



Equalities Strategy

Contents

1.	Introduction.....	1
2.	Our approach to supporting everyone in our community.....	1
3.	Understanding equality, equity, diversity and inclusion.....	2
4.	The Equality Act 2010.....	3
5.	Socio-economic disadvantage.....	4
6.	Embedding the Equalities Strategy in the council's day to day work..	5
7.	Responsibility for delivering the strategy.....	5
8.	Governance, ownership and accountability.....	6
9.	Equalities Plan.....	7

1. Introduction

This Strategy sets out East Herts Council's approach to equality, diversity and inclusion demonstrating our continued commitment towards fulfilling our legal obligations as set out in the Equality Act 2010, as well as striving to go beyond our legal duties in advancing equality, celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion across our services and staff. The Equalities Strategy applies to all those who live, work and visit East Hertfordshire. This includes:

- residents of East Herts/East Herts council's service users
- elected councillors
- council employees, volunteers, agency workers and consultants
- suppliers, sub-contractors and partners in supply chains.

Those listed above have the right to be treated fairly, with dignity and respect and are responsible for ensuring their own actions and behaviours are fair and respect the dignity of others.

2. Our approach to supporting everyone in our community

The council recognises that disadvantage and discrimination are still experienced across the district and that residents may experience more than one form of discrimination at some stage in their lives. East Herts Council is resolute that disadvantage and discrimination have no place in our district. The council will work within its powers to tackle discrimination by advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different groups. The aim of this approach is to create a brighter future for all who live, work and visit East Herts.

Sometimes the council refers to sections of the community as "harder to reach." It can imply that some individuals, through their own personal circumstances are harder for the council to access and support. By changing the narrative from "harder to reach" to "easy to ignore" by the council, the focus is no longer people's circumstances. Instead, the emphasis is on the council and sub-contractors to put into practice alternative ways to proactively engage with all

sectors of the community. This Equalities Strategy underpins how East Herts Council will provide a service that delivers for all.

Having a diverse workforce and inclusive culture ensures the council can access a wider range of skills, ideas and perspectives. This puts the organisation in a strong position for better understanding all sectors of the community it serves. This has a positive impact on staff morale as individuals feel valued, motivated and committed to their role.

The council aims to keep abreast of changes to the social demography of the district and adapt services accordingly, the Herts Insight website provides updated information that informs this strategy.

[Welcome to Herts Insight | Herts Insight](#)

3. Understanding equality, equity, diversity and inclusion

The Equalities Strategy sets out the council's vision for furthering the areas of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion both within the organisation and across the district.

Listed below is a summary of how East Herts Council embodies these four themes in the context of delivering our services:

- **equality** means treating all individuals fairly and providing access to our services when needed
- **equity** means providing different levels of support and assistance depending on specific needs and abilities. This ensures a more equal access to our services and recognises that individual needs may need to be met in different ways to achieve this
- **diversity** the council recognises, respects and celebrates the added value that differences bring. Diversity is demonstrated by the council employing, serving and engaging with people who have a range of different backgrounds, experiences and ideas.
- **inclusion** is actively providing everyone with access to opportunities and resources; ensuring that nobody is excluded or marginalised due to their identity, personal characteristics or background. An inclusive environment is one where everyone feels welcomed, valued, able to contribute and able to succeed.

4. The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 (“the Act”) is the legal context for the council’s work in this area. The nine ‘protected characteristics’ covered by the Act are:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. age | 6. disability |
| 2. gender reassignment | 7. marriage and civil partnership |
| 3. pregnancy and maternity | 8. sex |
| 4. sexual orientation | 9. religion or belief (including lack of) |
| 5. race (includes ethnic or
national origins, colour or
nationality) | |

The Act includes the Public Sector Equality Duty which places duties on public bodies such as the council. This general duty requires all public bodies to have ‘due regard’ to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Act further explains ‘due regard’ as:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- encouraging people from protected groups (see below for a comprehensive list of protected characteristics) to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low

The Act requires the council to publish information at least annually to demonstrate it has consciously considered the duty in its decision-making process. In addition, the council is required to publish one or more equality objective(s) to be reviewed at least once every four years.

The council, on 22nd July 2026 resolved to voluntarily adopt socio-economic disadvantage as an additional characteristic in its Equalities Strategy.

5. Socio-economic disadvantage

Although the socio-economic duty in Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 has not commenced in England, the council has voluntarily adopted the principles of the duty. The council will, when making strategic decisions about how to exercise its functions, have due regard to the desirability of exercising those functions in a way that will reduce inequalities resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.

For the purposes of this Strategy, East Herts council recognises socio-economic disadvantage as disadvantage arising from circumstances including, but not limited to:

- low income
- poverty
- unemployment and insecure employment
- limited access to resources or services.

The table below identifies how these indicators will be measured.

Indicator	Examples of indicator
Income	As measured by up-to-date data sets
Access to opportunities and services	Considering where possible access to services could be limited based on transport and employment opportunities
Place and wider deprivation	As measured through the Index of Multiple Deprivation

The council will seek to understand how its strategic decisions may affect people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage and, where appropriate, will identify

measures to prevent or mitigate adverse impacts to improve the equality of income.

6. Embedding the Equalities Strategy in council's day to day work:

The Equalities Strategy is embedded in the day to day running of the council by:

- 1) promoting community leadership and cohesion
- 2) improving consultation, community engagement and communication
- 3) embedding the council's voluntary adoption of the socio-economic duty into strategic decision-making and equality practice
- 4) promoting the Public Sector Equality Duty
- 5) promoting the Public Sector Equality Duty through staff employment and development
- 6) evaluating the impact of embedding the Equalities Strategy.

