

# Equalities Monitoring Place Directorate

## Annual Report – 2023/24



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## 1. Introduction

This report provides a summary to demonstrate the approaches taken by the Place Directorate (comprising Natural Estates, Planning, Public Health, Highways and Transport, Property, Building Control and Regeneration and Economic Development) to ensure that it pays due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and Equality Act and supports the Council's Equality Objectives.

In their responses for this report, each service area within the Directorate was asked to consider the following:

- The public sector equality duty:
  - General duty on public bodies and others that carry out public functions.
  - Ensures that public bodies consider the needs of all through:
    - Shaping policy
    - Delivery of services
    - Employees.
- The Council's general duty under the Equality Act
  - Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
  - Advance equality of opportunity between those who share relevant protected characteristics and those who do not.
  - Foster good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
- The Council's equality objectives detailed its 'All of Us' Equality Scheme, which includes the following key principles:
  - Inclusive in all we do
  - Accessible for all
  - Accountable and Fair
  - Diverse and inclusive workforce

## 2. Performance against Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

The evidence has been collected and is summarised according to four key areas defined in the diagram below.

**Diagram 1: Key themes for demonstrating the Place Directorate fulfils its responsibility for Equalities and the Public Sector Equality Duty**



This section also notes progress made and outcomes achieved against actions identified in 2022-2023.

## **2.1 Workforce: Addressing inequalities and meeting the equalities duty in recruitment, training, and CPD**

This section provides examples of action taken by different departments within the Place Directorate to ensure an inclusive work environment is created and the Equality Duty is met.

### **2.1.1 Recruitment**

Departments within Place comprise a diverse inclusive workforce and use principles of Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to make sure that barriers to entry do not exist. All departments within Place have incorporated recruitment practices that resonate with their equality duties. Whilst conducting candidate interviews a question based on EDI is asked of all applicants (e.g., *'Please share with us what equality and diversity mean to you and why are they important?'*). An applicant's understanding and position on equality and diversity influences the decision-making regards to recruitment of applicants.

The Public Health team have taken steps to meet the aims of their PSED duty through participating in an apprenticeship program that strives towards providing professional development opportunities to underrepresented groups. The Public Health Apprenticeship Program at Bracknell Forest focused on recruiting individuals from under-represented backgrounds to develop a public health workforce that is diverse and inclusive. The recruitment process was designed to be inclusive, fair, and warranted equal access for all candidates.

### **2.1.2 Staff management**

Annual appraisal templates invite staff to undergo self-evaluation on how their behaviour reflects the council's value of 'Being inclusive'.

### **2.1.3 Training and CPD**

All Place staff must complete their mandatory EDI training, and they are also encouraged to complete the non-mandatory training available to them to support awareness around EDI. The table below provides a summary of the additional training courses to support EDI undertaken by staff across Place in the last 12 months.

**Table 1: Additional training undertaken by Place Directorate staff to support EDI**

<b>Training</b>	<b>Number of staff attending course in the last 12 months</b>	<b>Percentage of Places staff attending course in last 12 months (Total staff<sup>1</sup>= 216)</b>
Equality in the Workplace	19	8.8%
Trans and Non-Binary Inclusion in Practice (Team Version)	5	2.3%
Neurodiversity Inclusion in Practice (Team Version)	4	1.8%
Active Bystander (Team Version)	4	1.8%
Disability and Discrimination	4	1.8%
Dyslexia awareness	4	1.8%
Allyship in Practice (Team Version)	3	1.4%
Mental Wellbeing at Work - Team Members	3	1.4%
Good Hair: Perceptions of Racism	2	0.9%
Faith and Belief	1	0.5%
Unconscious Bias	1	0.5%
Trans Awareness	1	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>23.6%</b>

The staff belonging to the client facing Social Prescribing team completed 'writing for accessibility and usability training', 'MERMAIDS (trans and non-binary gender diverse children)' and 'Inclusive conversations' training.

