

LDS/23/22

Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee

16 November 2023

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI): mid-year update

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:

- (a) Confirm the positive progress made, particularly achievement of Bronze Trailblazer status for race equality.
- (b) Recommend equality, diversity and inclusion data as a key area for development for the Council and that it should be integral to the development of the Performance Framework.

2) Background / Introduction

The Equality Act 2010 Public Sector General Equality Duty requires the County Council to give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other prohibited conduct.
- Advance equality of opportunity (remove or minimise disadvantage; meet people's needs; take account of disabilities; and encourage participation in public life).
- Foster good community relations (tackle prejudice and promote understanding).

Underpinning the General Duty are the Specific Duties which require public authorities to:

- Publish information that demonstrates how the authority is meeting the General Duty (updating this at least annually). We fulfil this duty through the publication of Impact Assessments and bi-annual reports to this Committee.
- Publish one or more specific and measurable objectives to achieve the General Duty (updating these at least every four years).

The duty applies to the protected characteristics of: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation (and marriage and civil partnership in relation to work).

3) Progress update June 2023 to October 2023

a) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan

Work is underway to refresh the Council's equality, diversity and inclusion action plan. On 10 July 2023, diverse staff and community stakeholders joined the Equality Commission

(elected Members), EDI team and service representatives to consider challenges, opportunities and priorities for the Council. The information and feedback is being reviewed and SMART actions developed, with an aim to publish the plan by the end of the year. Actions relating to improvement in employment practice will align with and complement the People First strategy.

Priority recommendations were put forward by attendees. These are all currently under consideration or already in progress through the People First strategy. Examples of the feedback can be found below (grouped by themes):

- Additional staff networks (young people, women) alongside clarity and support for all networks.
- Improve disability and neurodiversity accessibility alongside clarity and co-ordination for reasonable adjustments in the workplace.
- Improvements to recruitment and induction.
- Broaden the EDI training and development offer, including career development for minority groups.
- Women's equality, representation, health needs, and gender-based abuse and harassment.
- Transgender, intersex and non-binary people's inclusion and rights.
- Continue to promote 'zero tolerance' and respond to incidents effectively.
- Opportunities for feedback and co-production.
- Prayer and contemplation facilities and Chaplain; positive culture around religion and belief.
- Policy reviews and consistency of application.

Colleagues were also invited to suggest which sources of data we should collect and monitor for EDI, this includes employee data which will be part of a workforce dashboard, linked to the People First workforce strategy.

In addition, following a Notice of Motion put to Full Council on 7 September 2023, Care Experienced People are now recognised as a Protected Characteristic by the County Council. A prompt has been added to the Impact Assessment template and the EDI team and Corporate Parenting team will now begin the process of aligning work further.

b) Race Equality Action Plan

Progress has been made on the Race Equality Action plan. As the council moves forward, we are embedding race equality into all of our actions.

Live data on the action plan can be found here: [Race Equality Action Plan - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/race-equality-action-plan)

19% of actions are in progress, 16% are not yet due and 6% slightly delayed as we are refocussing the Council and embedding People First and the wider corporate agenda. Many of the actions are now complete.

