



# London Borough of Sutton Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Framework **2023-27**

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# 1. Statement of intent and priorities

**1.1.** Ensuring Sutton is an inclusive place for everyone sets the context for all that we do and underpins Ambitious for Sutton 2022-2027, the Council's corporate plan. The plan includes a specific commitment that by 2027, Sutton will be a place where people from all backgrounds feel included and get on well together, with support for our young people, families, older people, and vulnerable residents. In order to achieve this, the Council will continue to champion equality and inclusion in everything that it does to make Sutton a great place for all our diverse communities.

**1.2.** The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Framework sets out the Council's commitment and approach to upholding its legal duties and leading on equality, diversity and inclusion. This document includes information about how we will do this and key roles and responsibilities related to this work. In a context of reduced government funding, increasing demand for services and rising costs, the Council is faced with difficult decisions. This Framework will be an important tool for guiding these decisions and shaping the delivery of the Council's services in the future.

## **1.3. Our Priorities**

In addition to the commitments set out in section two, the Council's priorities for equality, diversity and inclusion for the next four years are;

1. **Reducing disadvantages for people who have care experience;** we will achieve this by embedding 'care experience' as a local protected characteristic; working across the organisation and with partners to create more opportunities for people who have experienced care to overcome the disadvantages they may face.
  
2. **Focusing on disadvantages linked to household income;** we will consider the socio-economic duty as part of decision making. We will work with partners to target support to help mitigate the impacts of the rising cost of living, and aim to reduce disadvantages faced by lower income households.

3. **Better understanding our diverse communities through data insights and community engagement;** We will work with partners to draw upon available data about Sutton’s demographics to make evidence based decisions and target our resources effectively. We will work closely with voluntary and community groups to ensure that we are speaking with residents from a wide range of backgrounds to continually improve our services and ensure more residents are engaged in plans for the future of the borough.
  
4. **Leading the way as a welcoming workplace;** we will deliver a workforce equality, diversity and inclusion plan which supports staff from all backgrounds to feel comfortable to be themselves and ensure our workforce reflects the diversity of Sutton as a place. We have won national EDI awards (Municipal Journal 2022, Public Sector People Managers Association 2023, Race Equality Matters Silver Trailblazer 2023). We will continue to test ourselves against other organisations to understand how we can improve and develop our approach.

## 2. Our duties and context

- 2.1. The Council commits to fulfilling both the letter and the spirit of its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and any other subsequent legislation relating to equalities, including upholding the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in figure A. In addition to this, the Council will also consider the socio-economic duty (figure B below), as part of its decision making, as well as treating ‘care experience’ as a local protected characteristic, as set out in figure C.

### **Figure A: Public Sector Equality Duty.**

As a Local Authority, we are subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty (the Equality Duty), created by the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a ‘protected

characteristic' and those who do not. The protected characteristics are;

- age
  - disability
  - gender reassignment
  - marriage and civil partnership
  - pregnancy and maternity
  - race
  - religion or belief
  - sex
  - sexual orientation
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - A number of specific duties are set out in secondary legislation to accompany the Equality Act 2010. These duties require public bodies to:
    - Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years, and
    - Publish information, at least annually, to show their compliance with the Equality Duty. This must include information relating to its employees and to people who are affected by the public body's policies and procedures.

For more information about the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty please see the Equality and Human Rights Commission website, which can be accessed [here](#). The Commission has been mandated by Parliament to challenge discrimination, and protect and promote human rights. The Commission produces a range of publications and guidance which can inform the work of the Council.

### **Figure B: Socio-economic duty**

Section 1 of the Equality Act asks public authorities to actively consider the way in which their policies and decisions can increase or decrease inequalities, this is referred to as the 'socio-economic duty'.

