



Meeting:	CR&E Scrutiny Committee
Meeting Date:	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2024
Publication:	Open
Council Priority:	Empowering People
Wards:	Not Applicable
Report of:	Corporate Director of Resources.

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## Subject: Annual Workforce Report

### 1. Recommendations

#### **The Committee are asked to review and note:**

- 1.1. The workforce profile for the financial year 2023/24, found in Appendix One.
- 1.2. The trends and progress in 2023/24 detailed in section 3.2.
- 1.3. The progress reported (in section 3.3) in delivering on Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion through our Workforce Strategy 2023 – 2026.
- 1.4. The main priorities (in section 3.4) for the 2024/25 workplan, based on the workforce profile and progress made to date.

### 2. Report summary

- 2.1. The Annual Workforce Report demonstrates our commitment to transparency in sharing data and addressing disparities, in line with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. This report shares our ongoing work and achievements focussing on:
  - Key trends from the data - Identifying any underrepresentation and potential discrimination to guide future actions.
  - Progress against the Workforce Strategy 2023-2026.
  - Identification of future priorities and actions for 2024/25.

## 3. Details

### 3.1. Background

3.1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty places a requirement on public authorities to consider how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act 2010. When public authorities carry out their functions, the Equality Act says they must have due regard or think about the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster or encourage good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

3.1.2 One of the specific duties under the Act is to publish equality information at least once a year to show how we have complied. The span of information to be published is not specified but normally includes:

- Composition of the workforce
- Pay (including pay gap reporting)
- Recruitment and retention

3.1.3 Our Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EEDI) pillar within the Workforce Strategy 2023-2026 outlines our dedication to creating an equal future and challenging inequality. This report reviews our progress, sets priorities, and measures our impact and ambition for the workforce to reflect the diverse community we serve.

### 3.2 Workplace Profile Trends and Progress

3.2.1 We have made good progress during 2023/24. Some notable trends and achievements are:

- The percentage of Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic colleagues has steadily increased year on year from 37.62% in 2016 to 43.51% in 2023/24. This shows a positive trend towards greater diversity over the years. This is higher than the Islington working age population (of 36.1%).
- Each year, we have increased representation for Black, Asian, Multi-Ethnic colleagues in the top 5% of earners. For 2023/24, this was 31%. This was 9.3% above the target of 21.7% and 6.8% above the London Council's average (of 24.2%).
- 9.37% of employees have shared they have a disability. This is lower than the Islington working age population of 15.1% but above the London average of 6.53%. In the colleague survey (March 2024) a higher number of colleagues (22%) shared they had a disability suggesting some under reporting.

- We have also seen an increase in the percentage of colleagues with a disability in the top 5% of earners. This was 11.4 in 2023/24, 5.1% above the target of 6.3% and 5.04% above the London Council average (of 6.36%).
- Islington has a negative mean gender pay gap of -2.26% meaning female employees are paid more on average than male employees. The balance in favour of females in terms of the median gender pay gap is likely influenced by their distribution within the organisation, particularly their higher representation in higher pay quartiles.
- The mean disability pay gap is -0.93%, indicating that, on average, employees with disabilities earn slightly more than those without disabilities. The median disability pay gap is 0%, suggesting that the median earnings of employees with and without disabilities are the same. We will be running an equality data campaign during 2024 and will be able to identify if increased sharing around disability identification has any impact on the disability pay gap.
- The mean ethnicity pay gap has reduced from 14.33% in 2022/23 to 9.33%. The UK mean ethnicity pay gap is 13.1%. The median ethnicity pay gap at Islington is 6.09%. Black, Asian, Multi-Ethnic employees are paid less on average than White employees. Underrepresentation in higher pay grades contributes to the overall mean ethnicity pay gap. For example, in the top quartile, 34% of employees are from a Black, Asian, Multi-Ethnic background, compared to 66% who are White. Black, Asian, Multi-Ethnic employees are more represented in the lower quartiles, which typically have lower pay.
- Initiatives like the Islington Management Diploma, Black on Board and Mentoring for Inclusion Programmes are enhancing leadership skills and representation among underrepresented groups. We aim to increase representation further through their continued investment as well as ensuring all open development programmes have diverse cohorts.
- Our focus on early careers development continues and is supportive of reducing the age profile of the council. External apprentices remain diverse, with a notable representation from Black African/Caribbean/Black British (20%) and Asian/Asian British (20%) ethnic backgrounds. 6% of apprentices declared they had a disability.
- 472 employees left the council, with the majority leaving voluntarily (resignation or voluntary redundancy). The proportion of leavers with disabilities (8.69%) is slightly lower than in the overall workforce. A higher proportion of leavers are White (55.93%) compared to the overall workforce, while the proportion of Black (18.86%) employees among leavers is lower than in the wider workforce.
- Excluding those that did not declare their ethnic origin, 44.02% were from a Black, Asian, or Multi-Ethnic background which is higher than the existing workforce (43.51%). A higher percentage (12.73%) of those offered roles shared they had a disability compared with the workforce composition (9.37%).
- The procurement of the eRecruitment system, EPloy, along with Coveya, the Apprenticeship system during this year, has positioned us well to enhance tracking and reporting on inclusive recruitment and career progression. The next step is to develop quarterly reporting once there is enough data in the new software and to run an equality data campaign to encourage colleagues to update their equality data. This