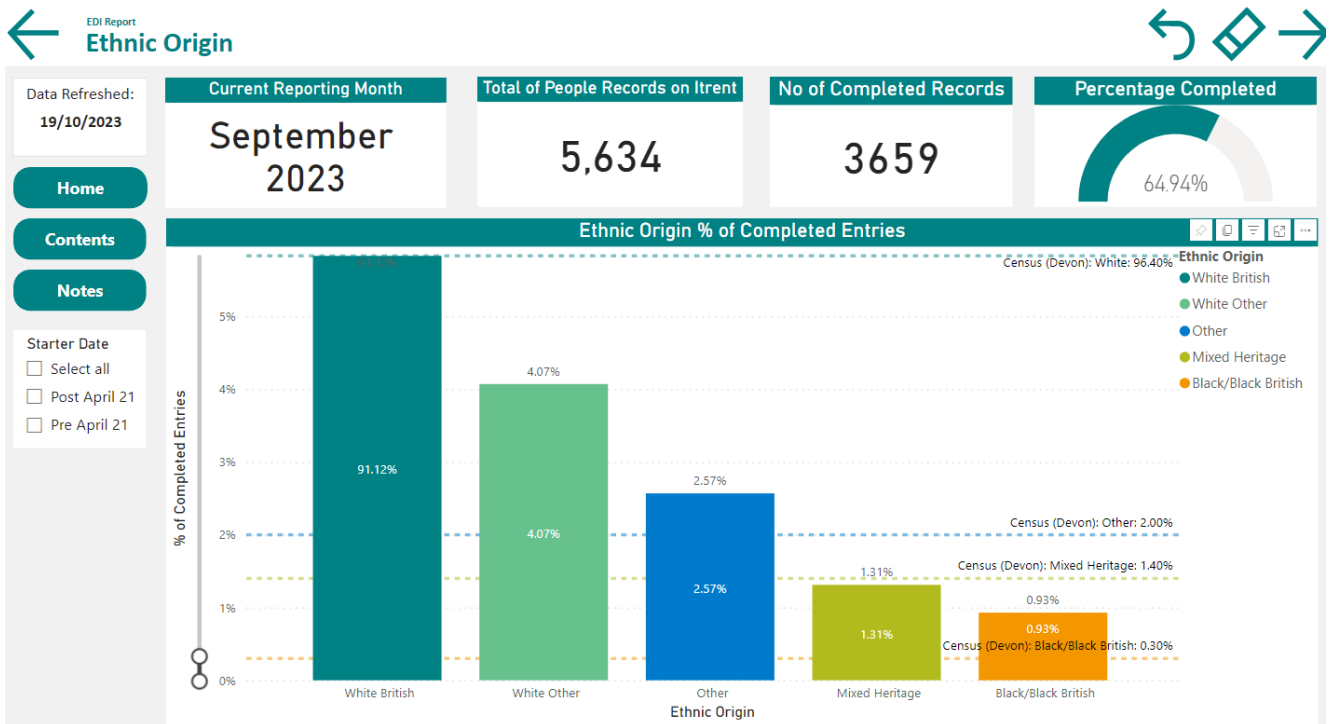
Changes since June 2023:

- EDI is embedded as a priority in our corporate annual plan; it is also integral to our People First workforce strategy. Significant work has been undertaken by Human Resources in consultation with the EDI team.
- Members of the Senior Leadership Team are scheduled to participate in a 1.5 day anti-racism leadership course.
- Example recruitment questions being published on the People Hub (resource for managers).
- Review of disciplinary and acceptable behaviour policies has begun. Both are expected to be approved, consulted on, and published by the end of January 2024.
- Implementation of the new Resolution (grievance) Policy: Training was provided for relevant HR personnel in March 2023 and toolkits have been developed and are available to managers when they are involved in a case.
- Workforce diversity dashboard developed in PowerBI. The dashboard uses data held in the iTrent Sensitive Data fields and shows the number of people in the organisation and service areas (where numbers are high enough) by age, disability, marital status, ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, and sexual orientation. Our current focus is to increase the number of completion rates which currently stands as follows:
 - Age 95.05%
 - Ethnic Origin 64.94%
 - Nationality 64.89%
 - Marital Status 61.25%
 - Religion or belief 46.29%
 - Sexual orientation 43.29%
 - Disability 39.35%

The dashboard is currently available to the Senior Leadership Team, and we will review information provided in the public domain. Current workforce data is published at [HR Dashboard - Facts and Figures \(devon.gov.uk\)](#)

The dashboard will enable us to review and benchmark the Council on our performance against equality and the People First strategy. We are also developing data fields for staff recruitment and retention.

Example of data visualisation:



c) Bronze Trailblazer Award

In July, Devon County Council was awarded Bronze Trailblazer status by Race Equality Matters for taking significant steps to make a meaningful impact on tackling race inequality and becoming a more diverse, inclusive and equal organisation.

Although this is a fantastic achievement for the progress we have made, we still have a good deal of work to do to ensure all our colleagues feel safe and included. The Bronze Award is the [first stage in the Trailblazer series](#) but it's not a lifetime award, and we have to work hard over the next 18 months, demonstrating that we are continuously improving, to keep it.

