



Inclusive workforce strategy 2021 - 2025

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Foreword



Inclusion is at the heart of our vision 'to build stronger communities' and is one of the elements of 'Our Identity' - which sets out who we are as an organisation and how we are expected to work, lead and act to deliver our services.

I want us to create together, an environment where we all feel engaged, supported and are able to thrive. Where we listen to and value others' opinions and ideas, treat each other with respect and celebrate our differences and the value they bring. This will give us an inclusive workplace where everyone can perform at their best, deliver our vision and support the communities we serve.

This is a strategy for all of us, as we all have a part to play in creating a workplace where everyone is welcomed, valued and rewarded for their achievements. It will support us to continue to move forward on our inclusion and diversity journey. I look forward to working with you all to deliver this.

Terence Herbert
Chief Executive



What does inclusion mean?

Inclusion

Inclusion means feeling valued and accepted for who you are. It has two key elements: uniqueness and belonging.

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Uniqueness

Uniqueness refers to every single one of us; our diverse identities and the lived experiences that make us unique. In relation to inclusion, it means that you are able (and feel safe) to be your true self, without feeling like you have to hide any aspects of your identity.

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Belonging

Belonging means feeling like you fit in. You feel like you belong when there is trust, you are able to have open, honest and transparent conversations with others, and you feel accepted and valued for who you are.



Introduction



An inclusive and diverse workplace where everyone is welcomed and feels a sense of belonging is important for our wellbeing and our ability to deliver great services to our residents. Only together can we create an environment where all staff feel able to speak up and are listened to, where we are respected and valued and can be ourselves every day, regardless of individual circumstances and background.

Diversity provides organisations with a wide range of different skills, knowledge and perspectives that improve creative thinking and the ability to develop solutions and improve outcomes. Embracing and respecting differences such as ethnic background, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, personality or working style, and valuing the benefits this brings will support us to create an inclusive workplace where everyone can thrive.

This strategy goes beyond our statutory responsibilities and will guide how we work together to deliver our vision and priorities over the next four years and will be embedded into our practices, policies and behaviours. This includes how we recruit, train, retain, engage and empower our staff.

Together, we can create a great place to work, where everyone feels welcomed and valued for who they are and where we work together to build stronger communities.