will ensure we make informed decisions based on the accurate makeup of our organisation.

- We continue to engage and effectively partner with our colleague forums, Trade Unions and Equality Champions, and run targeted events and celebrations to foster an inclusive workplace culture as well as co-designing work for example the online Neurodiversity Toolkit and continuing to develop our approach to workplace adjustments. This resulted in Islington being awarded the Best Employer & TU / Employee Partnership for working together to improve the experiences of our staff with disabilities by the Public Services People Manager Association (PPMA) in early 2024. This work has continued with the launch of our Disability Information Hub.
- Best practices, such as Safe Spaces and supporting Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic colleagues with trauma, emerged from the London-wide Tackling Racial Inequality programme for HR professionals, co-chaired by our Director of HR

3.2.2 Our focus areas for 2024/25 are detailed in section 3.4. We aim to build on work undertaken to date to ensure we further increase representation of Disabled and Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic colleagues within the higher pay bands as well as identify any emerging trends. We conducted our colleague survey towards the end of this reporting period. As we analyse the results through an Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion lens and undertake further deep dives into areas of improvement, this will help us understand the employee experience and develop our actions.

### **3.3 Progress against Workforce Strategy 2023/24**

3.3.1 During 2023/24 we have delivered on equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion for our workforce through our Workforce Strategy. Here is a summary of some notable areas of progress.

3.3.2 Our Colleague Survey 2024 closed in March, with 2048 colleagues (41%) participating. Initial results show that compared to the 2021, 26 out of the 41 questions have improved by at least 5%. Additionally, 90% of colleagues feel they have the knowledge and skills to support equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion. There were no significant differences in responses based on protected characteristics. Although engagement scores for colleagues with disabilities were slightly lower (by less than 5%), this difference is not statistically significant. We will continue to work closely with our Disabled Staff Forum to make further improvements. We know this survey doesn't give us the full picture, so we plan to provide opportunities through focus groups on the areas colleagues would like to see improved.

3.3.3 Check Ins and Check in Reviews are our approach to performance development. We are dedicated to creating a high-performing culture at Islington Council to help us deliver our 2030 ambitions, and Check Ins create a space for our staff and managers to talk regularly about their performance, achievements, wellbeing and where improvements can be made. We developed moderation guidance to ensure fairness and transparency in status allocations, along with guidance on supporting disabled colleagues. The Check In forms also include signposting to the workplace passport. As of the end of March 2024

there was no statistically significant differences related to status allocation for those with protected characteristics. We will continue to monitor trends and anything significant in terms of intersectionality will be flagged with actions agreed where appropriate.

