

Ensuring Equity:
Our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
Strategy 2024-2029

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION



Walsall Council

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Foreword

This Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy reflects Walsall Council's unwavering commitment to equity within our services, workforce, and communities. We strive to reduce inequalities and maximise potential across the borough, reinforcing our dedication to fostering an inclusive and fair environment for all.

Our focus on EDI is central to our mission, ensuring that Walsall remains a great place to live, work, and visit. We are proud of the progress made and remain dedicated to continuous improvement, guided by our community's feedback and aspirations.

Recognised by the 2023 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, the strategy aligns with the *Council Plan 2025-2029, 'Striving for Excellence'*, and builds on the *We are Walsall 2040* vision. It focuses on promoting equality, tackling inequity, and fostering good relations – involving residents, community groups, and staff to address EDI challenges.

The strategy emphasises enhancing understanding and perspectives on inequalities and outlines actions to ensure progress towards equity and excellence.

Cllr Lee: Cabinet Portfolio Holder Internal Resources

Introduction

'Ensuring Equity': Our Walsall Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, sets out Walsall Council's commitment to advance equity across all our services, our workforce, and our communities right across the borough.

Our Council has a clear mission to reduce inequalities and maximise potential. We have made great strides in recent years to support our workforce to better represent the communities they serve, to strengthen our governance around EDI and to ensure our staff voice is heard at all levels. Our *2023 LGA (Local Government Association) Corporate Peer Challenge* highlighted the work we have done and the improvements we are making with respect to EDI. This strategy underpins the vision and priorities of our *Council Plan 2025-2029* and builds upon the strong foundations laid down in the *We are Walsall 2040 Strategy* – the partnership-owned strategic vision and ambitions for the type of borough we want to be in the future. Promoting equalities, tackling inequity, and fostering good relations across our diverse communities is at the heart of our work across the borough in making Walsall a great place to live, work and visit.

Through this strategy we are committing to work with our residents, local community groups, and staff to address any challenges relating to EDI. This strategy incorporates feedback from our communities and staff, enabling us to address any challenges relating to inequalities that may have been raised by our workforce, residents, and the local communities within the borough which we serve.

To support us in achieving our ambitions, we recognise that it is important to enhance our understanding and perspectives on matters relating to inequalities across the borough and addressing these through initiating positive and preventative actions through our workforce, via policies and programmes and through community cohesion and by reaching out through our partners organisations. This strategy outlines how the council will progress with equality, diversity, and inclusion and how it will monitor progression made through its work programme and activities to ensure we aim for equity and move towards excellence.

Our Legal Duty

Under the Equality Act 2010, when delivering its services and functions, the Council must have due regard to the need to:

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

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in society and within the workforce. This Act introduced nine 'protected characteristics' and made it unlawful for people to be discriminated against based on these characteristics. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that equality and diversity are considered and embedded across our services and functions and our partnership work. The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Disability
- Pregnancy/maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or belief
- Marriage/civil partnership

Under the Equality Act, Councils also have specific duties and must:

- publish information to demonstrate their compliance with the Equality Duty annually. This information must include information relating to employees;
- prepare and publish one or more specific and measurable equality objectives (at least every four years) which will help us further any of the aims of the Equality Duty: this strategy sets out our objectives for the period 2024-2029.

The Equality Act is supported by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires public bodies such as Councils to consider how people can be affected by decisions that are taken and to ensure that the design and delivery of services meet the needs of different people.

Who We Are

Walsall borough is made up of six towns – Aldridge, Bloxwich, Brownhills, Darlaston, Walsall and Willenhall – and is home to 284,400 residents. Each of our 20 wards has its own distinct identity and diverse populations. This brings a vibrant character to the borough, but also means we need to understand the range of needs faced by those living within all our communities.

Deprivation

Walsall borough was ranked as the 25th most deprived local authority in England (in the Indices of Deprivation, 2019). However, the experience of life in the borough varies for residents across different neighbourhoods. There are pockets of extreme deprivation in some areas and over a quarter of neighbourhoods (44 of 167) are amongst the most deprived 10% in England – an increase since 2015. The wards in the centre and west of the borough are typically much more deprived than those to the east, however pockets of deprivation exist even alongside the more affluent parts of the borough.