Kate Blackburn

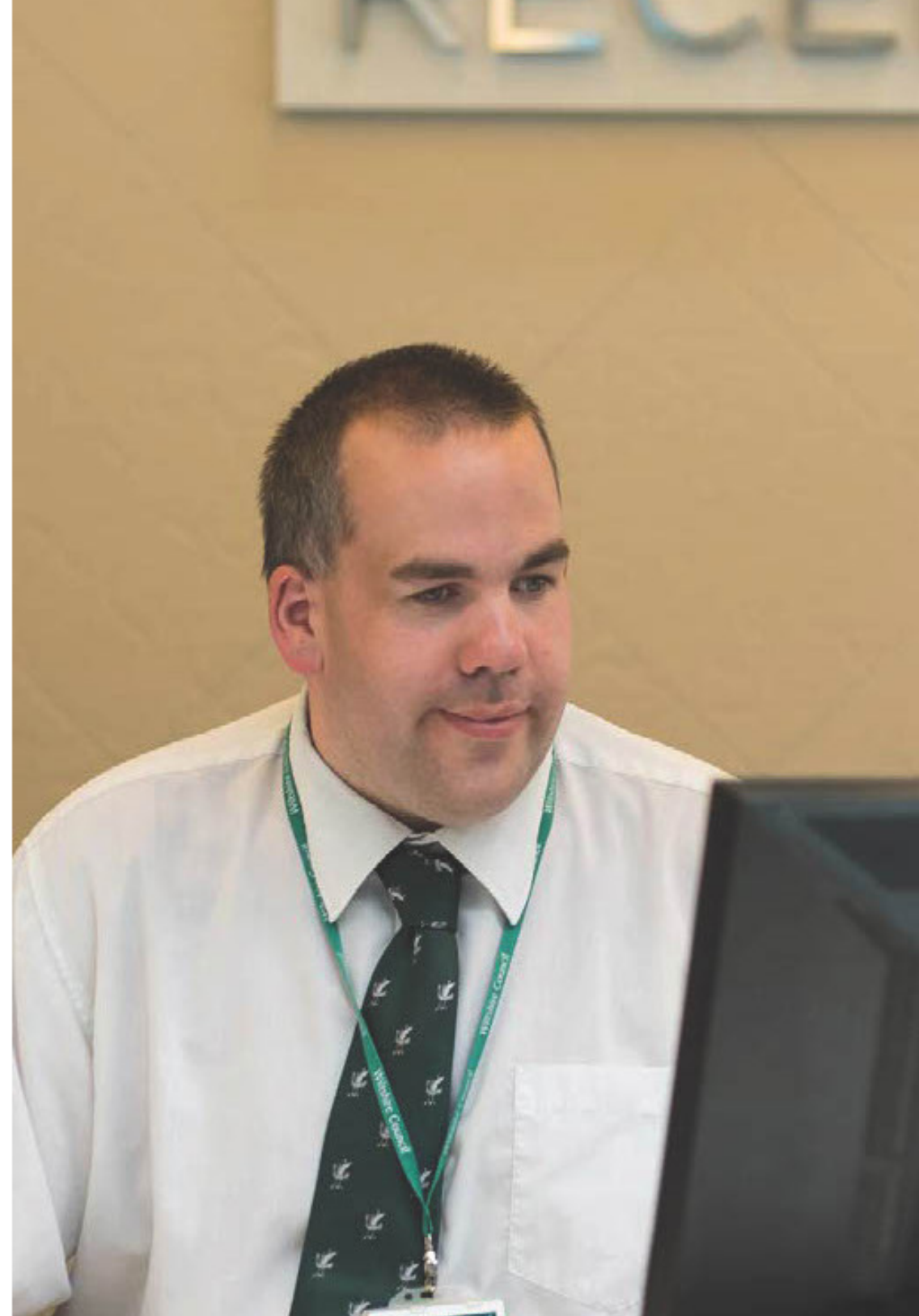
Director Public Health and Chair of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) steering group

Our vision

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We are an inclusive organisation that reflects the diverse backgrounds of the communities we serve, where everyone is valued as an individual and where fairness and respect run through everything we do.

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Our aims

Ensure that the workforce is representative of the community and that everyone in the organisation feels a sense of inclusion and belonging

Develop new initiatives and processes as part of organisational recovery, to educate, promote and embed Inclusion and Diversity practices and ways of working into all areas of the organisation

Build skills, awareness, capability and knowledge through sponsorship, training and communications campaigns to deliver the vision

