

**Equality and
Community
Cohesion
Strategy
2016 - 2020**

Kingston Council's commitment towards equality inclusion, diversity and community cohesion is embedded in its day to day activities through both the Equality and Community Cohesion Strategy and the medium term service and financial plan - Destination Kingston.

At a time of continued population growth and increasing diversity, the borough faces greater financial challenges. In this climate of change it is all the more important to continue to focus on the commitment to equality and inclusion through the design, commissioning and delivery of services, engagement with stakeholders and in its role as an employer. This will help to ensure that service is appropriate and accessible to all sectors of our community.

The Council values the strength that comes from the community in all its diverse forms and this is demonstrated in its commitment to engage with residents and stakeholders to shape the way forward.

The council has continued in its transformation journey through the design and implementation of, One Council, One Kingston and currently Our Kingston Programme.

Our Kingston community outcomes have two themes and these are People and Growth, which are underpinned by eight outcomes

The Community Outcomes for People are:

1. People achieving wellbeing, independence and live healthy lives
2. A place where people prosper and reach their full potential with high quality education, skills and employment
3. A safe and resilient community where everyone is welcome and which supports the most vulnerable
4. A network of engaged communities where everyone has a voice and does their bit

The Community Outcomes for Growth are:

5. A borough that embraces growth and attracts investment for stronger and more diverse economy
6. A borough of choice and opportunity that has broken the mould to increase the availability of housing and jobs
7. A sustainable borough with a diverse transport network and quality environment for all to enjoy
8. A borough with an identity rich in history heritage an creativity which drives its future

As the council evolves to become an enabler, facilitating work with others including our communities and stakeholders, it must ensure that the principles of equality and community cohesion are embedded throughout the process

The council demonstrates its legal duty towards fairness and equality to the residents, service users and employees through the implementation of Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty in its day to day activities.

The Equality Act 2010 strengthens the discrimination law and introduces the concept of protected characteristics under legislation regardless of: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or beliefs, sex and sexual orientation. This Strategy is an inclusive one and covers other groups like carers and people who are disadvantaged due to socio economic inequality.

The Council is bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty. This Duty comprises of the General Duty and Specific Duties

Under the General Duty a public authority must in carrying out its functions have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminated discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

Having due regard means consciously thinking about the three aims of the duty as part of the decision making process. This means that consideration of equality issues must influence the decisions reached by the public bodies, such as in how they act as employers, in how policies are developed, evaluated and reviewed, how services are designed, delivered and evaluated and how services are commissioned and procured from others.

To advance equality of opportunity involves considering the need to remove or minimise disadvantage suffered by people due to their protected characteristics, meet the needs of these people and encourage people to participate in public life where participation is low from people within the protected characteristics.

Fostering good relations involves tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and others.

The Action Plan accompanying this Strategy will provide the information on how the council meets its equality objectives and demonstrates compliance with the general duty.

The broad aim of the general duty is to integrate consideration towards the advancement of equality into the everyday business of organisations subject to the duty. It is intended to accelerate progress towards equality by considering and working to tackle systemic discrimination and disadvantage affecting people. The Act recognises that not everyone's needs or experiences are the same and that equality does not mean always treating everybody in exactly the same way. For everyone to have an equal opportunity to achieve their full potential, they need to be free from

any artificial barriers, such as prejudice or failure to respond to the specific needs of people with different protected characteristics.

The specific duty covers publication of equality information and equality objectives which shows how the general duty is complied to.

The Borough

Kingston is located on the Thames in southwest London. Known for its green spaces, shopping centre, theatre, University and College, it is an outstandingly successful place where people enjoy an excellent quality of life. The Council works closely with its partners such as the police, healthcare trusts, housing cooperatives, the voluntary sector and private sector to deliver its services on education, health, housing and the environment.

The resident population of Kingston was 147 273 in 2001 and this has risen to 160 060 in 2011 census, an increase of 8.7%. The Mid Year Estimate (2015) from the Office for National Statistics, the population Kingston was 173 525. Kingston's Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population has increased from 16% to 26% with the school age population being more diverse at just under 39%. The proportion of white people is expected to decline but there will be an increase of all other ethnic groups during this period. The Greater London Authority population projection estimates Kingston's population to be 181900 in 2026. Kingston has the largest Korean population in Europe with estimates of 10,000 followed by the Tamil community consisting of residents, visitors, students and business people.

People with long term health problems or disability according to the 2011 census data was recorded differently in the previous census. The current question sought to elicit an individual's ability to do day to day activities and whether this was limiting an individual's ability a lot (8605), a little (11297) or not limiting. The total number of people in this category was 12.5%.

