Inclusive Employers Standard

2024

Feedback Report

Essex Fire and Rescue Service

Silver

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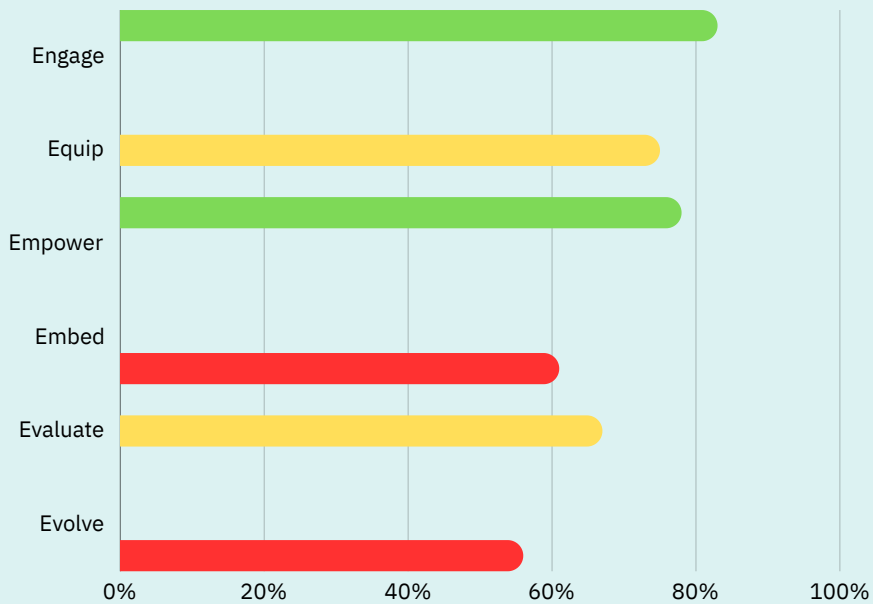
Inclusive Employers Standard

Summary

Congratulations on achieving a Silver award on the Inclusive Employers Standard. Your submission showed that you are an organisation with some excellent foundations and frameworks in place to support your evolving work. Your submission was full of strong examples of great I&D practice, which in many cases will require only tweaks and nudges to elevate the level of evidence to the next level.

It's clear that you have been working hard and in a thoughtful and considered way, to achieve the great results you have shown so far- congratulations! Of particular note is the work you have done to ensure you have robust diversity data and the evolution of your network groups in response to need, which is supporting you as you evolve. All this work is reflected in the strength you have shown in the Engage Pillar. Similarly, the strengths you have shown in the Empower pillar are testament to the way in which you formally recognise I&D contribution, the positive way in which you are engaging with the Unions, the way you are encouraging and actively seeking the views of staff on I&D and other organisational issues and the comprehensive structure you have in place to ensure that people at every level of the organisation are enabled, and supported to get involved, with engagement from SLT down. It is also noted the work you have done to help equip everyone involved with the knowledge and tools relevant to them to deliver their part of the I&D agenda.

The main areas for development for you are the Embed and Evolve pillars. You have to create a clear evidence based I&D strategy. However, whilst you have a clear line of sight from corporate strategy to your PDAP, the goals you have set yourself around I&D specifically within that plan are quite loose/vague statements which makes it much more difficult to measure success and impact. Something for you to think about going forward as your I&D practice becomes more sophisticated and at a higher level. Overall, a really clear and comprehensive submission with quality and relevant evidence provided, thank you.
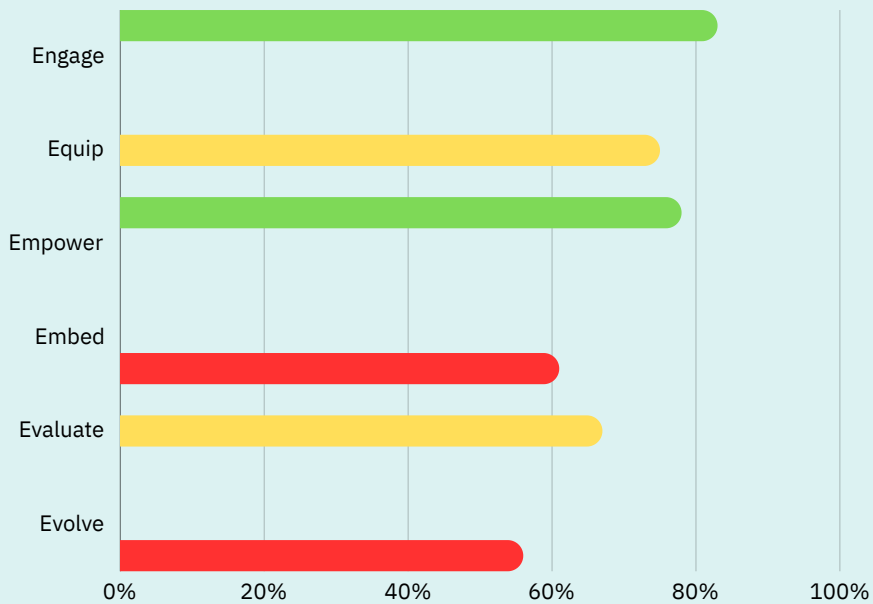
Quick Wins

