

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Employment Committee
Date:	27 June 2024
Subject:	Workforce Equality Data Report
Chief Officer:	Will Tuckley
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Ward(s):	All
Exempt:	No
Appendices:	A - Workforce Equality Data Report

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report presents Committee Members with the updated annual Workforce Equality Data Report. The report includes:

- An overview of Slough demographics (from Census 2021) and links to further Slough Insights Data.
- Links to Gender Pay Gap Reports, Equality Objectives, and the Corporate Plan
- Information on how the SBC (Slough Borough Council) workforce profile compares with the Economically Active Cohort in Slough (by Sex, Disability and Ethnicity)
- SBC workforce profiles by equality characteristics and salary (for Age, Gender, Disability and Ethnicity)
- SBC workforce profiles by Religion and Sexual Orientation
- Further measure to support workforce equality and inclusion, including HR policies and staff engagement.

Recommendations:

1.2 The Committee is recommended to review and note the Workforce Equality Data Report.

1.3 Reason:

Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council has various duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Collection, monitoring and publication of workforce equality data can support the Council to meet this duty. Publishing data such as workforce and salary profiles and other employee data in an anonymised format is one-way employers can understand whether unjustifiable disparities exist between different groups of staff based on specific protected characteristics. The council is committed to being an inclusive employer and has recently approved [statutory equality objectives](#) , two of which relate specifically to workforce. These are that:

- The council uses a robust and comprehensive set of employment data to inform its workforce strategy and management practice, as well as benchmarking and sharing best practice.
- The council actively ensures that the profile of its workforce (including the profile of major providers of commissioned services) reflects the community it serves/local labour market.

2. Commissioner Review

" The council did not make as much progress in improving its equalities data as it aimed to do in 2023/24. The authority received praise for acknowledging the scale of the problem and its ambitions but has not yet delivered on those ambitions. The new Director of HR has only recently taken up her post and this report sets out how she hopes to improve on previous initiatives in this area."

3. Report

Introductory paragraph

3.1 Regulations made under the Equality Act 2010 require specified bodies to publish information to demonstrate its compliance with its duty under s.149 of the Act. Section 149 (known as the public sector equality duty (PSED)) requires the council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The information required to be published under the regulations is not prescribed but includes information relating to persons who share a relevant protected characteristic who are (a) its employees; (b) other persons affected by its policies and practices. This report relates to the first category. As an organisation, we are working to improve the accuracy of our workforce data and ensure our HR policies, practices, and procedures provide an inclusive and responsive workplace for all colleagues. The Workforce Equality Data Report (Appendix A) takes a snapshot of the workforce as of 31 December 2023 and is published on the [Equality and Diversity](#) section of the council website.

3. Background

3.1 The council has gone through an unprecedented period of organisational change over the past 3 years. This has significantly impacted workforce stability, and our capacity to collect and analyse workforce data. The council is committed to addressing this as part of its recovery. Following a wider public consultation on statutory equality objectives in December 2023, the council has approved two workforce specific equality objectives (along-side wider service objectives). These seek to give focus over the next 2 years to addressing the key issues of improved data-collection and evidence –based

decision-making in HR process and practice and employing an inclusive workforce that is representative of the local Slough community.

- 3.2 To further support improvements in workforce diversity and inclusion, Cabinet (April 2024) has approved the commissioning of an LGA Equalities Peer Review, to take place in September 2024. How well the council supports a diverse and engaged workforce will form part of that review process. Specific areas of assessment will be collecting, analysing and publishing workforce data; inclusive workforce policies and strategies; learning and development and employee health and wellbeing. The LGA Peer Review team will produce a written report of recommendations following the assessment in September.
- 3.3 There remain significant issues with data quality and employee diversity declaration rates (particularly around disability and ethnicity). Current rates are showing signs of improvement (from the report snapshot date of December 2023), and this is regularly reported to CLT and Cabinet as a key performance measure. The staff network chairs have produced a video on the intranet to support staff in making these declarations and we are reviewing how diversity information captured on the Talos Applicant Tracking System can be more easily inputted into the Agresso HR system when individuals are appointed. Declaring EDI (Equality Diversity & Inclusion) information is now a mandatory element of completing an application form, but candidates have the option to select 'prefer not to say'. The equalities information is not seen by the hiring manager and is separated from the selection process.
- 3.4 The report shows that the council employs more female staff than male staff. This is consistent with national employment trends in local government and is reflective of the wide range of job roles and services provided by a unitary authority. Females are currently over-represented in the SBC workforce compared to the Slough economically active comparator.
- 3.3 Almost 1/3 (31%) of employees are aged between 45 and 54 years of age. Just 2% of employees are aged under 25 years.
- 3.5 Around 6% of employees have declared a disability. This compares favourably with the Slough economically active cohort (7%). However, almost 75% employees have not stated if they have a disability. It is reasonable to assume that our actual rate of disabled employees is higher than 6%.
- 3.6 With a significant gap in employee ethnicity declarations, our analysis of ethnicity profiles of staff remains limited. However, since the publication of the 2023 workforce report, additional work has been undertaken to analyse the more detailed ethnic groups category in Agresso (the HR and Payroll system, which contains all staff data). This detailed group is published alongside further comparators with the ethnic groups of the Slough economically active cohort.
- 3.7 Applicant data is now being collected via Talos our applicant tracking system and we are working with the supplier to build meaningful reports that can track the EDI data of our applicants at each stage of the recruitment and selection process. Our plan is that the EDI data declared by successful applicants will be added to the Agresso new starter form by the recruitment team to ensure data captured is not lost.
- 3.8 In addition to the workforce equality profiles and data, the Workforce Equality Data Report also details recent work to promote inclusive HR policies and procedures,