The number of carers recorded in the Census was 13 288 providing care for 1 to 19 hours as 9331, followed by 20 – 49 hours as 1611 and for more than 50 hours was 2346. All of this care was provided by carers who were unpaid, largely due to the fact that it would have been provided by another family member.

The Council's commitment to equality is that no one equality strand is more important than the other and all strands must be embraced equally. However, as the Council gathers information and acquires a better understanding of needs, it may have to focus energies and resources disproportionately in order to respond to the findings.

We want to achieve a community that respects differences, values the richness of our diverse population which contributes to a strong and cohesive community with a sense of belonging. In the current economic climate and the many challenges faced by individuals, it is important to ensure that we are promoting our message on equality and fairness effectively.

The Protected Characteristics

Age

Age equality means ensuring that no individual experiences unfair discrimination because of their age. It now applies to both employment and service provision which came into effect from October 2012. The Council will discharge its legal obligations and through best practice ensure that services are accessible to residents regardless of their age in accordance with eligibility criteria. There is a need to create greater opportunities for people of all ages to understand and get along together. The older and younger generation have a lot of knowledge and experience to give and share.

Disability

As an employer and service provider we need to better understand and promote disability equality. This requires an understanding of the definition and a willingness to promote the positive contribution made by disabled people. Disability is defined in legislation as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. It is important in discharging our duties that we take a more in depth look at an individual's disability and through either service delivery or as an employer the Council discharges this in a person centred manner that meets his or her needs. It is essential that we begin to learn and understand the aspirations of disabled people and value their contribution as equal members of our society. Until this happens disabled people can experience discrimination and disadvantage. We have adopted the social model to work with to overcome the disadvantage that can be experienced through attitudes and barriers that society can create.

The 2011 census improved on previous data collected on disability category by phrasing the question on long term health problems or disability together with the limitations that individual faced on their day to day activities. This was captured by the extent of their limitations by a lot, a little or none at all respectively. Service providers within education, social care and health have more detailed data on disabled people using their respective services. British Sign Language was used by 25 individuals and signing in total was used by 29 people in the borough.

Race, Ethnicity and Nationalities

Understanding race equality requires consideration of the diverse needs of different communities that make up the population of Kingston. This community is made up of White people as well as Black people, Asians and Chinese people, travellers and gypsy communities, refugees and asylum seekers and people of other nationalities and ethnicity. It is important that in discharging our duties we learn to appreciate the differences and understand the needs within this wide range of individuals. Services should be developed to meet specific and sometimes unmet needs. This also requires a greater understanding of migration and the needs of new communities from the European Union countries.

A greater understanding of disadvantage faced by individuals because of their race, ethnicity, nationality or colour will provide better opportunities to improve the delivery of fairer and more equitable services to everyone.

Some of the more common languages spoken in the borough after English are Tamil, Korean, Polish, Arabic, German, Urdu and Spanish. In total there are about 150 different languages spoken in the borough.

Gender and Transgender

The Council aims to improve gender equality by making sure the employment and service provision for boys and girls and men and women are fair and equally accessible. Experiences, expectations and attitudes of individuals are factors that can influence gender equality and create disadvantage within our society.

We need to inform ourselves about our transgender group and take this work forward through dialogue in a sensitive, practical and sensible way. We have a limited understanding about the needs of our transgender group and at present there is very little or no data on the actual size of the community within Kingston as none of the existing household surveys or main administrative sources asks about transgender status.

Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) suggests that there are 6,200 people who have transitioned to a new gender role via medical intervention and approximately 2,335 full Gender Recognition Certificates have been issued to February 2009. However, the group, Press for Change, estimates that there are around 5,000 post-operative transsexual people.

The figures are more diverse when looking at the wider 'trans community' in the UK which is an inclusive term for transsexual people, transgender people and people who cross dress (transvestites).

In 2007, transitioning was estimated to be 3.0 per 100,000 people aged over 15 in the UK that is 1,500 people presenting for treatment of gender dysphoria. Data provided to GIRES by HM Revenues and Customs for 2010 confirm the upward trend. The number who had by then presented for treatment can be estimated to be 12,500. That represents a growth trend from 1998 of 11% per annum. At that rate, the number who have presented is doubling every 6 1/2 years.

It is estimated that there are between 300,000 and 500,000 transgendered people living in the UK, a prevalence ratio of between 0.6% to 1% of the population. From this, we could estimate there are between 960 and 1600 transgender people living in Kingston.

The implications of the above figures are that organisations should assume that 1% of their employees and service users may be experiencing some degree of gender variance. At some stage, about 0.2% may undergo transition. The numbers who have so far sought medical care is likely to be around 0.025%, and about 0.015% is likely to have undergone transition. In any year, the number commencing transition may be around 0.003%.

