

Submission for Lewisham Scrutiny and Equality Commission

1. Introduction

The Equality Standard for Local Government was established in 2001 by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). Its purpose was to set a benchmark and enable councils to self-assess and improve their approach to equality. In 2009, the IDeA revised this, and soon after launched the Equality Framework for Local Government (the EFLG) which took a less bureaucratic approach. The LGA regularly revises the EFLG, with involvement of local government personnel to take account of changing society and legislation. It aims to be a supportive self-assessment tool for councils, to help them become more aware of their own achievements and areas for improvement. If the council chooses to have an external validation by an LGA peer challenge, the EFLG forms a large part of the evidence for that peer challenge.

The most recent revision was 2019. The EFLG (2019) has been updated to reflect the latest legislation affecting equality such as Gender Pay Gap reporting, GDPR, the changing context of the local government sector and equality in Britain and in response to other significant issues that might affect equality including the UK's decision to leave the European Union.

2. Aim of the EFLG:

The equality framework is intended to help Councils:

- deliver accessible and responsive services to customers and residents in their communities including those from protected characteristics
- employ a workforce that reflects the diversity of the area they are serving
- provide equality of opportunity for all staff
- Meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty

It seeks to do this by:

- Identifying the areas of activity that Councils need to be addressed to deliver good equality outcomes
- Helping Councils to understand how they can build equality into processes and practices
- supporting organisations to become inclusive employers
- Enabling Councils to informally self-assess their progress on the equality improvement journey and determine where and how they need to improve.
- Providing the framework for an LGA Equality peer challenge

3. Underlying Principles

- The EFLG is part of the LGA's sector led improvement offer to the local government sector and as such engagement with the Framework is voluntary.
- The Framework can help with compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty which is a legal obligation of the Equality Act 2010.
- The Framework references the nine legally protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. It also encourages Councils to consider other issues that might be affecting their staff such as caring responsibilities as well issues affecting communities such as socio-economic inequality and isolation including rural isolation
- The EFLG is supportive of the EHRC's six selected domains of equality measurement which it has identified as the areas of life that are important to people and that enable them to flourish. They are: Education, Work, Living standards, Health, Justice and personal security, and Participation
- The modular design of the Framework reflects the fact that Councils come in all shapes and sizes with different resources, communities and priorities. It recognises that action on all equality issues at once is not always possible.
- The Framework supports the LGA's Equality Peer Challenge

4. Structure of the EFLG

The Framework sets out four modules for improvement underpinned by a range of criteria and practical guidance that can help a Council plan, implement and deliver real equality outcomes for employees and the community. The four modules are:

- Understanding and working with your community
- Leadership and Organisational Commitment
- Responsive Services and Customer Care
- Diverse and Engaged Workforce

For each module there are three Levels. Developing; Achieving and Excellent. The levels are progressive and cumulative so an organisation can plan and chart its progression against different priorities. Councils can be at different levels of the framework for different modules.

Developing - The developing level criteria contain the basic building blocks for each priority. An organisation at the Developing level has made an organisational commitment to improving equality. It is putting in place processes to deliver on equality issues and is working towards meeting and exceeding the statutory requirements.

Achieving - An organisation at the Achieving level has policies, processes and procedures in place and is delivering some good equality outcomes. It is not only meeting but can demonstrate exceeding statutory requirements.

Excellent - An organisation at the Excellent level has mainstreamed equality throughout the organisation and can demonstrate that it is delivering significant outcomes across its services that are making a difference in its communities. The organisation not only exceeds statutory requirements and it is an exemplar council for equality and diversity in the local government and wider public sector.

The modules contain several themes, each with short descriptor at each level of the framework. This is followed by a set of indicators or criteria that can be used to self-assess.

5. Good Practice examples from recent LGA equality peer challenges

LB Croydon – Awarded Achieving November 2019

There is a visually diverse leadership team

There is a clear link on E&D from governing party's manifesto to corporate plan and Cabinet responsibilities. Progress on E&D strategy and objectives is monitored at a Member's equality and diversity oversight group.

