

Race Equality Action Plan – Progress update

Report of the Head of Organisational Change

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

Recommendations

- a) Scrutiny Members to consider their role in holding the whole Council to account in implementing the recommendations in the Race Equality Audit.
- b) Acknowledge achievements and support the planned next steps to further advance race equality and commit to a 'zero tolerance' approach to racism.

1. 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. 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.

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

Since our report to Scrutiny in March 2022, we have published an [Anti-Racism Framework](#) and corporate [Race Equality Action Plan](#). The recommendations from the audit have been condensed into 16 objectives which sit under four organisational themes. There are currently 80 actions aligned to these objectives:

Strengthening resources, governance, and accountability

Objective 1: Build equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) leadership, capability and capacity

Objective 2: Build and support staff involvement

Objective 3: Respond to legal and moral duties

Objective 4: Establish a Race Equality Board

Creating a safe and inclusive working environment

Objective 5: Strengthen grievance and disciplinary procedures

Objective 6: Protect and support staff at risk of identity-based harm

Objective 7: Improve commissioning and procurement guidance and practice

Objective 8: Improve recruitment and selection methods

Shaping organisational culture

Objective 9: Expand the Let's Explore Race Mentoring programme

Objective 10: Widen the EDI learning and development offer

Objective 11: Improve appraisal and supervision

Objective 12: Develop an organisational culture of curiosity, empathy, and learning

Building better understanding through data and insight

Objective 13: Understand, measure and report on the activity and impact of our work

Objective 14: Provide data training and guidance

Objective 15: Improve qualitative and quantitative data collection and reporting

Objective 16: Increase capability and capacity (including Smarter Devon resources)

The Anti-Racism Framework was published in the public domain as part of Black History Month in October (theme: Time for Change - Actions not words). The framework shows the alignment of our race equality work to strategic commitments. It provides resources for anti-racism practice and a 'live and interactive' dashboard for reporting progress within the action plan. This is part of our commitment to be open and transparent about the steps we are taking.

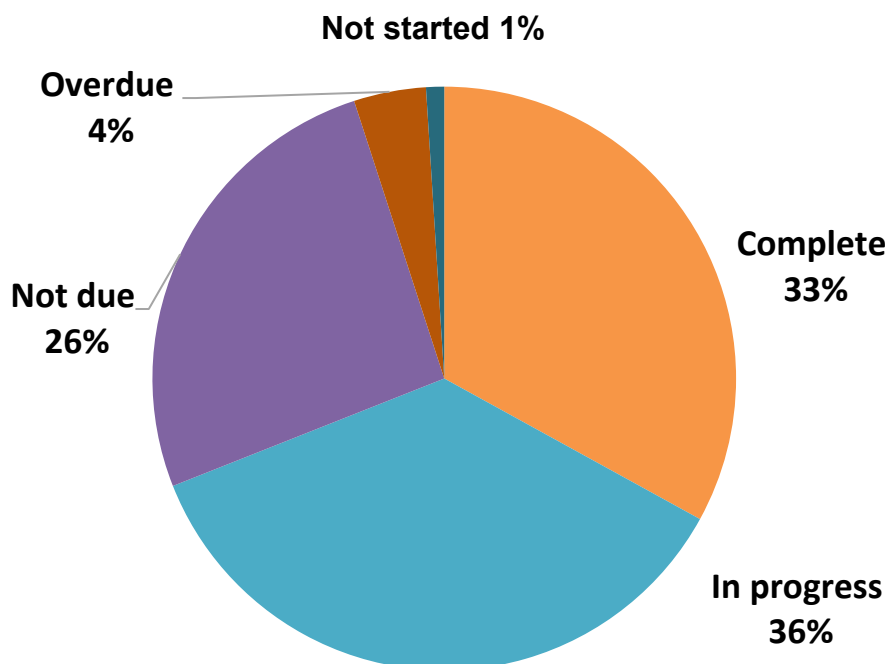
A Race Equality Staff Group chaired by Fakir Osman (Head of Trading Standards, Business Support and Innovation) and deputy chair Maria Chakraborty (Head of HR) has been set up which meets regularly and provides direction, leadership and prioritisation for the Council's race equality work. A Race Equality Delivery Group has been established to lead on delivering against actions within the plan. The Delivery Group meets quarterly to update on progress, share best practice, and explore opportunities for cross-organisational learning and change. Heads of Services and Directors hold overall accountability for actions within the Race Equality Action Plan.

