



# Equality Plan

## 2025-2027



# Contents

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Foreword by Cllr Ishrat Shah	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Embedding fairness and equality into the heart of how we improve, recover and change	6
3. The approach to the Equality Plan	8
4. Progress made	11
5. Inequality in Slough: demographics and key insights	13
6. Equality Plan Priorities: putting the basics in place to have a sustained impact	17



# Foreword by Cllr Ishrat Shah

Slough is a vibrant, young, urban and very diverse community. It is strikingly different from the surrounding area. Residents have access to unique economic opportunities within Slough. There are excellent transport links. Slough's recent history has been defined by patterns of migration - from other parts of the UK and the world. Every officer and Member need to understand our community in all its diversity. This means their strengths, specific needs, the ways communities get along and don't get along. Slough is on the edge of London, in a region that is generally more affluent. This means we can see more change and churn in our population.

For too long residents' needs have not been at the heart of how the council operates and the council has been under central government intervention since 2021. The council must build a very different relationship with residents, and the way we approach fairness and equality is a very important part of this and of how we improve and become a better council.

There are many longstanding inequalities in Slough, and life has got more difficult for many after the pandemic and as the cost of living has gone up. Slough has generally good levels of educational achievement, but this drops below average after 16. Slough residents are not accessing the best jobs in the local area and on average earn £50 less per week than those who come

to work in Slough from outside the town. Housing affects inequality - high rents leave less in people's pockets, overcrowding and poor housing affects health and children's life chances and people on the housing register want to be treated fairly.

The average number of years that a person can expect to live in "full health" in Slough is just 58 years for men and 60 years for women. These inequalities are unacceptable. It will take time to improve these outcomes, but the work must start now, and there must be a relentless focus across the council and in our work with partners.

This is why closing the healthy life expectancy gap, by focusing on children, is the purpose of the corporate plan adopted in 2023. The plan has priorities focused on enabling children to thrive, residents to live healthier, safer and more independent lives and for a cleaner, healthier and more prosperous town. Last year, in 2024, Slough adopted new Equality Objectives, which build on this purpose and priorities, drilling down to the equality issues that are most pressing.

These equality objectives focus on children who face disadvantage, tackling health inequalities and improving community safety. Alongside this, are commitments to change as an institution - using data to inform a workforce strategy, to have a workforce

that reflects Slough's diversity and for political and executive leaders to demonstrate personal knowledge and understanding of local communities and continue to show commitment to reducing inequality. Residents tell us that it can be hard to get through our front door and get the information or help they need. Becoming a more open council that designs services around our community must be a top priority as we change and improve.

These commitments must now be translated into action. Tackling inequality cannot be achieved through one department or through the council working on its own. By publishing the Equality Plan, the council is seeking to bring services, communities and partners together to take purposeful steps to make a difference to outcomes in the long term. Over the coming months we will be reaching out to staff, Members partners and communities on this, holding community conversations on key equality issues and improving the way we engage.

I look forward to working with you all to make Slough a fairer and more prosperous place.



# 1. Introduction

Advancing equality, eliminating discrimination and fostering good community relations needs to be at the heart of how the council improves and recovers. It is also a legal duty required under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Tackling inequality is a complex task for any council.

In April 2024, Cabinet agreed 6 statutory equality objectives. These are set for a maximum period of 4 years, but it was agreed to review these after 2 years, pending recommendations from the LGA Equality Peer Review.

The objectives are long-term aspirations for the council to reduce inequality in key outcome areas and are based on priorities of the Corporate Plan, which has a particular focus on reducing inequalities for children and young people, and health inequalities. There is overwhelming evidence that equality gaps experienced in childhood can persist and widen into adulthood, impacting many areas of an individual's life outcomes. This is especially true of health inequalities, which in themselves can have long-lasting impacts on quality of life, educational achievement and employment.

The six objectives are:

## Equality Objective 1

Improve outcomes for children and young people who are more likely to be disadvantaged based on their protected characteristic, including SEND.

## Equality Objective 2

Work with partners, including housing providers, to target health inequalities and well-being between those from different protected characteristic groups.

## Equality Objective 3

Work with partners to improve community safety, in particular focusing on violence experienced by women and girls.

## Equality Objective 4

The council uses a robust and comprehensive set of employment data to inform its workforce strategy and management practice, as well as benchmarking and sharing good practice.

## Equality Objective 5

The council actively ensures that the profile of its workforce (including the profile of major providers of commissioned services) broadly reflect the community it serves/local labour market.

## Equality Objective 6

Political and executive leaders demonstrate personal knowledge and understanding of local communities and continue to show commitment to reducing inequality.



## 2. Embedding fairness and equality into the heart of how we improve, recover and change

### 2.1 Changing as an institution

In Slough, to advance these objectives, we need to start by focusing on the basics or we will not have the intended impact. Government commissioners' feedback is that the council needs to give greater primacy to the needs of residents. Slough is in the process of improving and changing the way we operate as a council to be a more resident focused council. We need to ensure that fairness and equality is at the heart of the way we improve and recover as well as the changes to the way we operate as an organisation. This plan should be seen in this context - as the beginning of resetting our organisational approach, and ensuring we have the basics in place to deliver results and tangible change.

In recent years, councils across the country have been reflecting much more on how they need to change to deliver better, fairer public services in increasingly more diverse communities. Many councils have probed how they need to change to actively eliminate bias and discrimination in their culture and systems to deliver more effective public services. Bias and discrimination can also therefore be deeply embedded and difficult to uncover, even in well performing public institutions.

The Local Government Association has published case studies on an Equality Hub that show the extensive work going on in councils.

Given Slough Borough Council has been found to have not focused adequately on the needs of residents, we would expect even more of a focus on changing as an institution that our peers.

For our workforce, equality and diversity need to be demonstrably valued so we can recruit and retain the best people who reflect the community and can understand the needs of communities and who, in turn, will deliver fair and accessible services to our residents. Slough is developing a workforce strategy that will sit alongside this Equality Plan, ensuring that the work is embedded into a wider plan for our people.

As the council develops new operating principles and operating models, there is an opportunity to centre residents' needs - starting with the residents' experience of the different "front doors" that are used to access council services.

### 2.2 Working with other partners

We also need to do more to be outward facing and convene statutory partners, the voluntary and community sector, local businesses and employers. Together we can focus on the key inequalities in our communities rather than have separate plans to tackle the same long-term issues. Together we can also change our institutions and systems to provide fairer services and achieve fairer outcomes.