Furthermore, colleagues with Public Health must adhere to the UK Public Health Register standards (UKPHR). This sets clear expectations for the workforce regarding the integration of equality into their everyday practice.

The Social Prescribing team are now all trained in Mental Health First Aid which supports both clients and colleagues within the organisation.

Bracknell Forest has trained a network of Equality Allies who support colleagues who may feel uncomfortable or unhappy at work resulting from situations where there is discrimination or exclusion. The Equality Allies are impartial. They provide support, a confidential safe space for discussions, raising concerns and options on resolving the issue. In the Place Directorate, there are Equality Allies within the Natural Estates and Public Health teams, who are available for providing support to colleagues who have experienced discrimination, inequalities, and exclusion.

## **2.2 Embedding equalities in policies and strategies.**

This section describes some of the ways in which Place pays due regard to equalities when developing strategies or within policies. Examples from across the Directorate are provided below to illustrate the role of the work in supporting equalities.

<sup>1</sup> This number does not include casual workers.

### **a) The role of undertaking Equalities Impact Assessment to inform strategies.**

Within the Planning services, all policies and guidance documents are subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment at key decision-making stages.

### **b) The role of embedding equalities into strategies**

Strategic work across the Directorate includes analysis of need amongst a range of demographic groups. Recent examples include:

- The new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) considers equalities throughout its vision and proposed actions. For example, to identify barriers and incorporate public opinion a walking and cycling consultation was undertaken. The findings from this consultation were used to prepare the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan. Equalities were also considered in the new Electric Vehicle (EV) strategy which included due care for ensuring accessibility arrangements at EV charging points for older and disabled EV users.
- The emerging Berkshire Economic Strategy 2024 -2034 aims to grow a resilient economy with strong foundations based on equality, to help make Bracknell Forest a great place to live and work in.
- Bracknell Forest's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026 highlights reducing health inequalities as one of its cross-cutting themes, ensuring all actions identified within the strategy review and/or focus on the impact being had on inequality.
- The emerging Asset Management Strategy seeks to make improvements to the physical environment and reduce inequalities experienced by residents in some of the more relatively deprived areas and neighbourhoods within Bracknell Forest.

### **c) The role of consultation and community involvement**

The Planning team are in the process of reviewing their existing Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This will allow the people of Bracknell Forest a say in the scope and extent of public involvement in the planning process and sets out opportunities for public involvement in different planning processes. To further act upon their PSED duties, the planning team are continuing consultation on planning documents in accessible format targeting disability and minority umbrella organisations.

The Transport and Highways services are currently developing their Local Transport Plan (LTP4) 2025-2037. The development of the LTP4 is based around responses drawn from feedback obtained through local consultations as well as the consideration of the LAs position on meeting national commitments. This LTP4 plan incorporates strategies with a strong focus towards inclusion and accessibility to key services throughout the transport system. To make this plan more inclusive and reflective of the needs of the community, all stages are subject to public consultation.

Based on evidence obtained from conservation and research, changes have been incorporated in Bracknell Forest's Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). This plan was developed following a consultation with partner organisations, the Bracknell Forest Nature Partnership and the public. When the plan was sent out for approval, equalities screening was completed to ensure that PSED targets were being met. Based on the finding of this screening, actions were identified around improving document accessibility. The public consultation on the draft was carried out online. Acting upon the results of the equalities screening, paper copies were made available to ensure inclusivity.

Any public consultation on planning policy documents includes targeting organisations which work with disability and minority group to ensure that PSED duties are met.

#### **d) The role of analysing data to assess and meet residents' needs**

The health and wellbeing strategy is a joint plan that sets priorities for improvement based on the current understanding of the health and wellbeing profile of the population. The public health team is currently working on delivering a health and wellbeing strategy dashboard to capture progress and any challenges in achieving the aims of the health and wellbeing strategy.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment provides a picture of current and future health needs of the local population by collating a range of evidence in one place. Demographic and health analysis using census data are used to acquire insights into local communities and their needs. Health intelligence profiles of selected minority communities formed the basis of community engagement with the Nepalese, Hong-Kong, and Romanian communities.

