

EXECUTIVE – 16 JULY 2020

## EQUALITIES ANNUAL REPORT - 2020

### Executive Summary

This annual report seeks to inform the Executive of progress on the equalities agenda. It covers the period April 2019 to March 2020. The Equality Act 2010 brought together, harmonised and in some cases extended previous equality law. The aim of the legislation is to make it more consistent, clearer and easier to follow in order to make society fairer. The Act also sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5 April 2011. The Equality Duty ensures that all public bodies, including local authorities, play their part in making society fairer by tackling discrimination and providing equality of opportunity for all.

The Equality Duty covers the following protected characteristics; age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Duty requires the Council to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Having 'due regard' means consciously thinking about the three aims of the Equality Duty as part of the process of decision making. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by the Council, e.g. how it acts as an employer, how it develops, evaluates and reviews policies, how it designs, delivers and evaluates services and how it commissions and procures from others.

### Recommendations

The Executive is requested to:

#### **RESOLVE That**

the report be received.

### Reasons for Decision

Reason: To meet the requirement to report on annual progress on the equality agenda.

The Executive has the authority to determine the recommendation(s) set out above.

**Background Papers:** [Corporate Equality Scheme](#)  
Sustainability Impact Assessment  
Equalities Impact Assessment

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Woking Borough Council believes that the diversity of its population and workforce is one of its greatest strengths. Equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination is a fundamental right and this Council has a duty to exercise leadership to promote this right. The Council intends to promote equality and prevent discrimination through its roles as service provider, employer and community leader.
- 1.2 The Council will follow best practice in all equality areas and work to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not; and
  - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 1.3 From April 2011 the Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation and gave full protection to eight protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Some aspect of the legislation also covers marriage and civil partnership.
- 1.4 Success in mainstreaming equalities in the organisation is measured by The Equality Framework for Local Government, which was adopted by the authority in March 2009. The Framework is based on three levels of achievement, developing, achieving and excellent. The Council has been successfully verified by external assessment at 'Achieving' level.

## 2.0 Progress

- 2.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty (specific duties) requires all public bodies to:
- Annually publish information that shows how they have complied with the Equality Duty. This was published on the Council website in January.
  - Set equality objectives for the organisation. Overarching objectives have been developed which are relevant to each of the equality groups covered by the Equality Act. They relate back to the General Duty and are designed to ensure a holistic approach to tackling inequality and promoting equality through the organisation and Borough. (attached Appendix 1)
- 2.2 The Equality and Wellbeing Working group met quarterly, monitoring progress on the equality and wellbeing agenda. An annual Wellbeing Week is held in September, which promotes healthy lifestyles, physical and mental wellbeing.
- 2.3 A comprehensive programme of equality and wellbeing awareness has taken place over the year, covering issues such as homophobia, mental health awareness and Dementia Action Week and Carers Week. This included displays around the building, information on ewok+ and emails. Feedback has been very positive and the more subtle approach has definitely stimulated conversations, hopefully achieving our longer term objective of informing hearts and minds.
- 2.4 In addition monthly health and wellbeing themes have also been highlighted on ewok+, offering helpful advice and tips on how to look after yourself and effectively manage life and work. Themes have included healthy heart, benefits of walking, diabetes awareness and men's health. Advice is also provided on how to achieve good mental health and wellbeing, including dealing with stress and obtaining a better work-life balance. The organisation has 9

trained Mental Health First Aiders and the Employee Assistance Programme is promoted regularly.