Although this is not a binding legal duty, unlike the Public Sector Equality Duty set out in figure A, it has been voluntarily adopted by councils across the UK in order to help understand how decisions may increase or decrease inequalities as a result of 'socio-economic disadvantage'. Such inequalities are defined broadly in the Act itself but a 2018 report by the Equality and Human Rights Commission states;

*“Socio-economic disadvantage involves a complex interaction of a wide range of factors from poverty to health, education, limited social mobility, housing and a lack of expectations. Someone who experiences socio-economic disadvantage may be income deprived, live in a deprived area and/or belong to a community of interest that disproportionately experience poverty and social inequality.”*

In Sutton, the socio-economic duty is considered alongside the legal protected characteristics as part of equality impact assessments. A link to the website is below.

[Equality Human Rights Socio-Economic Requirements Full Report](#)

**Figure C: Care experience as a local protected characteristic**

Sutton Council is committed to improving outcomes for care experienced people and on the 20th February 2023 the Council’s Strategy and Resources Committee fully endorsed that care experience should be treated as a local protected characteristic alongside the other characteristics set out in legislation. This will mean that care experience is considered alongside the other protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 as part of decision making.

‘Care experienced’ applies to anyone who has been in care for any period of their childhood. They do not need to have "Care Leaver" status to be care experienced.

**2.2. Sutton’s changing demographics**



**209,600** people lived in the borough as of March 2021, an increase of 10.6% since 2011.

The demographics of Sutton have changed considerably in the last 10 years, making it increasingly important to consider equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do.

**Age**

A higher proportion of **children** live in the borough than the London average, with **more adults over the age of 40**. The population of Sutton remains older than the London



average, but is not ageing as rapidly as seen across England on average.

### Disability



**14.1%** of Sutton residents (29,614 people) are disabled under the equality act, meaning their day to day activities are limited a little or a lot.

### Gender Identity



At least **0.5%** of residents aged 16+ (810 people) identify with a different gender to the sex they were assigned at birth.

### Ethnicity



**43%** of Sutton residents are from Asian, Black, Mixed/ Multiple and White Non-British ethnic groups (up from 29% in 2011).

- The increase has been driven largely by increases in the population of people from Asian, and 'White Other' ethnic groups.
- The population is more diverse amongst younger age groups: below the age of 50, the population is more likely to be from Asian, Black, Mixed/ Multiple and White non-British ethnic groups. Above the age of 50, the population is increasingly made up of White British people.

### Sex



**52%** of Sutton's population are females, and **48%** are males, as a result of there being more females than males amongst the population over the age of 70.

### Sexual Orientation

At least **2.4%** of residents aged 16+ (**3,970** people) identify with an LGB+ orientation (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or "other" sexual orientation) - but over **5.0%** of residents



aged 16+ are in a same sex marriage or cohabiting with a same sex partner.

### Deprivation



Sutton is a relatively less deprived borough based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019), however there are pockets of significant deprivation in the borough, with seven neighbourhoods (out of 121 in Sutton) in Belmont, Hackbridge, South Beddington & Roundshaw, St Helier East, St Helier West and Sutton Central wards in the 20% most deprived areas in the country. These neighbourhoods are often next to some of the least deprived in England.

More information about the borough's demographic profile can be found in our strategic needs assessment, via the link below. This document includes data on languages spoken, disabilities, traveller communities as well as sexual orientation and gender identity.

[Data.Sutton's Strategic Needs Assessment](#)

### Addressing discrimination and harassment

**2.3.** At Sutton Council, we understand that we live in a society that is unequal and that people do face discrimination and harassment. The Council as a community leader, service provider, major employer and commissioner of goods and services, has a clear social and legislative responsibility to prevent discrimination and advance equality.

**2.4.** Forms of discrimination include, but are not limited to;

- age discrimination
- disability-based discrimination
- racism or xenophobia
- discrimination based on religion or belief such as anti-semitism and islamophobia
- discrimination based on political beliefs or opinions
- sex based discrimination (e.g. misogyny or sexism)
- discrimination based on sexual orientation

(e.g. homophobia and biphobia)

- discrimination based on transgender identity (e.g. transphobia)

### **Reasonable adjustments**

- 2.5.** Advancing equality of opportunity includes ensuring Council services and the Council workplace are as inclusive as possible by anticipating and making reasonable adjustments to support equal access (e.g. for residents or staff with a disability) and proactively identifying, eliminating or reducing potential negative impacts of proposed changes on people with protected characteristics (as set out in the Equality Act and listed as the following website [The Equality and Human Rights Commission information on protected Characteristics](#)). A policy statement around reasonable adjustments can be found on the Council’s website at <https://www.sutton.gov.uk/w/equality-diversity-and-inclusion> and guidance relating to reasonable adjustments for staff is available on the following Council [Intranet page on reasonable adjustments](#).

