



A review of Croydon's
Workforce Strategy
April 2019



The Brief

- To assess current practices and to determine whether any further developments or actions are required as part of Croydon's workforce strategy or overall council policy...[by means of] qualitative engagement with a representative sample of the workforce"; and
- To identify key conclusions and/or recommendations that inform the Council's workforce strategy, as well as highlighting key issues that require ongoing consideration and/or lessons to be learned.



Methodology

Review internal and commissioned datasets and then “test hypotheses with cross-sectional groups within the organisation, from front-line to senior management, with specific reference to trades unions, workers’ forums, a cross section of BAME staff, leadership development alumni, human resource staff, senior managers”

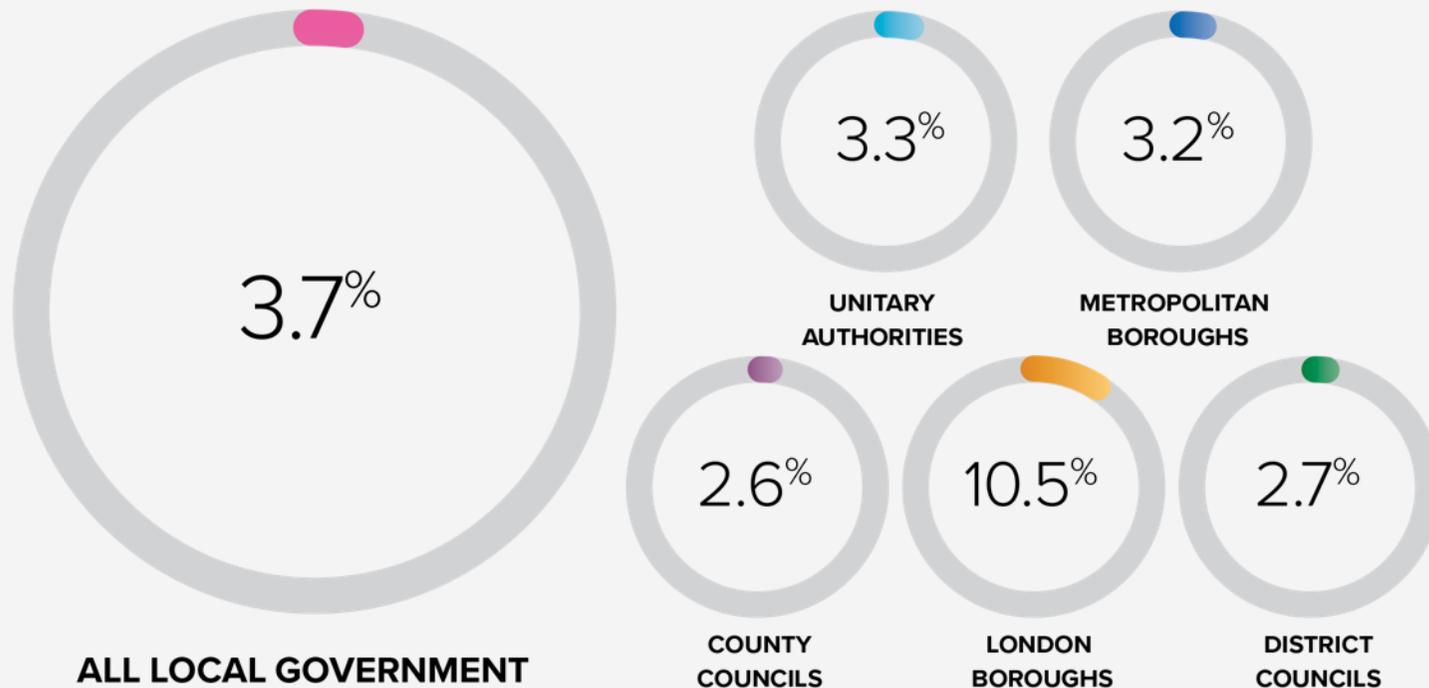
Data materials reviewed for this exercise included Ixia's phase 1 analytic reports; LBC internal datasets on ethnicity pay gap, staff appraisal results by ethnic group 2016-18, staff survey data for 2011, 2015 & 2018, HR grievance & disciplinary data 2015-18 plus draft EFLG materials; and Green Park local govt leadership reports.