- 2.5 During the current Covid 19 crisis, particular emphasis has been placed on ensuring the health and wellbeing of employees, especially those working from home and in front-line support. This has included up to date information on Ewok+, training sessions on wellbeing and resilience and weekly health & wellbeing emails.
- 2.6 The equality agenda has been successfully mainstreamed throughout the organisation and the Council's priority is to ensure accessible services are available to the vulnerable sections of the local communities. Highlights for the year include the provision of support for Syrian refugees through New Vision Homes and The Family Support Service, continued support to vulnerable families via the Family Support Service and Family Centre team; development of the Social Prescribing service, involving 14 GP surgeries across Woking, further development of services for people with dementia at the Wellbeing Centre (e.g. advice sessions, creative lunch and carers choir); continued work with the Woking Dementia Action Alliance (DAA) where the Council is working with a variety of stakeholders and partners to make the Borough Dementia Friendly. (See Appendix 2)
- 2.7 Working relationships with community groups, providing support to those protected by equality legislation, continue to be developed. Outline, a local support group for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community, were supported in putting together information to mark International Day against Homophobia and Surrey Pride; Alzheimer's Society held some dementia awareness sessions for staff and Liaise Women's Centre actively participated in events such as Party in the Park and Refugee Week, worked on an upcycling project in Sheerwater and continue working with the Bengali community on Lakeview.
- 2.8 Equality monitoring figures are produced annually for employment, looking at areas such as workforce profile, appointments, training, promotion and discipline and grievance issues. These are broken down according to race, gender, disability, age, sexuality and religion and belief. These are detailed in Appendix 3.
- 2.9 From 6 April 2017 employers in Great Britain with more than 250 staff are required by law to publish annually its gender pay gap (mean and median averages) and the proportion of men and women in each quartile of the organisation's pay structure.
- 2.10 This year's report, covering the 12 months up to 31st March 2019, showed that the Council has a mean gender pay gap of 18.26% and a median gender pay gap of 15.76%. The mean gender pay gap nationally is now 15.7% according to the October 2019 Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) figures. The main reason for Woking's gap is an imbalance of male and female colleagues across the organisation, the roles in which men and women work within the organisation and the salaries that these roles attract.
- 2.11 The Council is committed to reducing its gender pay gap and an action plan has been developed to look at how best to achieve this, including carrying out further analysis of pay, reviewing recruitment processes, promoting flexible working options and development opportunities. The full report and action plan can be accessed at <https://www.woking.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/Jobs/Pay%20Policy%20Statement%202020-21%20and%20Gender%20Pay%20Gap%20Data.pdf>

### **3.0 Future Plans**

- 3.1 Across the organisation a huge amount of work is done to address the needs of the most vulnerable sections of the local communities and the equalities agenda has successfully been mainstreamed into service plans. In the current climate of scarce resources, partnership working with the statutory and voluntary sectors is increasingly important.

Building the capacity of local voluntary and community organisations to support this is an essential part of ensuring this happens. The current pandemic crisis has highlighted the excellent work that can be done with partnership working to ensure the most vulnerable in our community are supported. As we recover from this it will be important to ensure all members of our communities receive the support they require.

#### **4.0 Implications**

##### Financial

- 4.1 Equality work is mainstreamed into annual Service Plans and budgets allocated accordingly. In addition external funding is identified for specific projects as and when required.

##### Human Resource/Training and Development

- 4.2 Equality and Wellbeing Training is provided through Surrey Learn, a partnership of all Surrey local authorities. Internal awareness campaigns and training take place throughout the year. A Member awareness session is held annually

##### Community Safety

- 4.3 As a crosscutting issue equalities impacts on all areas of the Council's work, including community safety. Work on areas such as community cohesion, anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and preventing extremism all contribute towards the community safety agenda.

##### Risk Management

- 4.4 The Council has statutory responsibilities to drive forward the equalities agenda, promote equality and eliminate discrimination. In the current economic climate partnership working, with the statutory and voluntary sectors is essential in delivering on these priorities. Continual progress in equalities will enable the Council to achieve its goal of helping the most vulnerable sections of the local community.

##### Sustainability

- 4.5 Sustainability Impact Assessment attached.

##### Equalities

- 4.6 Equality Impact Assessment attached.

#### **5.0 Consultations**

- 5.1 Narrowing equality gaps and improving the life chances of different groups will require a pooling of evidence, resources and action planning. Working in partnership with the statutory, voluntary and community sectors will become increasingly important. Building and supporting the capacity of the voluntary/community sectors to enable this will be essential. The Council will have to become smarter at involving communities of interest in decision making, service and workforce planning, particularly groups who may experience disadvantage and inequality.

REPORT ENDS

Equality Objectives:

Overarching objectives that have been developed for the council's Corporate Equality Scheme which are relevant to each of the nine equality groups covered by the Equality Act, relate back to the General Duty and are designed to ensure a holistic approach to tackling inequality and promoting equality through the organisation. The overarching objectives are to:

**Tackle victimisation, harassment and discrimination**

Take reasonable steps to ensure that residents, service users and employees are not unlawfully discriminated against and take appropriate action to prevent & tackle victimisation and harassment.

**Improve access to services**

Take reasonable steps to ensure that services are inclusive, responsive to risk, physically accessible and provided through the most efficient and effective channels available.

**Close the gap in outcomes for citizens**

Take reasonable steps to improve life chances for citizens by reducing outcome gaps that may exist within the Borough as well as those that may exist between the Borough and elsewhere.

**Increase understanding and mutual respect between communities**

Take reasonable steps to build stronger communities and promote good relations, both within and between communities.

**Increase participation and engagement**

Take reasonable steps to remove barriers that may exist to engagement and help residents (especially those who are under-represented) to participate in local decision making and influence local decisions.

**Ensure equitable employment policies and practices**

Provide equality of opportunity for all Council staff by ensuring all employment policies and practices, (concerning recruitment, retention, promotion, training and discipline), are designed to reflect and attract the communities that Woking serves.

