

Putting Equality at the Heart of Transforming Hackney

Action For Racial Equality
OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU

H Hackney

1999

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No-one can be in any doubt that race discrimination has been rife in Hackney Council – and there are still very serious problems to overcome.

This booklet contains details of one of the most far-reaching programmes ever embarked on by a local authority to eliminate race discrimination from its workforce.

Based on the Council's action plan, which was agreed by the Commission for Racial Equality in December 1998, it heralds an exciting new beginning for the organisation.

Hackney Council will be working in partnership with local agencies, its workforce and the community to eliminate race discrimination. The CRE will be there to provide guidance and support. But let no-one be in any doubt, we will also have a monitoring role, and we will be holding the Council to account for its actions – or inaction.

This action plan must be achieved – and it must make the difference.


Shahid Malik
CRE Commissioner

Letter from Hackney Council

Hackney Council has racially discriminated against its own workforce. We have quite rightly been severely criticised.

Lincoln Crawford carried out an independent inquiry into race discrimination within the Council. His report is a damning indictment of the way we have treated black and visible minority staff over a number of years. There are serious managerial and system failings. We have psychologically damaged staff. We have wrecked careers.

There is still considerable anger over the leaking of the names of 600 staff of African origin to the Immigration Service in 1995 and the failure of the Council to identify who was responsible for this. We understand the anger that those staff feel and apologise unreservedly to them.

We are guilty of serious and sustained discrimination. We do not intend to make any excuses. We are sorry and we are determined to put things right. But it takes more than well-meaning words to eliminate institutionalised racism. We expect you to judge us by our actions not by our words.

The endemic problems of institutionalised racism can only be destroyed through changing deep rooted attitudes and behaviours at all levels within the Council and ensuring that unacceptable actions and practices are not only challenged but prevented from occurring in the first place.

→ This booklet highlights the practical steps which we will take to eliminate race discrimination. The booklet is being sent to all employees, and will also be made available to all new staff joining the Council in the future. It is based on the five year Action Plan we submitted to the Commission for Racial Equality in December 1998. There are no quick fixes or easy solutions. However, we also know that action needs to be taken now to rebuild the confidence and trust of black and visible minority staff.

All the political groups on the Council have put aside their differences and given their total commitment to the Action Plan. Eliminating institutionalised racism is too important an issue to be derailed by politics. All elected Councillors, the Executive Board and Service Directors are determined to make our pledge to

eliminate discrimination a reality. This is an absolute and unequivocal commitment to you.

We are delighted that the Commission for Racial Equality has welcomed our Action Plan and will work in partnership with the Council to ensure it succeeds. However we know that the Commissioner will hold us to account for the success of the plan and quite rightly so.

We will only eliminate race discrimination by working in partnership: Partnership with the Commission for Racial Equality, partnership with the community and, most important of all, partnership with our staff and their representatives. Without partnership we will not succeed.


As political leaders and senior managers we are responsible for eliminating discrimination. But every single one of you has an important role to play. Without you it will not happen.

This booklet is our commitment to you. We expect you to judge us on our delivery. Let no-one be in any doubt that we are absolutely determined to eliminate racial discrimination wherever we find it and build the confidence and trust of black and visible minority staff.



Councillor David Mantion
Labour Group Leader



Lisa Christensen
Executive Director


Councillor Kevin Daws
Liberal Democrat Group Leader


Joel Duckworth,
Executive Director


Councillor Eric Ollershaw OBE
Conservative Group Leader


Sarah Ebanja
Executive Director


Tony Elliston
Chief Executive


Lorraine Langham
Executive Director

Making Equalities A Reality

Investing in People

The Lincoln Crawford report found that although Hackney was good at recruiting black and visible minority staff, it discriminated against them once they were in post. That's why we are committing ourselves to achieving Investor in People (IIP) accreditation by the year 2000.

IIP requires the Council to have in place effective systems for performance management and appraisal, including career planning, training and development for all members of staff. All of these areas were highlighted in the Lincoln Crawford report.

A system of performance appraisal will be in place for every member of staff by 30 June 1999. This will ensure all staff are continuously developed and have their own personal development plan. By getting some good management practices in place, the scope for discrimination will be reduced; our systems will become more transparent and favouritism in career development should be eliminated.

Each service area, core and trading unit is seeking accreditation separately within an overall corporate framework. The first unit – Core Human Resources – achieved IIP accreditation in November 1998. Another five units are on track to achieve it by April 1999. All the rest will achieve it by 31 December 2000.

