

Shropshire Council Equality Objectives Action Plan 2024 to 2028

Actions for 2024 to 2028 APPROVED NOVEMBER 2024

Overall Strategic Action A: publish information in ways that are visible and accessible

Key Action	By whom	By when	Commentary 2024
1. Maintain online resource materials on equalities, diversity and social inclusion in one main location on the external website at www.shropshire.gov.uk , in order to enable such information to be presented as logically and visibly as possible for a range of audiences.	Rurality and Equalities (R&E) Specialist; Web Support Team	Action ongoing	<p>The web location for content is badged: “equality, diversity and social inclusion” (EDI)</p> <p>Utilising one main location enables information to be presented as logically and visibly as possible, with links to further external material that may be helpful, including the website of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).</p> <p>Content is kept under review, as are signposts to other parts of the Council website. Further material continues to be added every year.</p> <p>The annual service user and workforce diversity reports required to be published in line with our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) are added to the website each year. These provide extra depth and layers of information about not only the needs of people across and within groupings but also the heritage and cultures of diverse communities in Shropshire, including amongst our workforce.</p>

			<p>Use of these pages facilitates ready links to be made to press releases and resources elsewhere on the website, including committee papers, and to other related websites including Shropshire Archives.</p> <p>The focus remains on the website, for both internal and external audiences, whilst recognising the need to provide additional support and advice via email and telephone.</p> <p>The information also includes guidance on how to carry out equality, social inclusion and health impact assessments (ESHIA's). This is in order to help internal and external audiences to understand what is expected from these and why, including what is required by legislation, and what we also include as good practice. ESHIA's accompany Cabinet and Strategic Licensing Committee reports. They may therefore be found with agenda documents on the relevant committee pages of the website.</p> <p>The Council intranet pages around EDI are also utilised, providing further resources and guidance for our workforce, eg on Black History Month, eg on guidance to support Muslim employees during Ramadhan, eg access to free online briefings, alongside links to news pages on the intranet. We will continue to arrange online briefings and</p>
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			discussion forums linked to events eg Race Equality Week.
2. Utilise a range of communication channels including social media and face to face, in order to promote opportunities to foster good relations between people from diverse communities of place and interest and people within and across Protected Characteristics groupings, and increase understanding amongst the general public, service users and communities of the challenges faced by people with Protected Characteristics and people at risk of social exclusion.	Rurality & Equalities (R&E) Specialist; Communications Team; Web Support Team; Shropshire Council Anti Racism Forum (SCARF); Public Protection Team; other strategic and collaborative partnership working arrangements	Action ongoing; action has changed in scope towards greater use of digital materials and resources	<p>The Council will continue to promote and link in with national events and commemorations.</p> <p>This will include joint promotion and pooling of resources across sectors, and greater use of online resources, in order to address financial and staffing capacity constraints and publicise the efforts of community and voluntary sector. The examples here would be continuing to work with local Pride Event organisers to support their efforts, and with the two interfaith forums.</p> <p>The R&E Specialist and Comms Team will continue to work together on key events and commemorations, and on opportunities to raise awareness of and tackle racism. Active support has been provided by members of Shropshire Council Anti Racism Forum (SCARF), with one off events also organised by the ICS.</p> <p>The R&E Specialist also works closely with colleagues across the region, particularly TWC and Wolverhampton City Council colleagues, on online events and other materials for the workforce, notably for Pride Month, Black History Month and South Asian Heritage Month.</p>

			<p>Social media presence is led by the Comms Team, who work with the R&E Specialist on dates and events including Stephen Lawrence Day, South Asian Heritage Month, and UN International Women's Day.</p> <p>Internally, lockscreens and Teams background screens will also continue to be used to raise further awareness of and support for commemorations and celebrations eg including Pride Month. Payslips will also continue to be used in order to promote the Show Racism the Red Card campaign, and the White Ribbon campaign against domestic violence.</p> <p>An action for calendar year 2025 is to produce an inhouse diversity calendar. This will expand this action from promoting events to supporting a range of commemorations and celebrations. Further energy will also be focussed upon continuing collaborative efforts across the ICS.</p> <p>The actions outlined above will then form an ongoing strategic activity area which continues at no cost beyond officer time.</p> <p>Externally, the Council website main page will continue to be used to mark Holocaust Memorial Day and the Srebrenica genocide. A watching brief is being maintained in regard to any local emergence of religious hatred</p>
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			<p>and extremism, as with other forms of hate crime.</p> <p>Given changes in how hate crime is monitored and reported by external agency, ie the police, current and future activity is targeted at overall awareness-raising for the workforce as well as for service users and the public. This sets out to help people to recognise and tackle and report racism and other forms of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This may be through formal hate crime incident reporting or through other joint and organisational action.</p> <p>Data is collected by the Police and reporting by individuals is encouraged through processes promoted on the Council's website</p> <p>Where racism and other discrimination issues emerging through public consultation exercises have been identified by the Feedback and Insight Team, this will be taken forward as a collaborative action including specific communication campaigns to address misinformation and increase understanding.</p> <p>One off action will be taken wherever needed, including place-based activity and activity linked to rural hate crime.</p>
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Overall Strategic Action B: analyse and utilise data in ways that are consistent and coherent