**Equality actions/achievements: 2019/20:**

Living Well Week October 2019

Programme of events to celebrate and value the diversity of the borough of Woking under the Celebrate Woking umbrella, including Chinese New Year, Refugee Week, the first Pride in Surrey, variety of children's workshops and activities including dance, science, arts and crafts , face painting and story-telling. Focus on sustainability including LA21, Bare and Fair, Surrey Community Action, Upcycling of clothes, Woking's Furniture Project, the Growth Team Surrey Choices and promoting organisations such as The Basingstoke Canal Society. Woking Street Angels, Heritage Open Days.

Young carers awareness training has been conducted to staff at WBC at two face to face sessions in January

WISH clinic opened to support vulnerable people on return to their own homes following hospital discharge, or where aids identified by a healthcare professional.

Community meals have improved the range they offer to include freshly made salads, soup, drinks, fresh fruit and frozen meal deliveries, including meeting dietary requirements, eg. texture modified foods, Halal, Kosher, Vegan, vegetarian and allergen free meals.

Social prescribing referrals now taking place across 14 GP surgeries across Woking to support those who are vulnerable in the community; with mental health, social isolation and other social issues

Training of Home Independence staff to be Trusted Assessors so that certain aids / equipment can be provided to residents without need for a lengthy wait for an OT assessment.

During Covid 19 support to vulnerable clients in the community by conducting welfare phone calls to assess whether they have enough food, care and prescription medication. Support to vulnerable residents at Brockhill with shopping and prescription requests. Assisted with delivery of meals for Homeless residents to the temporary accommodation provided by the Council.

In Sheerwater, the redevelopment project have a diverse client group to deal with and ensure that the same level of service and support is delivered to all the people engaged with. As the project has progressed and more people move out of the Regeneration Zone they have had to focus on the remaining tenants to ensure that their standard of living conditions are maintained to a high standard and that they do not become isolated. There are a number of tenants who have multiple or complex needs from various cultures, backgrounds and age groups but using partnership working and community links the team have ensured tenants stay engaged with the community and their well-being is maintained.

Customer Services colleagues have been involved in a lot of shielding and vulnerable calls. In some cases this has raised underlying issues which the team, because of their wealth of knowledge, have been able to flag up with the relevant services/organisations quickly to get help on board. This has enabled better working relationships with colleagues in Social Services and internal departments and hopefully this will continue.

The Family Centre team support vulnerable families with children aged 0-11. They do similar work to Family Support Programme but also deliver a range of group sessions and courses to support parents of young children. They work closely with partners including health visitors and school nurses, social care, charities and voluntary organisations.

The Family Support team identified 48 as having multiple and complex needs and successfully worked with them. Since the Covid 19 pandemic, there has been a significant increase in the

referrals being received. Support focusses on parenting, housing, financial management, training and employment, healthy relationships and positive health and wellbeing.

Syrian Refugee Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) - Another successful year for the team; the key focus is on supporting families to access housing, benefits, education and employment. Just before Covid-19 the 50th VPRS case was welcomed, the first reunification case. During lockdown ongoing support is provided from a distance and the families are coping well. Employment rates remain just above 30%.

ESOL classes are being rolled out by Woking College via Zoom and volunteers have been having regular WhatsApp video conversations with families in English. Some of our Syrian ladies have been involved in the sewing of laundry bags for the NHS. Some families will be due to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain at the end of 2020. A presentation/information session has been prepared to help families understand the process. The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme is currently on hold due to Covid-19 so all previously arranged new arrivals have been temporarily cancelled. The aim is still to reach the original commitment to resettle 60 families in Woking.

In January 2020, Business and Community Engagement arranged a briefing for Woking Shopping about AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo). The Council has supported DisabledGo since soon after its conception in 2000 by Dr Gregory Burke. Dr Burke unexpectedly became a wheelchair user, and his experience led him to wanting to provide more information about public spaces and town centres for people with disabilities. Woking continues to support the charity and takes part in regular accessibility audits of the town centre's many public spaces and outlets, to provide current and detailed information for visitors with a wide range of access requirements. AccessAble has now evolved to provide a useful app and new website for residents and visitors, which were demonstrated to Woking Shopping's retail liaison team. Woking Shopping was impressed by the depth of information gathered at audits and how it encourages new and repeat visits from people with disabilities and access requirements, along with their companions and families, and will be working with the Council to ensure that the latest information is available to users of AccessAble, particularly as the town's retail and leisure offer is developed further in the coming months and years.



**Equalities Monitoring Data for the period 1/4/2019 – 31/3/2020**

**1. \*Breakdown of all employees by:**

\*These figures are based on 453 employees; this includes all employees all on the payroll including casual employees who may only work very occasionally.

