

# EDI in action

## 2022/2023



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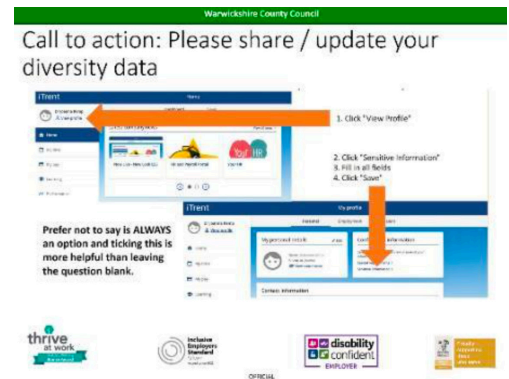
## Data confidence



We have continued our efforts to increase disclosure rates to help us better understand our landscape, identify key issues and measure progress. We have been working on building trust and educating both the public and our colleagues on what happens when individuals share their data and how this is used to inform decision making.

Two short videos were created to share with colleagues and the public when completing surveys, explaining how sharing data can lead to better decision making and understanding of our communities and any issues they may face. Our guidance for collecting diversity data was updated to include questions around socio-economic background which will aid us in our future work around social mobility and levelling up.

Colleagues from the Engagement Team developed and now deliver sessions on how to engage with people in an inclusive way, and best practice for collecting and analysing diversity data. In this year's YourSay survey, 68% of those who completed it stated that they understand how their diversity data is used to add value to the organisation. This gives us a good benchmark as we continue this area of work.



## Hidden Disabilities membership



We are now a members of the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme. The Hidden Disabilities Sunflower enables people with non-visible disabilities to access the support they need. It acts as a prompt for someone to choose to let people around them know they have a non-visible disability and that they may need a

helping hand, understanding, or simply more time.

### As part of this scheme, colleagues now have access to:

- E-learning on how to recognise the sunflower.
- Face-to-face or virtual training on how to support customers and colleagues with non-visible disabilities or health conditions, including support with reasonable adjustments.

### Adjustments and Access to work.

- Sunflower lanyards and posters to wear and display in workplaces.
- An online index of health conditions with suggested support, and templates for discussing reasonable adjustments.



***"The training was really insightful and made the whole team stop and think about how we can support customers and how to frame how that support can be provided."***

## Autism acceptance and our Neurodiversity network



March 2023 saw Neurodiversity Celebration Week and Autism Acceptance Week. Our Disability Commissioning Team used these to raise awareness of the useful information and resources available to neurodivergent people and families and to promote neurodiversity acceptance, as part of the local Autism Strategy. This included training sessions for professionals and families, videos, books, webpages and blogs written by neurodiverse individuals, and signposting to where people can find support locally.



Alex Manners, local neurodiversity and autism speaker, Asperger's champion, presenter and author, came to deliver two talks: "My Life Living With Asperger's", and "Autism/Asperger's in the Workplace."

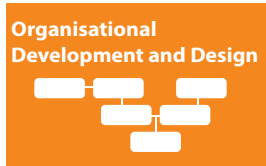
The sessions gave information about what living and working with Asperger's is like and how positivity has allowed Alex to pursue his passions. They demonstrated how valuable Autistic people/people with Aspergers can be to a business and how to support them in the workplace.

By creating a psychologically safe space, participants were able to ask questions to better understand autism and neurodiversity and gain practical advice for supporting neurodivergent colleagues and loved ones, as well as advocating for themselves.

We have also created a Neurodiversity Network, which aims to provide a safe space for all colleagues to come together for support and to share experiences if they, or a family/friend/loved one, is (or suspects/identifies as) neurodivergent. Like all our networks, this has been created and is run by WCC colleagues who have experiences of neurodiversity themselves. It includes a mix of virtual and face-to-face meetings, as well as a Teams Channel and Yammer Group. This ensures that colleagues who cannot attend the meetings can still get involved.

***"It has meant a lot to me to have support and know that I'm not alone, others in the organisation willing to share and give tips, ideas and advice on something that is so overwhelming is a great help and I hope to continue to gain knowledge and understand things for my own sanity and to support my daughter. Thank you all."***

## Health Equalities assessment tool



Colleagues from our EDI team and Public Health have been working together to reduce health inequalities by ensuring services are provided in an integrated way. As a result, our Equality Impact Assessments now include the following Health Inequalities considerations:

1. What health inequalities (HI) exist in relation to your work?
2. How might your work affect HI (positively or negatively)?
3. How might your work address the needs of different groups that share protected characteristics?
4. What are the next steps?

The Health Equity Assessment Tool (HEAT) was introduced as a resource to enable professionals to systematically address inequalities and equity in programmes and services to drive change and generate improvements. Health inequalities have been documented between population groups across at least four dimensions including socio-economic status and deprivation, protected characteristics, vulnerable groups in society, and geography. It is important to note that these are overlapping dimensions with people often falling into various combinations of these categories.

## Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service (WFRS) leading the way with EDI



There have been a lot of changes around EDI in the year 2022-2023 within WFRS.

### A new EDI plan and narrative

In September 2022, a new EDI plan was launched, aligning EDI with every stage of the employee lifecycle. The aim was to ensure that our people feel that EDI is important at every stage of the employee lifecycle; from attraction and recruitment, through to development and talent management, and even as they exit.



### Underpinning this new narrative are three major influences:

- The recently launched National Fire Chiefs' Council Core Code of Ethics for all fire service personnel.
- Recommendations from the previous HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services) report.
- An appreciative inquiry named 'Doing Our Best To Be Our Best', which was conducted in the summer of 2022.

### Yes, You Can Ask Us That

One of the specific recommendations from the HMICFRS report was to ensure that our people's understanding of the concepts and language around positive action was appropriate and proportionate. Following the appointment of a new EDI Advisor in August 2022, work began to use the knowledge gained from conversations with our people to help shape a new training roadshow, named 'Yes, You Can Ask Us That'.

The face-to-face 'Yes, You Can Ask Us That' roadshow introduced the new EDI plan and narrative, reiterated the Core Code of Ethics and created safe spaces for discussion about complex topics such as positive action, all while breaking down any exclusion barriers which might have prevented people from engaging with EDI previously.

Forty-six sessions have been held since February 2023 during office hours, evenings and weekend in accordance with non-operational and operational shift patterns, and overwhelmingly positive feedback has been received from the 82 respondents who filled out the survey:

- 99% of respondents said they liked the tone/approach of the training
- 96% of respondents rated the training as very good or good overall

Beyond the positive feedback provided, the safe spaces created for challenging conversation in these sessions have allowed themes to emerge and have emphasised the importance of EDI work in other parts of the organisation, allowing a more cohesive approach to workstreams. Examples of this include the ongoing review of promotion processes and the upcoming equality impact assessment review project.

### Independent culture review

Nationally, it has been a turbulent time for fire and rescue services in England and Wales. In November 2022, an independent culture review of London Fire Brigade indicated cause for concern within its culture, and other fire and rescue services have since been in the media spotlight following serious allegations having been made.

WFRS was keen to ensure no such problems could lie undetected within Warwickshire and therefore commissioned its own independent culture review in Spring 2023. The review has involved speaking to more than 400 fire service personnel (approximately 84% of the service) since the review, was launched. The service has receive the recommendations from the review which highlight the areas of good practice and strength as well as identifying where improvements could be made.

## People delivery strategy

We are more consistently embedding EDI into WFRS' delivery, including reviewing the current approach to promotion and ensuring every part of the recruitment process is independent and assured going forward. The work on this will soon feed into all part of recruitment within WFRS.

Support has also been given to ensure meaningful Equality Impact Assessments have been carried out for all people workstreams, including the new Competency to Manage framework and Talent Management offering.

## What next?

The outcome of the independent culture review and the latest HMICFRS inspection results, will inform WFRS 2023/2024 EDI strategy and plan alongside the themes identified within the 'Yes You Can Ask Us That' training.

In the short to medium term, a new internal communications strategy is in the pipeline, with EDI at its heart to ensure maximum inclusivity for all personnel. Equality Impact Assessments are also being reviewed to ensure best practice.

## Showing our Pride



Our LGBTQ+ Network has worked to design, promote and distribute Pride lanyards across the organisation. These proved to be incredibly popular, and we ran out within a week so had to order more! People can wear them to show their pride, or to demonstrate individual commitment to creating a safe and welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ staff and service users.



***"I had a young person point at my lanyard and said "That's the trans flag...I'm trans." ... It was a very quick, probably unnoticeable interaction to other people, but I hope I made that young person feel comfortable. All just by wearing my lanyard!"***

To mark Pride 2022, our graduates, members of the LGBTQ+ Network, and out EDI Team worked together to create a session on how people can support LGBTQ colleagues. The sessions called "Yes, you can ask that!" allowed people to ask questions they felt too afraid to ask to help break down barriers and encourage conversation. People were given the opportunity to reflect upon what it means to be supportive, explore the challenges, and come up with ways we can all support one another. This is now part of our training offer.



***"I have found this so helpful, thank you so much. I have made mistakes in the past and talked about them after and today gives me more confidence to be an ally."***



Throughout the year, Warwickshire County Council also worked with Warwickshire Pride to support their youth groups. This allows the charity to work with LGBTQ+ young people to ensure they have the support they need and can feel valued, supported, safe, and welcome in Warwickshire.

In August 2022, Warwickshire Pride held a march through Leamington Spa for the first time. Warwickshire County Council and Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service were in attendance. Representatives including senior leaders proudly marched through the town, showing our commitment to acceptance and celebration of people no matter their background, and acknowledging that we all have a part to play in challenging discrimination.

**Stop press!** WFRS were delighted to attend Warwickshire Pride 2023 along with colleagues from WCC, Warwickshire Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service to show their support for the LGBTQIA+ community in the county.