What we want to achieve

Inclusive and compassionate leadership

Represented and supported workforce

Nurture the next generation of diverse leaders to strengthen the talent pipeline

Engaged employees with a strong sense of belonging

How we will achieve them

Senior level sponsorship and all managers role modelling inclusivity

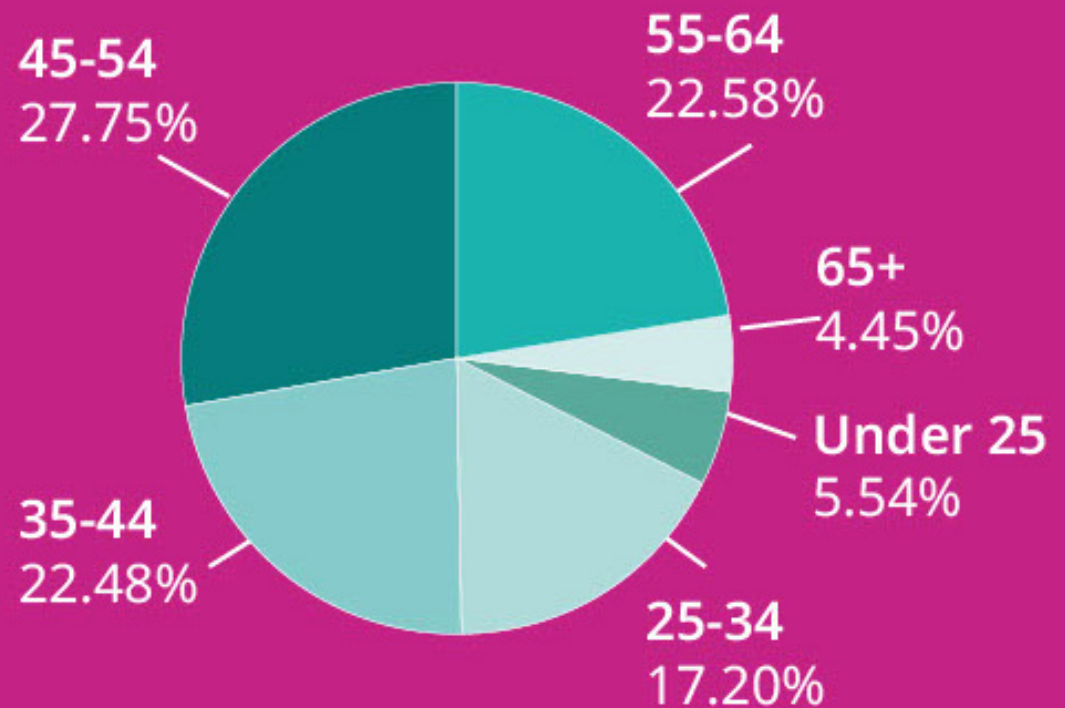
Inclusive attraction, recruitment, retention and development practices for all to grow and progress

Clear communication around inclusion through education, training and awareness

Empowering all staff, including the staff networks and allies to help shape and build an inclusive workplace

Who we are

4,605 individuals with unique experiences, all belonging to one council



27%

Male

10%

Disabled

55%

Full time

45%

Part time

17%

Carers

73%

Female

87%

White British

3%

BME

4%

White Other

3%

LGBT+

Staff networks

- We have developed a [staff network framework](#) which includes terms of reference and outlines time off for attendance arrangements.
- We now have four established networks under the 'Staff voices' umbrella: BME (Black and Minority Ethnic), Carers and Disability, Women's and LGBT+. Staff are welcome to join any of the networks as members or allies via the [EPIC hub](#). Currently, membership is at an all-time high with 165 members across the 4 networks.
- The BME network has organised several events with expert internal and external speakers, open to partner organisations and the public. This includes an annual Black History Month event, which attracted over 600 people in [2020](#).
- The LGBT+ network organises a rainbow flag raising ceremony every year to mark the start of LGBT+ History Month. The network also carries out communications campaigns for LGBT+ History Month and PRIDE Month, including a dedicated web page of staff stories in February 2021, which gained over 5,000 views.
- The Carers and disability network plays a valuable consultative role in policy development and other employment related issues, including reasonable adjustments and accessibility.
- The women's staff network launched on International Women's Day 2021 with a virtual [#EPICtalk](#) which was attended by over 120 people.
- Our work with the staff networks has gained national recognition on the [Diversity Dashboard](#) and [Power of Staff Networks](#) websites.



Inclusion and Diversity training

- Our Equality and Diversity e-learning is mandatory for all staff.
- 164 staff (including 49 managers) completed our Equality and Diversity in the workplace course (to 10 June 2021).
- 258 staff (including 75 managers) completed our Creating an inclusive workplace course (to 10 June 2021).
- Our Inclusion and Diversity training is offered externally as a commercial service and has been delivered to organisations including the NHS, Wiltshire schools and the Wiltshire Police senior leadership team.
- We have developed a short introduction [video](#) for Unconscious Bias in partnership with Wiltshire Police.
- Our staff networks have delivered one-off training sessions on subjects, including Wellbeing and Social Media, Racism and its link to mental health, Race Terminology, Understanding the Muslim community, Refugee awareness, Working with BME communities and Living with autism to raise awareness and create a safe space for difficult conversations on inclusion and diversity.



