

LGBTQIA+ Strategic Framework

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Background

Hackney's Single Equalities Scheme 2018-2022¹ identified the need for an LGBT+ Action Plan and a Trans, Nonbinary, Intersex and Gender Non-conforming (collectively known as "Gender Diversity") inclusion strategy.

A Gender Diversity inclusion review² of existing services was completed in early 2020 which made broad recommendations for service improvements, however further work was delayed due to the global pandemic. The review has been incorporated into the underpinning evidence base in development of this strategy, which brings together both the LGBT+ action plan and Gender Diversity Inclusion Strategy into a framework which looks to set aspirations for Hackney to become a borough in which LGBTQIA+ people can thrive, and lay out a plan for how we may reach those aspirations.

Development


The work began with a substantial research piece - a "Data and Insight Synthesis"³ - drawing on all the local information available and incorporating national data and insight, to identify key features that underpin LGBTQIA+ wellbeing and what supports genuine transformation. Through this research work, six key themes were identified which form the basis of the aspirations. These aspirations were then tested on a small scale with people who live, work or study in Hackney to see whether they were worded in a way which made sense and to explore what achieving those aspirations might look like.


The small scale testing involved three methods;


- Two community-based group conversations⁴, one with LGBTQIA+ Volunteers aged 25-50 and one with young people aged 15-21.
- An online portal using Google Sites for LGBTQIA+ individuals to provide detailed feedback anonymously
- A topic on "Hackney Matters"⁵ - this was open to all panel members, whether they were LGBTQIA+ or not


The feedback was largely positive, with the aspirational framework approach well received. There were two negative responses on Hackney Matters which challenged usage of the word "queer" and "intersex" and raised concerns about the safety of women and girls. Some challenging responses of this type may be expected, given the current media climate which has magnified unevidenced fears around trans inclusion. Such responses should not prevent the work moving forward, and should be seen within the context of the need for the work to be both sensitively tackled and rooted in the evidence base.

The community conversations were limited by needing organisations and individuals to give up their time without recompense, with limited resources, however the feedback gained was entirely consistent with Hackney's previous focus groups with Trans and Nonbinary residents and so it is with confidence we can state that the issues that matter to our gender diverse residents have not changed.

¹  single-equality-scheme-2018-2022.pdf

²  Report on Trans Inclusion in Hackney

³  Synthesis of insight and data LGBTQIA+ people in Hackney [internal] (public version also available)

⁴  LGBTQIA+ Strategy Update (Community Conversations)

⁵ https://www.hackneymatters.org.uk/about_us

As specific initiatives, projects and transformation work is carried out across directorates, it may be that further community engagement will be required. It is strongly recommended that residents and organisations which participate in these are recompensed in some way for their time, in order to avoid an issue of power imbalance often cited by these groups whereby Hackney uses the labour of marginalised people without rewarding it.

In November 2023 the LGBTQIA+ framework went out to public consultation alongside the Equality plan and the Anti-Racism Action plan. High level insight from the consultation has been included in this framework. There will be a more detailed action plan produced in autumn 2024

The Aspirational Framework

An “Aspirational Framework” is one that sets aims for Hackney to work towards which promote transformative work rather than nonperformative⁶ statements, single project workstreams or “tick box” activities. It frames our goals as part of a learning journey in line with the principles of systems change.

The framework is designed to be iterative, collaborative and flexible. In place of providing a list of recommendations for directorates to action, the framework outlines the shared goals for the Council to work towards and encourages services to consider what can be actioned to achieve those aims.

Within an aspirational framework, we look at what the desired outcome is, and work backwards to identify what actions we can undertake which will enable change towards the goal. This will likely take the form of both individual projects/initiatives as well as work that promotes long term systems change, and indeed both will need to take place concurrently.

Overview of the themes and aspirations

Theme	Hackney Council Aspires to...
Accessibility & Service Provision	ensure LGBTQIA+ people are able to access services that meet their needs where they are listened to, understood, and taken seriously without judgement
Intersectionality	recognise and celebrate the diversity of our LGBTQIA+ communities, paying attention to those who are often least heard and represented
Demographics & Data	improve our knowledge of our LGBTQIA+ communities through responsible data collection and use this information when planning services
Informed Allyship	be visible allies, open to learning and reflection, working in coalition with residents and organisations to promote LGBTQIA+ rights

⁶ Ahmed, S., 2006. [The nonperformativity of antiracism](#). Meridians, 7(1), pp.104-126.