Inequalities

The geography of deprivation directly maps onto a wide range of inequalities including poor educational attainment, unemployment, ill-health and higher rates of crime with some groups more impacted by the effects than others. For example, Walsall is the authority with the 17th highest levels of income deprivation affecting children. And many of the most deprived neighbourhoods are around the town centre, which is also the focus of our newly arrived migrant communities.

Resident Characteristics

The information gathered from the 2021 Census has been invaluable for understanding equality and diversity down to a neighbourhood level. The questions asked capture many of the defining characteristics of our population: who we are, how we live and what we do. This is vital for assessing need, setting priorities, and developing strategy. This gives us an opportunity to understand all aspects of our residents' identities, providing a full and timely picture of inter-related protected characteristics. For some protected characteristics (such as gender identify and sexual orientation) this is the first time we have had access to any robust data about how our residents identify themselves.

Our Characteristics

Resident Population

- Walsall has a **resident population** of 284,400, which has been steadily growing over the past two decades.

Sex

- This resident population consists of 145,000 women and 139,000 men.

Age

- Walsall's resident population has a median **age** of 38 which is a decrease of one year from the 2011 census.

Marital Status

- Those who are **married or in a civil partnership** account for 45% of residents (aged over 16) with the proportion who have never been married (38%) increasing.

Sexual Orientation

- 1 in 50 (2%) residents aged over 16 identified in the 2021 census as gay, lesbian, or bisexual – very slightly below the national average.

Ethnic Groups

- Although most people identify their **ethnic group** as being White (71%), this has decreased over the past decade and around 1 in 3 residents are now from a minority ethnic group (i.e. non-White British).
- The second largest ethnic group remains Asian, which has increased to 19%, and residents from Black (5%) and Mixed (3%) ethnic groups have also increased.

Disability

- Approximately 20% of residents identify as **disabled** due to experiencing a long-term condition that limits their daily activities.

Religion

- Many residents still claim to have a **religious affiliation**, although the proportion with 'no religion' is now close to a third (30%).

- The largest religious group remains Christian (45%), although this has been falling with Muslim (11%) communities the second largest faith community, followed by Sikh (6%) which has increased over the past decade.

Gender and Gender Reassignment

- There are just under 600 residents whose **gender identity** is different to the sex they were registered with at birth.
- Of those providing further detail, around 200 identify as trans men and 200 as trans women

Care Leavers

- Walsall currently has 665 children **in care**, and we are supporting 285 young people that have now left our care. This is line with a national picture of an increase in children entering care over the past decade.

Armed Forces / Veterans

- Around 2.2% of the Walsall population is identified as a member or veteran of the armed forces, equating to around 6,500 people – many of whom will also have families who fall within the Armed Forces Covenant.

Carers

- Among Walsall adults, 11.4% provide unpaid care for a family member, friend or neighbour who has long-term physical or mental health conditions, or problems related to old age.
- Over half of these unpaid carers (6.3% of all adults) are providing over 20 hours of care a week.

Our Objectives

This strategy supports the delivery of our key ambitions within our *Council Plan 2025-2029*, and ensures we remain community focussed to deliver our collective vision in the *We Are Walsall 2040 Strategy*. This strategy draws together all the strands of EDI into a coherent set of objectives that are directly linked to other relevant strategic documents, such as our *Organisational Development Strategy* and *Workforce Strategy*, and the Walsall For All plan for *Community Cohesion 2024-2034*.

The Local Government Association has developed an Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) built around four improvement modules:

- Theme 1: Understanding and working with our communities
- Theme 2: Leadership, partnership, and organisational commitment
- Theme 3: Responsive services and customer care
- Theme 4: Diverse and engaged workforce

This framework is widely adopted across the local government sector, and there are clear activities under each theme against different levels of progression: Developing, Achieving and Excellent. We have aligned our EDI objectives to this framework to support us in continuing to meet our Public Sector Equality Duties and strive towards excellence. Our four objectives are centred on:

- Communities
- Leadership
- Workforce
- Services.

