

**WALTHAM
FOREST
COMMITMENT TO**

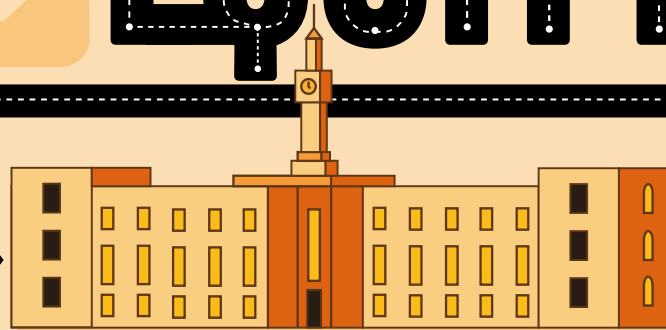
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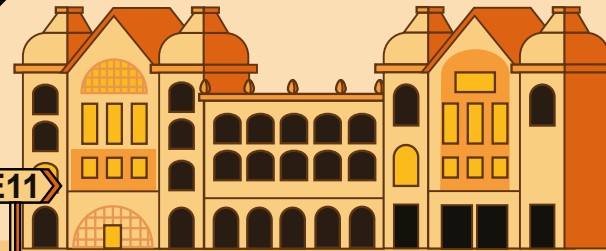
**IN
&
CLUSION**



E10



E11



**BE PROUDLY
YOU**



BE PROUDLY
YOU



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A pledge of commitment from the Council's Senior Leaders

Through our Equalities Objectives 2022-2026, Waltham Forest Council has publicly committed to building an inclusive workplace where our workforce, from the frontline to senior management, reflects the communities we serve, and all colleagues feel confident to be their authentic selves at work.

The Inclusion Action Plan is our route to getting there...

Becoming a radically more inclusive and equitable place to work is a vision we want to make a reality for everyone who works here. It's a vision we want everyone to believe in and a vision we want everyone to commit to. That includes us, and as political and strategic leaders of this organisation we hold ourselves accountable for driving change.

Through our People Strategy 2021-2025 we have made positive progress and our FOREST values clearly define what is important to us as an organisation.

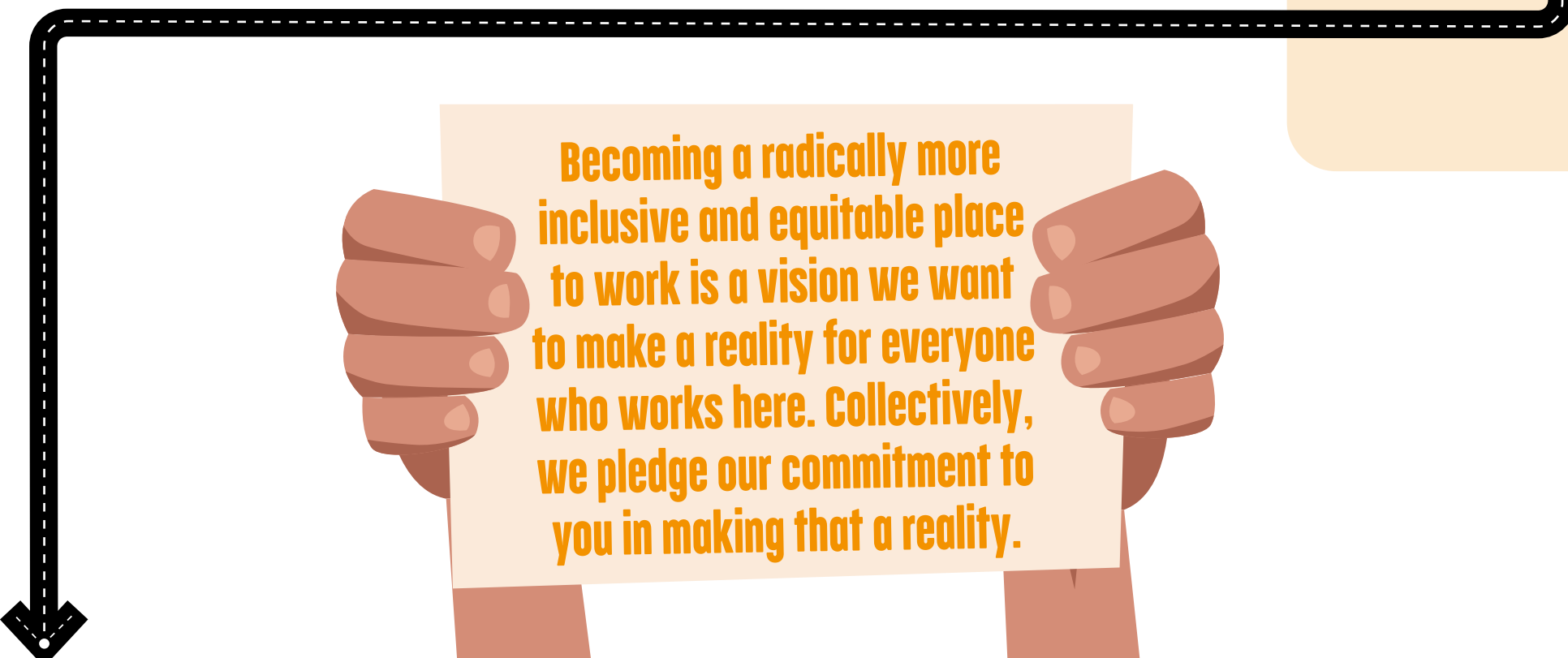
F	Fellowship
O	Opportunity
R	Respect
E	Equality
S	Service
T	Trust