Slough Borough Council is a member of Frimley Health and Care Partnership which collectively provides health and care including in Slough. Partners are working together to develop a Frimley Integrated System Anti-Racism Alliance and Framework. The Equality Plan proposes that the council engages with this work and adopts the framework. By doing so, the council is making a conscious commitment to identify, challenge and dismantle those institutional practices and attitudes that can make inequality worse, however unintended. By adopting commitments through the Frimley Integrated System Anti-Racism Alliance and Framework, we commit with our partners across the system to take a shared approach to tackling race inequalities for residents and staff. This includes:



- Addressing systemic racial equalities
- Developing policies and practices that promote race equality
- Actively listening to the voices of people who experience racism
- Promoting education and awareness to promote understanding
- Being accountable through monitoring and transparent reporting

Whilst focusing on racism, the work will identify how the council can more proactively eliminate all forms of bias and discrimination and improve public service.

## 2.3 Responding to the challenge from our peers

In September 2024 the Local Government Association conducted an Equality Peer Review, involving Members and Officers from other councils acting as critical friends and reviewing the council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion for workforce and community. The findings and recommendations were published in November 2024. The Equality Plan takes on board the feedback and recommendations and fully integrates them into this plan.

### 2.3.1 Summary of key findings:

The LGA peer review team acknowledged the commitment of senior officers, elected Members and staff at all levels to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion and noted real "green shoots" of change. They found a workforce and leadership eager and committed to being part of the work to deliver a more inclusive and fairer Slough for all residents. Whilst there were examples of good practice and progress in some areas, this was inconsistent and there were significant areas of challenge around:

- The council's data and knowledge of its residents and the key inequalities issues that they faced, including effective and joined up community engagement. This has impacted the ability to make evidence -based decisions around service design and delivery, understanding the impacts of policies on different groups. However, the peer review team noted some pockets of excellent practice, such as the Co-Production Network in Adult Social Care Commissioning, which was well-developed and could be used as a model for another service areas, and in Education, which was also acknowledged for having good data sets and a clear understanding of which children from different ethnic groups are under-performing and why.

- The corporate governance of equalities and structures to embed equality objectives into service design, this included limited staff awareness of the statutory equality objectives and how to deliver them effectively.
- A workforce that had undergone significant and sustained change and uncertainty, with low levels of trust and perceptions of inequity, especially around recruitment and career progression. However, the peer review team noted the energy and commitment of the staff networks to be part of the dialogue between staff and senior leaders and that the appointment of a new Corporate Leadership Team was being positively received by staff who wanted to be hopeful about Slough's future recovery.
- A need to broaden the understanding and dialogue around equalities beyond race and religion, with an emphasis on intersectionality.

In developing the Equality Plan, there has been some reflection on this last point: that equality in Slough can be viewed through the narrow lens of race, ethnicity and religion and that the lens needs to be widened. The Equality Plan seeks to ensure a focus on all equality groups, whilst recognising that until tangible progress is made to tackle racial inequality, it will continue to be at the forefront of the debate and dialogue, the council and community.



### 3. The approach to the Equality Plan

The Equality Objectives adopted in April 2025 set out the key inequalities that need to be addressed in relation to children, health and community safety, the workforce priorities and the leadership commitments and actions needed.

Since the Equality Objectives were adopted, the council has had feedback from the Equality Peer Review, we have had a Staff Survey and a further report on progress against the intervention. We have also developed our Improvement and Recovery Plan priorities for 2024-26 and have started the groundwork to develop a new operating model, looking at residents' experience of the council's main access points - the "front door". To support our employees, the council is developing a workforce strategy. This Equality Plan takes on board this feedback and developments.

It has been put together with the basic improvement tasks that are needed in mind. To make an impact on long term outcomes, basic work needs to be put in place. This is because actions to tackle these inequalities need to be sustained to make an impact. They cannot be progressed superficially with separate actions plans that do not connect to service delivery or strategies. These connections need to be in place first. The Equality Plan sets out how we will do this.





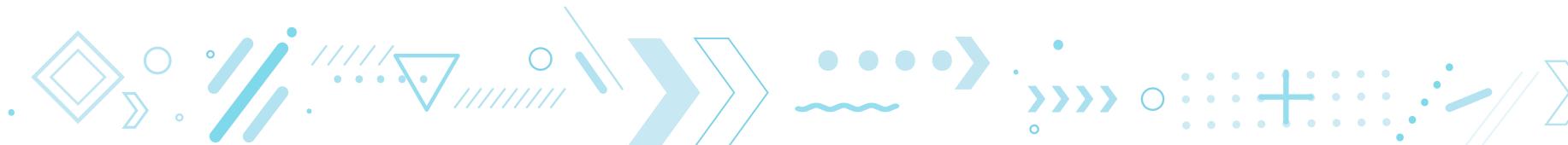
### 3.1 Summary of Equality Plan

Equality Objective	Putting the basics in place	Measures of success
<p><b>Equality Objective 1:</b> Improve outcomes for children and young people who are more likely to be disadvantaged based on their protected characteristic, including SEND.</p> <p><b>Equality Objective 2:</b> Work with partners, including housing providers, to target health inequalities and well-being between those from different protected characteristic groups.</p> <p><b>Equality Objective 3:</b> Work with partners to improve community safety, in particular focusing on violence experienced by women and girls.</p>	<p><b>Tackling Key Inequalities</b> To start to make an impact the council needs to do the following:</p> <p><b>Developing understanding of key inequalities with focus on children, health and community safety</b> Theme 1: Developing a solid evidence base for understanding the key inequalities that Slough residents face and what is driving them. Theme 2: Establishing and sustaining engagement with the community, voluntary sector and partners Theme 3: Building a dialogue with residents in a wider range of accessible ways</p> <p><b>Embedding equality into decision making, leadership and delivery</b> Theme 1: Drive delivery of equality objectives Theme 2: improving the quality of equality impact assessments (EIAs) so that they clearly demonstrate understanding of our communities Theme 3: ensuring better governance of equalities</p>	<p>By September 2025: The council has embedded delivery of Equality Objectives into corporate delivery and strategies.</p> <p>The council sets out in its evidence base a clear understanding of the diverse and intersectional needs of Slough's community - including a focus on inequalities in children's outcomes, health and community safety.</p> <p>By November 2026: Delivery of Equality Objectives is embedded into partnerships working.</p> <p>Equality impact assessments use local and national data to set out equality impacts and mitigations.</p> <p>The corporate performance management framework identifies the key inequalities where relevant.</p>





