

Including Everyone

Equalities, diversity and inclusion framework



Including Everyone

There is enormous strength in diversity. Bringing people together from across a wide range of social and cultural experiences and backgrounds enables us to broaden our perspectives, enhance our understanding and enrich our way of life. It fosters an inclusive and supportive environment, which lends strength and vitality to communities and enables individuals to meet their potential.

Our *Including Everyone Framework* outlines our joint approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion for Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. It sets out our vision to be leaders in our field; providing inclusive services, workplaces and communities, equitable access to services and equality of opportunity.

We have heard how painful exclusion can be for people and how negatively this can impact people's lives. We take our obligations and commitments to equalities, diversity and inclusion extremely seriously. We recognise the need to listen and learn as we tackle inequalities through our policies but most importantly through concrete actions.

We are working hard to ensure our workplaces, services and communities are inclusive, so they are places where diversity is protected, honoured and celebrated. We know we don't have all the answers, but by listening to and learning from our staff and residents, we can identify inequality and tackle disadvantage. We recognise the need to redouble efforts to tackle racism and all forms of discrimination.

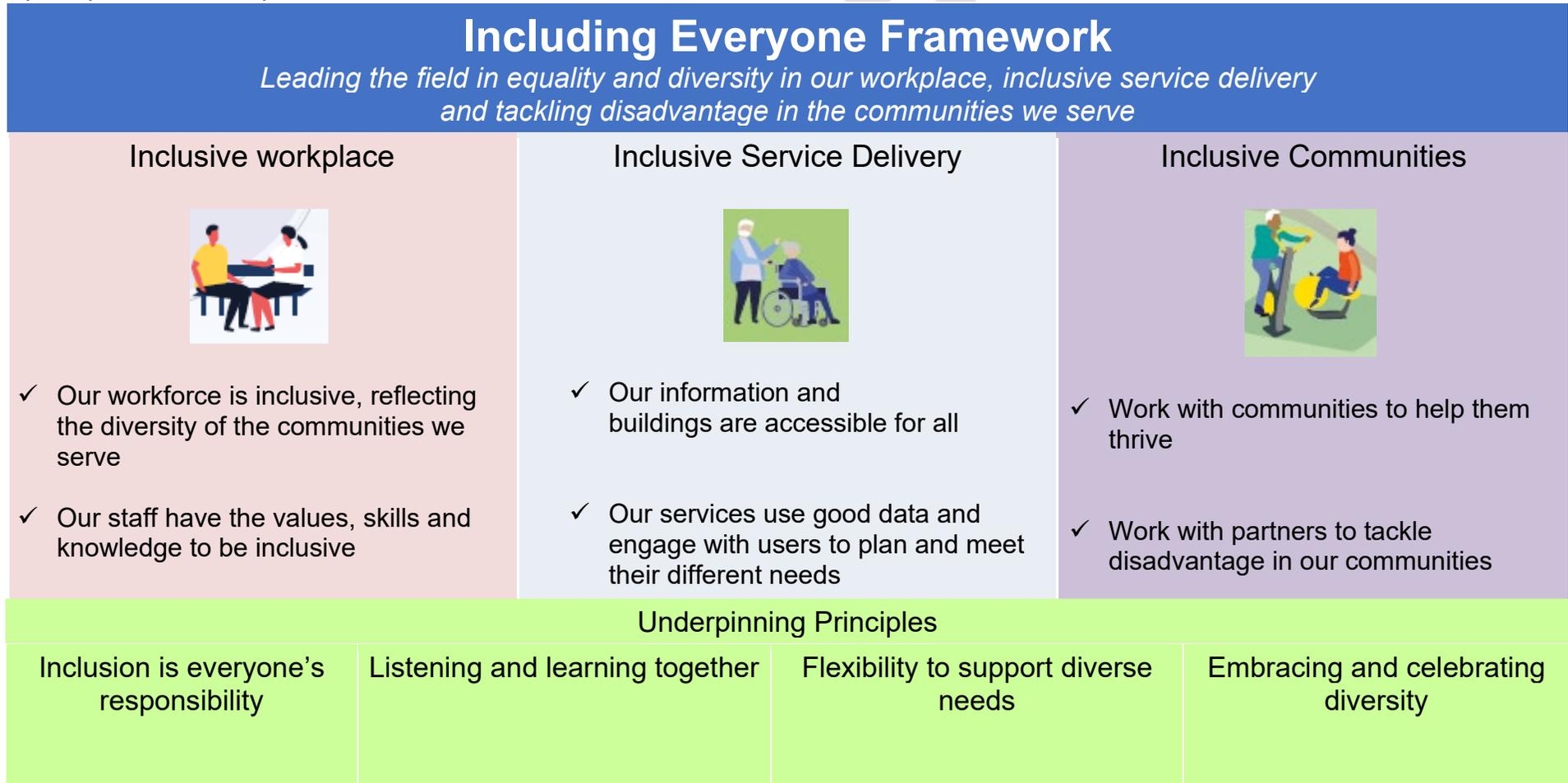
We have developed a joint framework because we share a mutual understanding of what is important and what we are working to achieve. How this is expressed for our communities, services and staff will differ according to their unique circumstances, and this will be reflected in an action plan for each organisation which sit underneath this framework. These plans describe the local actions we will take to deliver on the goals and commitments outlined in this document; they are updated annually and are used to track and measure our progress.

