

# Newcastle City Council

## Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Report

October 2023



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## Foreword from Councillor Irim Ali

As Lead Cabinet Member with responsibility for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in Newcastle City Council, I am proud to present this report which sets out the Council's approach and commitment to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

The Council has a responsibility to lead by example and to unite our partners to address the challenges that limit what people can do and become. I welcome the support that colleagues across the Cabinet, Council and the City have shown towards advancing inclusivity and supporting diversity in our great city.

Newcastle's heart is its identity – we are a multicultural city, a City of Sanctuary, and a regional capital that warmly welcomes visitors from across the world. We value our diverse communities and the richness they bring to our quality of life.

We are actively working to ensure everyone benefits from our city's success and crucially, we recognise that more work is needed particularly in the wider economic and social context which has exacerbated poverty and inequality across our city. We will do this by learning more from communities, businesses and partners – valuing their experiences to shape an inclusive vision for the city. We will design equality, diversity and inclusion into our services by default, both those we deliver directly, and those that are delivered on our behalf by our partners. We will also lead the way by being a truly inclusive employer, embedding ambitious practice that challenges us and influences others in the city to do more and do better.

Through this report, I'm seeking to make EDI action more visible so that anyone working for the Council, or in partnership with us or as a resident using our services, you are assured that you will always be treated fairly and with respect. It's time to shine a spotlight on the journey of continuous improvement that we have embarked upon.

Equality, diversity and inclusion are everybody's business, and we all have a part to play in building a fairer city for all. I'm intent on harnessing all of the talent and perspectives in our city and I look forward to working together to build a more inclusive city for all.



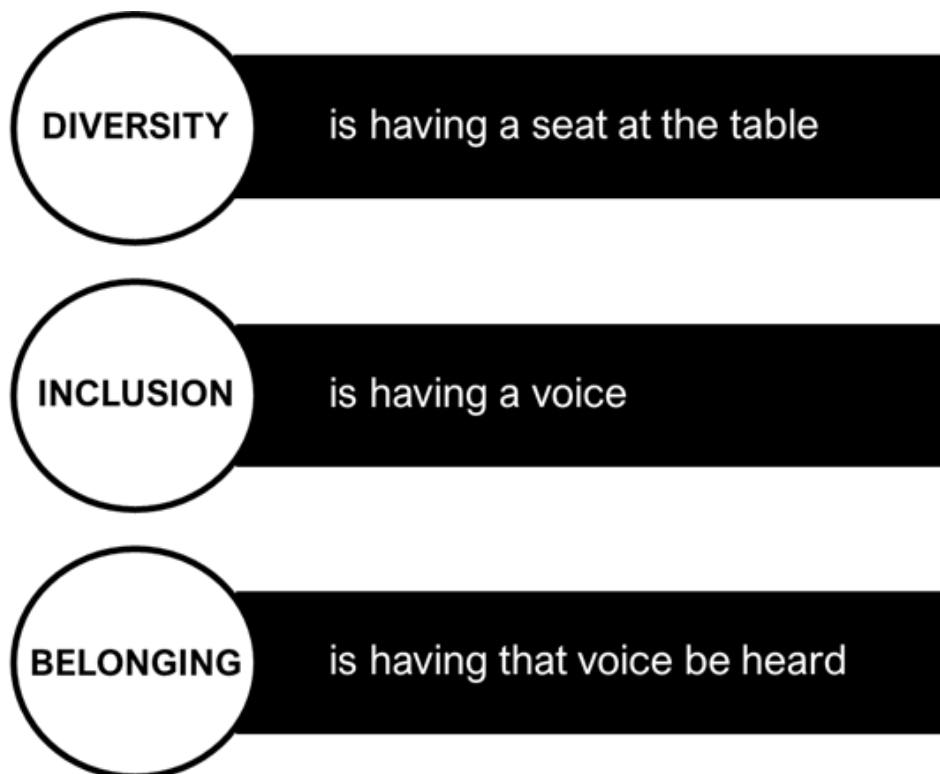
**Cllr Irim Ali,**  
Lead Cabinet Member for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

## Introduction

Equality, diversity, and inclusion is at the heart of our vision and values and is part of everything we do. The council has a critical role to play in addressing challenges of reducing inequalities and enhancing inclusion and cohesion within our communities, and we must do this against a backdrop of sustained unfair and disproportionate cuts to Local Authority funding from central government.