Through continuous improvement, we aim to ascend the three Levels of Achievement for each EFLG theme through our objectives and their associated activities, with an aspiration to reach 'Achieving' level across all elements by the end of 2026. We will then work towards becoming an 'Excellent' EDI Exemplar in the local government and wider public sector.

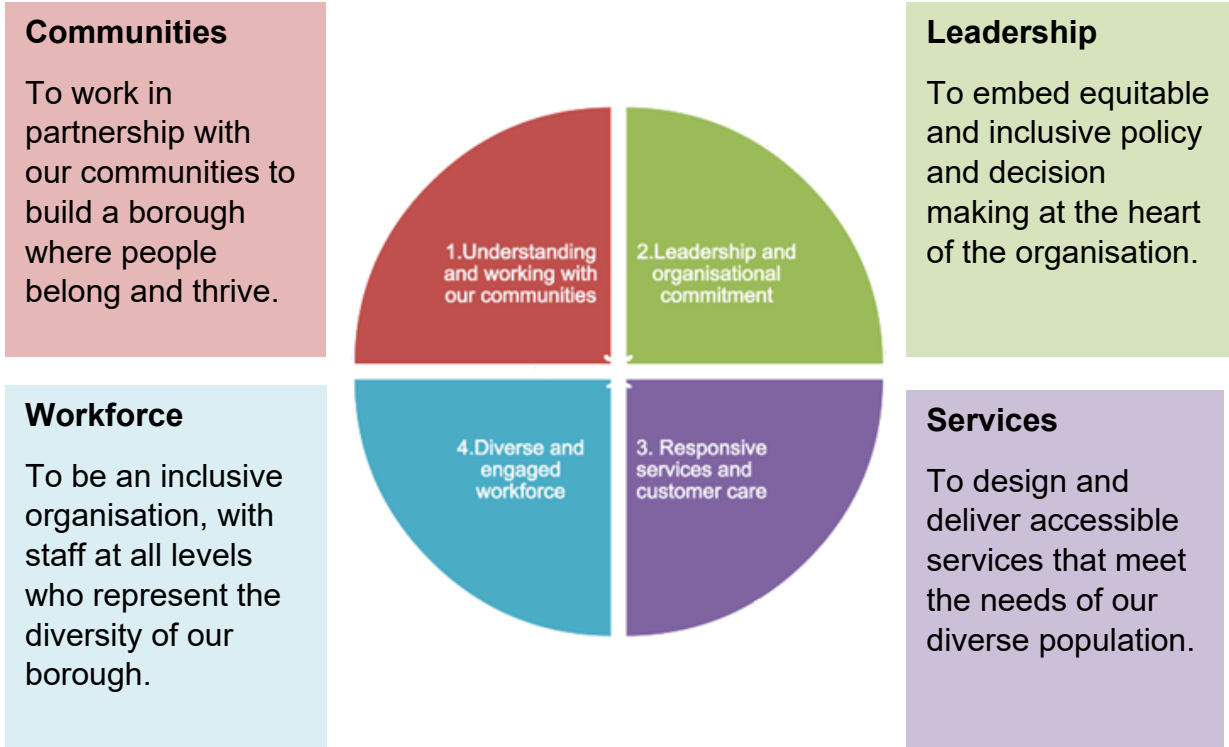


Figure 1: Walsall Council Equality Objectives 2024-2029

Objective: Communities

To work in partnership with our communities to build a borough where people belong and thrive

Our approach

Understanding and working in partnership with our communities is essential to build a borough that supports our *We Are Walsall 2040* ambition that people belong, thrive and are happy. Walsall is becoming richer in diversity, with people that have varied lived experiences and with neighbourhoods that are experiencing rapid changes in their ethnic makeup. We are committed to having a borough that respects and is tolerant to all. We want to achieve racial equality and recognise that racial inequalities and intolerance driven through beliefs, assumptions and biases can have adverse impacts on individuals and wider communities. We believe it is everyone's responsibility to educate ourselves, challenge biases, adopt an anti-racist attitude, and take positive action by addressing prejudice and intolerance and shaping solutions within our communities.