Celebrating inclusion and diversity

- We have produced a [video](#) featuring staff from across the organisation on what inclusion means to them.
- We have published an [inclusion and diversity calendar](#) with some key dates relevant to our community and workforce.
- We mark some important dates including religious festivals, with messages in internal communications and on social media.
- Our job adverts state that we are firmly committed to the principles of inclusion and diversity in both employment and the delivery of services.
- We have been made lifetime partners of [Includability](#), a new diversity job board and platform.
- We offer a range of policies to provide further flexibility for our employees, including enhanced maternity pay, shared parental leave, ordinary parental leave and flexible working.



Disability confident employer

As a Disability Confident employer we offer a guaranteed interview to disabled applicants who meet the minimum job criteria. We have also held three annual Employability fairs since 2017, showcasing over 30 employers and attracting over 200 job seekers each time.

We also provide information and support on mental health and wellbeing through:

- Our confidential wellbeing helpline
- Flourish - our health and wellbeing website
- Interactive courses
- Counselling
- Training for managers to support mental health conversations with staff

We are also developing a pilot to recruit a group of volunteer staff to be trained as Mental Health and Wellbeing Advocates.



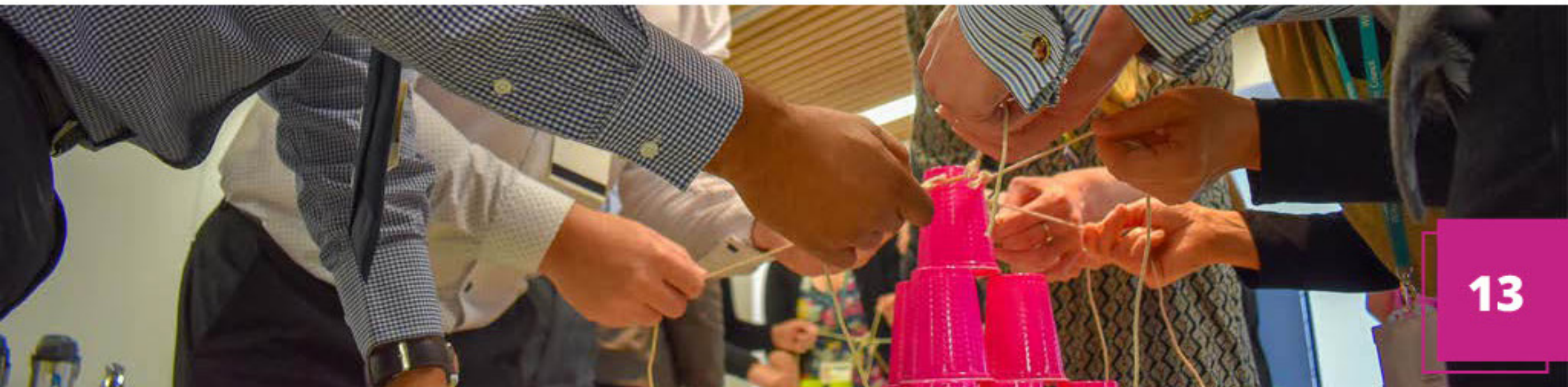
Partnership working and sharing good practice

We are working with various partner organisations to share information and best practice around inclusion and diversity. These partners include:

- Bath and North East Somerset, Wiltshire and Swindon CCG (ICS) EDI Leads Network
- South West Equalities Network (SWEN)
- The Civil Service
- Wiltshire Police

- Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue
- NHS Great Western Hospitals Trust
- The University of Bath

We are also a member of the Employer's Network for Equality and Inclusion (ENEI), who provide advice and support on equality issues related to all the protected characteristics.



