

Meeting: Overview and Scrutiny Board **Date:** 12 February 2025

Wards affected: All Torbay wards

Report Title: Torbay Inclusion Strategy

When does the decision need to be implemented? As soon as possible

Cabinet Member Contact Details: Cllr Haley Tranter, Cabinet Member for Adult and Community Services, Public Health and Inequalities haley.tranter@torbay.gov.uk

Director/Divisional Director Contact Details: Matthew Fairclough-Kay, Director of Corporate Services, matthew.fairclough-kay@torbay.gov.uk

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report shares with the Overview and Scrutiny Board the draft Torbay Inclusion Strategy which aims to support the Council to fully embed inclusion across the organisation.
- 1.2 It provides an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny Board to shape the strategy and, the Council's approach towards inclusion.
- 1.3 The report also provides Overview and Scrutiny Board with an opportunity to provide feedback on our proposed equality objectives.

2. Reason for Proposal and its benefits

- 2.1 Under the Equality Act the Council is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty which means that we need to give 'due regard' to equality. The General Duty requires us to:
 - Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not.
- 2.2 Under our Public Sector Equality Duty, we must publish one or more equality objectives every four years. Following a consultation, we last set our equality objectives in August 2021.

- 2.3 The Inclusion Strategy aims to holistically bring together the Council's work on inclusion and its equality objectives into one overarching document to support the Council to meet its Public Sector Equality Duty. It aims to respond to the feedback from the recent Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge which emphasised the need for more focused strategic inclusion activity.
- 2.4 The Strategy also builds upon the work of the Racism Review and aims to foster a shared commitment to inclusion within the Council. The Strategy has been guided by the LGA's Equality Framework for Local Government and is flexible enough to meet the needs of different departments and communities.
- 2.3 The Inclusion Strategy will form part of the Council's Policy Framework. It will be accompanied by an action plan and will incorporate updated equality objectives (following the consultation).

3. Recommendation(s) / Proposed Decision.

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Board are asked to provide its views on the draft Inclusion Strategy for Torbay for 2025 – 2030 and the draft equality objectives.

Appendices

Appendix A: Torbay Inclusion Strategy

1. Supporting information

- 1.1 In August 2021, the Council set its equality objectives. They are due to be refreshed by August 2025 as set out under the specific duties within the Equality Act.
- 1.2 The following equality objectives were set:
1. Ensure a wide range of voices are reached and heard in decision making and designing and delivering services.
 - Ensure all relevant groups are included in consultations.
 - Improve the accessibility of our events, meetings, information and communications. Strengthen our relationship with the community and encourage participation.
 2. Reduce inequalities so Torbay and its residents thrive.
 - Delivering on our Community and Corporate Plan ambition we will work to:
 - Ensure that all children are given the best start in life and families are supported.
 - Tackle lifestyle and economic issues which lead to inequality and poor health.
 - Ensure that older people age well and are physically, mentally and socially active.
 3. Consider and if approved implement the recommendations from the Torbay Racism Review Panel.
 - Maintain a legacy of the review.
 - Strengthen engagement networks.
 4. Support the diverse needs of our workforce. Our staff are one of our biggest assets and our employees come from a wide range of backgrounds with a variety of skills and knowledge. We are committed to supporting our staff and enabling them to provide the best possible service to our customers.
 - Demonstrating our Core Values, we will always be approachable, calm and respectful.
 - Create an environment where we act professionally and treat everyone with respect.
 - Ensure that policies and initiatives are in place so our staff can feel safe at work and carry out their duties without feeling bullied or discriminated against.
- 1.3 Since we adopted our equality objectives we have made progress towards achieving them. Some examples of this work has included;
- Working with our partners to deliver our Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Torbay which helps to inform the planning of future care and ensures that we respond to the areas of greatest need.
 - Launching the new Multiple Complex Needs Alliance.
 - Employing an officer whose job focuses on promoting inclusion as recommended by the Racism Review.
 - Drafting and developing our People Strategy.
 - Reviewing our inclusion training offer and commissioning additional inclusion related learning and development opportunities.