### **Considering cumulative impacts; intersectionality**

- 2.6.** When understanding the impact of policies or decisions on people with protected characteristics, staff are prompted to consider potential cumulative impacts for people who have multiple protected characteristics. These are also known as ‘intersectional’ impacts. Intersectionality can be defined as the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalised individuals or groups. As a Council we do this through the completion of individual equality impact assessments to support decision making, as well cumulative equality impact assessments which look at the combined impact of multiple decisions, for example, our Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **Age-related impacts; children and young people**

- 2.7.** We commit to ensuring that when we think about ‘age’ as a protected characteristic we consider the potential impacts for children and young people, as well as adults and older people. A higher proportion of children live in Sutton than London average and it is estimated that 1 in 4 children in Sutton live in poverty, compared to less than 1 in 5 adults in Sutton (see

Sutton's Strategic Needs Assessment, linked in section 2.2). In light of this, it is more important than ever that we better understand the wishes and feelings of children and young people in Sutton. We will do this by working with our partners in education and the voluntary and community sector to amplify the voices of children and young people to ensure we better understand how decisions may affect their lives.

#### **The importance of a learning culture**

- 2.8.** We commit to being a learning organisation when it comes to equality, diversity and inclusion, always ready to reflect on feedback from residents and staff, including complaints, to improve our practice and address new issues as they arise. We will seek to understand and address the root causes of inequality and exclusion in Sutton and focus our efforts on tackling those root causes. If we make mistakes, we will put things right and learn from our experience.

#### **Training**

- 2.9.** The Council provides up to date training, information and advice to councillors and officers on the Council's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and what this means in practice, including their roles and responsibilities to support the Council to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and advance equality of opportunity. The Human Resources and Organisational Development Team offer training on understanding and applying some of the more practical implications of the legislation, including how services can proactively identify and make reasonable adjustments to their services to ensure all residents can access the Council's services in an inclusive way.

## **3. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Commitments**

- 3.1.** Ambitious for Sutton, the Council's corporate plan, sets out six high level priorities for Sutton over the next five years. Ensuring Sutton is 'an inclusive place for everyone' is one of these six and underpins all the other priorities,

demonstrating a clear commitment across all Council services to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and make Sutton a great place for our diverse communities.

**3.2.** Details of how we will achieve this ambition are set out on the Council website [An Inclusive Place for Everyone](#). This includes specific actions across a wide variety of service areas as well as more strategic plans across the wider partnership, for example;

- Champion equality, diversity and inclusion across Sutton through strong partnerships
- Continue to play an active role in the Fairness Commission, working alongside our partners, to make Sutton a more equal and inclusive place for everyone (the role and remit of the commission is set out in on page 17 of this document)
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion across our workforce to support all staff to feel comfortable to be themselves, deliver their best work and ensure our workforce reflects the diversity of Sutton as a place
- Ensure that residents from a wide range of backgrounds are engaged in plans for the future of the borough on an ongoing basis, to ensure that Sutton is an inclusive and welcoming place for our diverse communities
- Develop and deliver a male violence against women and girls strategy which brings together work with partners across the borough, including; White Ribbon Accreditation work, community safety initiatives, and the Women's Night Time Safety Charter
- Work with partners to raise awareness of hate crime and how to report it, including delivering hate crime awareness events

**3.3.** In addition to this, there are a number actions within other areas of the plan that will underpin support our ambition for ensure Sutton is an inclusive place for everyone, for example;

- Continuing to develop and embed the Council's approach to community engagement

- Working in partnership with our contractors and providers to ensure that they understand the Council's values and have pride in the work they deliver in Sutton
- Delivering improvements to Customer Services and our website to make it easier for residents and businesses to find the information they need, access services and resolve issues quickly
- Working with our partners to provide a range of advice and support to residents and businesses impacted by the rising cost of living, to protect the most vulnerable and support Sutton's economy to recover in the longer term
- Developing a Digital Inclusion Strategy to increase digital access, connectivity and skills
- Enabling more social housing residents to have access to a faster internet connection

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1.** Achieving and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion is a responsibility shared by all elected members, the Corporate Management Team, Directorate Management Teams, managers, staff, contractors, partners, stakeholders and residents.