- 3.3.4 Between October 2023 - February 2024 we piloted new training sessions on equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion with three different colleague groups: general colleagues, frontline colleagues, and managers. 93% would recommend the training to a colleague. 95% agreed the training was useful and 90% rated the facilitators as 'Excellent' or 'Very Good.'
- 3.3.5 Leading with CARE is a five-day leadership development programme designed from October 2023 – March 2024. It blends modern leadership skills and behaviours with our CARE values. The pilot programme launched in April 2024 and is created for the Islington Leadership Network, which includes about 140 colleagues who are Heads of Service and above. Our Corporate Management Team have attended the pilot and help shape the programme, which will officially launch in Autumn 2024. After the Islington Leadership Network completes the programme, it will be offered to new starters, aspiring leaders, and high-performing colleagues.
- 3.3.6 To boost career progression and representation in the top 5% of our workforce, we run two programmes: Black on Board and Mentoring for Inclusion. The latter focuses on Disabled and Black, Asian, and Multi-Ethnic colleagues. Each year, we have increased representation for these groups in the top 5% of earners. Senior leaders involved reported a confidence boost (from 50% to 89%) in their conversations with mentees, and a number of mentees were promoted to senior roles. In 2023, the Black on Board programme had 10 participants from April to November. Participants felt they gained useful tools, expanded their networks, and felt more empowered.
- 3.3.7 We have an in-house coaching offer open to all colleagues. Each colleague receives six one-on-one coaching sessions with a qualified coach, focusing on individual professional development. The coaching program helps with career planning, skills development, and strategies for work-related goals. It also benefits our Learning and Development offer, as our internal pool of 26 qualified coaches have completed a Level 5 Coaching Professional Apprenticeship and an ILM Level 5 Coaching & Mentoring Diploma. As the programme is relatively new, the data set is not large enough to be statistically significant, but the team monitors the equality profile of both coaches and coachees to maximise successful matches and support progression of underrepresented colleagues.
- 3.3.8 We have improved the support we offer colleagues and encouraged conversations around wellbeing, disability, and workplace adjustments. In 2023/24 we ran biweekly Wellbeing Wednesday events at various sites, sometimes in partnership with external experts and connected with our year-round equality events calendar. For example, we covered Wellbeing for working parents (Carers Week), the Black maternal mortality rate, Black women's experiences of reproductive and maternal healthcare (Black History Month & World Mental Health Day), health and wellbeing in the South Asian Community (South

Asian Heritage Month) and deaf awareness and mental health (Deaf Awareness Week). The average rating for events was 9/10. Feedback showed that participants valued the opportunities and felt they positively impacted their wellbeing. One participant said, “I felt so anxious and stressed before, but the session made me present and relaxed” Another commented, “The session was perfectly timed for gloomy January, and the topic was ideal for this time of year. The presenter was high quality and fostered a lively discussion among participants.”

- 3.3.9 Our Disability Confidence Level 2 is valid until 26 March 2025. We ran nine Disability Confident online workshops during 2023/2024, with 103 colleagues attending, including 42 managers and Heads of Service. We will start action planning for Level 3 in Autumn 2024.
- 3.3.10 In response to feedback from our colleague forums and looking at best practice we updated the Workplace Passport to include sections on being a parent and/or carer and sharing information related to your religion or beliefs. Colleagues are regularly encouraged to use it. The central Workplace Adjustment Budget for 2023-24 covered adjustments for 136 colleagues. We also introduced an online Neurodiversity Toolkit, developed in partnership with colleagues following focus groups. This launched in November 2023 as part of our Disability History Month awareness campaign., developed in partnership with colleagues following focus groups. This launched in November 2023 as part of our Disability History Month awareness campaign.
- 3.3.12 Free period products for staff were also introduced across main sites. During November 2023 we offered flu vaccinations to colleagues at 3 main sites with 262 vaccines administered to colleagues and a further 376 taking up the e-voucher scheme.
- 3.3.13 We actively engage with and support our colleague forums, which includes the Disability Staff Forum, Carers Forum’, Race Equality Network, Women’s Network, and LGBTQ+ Staff Forum through monthly meetings and quarterly all staff forum co-chair meetings. We also regularly attend slots in the quarterly forum meetings. We collaborated with the Disability Forum to improve our approach to workplace adjustments and our disability information hub.
- 3.3.14 Equality Champions are volunteers across the organisation providing peer-support to colleagues and helping to share information and provide feedback from their services. In January 2024, a review session was held with equality champions to understand their experience and what further support would be useful. This resulted in an amended role profile and proposed actions to strengthen the champion role in People and Service Plans.
- 3.3.15 We held various events and activities throughout the year to promote Equality, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Wellbeing. Some examples include:
- **Webinar on cultural practices and beliefs: Ramadan, Easter, and Passover (April 2023).** The webinar included colleagues sharing the traditions and customs associated

with each of these religious observances with the opportunity to ask any questions and learn how to support teams or colleagues better.