- Ensuring that policies and initiatives are in place so our staff can feel safe at work and carry out their duties without feeling bullied or discriminated against.
- 1.4 We are proud of the steps that we have taken to promote inclusion, however we are aware that further work is needed to fully mainstream inclusion across the Council and are fully committed to doing so. Our proposed equality objectives aim to support us to continue this work in a meaningful and impactful manner.
- 1.5 Our refreshed proposed equality objectives aim to support us to continue this work in a meaningful way. They are;
1. Ensure a wide range of voices are reached and heard in decision making and designing and delivering services.
 - Ensure all relevant groups are included in consultations.
 - Improve the accessibility of our events, meetings, information and communications. Strengthen our relationship with the community and encourage participation.
 2. Ensure that we embed inclusion into our procurement processes and clearly communicate our commitment towards inclusion with potential suppliers.
 3. Continue to implement the recommendations from the Torbay Racism Review Panel.
 - Maintain a legacy of the review.
 - Strengthen engagement networks.
 4. Support the diverse needs of our workforce. Our staff are one of our biggest assets and our employees come from a wide range of backgrounds with a variety of skills and knowledge. We are committed to supporting our staff and enabling them to provide the best possible service to our customers.
 - Demonstrating our Core Values, we will always be approachable, calm and respectful.
 - Create an environment where we act professionally and treat everyone with respect.
 - Ensure that policies and initiatives are in place so our staff can feel safe at work and carry out their duties without feeling bullied or discriminated against.
 5. Raise awareness of the importance of ensuring that our services are accessible.
- 1.6 Once approved the refreshed equality objectives will sit within the Inclusion Strategy. The equality objectives will be delivered through a mixture of business-as-usual activities and specific activity included within the inclusion action plan which will sit alongside the final published Inclusion Strategy.

2. Options under consideration

2.1 The options considered were:

- (i) To not progress with an Inclusion Strategy or publish refreshed equality objectives.

- 2.2 This was not deemed to be a suitable option. The Council has a legal obligation to publish equality objectives. Under our Public Sector Equality Duty, it is important that we promote and fully embed inclusion. A strategic and joined up approach will help us to achieve this.

3. Financial Opportunities and Implications

- 3.1 No further funding is required at this stage.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Inclusion Strategy includes care experience within the list of protected characteristics. By including care experience within the list of protected characteristics and, in turn treating it as though it is a protected characteristic, there is a risk that this could cause confusion. This is because it could blur the line between groups that are included within the Equality Act as a protected characteristic, and those which are not.

5. Engagement and Consultation

- 5.2 To inform the development of the Inclusion Strategy and action plan, consultation and engagement will take place with key stakeholders and community groups throughout January and February.
- 5.3 An online consultation was opened on Monday 6 January and will close on 2 March to enable a range of voices to be heard and inform the final Inclusion Strategy.
- 5.4 Information about the Inclusion Strategy consultation is published on the Council's website. To date it has been shared via a members' briefing, emails to key stakeholders and through posts on LinkedIn.

Further engagement activities that are planned have been included below:

- Online engagement conversations to be held with local partners/ community groups
- Internal workshops to be held with Council colleagues

6. Purchasing or Hiring of Goods and/or Services

- 6.1 Not applicable within this proposal.

7. Tackling Climate Change

- 7.1 No adverse impacts on climate change are anticipated.

8. Associated Risks

- 8.1 The absence of a strategy will result in a lack of cohesion around our inclusion work, resulting in lost opportunities or duplication.

9. Equality Impacts - Identify the potential positive and negative impacts on specific groups

The Council has a public sector duty under the Equality Act 2010 to have 'due regard' to equality and to advancing equality of opportunity between those persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. The Act also seeks to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and promote cohesion. It is important that you carefully and thoroughly consider the different potential impacts that the decision being taken may have on people who share protected characteristics.