We must also ensure greater diversity, equality and inclusion within our own organisation to lead our city by example and pave the way for a more diverse democracy, supporting better life outcomes and celebrating our vibrant and diverse communities.

With determined leadership, and focused action, we're launching a dedicated portfolio reporting process to highlight the key interventions we're delivering and the robust frameworks that we have implemented to ensure that everyone, regardless personal characteristics, or background is empowered to reach their maximum potential.



## Our communities

To ensure that our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion in Newcastle continues to be effective, we need to know about the make-up of our communities.

In Newcastle:

- There are approximately **300,125** people living in Newcastle.
- A population that is **51% female and 49% male**
- **18.7%** of residents have a **long-term health problem** or **disability** that limits their daily activities.
- **20.3%** of our residents were born **outside of the UK** and **6%** of households don't have **English** as their first language.
- In the 2021 Census **41%** of residents reported their religion as **Christian**.
- The next largest religious group is **Muslim** at **9%** which has almost **doubled** in the last **10 years**.
- **42%** of **children** live in **poverty** and **16.8%** of households are in **fuel poverty**
- **11.4%** of our residents are from a **BAME** background.
- **1 in 4** school children in the most recent intake in Newcastle comes from a **BAME** background.
- Hate crimes have increased with **race related** crimes making up **70%** of all reported hate crimes.
- Crimes against **transgender people** has seen the **largest increase** over the last year.

### We lead by example:

Newcastle will be more prosperous when opportunity is shared more widely and more fairly across all of our communities and we cannot tackle deeply engrained inequalities unless we truly understand the issues driving them and take collective, joined-up action with residents and our partners.

Data is a powerful tool in our drive to tackle discrimination and exclusion. It allows the Council to better design, adapt, monitor and evaluate policies. We are using our Health Determinants Research Collaborative and other city research assets to better understanding the communities we serve and their priorities.

Through better data, insights and engagement we are developing evidence-based responses both within the council and across the city. With cutting edge, real world research underpinning all our work we are delivering targeted interventions that will help close the gap for under-represented or disadvantaged groups.

## Our Colleagues



We know that having a diverse workforce is the right thing to do, and it makes sense; diversity and Inclusion brings a wide range of talents and skills into the organisation that can ignite a culture of loyalty and solidarity, increase staff retention and improve productivity.

It also allows the council to have a better understanding of our residents, communities, businesses and partners if people from all backgrounds and different lived experiences are represented in our workforce.

In the Council's workforce:

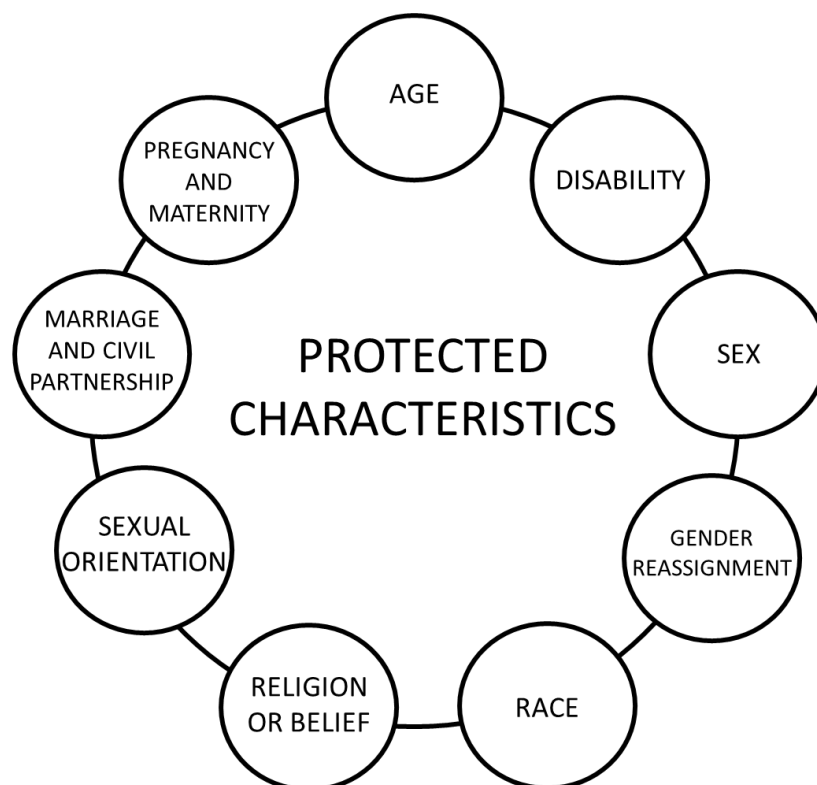
- 60% are female, 40% male
- BAME staff make up 6% of the workforce overall
- 5.2% of the workforce identify as disabled
- 2.7% of the workforce identify as LGBT+ groups
- 4% are aged 16-24
- 34% are aged 25-44
- 57% are aged 45-64
- 0.1% are aged 75 and over.
- The Gender Pay Gap shows that on average, female employees are paid 0.5% lower than males (8.3% gap nationally).
- The average ethnicity pay gap is 6.9% compared to a NE average of 9.5%

We have **employee health advocates** and **mental health first aiders** across the council who volunteer in their teams and wider workplace to make improvements to staff health and wellbeing. They do this by giving advice and signposting employees to support and information on health issues such as physical activity, healthy eating, mental wellbeing, smoking cessation, alcohol reduction and sexual health.

## Our legal obligations

As a public body, the council must comply with the Equality Act 2010 which gives protection to individuals and groups identifying with the nine protected characteristics in the Act making it unlawful to discriminate against someone on the grounds of:

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



In addition, The Public Sector Equality Duty came into force in 2011, placing a duty on local authorities to:

- consider how their policies and decisions affect people with protected characteristics.
- prevent discrimination and inequality.
- promote inclusion.

The equality duty sets out the ways we should integrate the consideration of equality and good relations into our day-to-day business. For example, in the ways we design our policies, the ways we deliver our services, and the ways we review their effectiveness. This means that we have due regard to the need to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act by removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not by taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not by encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

## **Moving Beyond Compliance**

Our drive and commitment to EDI is not just rooted in our legal responsibilities. As well as a clear moral case for action, the productivity benefits for organisations and cities have been well documented. Advancing EDI is beneficial for all. Additional action includes:

### **Our Socio-Economic Duty**

Newcastle City Council's approach to tackling inequality goes beyond our statutory duty as outlined in the Equality Act 2010, to the voluntary adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty (SED). In addition to assessing the impact of any proposals or policies on groups with protected characteristics, we also assess impact on community cohesion and on those experiencing, or at risk of, socio-economic disadvantage.

The council was invited to take part in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's National Socio-Economic Duty Network, as an example of good practice. This network of public bodies shares areas of good practice within the delivery of the SED, including the steps being taken by authorities, the impact this is having, and how the main barriers to tackling socio-economic inequalities effectively are managed.

### **Assessing Equality Impacts**

As a council, we undertake a comprehensive assessment of equality impacts relating to any changes in policy, services, or procedures. To ensure that our resources are invested equitably, we carry out integrated impact assessments (IIAs).

IIAs ensures an evidence-based review is key to making decisions. This means we actively consider how our proposals are likely to affect people and places in the city, particularly our most vulnerable residents and communities.