Career Development for Black and Visible Minority Staff

The appraisal system will ensure that all staff – whatever their ethnic background – are given the opportunity for career development. This could include development opportunities such as team coaching, work shadowing, acting up opportunities and secondments.

However, we know that many staff have been stopped from progressing through the organisation simply because of the colour of their skin. To redress this, we are providing substantial funding for career development opportunities for black and visible minority staff. Around 200 staff each year, for the next five years, will benefit from the tailored development programme. We hope this will go some way to putting right our past mistakes and the institutionalised racism which has blighted so many lives.

The development programme will build on a number of initiatives which are already underway. These include:

- a mentoring scheme to help black and visible minority staff and women progress in their careers. Mentoring is a confidential one-to-one relationship between an individual – called the mentee – and a more experienced (usually more senior) person outside their direct line of management. This person – called a mentor – acts as a sounding board, offering guidance and support. To date, 26 successful mentoring relationships have been set up in Hackney and another 40 are planned by the end of 1999
- a management development programme called Breakthrough for black and visible minority women. It is recognised that this group faces double discrimination on account of their race and sex.

underway

Eliminating Institutionalised Racism

The Crawford Report uncovered institutionalised racism in Hackney. It found basic management practices – which you would expect to see in any organisation – were missing, allowing discrimination to go unchecked. Despite our commitment to eliminating racial discrimination, we know institutionalised racism still exists. It is something we are determined to stamp out.

Institutionalised racism is a problem for the whole organisation. We must all take responsibility for eliminating it. However, the Lincoln Crawford report identified management practices and behaviour as key issues which must be tackled rigorously if we are to make progress.

Over the last year there have been wholesale changes within the Council's senior management team. The majority of Directors and a significant number of Unit Heads have joined the Council in the last year but there are still a large number of managers and supervisors who have not been directly affected by the reorganisation.

In some cases, managers were reappointed despite anecdotal evidence that these were the very people who were responsible for some of the discrimination in the past. We now want to send out a clear message to all managers: Racism will not be tolerated – learn from your past mistakes, stop discriminating or get out of Hackney.

To eliminate discrimination, we need good managers who are competent to manage within a multi-racial organisation. To kick-start the process, we're commissioning a management development programme which will ensure our 600 managers and supervisors have the skills and the right attitude for the job.

The course will be spread out over three years. A fundamental aim of the programme will be to change behaviours by directly tackling the way managers and supervisors relate to, and treat, black and visible minority staff – that means raising self awareness, confronting managers with their prejudices and giving them the insight and skills to manage in a non-racist manner.

Programme due to start April 1999

underway

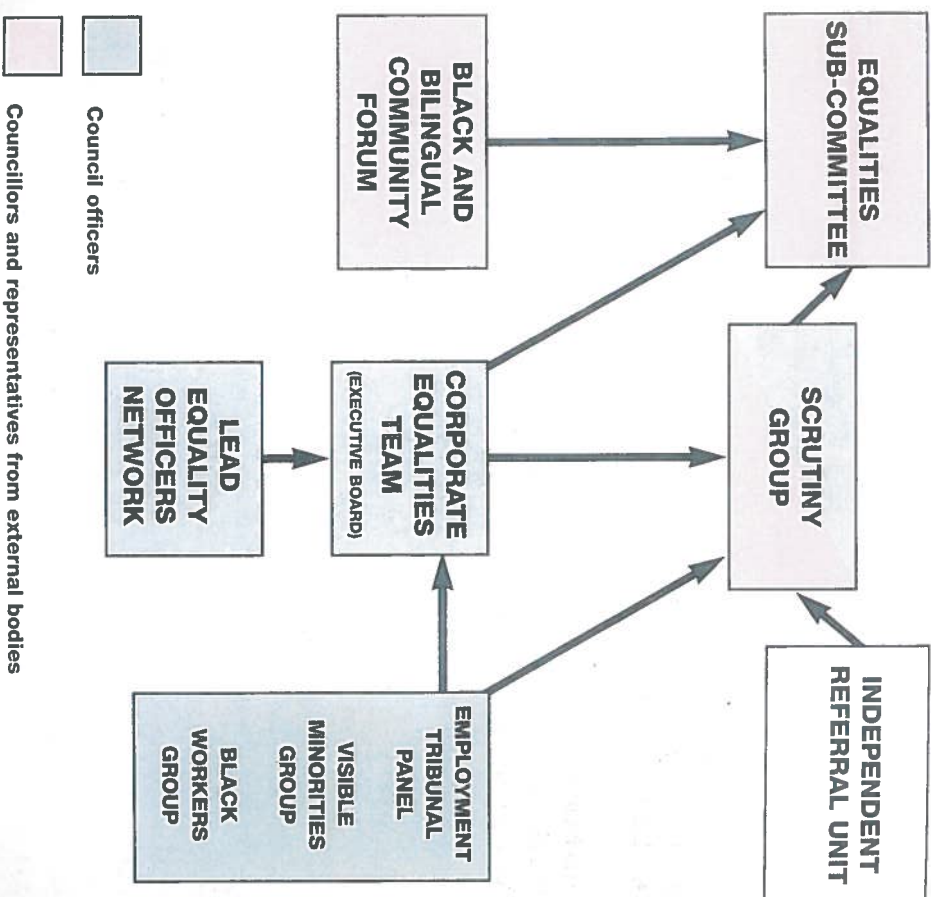
All managers will have to demonstrate that they are suitably trained to deal with recruitment and selection, appraisals, managing disciplinaries, dealing with grievances and unsatisfactory performance in a multi-cultural environment.