**a) Ethnic background**

Asian/ Asian British	40
Black/Black British	12
Chinese/Other	4
Mixed	5
White	344
Gypsy/Traveller	0
Romany Gypsy	0
Irish Traveller	1
Other (please specify)	38
Not Known	7
Prefer not to say	2

**b) Gender**

Male	157
Female	296
Transgender	0
Prefer not to say	0

**c) Declaration of Disability**

Yes	21
No	411
Prefer not to say	15
Not Known	6

**d) Age**

Under 25	23
25 - 34	64
35 - 44	118
45 - 54	117
55 - 64	104
Over 65	27

**e) Sexual orientation**

Heterosexual/Straight	416
Bisexual	3
Gay or Lesbian	5
Prefer not to say	15
Not Known	14

**f) Religion**

Christian	221
Buddhist	1
Hindu	10
Jewish	1
Muslim	35
Sikh	1
No Religion	146
Other (Please specify)	5
Not Known	27
Prefer not to say	6

**2. How many people belonging to each group applied to the Council for employment during the period?**

**a) Ethnic background**

Asian/ Asian British	32
Black/Black British	9
Chinese/Other	0
Mixed	38
White	812
Gypsy/Traveller	0
Romany Gypsy	0
Irish Traveller	0
Other (please specify)	5
Not Known	6
Prefer not to say	5

**b) Gender**

Male	508
Female	675
Transgender	3
Other	1
Prefer not to say	18
Not Known	27

**c) Declaration of Disability**

Yes	69
No	1154
Not known	3
Prefer not to say	20

**d) Age**

Under 25	208
25 - 34	349
35 - 44	326
45 - 54	197
55 - 64	131
Over 65	6
Not Known	17

**e) Sexual orientation**

Heterosexual/Straight	1092
Bisexual	14
Gay or Lesbian	44
Prefer not to say	48
Not Known	34

**f) Religion**

Christian	432
Buddhist	16
Hindu	29
Jewish	1
Muslim	178
Sikh	5
No Religion	411
Other (Please specify)	46
Not Known	33
Prefer not to say	79

**3. How many people belonging to each group applied for/received training during the period?**

**a) Ethnic background**

BME	35
White	106
Prefer not to say	0

**b) Gender**

Male	54
Female	87
Transgender	0

**c) Declaration of Disability**

Yes	5
No	136
Prefer not to say	0

**d) Age**

Under 25	7
25 - 34	35
35 - 44	38
45 - 54	33
55 - 64	27
Over 65	1

**4. How many people belonging to each group were promoted during the period?**

**a) Ethnic background**

BME	0
White	8

**b) Gender**

Male	5
Female	3
Transgender	0

**c) Declaration of Disability**

Yes	0
No	8

**d) Age**

Under 25	0
25 - 34	1
35 - 44	5
45 - 54	2
55 - 64	0
Over 65	0

**5. How many people belonging to each group "benefited or suffered detriment as a result of formal performance assessment procedures"?**

None

**6. How many people belonging to each group were involved in grievance procedures?**

**a) Ethnic background**

BME	1
White	0

**b) Gender**

Male	0
Female	1
Transgender	0

**c) Declaration of Disability**

Yes	0
No	1

**d) Age**

Under 25	0
25 - 34	0
35 - 44	1
45 - 54	0
55 - 64	0
Over 65	0

**7. How many people belonging to each group were the subjects of disciplinary procedures?**

None.

**8. How many people belonging to each group ceased employment with the Council during the period?**

**a) Ethnic background**

Asian/ Asian British	7
Black/Black British	2
Chinese/Other	1
Mixed	1
White	47
Not Known	0
Gypsy/Traveller	0
Romany Gypsy	0
Irish Traveller	0
Other (please specify)	8
Prefer not to say	2
Not Known	0

**b) Gender**

Male	25
Female	43
Transgender	0

**c) Declaration of Disability**

Yes	5
No	63
Prefer not to say	3
Not Known	0

**d) Age**

Under 25	3
25 - 34	18
35 - 44	8
45 - 54	19
55 - 64	15
Over 65	5

**9. Carers**

**a) Ethnic background**

BME	3
White	18

**b) Gender**

Male	4
Female	17
Transgender	0

**c) Declaration of Disability**

Yes	4
No	17

**d) Age**

Under 25	0
25 - 34	0
35 - 44	2
45 - 54	7
55 - 64	12
Over 65	0

**10. Flexible Working Requests**

<b>Number received:</b>	15
<b>Number agreed:</b>	14
<b>Success rate %</b>	93.3%

**10. Return to Work from Maternity**

<b>Number returned:</b>	7
<b>Success rate:</b>	77.7%