Health needs assessments of the local population examine the incidence and prevalence of disease as well as access to services including any inequalities. This is accomplished using data from primary care, secondary care, and surveys capturing service user experiences. The results of needs assessments are used to identify gaps in services and produce recommendations, feeding into council strategies (e.g. the dementia strategy for Bracknell Forest).

Health equity audits are performed to identify inequalities in the delivery of services commissioned by the public health team (e.g. stop smoking health equity audit). The results of the audits are used to determine if people from selected groups (pregnant women, people with mental illness, ethnic minorities) experienced barriers in access to the services and in achieving the required outcomes compared with other service users.

In addition, the Public Health Intelligence workplan in 2024/25 includes conducting needs assessment for Dementia, Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Through the needs assessment the team seek to evaluate the inequalities in meeting health needs and access to services for key population subgroups. The findings from the needs assessments will in turn feed into council strategies tackling inequalities in Bracknell Forest.

The Public Health team are engaged in conducting a Sexual Health Needs Assessment insights project which looks at possible barriers in accessing local sexual health services and perceptions of the service amongst targeted groups such as those with learning difficulties (LD). This would ensure that the foundations of future strategy and services are best geared to provide fair access, equitable services and best align with PSED duties.

### **2.3 Meeting the equalities duty and addressing inequalities through contracted services.**

Suppliers are required to demonstrate how they embed EDI principles within their service specifications. This ensures that fair and equitable services are provided throughout and there is transparency and accountability. This also includes supplier scrutiny and due diligence. Examples of how this approach shapes the services delivered to residents is provided in this section.

The Transport department ensure that the requirement for vehicles to be fully accessible for all residents is included in the Supported Bus Contract specifications. The Transport department have also ensured that their Highway works, and local Bus provider contractors have EDI policies in place.

The Green and Active scheme is a commissioned offer to promote volunteering among target groups, such as young people (0-18 years), ethnic minorities, people with physical & mental health conditions, neurodiversity and learning disability. Quarterly Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) include targeted focus on volunteers. Due regard is therefore given to EDI for volunteers with protected characteristics and/or belonging to vulnerable groups.

The Economic Development and Regeneration department has included the requirement for contractors and suppliers to undertake equalities impact assessments. The Skills Hub and Ambassador Scheme are explicitly covered by this requirement. The Economic Development and Regeneration team also oversee the Eco Rewards programme, which is designed to promote active travel amongst residents via a digital app. To widen inclusion and rectify the possibility of residents missing out through lack of digital literacy or digital poverty, residents are provided with the option of picking up a blue tag that they can scan at various locations around Central Bracknell.

Substantial progress by the Regeneration and Economic Development team has been made through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund projects such as Growth Hub business support programme and the deployment of town centre ambassadors. The Town Centre ambassadors engage with people sleeping rough or suffering with poor mental health when visiting the town centre.

Services commissioned by Public Health aim to reduce health inequalities and deliver universal offer to all eligible residents but also ensure that targeted communication and delivery is undertaken to ensure equitable access of these services. The commissioned services are designed to pay due regard to equalities and health inequalities:

- **0-19 Public Health Nursing services** specialise in working with families with a child aged 0 to 5 and focus on improving health and wellbeing by promoting good health behaviours, preventing ill health, and reducing inequalities. Health and development reviews, health promotion and education, parenting support and screening and immunisation programmes are used to accomplish their objectives. These services provide expert information, assessments and interventions for babies, children, and families. The services also accommodate for a wider range of situations such as first-time mothers and fathers with complex needs. The main aims of the service involve improving health and wellbeing outcomes as well as reducing inequalities and vulnerabilities.
- **Sexual Health Services** for Berkshire East are commissioned by Bracknell Forest. The service is inclusive and accessible to all residents within the borough and aims to reduce health inequalities. Expectations are placed on the service provider to make appropriate adjustments to support those with disabilities and enable them to access services. It is expected that all patient interactions, whether in clinics or through outreach services, are treated confidentially and respectfully. Steps are taken to reduce stigma related to sexual health issues, gender identity, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.
- **Stop Smoking service** provides specialist support to those who wish to stop smoking. These services are available to all residents of Bracknell Forest and those who work here. The Community Smoking Services are commissioned by Bracknell Forest's Stop Smoking service to deliver this service. A range of intensive behaviour change techniques that identify triggers to smoke are used through different avenues of interaction such as face to face, digital and online support. New targeted services for helping people with SMI quit smoking have been included. This has followed in response to the identification of support needs for people with SMI during the last smoking equity audit conducted by Stop Smoking service. The Community Smoking



Services commissioned by Bracknell Forest's Stop Smoking service ensure that their providers are trained to provide an inclusive support to all individuals including those with disabilities, LGBTG, people with severe mental illness (SMI).

- **NHS Health Checks** is commissioned by Bracknell Forest are provided by all GP practices in Bracknell. The service supports adults in Bracknell who do not have pre-existing health condition and are aged 40 to 74 years. The service targets adults who are at greater risk which include adults with a Learning Disability, adults who are Black African, Black Caribbean and South Asian, adults with diagnosis of mental illness and adults who are carers.

Sexual health services commissioned by Bracknell Forest requires all staff working in the commissioned services to complete mandatory NHS Equality Training. This ensures that the staff are equipped to understand and address the diverse needs of service users, including those with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. Similarly, commissioning NHS health checks guarantees that NHS service Staff are required to complete regular training which includes NHS Equality training that makes certain that they have the skills and knowledge to provide support that incorporates EDI for all service users.

Whilst undertaking their project on playground upgrade at Chaucer Woods, Parks and Countryside used contractors who specialised in providing accessible and inclusive play equipment. Parks and Countryside are also considering the *New Trees for Streets* initiative. This national street sponsorship scheme fits in with EDI, as it is committed to ensuring its services are accessible and easy to use for the widest range of visitors possible with due care towards ensuring accessibility for residents with disabilities and/or impairments.

## **2.4 Meeting equalities duty and addressing inequalities in directly provided services and information.**

Evidence gathered from each of the departments within Place illustrates examples of the ways in which equalities are embedded into direct council services and information for residents.

*AccessAble* guides have been developed by Natural Estates to provide accessibility information to enable residents to make informed plans for their visits. Natural estates have also updated their online information to include greenspace accessibility information. Detailed information for three greenspaces Pope's Meadow, Savernake Park and Westmorland Park have been made available through detailed *AccessAble* guides.

The Planning department are integrating policies in the Local Plan (March 2024) into their service delivery. Compliance with the Local Plan facilitates the development of programs that are inclusive and creates accessible places for people to live and work. The policies encompass the inclusion of provisions for people with protected characteristics such as older people, disabled and minority communities such as travellers. The Planning team are aiming at the continuous embedding and implementation of Local Plan policies through actions such as providing training for case officers and members.

Public Health has undertaken targeted work with marginalised communities such as residents from the Hong Kong, Nepali and Romanian communities to gather intelligence and insight in relation to health and wellbeing, which has then been used to inform service delivery. Public Health created community profiles of minority communities residing within Bracknell Forest. Community Engagement events were delivered in partnership with different Bracknell Forest teams such as Adults and Children's Social Care, Migration team and Community engagement team. The 'world café' approach was used to engage two

Bracknell Forest communities (Hong Kong and Nepalese) and their feedback is being used to deliver tailored programs that address their identified needs and encourage community ownership. A third community event has been planned for the Romanian community.