- **Black History Month (October 2023):** Events included a conversation with Kelechi Okafor on black womanhood in the UK, a screening of the film “Roxanne,” The month concluded with a Table Talk event, “Saluting our sisters – Intersectional experience,” involving all the colleague forums.
- **International Women’s Day (March 2024):** We hosted an Inclusive Breakfast featuring food from diverse cultures, showcasing the Women’s Forum, and providing networking opportunities. There was also an online talk with Coppafeel about breast health, and a pop-up Menstruation Cafe for those affected by menstruation or menopause, as well as those supporting them. This event also provided the opportunity to gather feedback on the current Menopause Guidance.
- **We held monthly Safe Space sessions.** This is a forum led by an experienced practitioner who is confident in discussing racial inequality and discrimination. This programme allows colleagues to share their experiences, ask questions, listen, and learn. It also aims to offer coping strategies, techniques to understand trauma, manage emotional wellbeing, and guide colleagues to services.

3.3.16 We consult diverse groups including all employees, managers, Trade Union colleagues and staff forum co-chairs, in the policy development process. Their input ensures the policies are inclusive and address various perspectives. We reviewed and updated the sickness absence policy in July 2023 consulting with the Disability Staff Forum. This led to updated wording on disability and sickness absence, a review of the language used in letters, a decision to expand the use of the workplace passport to support colleagues. We also reviewed and updated the Domestic Abuse policy and guidance to reflect the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Further work will take place in 2024/25 to create policies that foster an inclusive and equitable workplace including the launch of new guidance on bullying, harassment, microaggressions and coercive control. The policy schedule and prioritisation will be shaped following consultation with a range of stakeholders including the Staff Forums and Trade Unions.

3.3.17 We ensure that our benefits are accessible and equitable for all employees, regardless of their background. We continuously review and adapt our offerings to meet the diverse needs of our workforce, promoting an inclusive and supportive work environment. In 2023/24 we started work to introduce a new benefits package, MyBenefits, to all permanent and fixed term employees. MyBenefits offers a range of benefits aimed at supporting colleagues' wellbeing and lifestyle making benefits accessible to all staff and supporting colleagues with the general cost of living. The discounts portal is available via an app, which makes it accessible to front line staff who do not have regular access to a PC. New employee benefits include shopping discounts and dental insurance alongside existing employee benefits such as affordable loans, Smart Tech and white goods purchases and cycle to work. Benefits are tailored to colleagues' mental, physical, and financial wellbeing and include a family hub with information and advice on topics such as having a baby, death, divorce and separation, support for carers, illness and disability.

3.3.18 In 2023/24, we successfully implemented our new eRecruitment system, EPloy, to replace Trac. This enabled us to create a single recruitment portal, improving the recruitment process, removing inclusivity barriers, and gaining better data insights. The Equality Impact Assessment Screening in October 2023 highlighted that EPloy would:

- Continue to support fully anonymised applications and shortlisting to prevent bias, with the added ability to anonymise employment dates to reduce age-based discrimination.
- Be WCAG compliant on external interfaces, improving accessibility for disabled people. This means the recruitment system will be fully usable with accessibility software built into modern browsers and mobile devices.
- Use AI to check and eliminate gender biases in job adverts.
- Facilitate Guaranteed Interview Schemes for disabled individuals, care leavers, and armed forces veterans, ensuring they get an interview if they meet the minimum criteria.

3.3.19 Values-based recruitment focuses on attracting and hiring people based on their values and fit for the role, rather than just their experience, qualifications, and skills. During 2023/24, values-based recruitment was trialled for frontline Support Worker roles in Adult Social Care. This approach encourages diversity by recruiting individuals from various backgrounds who share the same core values, leading to a more inclusive workplace where different perspectives are valued. The pilot will be evaluated in 2024, and if successful, it will be refined and rolled out to other roles suited to values-based recruitment.

3.3.20 The number of starts on the apprenticeship programme increased by 5% this year from 78 to 82. Female apprentices make up most new starters (68%). 57% of External apprentices are aged 16-24. This indicates that our focus on early careers development continues and is supportive of reducing the age profile of the council. External apprentices remain diverse, with a notable representation from Black African/Caribbean/Black British (20%) and Asian/Asian British (20%) backgrounds. 6% of apprentices declared they had a disability. As of 31 March 2024, we had 162 active apprentices. This was spread across approximately 45 different subjects ranging from level 2 to level 7. Our 2022-2026 Career Pathways and Apprenticeship strategy aims to attract, engage, and retain talent from our residents and the wider internal talent pool. We are committed to creating clear and accessible employment routes. By building an inclusive talent pipeline, we create opportunities for residents and position ourselves as an employer of choice for professionals at all levels. In 2023/24, we procured new software (Conveya) to capture data, ensuring we have the information needed for succession planning, retention and next steps for apprentices.