Our Walsall Community Cohesion focus has been developed with Walsall for All Partnership and is based on a comprehensive engagement exercise co-designed and co-facilitated by the communities themselves. The work identified seeks to reduce the impact of any inequalities from a social cohesion perspective and enable all in the borough can work together collectively in building a borough where Walsall is not just a place to live, but also a place to belong and thrive.

We will continue to understand and work with our diverse communities and partners to recognise and address local inequalities that exist across the borough to shape and transform services that drive positive change. We are focussed on becoming more culturally competent through recognising differences in cultures, beliefs and cross-cultural communication to improve our engagement and service delivery with diverse communities across the borough. We will provide opportunities for youth participation so young people from all backgrounds have a voice to share their aspirations, concerns, and views from across the borough which will support us in designing better services for the future.

We understand the importance of bringing people together from a wide range of backgrounds to enhance our understanding of any local inequalities and to direct our focus on the actions we need to take to address any local matters. Through harnessing diversity,

we can create a safe and accessible borough where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered to contribute their perspectives and abilities.

Our Walsall Community Cohesion focus developed with Walsall for All Partnership

Walsall for All is a partnership that aims to improve social cohesion and integration in the borough. The members include local organisations and groups that work in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors, as well as public sector providers (including housing, health and more). Walsall for All works with diverse cultures, faiths, and communities. Walsall for All listens to their views and finds solutions to any challenges they may have accessing services and living in Walsall. One of its goals is to promote neighbourhood level partnerships between existing indigenous communities and new emerging communities. During 2023/24, Walsall for All co-produced a new Community Cohesion and Integration plan together with Walsall Council and launched 'a call for evidence' in relation to social justice with a focus on working class communities. They also established a new network of community run English as a Second Language providers – Skills for Life and appointed 6 Community advisors.

We will:

- Become more culturally competent in and through our engagement with diverse communities.
- Work in partnership with Walsall for All and voluntary, community and statutory sectors to recognise local inequalities across the borough and take action to reduce the impact on our communities.
- Provide opportunities to encourage integration, interaction, empathy and understanding amongst diverse groups in the locality through our engagement work.
- Collaborate and listen to the views of people on EDI and take action to improve their lives where people can belong, thrive and be happy in the borough.
- Celebrate different heritage, cultures, and traditions to champion diversity across the borough.
- Provide access to services, resources, and opportunities thus allowing people to advance, feel engaged and empowered.

Objective: Leadership

To embed equitable and inclusive policy and decision making at the heart of the organisation.

Our approach

Our Council's governance and strategic leadership plays an essential role in steering the organisation to maintain a strong focus on ensuring equitable and inclusive council and partnership policies. Our organisation is committed to ensuring EDI is a fundamental aspect of all decision-making across the Council and when working locally and regionally with partners such as West Midlands Combined Authority and Integrated Care Systems to ensure local community perspectives are embedded in everything we do.

We understand the importance of reassuring both local communities and the workforce of our organisational commitment to our socio-economic duty within the Equality Act 2010 and our equality priorities through inclusive strategies and clear implementation programmes. Our senior leaders and Members act as ambassadors for EDI and work together with partners and communities to drive the vision in Our Council Plan 2022-2025 that 'inequalities are reduced, and all potential is maximised'.

Strengthening our Council's internal EDI governance structure supports our leaders to reinforce our commitment to develop a more centred approach for equity when collaborating with our stakeholders and partners. Our leaders continue to raise the profile of issues around inequalities and drive change through equitable and inclusive policies and decision-making and via implementing coherent improvement workstreams. Reviewing our policies and procedures is key in identifying gaps, inconsistencies, or barriers that may affect inclusion and equity.

Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) are a fundamental tool for ensuring our policies are equitable and inclusive when considering impact on equality groups. The EqIA process considers all nine protected equality characteristics when considering a new policy, strategy, or service change. We are committed to doing more so have taken the decision to include local characteristics. Cabinet agreed in 2024 to make care experienced/care leavers a local extra characteristic within our EqIA process to ensure that this group of young people do not continue to experience inequalities and are supported to thrive. To reaffirm our commitment and duty to the Armed Forces Covenant, we will strengthen how armed forces are considered in our policy development and decision making through inclusion of this local

characteristic in our Equality Impact Assessments. The EqIA process ensures we consider any adverse impacts that budget and service delivery changes can have on people's lives and that we mitigate any impacts where we can.

