

# **Sunderland City Council**

## **Equality Update 2024/25**

**July 2025**

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The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) came in to force in April 2011 placing a duty on public authorities to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010. The objectives – known as the General Equality Duty – are to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

There is also a specific duty placed on public authorities to publish:

- equality objectives, at least every four years
- information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty

***"Progress equality performance through the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)."***

Equality objective agreed at Cabinet – June 2022

The Equality Framework for Local Government guides our equality improvement journey by identifying key actions that will support us to:

- Deliver accessible, inclusive and responsive services to customers and residents in their communities including those from under-represented groups
- Employ a workforce that reflects the diversity of the area they are serving
- Provide equality of opportunity for all staff
- Meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and support any aspirations to exceed these

It seeks to do this by:

- Identifying the areas of activity that councils need to address to deliver good equality outcomes
- Helping councils to understand how they can build equality into processes and practices
- Supporting organisations to become inclusive employers.
- Enabling councils to informally self-assess their progress on the equality improvement journey and determine where and how they need to improve

The EFLG requires the council to undertake a self-assessment. The framework has four modules and three levels.

- Modules:

1. Understanding and working with our communities
2. Leadership and organisational commitment
3. Responsive services and customer care
4. Diverse and engaged workforce

- Levels:

- Developing
- Achieving
- Excellent



# **ANNUAL PROGRESS UPDATE**

**JULY 2025**



From the self-assessment, a detailed action plan was developed with nine key areas for improvement:

**1. Strengthened governance arrangements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion**

- Adult Social Care(ASC) have an equality, diversity and inclusion forum with attendees representing all parts of the Directorate. This forum is responsible for the delivery of the ASC EDI Strategy and associated action plan.
- ASC have also signed up to the workforce race equality standards and are developing and collecting data to support 9 key metrics and the delivery of the associated improvement plan which is being monitored through the EDI forum.

**2. City level equality data is available for services to use to inform service improvements and set stretching social value targets**

- [Digital inclusion ward dashboards](#) give a snapshot of current digital services, key challenges, and opportunities to improve digital inclusion.
- [Resident survey summary report 2024](#) is used to shape and inform service planning and delivery.
- Updated and new Needs Assessments include the overarching [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) and [Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment](#). Several topic-based needs assessments have also been completed, which support the Healthy City Plan.

**3. [Equality profiles](#) of council customers will be understood, providing a sophisticated view of the needs of people in the city, informing intelligence-led commissioning and decision making. All sections of the community who need our services will be able to access them.**

- ASC completed analysis of workforce, resident population, customer cohorts and service provision. Information has been used to develop ASC EDI strategy and action plan which is monitored through the ASC EDI forum. Equality data collected and recorded within ASC case management systems.

**4. Engagement with communities and customer insight will routinely be used to inform service development**

- Local engagement insights from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment have informed the [refreshed Sunderland Healthy City Plan](#).
- Lived experience insights have been used to both inform and support the ongoing assurance of the '[No more: Our strategy to end domestic abuse and violence against women and girls](#)', ensuring the voice of women and girls continues to guide the development and improvement of local DA and VAWG services and initiatives.
- Digital engagement platform launched, includes the capturing and reporting of demographic information.
- ASC – Targeted outreach with underrepresented groups delivered by social work and therapies. Healthwatch and other VCS organisations gather insights from underserved communities on key developments in provision, policy and services. Co-production group in place with representation from key customers groups who help inform and develop services, policies and service transformation.

## **5. Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA) will be embedded across the council**

- IIAs ensure that the potential impact of an activity or decision on different groups of people is considered from the very start of any activity or decision. This includes thinking about those who may need additional support to accessing services and contribute to reducing inequality across our communities.

## **6. There will be a strategic approach to building stronger communities**

- Cohesion Stakeholder Summits and a range of engagement activity brought together partners, organisations and residents to explore the issues and priorities for communities across the city.
- The Community Recovery Fund grant has been allocated to projects that are helping communities to become more cohesive and to increase residents' sense of belonging in the city.
- A strategy to support the development of stronger communities is under development.

## **7. Meeting the needs of the organisation and ensuring the profile of the council workforce is representative of the city.**

- Work underway to explore how access to employment opportunities within the Council can be improved for veterans and care leavers.
- Workforce encouraged to update personnel profiles on SAP.
- ASC have a workforce strategy and are signed up to the workforce race equality standards.

## **8. All staff will be equipped with the knowledge and skills required to ensure services are equitable and inclusive**

- Specialist neurodiversity training delivered to raise awareness and improve understanding of neurodiversity. Occupational Health, HR and ICT offer promoted – providing support, adjustments and tools for neurodivergent employees.
- Sunderland Safeguarding Children's Partnership established a Practitioner Culture Network, bringing together professionals to share knowledge and resources, ensuring cultural understanding informs practice.
- Inclusion workshops for practitioners across Sunderland offering a safe space to explore inclusive practices.
- ASC undertaking specific training in relation to difficult conversations to ensure practitioners equipped with the skills, knowledge and confidence to address bullying, harassment and racism within the workplace and with customers.

## **9. All staff have a safe and inclusive working environment**

- The Maintaining Excellence level of the Better Health at Work Award has been achieved, recognising that a healthy workplace is actively promoted and supported across the organisation.
- A Workforce People Forum brings together colleagues from across the Council who represent their respective service areas, to discuss issues that matter to the workforce, for example, financial wellbeing.
- Together for Children achieved Bronze Trailblazer for Race Equality from Race Equality Matters.
- Commitment to be Age-Friendly Employer.

## **10. Services are designed and delivered with a focus on reducing inequalities**

- The council's Corporate Plan 2025-28 focuses on an inclusive and cohesive city for everyone, this includes:-
  - people feeling safe, respected, and comfortable in being themselves.
  - being a council that listens to and works in partnership with all communities.
  - programmes of events and activities providing opportunities for people from different communities and backgrounds to enjoy together everything that Sunderland offers.
- Ageism training and events were held across the city for National Age Without Limits Day (11 June 2025) to challenge stereotypes and promote positive ageing.
- A new partnership with Lightning Reach provides people with easier access to financial support through a secure online portal.
- One million women and girls event showcased the work across the city to advance equality of opportunity. Activity focused on inclusion in the areas such as health, education, physical activity, community safety and domestic abuse / violence against women and girls.
- A Health and Wellbeing Board development session explored how racism and discrimination affects health and care services. A Task Group has been established to take forward the work on behalf of the Board.
- Action plan developed for the delivery of health and care services within Adult Social Care following Healthwatch engagement and feedback from residents to improve pathways into support.

- [Digital inclusion Plan](#) progress:
  - Improved full-fibre connectivity from 25% to 72% of households across the city.
  - 30 Digital Health Hubs provide devices and offer free digital skills training and online safety support. This helps people access health care services and complete job searches, for example.
  - Launched Sunderland Free Wi-Fi across many areas of the city, reaching an average of 300,000 unique user sessions a month.
  - Created a citywide digital inclusion website and launched a Digital Charter.
  - Supported 900 digitally excluded employees with licences, devices, and connectivity to boost digital inclusion in the workplace.
  - Delivered a donate digital campaign, which enabled local residents to donate old devices, that were refurbished and gifted to households in need.
  - Expanded the Tech Mates volunteer programme to external partners, recruiting over 100 volunteers.
  - Provided over 16,000m2 of Wi-Fi into community building, reaching an average of 5,000 log ins a month.
  - Deployed footfall and CO2 sensors into 30 community buildings to monitor and assess the structural integrity of the buildings.
  - [£169K Investment to Expand Digital Health Hubs Across Sunderland.](#)

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