7. Responsibility for delivering the Strategy

Putting the Equalities Strategy into practice is the responsibility of every employee and member of East Herts Council as well as persons or organisations contracted by the council to work or to deliver services on its behalf. Each service and employee has a role in taking responsibility to advance equality and challenge discrimination. This will happen through:

- **elected members** - promoting our commitment to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion in their day-to-day work
- **senior leader and managers** – being responsible for overall management and direction of the Equalities Strategy
- **engagement manager** – overseeing the Equalities Strategy, monitoring progress against the Equalities Plan and providing an annual cumulative equality assessment for senior leaders and for publication
- **managers** – ensuring the Equalities Strategy is core to service delivery and employee management
- **contractors, supplies and potential suppliers** - adhering to the council's equalities commitments and the statutory duties relating to this.

8. Governance, Ownership and Accountability

In March 2026 East Herts council engaged with the Shared Internal Audit Service (SIAS) from Hertfordshire County Council with the aim of the service carrying out a review of the draft Equalities Strategy. The recommendations from the review included examples of effective equality strategies embedded by other councils, as well as equalities recommendations from Local Government Association.

To ensure robust governance, ownership and accountability of the council's Equalities Strategy key staff are expected to take on specific roles and responsibilities. These are detailed below:

- **Chief Executive Officer** – holds the overall strategic responsibility for equalities, equity, diversity and inclusion in the council
- **Director of Communities** – lead operational role for the council for promoting equalities, equity, diversity and inclusion
- **All Directors** – to encourage staff members to join the Equalities Delivery Group
- **Engagement Manager** – this post holder, within the Communities directorate, holds the deputy operational lead role for the council for promoting equalities, equity, diversity and inclusion
- **Equalities Delivery Group** – these individuals will act as champions in their service for equality, equity, diversity and inclusion and support the implementation and monitoring of equalities
- **Human Resources** – supporting the promotion of the council's equalities strategy, notably with regard to recruitment and staff development
- **All elected members** - promoting the council's commitment to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion
- **All managers** – ensuring the Equalities Strategy is being delivered in their teams

9. Equalities Plan

Objective	Actions	Tasks	Measure	Responsible	Review
1. Promoting community leadership and cohesion	Members, Strategic Leadership Team and Assistant Directors to understand the importance of equality, equity, diversity and inclusion	Review training needs of all groups listed and implement	All staff listed have completed training	HR and Democratic Services	May 2027
	Establish an Equalities Delivery Group comprising of individuals from cross-functions to support the implementation and monitoring of the Equalities Strategy	Establish the group and provide training on interpreting the Equalities Strategy and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) process	All staff in the group have completed training	Engagement Manager	December 2026
Objective	Actions	Activities	Measure	Responsible	Review
2. Improving consultation, community engagement and communication	Publicise the Equalities Strategy and Equality Plan	Publish Equalities Strategy and plan on council's website	Equalities strategy is published online	Engagement Manager	March 2027
	Work with partner authorities like Broxbourne Borough Council and Herts County Council to gather information on groups and individuals EHC can engage with for consultation exercises.	Collate this information into a consultation directory to work as a supporting tool when completing the EqIA process. The aim is to make the process more user friendly, resulting in a greater level of community inclusion	Produce toolkit to supplement the completion of EqIAs	Engagement Manager and Equalities Delivery Group	January 2027

Objective	Actions	Activities	Measure	Responsible	Review
3. Embedding the council's voluntary adoption of the socio-economic duty into strategic decision-making and equality practice	Develop and approve a council definition and framework for identifying socio-economic disadvantage, including appropriate local indicators of poverty, income, deprivation and access to services	Liaise with local groups and charities to define socio-economic disadvantage	Socio-economic disadvantage is routinely and proportionately considered in relevant strategic decision-making, with supporting evidence of mitigation or positive action where appropriate	Engagement Manager	January 2027
	Incorporate consideration of socio-economic advantage into the council's Equality Impact Assessment process	Include a section on this measure in the Equalities Impact Assessment form Provide guidance and training for officers and Members on the voluntary socio-economic duty and its application		Engagement Manager	March 2027
4. Promoting the Public Sector Equality Duty	Review and deliver equality impact assessment training to managers and employees responsible for managing services and developing policies	Review training to ensure it meets the needs of attendees. Provide post training guidance and support	All relevant staff trained in using EqIAs	Engagement Manager	May 27
	Publish results of equality impact assessments for relevant functions, policies and proposed policies	Publish equality assessments on council's website	Equalities report published online and shared with relevant partners	Engagement Manager	Annually
Objective	Actions	Activities	Measure	Responsible	Review
5. Promoting the Public	Recruitment and monitoring of staff in line with the nine protected characteristics of the Equalities Act 2010	Publish workforce profiling on the council's website and produce report for Leadership Team	Data demonstrates more diverse workforce	HR	Annually

Sector Equality Duty through staff employment and development	Publish annually a gender pay gap report in line with Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011 and the Public Sector Equality Duty	Produce and publish annually a report detailing the gender pay gap at East Herts council	Updated and published annual report available on the council's website	HR	Annually
Objective	Actions	Activities	Measure	Responsible	Review
6. Evaluating the impact of embedding the Equalities Strategy	Report to Senior Leadership Team progress against actions and Executive Member for Communities	Undertake review and escalate recommendations to Senior Leadership Team	Progress reports presented to SLT and recommendations actioned	Engagement Manager	Quarterly