Complete by 30 June 1999

underway

Filtering Equalities through the Organisation

HACKNEY RACIAL EQUALITY NETWORK KEY LINKAGES



→ Top Level Scrutiny Group

We want to ensure that race equality is high on the Council's agenda over the years to come. That's why we are setting up a top level scrutiny group to monitor progress on the five year action plan. The Political Groups are absolutely committed to making sure this happens – which is why the Group Leaders will be representing them on the Scrutiny Group. If the group spots a problem, or decides we are not making enough progress, it will have the power to alter the action plan so that we can quickly get back on track.

The group will meet quarterly and will be chaired by Lincoln Crawford, who conducted the independent inquiry into racial discrimination in Hackney Council. It will also include:

- the Group Leaders on Hackney Council
- CRE Commissioner SHAHID MALIK
- Hackney Action for Racial Equality Chair AYDIN MEHMET ALI
- Local Government Management Board representative MANDY WRIGHT.

→ The local unions and black and visible minority staff groups will have direct access to the Scrutiny Group to ensure their voices are heard. We are committed to involving staff and their representatives as widely as possible in tackling racism in the organisation.

First meeting: January 26 1999

in progress

Corporate Equalities Team

Transforming Hackney put equalities at the heart of the new organisation when it was launched in January 1998 – with the Chief Executive taking a personal lead on this. Over the last year, he has set up a Corporate Equalities Team which has been responsible for developing the action plan to eliminate race discrimination and for overseeing the Equality Action Plans which have been developed by each directorate.

The team will report to the Scrutiny Group and will be responsible for implementing the Action Plan.

The membership of the team is currently being expanded to include a representative from the trade unions, the Black Workers Group and other visible minority staff to ensure the team has the confidence of the black and visible minority workforce.

in progress

Black Workers Group

The Black Workers Group (BWG) is part of the trade union UNISON Self-Organised Group structure that caters for disadvantaged groups such as black people, women, disabled people, gay men and lesbians. Black self-organisation is properly constituted and has national, regional and local structures. Self-organisation is enshrined in UNISON's rule book and policies.

Hackney BWG is a long established group that has been operational in the borough for over ten years. The BWG is open to all black UNISON members and has been the catalyst for raising issues with both the Council and the trade unions on matters that affect black staff. The BWG meets monthly and has an Executive Group that is elected annually at an Annual General Meeting. Hackney BWG has a working constitution and is seen as one of the original protagonists in obtaining equal rights and justice for black workers in Hackney, Greater London, and throughout the UK. The Hackney BWG was one of the first groups to be established in one of the partner unions and now UNISON.

The BWG has been stating for many years that Hackney Council has been consistently operating in a racially discriminatory manner against its black staff. The Council's CRE agreed Action Plan is cautiously welcomed by the Black Workers Group.

New Group for Black and Visible Minorities Staff

As a direct response to the existence of institutional racism in the authority, a new group is being set up by black and visible minorities staff. Its steering committee is in the process of developing aims and objectives and operational terms of reference. As a principle, the group will be seeking to promote the development of an environment where staff and managers can work together to develop equalities and the social inclusion agenda. All black and visible minorities staff will be eligible to participate in the group. More details will be available by the end of February 1999.

Filtering Equalities through the Community

Equality Action Plans

Each of the Council's nine service directorates has an Equality Action Plan – a plan setting out how we will achieve equalities in relation to service delivery, employment and community involvement. Staff should be fully involved in the preparation and delivery of their plan so that we promote the widest possible ownership. Each directorate also has a lead officer, in its strategy & commissioning team, who will make sure the plan is implemented and monitor its progress.