It is also important for us to consider the impact of other drivers of inequality such as health determinants across the borough. We will incorporate a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach through our equality analysis toolkit to ensure health equity is considered when we develop any strategy, policy or make changes to services. In this way we can ensure we work to minimise and reduce any adverse impact on those experiencing health inequalities.

Care Leavers as a local protected characteristic in Walsall Council

Walsall Council has recognised care leavers as a local protected characteristic and acknowledged that the care experienced can face discrimination, stigma and prejudice. A motion was first put forward at Full Council meeting in February 2024 requesting members to treat 'care experience' as a local protected characteristic in Walsall in line with the other nine protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

At Cabinet in April 2024, two of Walsall's care leavers explained some of the everyday challenges and prejudices they have faced. Both young people now live independently and shared some of their aspirations for the future which included wanting to give back to children and young people who may have similar childhood experiences to them.

The Council is committed to advancing equality of opportunity between those with care experience and those without. Care experienced people often face discrimination in everyday life including access to housing, health, education, relationships, employment.

Recognising care leavers as a local protected characteristic allows us to provide them with greater opportunities in accessing work, training opportunities and better access to our housing offers. It helps us to design future equitable policies, consider needs through equality impact assessments, and deliver accessible services as their needs are better recognised and understood.

We will:

- Ensure EDI is evidenced through equitable and inclusive policies and decision-making.
- Adopt an anti-racist organisational approach, ensuring cultural competence and awareness across our staff, programmes and policies.

- Work with our regional partners and stakeholders on our shared equality priorities, objectives and outcomes for the borough so they are understood and acted on at all levels.
- Continue to review and improve our equality impact assessment toolkit to ensure effective equality analysis at the start of policies, projects, or decisions and when considering budget setting, service delivery and ensure any adverse impact on equality groups are understood and mitigated.
- Develop a Health in all Policies (HiAP) approach in our toolkit to judge and mitigate impact on equality groups and advance health equity through everything we do.
- Continue our work with Members to help them understand and champion equity and the needs of the communities we serve. [OBJ]

Objective: Services

To design and deliver accessible services that meet the needs of our diverse population.

Our approach

We strive to design and deliver accessible services that meet the needs of our diverse population through a detailed understanding of our residents, service users and their needs. We deliver a range of services and support across the borough. As emphasised in our Customer Experience Strategy 2021-2026, we strive to increase performance, efficiency, and champion the design of services to meet the service needs of a range of people across Walsall including everyone living, working, volunteering, running a business, investing or studying across the borough.

A key aspect that supports this is through knowing and understanding the needs of our communities, residents and businesses and ensuring we have appropriate, relevant, and accurate data to identify gaps and design and deliver the right services at the right time and in the right way that are more accessible and joined-up. We are determined to continue to work with all services to establish how EDI can be better embedded and measured through our service design by using data to understand the needs of our service users – recognising that some of our services are still working towards developing this detailed picture of the characteristics of their users. Our Corporate Equalities Group is committed to ensure that equality objectives are integrated into planned service outcomes when creating services and opportunities for everyone.

Our approach is aligned to our corporate values which highlight how the Council works with local communities and businesses and influences choice and behaviours. We want services in the Council to understand what residents want, to enable us to design and deliver an excellent service user experience, make reasonable adjustments for service users, reduce inequalities, be fair, and provide good customer care for all the diverse range of people we serve. We will continue to deliver accessible communication support through an Interpretation, Translation and Transcription and Easy Read (ITTE) system to allow all service users to access information and support. We will work across all our services to ensure they are looking at their communities and service users, understanding EDI requirements and ensuring they take account residents voice and views in service design and accessibility.

Commissioning and procuring services in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way is also important to achieve our equality objectives within the local economy. We aim to up skill our staff to design and deliver accessible services for the changing needs of our diverse population.

Our Corporate priorities feed into our outcomes to enable us to provide an excellent customer experience for all, increase digital contact from users through web accessibility, comply with accessibility standards and to act on service user feedback to improve service delivery. In recent years we have designed and delivered locally accessible services and ensured locality approaches were appropriate to ensure our services can be accessed where the public need them. Our Walsall Connected model has 29 hubs across the borough and offers localised support for accessing council services and build resilient communities.