Cllr Barry Wood
Leader of Cherwell District Council

Cllr Ian Hudspeth
Leader of Oxfordshire County Council

Our Including Everyone Framework

Our shared vision is to be a partnership of councils, leading the field in our approach to equality and diversity in our workplace, inclusive service delivery and tackling disadvantage in the communities we serve. We have developed a framework around our vision, shown below; organised around three strands of work, each with commitments and goals against them and a set of key principles that underpin all we do.



Why Including Everyone is important

This Framework is important for us in honouring and protecting the diverse strengths of individuals and in building inclusive communities; we go beyond what the law expects of us to achieve this. The Equality Act (2010) states that public bodies, including Councils need to take extra steps to stop discrimination: this is known as the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Act defines discrimination as the less favourable treatment of a person, because of a protected characteristic, as compared to others who do not share that characteristic. The legislation also applies where there is a belief that the person who is disadvantaged has a particular protected characteristic, even if that is not the case.

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that we must consider equality as part of our daily business, in particular:

- We need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
- We need to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
- Foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not,
- Set and publish equality objectives at least every four years and,
- Publish information, at least annually, to show how we comply with the Equality Duty including information about employees and to people who are affected by the public body's policies and procedures.

There are nine protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

We go further than protected characteristics in our decision-making process because we want to build inclusive communities. To do this we consider the impact that our decisions have on people living with social deprivation, rurality, care leavers, carers, and from our armed forces community¹. For us inclusion applies to the 'communities' where we live and work, but also communities of shared understanding, such as faith, heritage and sexuality. We want our communities to be inclusive and to thrive, meaning that we help and support every community to be the best it can and that we will remove or reduce obstacles which may prevent them from doing so.

¹ Editing note: rurality, care leavers, carers, and from our armed forces community are not currently specified for consideration in Impact Assessment documents; an action will be taken to amend Assessment documents to explicitly include these characteristics.

Not everyone is included

Data about the county and district tells us that the population we serve is relatively affluent; we also know that this level of data masks some stark inequalities within our communities which we find when we dig beneath the surface. The diversity in our communities is a strength and does not result in disadvantage by itself, but we know we need to tackle inequalities because not everyone has the same life opportunities. The following illustrates examples of some of the inequalities in our communities:

89,800 people live with a long term illness or disability in Oxfordshire. 20,072 are Cherwell residents (2011)

In 2019, there were 6,464 pupils with learning difficulties in Oxfordshire schools

In 2020, 10% of children across the county live in low income families; that's almost 12,000 children living in poverty

Men earn on average £6,800 more than women in the Oxfordshire area. Men in the Cherwell area earn on average £6,200 more

Research shows carers are more likely to report symptoms of mental ill-health, and struggle financially

In 2011, there were 61,100 unpaid carers in Oxfordshire and 13,254 unpaid carers in Cherwell

Public Health England, information shows ethnic identity influences mental and physical health outcomes via multiple routes, such as experiences of discrimination and fear of negative incidents