Developing HR policies and procedures

We have created a range of policies, toolkits and guidance to support staff in response to the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, including guidance to support staff with homeworking, caring responsibilities, and mental health support.

The council has set up two working groups to look at how we can become more agile in our ways of working, redesign our workspaces and be more flexible in our use of the office buildings.



Equality Impact Assessments

Equality Impact Assessments are carried out to ensure that proper care is given to the general equality duty aims when we plan, deliver, and make decisions about the work of the council.

Regular equality analysis panels are set up to consider the impact of new and modified policies and procedures on inclusion and diversity and the three general equality duties. Representatives from HR&OD, trade unions, and our staff networks attend the panels to give a breadth of perspective.



What we aim to achieve

We aim to create maximum impact with our work over the next four years. Our main initiatives focus on creating the right conditions to consistently deliver on our inclusion and diversity aims. The achievement of those aims will be underpinned by cultural transformation, introducing long-lasting initiatives and processes.

We will measure our progress against the [Equality Framework for Local Government \(EFLG\)](#), aspiring to becoming 'Excellent' on all four of its improvement modules by 2025.



Inclusive and compassionate leadership

- Achieve senior level sponsorship of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) steering group and have representatives from all directorates.
- Build leaders' capacity to be change agents and embed inclusive work cultures by encouraging all Directors, Heads of Service and Managers to complete the inclusion and diversity training within the next 12-18 months.
- Complete our pilot reverse mentoring programme with positive learning outcomes for participants.

Nurture the next generation of diverse leaders to strengthen the talent pipeline

- Increase progression of under-represented groups and reduce the gender and ethnicity pay gaps to below 3%.
- Sponsor two delegates to attend the 2022 Bristol City Council's Stepping up programme, which aims to support staff from under-represented groups into leadership.
- Promote development, coaching and mentoring opportunities to under-represented groups, including participation in our leadership and management programme and the South West Challenge.

Represented and supported workforce

- Increase workforce representation and progression of under-represented groups (in line with new census data), through education, training, social media and advertising of roles.
- Reduce bullying and harassment in relation to staff with protected characteristics.
- Increase the number of under 25's in the council workforce to 7.5% (above 2019 level) through apprenticeships, working with schools, and targeted advertising campaigns.
- Ensure all workplaces, equipment, communications, training and meetings are accessible for all.

Engaged employees with a strong sense of belonging

- Increase staff survey engagement and inclusion/belonging scores from all staff, including those from under-represented groups.
- Support and invest in our staff networks, with an increase in participation, allyship and funding for activities.

Conclusion

Delivering this strategy will help us achieve our vision, and we will do this by embedding inclusive behaviours into everyday practices. The initiatives outlined will result in:

- Our staff and managers understanding the role they need to play to make inclusion and accessibility a reality.
- Our staff feeling a sense of belonging and pride to work for Wiltshire Council.
- Staff and leaders having the skills, knowledge and commitment to create an inclusive workplace, resulting in improved team working and accountable managers.
- Recognising the benefits and value more diverse teams bring, and creating an environment where we seek out new voices and perspectives.
- Reduce and mitigate potential bias in our hiring and decision-making processes, thus improving our ability to attract, recruit and retain a diverse and competent workforce.
- A positive change in behaviours, with increased trust, collaboration and sharing.
- Improved two-way communication between the staff networks and the organisation to shape and influence our activities to build a more inclusive workplace.
- Greater confidence in how we talk about inclusion and diversity.
- Equal opportunities for all to develop and progress, recognising the diverse talents and skills each person brings.
- More diverse talent pipelines that reflect the diversity of the workforce with a higher percentage of under-represented staff being promoted and/or making lateral moves.

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Our ultimate goal is to make Wiltshire Council an even better place to work, through empowering our staff to innovate and collaborate to build stronger communities.