Another key method that underpins our determination to improve is through our behavioural science approach. This is used to determine the motivators, lived experiences, barriers, challenges, and enablers faced by residents when using our services. This approach supports the designing of accessible services that meet the accessibility needs of its users through gaining these insights from hard-to-reach populations. The behavioural science team have worked closely with the Adult Social Care team to produce accessible communications and resources, including easy read options, to help residents with financing their care needs as well as working with mothers from all communities to identify local barriers and opportunities around infant feeding choices and explore how we can help marginalised and vulnerable communities to make informed life choices.

Walsall Connected – A collaboration with the community

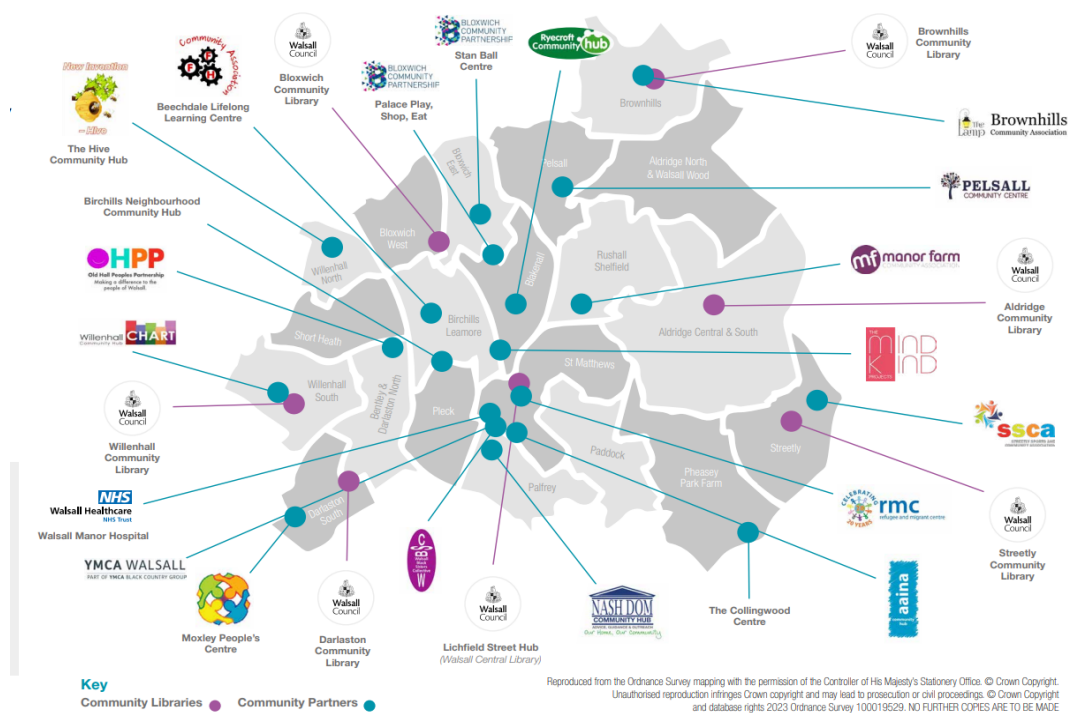
Walsall Connected is a collaboration between the council and its partner organisations to build resilient communities across the borough – helping over 10,000 residents in 2023.

There are 29 Connected ‘hubs’ across the borough manned by trained staff and volunteers, with each local hub offering services aimed at developing residents’ digital literacy, increasing access to first-line Council services, and creating a strong and sustainable community network.

The initial aim of Walsall Connected is to ensure digitally excluded residents receive consistent support and gain essential everyday transferable digital skills. Walsall Connected is ‘open to all’, any resident can receive support through any of the 28 Walsall Connected centres. Walsall Connected has expanded from its initial focus of reducing digital exclusion

across the borough, with the initiative now used to raise awareness of important local assets such as libraries and community groups.

Throughout 2023 there has been an increase in individuals accessing connected hubs, with three of the most common inquiry types, Food Banks (343), Homelessness (866) and the Household Support Fund (909) evidencing the reliance of vulnerable individuals on these hubs.