Equality Objective	Putting the basics in place	Measures of success
<p><b>Equality Objective 4:</b> The council uses a robust and comprehensive set of employment data to inform its workforce strategy and management practice, as well as benchmarking and sharing good practice.</p> <p><b>Equality Objective 5:</b> The council actively ensures that the profile of its workforce (including the profile of major providers of commissioned services) broadly reflect the community it serves/local labour market.</p>	<p><b>Improving Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our Workforce</b></p> <p>Theme 1: equipping our managers with better data to ensure they can support diverse teams by identifying and removing barriers to inclusion</p> <p>Theme 2: Fostering a healthy workplace and inclusive culture</p> <p>Theme 3: Inclusive recruitment and staff development</p> <p>Theme 4: Developing leadership visibility and valuing staff</p>	<p>A workforce strategy is adopted that focuses on organisational health and creates a stable and resilient workforce. Measures are taken to ensure that the workforce fully reflects the diversity of Slough's community.</p>
<p><b>Equality Objective 6:</b> Political and executive leaders demonstrate personal knowledge and understanding of local communities and continue to show commitment to reducing inequality.</p>	<p><b>Developing the political and executive leaders' knowledge and understanding</b></p> <p>Theme 1: celebrating diversity in the workplace</p> <p>Theme 2: celebrating diversity in the community</p> <p>Theme 3: Developing and supporting elected Members to be equality champions</p>	<p>By November 2026: The council leadership (Members and senior officers) will be confident engaging with the community and can engage with diverse communities in open and targeted ways to ensure good reach.</p>





## 4. Progress made

Over the past year, the council has demonstrated a clear leadership commitment to improving our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, through the publication of [Statutory Equality Objectives](#), [Workforce Equality Data](#) and undergoing independent scrutiny. In September 2024 the council asked the Local Government Association to conduct an independent peer review into equality, focussing on both service design and customer care, and workforce: the full report and recommendations are published [here](#).

### 4.1 Equalities Progress so far

- Whilst there is much to do to embed a consistent approach to improving equalities in both service delivery and employment, the peer review team noted real “green shots” of change.
- The leadership has been recognised by the Peer Review team to be clearly committed to advancing equality for staff and residents, with Members keen to have a role in operationalising equality, diversity and inclusion in front line services.
- There have been key appointments to help embed an inclusive culture into the workforce and develop a systematic approach to community engagement and data insights at the strategic centre of the organisation.

### 4.2 Tackling inequality in communities

- Some excellent areas of good practice of engagement with service users were highlighted by the peer review, especially within Education, where SEND teachers and Head Teachers are increasingly being involved in service design and in Adult Social Care Commissioning via the Co Production Network, which involves partners, residents and the voluntary sector.
- The Education department was particularly noted in the peer review as having good equalities data sets around pupil achievement and outcomes.
- Public Health initiatives are supporting equalities work around multi-generational health campaigns for vaccine awareness and take up, promoting Healthy Workplaces, and launching a genetic test to more proactively identify genetic anomalies.
- Within Adult Social Care a range of Forums are in place that are working well to engage residents, involving them in service design, tender panels and recruitment panels for senior staff. These include Older People's Forum, Carers Forum, Autism Steering Group and a forum for People with Learning Disabilities.

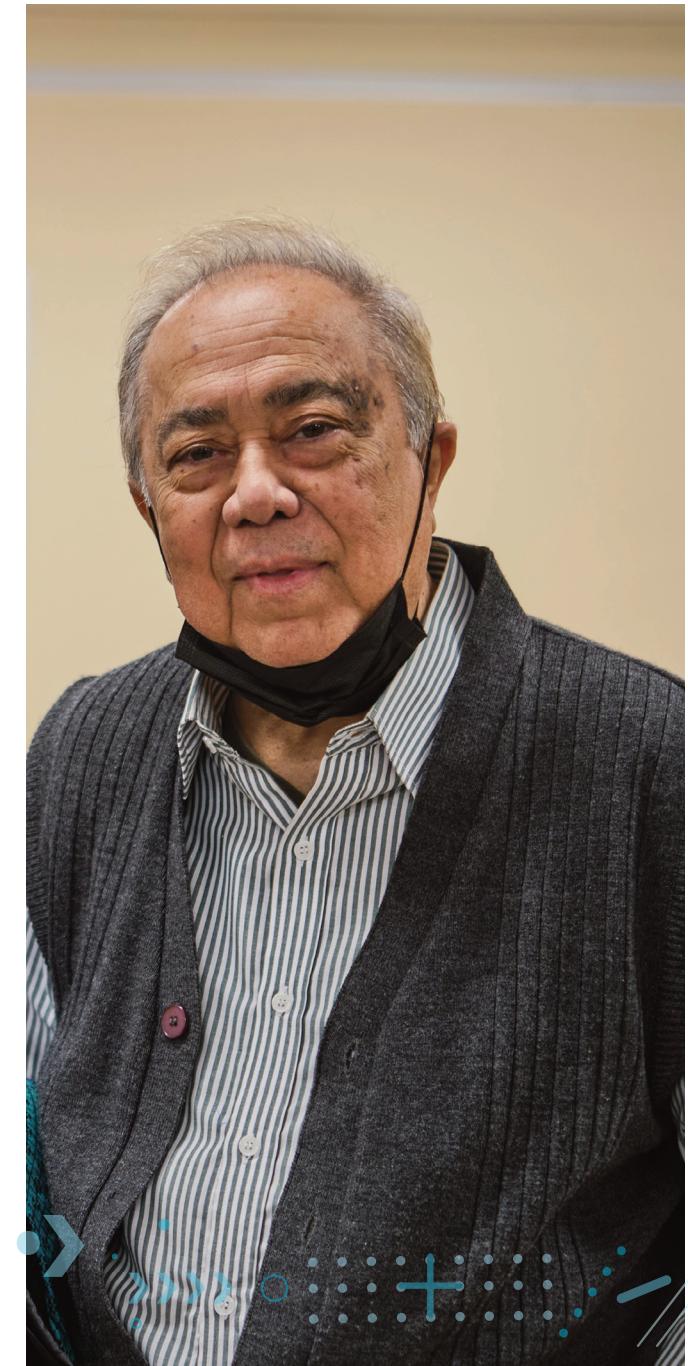


- Equalities briefing sessions have been delivered to all elected members on the findings of the peer review.
- A Corporate Equalities Board, chaired by the Chief Executive, has been established with an equalities workshop involving all members taking place at the end of 2024, and quarterly meetings throughout 2025.