However, we know from what you've told us, and from our workforce data, that not everyone experiences all of these things during their time at work here.

Feeling safe to bring your most authentic selves to work; experiencing equal opportunities and support to develop and progress; and working for an organisation that celebrates, promotes, and respects diversity are all things you should expect as a bare minimum.

One of the four priorities set out in our People Strategy is to be a Diverse and Inclusive employer. We are moving in the right direction but we need to go further. We want to bring EDI issues to the front and centre, taking the lessons learned and pinpointing the steps needed to bring about long lasting and impactful cultural change that everyone feels.

This document sets out the positive action we will take to become the radically more inclusive employer we want to be. One that ensures our people, at all levels of the organisation, reflect the communities we serve and one that enables every single one of us to thrive



Becoming a radically more inclusive and equitable place to work is a vision we want to make a reality for everyone who works here. Collectively, we pledge our commitment to you in making that a reality.



Cllr Grace Williams,
Leader of the Council



Linzi Roberts Egan,
Chief Executive



Cllr Vicky Ashworth,
Cabinet Member for
Jobs, Social Inclusion
and Equalities



Cllr Paul Douglas,
Cabinet Member for
Finance and Resources



Shazia Hussain,
Deputy Chief Executive



Summary

What is the Inclusion Action Plan?

The Inclusion Action Plan is a focused three-year programme of work, aimed at making Waltham Forest Council a radically fairer, more inclusive place for you to work.

The Inclusion Action Plan is not a 'tick box' exercise, it's about achieving a long-lasting change in culture, systems and mindset. To ensure that change remains relevant and impactful for you, it is guided by four firm principles:



Engage

Co-designing with you and being led by your insights, experiences and feedback



Empower

Elevating different voices ensuring you're able to participate in the development of inclusivity within the organisation



Equity

Developing a culture that supports representation at all levels and across all areas of the organisation



Educate

Training and resources for all that encourage inclusive leadership, cultural intelligence and allyship

A flexible, three-year approach

To truly become inclusive, there is no quick fix. We need to challenge ourselves to change the practical ways we do things as well as the way we behave and think – as individuals, as leaders, as service areas and as a whole organisation.

Recognising that this takes time, our action plan has a three-year approach, with realistic but ambitious measures of progress to ensure we drive accountability and positive outcomes.

In order to do this, it's important that we continually monitor the success of our actions and are able to adapt as needed.

 We will act

 We will measure

 We will consider



One size doesn't fit all

We want the outcomes of our plan to be felt by everyone who works here, regardless of the kind of role or service you work in. So, in everything we do, we will work closely with directorates and tailor our approaches to ensure maximum reach.



Aims

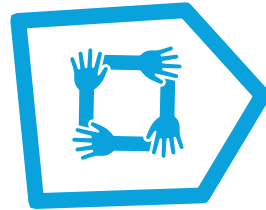
What is the Inclusion Action Plan aiming to do?