There are Member champions for Autism, mental health, dementia and BAME and LGBT.

The borough has declared itself a "White Ribbon" borough to highlight the issue of Domestic Violence. The Leader is a White Ribbon ambassador.

There are 6 staff equality networks. Each has a sponsor and a budget of £1500 per annum for projects.

Croydon was the first council to publish menopause guidance and this has already had positive outcomes in the workplace.

Socio- Economic Equality actions

Localities based approach uses data to tailor services to the most vulnerable in the borough.

Procurement and commissioning is used effectively to deliver equality outcomes. Contracts in excess of £100,000 are assessed with equality metrics. Service providers are required to collect equality monitoring data and provide equality training to their staff.

Council supports the VCS deliver food clubs not food banks to reduce stigma

There is targeted leadership development for BAME and women employees which has already started to see results. There is a commitment to diverse recruitment panels and LBC is working with neighbouring councils to achieve this.

The organisation is Level 2 of “Disability Confident” It pays employees the London Living Wage and encourages other employers in the borough to do the same with its Good Employer Charter.

The Council has a low gender pay gap of 1.6%. It goes beyond the pay gap legal requirements to also measure disability and ethnicity pay gaps.

Wolverhampton Council – Awarded Excellent Autumn 2018

The Council’s “WV Insight” website gives staff and the public access to information and data sets developed from several sources including the Office of National Statistics, Public Health and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA). The data is aligned to the Equality Framework for Local Government. It enables users to drill down to consider trends and compare CWC to its near neighbour councils and conduct gap analyses on equality criteria.

All elected Members receive annual equality training and on induction.

There is a Members Equality Advisory Group (EAG) with a very good knowledge of their communities & local issues. EAG has a diverse makeup in terms of gender and ethnicity. Members of the group are trained on the WV Insight tool to help them to understand the emerging trends and changes within their communities.

The Council has taken some bold initiatives that impact beyond the local authority area e.g. the Paulette Wilson Windrush Migrants Initiative. The project is named after a Wolverhampton resident who was detained as part of the scandal. CWC developed a project with the city’s Refugee and Migrant Centre to assist and support those who came from the Commonwealth prior to 1973 and who may be affected or worried about their immigration status. It provided one-year funding for the project and its launch on the 9 May 2018.

Each service produces an annual service equality action plan and has a service equality group and an equality champion. Performance on service equality plans is reported through the relevant governance processes and presented to the Members group.

The Council has set up a Community Reference Group which acts as community moderators in the event of critical incidents of gang crime. Members of the group include community leaders, third sector organisations as well as parents of victims and perpetrators.

There are four well-established staff equality forums (Race, Gender, Disability and LGBTQ) which have clear structures and regular meetings. These are open to all staff in the council and have memberships from across the organisation. Forums are recognised as a source of innovation and good ideas (for example the Maternity and Disability Buddy Schemes, and the need for Unconscious Bias training).

Socio Economic Equality Actions

“Wolves at Work” uses data to identify and target key groups. In this case to receive support around employability.

CWC offers more of its contracts to local SMEs rather than national organisations as a result of its policy of breaking down contracts into smaller lots by area. An example is the Advocacy contract which was increased from 2 lots to 5. Outcomes of contracts are analysed by protected characteristics. Questions on social value are included in tender questions and social value (with a focus on equality) is used to

The Council supports a Parental Ambassadors scheme which provides opportunities for the better integration of migrants. The scheme is recognised as best practice at a national level. It offers an accredited training course in becoming a community ambassador to parents newly arrived in the City. Twenty newly arrived migrant parents who were unemployed have qualified from this course and a number have found employment in Wolverhampton schools. They are providing daily interpretation and other key support to newly arrived children with additional language requirements. The scheme has had positive outcomes for both education and employment.