Key Action	By whom	By when	Commentary 2024
1. Ensure that the analysis and utilisation of EDI intelligence from local and national sources is undertaken in ways that are consistent and coherent, and that link into the Council's strategic priorities and to the use to be gained through input to and findings from public consultation exercises and ongoing engagement with communities.	Feedback and Insight Team; Performance and Research Team; Public Health Intelligence; R&E Specialist; Service Areas	Progress made; action ongoing; linked to publication of data in the annual service user diversity report.	<p>In this way, data and analyses will form a more in-depth resource for service areas and for reports to Members as well as for publication on our website.</p> <p>The Council uses EDI questions within public consultation exercises to aid in analysis of who is responding, ascertain whether views are representative of the wider community, identify gaps where further engagement work is warranted, eg views of young people, and provide opportunity for views to be expressed on EDI issues.</p> <p>Where such views indicate that there may be misinformation or a level of misapprehension about a local service change proposal or a national issue, or where views are being expressed contrary to the three national equality aims, the findings will be used to develop communication campaigns.</p> <p>In so doing, this will help the Council and partners to take regard of feedback and views to be gained from service users and the wider community, and also demonstrate efforts to counteract</p>

			<p>views that are for example regarded as discriminatory against a group or grouping.</p> <p>This remains an area where efforts need to continue to ensure accurate analysis of data and findings, using up to date sources and methods to present intelligence and statutory performance information in ways that will be meaningful to a range of audiences.</p> <p>Data and findings also form an integral part of ESHIAs in terms of helping to assess the likely impact of proposed service changes upon people in different groupings. Service areas make use of ESHIAs in order to collate and present evidence about the communities, service users and stakeholders with whom they work, and demonstrate ongoing engagement with specific target groups and stakeholders.</p> <p>Officers additionally make use of opportunities to submit evidence to UK Parliamentary Inquiries and to Government Departments in order to seek to influence national policy. This is pertinent to our situation as a rural authority with physical and digital connectivity issues for a range of groupings.</p>
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			Comparison work into rural authority approaches continues to utilise opportunities to contribute to data collection through collective and collaborative working eg on fairer funding for rural authorities with the CCN and RSN. This represents best use of pooled resources including scant officer capacity.
2. Analyse and present contextual equality and health and wellbeing information in a range of ways and through local and national opportunities that arise, in order to strengthen collective understanding about issues and needs, and optimise use to be made in partnership, Council and service area policy and strategy development of all opportunities to aid understanding of equality, diversity and social inclusion issues.	Performance and Research Team; Public Health Team; Communications Team; Service Areas	Progress made; action ongoing	<p>This action involves use of a wider range of in depth analyses published on the website, including Census 2021 analyses and public health data.</p> <p>There is also a greater awareness of the complexities of health inequalities for different groupings, including those which emerged during the pandemic; and those which remain for people we may describe as vulnerable. This includes people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families; and young people leaving care.</p> <p>Future plans include further assessment of inequalities (both health and otherwise) through the embedding of select aspects of the Health Equity Assessment Tool within the ESHIA process.</p>

