Lewisham Council EDI Assessment Interim Report

1. Introduction

1.1 DWC has been commissioned to undertake a high-level assessment/benchmarking exercise on the effectiveness of Council's EDI approach, strategies, systems etc. Our methodology begins by collating the key drivers that contribute to the success of the council in establishing an inclusive workplace and promoting EDI within the borough.

1.2 At this interim stage, this document provides an assessment of the council's capabilities against the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG), which is the primary EDI standard for local authorities. We have therefore taken the competences in the EFLG and its Performance Scale (Developing, Achieving, Excellent) as the baseline against which to assess the council's EDI performance.

1.3 Moreover, in assessing the council's race equality performance we have reviewed the council's performance on race both through the lens of the EFLG and other indicators that contribute to the broad aims of the 'The London Local Government Tackling Racial Inequality Programme' (TRI). Whilst the TRI is not to be regarded as a benchmarking tool at this point, its stated aspirations does allow us to extrapolate the competences required by councils in pursuing race equality.

1.4 A similar process is being followed for establishing a view of the council's performance on sexual orientation (LGBTQ) which will reference the good practice outlined by Stonewall's Champion programme. This will be completed mid-March 2023.

1.5 In arriving at our assessment of the council's EDI and Race performance, we have also drawn on DWC's considerable experience of working within the fields of EDI and Race Equality to present some initial recommendations on areas where improvements can be made.

2. Thematic Performance Indicators

2.1 The EFLG gives us a framework for identifying the areas of activity that councils need to address in order to deliver good equality outcomes. This assessment of the council's performance against the framework informs the recommendations for improvement made in this report.

2.2 The EFLG uses 6 overarching performance indicators in its standard. These taken individually and together are regarded as the areas critical to a council's success in integrating EDI into its business life cycle. These are:

1. Leadership - demonstrating a clear commitment to EDI through their actions.
2. Governance – adherence to corporate structures that govern EDI implementation.
3. Policies, Procedures & Monitoring – regulating and evaluating EDI performance.
4. Diverse & Engaged Workforce – as a prerequisite and indicator of inclusion.
5. Service Delivery & Design – is inclusive and engages diverse stakeholders.
6. Promoting EDI Borough-Wide – to influence good practice.

2.3 Lewisham council's performance against each theme is assessed on how the council delivers against a number of sub-competences.

2.4   The Tackling Racial Inequality programme (TRI) has been established to ensure race equality is central to what local authorities do and deliver. To achieve this, the programme is set up to deliver two overarching priorities:

1.   Support the work that individual boroughs are undertaking which responds to the needs within their communities and organisations.

2.   Work beyond our statutory duties to develop regional activity and action, where appropriate.

2.5   The competence indicators presented in the EFLG have been phrased by DWC in such a way as to reflect the aspirations expressed in the TRI programme (Appendix 1).

3.   Information Sources

3.1   In making the assessment and recommendations presented in this interim report we have relied on a number of published documents presented to us by the council. In addition DWC has had discussion with a number of senior leaders as well as the LGBTQ and Disability staff forums. In completing the work we will offer the opportunity for additional council officers and the BAME Forum to provide information that presents a fuller picture of the council's performance. In light of this, the initial scorings presented here are subject to change.

3.2   A list of documents relied on in making this assessment is presented at the foot of this report. These documents have also been tabulated against the relevant EFLG and TRI competences in a spreadsheet (Appendix 1).

The EDI Performance Assessment

4. Leadership — demonstrating a clear commitment to EDI through their actions

4.1   The score for EFLG under this theme is 'Developing'

4.1.1   There are a number of contributory factors leading to this determination the most recent staff survey indicates a lack of trust between staff and senior leaders – (only45% of all staff (on average) agree they have trust toward senior leaders) . In the same survey a low number of staff (46.4% - the average) report they feel senior leaders listen to their ideas

4.1.2   Whilst there may not be a definite correlation between these results and EDI it is likely that there exists a similar lack of trust and perception of senior leaders' responsiveness on EDI.

4.2   The score for TRI under this theme is 'Developing/Achieving'

4.2.1   The main contributing factor to the score here is the perception that the leadership under the current CEO has shown a determination to tackle racial inequality. Whilst this has yet to bear all the desired fruit the CEO's involvement in the TRI programme sends out a strong message about the council's race equality commitment to staff, communities and other London councils.