<u>Participation & Engagement</u>	empower LGBTQIA+ people in Hackney to be able to influence the council on matters and policy that affect their communities
<u>Community Resilience & Belonging</u>	be a place where LGBTQIA+ people feel free and safe to express themselves with opportunities to connect with others

Accessibility & Service Provision

“Hackney aspires to ensure LGBTQIA+ people are able to access services that meet their needs where they are listened to, understood, and taken seriously without judgement”

According to the research⁷, the biggest factor in whether LGBTQIA+ people feel they've had a good service is when they're listened to, taken seriously and that they are not judged. The research suggests that this is more important to people than having their problem solved - so they clearly matter a great deal.

Understanding what makes people feel heard and taken seriously will help us develop training and resources for our front line staff. It's useful to know what it might look like if you were accessing a service and you felt like the person you spoke to really showed they understood what you were telling them.

The consultation responses also highlighted the importance of understanding the lens through which we see the world and recognising and challenging cis and heteronormative thinking. As well as thinking about accessibility and service decision, needs should be considered during service design and decision making


Actions to now develop:

- Ensuring any database that holds resident information is able to accurately reflect their personal data, including options to add gender neutral titles (e.g. Mx) and pronouns, and that this information is secure and used appropriately.
- Ensure LGBTQIA+ specific services are included in wider directories of services, so residents can be referred to specialist services, and that staff and residents are aware that these services can be searched for.
- Develop understanding for all staff who come into contact with the public on LGBTQIA+ identities and issues. This should include guidance on intersectional needs and experiences (see below) of LGBTQIA+ communities, as they are not homogenous.
- Develop an inclusive understanding of non traditional families, especially in reference to housing
- Embed consideration of needs into service design as well as delivery. This means that listening has taken place through every stage. This will be taken forward as part of the wider actions in the Equality Plan.

Intersectionality

“Hackney aspires to recognise and celebrate the diversity and complexity of our LGBTQIA+ communities, paying attention to those who are often least heard and represented”

This theme showed up in the research in a number of ways -

⁷  Synthesis of insight and data LGBTQIA+ people in Hackney [internal] (public version also available)

1. The need to understand how LGBTQIA+ people may have different needs or experience discrimination in very different ways due to other Protected Characteristics - for example their race or religion - or other life experiences such as their immigration status, socio-economic situation or long term health or mental health challenges.
2. This is especially important when thinking about safety and how intersectionality, for example around race or disability will impact that
3. The consultation response highlighted impact on LGBTQIA+ carers such as, accessing services, especially health and wellbeing ones, the reluctance in accessing GP appointments due to patchy staff training, resulting in people being misgendered and exacerbated sense of loneliness and isolation
4. There are multiple LGBTQIA+ communities; Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexuals, Trans people, Queer folk, Intersex or people with variations of sexual characteristics, Asexual and others can and do have distinct needs and a "one size fits all" approach for may not always work or be the most effective course of action.

Actions to now develop:

- An understanding of intersectionality is embedded into all relevant training
- Equality Impact Assessments have a section designed to draw out potentially intersectional impacts
- Intersecting needs are considered during grant making and commissioning processes
- Equality of outcomes are represented across all council strategies and plans, with clear links and signposting to relevant cross-service work

These actions will be taken forward as part of the wider actions under Objective 4 of the Equality Plan.

Demographics & Data

“improve our knowledge of our LGBTQIA+ communities through responsible data collection and use this information when planning services”

Without good data, it's hard to target funding and resources where they're needed most and to ensure our services are reaching those who are in need of them.

While the 2021 Census asked a question about Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity for the first time since the census began has provided data about our communities as a starting point to understand who may be in need of services, it remains difficult to collect identity data about those using - or unintentionally being excluded from - our services as it is very personal and private information, which not everyone feels comfortable or safe to share. We need to think about how we can make people feel confident to share their personal data with us, and that it will be secure and safe. The safer people feel to give us this information, the better our data will be.

There was some evidence during the census 2021 that some organisations view SOGI data as purely for equalities monitoring purposes. In order to improve services for LGBTQIA+ people, we need to commit to actively using this data in service planning as we would with other demographic information. There needs to be a consistent approach to

collecting LGBTQIA+ data across the organisation so that we can understand who is accessing services and how they feel about those services; as well as understand who is not accessing our services, and explore why. Our systems and databases need to be able to accurately and respectfully record information about people's gender identity.