### 4.3 Workforce

- Our People Forum has been established to provide an opportunity for staff at all levels to be involved in taking the organisation forward and promoting culture change and 2-way dialogue.
- Staff networks supporting race, women's and disability equality are well-established and actively involved in supporting the engagement of staff on equality issues. The network chairs have met with the Chief Executive, and each have a dedicated sponsor from the Corporate Leadership Team.
- Staff networks have held events to celebrate Black History Month, International Day of the Disabled Person and International Women's Day, as well as training on race equality and workshops on menopause.

- Staff network chairs sit on the Our People Forum and the Corporate Equalities Board.
- Staff network members have sat on recruitment panels for senior staff and are a regular part of new employee induction.
- Staff induction includes a dedicated session on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, including the council's equalities objectives.
- Staff diversity declarations have increased after a change of the categories on the HR system to align better with the census.
- The 2024 staff survey scored highly on diversity, with 86% of respondents agreeing with the statement that "diversity is valued" in the organisation and 76% agreeing that staff from all backgrounds have equal opportunity to progress.
- Senior leaders have been engaging staff via directorate meetings, newsletters, the Chief Executive Vlog and Talk About sessions.



# 5. Inequality in Slough: demographics and key insights

Slough has a unique and vibrant demographic profile, compared to our geographical neighbours, and is a strikingly young, urban and super-diverse town in terms of ethnicity.

## 5.1 Demographic breakdown

### Age:

- Slough has the second largest population of children in the country with 25% of residents aged 15 or under (Census 2021 & ONS mid-year population estimates for 2023, England average: 18.5%).
- Slough's average age is 34 years, compared to 41 years for the South East and 40 years for England (Census 2021).
- 10% of Slough's population is aged 65 years or older, compared to the national England average of 18.7% (Census 2021).

### Sex:

- 50.4% of Slough's population are female and 49.6% are male (ONS mid-year population estimates for 2023).

### Gender Reassignment:

- 90.4% of Slough residents' gender identity is the same as their sex as registered at birth. (Census 2021).

- 0.9% of Slough residents have a different gender identity to the one registered at birth (Census 2021).

### Ethnicity:

- Slough has one of the most ethnically diverse populations in England.
- Almost half of all residents are from Asian ethnic groups (Slough: 46.7%, England: 9.6%, Census 2021).
- The largest detailed ethnic groups are White British (24%), Pakistani (22%), Indian (19%) and White Polish (5%) (Census 2021).
- 44% of residents were born outside of the UK. After England, the top countries of birth were India, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, and Kenya (Census 2021).
- Over 150 languages (including British Sign Language) and dialects are used in Slough.

### Religion and Belief:

- Slough residents are more likely to have religious beliefs compared to England more widely. 13% of Slough residents stated they have no religion, compared to 37% for England (Census 2021).
- The largest religious groups in Slough are Christian (32%), Muslim (29%), Sikh (11%) and Hindu (8%) (Census 2021).

### Disability:

- 15.1% of Slough residents are disabled under the Equality Act, 2010 (Census 2021).
- 26% of Slough households included at least one person with a disability (Census 2021).

### Sexual Orientation:

- 88% of Slough residents identified as straight or heterosexual (Census 2021).
- 2% of Slough residents identified as an LGB+ orientation (e.g. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual) (Census 2021).

### Marriage and Civil Partnership:

- 50% of Slough residents are married to someone of the opposite sex (Census 2021).
- 0.3% of Slough residents are in a same-sex marriage or same-sex civil partnership (Census 2021).

### Pregnancy and Maternity:

- In 2023, Slough had a higher Fertility Rate (1.94) compared to the rate for England as a whole (1.44) (ONS 2023).





Although not protected characteristics under the Equality Act, the following groups are also known to experience inequalities:

#### Unpaid Carers:

- There are 10,143 Slough residents providing unpaid care each week (Census 2021). This is 7% of the total population aged 5 years or over.

#### Care-Experienced:

- The exact number of Slough residents who have ever experienced time in care is unknown. In 2023/4, there were 203 Children Looked After (CLA, under 18 years) in Slough. Boys are more likely to be in care than girls. As of February 2025, there were 177 Care Experienced Young People (aged 18-25 years) who were open to the council's service.

Many factors contribute to inequality in Slough, including overcrowding, educational achievement, and employment, and these have been exacerbated by the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic, as well as pressures on housing and cost of living:

- There is an average of three people per household in Slough - the highest average size in England. 16% of households are overcrowded (Census 2021).
- Larger proportions of Slough residents from non-White ethnic groups live in overcrowded housing compared to White ethnic groups.

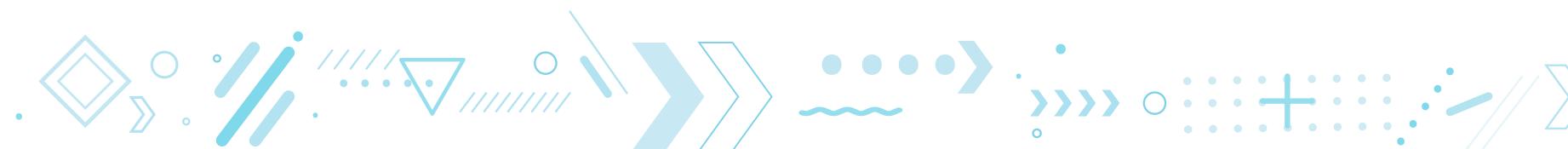
- Slough has generally good levels of educational attainment but is below the national average for post-16 education and qualifications (Census 2021 & DFE 2023).
- More girls (74%) than boys (60%) achieved a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage (2023).
- At Key Stage 2, White British outcomes are lower than for other ethnic groups and significantly lower than the national average.
- At Key Stage 4, the achievement gap between White British Pupils and all other pupils has increased every year since 2018.
- In 2023-24, 75.5% of Slough's working age population (aged 16-64) were economically active which is slightly lower than England (78.8%) and 24.5% were economically inactive (ONS APS, 2024).
- Slough has a larger proportion of people claiming unemployment benefit than the Southeast and England averages.
- There is a gap in earnings of £53.40 per week between Slough residents and all those who work in Slough (2023).
- Slough has pockets of severe deprivation and 70% of neighbourhoods fall below the national average in the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

More detailed information can be found in the Slough Demographics Data Pack (Census 2021) and the Slough Insights Data Pack (2024).