We will:

- Champion the design of accessible services to meet needs of service users.
- Ensure all services delivered by the council and through our statutory duties are accessible through a range of channels.
- Achieve a better understanding of who our service users are and their needs
- Improve service user engagement across all services to understand any barriers with accessing our services.
- Deliver accessible communication support through an Interpretation, Translation and Transcription and Easy Read (ITTE) system.
- Develop our staff to design and deliver services to meet the changing needs of our service users.
- Develop our behavioural science approach to improve our services.

Objective: Workforce

To be an inclusive organisation with staff at all levels who represent the diversity of our borough.

Our approach

We aim to improve the diversity of our workforce at all levels, so it represents the people who use our services from across all communities within the borough. We will do this through attracting, recruiting and upskilling individuals from all backgrounds and lived experiences. Our Organisational Development and Workforce Strategies outline what we will do to recruit the right staff to represent the people we serve, and how we plan to achieve an engaged workforce that understands the benefits that EDI brings. By attracting, welcoming, developing and advancing a diverse mix of individuals that represent the communities we serve we can bring real lived experience and knowledge to policy and service design, management of our programmes and activities, and ensure our work reflects the real needs of the borough. Therefore, our ongoing commitment to embed equality in our recruitment and selection processes is key. We will continue to maximise employee retention, retain knowledge, reduce skills gaps, and reduce recruitment costs through being a good employer.

We are planning for the workforce we need now, and in the future, to ensure the ongoing success of the Council. We will identify the skills and abilities we need to meet the needs of services and ensure staff are up skilled and re-skilled to meet these changing demands. Embracing new ways of working and ensuring a talented and motivated workforce, to give Walsall residents what they need and deserve, is at the heart of everything we do.

Our staff networks are crucial in allowing EDI to be better deployed through our working practices and allow a platform for every voice to be heard and valued. Equality Champions are embedded across all directorates to support colleagues in all aspects of EDI and staff who experience issues around inequality can raise these through our EDI concerns resolution process: *'Voices from Within: Navigating Employee EDI Concerns.'* Our pilot Accelerating Diverse Talent Programme has allowed staff from underrepresented groups to develop their skills and aspire to further development opportunities – and we want to continue to roll out this programme and do even more to advance diversity, voice, and inclusion across our workforce.

Staff Networks

Staff networks at Walsall Council were initiated during the pandemic and continue to be a useful platform to allow every voice to be heard and valued. Our Staff Networks have gone through a period of change and rejuvenation. Feedback received through a Council-wide staff survey and a Staff Network Development Day ensure they reflect the forums staff need and want.

There are six staff networks:

- The Disability Network
- Parents and Carers Network
- Ethnically Diverse Network
- Emerging Professional Network
- LGBTQ+ Network
- All Workers Welcome Network

A senior level Executive Director sponsor has been assigned to each network to provide support and resources for their successful implementation. Alongside this our Equality Champions Network has been equipped with the knowledge and skills to deliver their role to help drive positive EDI changes within the Council. Equality Champions provide advice, support and challenge within their teams and directorate to drive forward EDI in everything we do. This supports our commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace environment where the Council is well-positioned to meet the diverse needs of its workforce and promote a culture where everyone is empowered, respected, valued, and listened to.

We will:

- Attract, welcome, develop and advance a diverse mix of individuals to ensure we employ a workforce at all levels that represents the communities we serve.
- Become an inclusive employer through embedding equality in our recruitment processes.
- Maximise employee retention, retain knowledge, reduce skills gaps, and reduce recruitment costs through being a good employer.
- Ensure identification of skills and abilities to meet the needs of services and staff.
- Up-skill and re-skill staff through our effective workforce and succession planning processes.
- Develop and support our staff networks and Equality Champions to ensure all staff have a voice and can support our EDI principles across the organisation.