A range of actions have been introduced over the past two years to address lack of workforce representation at senior levels. These include having diverse selection panels; introducing mandatory unconscious bias training for all staff involved in selection decisions including members; requiring recruitment agencies to produce diverse shortlists; having anonymised applications for all posts; giving guaranteed interviews for all disabled applicants meeting the vacancy criteria.

Manchester City Council – Re-accredited at Excellent June 2018

The Council’s collaboration with partners is enriching its knowledge and enabling it to gain a deeper understanding of residents. An example of this is its work with higher education institutions to generate an ethnographic study of Manchester and an external study of the Health and Wellbeing system. Another example is the preparation work being done for the new Local Care Organisation. (LCO) Data is being provided by a range of partners including police, fire, the ambulance service and housing providers. Mental Health Trusts are also involved.

Member Equality Champions were strongly committed to driving change for each of the protected characteristics.

The Council has very strong relationships with the local LGBT community. A strong strategic partnership and engagement framework exists between the council and the LGBT Foundation.

The Ward Improvement Partnerships intervene early to tackle cohesion issues, focusing on the problem (such as fly tipping) rather than different communities blaming each other.

Extra care for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) elder residents is available as part of an effort to improve residential care delivery for this protected characteristic group. The provision was designed with input from an LGBT elder reference group.

Socio Economic Equality actions

The City Council has adopted Inclusive Growth as a very explicit goal to help ensure that all residents can benefit from the considerable economic growth of the last twenty years.

Since 2015 the Council has worked hard to increase the use of the Social Value Act to drive conversations with suppliers. It has increased the weighting given to social value considerations in the tendering process from 10% to 20%. Outcomes from this approach include suppliers creating 423 employment opportunities for hard to reach individuals, 705 apprenticeships and 1,160 jobs and nearly 69,000 hours of support to the VCS.

The Council pays the national Living Wage to all its staff including care staff. Staff can have up to three days paid leave to volunteer. Flexible working is promoted across the organisation and the Timewise Accreditation has been adopted.

Essex CC – Reaccredited at Excellent June 2018

Essex Innovates is a partnership between the County Council, the police and Essex University. It has created a data platform with the vision of making Essex national leaders in using the power of data science and Artificial Intelligence to tackle public policy challenges. The intention is that partners will implement data-driven solutions for prevention to benefit local people and businesses. Issues on the ground are already being tackled using predictive data analysis from the platform. e.g. domestic violence, and school readiness where district councils, ECC and police data is analysed to predict which families will need the greatest intervention.

ECC has worked with partners to develop and launch the first countywide Faith Covenant in Britain. The Covenant was signed in October 2017 by, amongst others, ECC, Basildon, Braintree, Chelmsford and Colchester councils, Essex Police, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Essex Fire Authority. The shared ambition is for Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Pagans and leaders from the public sector to pool their resources to strengthen community cohesion and tackle isolation and loneliness.

Accessible Meeting Hub – ECC sought to create a space where with people with a range of needs can be better supported during meetings or engagement work, as part of its drive to be Disability Confident. In Autumn 2017, the first floor of Chelmsford Library was identified as the most viable space for new 'accessible' meeting rooms.

The Council is doing some innovative work around preventing mental ill health. It funds a council based Mental Health and Wellbeing team of specialist social workers who do preventative work with people suffering from low level mental ill health.

Carer and disability passports are “owned” by the staff member and set out their issues and needs so that new managers can quickly appreciate their needs.

Socio-Economic Equality Actions

Ethnographic research is used to engage with hard to reach communities. E.g. at Jaywick in Tendring where intelligence was gathered by talking to residents. This is helping to determine where infrastructure changes can really help the community, for example the provision of shelters at bus stops for residents who use public transport to get to work. Research with the Children in Care Council also used observation and soft data to develop services.