## 5.2 Health inequalities

Different population groups experience a wide range of health inequalities:

- When compared to Slough as a whole and with White ethnic groups in particular, people from Black, Asian and other non-white ethnic groups live in more deprived and densely populated areas and have higher incidences of diabetes, hypertension and other chronic health conditions.
- Healthy life expectancy for both men and women living in Slough is below the national average at 58.1 years for men (England average 63.1) and 60.3 years for women (England average 63.9).
- Residents from Black, Asian and other non-White ethnic groups experienced more excess deaths and higher levels of morbidity from Covid-19, than other ethnic groups.
- Carers are twice as likely to suffer from poor health compared to people without caring responsibilities.
- The risk of premature mortality is 62% higher for care-experienced people than for non-care-experienced people.





## 5.3 Understanding the drivers of local inequalities - the link to poverty and low income

The drivers of local inequalities are multi-factorial, with many factors intersecting. In Slough, poverty and low income intersects with equality characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, disability, age, sex etc), as well as other factors such as being an unpaid carer to someone who is older, sick or has a disability, being economically inactive, or being someone who has grown up in Care themselves (Care-Experienced). Better understanding of the complex ways in which these interact is key to addressing some of the main persistent inequalities and poor outcomes our residents face.

National data analysis shows you are more likely to be living in poverty or low income if you are:

- a single parent with children (this is more likely to impact women, who make up 90% of single parents nationally)
- a child in a family with 3 or more children
- a child under the age of 5, especially if you live in a larger family
- a child in a family where no-one is working

- living in a household where the head is of Asian/Asian British or Black/Black British ethnicity
- an adult with a long-term health condition or disability
- an unpaid Carer
- living in a family with disabled children

### 5.3.1 People in poverty in Slough tend to be from the following groups:

Children aged 0-15:

- Over a quarter of residents in social rented homes are children.
- A quarter of residents living in deprived households are children.
- A third of Slough's children live in overcrowded homes.
- 21% of Slough's children (aged 0-19) live in relative low-income families and 17% live in absolute low-income families.

Single parents:

- Slough has a higher percentage of recipients of the "single with dependent children" entitlement of universal credit.

Families with dependent children:

- Slough has a higher percentage of recipients of the "child entitlement" of universal credit.
- In 2023, there were 1900 households with dependent children where no one was working.

Women:

- Almost a third of Slough's women were economically inactive in 2021.
- Single parents are more likely to be women.
- Pregnancy and maternity negatively affect income.
- Slough Adult Social Care has higher activity with female residents.
- 53% of residents aged 65 and over are women, which intersects with older people being more likely to experience poverty.

People with disabilities:

- 35% of disabled residents have no qualifications.
- 53% of disabled residents are economically inactive.

Asian ethnic groups:

- Slough has a much higher percentage of residents from Asian ethnic groups receiving Universal Credit than England.





- 46% of residents living in deprived households are from Asian ethnic groups. Just under a quarter are Pakistani.
- Half of Slough's children (0-15) are from Asian ethnic groups, which intersects with children and parents with dependent children being more likely to experience poverty.

Older people aged 65 and over:

- Slough has a higher percentage of older people receiving pension credit than England.
- Just over a quarter of Slough's older residents live alone.
- Over a third of Slough's older residents are disabled.
- The highest Slough Adult Social Care activity rate is by older residents (aged 75+, especially, who are more likely to be female residents).

Carers:

- Research by Carers UK indicates that many people do not recognise themselves as carers and this can be particularly the case in some ethnic minority groups where caregiving is under-identified and seen as not requiring additional support.
- Women remain more likely to be unpaid carers than men.

Care-experienced people:

- National research shows a high correlation between the likelihood of entering care and deprivation. In 2020, children in more deprived areas were 9 times more likely to enter care than in the least deprived areas.
- Care-experienced children are more likely to receive a youth caution or conviction (between age 10 years and 17 years) than their non-care-experienced peers.
- Nationally, in the 8 years after leaving school, 25% of care-experienced children were not in employment or education compared to 4% of non-care-experienced children.

The council is currently developing a comprehensive poverty analysis pack, incorporating national and local data, to improve awareness and understanding of the impact of low income on different groups and how this should be considered in the context of service design and policy decisions.

# 6. Equality Plan Priorities - putting the basics in place to have a sustained impact

This action identifies the foundational work that will be progressed in the next two years, at a high level, with a focus on the next 6 months. More detailed action plans will be developed with timelines that are also aligned to the Improvement and Recovery Plan. Updates will be brought to council on an annual basis as part of updates on corporate plan delivery.

## 6.1 Tackling key inequalities

To deliver:

- **Equality Objective 1:** Improve outcomes for children and young people who are more likely to be disadvantaged based on their protected characteristic, including SEND.
- **Equality Objective 2:** Work with partners, including housing providers, to target health inequalities and well-being between those from different protected characteristic groups.
- **Equality Objective 3:** Work with partners to improve community safety, in particular focusing on violence experienced by women and girls.

### 6.1.1 Developing understanding of key inequalities with focus on children, health and community safety

To make an impact on these objectives the council needs to develop a solid evidence base for understanding the key inequalities that Slough residents face and what is driving them. The evidence base will include both service data collection and analysis, as well as sustained engagement with the community, voluntary sector and partners to understand the richness of residents' experiences and views. These conversations will also bring groups together to develop the solutions needed and help the council understand its specific role in closing some of these persistent gaps. The work needs to identify the equality issues that are being neglected and need more attention.

#### Theme 1: Developing a solid evidence base

**Links to Improvement and Recovery Plan workstream on Vision and Evidence-Based Decision-Making**

By September 2025:

1. Review the information currently collected within service areas on the protected characteristics of service users. Work with services to carry out mapping exercises to identify and review gaps in data collection, current participation and to highlight gaps in participation (links to Improvement and Recovery Plan action on data maturity).
2. Develop and promote shared evidence base and story of place and council to support policy and decision-making across Slough (links to Improvement and Recovery Plan Action). Ensure that all evidence is examined through the equality lens and there is a shared understanding of equality issues by each equality group.





