

# Equality and Diversity Development

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny  
Commission

Date of meeting: 3 March 2026

Lead director/officer: Laurence Mackie-Jones

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Laurence Mackie-Jones
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- Report version number: 1.1

### 1. Summary

This report sets out the Social Care and Education Department's improvement ambitions with regards to equality and diversity over the 2026-27 year.

### 2. Recommendation(s) to scrutiny:

Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission are invited to comment and make any recommendations with regards to the department's plans.

### 3. Detailed report

3.1 The Social Care and Education Department has fourteen priority areas for the 2026-27 year. These are:

- Delivery on the improvement plans following the Ofsted ILACS, Adult Social Care CQC, HMIP Youth Justice and Area SEND Inspections
- Developing Leading Better Lives into a programme delivering early action across the city with cross council support and closely aligned to and supporting the delivery of neighbourhood health plans
- Delivering locality Family Help across all six clusters and having Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams in place
- To continue our financial grip on finances and seek opportunities to deliver best value and reduce growth whilst pursuing excellence in service delivery
- To develop a maturity matrix for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work and to deliver on a clear plan to advance our growth
- Having a clear school place sufficiency and SEND Capital Programme in place with Executive agreement
- Having clear medium- and long-term strategies in place for children's residential provision and adult supported living
- Deliver a programme to develop a performance culture across the department
- Developing a consistent methodology to underpin our quality assurance processes across the department
- Making technology including artificial intelligence tools available to all practitioners to help manage workload and improve efficiency
- To review our partnership plans around SEND to deliver on the new government strategy once this is clear

- To develop and officially launch our Social Care Academy and our wider approach to recruitment, retention and continual professional and leadership development
  - Refine and begin to deliver our plans on preparing for adulthood and transition to adult services
  - Begin to prepare for Local Government Reorganisation
- 3.2 Equality and diversity is a golden thread that runs through all of these priorities but priority five sets out a specific goal around planning progress in this area.
- 3.3 The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan sets out the Social Care and Education (SCE) Department's commitment to strengthening its anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice over the period 2025–2027. The plan focuses on meaningful staff engagement, organisational self-assessment, capability building, and embedding inclusive values into everyday practice.
- 3.4 A central element of the plan is a department-wide consultation with staff. During 2025, staff were invited to respond to the question: *“If the SCE Department at Leicester City Council was the best version of an anti-discriminatory and anti-racist organisation in the country, what would have changed?”* This question was published through the SCE newsletter and there have been over fifty individual and group responses. The findings will be analysed by independently by an organisation called Mission Diverse and will be used to inform the department's audit framework and provide a staff-led evidence base for improvement activity.
- 3.5 Building on this consultation and existing audit tools, the department will develop a bespoke version of the maturity model being adopted corporately to benchmark its current position on equality, diversity and inclusion. This work will involve collating established maturity frameworks, cross-referencing them with staff feedback, and producing a tailored model that reflects the SCE context. By March 2026, this maturity model will be used to develop a clear, prioritised action plan to support continued improvement over the next two years.
- 3.6 The department will also continue to articulate and reinforce its core beliefs and values in relation to equality and diversity. These values affirm a commitment to dignity, respect, inclusion, and recognition of the structural nature of discrimination. They emphasise the importance of ongoing reflection, challenge, and empowerment so that all staff feel heard and able to thrive. These beliefs have already been published in the SCE newsletter and will be actively promoted and reinforced through further communication and engagement opportunities. They also form part of the consideration of the Value Based and Ethical Leadership” module on the departments “leading Performance programme” which is mandatory for all managers during the first half of 2026.
- 3.7 In order to strengthen inclusive leadership, the department is committed to ensuring that all managers complete training in active bystander intervention, unconscious bias, and reasonable adjustments. By March 2026, an assessment will be undertaken to identify training completion levels, and a robust system will be established to monitor ongoing uptake. Progress will be overseen through the Learning and Improvement Board, with the aim of achieving full coverage by September 2026. Whilst awareness training exists on unconscious bias we are

investigating at self-testing to help people be aware of how their own biases may impact on their decision making.

