe and inclusive working environment

We have:

1. Introduced a new Resolution Policy and improved support to staff for raising concerns.
2. Included racism and other diversity characteristics as a risk factor in Lone Working Risk Assessments to protect staff from racism, as well as other identity-based harm from service users and members of the public.
3. Updated and promoted guidance on dealing with unacceptable customer behaviour and clarified duties under the Care Act.
4. Published a new Customer Notice (taking a 'zero tolerance' approach to racism). In addition, a new leaflet from Proud to Care, called Care at Home - What to Expect, emphasises that "hostile, racist, or threatening behaviour towards care workers could result in your care and support being withdrawn. We are fortunate in that we are currently benefitting from international recruitment to support the care workforce in Devon. We hope that you will join us in welcoming all recruits into the social care profession."
5. Communicated expectations to new staff through a standard equality statement in recruitment adverts.
6. Regularly promoted It's OK to say it's not OK – encouraging the reporting of incidents of racism and other forms of discrimination. We have also improved our records for monitoring outcomes of incidents.
7. Started developing new Prayer and Contemplation facilities at County Hall, including improved disability access and Wudu facilities. The facilities will be available to staff, Councillors and visitors to County Hall.
8. Through Learn Devon, introduced a Living in the UK course for international recruits. This complements our Overseas Recruitment Support package already in place for Children's Social Work international recruits (delivered through Tripod). The support includes guidance on essentials such as GP registration, utilities, banking, shopping, leisure, faith

organisations and schooling alongside financial, travel and accommodation support for relocation.

9. Selected a wellbeing, recovery and resilience service for staff who have experienced racism (to be delivered from July).

Shaping organisational culture

We have:

1. Set up an anti-racism webpage with resources and information for staff.
2. Created a team conversation resource for managers on anti-racism and ran daily briefings on becoming anti-racist during Race Equality Week 2023, with over 150 participants attending each day. In addition, we have been taking part in events such as Stephen Lawrence Day, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month and Windrush Day in Devon.
3. Connections with peer organisations, so that we can learn about and share best practice, through the NHS Equality Leads network, University of Exeter led Equality Partnership, and regional Local Government through the South West Equality Network. Hate Crime work is through Safer Devon Partnership. The EDI team also engage with Race Equality Matters and the Equality Republic.

and 348 people have completed the Understanding Race Bias course (assignments submitted and graded).

Building better understanding through data and insight

We have:

1. Included equality and diversity questions as part of regular Staff Surveys and staff engagement.
2. Developed a single data repository (Smarter Devon).

and by March 2023, 66 per cent of staff had completed their ethnicity field in iTrent so that we can carry out more accurate employment outcomes monitoring.

Next steps

The following actions will be the next steps

- All Strategic Leaders to agree further learning and development through corporate appraisal process- (by October 2022; Significant work has been undertaken in relation to the New Corporate Plan and People First Strategy and this will be embedded into everything that we do. This action has been mitigated with staff communications and is expected to be embedded by September 2023).
- Leadership team completion of Understanding Race Bias course (by December 2022 - a number of new people have joined the SLT in the past 9 months, SLT have completed the basic training and are in discussion with mentors in relation to the best way of receiving further training and development).

- Recruiting additional staff with EDI expertise (by April 2022- from November 2022 the Equalities team sat within the Legal and Democratic team and are embedded with the team with access to the wider teams' resources including the legal team. A new structure has been agreed for the team and posts are currently pending job evaluation).
- Annual data reporting on protected characteristics (by September 2022; progress has been made in relation to gathering some of the relevant data required for the team with further activity required to complete an annual report in relation to all Equality data. It is anticipated that this will be completed by October 2023 and be considered by the Equality Commission).
- Appointment of a data lead and development of a dashboard to measure impact and outcomes (by September 2022; this is currently in progress and will be an integral part of the Wider Equality Agenda).
- Development of a Race Equality Board (by December 2023 to March 2024; this timeline will be adjusted to work with the Equality Commission and to ensure consistency).
- Relaunch reverse mentoring programme (a mini-mentoring programme is currently taking place; full programme due date adjusted to 2024 to 2026; the EDI team will be able to provide best value at delivering this service in house and tailored to DCC's needs).
- Review JSNA equality data (timescale in line with JSNA refresh).
- Review compliance with Equality Act as part of performance and risk monitoring (by March 2024; timescale adjusted to account for Governance Review, Corporate Strategy and People First Strategy to ensure that Equalities are embedded in all that we do).
- Training on dealing with unacceptable customer behaviour (by March 2024).
- Programme of peer learning and challenge (by December 2023).
- Review annual reporting (by March 2024; timescale adjusted to account for Governance Review).
- Review community and service user engagement tools (by March 2024; timescale adjusted to account for Governance Review).
- Development of Community of Practice for dealing with unacceptable customer behaviour (delayed due to capacity; resource identified in IASC and timescale for completion to be confirmed).
- Review of Disciplinary and Acceptable Behaviour Policies (Due by September 2023).

Our second phase will focus on:

1. Training and mentoring, targeting leadership and management*
2. Recruitment and selection*
3. Review of Disciplinary and Acceptable Behaviour policy and procedures*
4. Procurement and commissioning standards
5. Information, engagement and data; performance monitoring and reporting
6. Consistent implementation of policy to practice
7. Continuing to engage people through events and information
8. Introducing a new Equality Commission and Equality Objectives/Action Plan, opening opportunities for better consideration of intersectionality and other equality priorities without taking away the need for a focus on anti-racism.

***Integrated with our People First Strategy.**

a) Strategic Plan

Under our priority to tackle poverty and inequality, we made a commitment to consider the findings of the Race Equality Audit and implement its recommendations.

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan>

b) Financial Considerations

The work will be covered by existing resources, including the EDI Budget.

c) Legal Considerations

There are no specific legal considerations other than those stated below under item e.

d) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

There are no specific environmental impacts to be considered through this work.

e) Equality Considerations

The Race Equality Action Plan meets the County Council's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty which requires the local authority to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding

f) Risk Management Considerations

Maintaining momentum and prioritisation against other competing priorities and external factors such as increasing costs and service demand is a key risk to progress. Six monthly reporting to CIRS will alert any issues to Members. The Race Equality Framework is included as a 'risk control' on the Risk Management system for the following risk: Failure to prevent discriminatory practice/adhere to the Equality Act 2010 (Ref: SPOC15).

4) Conclusions

The Council remains committed to becoming an organisation that is intolerant to racism, prejudice and discrimination and helping Devon to be a place that is inclusive, compassionate and caring, where everyone can feel safe.

Progress has been made in response to the findings of the Race Equality Audit report, with actions taken to support colleagues and develop a more inclusive culture. Work will continue to address racism in the workplace and our communities to improve the protection of staff, including addressing behaviours identified in the audit.

The new cross-party Equality Commission will play a pivotal role in unlocking barriers, building in intersectionality and driving through change. The Commission will oversee a new Equality Action Plan which will integrate our race equality work into the wider context, increasing visibility of impact and outcomes across all areas of our work around equality, diversity and inclusion.

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Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Public Health, Communities and Equality: Councillor Roger Croad

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