All of the above numbers are tiny proportions of an organisation's employees and service users. Moreover, most of the people in each group are unlikely to wish to be detected. The only persons who cannot escape detection are the very few who undergo transition.

Religion or Beliefs

Understanding the equality implications on religion, beliefs or non-beliefs is important because it enables service providers to be sensitive to individual needs and communities. We have in Kingston churches, a Sikh temple, a mosque and a synagogue. Other venues such as community halls are used to bring people together with the focus of religion or beliefs. There are a number of churches that are being used by the Korean Christian communities to practise their faith with their respective clergy. It is equally important that as an employer we are able to provide the necessary support to our staff by taking into account any specific needs to ensure that the working environment is respectful and understanding.

There is also a large presence of people in Kingston about 17% who state that they do not practice any religion.

Sexual Orientation

The Council understands more often than not, sexuality is perceived to be a private and personal matter. We know that it can be a very sensitive issue for some individuals and not for others who are more open to their respective sexuality. The Council also understands the many challenges and discrimination that lesbian, gay and bisexual people have faced and continue to face.

In 1987 the British Social Attitudes Survey revealed that 75% of people thought homosexuality was 'always or mostly wrong'. By 2008 this had substantially lowered to 32%. Whilst this is positive news there has been an increase in homophobic attacks.. The report "Beyond Tolerance" by the Equality and Human Rights Commission states 'the absence of reliable data on sexual orientation presents a major obstacle to measuring progress on tackling inequality'.

As part of our equality monitoring we have begun to ask sexual orientation questions in order to begin to respond better to the needs and issues affecting the lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual population .

We recognise that when we ask questions about sexuality, it is often thought to be a personal matter and needs to be handled confidently and sensitively. However it is important to gather and analyse data if we are going to be in a better position to ensure we deliver our duties in a fair and equitable way.

Civil Partnership and Marriage, Pregnancy and Maternity

The Equality Act brought further categories within its protected groups in acknowledgement that people in these groups can also face inequality and discrimination from intolerance and lack of understanding.

Working with Partners

Kingston Strategic Partnership

The Kingston Strategic Partnership, which is made up of our local partners, contributes to the overall vision and strategic direction for the borough. It is clear about its vision to work even more closely together to meet the needs of residents and make the services that are required easily accessible. The joint working starts from planning, conceiving, commissioning and delivering services through pooling of our assets, resources, energy and imagination. There is a strong commitment to be inclusive to all members of our community with a clear aim to tackle discrimination and social deprivation and ensure that people from different backgrounds have similar life chances.

Commissioning and Procurement

The Council will ensure that in commissioning and procuring goods or services from contractors and others, it communicates their requirement to observe the duties and legal obligations towards implementing equality and diversity. The contractors will need to ensure that their own organisations/businesses are implementing equality within its own structures.

The Aim of the Strategy

As one of the largest employers and service providers in the area, The Royal Borough of Kingston is committed to eliminating discrimination in all its forms and working to a cohesive community that respects differences and values human rights.

We will work to challenge discrimination against age, ethnicity, gender, transgender people, disabled people, individuals who practise a religion and those who do not have any religious beliefs or practice other beliefs, people with specific sexual preference and people across all levels of economic status. We recognise that some individuals suffer from multiple discrimination and we will work together with our partners to alleviate this.

This will be achieved by

- Ensuring that everyone understands and implements our legal duty and best practice on equality, diversity and cohesion.
- Making sure that the ownership and implementation of equality is embedded at all levels from politicians and senior management to every employee.
- Taking proactive steps to reduce social, economic and geographical disadvantage or exclusion.
- Providing appropriate training to all employees.
- Ensuring that equality is embedded within commissioning objectives and procured service.
- Tackling all forms of bullying, harassment and intimidation.

- Being fair, equitable, transparent and consistent in delivery of services.
- Ensuring that access and communication meets the needs of our service users and employees.
- Continuing to implement change through the social model of disability when discharging our duties to our disabled employees and service users.
- Aiming to recruit a workforce that is representative of the local population
- Encouraging residents and others to take an active role in the way Kingston works and influence the decision making process.
- Identifying and tackling discrimination, challenging stereotyping and striving towards a cohesive community.