Public Health coordinate the Community Map service, which provides residents with information on local groups, activities, and societies. This includes many inclusive activities such as activities for SEND individuals. The Community Map further upgraded their services in response to requests from the Learning Disabilities Board and People Power advocacy group. They widened their inclusivity through adding two filters (Children and Young People, 16+ years). Three different booklets of the Community Map were prepared, printed, and distributed across the borough in response to the feedback from the self-advocacy groups. The booklets depict visual depictions of how to use the Community Map. The website now includes an instructional video on how to use the Community map. The Community Maps also now has links to *AccessAble* guides to give those who need accessibility needs the opportunity to review venues before visiting them.

Digital screens known as Community Kiosks have been placed around the borough for people to gain access to information provided in the Community Maps. These digital screens present information in a simplified format to provide increased access to information for people with poor digital literacy and increase accessibility for people with SEND. The intention behind establishing community kiosks is to help reduce digital poverty.

The Public Health Social Prescribing team provides numerous activities and signposting of services to local residents. Examples of the ways in which they have incorporated the PSED goals into the services they provide are as follows:

- Engagement with faith forums through the delivery of awareness talks and presentations to local faith groups.
- Local accessibility groups such as BADHOGS and Berkshire Vision have been drawn into their Stay Connected program and are exploring options to make their leaflets more accessible by producing versions large print as well as ensuring people without internet receive printed program leaflets.
- The Shopmobility drop-in service supports people with disabilities and long-term conditions.
- During summer, the social prescribers have collected clients using wheelchair accessible transport and taken them to their summer programs thus enabling some of the most vulnerable in the community to participate in activities and feel included in these events.
- The *Stay Connected* program activities are inclusive to all residents over 18 years of age. Furthermore, existing programs have been adjusted to accommodate the needs of attendees such as provision of separate table for a client with a Learning Disability & their care worker.
- Engagement with relatively new communities/ migrant populations such as the Hong Kong community and increases their participation in activities to improve social connections.
- The Social Prescribing team have delivered sessions for older people at various venues and fostered good working relations with a wide range of organisations who may represent protected characteristics such as the Bracknell Stroke Foundation, AGE UK, Age concern and Dementia advisory team.

The Public Health team run a peer education program open to all 16 -18-year-olds across secondary schools in Bracknell Forest known as The Young health Champions program. This program provides them with the opportunity to complete a Royal Society of Public Health qualification as a Young Health Champion. Through the program, they are provided

with skills and opportunities such as participating in interview panels, focus groups and young commissioning.

## **2.5 Highlights on progress made and outcomes achieved against actions identified in 2022-2023.**

Notable achievements and progress within Place demonstrate how teams within the Directorate have made progress to embed equalities into its work and service delivery:

- The Transport and Highways team has adopted a revised recruitment process that incorporates best practices.
- The Natural Estates team implemented HR recommendations to enhance their recruitment process, promoting EDI training through iWorks and resources on the council intranet.
- Equalities Impact Assessment was utilised to evaluate policies for Trans and non-binary individuals, ensuring a safe, non-discriminatory work environment. Recommendations include mandatory Trans Awareness and inclusion training, and staff can now add pronouns to their email signatures.
- Many staff members participated in training sessions on accessibility writing, neurodiversity, and mental health first aid.
- Engagement with six minority communities helped profile their health needs and promote self-care.
- There was an increase in social prescribing referrals from minority ethnic communities.
- Additional support for smoking cessation services was provided to boost participation among key demographic groups.

## **3. Breakdown of customers/service users by protected characteristics**

As described in Section 2, data on each of the protected characteristics is regularly collected by both contracted and direct services provided to the public. This data is used to inform messaging and positioning of services, as well as understand gaps in relation to access and uptake.

All contracted Public Health services routinely monitor protected characteristics. This includes a range of demographic and other sensitive data to assess the population's health trends, identify vulnerable groups, and monitor health inequalities.