This ensures we:

- improve our awareness and understanding of any disproportionate differences between groups of people and how our policies or practice may impact on them.
- reduce barriers to participation by taking action to mitigate or remove barriers.
- increase EDI action and awareness amongst Council staff
- demonstrate that decisions are transparent and based on evidence with clear reasoning.

### **Our policies and initiatives**

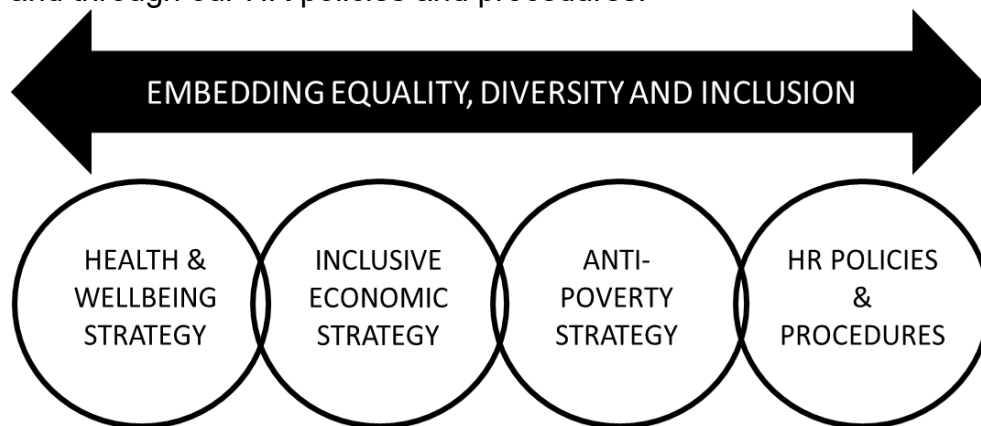
The council has a wealth of policies and initiatives in place to support the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion, including but not limited to:

- A comprehensive **Dignity at Work Policy**
- **Disability support** for employees – Newcastle City Council has been assessed as a '**Disability Confident**' employer and will be seeking to achieve **leadership status** over the next 12 months.
- **Staff networks (LGBT+, Disabled and BME)** in place which offer support and practical advice to colleagues and managers. The network is available to assist in influencing council strategy, policy and procedures to promote equality and tackle discrimination.
- A range of initiatives, guidance and support for employees experiencing **mental ill health** including a **24-hour helpline**.
- **Special leave** relating to **disability**.
- **Special leave** for anyone **transitioning** or wishing to transition at work.
- A suite of '**work-life balance**' **policies** which can enable employees to work flexibly depending on their personal circumstances.
- **Better Health at Work Award**.
- **Equality, diversity, and inclusion training for all staff**.
- Development of a **Neuro-diversity training for HR & OD** teams to inform our people processes.
- A **refreshed corporate induction** which includes an equality, diversity and inclusion element.
- **Five recruitment roadshows** have been held across the city in the past year, with over five hundred residents, including those from diverse communities who were able to access employability support offered by NCC, YHN & Partners.

## Our corporate framework

Promoting equality and tackling inequalities is at the heart of our goals at Newcastle and we recognise that this is fundamental to building a strong and inclusive local economy and a fair society

Equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded in all we do including through our Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Inclusive Economy Strategy, Anti-Poverty Strategy and through our HR policies and procedures.



## Our strategic principles

All of our work is underpinned by our four strategic principles:

### 1. Value lived experience

Employees and residents will be able to share their experiences and be heard.

### 2. Well-led and co-produced

We will embed inclusive decision-making in all we do, and co-design organisational and service changes to reflect the diversity of residents and colleagues.

### 3. Shared responsibility

It is everyone's responsibility to eliminate inequality, recognise and respect difference, and treat everyone with dignity and respect.