The Council received a comprehensive feedback report which highlighted we had:

- demonstrated evidence of action taken in tackling racial inequality, and the strongest area was the impact this action had.
- created a substantial paradigm shift in the culture of the organisation.
- exemplary use of the data discovered through the independent audit.
- a commitment to investment demonstrated through the increase in the corporate equality budget.
- senior leadership endorsement.
- the establishment of an effective Race Equality Staff Group.
- commitment to providing a safe and inclusive work environment supported by the implementation of strategic objectives and consistent real-time reporting to ensure accountability and transparency.
- impactful activity and effective future planning.

- pushed the boundaries to produce unprecedented guidance; the subject matters we had chosen to explore around race in the workplace are outside the norm in a good way and demonstrate that we are discussing the real nuances of race.
- shown real authenticity in implementing measures to challenge customers who exhibit racist behaviour.

Areas for development were:

- to produce more measurable goals / investigate the impact of activity on ethnically diverse colleagues across various measures through testimonials, surveys and comparative data, including workforce diversity, recruitment, retention, promotion, psychological wellbeing and participation.
- transparent accountability on who is leading what and by when.

Further information:

[We have achieved Bronze Trailblazer status with Race Equality Matters - News \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/news/we-have-achieved-bronze-trailblazer-status-with-race-equality-matters)

d) Personal and organisational learning and development

We have promoted a number of events that celebrate diversity as a way of engaging colleagues in ongoing awareness raising, to keep EDI considerations in mind in all that we do.

In many cases, events have been employee-led with contributions to articles about diversity and personal perspectives from staff. Events celebrated include: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month and Refugee Week in June, Black History month in October with articles and interviews on the theme of Saluting our Sisters - celebrating the lives of black women who have contributed to Devon and our workforce, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia awareness weeks.

In addition, there was a County Council presence at Exeter Respect Festival in June.

EDI training at DCC is mostly provided in an e-learning format on 'DeL'. The current offer is:

- EDI Essentials (mandatory)
- EDI Advanced
 - Understanding race bias
 - Neurodiversity awareness
 - Deaf awareness.

A new EDI Essentials course will be launched in January 2024. The refreshed course offers more engaging video-based content and a workbook. It covers legislation, creating an inclusive environment, unacceptable behaviour including harassment, and effective bystander intervention. Colleagues will be expected to complete their EDI Essentials refresh within the year. All new staff are expected to complete the course within one month of starting. According to our online training provider, this timeframe is consistent with other organisations they support and makes reporting and reminders easier to manage.

Elected Members should note that they have access to DeL (our site for e-learning and other courses) where they can access all these courses.

Integrated Adult Social Care services have been piloting an in-person anti-racism training programme for managers which explores the impact of colonialism, trauma informed responses, and compassionate leadership. This has also been made available to some senior managers from other parts of the organisation including the Senior Leadership Team.

Two sessions on anti-racism and engaging ethnically diverse communities were delivered in October to Devon's Deputy Lieutenants.

The Senior Leadership Team and the Chief Executive have conducted staffing events and briefings with all Directorates across the county and reinforced the need to ensure that equality objectives are met, and any bad behaviours are called out through a zero-tolerance approach. This has been embedded into the People First strategy.

4) Options / Alternatives

N/A

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

N/A

6) Strategic Plan

Our work aligns with the following vision and priorities in the Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan>:

- Tackle poverty and inequality (address poverty, health and other inequalities)

7) Financial Considerations

All activities are being delivered within available resources and there are no additional budgetary requirements.

8) Legal Considerations

There are no additional specific legal considerations.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

There are no specific environmental impacts.

10) Equality Considerations

As section 2.

11) Risk Management Considerations

Over the past 6 months, the Council has developed a Future Sustainability Programme, launched a full Governance Review, the Equality Commission, and People First strategy, refreshed the corporate annual plan, and made significant progress in children's services. The EDI agenda aligns very closely to the People First strategy.

Significant progress has been achieved in EDI, but recruitment has been impacted as it has been important to reset and realign the corporate needs of the council. As a result, progress in achieving some race equality goals has been slower than anticipated when the race equality action plan was published.

12) Conclusions

The Chief Executive and the Senior Leadership Team and committed to ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded into everything that we do.

We are committed to developing SMART targets and effective data to enable us to measure our performance and develop even better practice.

Maria Price

Director Legal and Democratic Services

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for equality, diversity and inclusion: Councillor Roger Croad

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

N/A

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