Some teams have consulted the Equalities team for advice when redesigning surveys or data capture mechanisms. For example, the Regeneration and Economic Development team consulted with the equalities team whilst drafting their Equalities Impact Assessment for the Economic Strategy.

In some cases, KPIs are used to ensure services are making concerted efforts to target particular groups. For example, the Get Green and Active volunteering programme includes KPIs to record the number of volunteer hours delivered by those within the following target groups: young people (0-18 years), ethnic minorities, physical & mental health conditions, neurodiversity, learning disability.

## **4. Key issues for 2024/25**

The key issues identified by some of the teams across Place that will be addressed in the coming year include:

- A need to continue to improve uptake of Public Health services amongst target groups and those at risk of experiencing poorest health who often form protected characteristics.
- A need to ensure continued recruitment practices and positive action is being taken to reduce barriers to recruitment for under-represented groups.
- A need to support residents to develop skills for employment and improve access to employment opportunities to support economic growth.
- A need to promote and support staff to undertake supplementary training provided by the council to augment their understanding of a wider range of themes relating to Equality and Diversity.
- A need to equip staff to better assess impact of decisions on equalities, health and wellbeing and sustainability and identify the relationship between these factors.
- A need to create improved mechanisms to record ongoing activity undertaken by each department in relation to equalities monitoring. This will ensure best practice is continually recorded and reviewed.

## 5. Actions and mitigations planned.

In order to address the issues noted in Section 4 above, the following actions will be taken across the Directorate:

### a) Improving uptake of Services amongst target groups

Based on the recent Sexual Reproductive Health Needs Assessment, the 0-19 Public Health Nursing Service and Sexual Health Services plan to implement targeted outreach efforts to engage priority groups identified in the assessment. They aim to make this outreach a routine part of their collaboration with service providers and commissioners, fostering greater cooperation with other health partners.

To better meet their Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the Stop Smoking Service plans to address the specific needs of individuals with severe mental illness. This will involve targeted collaboration with local mental health and recovery services to better serve this population.

The NHS Health Check Programme will continue its efforts to increase overall participation, focusing particularly on those with high levels of unhealthy behaviours and risk factors. This approach aims to ensure fair access to NHS Health Checks for all.

The four services contracted by the Public Health team (0-19 Public Health Nursing Service, Sexual Health Service, Stop Smoking Service, and Health Check Programme) will review their specifications and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Their goal is to integrate PSED requirements into their contracts by including equality metrics and outcome measures, and to ensure these updates are communicated to all contract leads. They aspire to proactively engage with underrepresented groups.

#### **b) Positive Action on Recruitment**

The Public Health Team seeks to share their positive recruitment practices with partners, showcasing outcomes from initiatives aimed at reducing under-representation based on characteristics such as age, gender, race, and disability. All teams aim to further enhance their efforts to create a diverse and inclusive workforce.

#### **c) Focus on Skills for Equitable Employment Opportunities for residents**

Strategies are in place for the Regeneration and Engagement team to expand their business engagement programs and economic strategy action implementation plan to include PSED responsibilities. This will ensure community inclusion and opportunities for everyone. They will continue to provide business support and develop the Bracknell Forest Skills Hub.

#### **d) Engagement in consultation**

Ensuring all public facing documents are accessible, targeting organisations that represent individuals with disabilities and minority groups to engage with consultation.

#### **e) Assessment of impact of decision making in relation to equalities and health**

All departments are encouraged to support the development of the Integrated Impact Assessment Screening Tool (IIAST) and use this to explore and identify impact of plans and decisions on equalities and identify the relationship between equalities and health.

#### **f) Improved mechanisms to record activity across the Directorate**

There is a wealth of positive action towards Equalities within Place and a wide range of examples have been given. As part of the Equality Monitoring process all departments are encouraged to have a more comprehensive mechanism to record all the work that is being undertaken. It is recommended that an Equalities Group is created within the Directorate to ensure that there is consistency in the approach to Equalities and it is recorded.