## Equality benchmarking tools

Benchmarking Equality and Diversity allows us to distinguish that are doing well from those that need improvement. We are undertaking two assessments to drive aspirations, measure progress, provide an objective basis on which to plan our EDI actions. These are:

### Equality Framework for Local Government

The purpose of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) remains to help organisations, in discussion with local partners including local people, review

and improve their performance for people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010. By using the EFLG organisations can also be helped to deliver on the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)**. The EFLG continues to encourage local adaptation with a focus on local issues and problems, and prompts learning from, and the spreading of, good practice.

We are currently undertaking a self-assessment exercise based on the EFLG framework. The findings of this review will inform an evidence-based **EDI strategy and action plan** for the council, along with the opportunity to re-focus our **statutory equality objectives** as well as supporting the delivery of the **Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan**.

### **Diverse by Design**

We are currently undertaking the **Diverse by Design framework** which is also produced by the Local Government Association. This outlines fifteen key steps which are fundamental in helping local government employers embed fair values, systems, and behaviours throughout their organisation. This includes:

- Data collection and analysis
- Redefining equality and fairness
- Senior diversity champions
- Agreeing how to talk about equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Rethinking recruitment processes
- Engaging managers and staff

### **They will help us to:**

- Go beyond initiatives and compliance
- Understand what change is needed and why
- Be clear about how this will improve the organisation for employees, communities, and partners.
- Inform our approach to refreshing our **statutory equality objectives** (equality priorities)
- Inform the content of our **Workforce Plan** (our People Plan)

### **Our priorities: a framework for positive change**

#### **EDI Strategy**

We are working to develop an effective EDI strategy for the Council. This will drive change within our organisation and the city, whilst always ensuring that our colleagues, partners and residents remain at the heart of our thinking and decision making.

To ensure effectiveness, our EDI strategy will be embedded into the corporate framework and championed at every level within the organisation. This strategy will clearly articulate our ambition and priorities, highlight key actions and bring together the EDI actions already embedded within existing Council strategies. We want the Council to be a beacon of best practice for EDI and this strategy will become our roadmap for this transformation.

## **Anti Racism**

### **Race Charter**

We are making an active and conscious effort to have conversations about what it means in practice to be anti-racist – both as an organisation and across the city. This is an important milestone in our ongoing effort to combat racism in our city. This includes work to **develop a race charter** to articulate our stance on racial discrimination and to reinforce our vision of the inclusive city we aspire to be.

We will engage and work with and people experiencing all forms of racism to develop a charter that reflects the lived experiences of our communities. The Charter will outline the key actions that are needed to redress inequality in our city and which complements our support for **UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter**.

### **Diverse Curriculum**

In an increasingly divided world, education is the key for Newcastle and our future generations to build a fairer and more inclusive society. That's why we are engaging with Newcastle schools to explore the feasibility of introducing a more **diverse curriculum** in our schools.

### **Black History Month**

We are proud to support and celebrate Black History Month which helps to recognise and celebrate the important people and events in Black History that helped to shape our country and city. It's also an opportunity for residents to learn more about the lives and legacies of black people in Newcastle.

### **Corporate EDI Board**

We are establishing a EDI Board, led by the Chief Executive and Director of Workforce and Inclusion to provide clear strategic leadership of EDI programmes of work and action plans. This Board will bring together representatives of equality groups, including colleagues with a range of different lived experiences and Trade Union representatives to ensure all voices are heard and can influence our policy and practice.

As well as steering the Council's overall approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion, the Board will provide powerful advocacy for inclusive practices in the city's communities and businesses. The Board will report to the Cabinet Member for EDI on EDI related issues in the city, including those faced by specific communities and/or groups.

### **Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities**

We know that LGBT+ people continue to face discrimination, abuse and even violence for being who they are. Reports of violent attacks and hate crime against LGBT+ people, show hate crime against transgender people has quadrupled in recent years. Therefore, raising awareness and advancing education on matters affecting the LGBT+ community is paramount.