The Meaningful Lives Project for autism and learning disability is funded for three years and works across health, employment and housing needs. The offer is firmly grounded by the people themselves who are using the service telling the council what they need in their lives. The project has enabled a programme for six adults at a time with learning disability and/or autism to be given paid internships within ECC for an eight-week period. The project is also approaching other potential employers such as police, fire and ambulance services about opportunities for people with a learning disability or autism.

London Borough of Hackney Re-accredited at Excellent April 2018

There are Member Champions for equality

Community engagement is well resourced. There is an independent facilitator for the community planning panel and other social cohesion groups. Different faith groups meet via the Faith Forum throughout the year working on different issues such as hate crime and welfare reform.

Examples of positive partnership working in practice: e.g. Volunteering for Hackney, the Faith Forum, reaching excluded communities, Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men, work in Hackney Museum, Integrated Communities.

Consultation is targeted appropriately, and the Council monitors which communities are harder to reach or engage with. Events are then held specifically to engage these communities. For example, Public Health targeted work with Muslim women. A fitness instructor in a hijab was engaged to provide fitness classes.

Although the Council is putting more services on line, it recognizes that there will always be certain people who are unable to use the internet due to disability, age or mental health issues. Its strategy is to help those who can, to interact on line, which will free up resources to work with the people who need face to face assistance. The I-Care Information Directory was tested by elderly users and those with mental health issues. User groups were able to go through the process with support where necessary.

The Council has recognized that tenants in the private rented sector also need support. It has set up a specific team set up to address health and wellbeing issues of private tenants.

The Pause Project supports women at risk of having their future children being taken into care. The programme which is now in its third cycle provides 18 months of support in every aspect of the women's lives. The approach was piloted in Hackney and it is now being adopted across the county.

Socio Economic Equality Actions

Work with Young Black Men –This project addresses the fact that many young black men have worse outcomes in terms of education, mental health, offending rates and employment than their peers in the community. The project is championed by the Council's Deputy Mayor Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. It is a multi – agency partnership that seeks to improve the life chances of future generations of young black men and to provide support and opportunities for those now aged 18-25. Its next step are to secure resources to increase the level of community engagement, develop the leadership role of the youth advisory group of young black men who steer and shape the programme and deliver engagement.

There is a deliberate policy of taking some services and interventions out to the estates in the borough where there is particular need. Some residents are being prescribed exercise and fitness by GPs and the Council is responding by offering £1 fitness classes on some estates.

Rugby Borough Council Re-accredited at Excellent May 2017

Community Associations within the borough are proving to be a good source of community insight and intelligence. Issues around anti-social behaviour and gang culture have been identified and addressed in one area as a result of intelligence gained by the Association.

Member Champions for equality

The Council has good relationships with volunteers such as street pastors who are supporting vulnerable people across the town.

The Council has been bold in tackling the issue of child sexual exploitation by working with partners to provide training for hotels, bed and breakfasts and taxi drivers. All new taxi drivers are required to attend the training and then every three years as part of their licence conditions to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities in protecting their passengers.

Staff have access to a wide range of equality and diversity training. Refresher training is regularly available. Manual and customer service staff have had "theatre type" equality training. Some equality training is mandatory, such as for new staff in their induction training. All employees have had training around the Prevent agenda. Members training is also mandatory and should be undertaken every three years.

Socio -Economic Equality Actions

Leaders recognise the “socio-economic” challenges facing communities in Rugby that are at risk of exclusion. This is exemplified in the case studies relating to Homelessness and Universal Credit. RBC is the lead Council in the Homelessness Prevention Trailblazer pilot project across Warwickshire. The aim of the project is to trial new ways to prevent Homelessness at an earlier stage than other local authority models. In response to a growing need for support for vulnerable claimants of Universal Credit the Council has contracted with the Benn Partnership and the Citizens Advice bureau to provide advice and support on a cost per client basis

Other case studies

Available on the LGA website here: [LGA Equalities Case Studies](#)