The actions included are based on what you have told us about your current experiences of working here and on where our workforce data tells us there is clear disparity.

You have told us what needs to change...



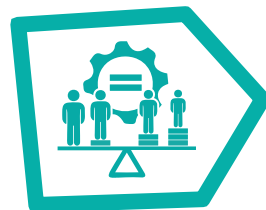
Inclusive Leadership and Recruitment



Culture and Behaviours



Talent Development



Policies and Pay Gaps

..... How it needs to be different

Fair, equitable and consistent leadership and line management for everyone, everywhere.
Recruiting without bias at all pay levels.

Everyone being accountable for embedding inclusivity across the organisation and ensuring people feel psychologically safe to bring their authentic selves to work.

Everyone being able to access good quality and suitable opportunities for learning, development and progression.

People policies that support equitable and inclusive practice.
New targeted approaches to tackling our ethnicity and gender pay gaps.

What will each of the three years focus on?

Year one



Year one is about disrupting the status-quo and driving the development of internal practises, both council-wide and within each directorate, that fully support an equitable and inclusive working culture.

Year two



Being sure to review the impact of actions so far and considering any new factors emerging, in Year Two we will focus on:

Utilising our technology and digital systems to aid inclusivity and equity.

Year three

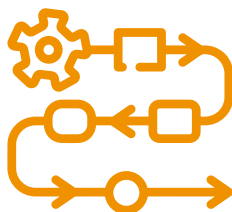


In Year Three , we plan to focus on:

Embedding the *new* status-quo so that equitable and inclusive practice is experienced Council-wide for the long-term.



We will challenge the way we've always done things, inviting external review to help break through any deep rooted barriers to change. We will empower our people to be, and to *want* to be, more inclusive.



Embedding a consistent EDI experience for all employees at every stage of their journey.



Seeking internal and external validation for how inclusive and equitable we have become.



Year One Actions



Inclusive Leadership and Recruitment

What do we want to achieve?

Fair, equitable and consistent leadership and line-management for everyone, everywhere.

Recruitment without bias at all pay levels.

What's the situation now?

In our Staff Survey 2022:



Despite **74%** of you agreeing that the Council is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace, if you identify as a person of **African or Caribbean heritage, LGBTQIA+, female or as having a health condition**, you are considerably less likely to agree.



If you have a **health condition** you feel significantly less positive about our **Senior Leadership Team** and are somewhat less positive than others about the leadership from your line managers.



Line management practices are seen to be **inconsistent**, meaning your experiences range widely.

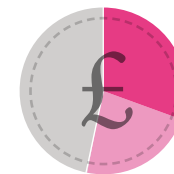


Only **56%** of you (and **49%** of you with a health condition) feel that our Senior Leadership Team lead by example.

OUR WORKFORCE DATA SHOWS US THAT:



The higher up the pay scales you look, the more under-represented **ethnically diverse staff** become and the more over-represented **white staff** become.



Despite making up **53.3%** of the Council workforce, ethnically diverse staff are significantly under-represented in positions of leadership with only **22.6%** earning the highest **5%** of salaries.



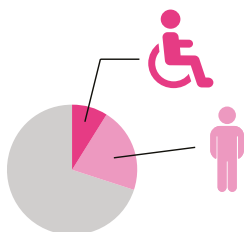
And, ethnically diverse staff only make up:

32% of our Top **10%** earners; **37%** of our Top **20%** earners; and **40%** of our Top **30%** earners



Our workforce data shows us that:

In 22/23, our applications data showed that there was general equity across key characteristics at the point of shortlisting which suggests that anonymous application forms are effective, however, following the interview stage we can see that:



Only **9%** of shortlisted applicants who declared a disability were **appointed to a role** (compared to **21%** of shortlisted applicants without a disability).



And shortlisted applicants who were white were **twice as more likely** to be appointed following interview compared to people who were **ethnically diverse**.



We can also see from our new starter data that **white and/or male candidates** are more likely to be recruited into higher paying roles than their counterparts.



So, how will we start to fix it?



By defining what an inclusive Waltham Forest Manager is, **equipping our managers** to live it and ensuring accountability is embedded in our processes.



By **ensuring our leaders continually speak and act** on the importance of driving more equality, diversity and inclusion.



