

# TACKLING RACIAL INEQUALITY

## Good Practice Case Studies

LB Hackney  
Workforce Diversity &  
Inclusive Leadership

Recognising that the council will be best placed to successfully support those they serve through a more inclusive and diverse leadership, in 2018 Hackney embarked on a major corporate equality programme, supported and promoted by a team of trained champions across the organisation.



### Problem we were seeking to address

Workforce diversity and inclusivity is essential for any organisation, no less for those in the public sector. Inclusive, diverse and representative public sector workforces are key components of effective service delivery and developing strong relationships with communities and residents. Achieving such a workforce means diversity at all levels of an organisation, including frontline services and senior leadership. A lack of diversity can result in a poor level of genuine engagement with local communities which often means that marginalised communities are labelled 'hard to reach' and little effort is made to connect with them. In Hackney Council there is currently an under-representation of culturally and ethnically diverse staff at senior levels; variations in workforce diversity between different directorates and lower rates of satisfaction among disabled and culturally and ethnically diverse staff ([Single Equality Scheme for Hackney 2018 -2022](#)).

Establishing a diverse workforce in local government and the public sector can bring a range of benefits, including:

- A diverse workforce brings in a diversity of experiences and perspectives to better meet the needs of residents and improve services. It enables us to tap into and harness talent from across the community
- Diversity supports innovation
- Diversity and promoting a more inclusive leadership culture is crucial to the way we can tackle underlying and systemic issues that might drive inequalities.

### Partners involved

LB Hackney

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### **The solution or actions/proposed solution or actions**

In 2018, Hackney Council launched a major corporate equality programme, adopting a dual focus on promoting workforce diversity and promoting an inclusive leadership culture. This is based on the idea the council will be best placed to successfully support those they serve through inclusive and diverse leadership. Several initiatives have been established or are planned for 2021 as part of the programme and by drawing upon findings from the Equality Framework for Local Government self-assessment, desk research, staff survey results and feedback from unions.

### **Creation of Inclusion Champions programme**

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- Champions delivered in-house inclusive leadership and cultural humility training to senior managers – aiming to encourage greater self-awareness about inter-personal biases and preferences, to better understand our own culture and how this impacts our outlook and the decisions we take.
- The Inclusion Champions and Strategic Delivery Team delivered short, online sessions covering the key principles of inclusive leadership and cultural competency with over 500 managers. The sessions were designed to encourage greater self-awareness of biases and encourage managers to learn more about the realities of racism and the impact this may have on staff health and wellbeing. As a result of these sessions, over 100 managers are due to undertake more in-depth training in these areas and an online module on equality and diversity in the workplaces has been launched for all managers. A workshop on understanding institutional racism as senior leaders is also being piloted.

### **Internal workforce diversity and subsequent action plan**

Directors held focus groups with staff from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds. The aim of this was to help the council to understand the way management behaviours, policies and procedures impact the wellbeing and career progression of staff.

The focus groups then led to the creation of an action plan which was produced with staff and looks at the entire employee journey (recruitment, induction, development, progression, exit). This included measures to improve management practices that would be more transparent, fair and encouraging of career

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progression for staff. The action plan also advocates for greater cultural visibility to the council's ethnically diverse staff, as well as improvement of workforce data that could pinpoint 'problem' areas for development.

### **Move away from one-size-fits-all approach**

Based on recognition that the council employs many kinds of people from hundreds of different professional backgrounds, each with their own qualifications and career pathways – what works for one person may not work for another. Services are best placed to recognise where they need to focus their efforts, and to do so accordingly, for instance focusing on more staff training, better recruitment protocols or better visibility of management in the workplace. This approach allows service-specific concerns identified from staff feedback to be addressed, for instance around department culture and visibility.

### **Development of single management standard**

Creating an inclusive management toolkit that aims to encourage best practice and consistency and to embed inclusive practice in everything managers do to manage staff and deliver services. This also seeks to address feedback from staff on the inconsistencies in management practice when supporting staff career development.

### **Leadership programme**

The council has plans to launch a leadership programme for senior managers (possibly delivered with partner organisations) to equip managers with strategies to more confidently engage with those outside the organisation and encourage inclusive practices in areas like procurement and co-production to benefit the wider economy.

The council also has plans for Inclusion Champions to work with their managers on anti-racist and inclusive leadership action plans for their services (some of this work has already started), equalities coaching, reverse mentoring programme and data dashboards to track progress and ensure accountability.

### **Background**

Hackney is the sixth most diverse borough in London, there are well-established Caribbean, Turkish, Kurdish, Vietnamese and Orthodox Jewish communities. According to the 2011 Census, 36 per cent of Hackney's residents are White British, with the remainder of the local population made up of Black and minority ethnic groups (with the largest group Other White, 16.3 per cent, followed by Black African, 11.4 per cent).

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Health outcomes are frequently worse for the Black population although this is not always the case. For example, prevalence of hypertension, stroke and serious mental health illness is highest amongst the Black population. Obesity disproportionately affects Black children in Hackney, although obesity is a problem across all ethnicities.

Black children are more likely to be among Hackney's looked after children and far more likely to be in residential care. Black children also have the poorest performance at GCSE (53 per cent achieve of A\*-C in 5 GCSEs including English and Maths) with Asian children performing the best (68 per cent achieve of A\*-C in 5 GCSEs including English and Maths).

Child Poverty is highest among the Black population and young carers are more likely to be from Black and minority ethnicities.

Residents of Other Ethnicity are the least likely to have a Level 4 qualification and most likely to be have no qualifications. This group are also the least likely to be employed.

Black residents are more likely to worry about crime as well as be a victim of crime. Black residents are also most likely to be searched, as part of stop-and-search, compared with Asian and White residents. Similarly, over half (57 per cent) of first-time offenders are Black while just over a quarter (29 per cent) of Hackney's youth population is Black. Gang membership is also high amongst the Black population as well as the Turkish/Kurdish population ([Equalities Evidence Base: London Borough of Hackney](#)).

### Desired outcomes/delivered outcomes

To promote workforce diversity and inclusive leadership culture in order to tackle inequality more effectively and improve the services provided to residents. The programme has a number of key indicators for success:

- The gap is closed between the 82 per cent (81 per cent in 2016) of staff who feel the Council is committed to Equality in policy and 69 per cent who feel the Council is committed in practice
- There are a higher proportion of disabled staff working at the Council
- Senior management is more reflective of Hackney's diversity (culturally and ethnically diverse, and disabled staff)
- Managers feel more confident and competent in promoting equality and addressing workforce diversity (need baseline)
- Disabled staff are more satisfied with the Council as an employer and higher proportion feel Council is committed to Equality in practice.

The overall aim of the programme is to promote workforce diversity and inclusive leadership culture in order to tackle inequality more effectively and improve the services provided to residents

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### Learning/evaluation

The Inclusive Leadership and Cultural Humility training has been well received with participants rating both courses 3.9 out of 5. Feedback from participants and Inclusion Champions has been used to inform the development of the programme.

Hackney Council is developing the range and quality of workforce data it collects. A new Workforce Data Scorecard has been developed, which includes demographic information on agency staff and recruitment data for the first time. A Workforce Census will be carried out next month, to encourage more staff to record their demographic information. This should improve the quality of the workforce data.

The council will shortly be repeating its staff survey which includes questions measuring employee satisfaction in relation to the Council as an employer overall, fair treatment, commitment to equality, in principle and in practice, and the extent to which senior managers are inclusive. Results will be analysed by grade and demographic characteristics to measure progress against 2018 results.

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