We are facilitating equality and diversity training for all Councillors and Officers. As well as taking a zero-tolerance approach towards discrimination, we also proactively mark dates across the LGBT+ calendar, including Pride Month, LGBT+ History Month, Lesbian Visibility Week, Transgender Day of Remembrance, and International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.

### **Sexual harassment**

We recognise the endemic nature of harassment, abuse, and violence faced by women in society. We recently raised awareness of the issues and have become a **White Ribbon accredited council**. We proactively challenge any sexism, sexual harassment and abuse as an integral part of our duties both to our staff and elected representatives of the city. We will intervene early and challenge attitudes and beliefs that normalise sexual violence. Sexual harassment can impact anyone however women and girls are much more likely to be the victims. Sexual harassment All Party Parliamentary Group for UN Women reported that **80% of all UK women (and 97% of women under 25)** are subject to routine sexual harassment and abuse. We strongly believe that all employers must do more and take action to ensure that women and girls are safe and respected.

This means that women and girls, and any staff impacted must be supported to speak up about sexual harassment, abuse and violence. In order to achieve this we have developed a **robust draft sexual harassment policy** which will consult on with trade unions and staff. This policy will not only be our policy but will act as a model policy for all employers in the city.

Once the policy has been agreed with our staff and partners we will develop and deliver **training and awareness** raising materials on preventing, challenging, and reporting sexism, sexual harassment, and sex discrimination. This will ensure staff and elected members know how to challenge and report any incidents of sexual harassment that they experience, or witness as bystanders. We will also ensure staff and managers have access to an **independent service** to support and provide help to anyone experiencing sexual harassment.

### **Roma holocaust**

Roma and Sinti was the second largest number of victims exterminated by the Nazis, after the Jewish community. The Roma Holocaust represents a unique chapter in the Holocaust, characterised by the systematic persecution, discrimination, and genocide of the Roma and Sinti communities during World War II. We officially acknowledge **2nd August as a commemorative day** for the Roma Holocaust within our city and promote education and awareness about the Roma Holocaust on this day, ensuring that the unique experiences and historical injustices faced by the Roma and Sinti communities are recognised and understood.

### **Disabled people**

As we continue to learn to live with Covid, the disproportionate impacts on disabled people are still compounding existing inequalities. Disabled people continue to encounter barriers to education, services, health care, work and access to support and care at home. Disabled people are also more likely to face discrimination and

negative attitudes, be a victim of crime and experience problems with housing and transport.

We are currently a member of the **Disability Confident Scheme** which recognises our commitment to successfully employing and retaining disabled people, and people with long term health conditions within our workforce. Over the next 12 months we will take the next step to becoming a Disability Confident Leader.

**Our Community Champions programme** continues to work with disabled communities to help improve information about Covid, vaccines and the impact of the pandemic. This has included working with disability charities and organisations in the city to understand concerns and barriers to accessing vaccines and to spread information. Our Champions created and distributed accessible information on how to stay safe and a group of champions with learning disabilities created a short film about looking after your mental health in the wake of the pandemic, which has been shared widely. Looking forward we will work more closely with people with learning disabilities and neurodiversity to address barriers to engaging in health services and improve health literacy.

**The Newcastle Street Charter** was initiated and led by blind and partially-sighted people and local sight loss organisations. It was developed in consultation and with the support of disabled people and other groups and organisations. The Charter aims to remove or reduce the barriers that disabled people and others with mobility issues face in our city and sets out actions and commitments that everyone involved will abide by. We are in regular contact with disability groups across the city on any potential developments and operational issues which emerge relating to disabled peoples' needs.

**Our accessible communications plan and toolkit** is currently being refreshed, ensuring our communications are inclusive for all. The plan and toolkit will be designed for our colleagues who are involved in or who have responsibility for the authoring, commissioning, publication and / or provision of information. It will also be relevant to colleagues who have any contact with residents, carers, service users, or Newcastle's external stakeholders and partners.