3.3.21 As part of our strategy, we introduced a multi stranded corporate work experience programme. This is the first comprehensive programme to be introduced in several years. Our aim is to provide defined routes towards apprenticeships and other employment opportunities. Our target groups include school children, those not in employment, education or training (NEETs), Care Experienced Young People, Individual with global learning needs and those with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). We have increased our range of engagement and promotion activities by



increasing our attendance at career fairs and hosting information session and insight days. We are working proactively with the Youth Engagement Service and iWorks to reach residents most in need of career support and employment.

3.3.22 We are committed to developing our management and leadership development programmes to ensure there is a clear and inclusive route for staff to progress within the council and address underrepresentation at senior levels. To date 84 learners have chosen to develop their skill further as part of the Solace Emerging Leader programme and the Islington Management Diploma. Applications are monitored to ensure the spread of participants is as representative as possible with bespoke information sessions targeted at under-represented groups, in particular Black, Asian and Multi-Ethnic colleagues.

### **3.4 Priority actions for 2024/25**

3.4.1 Based on the data and our progress to date, the priority work areas for 2024/25 are to:

- Partner CMT members as Senior Active Allies with colleague forums to show clear and active leadership.
- Run an equality data campaign to encourage colleagues to share their data, highlighting how this helps us make improvements.
- Continue to address senior level underrepresentation through inclusive recruitment practice and our targeted career development programmes.
- Roll out and embed our updated EEDI training offer at all levels from Leadership, through to front line colleagues.
- Work towards Disability Confidence Level 3 by 2025 including the ongoing development of the Disability Information Hub.
- Develop a prioritised policy schedule including new guidance on Workplace Bullying, Harassment, Microaggressions and Coercive Control.
- Undertake further engagement on the Colleague Survey results with an EEDI lens ensuring we get diverse feedback to inform future priorities and actions.
- Strengthen all elements of the apprenticeship strategy which includes an apprenticeship first approach to reviewing Scale 6 and below vacancies.

## **4. Other options considered and the reasons for recommending this proposal**

4.1. Not applicable.

## **5. Key impacts and risks of the proposal**

5.1. Not applicable.

## 6. Contribution to the Islington Together 2030 Plan

- 6.1. The annual workforce report helps us review our progress to date and plan future actions to work towards creating a Fairer Islington and creating a high performing workforce as set out in the [Islington Together 2030 Plan](#).

## 7. Consultation and community engagement

- 7.1. Not applicable.

## 8. Implications

### 8.1. Financial Implications

- 8.1.1. There are no financial implications from the recommendations in this report.

### 8.2. Legal Implications

- 8.2.1. The Council's legal obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (s.149 Equality Act 2010) are set out at paragraph 3.1 of this report.
- 8.2.2. Additionally, under section 158 of the Equality Act 2010, it is lawful for the Council to take action to compensate for disadvantages which it reasonably believes are faced by people who share a particular protected characteristic. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 8.2.3. Positive action is lawful if it is taken to:
- Enable or encourage people who share a protected characteristic to overcome a disadvantage connected to the characteristic;
  - Meet the needs of people who share a protected characteristic where those needs are different to those people who do not have the characteristic; or
  - Enable or encourage people who share a protected characteristic to participate in an activity in which their participation is disproportionately low.
- 8.2.4. Whilst the Council can encourage people from disadvantaged groups to apply for certain positions and can provide training and support to help equip them for the particular work, the decision on whom to select must be made on merit alone (s7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989).
- 8.2.5. There are no other legal implications arising from the report. Legal Advice and support will be provided where necessary in respect of individual actions.

### 8.3. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

8.3.1 There are no additional environmental implications associated with the presentation of this report.

## **8.4 Equalities**

8.4.1 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

8.4.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment Screening was completed, and a full Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, because this is not a new proposal. The data will help inform any internal Equality Impact Assessments.

## **9. Timetable for implementation**

9.1. The planned actions will take place during the financial year 2024/25 and progress will be reported in the 2024/25 annual workforce report.

### **Appendices:**

- Appendix One - Workforce Profile 2023/24

### **Relevant decisions / reports:**

- [Agenda item - Annual Workforce Report | Democracy in Islington](#)

### **Background papers:**

- None.

### **Report approval:**

Authorised by:

**Corporate Director of Resources.**

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024

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