The consultation highlighted the need to think about how we collect data in relation to staff as well as residents

Actions to now develop:

- Review the Council's data collection strategy to ensure personal information data collection is trauma informed and consistently applied across the council
- Ensure that Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity is used in service development and commissioning.
- Ensure when collecting data about service user experiences that SOGI data captured in order to include this as a factor when determining user satisfaction
- Work with staff networks to improve staff disclosure on HR systems and during staff surveys

Informed Allyship

"be visible allies, open to learning and reflection, working in coalition with residents and organisations to promote LGBTQIA+ rights"

Many organisations are starting to have rainbow lanyard schemes, support Pride marches or have pronoun badges or pronouns in their emails, which is great for visibility and can help people feel seen; however if these gestures aren't backed up by the organisations actively working to make LGBTQIA+ people's lives better, it can be harmful. If an organisation is displaying pride flags when a service user experiences LGBTQIA+phobia or a lack of understanding about the impact of their identity on their need for the service, it may give the impression that organisation isn't serious about their commitment to LGBTQIA+ Equality, and could potentially backfire and decrease trust in the organisation. Therefore it's important to go beyond visual allyship, and back it up with ensuring our services are culturally humble, well informed and ready to listen and learn when we don't get it right.

Hackney has launched a new Rainbow Lanyard scheme in 2022 - this needs to be underpinned by a coherent learning and knowledge building programme to equip all staff, particularly public facing staff, with the confidence and awareness to be visible allies.

Actions to now develop:

- A communications and dissemination plan for initiatives that support LGBTQIA+ communities (internal and external)
- A varied package of guidance and materials for staff to understand the key needs and issues for LGBTQIA+ service users, building on the Gender Diversity FAQ
- Engage with LGBTQIA+ residents and organisations to understand what they would like to see from community activity.

Participation & Engagement

“empower LGBTQIA+ people in Hackney to be able to influence the council on matters and policy that affect their communities”

“It’s great to have pride and LGBT+ history month but it needs to be every day”

Events, projects and services should not only include LGBTQIA+ communities but should actively involve communities at the development and planning stage. We need to make sure that where funding is available we're putting it into events and initiatives that genuinely make a difference. Identifying different and creative ways to allow people to participate is important, as formal focus groups are not always the best way to talk to communities with experience of discrimination or not being listened to. As a council we need to make sure we're making the effort to reach out to parts of the LGBTQIA+ community who are often less heard (one of the reasons good data collection is so important) and that we're seeking out lived experience expertise within our communities.

Actions to now develop:

- Development of an ongoing way to gather feedback, challenge and ideas from the LGBTQIA+ community with appropriate recompense. This will be taken forward as part of wider plans to develop community engagement in the Equality Plan. Ensuring diverse representation from the LGBTQIA community will be key to reaching a range of communities.
- As part of wider plans to develop a consistent approach to co-production ensure that LGBTQIA+ panel residents are involved in council consultation and engagement, e.g. on policy matters, funding decisions, public safety
- Develop our existing approaches to supporting and funding local grassroots initiatives and safe community spaces

Community Resilience & Belonging

“be a place where LGBTQIA+ people feel free and safe to express themselves with opportunities to connect with others”

A key priority for LGBTQIA+ communities is to have safe access to daytime spaces and events which are not built around nightlife or alcohol. Many of the LGBTQIA+ venues in London have closed over the last few years, and while there are some great late-night bars and clubs in Hackney, we have fewer sober spaces or places to go to during the day. There are challenges with current LGBTQIA+ social spaces, such as loud environments. We also know that LGBTQIA+ people were significantly impacted by feelings of isolation and loneliness during the pandemic. We've been told that our public spaces don't always feel safe, and that people want more opportunities to be able to meet together in Hackney spaces. Research suggests that not all LGBTQIA+ people feel safe reporting to the police, and that there need to be better ways at dealing with hate crimes and harassment and how people are supported, as well as work to prevent it happening in the first place through looking at public space improvements.

Feedback from the consultation calls for a stronger stance on transphobia, to push back on misinformation, and to support trans rights. All actions were needed and were different. This was in the context of the Council supporting and protecting the equality and human rights of residents and workers in the borough to help make Hackney a better, safer place in the future.