The plans set out what the service aims to achieve in terms of equalities, how it will progress this and the timescales. They will be submitted to the Equalities Sub-Committee and made available to the Black and Bilingual Communities Forum.

Each director will produce an annual report to go to committee showing progress against the targets set in the plan. First reports will be submitted in November 1999.

Equality Action Plans are a key part of our overall approach to service improvement and best value. Equality must be at the heart of the Transforming Hackney Programme. We will not allow it to be marginalised. We will ensure that equalities are mainstreamed into all our activities.

Equalities Sub-Committee and Service Committees

As well as being represented on the Scrutiny Group, councillors will play a leading role in ensuring that equalities is not sidelined from the day-to-day business of providing services for residents.

They will be monitoring each of the directorates' Equality Action Plans which set out how we are going to make our services accessible to **all** residents – in regards to race, disability and gender.

To stop equalities being marginalised, the Equality Action Plans will be monitored by the main Council committees as well as by the Equalities Sub-Committee. Councillors will also be given the chance to develop their awareness of equal opportunities issues.

Seven equality action plans agreed. Rest to be submitted by

March 1999

in progress

Black & Bilingual Communities Forum

Hackney wants to pay more than lip service to consulting with the community. To do this, we need to reach out to all those community groups who, traditionally, have not been heard. This new forum, set up by the Council in partnership with Hackney Action for Racial Equality, will do just that. Chaired by Hackney Action for Racial Equality, with the Council represented by the Chief Executive, it will be open to all black and bilingual community groups and voluntary organisations in Hackney, paying particular attention to those groups whose voices have been absent in the past.

The forum will:

- advise the Council on how services can be developed to meet the needs and aspirations of black and bilingual communities
- monitor the impact of council decisions, services and programmes on black and bilingual communities

Monitoring Our Progress

→ The Crawford Report found there was no mechanism in place for dealing with criticisms of the Council made by employment tribunals, or any clear line of accountability for ensuring that the same mistakes were not made again. If we are to break the patterns of the past, we must learn from our mistakes.

Monitoring is essential if we are to know whether we are succeeding or failing to make the difference. So we are putting in place effective monitoring systems which will be reported to the Scrutiny Group and Executive Board.

This will show us:

- the make-up of the workforce by race, gender and disability within each service and grade band (called the Workforce Profile). The workforce profile was completed in December 1998 and will be updated automatically as staff leave and join the Council

- how black and visible minority staff, women and people with disabilities fare when it comes to appointments, acting up opportunities, disciplinaries and grievances (called the People Return). The returns will be submitted every six months and came into operation in January 1999.

But monitoring is only part of the story. On top of this we need to find out what the problems are as they are happening. In this way, we will be able to nip emerging problems in the bud.

In addition to the monitoring returns, we have developed a series of robust controls around issues such as disciplinaries, grievances and the number of black and visible minority staff who are 'restructured' out of their jobs compared to white staff. These ad hoc returns will be submitted to the Scrutiny Group and to Executive Board – allowing them to intervene if things are going wrong.

Core Human Resources will also be carrying out 'audits' to check units are complying with the human resource standards. A number of audits have already taken place, and the reports have been submitted to Executive Board and Service Directors.

- promote a better understanding of the problems faced by black and bilingual communities in accessing services and develop ways of tackling them
- promote greater participation and better partnership between the Council and black and bilingual communities
- act as a consultative forum.

First meeting took place 7 December 1998

in progress

Hackney Action for Racial Equality (HARE)

If we are to effectively challenge – and ultimately end – discrimination, we need the help and support of the communities. Hackney Action for Racial Equality can assist by bringing that perspective to council policy.

Funded by the Council and the Commission for Racial Equality, HARE is working towards the elimination of racial discrimination and promotes the equality of opportunity and good relations between different racial groups. It strives to achieve these objectives in Hackney through policy development, working with other agencies, public education, community development and casework. HARE will be represented on the Scrutiny Group.

Dealing with Complaints about Racial Discrimination

A rigorous new procedure for dealing with complaints about racial discrimination was put in place in December 1998. This complaint's procedure is explained below.

Although we are committed to dealing with complaints quickly and fairly, we recognise there are many people who have had a bad experience of working in Hackney and who will be, understandably, cynical of our attempts to reform ourselves. Until all staff have faith in the organisation to deliver equal opportunities, we will need another mechanism – completely independent of the Council – to investigate some complaints of racial discrimination. That's why we are setting up an Independent Referral Unit, which is described in more detail below.

Procedure for Dealing with Complaints about Racial Discrimination

This relates to complaints from staff concerning race discrimination, racial harassment or any other matter which the member of staff considers to be racially motivated.