By assessing how our **recruitment practices** impact applicants with protected characteristics and introducing changes from end-to-end that **eradicate opportunities for discrimination** and maximise opportunities for inclusivity and equality.



By **training our leaders and managers** to recruit with inclusive approaches and mindsets.

And what difference will that make to you?

AS an employee



You will be able to anonymously feed back on your manager's approach and be provided with regular opportunities to have open and **honest conversations** with those in **positions of leadership**.

AS a manager



You'll be better **supported and empowered** with a peer managers network, clear expectations on inclusive behaviours as part of your annual objectives and regular training on best practise.



Our systems will ensure you attract more **diverse talent** when recruiting and you'll be confident in making appointments that are not influenced by conscious or unconscious bias.





Year One Actions



Culture and Behaviours

What do we want to achieve?

Everyone being accountable for embedding inclusivity across the organisation and ensuring people feel psychologically safe to bring their authentic selves to work.

What's the situation now?

In our Staff Survey 2022:

ONLY 65%



of you said you can be your authentic self at work. This was lower if you identify as a person of **African or Caribbean heritage (60%)** yet higher if you identify as **white (72%)**, and lowest if you identify as having a **health condition (56%)**.



African or Caribbean heritage 60%



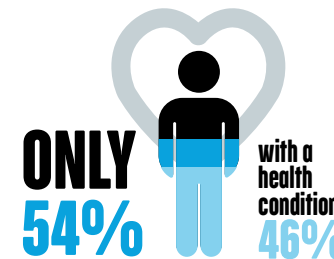
White 72%



Health condition 56%

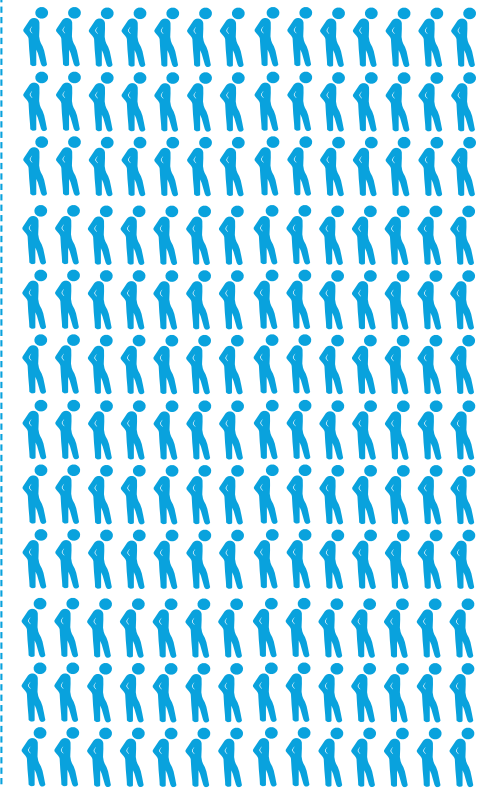


of staff feel it is safe to speak up and challenge the way things are done at the Council



Only 54% of you said you feel a strong sense of belonging at the Council and if you have a health condition, this drops to 46%.

168 of you said you've been bullied or harassed in the past two years and if you said that, you were more likely to have a **health condition** or identify as having **Asian heritage** and feel less able to report it.





So, how will we start to fix it?



By **raising deeper and wider awareness** of the lived experiences and needs of colleagues with a protected characteristic.



By **ensuring our managers are equipped** to create supportive, safe and empowering work places for *all* employees.



By making our corporate **expectations on inclusive behaviours** clear to everyone who starts working here.



By providing a variety of **safe routes and forums** for people to raise concerns about their experiences at work and access the best kind of support for them.

AND WHAT DIFFERENCE WILL THAT MAKE TO YOU?

AS AN EMPLOYEE



You'll hear from a range of external **thought-leaders and high-profile speakers**, that represent a range of protected characteristics.



If you have a disability, you'll be able to request the **practical adjustments** you need knowing your manager is equipped and accountable.



You will be encouraged and enabled to **speak up** about your concerns, knowing you will be heard.



New colleagues will be **clear on organisation expectations** on inclusive behaviours.

AS A MANAGER



You'll have **access to the right tools, training and guidance** to support the needs of diverse members of staff, enabling them to thrive and deliver the best outcomes for the business.