Actions to now develop:

- Through 'SpaceBank,' we are looking at how we can ensure that council owned buildings support local businesses, social enterprises, voluntary, community and third sector tenants. We will look at how this work can be inclusive of the LGBTQIA community usage.
- Explore how to ensure representation of LGBTQIA+ run local businesses and venues in wider business engagement activity
- Explore how preventative and transformative justice approaches might lead to a reduced reliance on the criminal justice system.

Approaches

There are two approaches to this work based on where the council has the most opportunity to effect change. While the two approaches may in some cases take place concurrently, there is some foundational work the council needs to carry out before the influencing stage can be genuinely effective. There is also the possibility of partnership, with other agencies adopting the framework for their own strategy.

Direct change

Where we implement transformation within the council through, for example

- training,
- onboarding,
- knowledge production and sharing,
- policy review,
- incorporation of equalities actions unilaterally across different strategies and work plans

Some change can, and should, be made as soon as possible, some is already underway. Other work is the slow, complex work of systems change. Both short term and long term work is necessary, as any short term initiatives needs to be backed up by work that seeks to shift the entrenched, structural LGBTQIA+phobia within the system. This approach both mirrors and supports the Anti-racist strategy, with which there is much in common; not least that LGBTQIA+ people of colour experience compounded marginalisation by being at the intersection of gender, sexuality and race. As the Council develops its competency in dealing with the impacts of structural discrimination, linking up such strategies will become easier.

Work that needs to be delivered in the short term takes three main forms - "quick wins" which meet community demand while being relatively simple to initiate; "priorities" which are those most pressing to LGBTQIA+ people in Hackney; and "foundational"; work which needs to take place in order for the long term work to be successful.

Influence

As the council builds our internal competencies we can use our experience to influence partners to implement change within their own organisations through for example

- partnership working
- supplier policy
- commissioning policy
- shared training & peer learning opportunities

The influencing approach will need to be **relational**, consisting of utilising existing positive networks and relationships alongside a proactive strategy of reaching out to organisations and communities representing gaps, cold spots, seldom heard voices, small populations and those with multiple intersecting ways of being marginalised.

Identifying who owns this work, how it is coordinated and systematised will need to be explored during the direct work.

Partnership

Due to the iterative, collaborative and flexible nature of the framework, it is adaptable for other partners and organisations to adopt for their own transformation work. Our partners can adopt this framework in partnership with Hackney Council which will support alignment of goals and promote collaborative and co-productive approaches.

Discussions are underway with both CAMHS and local NHS partners to adopt the framework as a shared approach.

Accountability & Measurement

Hackney LGBTQIA+ Community Engagement and Representation

We need to develop an ongoing way to gather feedback, challenge and ideas from the LGBTQIA+ community. This will be taken forward as part of wider plans to develop community engagement in the Equality Plan. Ensuring diverse representation from the LGBTQIA community will be key to reaching a range of communities. Appropriate recognition and recompense would be needed. This work will help:

- Hold the Council to account in working towards the six aspirations
- Act as a critical friend for new guidelines, policies and initiatives
- Measure the journey travelled towards the aims

The LGBTQIA+ community panel would be actively engaged, and this engagement would be reflected in all development work, not just within Equality Impact Assessments.

Responsibility for the Community Panel would require a strong lead with cross-cutting reach.

Success Measures

Improvement in Workforce activities will be linked to Stonewall benchmarking e.g. Hackney achieving Silver or higher in the Stonewall Workforce Equality Index

Individual workflows within this framework would have measurement determined at initiation and tested with residents.

For example - a workstream initiated to produce a joined up and consistent approach to collecting equalities data across the council would be measured through:

- seeing lower rates of “prefer not to say” - this would indicate that residents feel safer in providing us with their details and understand why we are collecting this information.
- Data being available via ICT’s data lake on LGBTQIA+ residents in Hackney
- Services actively include Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity as core demographic information along with Ethnicity, Religion, Disability etc.

Overarching measures of success of this programme would be:

- Hackney develops robust data on our LGBTQIA+ population, and this data is actively used to understand the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people in Hackney and their satisfaction with services. Collecting and utilising this data will allow us to measure, for example.
 - Experiences of LGBTQIA+ people with Housing services and the number of LGBTQIA+ people in Hackney who experience insecure housing
 - Complaints raised by LGBTQIA+ residents, and where they felt their identity impacted on the service they were provided.

Open as PDF: [LGBTQIA+ Strategic Framework_2023-06-27_16-12-20.pdf](#)