1. Consider expanding on your communications on data disclosure to highlight the benefits of I&D to the individual, rather than always stating the organisational benefit, showing more examples of what you use the data for, and emphasising the confidentiality of the data provided to you. Also considering having some of these communications around I&D could come from the Chief and SLT.
2. Consider adding Reasonable Adjustments and Flexible Working policies to your suite (if you don't already have them) as these important ones for supporting legal obligations as well as for employer of choice considerations. You will also need to consider how these would work for operational and non-operational roles.
3. Consider making an I&D objective a requirement of the Performance Review Process, at the very least for leaders and managers, ideally for all staff.

Long Term Goals

1. Consider reviewing your current strategic approach to provide further clarity around how inclusion is featured to allow you to move beyond diversity, to embedding inclusion. It is important that you use your current data to ensure all goals/targets are evidence based and have clear, measurable outcomes to allow you to track your progress towards them.
2. Consider how you can build inclusion more explicitly into your procurement and tender process not just in terms of looking at whether a potential supplier is able to meet an identified diversity need for your organisation, but in terms of their ability to evidence that they consider I&D to be an important business driver for their business (e.g. you could ask to see copies of any I&D policy they have, in the same way that you look at modern slavery).
3. Consider how you can begin to more formally measure the impact of the various measures and activities that you have in place, in particular the new career enhancing opportunities you are introducing for women.

Pillar 1 Engage

This pillar explores how you engage staff (at all levels) to ensure they have a good understanding and awareness of the organisation's vision for diversity and inclusion. As well as how you engage with staff so that you have s a good understanding of the employee experience from an inclusion perspective.

Questions cover:

1.1 Diversity data collection methods
1.2 Breadth of data collection
1.3 Disclosure rates
1.4 Communications relating to monitoring
1.5 Broader inclusion communications
1.6 Participation in external inclusion campaigns
1.7 Engaging with under-represented groups
1.8 Staff survey

Areas of Strength

You have demonstrated that you gather diversity data across a range of characteristics, both core and some additional ones and that staff can update at any time. You have also clearly been undertaking work to actively encouraging diversity data disclosure, but also to understand experience of different groups, through detailed analysis of staff survey outcomes, and also through your network groups. You are also participating in a range of events in the I&D calendar. It is great to see your responsiveness to feedback from your network groups in terms of how they want to contribute, and how you have married that to your organisational desires to elevate your I&D practice. Your use of a wide range of communication channels to share a range of diversity information is also to be commended.

83%
Your Score

55%
Your Industry Average

59%
Average score for your org size

55%
Average score for UK

Areas for Focus

You have a mixture of data disclosure rates across the characteristics you collect, with some very high and some below 50%. You should seek to gain a disclosure rate of 75% for each characteristic to ensure you have a representative sample of your organisation. Additionally, all questions should have a 'prefer not to say' option, even those that are 'yes/no', as this will likely improve disclosure and stop people skipping questions. You may also want to use our diversity monitoring guidance to explore expanding how you collect ethnicity to provide more up to date options. Additionally, ensure all your options are offered in alphabetical order, sexual orientation is the only one that is not at the moment. You may also want to explore your different approaches to inclusion communication to understand how different groups engage with them, this will help you to identify if you need to adapt your approach to ensure your inclusion messaging gets out to all staff, especially operational staff on stations.

Pillar 2 Equip

This pillar explores how you equip all staff, managers and leaders through training, policies and guidance to build equality, diversity and inclusion into the work they do and the way they work. As well as how you equip all staff to help the organisation design and deliver more effective and inclusive policies, processes and services.

Questions cover:
2.1 Policies
2.2 Staff training
2.3 Manager training
2.4 Policy guidance

Areas of Strength

Your policy and training provision is of a really high standard. Of particular note is the way in which you are very clear about what training you are offering, to whom, and why. It is also very impressive that you have identified core mandatory training, which you are tracking attendance on, and you are also monitoring attendance of other training, especially leadership training. The foundational work you are doing in terms of line manager and leader training is also great to see as this will equip them to help you to deliver your I&D goals, and this is the best way to get the principles embedded - leading and managing by example.