Life expectancy between the most and least deprived wards in Oxfordshire is 13.7 years

Black males and females are 1.9 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than the White ethnic group. Males of Bangladeshi and Pakistani ethnicity are 1.8 times more likely to die

Principles

Our equality, diversity and inclusion Framework is underpinned by the following key principles:

1. **Inclusion is everyone's responsibility.** Including everyone means that we all need to work together, in the workplace and in communities to remove seen and unseen barriers to opportunities.
2. **Listening and learning together.** People have unique experiences and perspectives which can enrich our collective understanding and allow us to learn how to best focus our efforts.
3. **Flexibility to support diverse needs.** Recognising and responding well to diverse needs, ensures we deliver an inclusive workplace, services and communities.
4. **Embracing and celebrating diversity.** There is enormous strength in diversity; we celebrate this and embrace it in our learning, service delivery and community leadership.



We have three inter-connected strands that help us organise our work: inclusive workplace, inclusive service delivery, and inclusive communities. The following section sets out our goals and commitments against each strand. The goals will be tracked and measured in an annual action plan for each council, which sit underneath this framework.

INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

Goal 1

Our workforce is inclusive, reflecting the diversity of the communities we serve

Commitments

Improve the diversity of our organisation at all levels to be representative of our communities

Celebrate and promote diversity in our workforce

Provide a supportive environment so all staff can reach their potential

Goal 2

Our staff have the values, skills and knowledge to be inclusive

Commitments

Identify and tackle discrimination in all its forms

Provide managers with the skills to support employees with different needs and plan inclusive services

Train our staff to identify and avoid unconscious bias and deliver inclusive services

**INCLUSIVE
SERVICE
DELIVERY**

Goal 3

Our information and buildings
are accessible for all

Commitments

Ensure our information, website
and digital services are accessible
for all

Take action to make our buildings
accessible to all residents and
staff

Goal 4

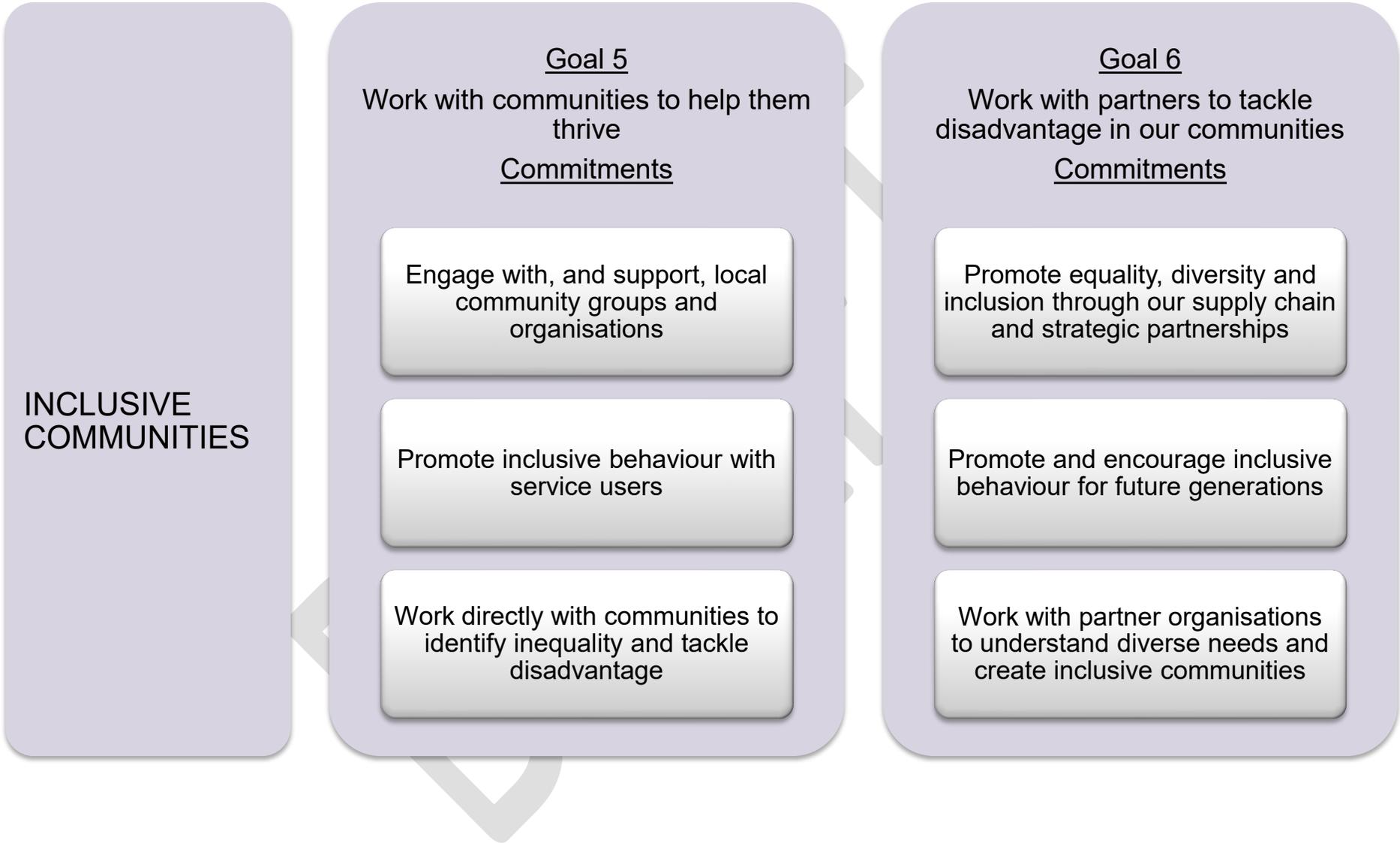
Our services use good data and engage
with users to plan and meet their diverse
needs