It is not enough to state that a proposal will affect everyone equally. There should be thorough consideration as to whether particular groups or individuals are more likely to be affected than others by the proposals and decision. Please complete the table below. If you consider there to be no positive or negative impacts state 'there is no differential impact'.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act and groups with increased vulnerability	Data and insight	Equality considerations (including any adverse impacts)	Mitigation activities	Responsible department and timeframe for implementing mitigation activities
Age	18 per cent of Torbay residents are under 18 years old. 55 per cent of Torbay residents are aged between 18 to 64 years old. 27 per cent of Torbay residents are aged 65 and older.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Carers	At the time of the 2021 census there were 14,900 unpaid carers in Torbay. 5,185 of	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable

	these provided 50 hours or more of care.			
Disability	In the 2021 Census, 23.8% of Torbay residents answered that their day-to-day activities were limited a little or a lot by a physical or mental health condition or illness.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Gender reassignment	In the 2021 Census, 0.4% of Torbay's community answered that their gender identity was not the same as their sex registered at birth. This proportion is similar to the Southwest and is lower than England.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Marriage and civil partnership	Of those Torbay residents aged 16 and over at the time of 2021 Census, 44.2% of people were married or in a registered civil partnership.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Pregnancy and maternity	Over the period 2010 to 2021, the rate of live births (as a proportion of females aged 15 to 44) has been slightly but significantly higher in Torbay (average of 63.7 per 1,000) than England (60.2) and the South West (58.4). There has been a notable fall in the numbers of live births since the middle of the last decade across all geographical areas.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable

Race	In the 2021 Census, 96.1% of Torbay residents described their ethnicity as white. This is a higher proportion than the South West and England. Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals are more likely to live in areas of Torbay classified as being amongst the 20% most deprived areas in England.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Religion and belief	64.8% of Torbay residents who stated that they have a religion in the 2021 census.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Sex	51.3% of Torbay's population are female and 48.7% are male	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Sexual orientation	In the 2021 Census, 3.4% of those in Torbay aged over 16 identified their sexuality as either Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or, used another term to describe their sexual orientation.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Armed Forces Community	In 2021, 3.8% of residents in England reported that they had previously served in the UK armed forces. In Torbay, 5.9 per cent of the population have previously served in the UK armed forces.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable

Additional considerations				
Socio-economic impacts (Including impacts on child poverty and deprivation)		No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Public Health impacts (Including impacts on the general health of the population of Torbay)		No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Human Rights impacts		No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable
Child Friendly	Torbay Council is a Child Friendly Council and all staff and Councillors are Corporate Parents and have a responsibility towards cared for and care experienced children and young people.	No adverse impacts are anticipated from this decision.	Not applicable	Not applicable

10. Cumulative Council Impact

10.1 None

11. Cumulative Community Impacts

11.1 None

Appendix A – Inclusion Plan

Introduction

Inclusion means that everyone is included and feels welcome. It is about seeing and valuing people's differences. Inclusion also means supporting people and providing help in different ways when people need it.

The Torbay Inclusion Plan has been written to make sure that this is a place where everyone is treated fairly. This plan is for everyone who works at the Council including our councillors. It includes our services and how we work and support our staff.

The Torbay Inclusion Plan follows the Racism Review which looked at how we can make Torbay a welcoming place for everyone. The Inclusion plan supports work such as Child Friendly Torbay, the Carers Strategy, Age friendly and others.

Our legal duties

We must follow the Equality Act to make sure that we treat people fairly and with respect. You can read more about our legal duties on our website.

We must make sure that we do not treat people unfairly because of their background, identity or experience. These are known as the protected characteristics which are:

- age
- Care experience
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

We treat care experience as though it is a protected characteristic as we know that people who have been in care face lots of challenges. We also make sure that we promote equality and do not treat members of the armed forces community unfairly under our Armed Forces Covenant Duty.

To be inclusive we will:

- Treat people fairly and with respect
- Challenge unfair treatment
- Help people to feel safe and welcome in Torbay
- Help people to have easy access to our services.
- Help people from different backgrounds to have similar life chances
- Create good relationships between communities in Torbay
- Change the way we do things to meet different people's needs
- Look at how our policies may effect different groups of people

How we will be inclusive

The Equality Framework for Local Government

We have used the [Equality Framework for Local Government](#) and its different areas to help us write this Plan. The Equality Framework for Local Government was created by the Local Government Association to help local councils be more inclusive.