As a disabled employee, I want to feel that my needs are understood and supported by my manager and the organisation





Year One Actions

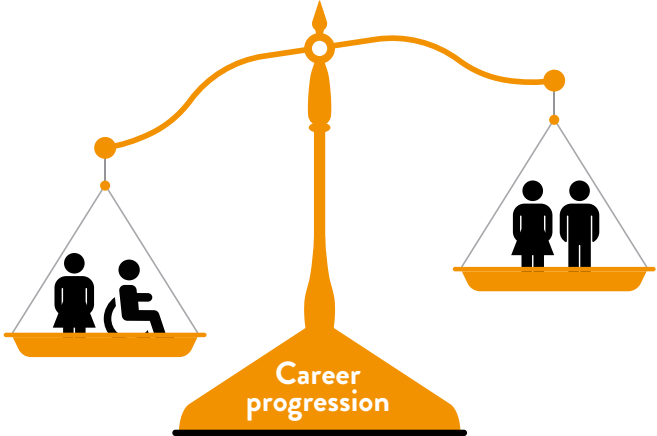


Talent Development

What's the situation now?

In our Staff Survey 2022:

If you are **female, African, Caribbean or Asian heritage,** or have a **health condition** you are **significantly less likely** to agree that the Council is a place where staff with whom you share a protected characteristic are given **equal opportunities for career progression.**

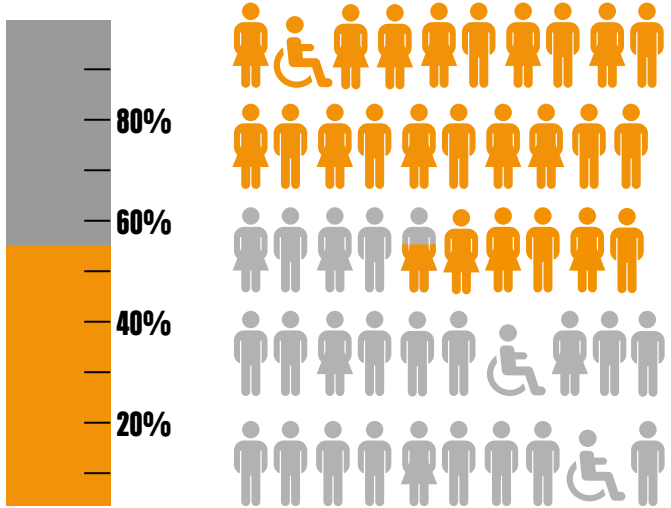


What do we want to achieve?

Everyone being able to access good quality and suitable opportunities for learning, development and progression.

ONLY **55%**

of you agree that the Council is a place where you can **develop your career**, and if you are female or have a health condition you are **less likely to agree.**





Our workforce data shows us that:

In 2022 **104**

of you were either **acting up or on a secondment**, and **more than half** of these positions were filled by ethnically diverse employees.



However, we know from the last three years that these opportunities tend not to lead to permanent promotion and for the **small percentage** of you that do secure promotion, **it takes an average of**



15 months

to do so after returning to your substantive role.



So, how will we start to fix it?



By ensuring that anyone who is keen to develop and/or progress is **supported** to do that, whatever their role or background.

And what difference will that make to you?

As an employee



You'll have access to a programme of **personal development** and **motivational masterclasses** delivered by diverse and inspirational people from within and outside the Council.



You'll have access to career **coaching** and **job application** support when you need it.



If you deliver a **front line** or **resident facing service**, you won't miss out as we will work with services when designing schedules to ensure you can access them too.





Year One Actions



Policies and Pay Gaps

What do we want to achieve?

People policies that support equitable and inclusive practice.

New, targeted approaches to tackling our ethnicity and gender pay gaps.

What's the situation now?

Our workforce data shows that we still have large ethnicity and gender pay gaps:

When you take the mean average salary of all **male employees** and compare it with the mean average salary of all **female employees**.

We can see we have an

overall gender pay gap of **11.96%**



When you take the mean average salary of all **white employees** and compare it with the mean average salary of all **ethnically diverse employees**.

We can see we have an

overall ethnicity pay gap of **16.69%**



We can see that the **Gender Pay Gap** and **Ethnicity Pay Gap** varies across different directorates and require a targeted approach in order to address them.