employee wellbeing and the continuing development of the staff network groups: REACH (Race equality and celebrating heritage) Network, SBC Women's Network, Employees with Disability Forum, and Menopause Cafe. The engagement of diverse staff through the networks has been an important part of HR policy review and culture change programmes.

3.9 The following actions are being undertaken over the next 3 months to improve workforce data reporting:

- The HR Director and EDI Lead are reviewing the current diversity categories held in Agresso to ensure they are fit for purpose. Revised categories will follow a standardised format that can more easily be compared to national census and other ONS and local authority data
- Whilst providing diversity information is not mandatory for any employee, completion rates can be improved using the "prefer not to say" option, whereby it can be recorded as a conscious decision by the employee. This will enable us to understand better what the barriers are (access to and understanding of Agresso, feeling uncomfortable to report etc). Support can be given by managers/staff networks for staff who are unsure how to complete on the system.
- The HR Director will be exploring the current capabilities and resources within HR to analyse data across a wider range of HR metrics (directorate and team breakdown, exit interviews, disciplinaries etc).
- As part of the LGA Peer review in September, staff will be encouraged and supported to attend focus groups to provide insight on their lived experience to include workplace culture and opportunities for career development. The findings of which will help inform the development of a HR /Workforce action plan.

3.10 The council is committed to being an inclusive employer and seeks to place employees at the centre of its recovery process. Data analysis is the starting point for evidence –based interventions to improve diversity and inclusion across the organisation and ensure HR policies and processes are fair and accessible to all employees.

4. Implications of the Recommendation

4.1 *Financial implications*

There are no financial implications of the proposed action in terms of allocated budgets.

4.2 *Legal implications*

The Equality Act 2010 contains various duties in relation to workforce duties. This includes, but is not limited to, the public sector equality duty, the duty to have up to date equality objectives and to publish equality information. There is a specific duty to publish data on the gender pay gap. The Equality Act consolidated previous discrimination legislation and contains duties and responsibilities in relation to employment and work-related activities. There are specific duties in relation to equal pay between men and women. The Act makes it unlawful to discriminate, victimise or harass based on protected characteristic and places positive duties on employers to make reasonable adjustments to employees who have a disability. Some duties

apply in the recruitment process, as well as during employment. Whilst it is lawful to have policies to encourage and promote roles to specific protected groups, there are only limited circumstances when it would be appropriate to require a person with a specific protected characteristic, for example a requirement for a female care worker if the role involved intimate care tasks.

When collecting and reporting on workforce data, the Council must comply with its data protection duties. Data about a person's protected characteristic, such as their ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion is classed as special category data under GDPR. This means that when collecting data, the Council must make sure their employees are aware of how the data will be used and how it will be kept safe and secure.

4.3 *Risk management implications*

Failure to publish information risks legal challenge relating to non-compliance with the PSED and potential investigation and intervention by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Failure to address the long-term causes of inequality in the workplace can reduce staff morale and engagement, and ultimately impact recruitment and retention. Longer term it may also increase the risk of indirect and direct discrimination claims.

4.4 *Environmental implications*

There are no anticipated environmental implications

4.5 *Equality implications*

Analysing workforce equality profile data seeks to promote equality for all groups within the workplace by improving, through data insights, our understanding of how different policies and practices impact on different staff equality groups. Publication on the council website leads to greater transparency and accountability. Furthermore, analysis of staff equality profiles supports the council ambition to be representative of the communities it serves.

4.6 *Workforce implications*

The council is committed to being an inclusive employer, where employee diversity is valued and all staff have equal opportunity to thrive and progress their careers, irrespective of background.

5. Background Papers

A – Workforce Equality Data Report