			Guidance will continue to be provided to officers and shared with elected members accordingly.
3. Ensure that equality, social inclusion and health impact assessments for service areas continue to be fit for purpose, in order to equip service areas to have due regard to the three national aims when considering and planning service changes, and to local policy approaches, thereby forming a coherent suite of materials to aid decision making processes.	Feedback and Insight Team; Public Health Team; R&E Specialist; Service Areas	ESHIA template continues to be kept under review, in line with any changes to national legislation and to local policy approaches.	<p>With the continuance of the ESHIA as a single use impact assessment template, our additional efforts to record that we have considered impacts of decisions through the screenings that we undertake thus involve considerations around: social inclusion; health and well being, linked to health impact considerations; environmental impacts, linked to climate change considerations; and socio-economic impacts.</p> <p>None of these are currently legal requirements under the Equality Act 2010. Together, they add value or at least ensure that the Council is visibly seeking to take an holistic view of impacts: and as importantly for our service areas is taking a proportionate and time efficient way in which to do so through use of a single template.</p> <p>Nationally, it is likely that the Government will enact the element of Equality Act legislation requiring us to have due regard to socio economic considerations.</p>

			<p>The Council has, however, been doing so since 2018 and also seeks to factor rural impact within such considerations.</p> <p>Future local plans include further assessment of inequalities (both health and otherwise) through the embedding of select aspects of the Health Equity Assessment Tool within the ESHIA process.</p> <p>A refresh of the wider Shropshire Inequalities Plan is also due for 2025.</p> <p>The R&E Specialist, Public Health lead for health impacts, and Feedback and Insight Team colleagues provide critical friend support to service areas on completion of ESHIAs.</p>
4. Analyse internal information on workforce, and compare with good practice authorities, in order to identify and comment on trends and prioritise where the gaps may be in representation within the workforce of groups with Protected Characteristics.	Human Resources Team; R&E Specialist	Progress made; action ongoing; linked to publication of data in the annual workforce diversity report	<p>Comparison work is maintained as a watching brief. This has included learning from the Civil Service as well as other local authorities, particularly at regional level.</p> <p>An internal working group chaired by HR has carried out activity over the last reporting term to encourage the self completion of equality information by existing employees as well as new starters.</p>

			<p>This was linked to the need identified for emergency contact data to be completed as well. Targeted support has been given to the areas where there is limited access to update systems e.g. cleaning and catering teams.</p> <p>Positive approaches towards recruitment and retention are reported upon in the annual workforce diversity report eg flexible working. Links are also made to Gender Gap reporting.</p>
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Overall Strategic Action C: work together in ways that are collaborative and cost efficient

Key Action	By whom	By when	Commentary 2024
1. Promote Holocaust Memorial Day, 27 th January each year across the county and more widely	R&E Specialist; Feedback and Insight Team; Arboriculturists; Communications Team; Web Support Team; Archives and Museums; Libraries; inter faith forums; primary and secondary schools.	January each year; action has changed in scope to now include an event to Remember Srebrenica, in July each year.	<p>Activities are focussed on work with primary schools and interfaith forums and with local councillors as community leaders.</p> <p>There are now 19 trees in the HMD memorial cherry tree orchard being grown with schools across Shropshire, with one more tree to be planted in January 2025. These are sourced by the County Arboriculturists.</p> <p>Details about activities are published as press releases, as well as on the</p>

			<p>Council website, and via the national Holocaust Memorial Day Trust website.</p> <p>Commemorations now include annual services to Remember Srebrenica, at a cherry tree planted at Shirehall in 2021 to commemorate the role of the armed forces in their humanitarian efforts. Further information for this was provided by Archives Team, who continue to support in annual efforts.</p> <p>Interfaith forums also return as requested to the cherry tree at Woodside School in Oswestry to remember Anne Frank's birthday.</p> <p>The Council's efforts are not only around ensuring that the Holocaust and other genocides are never forgotten but also around providing opportunity for children to work with representatives of a range of faith communities and grow their own understanding of world faiths.</p>
2. Identify and implement good practice in training and guidance on developing and maintaining good relations with groupings in the community, as part of Shropshire Council guidance, training programmes and	Human Resources Team; R&E Specialist; Democratic Services; community and voluntary sector organisations; other strategic and	Progress made; action ongoing	<p>This action aids Shropshire Council to meet its general equality duty under the Public Sector Equality Duty.</p> <p>This action has changed in scope over the last reporting term, in part due to the move towards greater use of online materials and resources.</p>