75% Your Score

40% Your Industry Average

42% Average score for your org size

39% Average score for UK

Areas for Focus

You have provided evidence of some excellent training and support for line managers around some elements of the employee lifecycle, including general recruitment and leadership, which of course will help to ensure that they approach leadership and management situations generally in a more inclusive way. To build on this you could explore how to embed specific guidance in relation to key areas of the process e.g. considering what guidance is there for ensuring that you help line managers to apply specifically inclusive management practice when they conduct appraisals, deal with flexible working requests, development conversations and so on. Using the way that you have approaches your recruitment specific guidance, perhaps consider how you could introduce similar more specific guidance around these other key areas of the employee lifecycle, over and above the generic training around behaviours. Additionally, consider how you are going to review and monitor this to understand if these processes are being applied consistently across the organisation and if managers feel confident to meet the needs of their teams.

Pillar 3 Empower

This pillar explores how you empower all staff by involving them through networks, team discussions, Trade Unions and/or other channels. Value the contributions of everyone, including people from under-represented groups and ensuring inclusion and diversity makes a positive difference. As well as empowering by providing support and encouragement to staff to develop their careers and increase their contributions to the organisation through the enhancement of their skills and abilities.

Questions cover:
3.1 Consultation
3.2 Staff self-organised inclusion-related activities
3.3 Recognising the contribution of staff who self-organise
3.4 Role models
3.5 Champions
3.6 Accessibility of mainstream career enhancing learning and development opportunities

Areas of Strength

78% Your Score

41% Your Industry Average

43% Average score for your org size

38% Average score for UK

You have shown a wide range of ways in which you enable, support and recognise the contribution of staff in terms of I&D. You have also shown that you have robust methods in place to seek and gather views of staff for wider organisational issues, and that you act on that feedback. The collaborative way you are working with the Unions, 'Working Well Together' is a particular example of great work. Unions can be a real asset to getting things done, when there is a positive working relationship. It is great to see the clear and comprehensive structure you have created and continue to develop in response to what's working/not working, in respect of championing and advocating for Diversity and Inclusion in your organisation. The SLT Sponsors (champions), Advocates who are given active training to support them in their role, and the reconfiguration of the Network groups are fantastic examples of empowering people in your organisation through ensuring top-down involvement and accountability.

Areas for Focus

To raise your practice further: It's worth thinking about what more you could do to ensure that mainstream career enhancing learning is not only made available to under-represented groups, but also that they are perhaps more widely encouraged to partake, and whether there is more that you could be doing to monitor usage, and outcomes from those opportunities for under-represented groups, as compared to others. To do this you may want to explore certain barriers that might be impacting peoples confidence or ability to apply for different development opportunities and then implement avenues to reduce these barriers, e.g. offering video applications for the crew manager process to make it more accessible to people who are less confident or able to express themselves well in writing. Similarly, your current ways of recognising contribution are examples of best practice, perhaps consider whether you could elevate this even further to look at meaningful ways you could recognise contribution through offering development opportunities, formal protected time embedded in process/procedure (you may already do this, as it was mentioned in the narrative - but there was no evidence to show exactly how this works or how much time is 'allowed').

Pillar 4 Embed

This pillar explores how you build a shared responsibility and accountability for achieving improvements by explicitly embedding inclusion and diversity into everything the organisation does. This includes embedding inclusion and diversity into the organisation's corporate strategy, any processes and policies to improve its ability to attract and retain the best talent and through its procurement processes.

Questions cover:
4.1 Corporate strategy/KPIs
4.2 Inclusion strategy
4.3 Departmental business plans
4.4 Governance
4.5 Wider decision-making
4.6 Pay policies
4.7 Recruitment
4.8 Positive action
4.9 Performance development review
4.10 Board awareness
4.11 Procurement

Areas of Strength

61% Your Score

39% Your Industry Average

45% Average score for your org size

39% Average score for UK

It's clear where I&D fits within the bigger picture of your organisation, and that it forms part of your over-arching strategy. There is reference to this across the suite of documents, including the PDAP. In terms of pay gap data you have identified a number of actions that are clearly linked to your audit report, and you are to be commended both for the range of measures you are looking to take and at how much you have already narrowed the gap year on year to what is now a low level. What you might wish to consider is setting a more specific target around how you want to see the gap reduced - e.g. aiming for zero, and perhaps your main way of achieving this is to develop or recruit more women into the higher paid roles. The recruitment activities you have been putting in place and evolving for the past few years is clearly having a positive impact, which is great to see and should give you confidence in your I&D approach. It's wonderful to see the various ways in which the SLT have been engaging with different types of I&D activity to enhance their understanding and confidence around inclusion.