### **Elected members**

- 4.2.** Elected members must fulfil their statutory responsibilities under equalities legislation to promote good community relations in all their work, particularly in their community leadership role. Members have a duty to take account of equalities considerations when reaching decisions and must be able to demonstrate that they have done so.
- 4.3.** Members (as nominated by their political group through the Council's outside bodies appointment process) will also represent the Council at the Fairness Commission. There is a lead member for equalities who meets regularly with relevant officers across the Council and takes part in Fairness Commission

work.

### **Corporate Management Team**

- 4.4.** The Corporate Management Team (CMT) must champion and lead by example, using the Public Sector Equality Duty to encourage the integration of equality, diversity and inclusion principles in all aspects of the Council's work. CMT should actively help to promote good practice around equality, diversity and inclusion within directorates, respond to any issues openly, and ensure that good quality Equality Impact Assessments are completed (where appropriate). Each member of CMT acts as a champion for one of the protected characteristics.

### **Directorate Management Teams**

- 4.5.** Directorate Management Teams must maintain an overview of equality and diversity for the directorate and ensure effective development, implementation and monitoring of service equality, diversity and inclusion objectives and related actions, including ensuring completion and appropriate challenge of Equality Impact Assessments. In addition, each Directorate Management Team will have an EDI champion. They will ensure the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion plan is tailored to the needs of the Directorate.

### **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group**

- 4.6.** The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group is made up of various staff network leads, HR&OD and Policy and Partnerships and is chaired by the staff network leads. The group meets five times a year and reports to CMT on a quarterly basis with a brief summary of the group's work and key issues.
- 4.7.** The purpose of the Group is to champion and steer the Council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion and support compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. More specifically the group's objectives are to:
- Be the advocate and leader for equalities in the organisation; championing diversity and inclusion both internally and externally (e.g. policies, decision making and service delivery)

- Oversee and inform the development and implementation of the Council's equality and diversity strategies, policies, and guidance
- Provide check and challenge around key equality impact assessments, and ensure learning is shared across the organisation
- To increase the visibility and awareness of internal and external equalities, diversity and inclusion issues
- Ensure CMT is updated on key Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion work and escalate issues as and when appropriate
- Advising and utilising relevant external bodies (including the Fairness Commission) and internal bodies (such as the Council's Staff Networks) where needed as mechanisms for consulting and examining the Council's policies, projects and programmes

### **Staff**

- 4.8.** Staff should demonstrate commitment to equalities by:
- Championing equality, diversity and inclusion in the borough when undertaking their work
  - Taking active steps to challenge discrimination and harassment in the workplace and the community, with the support of their manager
  - Proactively identifying and helping to remove barriers to accessing services (for example, through suggesting and making reasonable adjustments for people who might need them)
  - Being a welcoming and supportive colleague to staff from different backgrounds
  - Making informed decisions, which consider the impact on people with protected characteristics (for example, by reaching out to affected groups and completing equality impact assessments), and;
  - Understanding, complying and feeding into the equality and diversity practices in their directorates, including working towards a personal objective which is focused around equalities, diversity and inclusion.

### **Staff Networks**

- 4.9.** Staff networks are led by staff and formed in line with key protected groups. The groups are supported by Human Resources and Organisational Development and work so that network members are able to support one another and also bring forward ideas to the Council for improvement. Each

network has a senior management sponsor who supports the networks and communicates issues that they raise to other bodies, CMT and elsewhere as appropriate. Staff networks actively contribute to the decision-making process and actions regarding the Council's EDI approach, through their participation in our EDI Steering Group and various Action Plan Working Groups.