4.3   Our emerging recommendations here are:
- Increased visibility of all senior leaders is needed on EDI and race issues coupled with care taken to manage expectations about the scale and pace of progress.
- Leaders should be appraised on their EDI performance, with input from staff within their area of influence.
- Staff survey questions should be enhanced by including questions that elicits richer information about staff lived experience (by protected characteristics), and how leaders are perceived to be progressing EDI and Race Equality.

5. Governance – adherence to corporate structures that govern EDI implementation

5.1   The score for EFLG under this theme is 'Developing'

5.1.1   The council has established a Corporate Equalities Board (CEB)to guide the development of its EDI strategy. This is a positive indication of Lewisham's intention to include a diverse range of voices in its decision-making process at corporate levels.

5.1.2   We have not yet seen evidence of how the objectives/decisions of the CEB connects with its overall business planning and governance. This requires further exploration.

5.1.3   The council has begun the process of benchmarking its performance against a range of good practice standards and that of other London councils. This supports the competence in the EFLG - 'The organisation assesses its performance and outcomes against comparable organisations'.

5.3   The score for TRI under this theme is 'Developing'

5.3.1 The BAME Forum is represented on the CEB and the minutes shows consideration of race equality issues.

5.3.2 This assessment against the TRI objectives and implied competences is evidence of the council's intention to tackle racial inequality.

5.4 <u>Our emerging recommendations here are:</u>
- The EDI governance structure should be synergised with the council's business strategy and planning processes.
- The specific business case for EDI and Race Equality needs to be articulated and placed at the forefront of council business and EDI objectives and given a high priority.
- Staff Forums need to be capacity built to move beyond providing a safe space for their members to raise issues and be empowered to provide strategic high-level input into the CEB.

6. Policies, Procedures & Monitoring – regulating and evaluating EDI performance

6.1 <u>The score for EFLG under this theme is 'Achieving'</u>

6.1.1 It is clear from the document search and our review that the council has a set of policies and practices to enhance workforce equality and diversity, and there are procedures for monitoring its EDI performance: including reasonable adjustments, equal pay, flexible working and family friendly policies.

6.1.2 The Single Equality Framework, Equal Opportunities Policy Statement, Dignity at Work policies are fit-for-purpose and inclusive of the interests of protected characteristics.

6.1.3 The recent staff surveys elicits rich information that gives good scope for understanding the experience of staff from different backgrounds.

6.1.4 The one area where we could not identify any clear evidence of monitoring is faith/religious belief. It is notable that there is not a faith staff forum to gauge the qualitative experience that faith groups have working for the council.

6.2 <u>The score for TRI under this theme is 'Developing'</u>

6.2.1 The council's policies and procedure cover race in general but we have yet to speak with the BAME Forum to understand how these relate to the specific lived experience of BAME group. There is also more to be done to understand where the council has progressed in addressing the ethnic pay gap – part of this can be accounted for by the bulge in the demographic of Black staff in the lower grades.

6.2.2 With respect to Ethnic Pay Gap - the council undertook a deep-dive analysis (covering period 2021-22) into pay and ethnicity. EMT were asked to consider the findings and its role in addressing the ethnic disparity in pay. We need to understand how much progress has been made to address the recommendations made in the report -'People management a deep dive into workforce practices'.

6.2.3 Over three fiscal years, there has been a lack of noteworthy advancements in closing the pay gap. In fact, the pay gap has risen to 2020/21 levels, exceeding the 10.4% value reported in 2018/19, albeit with a negligible reduction from 2019/20. These findings suggest that the efforts made to address the pay gap between diverse ethnic groups require more attention.

6.3   Our emerging recommendations here are:

- A thorough review of key policies is undertaken with a focus on those that are most likely to impact the council's EDI objectives/stakeholders e.g., recruitment, dignity at work, training & development. This could take the form of a rigorous Equality Analysis Assessment (EAA).
- Faith and religion are an important part of a person's identity and at certain moments in history they act as a trigger for punitive and discriminatory behaviour. The council should bolster its policies and procedure with specific reference to faith and initiate monitoring to understand the experience of faith groups in the workplace.
- Consideration should be given to the questioning and data capture in order to move the focus of data capture from collecting information to gathering intelligence to improve EDI performance. For instance, asking whether staff are proud to work for Lewisham can be supported with additional enquiry to elicit the sources of that pride/dissatisfaction.
- We highlight the recommendations made in the 'Deep Dive' report into workplace practices and recommend the council prioritise action to implement them i.e.:
  — HR to consider the types of support/ programmes and interventions that may be put in place to help upward talent movement of BAME staff, particularly Black staff which targeted approach for staff at different levels.
  — SLT briefing to highlight inequities identified. This would be set in context of 'tackling race inequalities' CELC working group which Lewisham are actively part of.
  — Review existing approval requirements for honorariums, market supplements and starting salaries e.g., should all HR/ED approval be required for honorariums PO6-8 and above.