Areas for Focus

You have a broad ranging People Development Action Plan which alludes to I&D, and which has included some loose actions for 'improvement' however it doesn't really articulate clear and specific strategic goals based on your diversity headcount and other specific diversity data. Your PDAP measures are very broad, and non-specific, such as "there is an increase in positive responses to" - how much of an increase/what target level are you aiming for? Consider whether you could create a more specific set of strategic goals around I&D, underpinned by an evidence-base, that fits with the overarching People and Corporate strategies and that includes more specific measurable targets. Consider how you can more tangibly reflect I&D into departmental operational planning, by setting clear goals for each department allowing them to use their skills to contribute to the inclusion progression. Consider making I&D objectives a requirement of the performance review process. You clearly consider I&D issues when you are entering the tender process, in an internally facing way - it could be beneficial for you to consider how you could include a mechanism for evaluating a supplier's I&D status, like you would for modern slavery and other core requirements.

Pillar 5 Evaluate

This pillar explores how you use both qualitative and quantitative data and insights to evaluate diversity and inclusion progress to set relevant and achievable interventions/ targets.

Questions cover:
5.1 Using profile data
5.2 Using wider data
5.3 Qualitative research

Areas of Strength

It's great that you monitor and review your headcount and other information, and that you are beginning to look more deeply into your data, with a view to analysing not just the trends, but getting underneath them in order to understand what underlying issues might be showing up. It will be interesting to see what results from your more detailed analysis of the grievance data.

67%
Your Score

41%
Your Industry Average

40%
Average score for your org size

35%
Average score for UK

Areas for Focus

It might be worth reflecting on whether you want to start looking at setting some firmer targets around your I&D goals as this would provide a tighter focus and also make your progress more measurable over time. It would perhaps be good to see more extensive use of qualitative data gathering, this could be applied through your new style network groups or focus groups, and in relation to particular projects and initiatives. This will help to provide a really useful and likely insightful context to the headcount and lifecycle data that you gather, e.g. once you have understood more about the grievance data, you could consider setting up a focus group to look into some of the issues and identify solutions. Additionally, whilst reporting this data to the senior leadership can help inform decision making, it is also important to report this information, in a high level and engaging format (such as infographics) to the whole organisation. This helps to build trust and understanding of how diversity data is used to inform decision making and organisational priorities.

Pillar 6 Evolve

This pillar explores how you work to evolve your inclusion work by continuously learning and drawing on best practice to devise innovative and creative interventions.

Questions cover:
6.1 Return on investment
6.2 External horizon scanning to drive innovation internally
6.3 Leadership to drive innovation externally

Areas of Strength

It is good to see you have identified some measures of return on investment for your inclusion activities. You have shown that you engage with a range of sources of learning around I&D, which has lead to action on your part to support individuals within your organisation. Likewise you have shown that you are reaching out to other organisations to share your own learning and best practice. Continue to build on this as the sophistication of your knowledge and understanding grows - perhaps looking both within and beyond blue light services, as well as looking at how your senior leaders can get more involved and share more of their learning.

56%
Your Score

34%
Your Industry Average

39%
Average score for your org size

35%
Average score for UK

Areas for Focus

Think about how you communicate the benefits derived from your inclusion programme as they show up in your return on investment measures and how you can communicate the way in which this is demonstrating that inclusion is supporting your wider organisational objectives. To further build on your horizon scanning and external role modelling consider how you can work with other blue light services to sponsor or host a collaborative event to bring together organisations from all over the UK to share their practise and learn from others. Blue light services, particularly the fire and rescue service are not always able to or offered opportunities to speak openly and learn from each other, so by creating this opportunity you are not only able to generate learning for yourself but you would be able present Essex Fire and Rescue Service as the forefront of blue light inclusion.
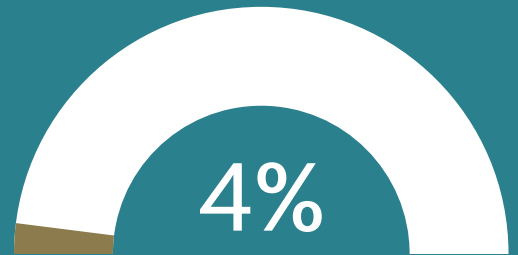
Benchmarking