3. Learn from experiences and solutions of similar Local Authorities, working with other council in region, other intervention councils and the Local Government Association.
4. Refresh the equalities monitoring template across council and roll out consistent use to develop proportionate and appropriate approach to collecting information on service users - embedding within wider policies relating to standardising data collection (links to Improvement and Recovery Plan action on data maturity)

By March 2026:

1. Publish available data relating to local inequalities/groups with protected characteristics by focusing on access to services and key outcomes.
2. Develop systems to capture and analyse hard and "soft" data that comes into the council from a range of sources, including information from front line staff, consultations, service and statutory monitoring and ensure these form part of regular Management Information Reports.

3. Develop systems within services to collect, analyse and measure satisfaction levels across different equality groups.
4. Analyse annual residents survey by equality group responses.
5. Research and develop a local profile of how equalities characteristics intersect with each other and additional factors, such as poverty and low income, experience of care and caring responsibilities- building on recent production of Poverty Profile that identifies equality groups on low incomes.
6. Identify and develop deep dive needs analyses into specific equality issues where the evidence base and the understanding of need is not developed enough. This could focus on a specific equality group or a thematic issue and should be developed working closely with Public Health, and in collaboration with other services and partners.

**Theme 2: Establishing and sustaining engagement with the community, voluntary sector and partners to better understand the drivers of local inequalities**

**Links to Target Operating Model and Communications, Partnerships and Engagement workstream of Improvement and Recovery Plan**

By March 2026:

1. Utilise and build upon existing relationships with partners and community groups, especially with umbrella organisations such as Slough Council for Voluntary Services and existing forums.
2. Increase the diversity of existing forums to ensure they represent a wider range of voices and experience.
3. Discuss and agree with partners and communities, joint priorities for reducing local inequalities.
4. Create more opportunities for open and honest dialogue around the challenges and solutions to local inequalities.
5. Promote existing information guides about available services to support residents, for example the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support (SENDIAS).
6. Develop a tool to capture on going community engagement insights.





### Theme 3: Building a dialogue with residents in a wider range of accessible ways

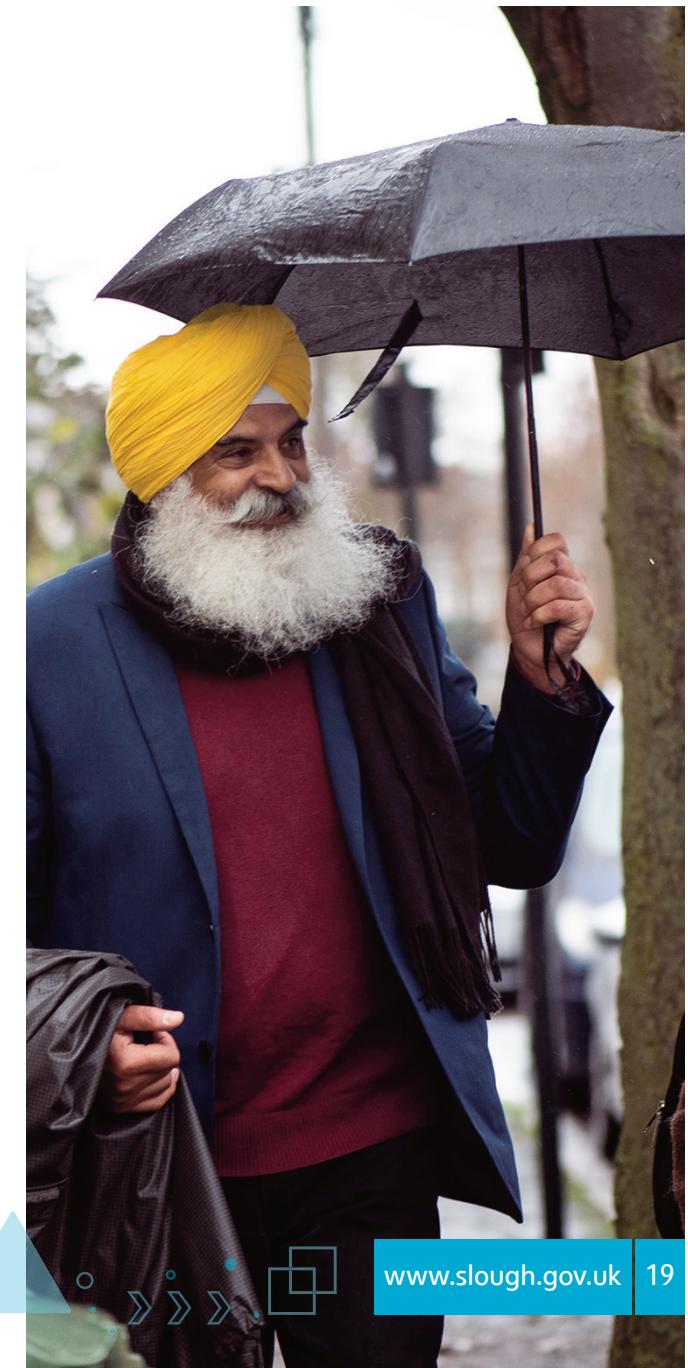
#### Links to Future Operating Model and Communications, Partnerships and Engagement of Improvement and Recovery Plan

By September 2025:

1. Service managers to broaden their understanding of resident experiences through undertaking ward walks, attending community groups to hear about lived experiences, and actively challenging outdated community stereotypes.
2. Adopt a refreshed Resident Engagement Framework for the council that sets out a clear and council-wide approach for inclusive engagement, tailored to the diversity of Slough communities. Ensure this is embedded in the new Operating Model.
3. Develop the Co-Production Network as a model for other services in collaborative service-design as part of the development of this framework.
4. Put structures in place to monitor and respond to community tensions and promote community cohesion.

By March 2026:

5. Ensure all communications are in "plain English" and that there is access to translation where necessary.
6. Ensure the website and other digital means are fully utilised, with options for people to use social media and online chat as points of access as part of Target Operating Model.
7. Create more opportunities for face-to-face dialogue by utilising community hubs, libraries and children's centres as part of Target Operating Model.
8. Better utilise partners and community groups as key access points as part of Target Operating Model.



## 6.1.2 Embedding equality into decision-making, leadership and delivery

To drive the strategic focus on objectives 1-3, the council needs to influence the delivery of existing services and key strategies, to ensure these are focused on tackling key inequalities. This relies on the council developing service plans that connect commitments to delivery. The work will need to bring services, communities and partners together to focus on these key inequalities together.

