Equity in experience and outcomes

Score: 2

2 - Evidence shows some shortfalls

What people expect

I have care and support that enables me to live as I want to, seeing me as a unique person with skills, strengths and goals.

The local authority commitment

We actively seek out and listen to information about people who are most likely to experience inequality in experience or outcomes. We tailor the care, support and treatment in response to this.

Key findings for this quality statement

Understanding and reducing barriers to care and support and reducing inequalities

The local authority understood its local population profile and demographics, but improvements in the use of data were still underway and not fully developed in some areas. The local authority analysed equality data on social care users and used it to identify and reduce inequalities in people's care and outcomes. The local authority's public health function had carried out extensive work looking at demographics and identifying inequalities. There was a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) which identified current and future risks to population health, including focus on current and future inequality. For example, the JSNA analysed demographic data to understand deprivation, with data showing 31% of people in the borough lived in the 20% most deprived areas in England.

There was a new corporate equality strategy at the local authority, and it aligned with the objectives of the integrated adult social care strategy. Staff and leaders told us about work they had undertaken to make services more accessible. For example, there had been extensive work over the previous 12 months looking at digital inclusion and there had been a variety of improvements to improve digital inclusion when it came to the provision of information and advice. The local authority and partners had used Better Care Funding to recruit to a new inclusion manager post and the improved approaches to the accessibility of information. Grant funding had been used to enable the voluntary and community sector to better support people to access local authority services.

The local authority used data to understand the experiences of different groups who used their adult social care functions. Staff and leaders told us how the move to the new IT system was driven by a need to better understand the impact of the work of adults' services on different groups and demographics. The new dashboards allowed leaders and teams to understand the experiences of people from different demographic groups and seldom heard voices.

The improvements to data meant the local authority had access to more detailed data to understand its performance against the public sector equality duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010. However, leaders acknowledged a need to do more. The new systems had been in place since January 2024 but had not yet become embedded in practice, so examples of changes they had informed was limited. Leaders also said they were confident people's needs were being met, but they had plans to enhance and improve the way they used data to anticipate the needs of diverse communities across the borough.

The local authority was reaching and engaging with groups that sat below high-level demographic data, but this had not yet led to development of specialist provision. For example, the JSNA highlighted that the local authority was home to a large orthodox Jewish population that made up a minority of the overall demographics. Staff described working with this community around developing new care provision. However, we also heard from partners and staff how there was a lack of specialist provision to meet their needs which meant people sometimes had to move out of borough to have their needs met. This sometimes involved moving a long distance away. Work was underway to address this gap through co-production.

The Jewish Council regularly delivered training to improve cultural awareness amongst local authority staff. Staff spoke positively about this training and how it had improved their practice or approach when supporting people from the community.

The local authority was working to engage with local Muslim populations, to understand what services people needed in these communities and support them to overcome challenges. Staff told us about examples where this had achieved positive outcomes at the frontline, such as recent work between housing and commissioning to help a local group overcome challenges around accessibility of a housing scheme. Community funding had also been used to support refugees and asylum seekers in the borough.

The local authority proactively engaged with groups where inequality had been identified to understand and address specific issues experienced by them. The local authority had different groups who they used to gather feedback and experiences for People's Voice, which brought together community and faith organisations. Staff told us this group had recently been used to understand the experiences of women from minority groups and had informed work to improve accessibility of services.

We heard about a wide range of listening events to encourage people to get involved in the People's Voice group. The local authority implemented face to face engagement events aimed to involve people from different parts of the community to meet with community leaders to talk about their experiences of adult social care. Staff said the most recent discussions had been used to look at how to make different models of care provision more attractive or accessible to minority groups or how to improve uptake of direct payments.

The local authority had undertaken work with voluntary and community partners to enhance its approach to co-production, including using co-production to enable minority groups to influence policy and strategy through the voluntary and community sector. Faith partners said they had been involved in this work and staff spoke about how it had informed commissioning. We also heard how the local authority had set up the poverty truth commission, which was a small team they recruited to of people with lived experience of poverty to support the local authority through advice around the real-life experiences of poverty and how the local authority could help people overcome barriers.

Inclusion and accessibility arrangements

People's experiences of accessibility arrangements were inconsistent. Feedback about accessible information was mixed. We heard positive experiences from some people but also heard feedback from a partner organisation that there had been difficulty accessing British Sign language (BSL) interpreters at front door community hubs for people attending in-person. Another person also told us they had said on their initial contact with the local authority that they would require a BSL interpreter, but the staff who contacted them about their assessment did not know this.

Despite this feedback from partners and people, staff described good access to BSL interpreters in locality teams and at the front door. Staff told us they were able to access these promptly and the local authority commissioned a provider to support staff to communicate with people who had hearing or vision impairments. Staff shared examples with us of people being supported with BSL interpreters and other forms of accessible communication. This showed the feedback we received was not consistent with everyday practice, but there were opportunities to improve access to BSL.

Partners also shared how the local authority's website could be hard to navigate for people with sensory impairment. This had been an area of recent improvement activity and there had been extensive work over 2023 around digital inclusion which had led to changes to how accessibility was quality assured for all website publications and looking at other factors, such as digital poverty, that could prevent people accessing information and advice.

There had also been ongoing work between the local authority and community partners to map resources and identify ways to improve digital inclusivity and improve access to information and advice. These included voluntary partners being provided with grant funding to support people who may be digitally excluded due to a sensory impairment, poverty or not speaking English as a first language.