Average % score per pillar per outcome

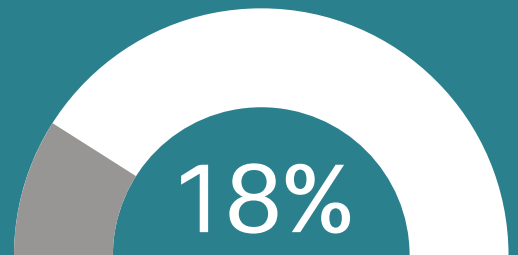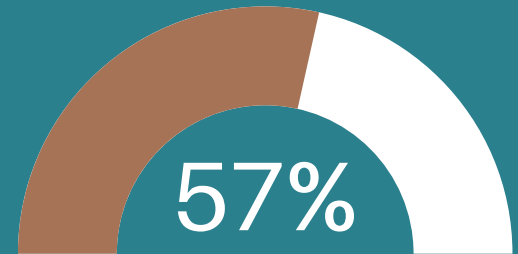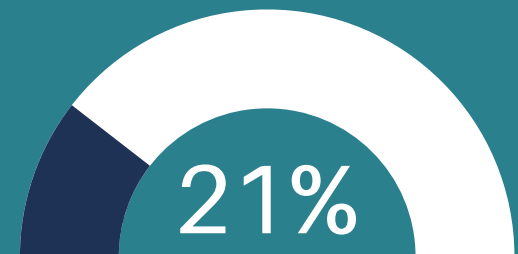|	Committed	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Engage	33%	55%	75%	94%
Equip	21%	37%	64%	87%
Empower	15%	39%	58%	87%
Embed	11%	37%	60%	81%
Evaluate	9%	31%	61%	81%
Evolve	13%	33%	58%	95%

% Outcome by Sector Type

Legend: Public Sector, Private Sector, Third Sector

% Outcome by Organisation Size

Legend: 0-49, 50-249, 250-999, 1000+, 10,000+
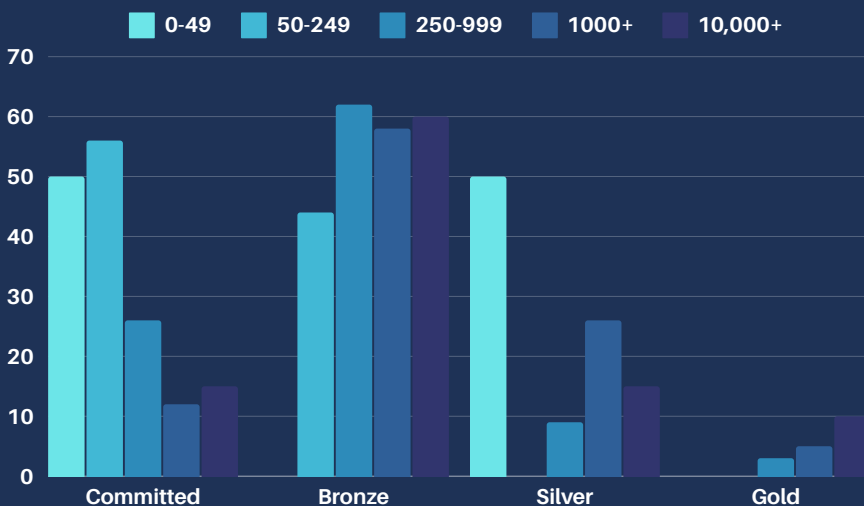
Our benchmarking data is generated from all IES submissions since 2019

Participants awarded

Gold
4%

Silver
18%

Bronze
57%

Committed
21%

Reverse Mentoring

Implementing a reverse or reciprocal mentoring programme is a great way to upskill your leaders and your future leaders and allow them to learn from each other. Check out our mentoring guide and free blogs on this topic for more advice.

CMI Qualifications

At Inclusive Employers we work in collaboration with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) to develop and deliver a wide range of expert-led Inclusion and Diversity Qualifications, Courses and also a learning Pathway, suitable for all levels of experience, and a great way to upskill champions, managers and leaders.

Bitesize Toolkit for Team Learning Level 1

Our Bitesize inclusion toolkit for team learning is a dedicated package with 12 structured bitesize sessions. Each session includes a 10-minute video followed by suggested individual/ group activities and discussion prompts. Perfect for an organisation looking for a structured approach to inclusion training.

Horizon Scanning

Horizon scanning is a great way to understand more about what best practice looks like within and beyond your organisation. Inclusive Employers offer a range of opportunities to connect with others in inclusion such as our member unite events, National Inclusion Week, Global Inclusion Week and our Inclusioneers Conference.

Questions? Contact us.

If you are a member your account manager will be able to support you

Or you can get in touch with the Inclusive Employers Standard team at:
standard@inclusiveemployers.co.uk

For general enquiries:
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