We need to embed equality considerations into the way the council makes decisions and into everyday delivery of services. This means ensuring that there is an evidence-based understanding of the impacts of service and policy decisions on our communities – both negative and positive. During a time of change, policies can have cumulative impacts especially for those already experiencing multiple disadvantages and poor outcomes. We need to ensure that these are better understood and based on up-to-date evidence through keeping assessments under review.

### Theme 1: Drive strategic delivery of equality objectives

By March 2026:

1. Review the existing delivery of services and main strategies to ensure that these are focused on the right actions to tackle the key inequalities identified in the refreshed shared equalities evidence base.
2. Work with partners to develop shared approaches to progressing the equality objectives and delivery plans that cover proactive actions to tackle inequality across the partnership.
3. Ensure that service plans that connect commitments to delivery are in place so that equality objectives can be embedded further into operational planning. This is a key priority in the council's improvement plans.
4. Continue work that brings services, communities and partners together to focus on these key inequalities collectively.
5. Ensure that existing work to review Strategic Commissioning enables a focus on tackling key inequalities and shared outcomes.
6. Adopt the Frimley Anti-Racism Framework to help develop Slough's approach to equality and to driving equality objectives across the system which will help review our approach and establish the development needed.

### Theme 2: Improving the quality of equality impact assessments (EqIAs) so that they clearly demonstrate understanding of our communities

1. Re-design templates and guidance for conducting EqIAs- exploring development of community impact assessment and how cumulative impact assessments can be embedded.
2. Deliver officer-led training sessions to support managers in completing high quality impact assessments, using national proxy data where local data does not exist.
3. Deliver officer-led training sessions to Members to build awareness and skills in understanding equality impacts and how to scrutinise through the decision-making process.
4. Develop and implement a council -wide approach for the quality assurance of EqIAs to improve standards and consistency.
5. Ensure EqIAs capture the richness of residents' needs and views (see above section - Understanding Our Communities).



### Theme 3: Ensuring better Governance of equalities

1. Establish an Equalities Board chaired by the Chief Executive to oversee organisational accountability for the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and drive the strategic equalities programme.
2. The Equalities Board to raise awareness and oversee the wider promotion of the equality objectives in organisation and ensure these are embedded into service delivery.
3. Ensure services have structures in place to integrate equality outcomes into their service objectives and that equality analysis is fed into planning and assessment of service plans.
4. Publish an Annual Equality report and update on progress against statutory equality objectives.



## 6.2 Improving Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in our Workforce

To deliver:

- **Equality Objective 4:** The council uses a robust and comprehensive set of employment data to inform its workforce strategy and management practice, as well as benchmarking and sharing good practice.
- **Equality Objective 5:** The council actively ensures that the profile of its workforce (including the profile of major providers of commissioned services) broadly reflect the community it serves/local labour market.

Our employees are at the heart of driving the delivery of fair and inclusive services. It is essential that everyone in our workforce feels valued, treated with dignity and respect and has equal opportunity to progress. The 2024 LGA Equality Peer Review acknowledged the strong commitment of staff to diversity, and particularly the excellent work of the staff networks. However, it recommended the organisation needed to better support staff wellbeing, rebuild staff trust and morale, and clearly demonstrate its commitment to inclusive recruitment and widening career opportunities for all staff groups. This is particularly important if we are to achieve a more representative workforce of local communities. The peer review noted that workforce data needed to be more robust, and staff diversity data was incomplete.

### Theme 1: Equipping our managers with better data to ensure they can support diverse teams by identifying and removing barriers to inclusion

1. Undertake a cleanse of data held on the HR data and information system (Agresso) and create “bitesize learning” for all managers on how to maintain data.
2. Work with communications, staff networks and managers to promote the importance of completing personal diversity information and improve declaration rates in all categories, with the option of “prefer not to say” as a conscious choice.
3. Create directorate dashboards of workforce information and metrics that are cascaded to managers to drive people-centric conversations.
4. Raise awareness of the “self-service” Diversity function in Agresso to support the recording of reasonable adjustments for employees with disability.
5. Develop a suite of tools/guidance supporting managers to confidently lead diverse teams, including managing employees with disabilities.

### Theme 2: Fostering a healthy workplace and inclusive culture

1. Increase employee engagement with the Our People Forum for all aspects of staff survey development.
2. Publish the full results of 2024 staff survey by directorates, together with directorate action plans, tracking and sharing progress with staff.
3. Re-procure the Occupational Health supplier, building in a requirement for the provider to offer mental health and stress support.
4. Provide security and additional support for reception staff at Observatory House (Head Office) so that they can deal with visitors who may present with challenging circumstances. Deliver training to ensure facilities officers can manage any conflict that arises in the reception area.
5. Nominate a Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) sponsor for each staff network and have the Chief Executive meet with Chairs.
6. Include Staff Network Chairs and Trade Union Representatives as Members of Corporate Equalities Board.
7. Ensure staff networks are fully promoted, and all staff have access to them and can take time off to participate where practicable.



### **Theme 3: inclusive recruitment and staff development**

1. Launch a senior leader's induction including an operational shadowing within the first 6 months.
2. Enhance the onboarding process to allow new staff to access key materials ahead of joining, to include offer of a buddy and welcome letter.
3. Review recruitment end to end, including upskilling on inclusive recruitment panels, internal by default and talent/succession planning.
4. Review and develop a process for recruiting Care-Experienced people, Work Placements and Graduates into the council workforce.
5. Continue the embedding of the redesigned appraisal form and process to encourage regular feedback and performance management.
6. Reverse mentoring to be developed and offered to all staff.

7. Line Managers Essential course to include Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and ensure that managers are more aware of cultural holidays and to workforce plan to support annual leave requests.
8. Corporate Induction to include presentations from EDI Lead and Staff networks, to promote better awareness of equality objectives and employee inclusion.
9. Ensure EDI Mandatory Training offer is refreshed, relevant and easy to access.
10. Establish a coaching and mentoring network and a reverse mentor for every member of CLT.
11. Increase our apprenticeships and interns as part of our plans to recruit a more diverse range of staff.
12. Through the new 121 launch, capture skills across the business to understand job families and any skills gaps.