Commitments

Better understand our service
users and their needs by collecting
their information and feedback

Engage residents, service users
and community groups when
planning and delivering services

Plan and deliver services that
promote inclusion



Responsibility for delivering the Including Everyone Framework

An underpinning principle of our Framework is that inclusion is everyone's responsibility; we need a collective effort to realise our vision. The following sets out the roles and responsibilities for delivering the Including Everyone Framework:

Councillors on the Executive or Cabinet ensure services are planned and delivered inclusively. They set inclusive values for staff to champion within the organisation. All Councillors demonstrate inclusive behaviour.

The Lead Councillor for equalities, diversity and inclusion sits on the Executive or Cabinet and champions inclusive practices and is held accountable for delivery of actions.

Our staff understand and demonstrate inclusive behaviour, they value diversity. Managers assess, plan and deliver inclusive services and actions (including reporting).

Senior leaders set the tone and ambition for our inclusive values. They drive delivery of the action plan and wider inclusion agenda; including overseeing equalities reporting.

Supported by staff and allies at all levels; networks promote inclusive behaviour, constructively challenge and act as a sounding board for inclusive decision making and developing the annual action plan.

Communities are shared places and spaces, where diversity and difference need to be embraced. Everyone in our communities has their role to play in shaping and delivering inclusion.

Partners help us identify inequalities and provide feedback about ways in which we can improve. They work with us in tackling inequality in the community.



Monitoring and reporting progress

The goals and commitments of our Including Everyone Framework are set every four years and are shared between Cherwell District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.

Sitting beneath this Framework will be an annual action plan for each organisation, that reflect the different ways in which we are working to make our respective organisations, services and communities more inclusive. The action plans will have indicators to help us measure progress against our goals. Implementation will be overseen by the Inclusion Steering Group and reporting will align with business monitoring.

We will engage in the development of our action plans each year and will produce an annual report to outline our progress. We will seek feedback on how others see and experience our progress as part of the annual reporting process.

References and resources

- [Oxfordshire Joint Strategy Needs Assessment](#)
- ['Some are more equal than others: hidden inequalities in a prospering Oxfordshire' 2019/20 Director of Public Health Annual Report](#)
- [Equalities and Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Stonewall \(LGBT+\) specific information](#)
- [My Life, My Choice](#)
- [Age UK Oxfordshire](#)
- [Oxfordshire Youth](#)
- [Disability Rights UK](#)