Understanding and working with your communities

To help us meet the needs of different communities in Torbay and to support us to work well together we will:

- Collect and share information about our communities
- Use inclusion data to help us to decide what to do
- Identify how we will listen to different communities
- Support good relationships between communities and with the Council
- Support people to volunteer and get involved in their communities

Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment

To show that our leadership and our partners are inclusive we will:

- Support councillors and senior leaders to support and raise awareness of inclusion
- Work with our partners and support them to be inclusive
- Look at the effects of our decisions on different groups of people and complete an equality impact assessment
- Support councillors to feel confident to understand the possible inclusion impacts of a decision
- Publish an annual report to show where progress has been made
- Celebrate the different communities living in Torbay

Responsive services and customer care

To show that our leadership and our partners are inclusive we will:

- Buy our services and products in an inclusive way
- Look at our equality objectives when planning services
- Change the way we deliver services to meet the needs of different people
- Provide information, advice and guidance in a way that is easy for everyone to access and understand

Diverse and engaged workforce

We have a People Strategy which is the plan for how we will be an even greater place to work. To help make this an inclusive place and to support the People Strategy we will:

- Support people from different backgrounds who work here
- Put in place policies that meet the needs of our workforce
- Look at our workforce data
- Provide different training and learning opportunities to help our staff understand equality and diversity
- Put in place reasonable adjustments

- Make this a welcoming place to work

Making it happen

To make our services welcoming and inclusive in Torbay we will focus on key areas. These areas are known as our equality objectives and are:

- Listen to different people and communities when the Council makes a decision.
- Be clear with the organisations and people that the Council buys services and products from that inclusion is important to the Council.
- Continue to complete the actions from the Racism Review.
- Support our staff to understand what they need to do and how they need to behave to be inclusive.
- Continue to raise awareness of the importance of reasonable adjustments.

More information about our equality objectives can be found on our website.

Reasonable Adjustments: Small Changes - Big differences

Reasonable adjustments are small changes which the law says must be made so that disabled people can use services as easily as everyone else. They may be small changes but they make a big difference to the lives of people with learning disabilities.

The Learning Disability Ambassadors have told us that having reasonable adjustments can help people to take part in their community, give them more independence, get better health care and live longer. The work we do to deliver our Inclusion Plan will support The Big Plan and will include reasonable adjustments in everything that happens.

The Torbay Inclusion Partnership

The Torbay Inclusion Partnership is being set up to help us listen to the needs and views of different groups of people when it makes decisions. It will also help us to deliver this Inclusion Plan. The group will be made up of organisations working with different communities and people who make decisions within the Council.

The Partnership Board aims to:

- Promote fairness and respect
- Promote partnership working
- Listen to their views and needs of different groups
- Act as a 'critical friend' on inclusion issues
- Help us to understand the impacts from our decisions.

Making the Inclusion Plan happen in Torbay

Making everything inclusive will take time. The Torbay Inclusion Partnership Board will agree the actions to be completed each year. The Council's Senior Leadership Team will oversee this. The action plan will then be approved by the Council's Director of Corporate Services who will be updated every three months with progress.

The Council's Partnerships and Inclusion Manager will write the actions and report on behalf of the Partnership Board. They will also write an annual report about the work that has been done and the progress that has been made. There will be actions which other groups need to take to make sure The Inclusion Plan happens. It is important for everyone to work together to make change happen. The annual report will need to include information from other plans too.

Policy and legislation (Laws)

The Inclusion Plan includes work which the Government has written about and made laws about. These include:

- The Human Rights Act (1998)
- The Equality Act (2010)
- The Armed Forces Covenant (2021)
- The Accessible Information Standard (2017)

For more information please contact us:

By email:

engagement@torbay.gov.uk

By telephone:

01803 201201

By post:

Policy, Performance and Community Engagement Team

Town Hall

Castle Circus

Torquay

TQ1 3DR