- 3.8 Inclusive decision-making remains an established and ongoing priority. The department will continue to support staff participation in inclusive decision-making forums and will develop a forward plan to identify areas where consultation is required. This work is already in place and will continue to be embedded as part of routine practice.
- 3.9 The plan also includes the development of a community of practice focused on anti-racist practice. This will be shaped by staff feedback and aligned with existing Social Care Academy and Evidence into Practice initiatives. The intention is to create a sustainable space for shared learning, reflection, and practice development, with a planned launch in November 2026.
- 3.10 In relation to external scrutiny, the department will continue to actively engage with inspection and peer review bodies to ensure that review teams are representative and have an understanding of unconscious bias. This approach has already been undertaken during the ASEND inspection and will be reinforced through ongoing dialogue, including the Ofsted annual conversation.
- 3.11 Finally, the department will deliver the *Diverse By Design* workforce and communities baseline assessment. This assessment will support targeted action planning and provide a clearer understanding of current strengths and areas for development, with delivery scheduled for October 2025.
- 3.12 Together, these actions provide a structured and transparent approach to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion across the SCE Department, ensuring that progress is informed by staff experience, supported by evidence, and embedded into leadership, culture, and practice.

### **Regional Work**

- 3.13 The Leicester Director of Children's Services (DCS) is the current lead of diversity and equality for the Regional Improvement Alliance of local authority children's services. The third Diversity in Leadership conference will take place on the 26<sup>th</sup> March in Nottingham.
- 3.14 Leicester has had five participants in the regional development programme for global majority manager, Beyond Barriers. This initiative is aimed at colleagues from the global majority, particularly those who exhibit promise and potential for senior strategic leadership roles in children's services. The regional Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) recognise that individuals from diverse backgrounds face numerous barriers to making career progress. This programme is designed to address and surmount some of these obstacles and challenges.

### **Expected Outcomes**

- 3.15 Implementation of this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will support sustained cultural and practice improvements across the SCE Department. The planned activity is expected to result in:

- Increased staff engagement and confidence that equality, diversity and inclusion issues are actively listened to and addressed.
- Increased confidence of global majority staff to develop in managerial and leadership roles
- A clear, evidence-based understanding of the department's current position in relation to anti-discriminatory and anti-racist practice, supported by a tailored maturity model and action plan.
- A better understanding of differential outcomes for different demographics within the city
- Improved leadership capability through increased completion and monitoring of training on unconscious bias, active bystander intervention, and reasonable adjustments.
- More consistent and inclusive decision-making, underpinned by structured consultation and staff involvement.
- Improved organisational readiness for inspection and peer review, including greater awareness of unconscious bias and the importance of representative review teams.
- A stronger foundation for continuous learning and improvement through the development of an anti-racist community of practice and alignment with existing workforce development initiatives.

#### **4. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications**

##### **4.1 Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

Signed: Mohammed Irfan, Head of Finance

Dated: 16 February 2026

##### **4.2 Legal Implications**

There are no direct legal implications in respect of this in respect of plans being progressed.

Signed: Susan Holmes

Dated: 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026

##### **4.3 Equalities Implications**

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions they have to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

This report summarises the Social Care and Education Department's plans to strengthen equality and diversity during 2026-27, focussing on 14 priority areas. Progressing the work identified within these priorities is expected to deliver positive outcomes for people who use our services, representing a wide range of protected characteristics. The implementation of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan will help to improve cultural and practice improvements for staff via training and development.

In delivering services, it is essential that the city's demographic profile is considered. Monitoring service uptake will help the Council to ensure it is reaching a broad range of groups, particularly those most at risk, and will assist in identifying any gaps or areas of concern so that appropriate mitigating actions can be implemented. Where service changes are proposed, Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) should be undertaken to ensure equality considerations are addressed and due regard is given as part of the decision-making process.

Signed: Sukhi Biring, Equalities Officer

Dated: 17 February 2026

#### **4.4 Climate Emergency Implications**

There are no significant climate emergency implications arising from this report.

Signed: Phil Ball, Sustainability Officer, Ext 372246

Dated: 16<sup>th</sup> February 2026

#### **4.5 Other Implications**

Signed:

Dated:

### **5. Background information and other papers:**

Equality and Diversity Plan 2026-27

### **6. Summary of appendices:**