

SC-WRES Improvement Programme: highlighting the challenges and driving action



Background:

Hertfordshire County Council has been actively involved in the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC-WRES) Improvement Programme since the test phase in 2021. Liz Fergus, Diversity and Inclusion Project Manager, is their lead, for this important work.



As a local authority with a diverse workforce and a significant staffing within adult and children's social care, Liz recognised the importance of addressing race inequality within their organisation. Despite having a diverse workforce, it was evident that there were disparities, particularly in leadership representation.

Challenge:

One of the primary challenges faced by Hertfordshire County Council was the lack of diversity in leadership positions, despite a workforce comprising approximately 25% of individuals from ethnically diverse backgrounds. There was a commitment to addressing deeply entrenched inequalities and making change, but this required action and not just acknowledgment. Structural barriers and biases needed to be identified and overcome to create a truly equitable workplace.

Action:

Hertfordshire County Council signed up to the test phase of the SC-WRES to take proactive steps to address race inequality within their organisation. The local authority's commitment to analysing their data against the nine SC-WRES indicators, allowed them to measure the experiences of individuals from minoritised ethnic backgrounds accurately. The analysis of the data revealed information on race equality hidden in plain sight and helps to identify actions to drive meaningful change. Additionally, the local authority emphasised the importance of individual and collective action, recognising that lasting change required intentional effort and collaboration across the organisation.



Impact:

The commitment to the SC-WRES and the subsequent actions taken by Liz and the local authority resulted in tangible improvements within the organisation. The recognition of the need for continuous effort and commitment to addressing race inequality has led to a steady cultural shift within the organisation. To further push these positive changes, the organisation launched the Equity, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in Shaping Our Services programme. The programme seeks to ensure that changes in demographics are recognised and that these changes are fairly reflected in services. It also aims to help the authority meet needs equitably, inclusively, and deliver equality of outcome.

Overall, despite it highlighting some significant challenges, Hertfordshire County Council's continued involvement in the SC-WRES improvement programme has facilitated significant internal improvements in promoting racial equality, fairness, and inclusivity.

Liz Fergus, Diversity and Inclusion Project Manager, Hertfordshire County Council, said:

I'm really happy to be supporting my whole authority and my colleagues and the social care system to be creating better equity in terms of race and ethnicity, and how that influences our experiences when we work in social care.