<p>briefings for staff and elected Members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The aim is to increase understanding amongst officers and elected Members about the challenges faced by people with Protected Characteristics and people at risk of social exclusion. - This is in order to help in collective progress, for the workforce and for members, towards the three national equality aims, ie: eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; and advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations. 	<p>collaborative partnership working arrangements.</p>	<p>The focus is now more upon awareness raising of campaigns, celebrations and commemorations, through news items, intranet and internet resources, and online events and briefings.</p> <p>Awareness raising efforts include the following: terminology changes such as no longer using BAME as an acronym; being an ally, particularly for the Protected Characteristic groupings of Race, Religion or Belief, and Sexual Orientation; visible 'due regard' being taken of the needs of neurodiverse individuals within ESHIAs; and use made of poetry and narratives as a way to help people to think about commemorations and celebrations.</p> <p>Additionally, the Safe Ageing No Discrimination (SAND) Covenant agreed by Cabinet in November 2023 serves as a protocol template to use for further work with community and voluntary sector organisations who work across Protected Characteristic groupings.</p> <p>The Council continues to maintain and develop training resources online, with a baseline module for all staff aimed at increasing understanding of EDI policy and legislation and the part that all staff and Members are expected to play in</p>
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			<p>helping the Council to meet its PSED and demonstrate good practice.</p> <p>Specific support for staff and Members in understanding the PSED and in understanding the role and purpose of ESHIAs will continue to include bespoke online sessions, as well as the publication of updates in guidance for all Members and all managers.</p> <p>Research continues to be undertaken into how other rural authorities, public sector organisations, the private sector, and the voluntary and community sector approach training and guidance, scoped more now towards use of online resources and towards links to be made with ICS partner organisations.</p>
<p>3. Actions: to work with local NHS organisations and Telford and Wrekin Council through the Integrated Care System (ICS), on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For the workforce: equip managers with the confidence and competencies to recognise and tackle racism and other forms of discrimination, including sexism and misogyny, through targeted training and briefing, and 	Human Resources Team; R&E Specialist; Shropshire Council Anti Racism Forum (SCARF); Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin ICS	Some progress made; action ongoing	<p>HR Business Partners are aware that further support is needed to build on awareness raising for managers as well as for staff, to equip them in their leadership roles with the confidence and competencies to recognise and tackle racism wherever encountered.</p> <p>This has also been highlighted by SCARF, whose members include colleagues working with refugees, and by the Workforce EDI group of the ICS, both of which have raised concerns</p>

<p>equip all employees to act as allies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - For service users and the community: implement communication campaigns to address misinformation and raise awareness of how to recognise and report hate crime in all its forms, allied to communications about standards of respectful behaviour and language towards the workforce 			<p>about racism towards health and social care staff.</p> <p>A training proposal has been recast from face to face workshops, to a broader online offer to save on finance whilst still leading to projected positive outcomes. This includes actions to tackle sexism and misogyny, as well as support neurodiversity awareness. Financial constraints have prevented its procurement and delivery to date in that format. This training need will be taken forward as an action in liaison with the ICS.</p> <p>There is a growing need to collate and highlight a number of racism and other discrimination issues emerging through public consultation exercises, identified by the Feedback and Insight Team. This needs to be taken forward as a collaborative action including specific communication campaigns to address misinformation and increase understanding.</p> <p>Action will be allied to findings obtained through the ICS about racism experienced by health and social care staff, including from academic research as well as sharing of experiences.</p>
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			Research continues to be undertaken into how other rural authorities, public sector organisations, the private sector, and the voluntary and community sector approach training and guidance, scoped more now towards use of online resources and towards links to be made with ICS partner organisations.
4. Support positive joint approaches towards recruitment and retention of young people in local businesses and within the Council	Human Resources Team	Progress made; action ongoing	<p>Shropshire Council continues to promote the development of employees through its on-line learning system, making learning more accessible and flexible to all employees,</p> <p>Shropshire Council continues to utilise the Apprenticeship Levy to support accredited learning and will monitor the development of new processes through Skills England and the new Skills and Growth Levy (Apprenticeship Levy reform) over the next four years.</p> <p>There is an ongoing commitment that the organisation will support diversity and inclusion of apprenticeships and other early careers and career development initiatives such as T Level Placements, Work Experience, Supported Internships and supporting Children Looked After</p>

			<p>Apprenticeships are delivered by local and national providers and offer flexibility in the way they deliver training to meet the needs of the organisation. Shropshire Council continues to work with these providers to develop apprenticeships for the future, providing greater flexibility to all employees in accessing apprenticeships</p> <p>Additionally, the Council supports care leavers in a number of practical ways, as well as identifying them as a distinct local grouping due to their recognised vulnerabilities.</p> <p>The Council also requires companies tendering for contracts to articulate how they will achieve social value, including through support to local young people.</p>
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