### **Theme 4: Developing leadership visibility and valuing staff**

1. Confirm the permanence of the senior leadership team to provide stability for the organisation.
2. Develop a regular staff recognition scheme.
3. Hold regular "whole directorate" engagements sessions.
4. Develop regular staff engagement through the Chief Executive Vlog, Talk About, Forward Together and Directorate newsletters.
5. Senior Managers taking the service to those that do not always have access to corporate headquarters or digital communications, including visits to schools and children's centres, hubs, and offices outside Observatory House.
6. More regular senior leadership involvement in team meetings and attendance on leadership programmes.
7. Refresh corporate values and explore how these can be revisited in appraisal process.
8. Publicise and promote equality objectives and incorporate into appraisals





## 6.3 Developing the political and executive leaders' knowledge and understanding

To deliver:

- **Equality Objective 6:** Political and executive leaders demonstrate personal knowledge and understanding of local communities and continue to show commitment to reducing inequality.

Understanding the needs of our communities and making these central to our future operating model is a key recommendation from the 2024 LGA Equality Peer Review. The officer and member leadership commitment to improving equalities was acknowledged by the 2024 LGA Equality Peer Review: this now needs to be embedded in organisational culture and practice to ensure the equality objectives are widely understood, embedded into operational service plans and progressed across the organisation. Decision-makers need well-developed understanding of local community needs, and the lived experience of residents. The wide-ranging diversity of Slough residents and the council workforce brings many strengths. It is an opportunity to promote cohesion, understanding and shared experiences and should be

celebrated more. The 2024 LGA Equality Peer Review commended the work of existing staff networks and some service areas but recommended that more could be done corporately and across the organisation. Celebrating a range of events also creates the opportunity to widen understanding of diversity and inclusion beyond race, ethnicity and religion and promote awareness of other equality characteristics.

### Theme 1: Celebrating diversity in the workplace

1. Support the staff networks in celebrating key events (nominated by network members).
2. Hold an organisational wide "diversity day" to celebrate the diversity of our employees.
3. Develop with internal communications a calendar of inclusion events to be promoted to staff and acknowledged.
4. Work with communications to display more diverse imagery in council offices and ensure that this is reflective of the diversity of Slough and our employees.



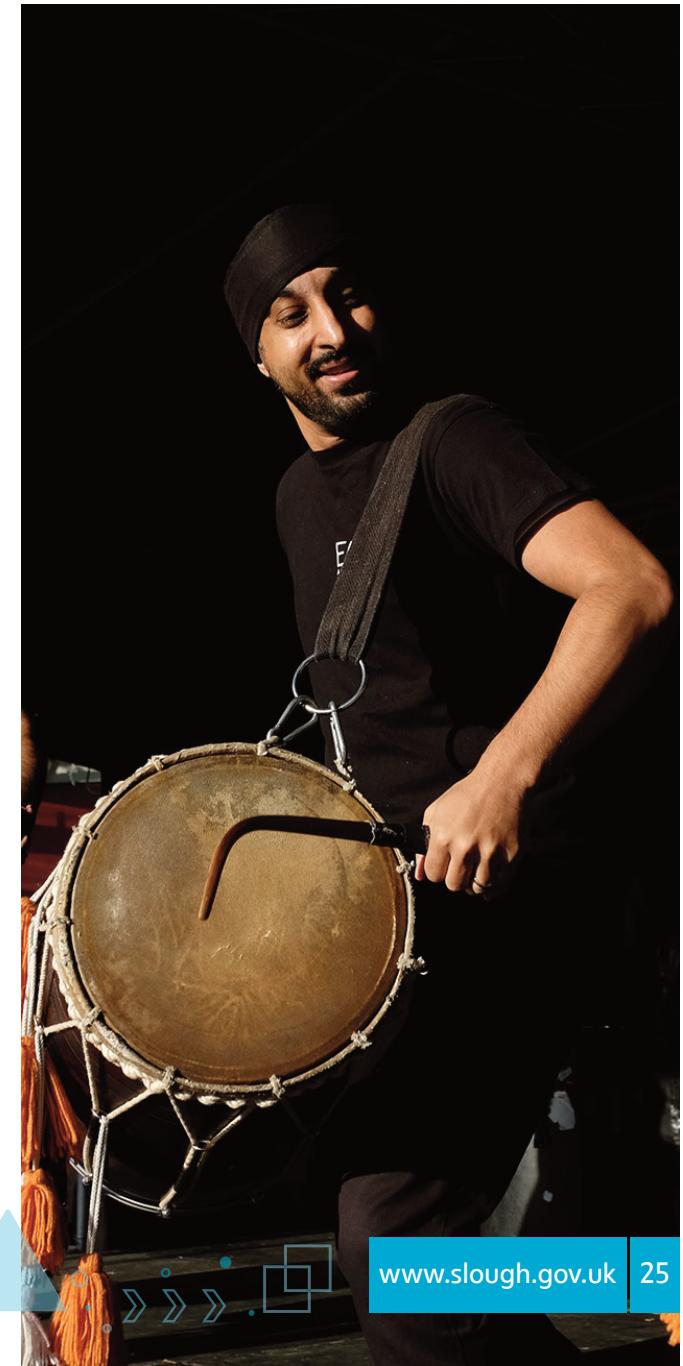
## **Theme 2: Celebrating diversity in the community**

1. Council communications to publish a calendar of celebrations/events to enable greater awareness in services, especially around lesser-known days.
2. Services to determine specific activities around celebrations as appropriate.
3. Work with community groups who are keen to get involved in events and celebrations and who can promote more widely to residents.
4. Encourage employees who live in Slough to invite senior officers and Members to their community events to improve cultural insight and understanding.

## **Theme 3: Developing and supporting elected Members to be equality champions**

1. Run quarterly training sessions for elected Members on equalities issues to ensure they are knowledgeable on the key inequalities' issues in Slough and their specific wards.
2. Establish quarterly meetings with political group leaders on equality, diversity and inclusion matters, developing a survey of back benchers to identify key issues they wish to explore or increase their awareness of.

3. Explore and publicise wider training offers outside the local authority i.e., Local Government Association (LGA) training and peer mentoring.
4. Explore the role of Members in championing specific equality issues.
5. Encourage Member Ward Walks with CLT and service leads.
6. Support Members to be proactively involved in "community conversations" on key equalities issues, actively listening to community experiences and challenging outdated stereotypes.
7. Ensure Members have access to local and national equality data and demographic insights.
8. Develop more opportunities for Members to have dialogue with staff of all levels, via Our People Forum and Staff Networks.



## **Equality Plan 2025-2027**