Delivering Improvement and Monitoring Our Progress

The Council has a clear governance structure in place to ensure EDI is embedded at the heart of our service design, delivery, workforce, and strategic decision-making. Our Corporate Equalities Group (CEG) governs EDI to ensure that the Council meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty, and Human Rights Act. CEG comprises senior managers and leaders from across the Council to ensure we represent all aspects of our equality objectives with a broad service perspective. The strategy will be monitored and reviewed regularly through this group. Furthermore, we have now embedded equality as a key priority for our Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Internal Resources from the start of the 2024/25 municipal year.

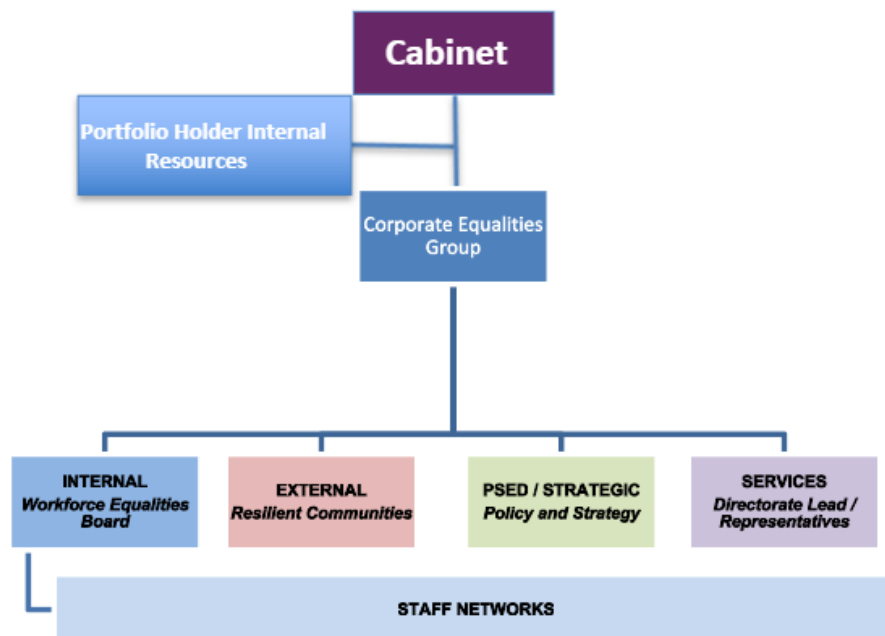


Figure 2: EDI Governance Structure

CEG reports upwards to the officer senior management group – our Corporate Management Team (CMT) – to ensure strategic alignment and focus on delivery of our equality objectives. Our EDI Portfolio Holder will be briefed on progress and regular updates provided through the Portfolio Holder’s Internal Resources briefings at Cabinet and Council.

Our responsibility for tackling inequality sits at every level across the Council and we understand the importance of having a good governance structure in place to deliver our EDI objectives. It allows our residents, businesses and workforce to understand our views on EDI and what they can expect from us through our EDI-related decision-making processes and

service delivery. The Council's governance and strategic leadership continues to promote a strong organisational culture that drives EDI through forming partnerships and positive relationships where people from all backgrounds are valued, respected, and supported.

This governance enables EDI to be an integral aspect of all decision making and is fundamental in the design and delivery of all policies and supporting action and delivery plans, hence making them equitable and inclusive. We will continue to address inequalities and implement solutions through making decisions that lead to positive equality outcomes through taking actions that are transparent and ethical.

The CEG monitors the work programme to ensure we deliver our equality objectives. This work programme will be developed through creation of an annual delivery plan to help us to achieve the objectives within this strategy and identify areas for improvement and growth. As we have aligned our approach to the EFLG, the work programme will be delivered through an action plan which underpins each EDI objective and is aligned to the criteria under each of the four modules of the EFLG. To ensure we can measure progress against the EFLG criteria, we will rely on good evidential data that reflects the equalities profile of the communities in the borough based on national and local data that is regularly reviewed and considered. This will support us to disaggregate data relating to relevant performance indicators and actions to analyse and demonstrate improved equality outcomes. The criteria under each module will allow opportunity to plan activity so we can work towards the 'Achieving' level across all elements by 2026, self-assess, and undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge to identifying our areas of strength and development in EDI. We will also outline our annual progress against the new strategy and EDI objectives in the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report that is approved at Cabinet in March each year as a requirement under the Public Sector Equality Duty.