In our Staff Survey 2022:



ONLY **47%**

of you agreed that all staff are **treated equally**, and there is no discrimination, and if you have a health condition or identify as a person of **African or Caribbean heritage** you were significantly less likely to agree.



So, how will we start to fix it?



By increasing declarations of protected characteristics and analysing our **pay gaps** in each directorate so we can understand the different causes and co-design targeted actions to address them.



By seeking recommendations from external EDI experts on how we can improve our **HR policy and practise** so that chances for inequity are eradicated.



By developing diverse and innovative ways of applying traditional and non-traditional **flexible working options** to more people.

As an employee



You'll benefit from **practises and policies** that have been scrutinised by external groups representing people who are **ethnically diverse, differently abled, LGBTQIA+, parents or carers.**



You'll have clear guidance on your rights around requesting **flexible working.**



If you are a woman, you can expect to see recommendations for a **comprehensive policy** that ensures you have support at all stages of the **female health cycle.**

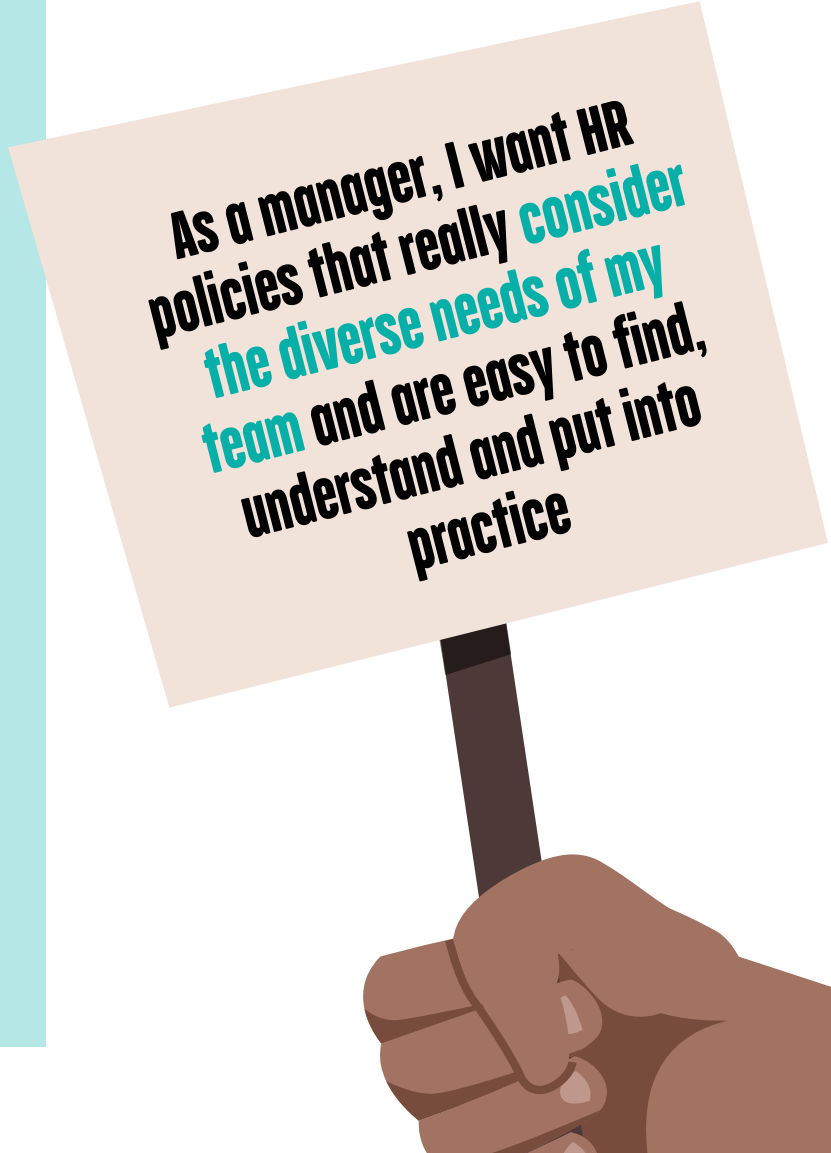


If you have a **disability** or identify as **LGBTQIA+** you will have **more reliable statistics** to highlight any inequities, enabling us to understand how your experience can be enhanced.