The approach took into account a range of diversity and inclusion considerations but focussed more closely on issues of race as a proxy for the wider set of concerns, with the view that Croydon can derive cross-cutting insights from a sustained initial focus on one aspect of its broader D&I challenge.

Croydon's Profile

LBC'S TOP TEAM IS AT THE LEADING EDGE: 3 OUT OF 7 ARE BAME

Ethnocultural Diversity: Top 20





Croydon's Profile

SIGNIFICANT DISSONANCE

Croydon has secured considerable staff buy-in to its values of "One team; proud to serve, honest and open; and valuing diversity";





Structured Listening

During the staff interactions, the following themes were consistently raised:

RECRUITMENT PROCESS:

Need for stronger D&I component to search & shortlisting; need for BAME representation on interview panels;

LINE MANAGEMENT:

concerns around managers' accountability for staff engagement and D&I, and inconsistent decision-making on themes devolved to managers' discretion (especially annual/compassionate leave & agile working);

UNCERTAINTIES:

about a centralised or dispersed model of leadership regarding D&I and the role of the Culture Board;

ROLE CLARITY:

and resourcing of Staff Forum groups;

TARGETS TO TACKLE:

Under-representation of BAME staff in senior management and the consequent ethnic pay gap; and over-representation of BAME staff in lower quadrants of staff appraisal, in grievances, disciplinaries and TU casework.



Potential Responses

a. RECRUITMENT

1. Corporate commitment to race and gender participation on interview panels;
2. Curation of external BAME panel members list to serve on interview panels for senior posts;
3. Insertion of fee retention clause to incentivise search consultants to generate diverse candidate lists;
4. Trialling of 'name-blind' shortlisting systems as practiced in NHS;
5. Non-diverse shortlists only be taken to interview with approval of relevant ED



Potential Responses

b. PROMOTING DISPERSED LEADERSHIP OF D&I

6. Learning & development refresh for all managers on the equalities duty, staff engagement and managing difference;
7. Inclusion of staff engagement and promotion of D&I in all managers' objectives;
8. Clarify guidelines on areas left to managers' discretion (especially agile working, annual & compassionate leave etc) to reduce perceived inconsistencies;
9. Commission an external provider to conduct future staff surveys to alleviate 'trace-back' concerns, with disaggregated questions on particular D&I sub-themes and with space for respondents to rate their team, their department and the organisation as a whole;



Potential Responses

c. CORPORATE D&I FOCAL POINT

10. Reconstitute the Culture Board giving its remit, programmes and membership an explicit focus on D&I as part of its wider responsibility for the workforce strategy;
11. Support ELT and the Culture Board with the creation of a data observatory to bring together strands of D&I data at regularly intervals.
12. Craft a small number of key metrics through which the Culture Board can measure progress against explicit D&I targets on representation of BAME staff in senior positions; on BAME over-representation in grievance, disciplinary and TU casework; on BAME over-representation in lower appraisal quartiles; on the ethnic pay gap; and on comparative progression rates within the organisation;
13. Review the initial work on EFLG accreditation in the light of the emerging workforce strategy, with a view to using the EFLG accreditation drive as a vehicle to generate an organisation-wide recommitment to the equalities duty, staff engagement, and D&I.



Potential Responses

d. REFRESH KEY PROCESSES

14. Commission a rapid stocktake of grievance, disciplinary and TU casework with the aim of bringing these to closure within a short but reasonable timespan;
15. Introduce an organisational target to close out all routine grievance, disciplinary and TU casework within 12 weeks, recognising that there is a resource implication to this target and that there will always be a number of more complex cases;
16. Assemble a team of trusted, potentially external, mediators to help handle disputes that are amenable to more informal forms of resolution;
17. Review the purpose and format of the appraisal system now that it has been decoupled from the remuneration system, so as to make staff clear whether it aims to promote personal growth and development, whether it assesses promotability or whether it serves mainly to cascade departmental goals to individual team-members;



Closing Comments

Croydon has made important progress on Diversity & Inclusion, not least in creating one of the most diverse top-teams in local government;

There is clearly more the Council can do on its journey toward better staff engagement, a better equalities profile and a leading edge workforce strategy;

In commissioning this review, ELT has clearly shown that it is motivated to help the organisation secure fuller engagement from its BAME staff but it will need to build an implementation plan that is commensurate with the scale of the challenge;

Progress against the milestones in any implementation plan will need to be reviewed in order to secure sustained progress.