7.   Diverse & Engaged Workforce – as a prerequisite and indicator of inclusion

7.1   The score for EFLG under this theme is 'Developing'

7.1.1   Inclusive communication is a contributing factor to arriving at the Developing score in this area. We are uncertain whether/how the council meets the objective of having clear communication with staff about its EDI values and how to live them.

7.1.2   After reviewing staff feedback, we found around 70% of all staff feel well-informed, which means there is still some room for improvement in communication with staff (30%). However, there is some disparity in groups feeling informed about team happenings - including Asian staff, men, those aged 40-49, and gay/lesbian staff. Unfortunately, there is no indication how this relates to feeling informed about EDI issues.

7.1.3   A strong indicator of how staff experience the organisation was given in the most recent Staff Survey. Staff on average (86.5% the average) agreed their line manager treats them fairly. This is very encouraging, and it is worth noting that conditions are particularly good for staff between the ages of 30-39.

7.2   The score for TRI under this theme is 'Developing'

7.2.1   We cannot detect clear evidence that race equality issues are mainstreamed into all staff training and development programmes.

7.2.2   The council's race equality values are not embedded within staff appraisals, one-to-ones, performance assessments.

7.2.3 On some satisfaction indicators Black and Asian staff score above average. As this is an important contributor to the 'Developing' score, it requires further discussion with the BAME Forum to contextualise.

7.3 Our emerging recommendations here are:

- Improved data capture on how protected characteristic groups are experiencing the workplace.
- Embed EDI considerations into all performance review processes and monitor them to ascertain how much staff are invested in creating an inclusive organisational culture.
- Leaders and managers supported to hold informative and courageous conversations with staff on EDI to reinforce the values via team meetings, one-to-ones etc.
- Improve awareness of EDI issues by marking cultural events like Black History month, Eid, Diwali, and Hannukah.

8. Service Delivery & Design – is inclusive and engages diverse stakeholders

8.1 The score for EFLG under this theme is 'Developing'

8.1.1 One of the competence indicators here is the ability of the organisation to demonstrate a clear link between meeting its equality objectives and positive outcomes for its communities. Once again this is not the substantive focus of our review so there may be more evidence than we were presented with. However, there is just enough evidence here to surmise that the council is delivering against the competences in this area.

8.1.2 There is evidence that EAA's are completed but the quality of them and EDI considerations given in drawing them up have not been reviewed by us.

8.1.3 In order to properly evidence this area we would need to review service plans and the EDI consultative processes that supports them.

8.2 The score for TRI under this theme is 'Pre-Developing'

8.2.1 There is not enough evidence to properly assess the council's race equality performance in this area. Reluctantly we score the council as Pre-Developing with a request for more information.

8.3 Our emerging recommendations here is:

- More time and information are needed to score the council's service delivery and design performance.

9. Promoting EDI Borough-Wide – to influence good practice

9.1 The score for EFLG under this theme is 'Pre-Developing'

9.1.2 The focus of this review has been internal facing on the workplace so we are not in a position to properly assess performance in this theme. However, there are some indicators in the information presented to us that the council is promoting EDI externally. This is mainly project based (e.g. Achilles Street regeneration) and therefore does not represent a co-ordinated central strategy to promote EDI borough-wide in all its initiatives.

9.2 The score for TRI under this theme is 'Pre-Developing'.

9.2.1   There is not sufficient information presented for us to make a determination on the TRI competences beyond scoring it Pre-Developing.

9.3   Our emerging recommendation here is:

- The council develops a strand of its EDI strategy geared towards promoting EDI in its work with partners across the borough.

Primary Documents used in scoring the assessment:

- Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)
- London Local Government Tackling Racial Inequality Programme (TRI)
- CYP Directorate Plan
- Deep Dive into workforce practices
- Head of Service. Strategy & Improvement
- SSCSC: How Lewisham Council embeds Equalities across its service provision (Equalities review September 2020)
- Single Equality Framework 2020-2024
- Voices of Lewisham Final Report
- Equal Opportunities policy statement
- Corporate Equalities Board Updated Terms of Reference
- Staff surveys - Age/Ethnicity/Gender/Sexual Orientation/Disability
- Lewisham people delivery plan
- Race Equality Pledge
- HR Report Q3 2022
- Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (updated draft Nov'22)
- Birmingham and Lewisham African Caribbean Health Inequalities Review