2. Progress update

The [first progress report](#) was submitted to Cabinet in September. Since the report to Cabinet, the following activities have taken place:

- Improvements to risk assessment forms, which include recognising a person's risk of experiencing racism because of their ethnicity and risk management, have been approved at the Health and Safety Panel on Monday 7th November and will be published by 21st November.
- Increased the iTrent ethnicity staff profile completion rates to 64% (September 2022) to help monitor diversity and employment outcomes.
- HR are conducting a full review of the grievance policy including embedding a restorative practice approach. We have engaged with staff reference groups and Trade Unions in September and October and will be reviewing feedback during November. Training sessions and toolkits are also being developed to help successful adoption of the new approach. Training and support will continue during 2023.
- The Race Equality Staff Group continues to review progress against the Race Equality Action Plan. The 'anti-racism in practice guidance for staff '(adult social care guidance only) will be taken to the Race Equality Staff Group for final approval at the end of this month.

Action status (15/11/2022)



The actions that are overdue relate to recruitment of EDI resources which is in progress.

Planned next steps

Work will continue to deliver against the Race Equality Framework and Action Plan and the additional areas of focus identified by the Race Equality Staff Group, which included initiating a review of the Council's prayer and contemplation facilities.

A particular area of focus continues to be providing protection for staff at risk of identity-based harm:

- Taking a 'zero tolerance approach' to racism (that racism is unacceptable). This is due to continued reports of racism directed at staff from the families they are trying to support.
- Improved protection for staff at risk will include provision of personal safety equipment.
- A new Customer Notice will be published shortly. The notice was refreshed in consultation with the Race Equality Staff Group and is part of our policy on dealing with unacceptable customer behaviour.
- Continuing the review of the Staff Grievance Policy and procedures with a view to incorporate 'restorative practice' approaches as well as 'safe channels' for raising concerns.
- 6th December 2022: Members' briefing on the 'legal and moral duty to represent the minority'. A second event is also planned for 8th February 2023 for those who are unable to attend the first session.

3. Strategic Plan

A key action in the Strategic Plan 2021/2025 is to consider the findings of the Race Equality Audit and implement its recommendations. The progress to date and the action planned for the coming months will help the council be an organisation that is intolerant to prejudice and discrimination and help Devon to be a place that is inclusive, compassionate, and caring, where everyone can feel safe.

4. Financial Considerations

In response to the Council's financial position and Financial Sustainability Program (FSP) services across the organisation were requested to reevaluate their spending and redirect budgets to the central reserves. The EDI budget has contributed to this process drawing on underspending due to delays in recruitment, but remains in place to deliver against actions.

5. Legal Considerations

The Race Equality Framework and Race Equality Action Plan contribute positively to our public sector equality duties to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations for the protected characteristic of race (Equality Act 2010).

6. Environmental Impact Considerations (including Climate Change)

It is not anticipated that the activities within the plan will have a negative environmental impact.

7. Equality Considerations

The activities will have a positive equality impact for the protected characteristic of race. Other needs and impacts such as disability access and intersectionality will be considered as part of each activity and, where necessary or beneficial, an impact assessment will be carried out for individual projects.

8. 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).

9. Conclusions

The Council is committed to becoming an organisation that is intolerant to 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 and to improve the protection of staff.

Sara Cretney

Head of Organisational Change

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Equality: Councillor Roger Croad

Contact for enquiries: Equality, diversity and inclusion team - equality@devon.gov.uk