As a manager



You'll have clear guidance and any training necessary to put new and existing policies into practise.



Measuring Progress

We will monitor our workforce data



Inclusive Leadership and Recruitment

Looking for an increase in:

- Female and ethnically diverse people in the **Top 30%** earners and **successful appointments** of disabled and ethnically diverse applicants
- People with protected characteristics securing **promotions and accessing secondments/acting up opportunities** that lead to permanent promotions.



Culture and Behaviours

Keeping an eye on the themes of **incidents and concerns** being formally reported to HR and informally to **Speak Up Champions and employee networks**, as well as the protected characteristics of the people reporting.



Policies and Pay Gaps

Looking for an increase in staff declarations on **disability and LGBTQIA+** and an increase in people with a protected characteristic receiving a **pay rise** into higher sections of the pay scale, and the **narrowing of our pay gaps**.

We will repeat our staff survey and look for an increase in staff (particularly those with protected characteristics) agreeing that...



Talent Development

...the council is a place where they can **develop their career** and a place where those with whom they share a protected characteristics are given **equal opportunities** for career progression.



Inclusive Leadership and Recruitment

...their SLT, Directors and Managers **lead by example**, particularly staff with a protected characteristic and that the Council is committed to creating a **diverse and inclusive workplace**.



Culture and Behaviours

...they feel a strong sense of belonging at the Council, they can be their **authentic self** at work, they feel able to **report bullying and harassment** and feel safe to speak up and challenge the way things are done.
And a decrease, in staff saying they've been **bullied or harassed**.



Policies and Pay Gaps

...all staff are treated equally, there is **no discrimination**.

Measuring Progress

We will hold regular focus groups, to keep informed on how people with protected characteristics are experiencing improvements (or not) in...



Talent development

...access to career and personal development support.



Inclusive Leadership and Recruitment

...**recruitment** processes; managers with inclusive **behaviours**; and **leadership** demonstrating importance of EDI.



Culture and Behaviours

...workplace culture, including **respectful and fair treatment**; psychological safety and authentic selves at work; and inclusivity and belonging.



Policies and Pay Gaps

...how our policies **support** individuals with protected characteristics.



We will test ourselves externally by:



Inclusive Leadership and Recruitment

...**Mystery shopping** our application experience and benchmark our workforce data against other local authorities.



Policies and Pay Gaps

...**Comparing our pay gaps** with other London local authorities with a similar make up of service areas.

Consider



Years two and three

What will happen after year one?

Following the delivery of our actions for Year One, we will review the impact and effectiveness of the steps taken so far. This will help inform an action plan that is co-designed with you, with the aim to accelerate our journey further into 2025.

If **year one** is about disrupting the norm, then **year two** is about developing a new norm...

Year two

Year Two is all about building on progress of Year One and ensuring an inclusive and equal culture is supported and even enhanced by our digital HR systems. It's also about looking at the EDI experience for all employees at the point of joining the council and each stage of their employment journey thereafter, and ensuring this is consistent for everyone.

...And **year three** is about making it who we are. Now and in the future.

Year three

Again, we will review our progress letting you and our data do the talking and then, we will deliver co designed actions that build even further on the culture change achieved so far, ensuring it's change that will last and remain progressive.

We will test our success externally, benchmarking with other London Councils, inviting peer review from EDI Thought Leaders and applying for accreditation with outside experts in inclusivity and specific protected characteristics.

We will focus on embedding the new status-quo so that equity and inclusivity is felt Council-wide and is fully future proof.

Take the Inclusion Pledge

Join us and **pledge your personal commitment** to building a fair, inclusive place of work that is free from discrimination and prejudice.

We know that achieving the aims set out in this action plan is no easy task but we also know that working in collaboration and honesty with each other is critical to us having a chance to succeed. That is why we are inviting you to take the Inclusion Pledge which is formed around our six FOREST values.



Fellowship

F

I will do my best to combat prejudice and speak out against all forms of discrimination, including examining my own behaviour and preconceptions and seeking to learn from my mistakes.

Equality

E

I will treat others with kindness and understanding, as I would hope to be treated.

Opportunity

O

I will embrace the Council's ambition to become an inclusive, fair and non-discriminatory employer with equal opportunities for all.