Strategy in Practice

The Council is bound by legislation on equality and community cohesion. It will deliver its duty to promote equality by working through the five objectives set out below:

Knowing our community – Our key objectives are:

- To appreciate the changing nature of the population of the borough
- To better understand who lives in the borough and be aware of their needs
- To improve on how to gather, use and share the information appropriately

Place Shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment – Our key objectives are:

- To provide strong leadership and ensure equality, diversity and community cohesion are embedded throughout the council by politicians and senior management
- To engage and influence our partners to work together to achieve the equality objectives by setting clear equality priorities that support each other
- To ensure that the procured services meet our equality obligations
- To take responsibility for the delivery of equality and community cohesion work and to manage and monitor its performance more effectively
- To continue to improve on the equality impact assessment process and setting of targets

Community engagement and satisfaction – Our key objectives are:

- To improve the involvement and engagement of the diverse communities within the borough
- To ensure the communities feel their views are taken into account and to provide feedback
- To challenge negative views and promote more cohesive communities
- To make communities feel secure and safe in our diverse society

Responsive services and customer care – Our key objectives are:

- To ensure that everyone entitled to services is able to access them
- To make our service provision fair, equitable, transparent and consistent
- To understand the impact changes can have on the lives of service users, their family and carers
- To improve our communication and accessibility for all services users
- To encourage feedback, compliments as well as complaints, and respond to them
- To regularly monitor equality and cohesion objectives at departmental management meetings
- To carry out equality monitoring of our service users and analyse the data
- To act on any adverse trends that are identified

A modern and diverse workforce – Our key objectives are:

- To have employment policies and practices that are fair, flexible and address equality issues
- To ensure that employees feel supported at work and that their experiences are positive
- To strive for a workforce that represents the community it serves
- To provide all employees with opportunities to engage in training and learning
- To make sure that every employee understands and engages in the council's equality duties
- To carry out equality monitoring and encourage more self-declaration on all equality strands

Community Cohesion

Equality and community cohesion co-exist and are interdependent for the mutual benefit of the community. Insecurity, conflict and tension are more likely to occur where there are serious inequalities. Community Cohesion can be described as a set of values where

- There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities

- The diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued
- People from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities
- Strong and positive relationships are being formed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Community cohesion incorporates and goes beyond the concept of equality and social inclusion.

Socio- economic Inequality

While Kingston is a relatively affluent borough there are pockets of deprivation as identified by national indicators. Over the years the borough profile has changed to indicate a widening of the gap between the most affluent and the least well off.

Kingston ranks as the second least deprived authority in London according to the DCLG 2015 Index of Deprivation 278 out of 326 local authorities in England. However, there are extremes of advantage and disadvantage across the borough.

In terms of Children in Low Income Families Local Measure shows the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work benefits or in receipt of Child Tax Credit, where their reported income is less than 60% of national median income. In Kingston this was 13.9% or 4,705 children estimated to be living in poverty in Kingston. The 2011 Census showed that 39% of lone parents in Kingston were unemployed and the vast majority (90.4%) were female.

Socio- economic inequality is about fairness and equality:

- for the individual - it is harder for every individual to have the opportunity to achieve their potential if there is a vast gap between the starting point of those at the top and those at the bottom
- for the economy – a strong economy draws on the talents and skills of all and leaves no potential wasted
- for society – divided and unequal societies are more beset by crime and disorder

It is widely recognised that socio-economic disadvantage leads to significant inequalities and gaps in outcomes (for example in relation to education, employment, financial capability, crime and health) which have a significant effect on people's life chances from early childhood through to later life.

A person's socio-economic background, their social class, is still a key factor in determining their life chances. In some cases there is clear evidence of the impact of socio-economic disadvantage where class is a better predictor of educational attainment than ability; less academically able, but better off children, overtake more able, poorer children by the age of six. Again this can be seen in gender when it comes to life expectancy – women generally live longer than men, but since the early 1980s poorer women have not been living as long as rich men.

It is important to understand the link between the impact of socio-economic and class together with the nine equality strands.

Socio-economic disadvantage reinforces and increases the inequalities associated with particular characteristics for example due to their gender, ethnicity, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion or beliefs. Here are some examples:

- around 70% of people from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds live in the most deprived wards in the country
- disabled adults are twice as likely to live in low-income households as non-disabled adults
- half of all lone parents are in low income households; the overwhelming majority of them being women
- only 61% of Muslim men have jobs, compared to 80% of Christian men, and 82% of Hindu men

Understanding and tackling socio-economic disadvantage will begin to improve life chances and social mobility and contribute to social cohesion, especially at this time of economic challenge. It is important to be mindful of the negative impact of poverty and a disenfranchised society.

Delivering on Equalities & Community Cohesion

The Council and its partners will be conscientious in their approach to implementing equality and community cohesion objectives in employment practices, the provision of services, decision making and policies, when commissioning and procuring services from other suppliers and by involving the residents and communities.

The action plan sets out the objectives that we want to work on to promote, advance and foster equality of opportunity both in service delivery and in our employment practices.