### **6. Performance against the equality objectives**

The table below provides a summary of examples of the ways in which the Directorate has demonstrated how it contributes to the council's equality objectives.

	<b>Summary of how we fulfil this through our work and service delivery</b>
<b>Inclusive in all we do</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equalities Impact Assessments for all decisions</li><li>• Equalities Impact Assessment for strategies</li><li>• Consultation activity with a wide range of demographic groups</li></ul>
<b>Accessible for all</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Equity audits for frontline services</li></ul>

	Summary of how we fulfil this through our work and service delivery
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capturing service user data on demographics and protected characteristics</li> <li>• Ensuring services are accessible and barriers to access are eliminated or reduced.</li> <li>• Incorporation of public opinion on their needs and barriers through involving groups such as Local Countryside Access Forum (LCAF) to actions such updating SCIs to ensure our services are accessible to all.</li> </ul>
<b>Accountable and fair</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring feedback from residents such as Customer Satisfaction Surveys e.g. feedback from Parks Satisfaction Survey are considered and actioned when it is possible to do so.</li> <li>• Equality allies who provide unbiased support and help to staff.</li> <li>• Bracknell Forest Corporate Complaints Policy followed for all complaints received ensuring transparency, consistency and accountability.</li> </ul>
<b>Diverse and inclusive workforce</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruiting from Under-represented groups</li> <li>• EDI questions in recruitment</li> <li>• Training and CPD on EDI themes</li> </ul>

## 7. Views of our customers/service users

Frontline direct or commissioned services undertake regular satisfaction surveys and as such these are used to understand accessibility issues and help inform improvements to services. These surveys are designed to gather information about the user experience across various groups, particularly those with protected characteristics. Surveys are distributed both online and in paper formats, ensuring accessibility for individuals who may not have internet access or prefer other methods of communication.

Customer views and feedback are also collected through other methods such as insights from highway inspectors during street works. The highways inspectors use feedback from customers/public so they can rectify and enforce changes to improve accessibility.

The Bracknell Forest Corporate Complaints Policy is followed throughout the Place directorate. For example, Transport services log all complaints and compliments they receive for purposes of consistency and transparency. Natural Estates Team monitored their complaints and compliments, highlighting improvements brought about resulting from actions taken to address them. Public Health have a standing item regarding complaints in team meetings.

Overall, complaints are reviewed and used to identify patterns and areas of service improvement. They are also used as a learning opportunity for our staff, offering additional training where needed.

Based on the data collected and analysed, consultation is used to make adjustments to ensure continuous improvement. For example, if consultations reveal that certain groups are underrepresented in the service, services might:

- Enhance outreach to those communities.
- Provide targeted support or adjust our referral pathway.
- Adapt the service to better meet their needs, such as offering language support or accessible materials.

## **8. Conclusion**

The report provides evidence to demonstrate how departments within Place have taken steps to meet the PSED and embed equalities through all aspects of its work including:

- Recruitment and CPD
- Strategies and policies
- Direct Council service delivery
- Contracted services

All departments recognise the need to continually consider how it pays due regard and has highlighted the importance of:

- improving uptake of services amongst target groups and those at risk of experiencing poorest health who often form protected characteristics.
- ensuring continued recruitment practices and positive action is being taken to reduce barriers to recruitment for under-represented groups.
- supporting residents to develop skills for employment and improve access to employment opportunities to support economic growth.
- promoting and supporting staff to undertake supplementary training provided by the council to augment their understanding of a wider range of themes relating to Equality and Diversity.
- equipping staff to better assess impact of decisions equalities, health and wellbeing and identify the relationship between these two factors.
- creating improved mechanisms to record ongoing activity undertaken by each department in relation to equalities monitoring. This will ensure best practice is continually recorded and reviewed.

It is recommended that an Equalities Group is developed for the Directorate so that the work undertaken on Equalities can be regularly discussed and monitored.