#### **Commissioned services**

- 4.10.** The Council seeks to work with suppliers who can evidence high standards of ethical conduct within their organisation and across their supply chains. Procurement processes at the sourcing stage seek to determine that suppliers are able to evidence that policies and processes are in place ensuring the fair treatment of employees and promoting equality and diversity.

#### **Residents**

- 4.11.** Residents are key to ensuring Sutton is a place where people from all backgrounds feel included and get on well together. The Council expects residents to be tolerant and respectful in their interactions with others. We will take an active approach and work with communities to tackle discrimination, harassment and prejudice to ensure that Sutton is a place where people from all backgrounds feel included and get on well together.

## **5. Governance**

### **5.1. Policy Context**

The Sutton Plan is a shared, cross-borough vision put together by public and voluntary sector partners (including the Council) with input from residents, voluntary and community organisations and businesses. The Sutton Plan partners have agreed on the following five principles – each one aimed at improving the lives of residents across the borough:

- Think Sutton first
- Provide seamless coordinated services
- Build stronger communities
- Work across sectors

- Intervene early

**5.2.** Among other aims, the Sutton Plan work focuses on:

- Providing equal access to services for all residents across the borough;
- Reducing inequality between the wealthiest and the most disadvantaged parts of the borough;
- Piloting joint early intervention schemes that tackle social problems and injustice

The Sutton Plan guides the Council's aspirations and also provides a vehicle for understanding equality and diversity opportunities and issues across the borough.

**5.3.** London Borough of Sutton's governance and scrutiny framework is built upon a committee system, in order to achieve more open and more transparent decision making. Decision making by the main policy committees, supporting committees and boards is supported by the Corporate Management Team, which oversees progress against the Council's stated priorities. In addition, the Directorate Management Teams quality assure the outcomes delivered as a result of the Council's plans, and the services they provide to residents. Equality impact assessments are used by committees, boards, CMT and DMTs to help determine the impact of the Council's initiatives.

**5.4.** The Council also has a specific governance structure in place to develop, implement, embed and review equality, diversity and inclusion work. Figure D sets out the equality governance arrangements and how the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group and Fairness Commission form part of this structure in relation to other Committees and management arrangements.

**Figure D:** London Borough of Sutton equality governance arrangements

**The Sutton Fairness Commission**

The Fairness Commission is a partnership forum the Council is a part of. Its terms of reference state the following about the role of the Commission:

‘The overall aim of the Commission is to work to ensure that the benefits of living in Sutton are enjoyed by all sections of society. The Commission will work to ‘eliminate discrimination’, ‘advance equality of opportunity’ and ‘foster good relations’ amongst all in the borough, including those from ‘protected characteristic groups’.

The Fairness Commission will be the main vehicle for external equality, diversity and inclusion activity. The Commission will act as a critical friend for partners, offering challenges around services, policies and processes, where required, to help make Sutton a great place for our diverse communities, where people from backgrounds feel included.

More information is available on the following Community Action Sutton website <https://www.communityactionsutton.org.uk/our-work/fairness-commission/>.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group and Corporate Management Team**

The Corporate Management Team (CMT) will provide senior strategic leadership on equalities. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group (described in section 4.6 above) will support CMT with this through;

- overseeing and informing the development and implementation of equality and diversity strategies, policies, and guidance
- monitoring progress on the ground in achieving our aims and;
- reporting up to CMT on a regular basis to ensure progress is being made, issues are raised and barriers are unblocked.

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## 6. Monitoring

- 6.1.** The equality, diversity and inclusion commitments set out in Ambitious for Sutton will be monitored through the Council's performance management framework, in addition to regular oversight by the EDI Steering Group and CMT. Where relevant, the Fairness Commission may also be called upon for external check and challenge.
  
- 6.2.** Additionally, the Council will report annually on key equalities information of its workforce in accordance with the Equalities Act 2010. An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan is in place to bring together various actions related to the Council's workforce and updates on this plan will be provided by HR & OD, to key stakeholders such as our CMT and Trade Union colleagues.

Approved: 11/12/2023 at the [Council's Strategy and Resources Committee](#)