1. Any complaint relating to race must be notified to the relevant Service Director within 24 hours of the complaint being made. In the case of Core and Trading Units, notification will be made to the Executive Director who performance manages the unit head.
2. Within a further 24 hours, the Service Director or Executive Director will notify the Head of Core Human Resources of the complaint in writing together with the name of the person who will be investigating the complaint. In some cases, it will be appropriate for the complaint to be investigated by the head of the unit concerned. However, complaints of this nature will not be investigated by more junior officers within a unit. There may be cases where

→ We have also established a panel to review current employment tribunal cases. If

some of the grievances against the Council are justified, we will settle them quickly and learn from our mistakes. We will no longer defend the indefensible.

We will also ensure that prompt action is taken against managers and staff who are guilty of racial discrimination – including dismissal.

underway

Surveying Staff

To find out if the Action Plan is having an impact, we will be taking 'snap shot' surveys of staff, starting in April, to find out if all of this is making a difference. It is crucial we know what you think and that you have the opportunity to feed back your views anonymously. Yours views will be reported back to the Scrutiny Group – and if the action plan is not having an impact, we will revise it until it does.

First survey out April 1999

underway

it would not be appropriate for the unit head to be involved in the investigation. In these cases it will be for the Executive or Service Director to determine who will be responsible for carrying out the investigation so as to ensure it is genuinely independent and to notify the Head of Core Human Resources accordingly.

3. Within three weeks of the complaint being notified a report must be sent to the Head of Core Human Resources by the person carrying out the investigation including the nature of the complaint, the parties involved and the action taken to resolve the complaint. It is expected that complaints will have been resolved within this period. In exceptional circumstances where this is not possible, the report should state the reasons why the complaint has not been resolved and the timescale for resolution. A further report must then be submitted to the Head of Core Human Resources when the complaint has been resolved. In all cases reports must be copied to the relevant director.

4. All complaints relating to race will be reported to the Executive Board and to each meeting of the Scrutiny Group.

→ Independent Referral Unit

In his inquiry into employment practices and procedures in Hackney, barrister Lincoln Crawford found a culture of fear among black and visible minority staff, who said they had nowhere to turn if they had a problem. Because they had no confidence in our grievance procedures, employment tribunals became the main forum for resolving disputes.

This 'culture of fear' is still with us. We know that Hackney Council will have to prove itself to staff – in particular those staff who have been discriminated against – before they feel safe to use our internal complaints procedure. That's why we are setting up an Independent Referral Unit from April 1999.

The unit will be totally independent from the Council and your line management. If you do not feel comfortable using the internal complaints procedure, you will be

able to report instances of racial discrimination to the unit – either personal discrimination you have experienced or discrimination you have witnessed – without fear of personal reprisal. If necessary, you will be able to make complaints anonymously (although this can sometimes make it harder for the team to investigate) and be assured that any confidences will not be breached.

Over the next few weeks, we will be talking to black and visible minority staff about how they want the unit to operate. We need to ensure that we set up something which black and visible minority staff have confidence in and which has the authority to put things right. In particular it will be essential that the unit is able to report independently to both the Chief Executive and the Scrutiny Group.

Unit set up in April 1999
in progress

Equality – Valuing Diversity – Challenging Discrimination & Exclusion

The equalities statement below is part of the new equalities framework agreed by the council in November 1997.

Discrimination is **dangerous** and **damaging**. It also **wastes talent**.

Valuing diversity means recognising that **everyone has a contribution to make** and that we can all **enjoy living and working together**.

Hackney Council has an absolute commitment to valuing diversity and that means **believing in equality** and challenging discrimination and exclusion wherever we find it.

We know that Hackney is made up of **diverse communities, women, men** and children with potential from very different **backgrounds, races, religions and cultures**. In a society which too often excludes and marginalises, that potential is often ignored.

Whilst some groups have received fair treatment and quality services, the basic needs of others have been denied. Hackney Council is committed to **attaining excellence in the delivery of services** to everyone in the community – regardless of age, disability, class, race, religion, sex and sexuality.

Not only that, but as employers we will work to **rid Hackney of prejudice**, ensuring that all our staff are **treated with the dignity they deserve** and with respect for their unique contributions.

We want a just society which gives **everyone an equal chance** to learn, work and live free from the fear of harassment, violence and abuse. We will work with our partners and others agencies to achieve this. We want to work together to build a **spirit of cooperation** in Hackney, an atmosphere **free from prejudice, ill feelings or resentment**.

We're going to work with you to ensure that you feel that you and your community have a stake in what we do – that **what you think really makes a difference**.