### Our Diversity and Inclusion STAR Award winners



Winners – Sharon Forman and the County Record Office

Often, the only records preserved by museums are from White histories and it is not easy to find Black and Asian voices in the archives. Sharon and the team have been working tirelessly to preserve histories from a range of communities, celebrate their contributions to our county’s rich heritage, and ensure our museums and record offices are accessible to everyone in Warwickshire. This included interviews with local people to understand their experiences of life in Warwickshire, as well as those of their families and ancestors. The ongoing project has yielded many discoveries and is showing our county’s past to be far more multicultural than previously thought.

### Black and Asian Voices in the archives project



Archives like Warwickshire County Record Office are places where the records of human history are stored and preserved for generations to come. They hold the sources for our collective memory, and they shape how we understand the society in which we live. These records are freely available to everyone.

However, often the only records we have are created by White people. In this way, Black and Asian voices have been lost or hidden. That is why Warwickshire County Record Office has developed a strategy to address this imbalance. By learning about Black and Asian people in Warwickshire’s past, we can recognise and celebrate contributions to our county’s rich heritage. We can also use the past to understand where we are today, by exploring the development of culture and attitudes towards race.

This is an ongoing project but has already yielded results such as discovering that Britain’s first Black Toastmaster lived in Bidford Upon Avon, and that at Salisbury Hall in 1928, a pioneering female lawyer from India called Cornelia Sorabji gave a public address to the Leamington branch of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society.

In 1968, representatives of twenty different immigrant organisations from around the country met at 57 Avenue Road to form the Black People’s Alliance (BPA). From 1964 to 1994, the building at 3 Church Street was home to the Commonwealth Club. The club was founded by Shree Nath Rohilla, a resident of Leamington who had moved to the town in the mid-1950s from India. The Commonwealth Club was intended to provide

This project serves to reassess Warwickshire's past and shows it to be far more multicultural than previously thought. This way, everyone can feel represented by the histories we tell.

"Our Commonwealth" display in Market Hall Museum sharing Warwickshire residents' experiences. This display tells the story of Horace Boyer who was born in India and came to the UK in 1947, settling in Leamington Spa. The display includes jewellery, amethyst, photos and other family treasures from India.



Reuben Lynch, who is believed to be Britain's first Black Toastmaster, shares his experiences of life in Montserrat with Heritage Culture and Warwickshire.



## The Children and Families Academy AYSE anti-racism programme



Over 60 newly qualified social workers have engaged in cultural competency training which has been developed for Warwickshire County Council children and families' service, specifically to help social workers engage in a meaningful and holistic manner with all the diverse communities that they work with across the county. The sessions enable the learner to gain a better understanding of the experiences of these communities and how they shape the perception of public sector services, which has an impact on the uptake of statutory services provided.

***"The sessions have been very positively received and I have had lots of very positive feedback from this. It certainly opened up discussions and awareness around the topic and the NQSW have implemented their learning into their practice and within their teams."***

## Menopause peer support group



In July 2022, we began work on how we can support colleagues as they go through the menopause, acknowledging that it can happen at any age for a range of reasons, and that everyone's experience of the menopause will be different.

A menopause peer support group has now been set up which offers a safe space for anyone who is experiencing the menopause. This can include those who are going through it as part of life's journey, or those who are experiencing it due to medical interventions. The group meets monthly, virtually and offers a safe space for staff to share experiences and advice with others who are going through, or have been through, the menopause. There is also a Team's channel to join for ad hoc support.

Going forward, we are developing an organisation-wide approach to supporting those experiencing the menopause to ensure everyone feels supported and valued, and that no one feels they have to sacrifice their career or wellbeing.

***"As someone who had the menopause medically induced at 33, I didn't know what to expect. This group has been so welcoming and helpful, from suggesting shampoos to slow hair loss and helpful tips for nutrition, to listening to me rant, and even providing advice on how to get support from my GP. It has made a scary and confusing experience so much less isolating."***



## EQulP



The Council commissions the Equality and Inclusion Partnership to deliver independent advice and support services covering each of the protected characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010. The service tackles victimisation, discrimination, harassment, and hate crime, referring residents to specialist support organisations where appropriate. The service seeks to improve community cohesion via a range of engagement channels, ensuring different groups sitting under each of the protected characteristics feel their voices are heard and they have influence in local decision-making.

The Safer Warwickshire partnership big board conversation took place this year to raise awareness of the importance of tackling discrimination in all its forms. The event was co-organised by EQulP, Warwickshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire, Philip Seccombe. It was a very positive event with some uplifting keynote speakers and engaging workshops which covered topics such as “Tackling discrimination and achieving positive outcomes”, “Building community cohesion in challenging times”, and “Establishing links between hate and extremism”. The event was well attended and a huge success as it provided lots of opportunities for organisations across the county to network and discuss ways of collaborating on pieces of work and effective ways of information sharing.