Service

S

I will treat all customers and colleagues fairly, equitably and with compassion.

RESPECT

R

I will listen to others, treat everyone with dignity, and recognise that others' experiences will be different to my own.

TRUST

T

I will encourage an open and transparent culture that enables people to raise concerns about prejudice or discrimination.

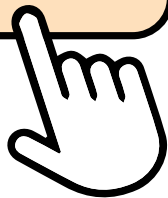
Our employee network chairs have taken the pledge...



Race Equality Network (REN)

The Race Equality Network stand by this pledge and in doing so urge our colleagues to be open enough to not only believe in change, but to take active steps in bringing that change about, through open and honest discussion, because at the end of the day, we all want the same thing, to be treated equally, fairly, and respectfully within our place of work. We want the Inclusion Action Plan to build more confidence within the organisation itself and give staff the will to come forward when their voices are not being heard.

Find out more about all of our **staff networks.**



Out in the Forest

Out in the Forest is proud to stand alongside our fellow staff networks to sign the proudly you pledge. Out in the Forest seeks to promote a working environment where LGBTQ+ people are safe, supported and celebrated for who they are. We are thrilled that the council is adopting a strategy that seeks to address inequality and discrimination at all levels, so that LGBTQ+ people can continue to come to work as their truly authentic selves.

We are thrilled to see this strategy convey such resolute messaging against prejudice. However, we also hope it serves as a guiding light and inspiration for other employers, and highlights Waltham Forest as an organisation that actively embraces diversity and sees it as one of our greatest assets.



Women of Waltham Forest (wow)

As a network our motto is “together we are stronger”, we actively support diversity and inclusion and really want to create a culture where everyone feels valued for who they are and the contribution they make which is empowering all of us to communicate, connect, belong and to grow.

Staff networks are a really good way of promoting diversity and building a sense of community and inclusion. They provide a safe space for colleagues to support each other and raise any issues which affect them at work. We want to come to work every day being kind and for each person to be themselves and achieve their full potential, feel valued and thrive in the council.



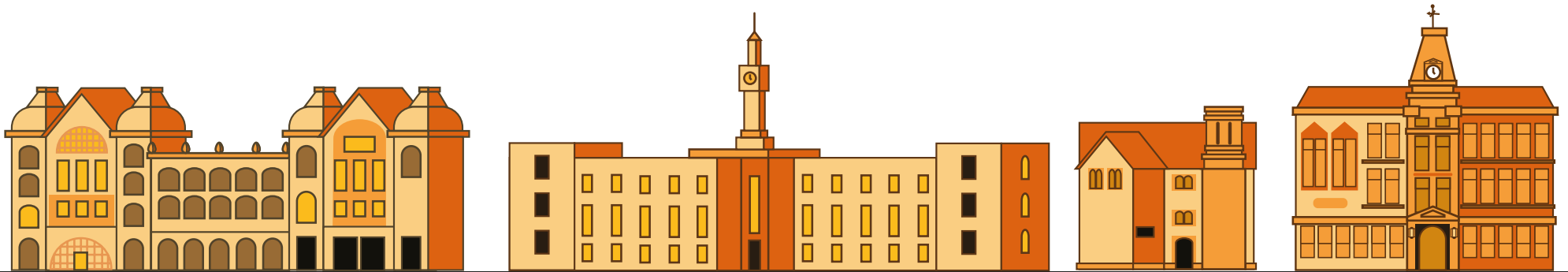
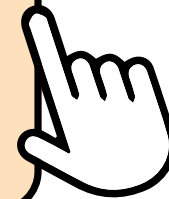
Differently Abled Forum

The differently abled forum are proud to stand by this pledge and we encourage all staff to do their part to ensure everyone feels valued, welcomed, respected, represented, and heard.

As a forum we have created a safe space where we can come together and share our experiences, support one another, and where everyone is included. We are a diverse, with trust and compassion for one another and we want to make sure the council is one where everyone is treated fairly and everyone is given opportunities to thrive. We hope this inclusion action plan will help the council effect change to become a place where everyone trusts that they can be themselves.



Get involved or keep up to date with the Inclusion Action Plan by visiting our page on [Forest Connect](#)



INCLUSION ACTION PLAN

OUR ROUTE TO EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

