

# PROGRESS AGAINST OUR EQUALITY OBJECTIVES 2023

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# FOREWORD

**Essex County Council has a proud track record of spreading opportunity across the county and has made this a key component of the “Everyone’s Essex” programme.**

There is a very strong moral argument that a person’s potential should not be defined at birth. We believe that individuals should define their own destiny, with the council supporting them to develop the skills and tools necessary to get on.

The Equality Act 2010 helps us do that. It requires public bodies such as the County Council to demonstrate that we are advancing equality under the Public Sector Equality Duty. Under the legislation we are required to produce at least one equality objective every four years to demonstrate how we will both advance equality, whilst at the same time eliminate discrimination.

In essence, equality objectives help focus our attention on the priority areas within our organisation in order to deliver improvements in policy making, service delivery and employment.

Our Cabinet agreed two equality objectives in May 2022 for the 2022-2025 period - tying into the lifespan of the Council’s corporate plan - Everyone’s Essex. The first of these objectives is aimed at focusing our work to tackle inequalities within communities whilst the second is focused on the corporate equality

health of the council - namely around our workforce. Each of our objectives are accompanied by a set of key activities that we said we would achieve in year one - demonstrating how we are advancing equality of opportunity for our residents and employees.

This annual publication sets out the progress we have made since setting our equality objectives in May 2022. Where applicable, case studies have also developed that aim to describe the impact of some of this work to date.

Equality objectives are reviewed and aligned to our business planning business processes to ensure continued relevance and delivery against “Everyone’s Essex”.

For further detail follow the links provided in each section or contact [ecc.equalities@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ecc.equalities@essex.gov.uk).



**Cllr Louise McKinlay**  
**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance**

# COMMUNITY FOCUSED EQUALITY OBJECTIVE:

We are committed to addressing inequalities and levelling up life chances for our residents and advancing equality of opportunity for our communities. We will achieve this by:

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**1. Developing a Levelling Up Strategy that will set out our long-term commitment through a series of policy interventions to connect people to opportunities and support aspiration across Essex, with a specific focus on those cohorts and places most at need.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

By levelling up we mean that everyone should have the opportunity to succeed in life and fulfil their potential and that all places and communities should be able to share in this. Details of our plans are outlined in the [Levelling Up Essex White Paper \(2022\)](#).

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

Over the past year we have launched numerous Levelling Up initiatives across our priority places (Harlow, Jaywick and Clacton, Harwich, Basildon (Town) housing estates, Canvey Island, Colchester (Town) housing estates, Rural North of the Braintree District) as well as supporting some of our most deprived communities across all

of Essex. These include ensuring that children at key stages of development receive the support they need to learn and succeed, that parents have access to free childcare to enable them to more easily access work, that community hubs and community supermarkets are set up in the areas that will benefit the most, and that we make it easier than ever before to be able to retrain and gain new skills.

More information can be found in our [Levelling Up One Year On Impact Report](#).

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

Levelling Up Essex is in its early stages. The focus is on creating systemic change through targeted delivery/impact and strategic alignment.

## CASE STUDY:

### Working with faith-based organisations to deliver Community Supermarkets - Basildon

Building on a huge body of good practice from across the mid and north of England, ECC is working with local partners and Feeding Britain to create a Community Supermarket in every Levelling Up priority area. These community-based shops form the bridge between the charitable, crisis intervention of our food banks and the affordable supermarkets such as Aldi and Lidl.

Offering access to shoppers from anywhere in the local area, Community Supermarkets provide a next step for people moving out of crisis and create a pressure release on the weekly finances of those of us who regularly shop at affordable supermarkets, enabling money to go a little further.

A Community Supermarket can look and feel like a small convenience store or be a mobile offer depending on the area. Shoppers get to browse, choose how they spend their money and retain choice and control, paying for their items at the till but with a 30-40% discount on the same basket purchased through an affordable supermarket.

One of the two initial Community Supermarkets to be set up through this work was the Hope Community Supermarket in Basildon, one of the Levelling Up priority areas. Essex County Council awarded the funding

to two faith-based organisations working together for the good of the local community.

Billericay Street Pastors and Hope 3:16 both had strong links in the local community and a proven track record in delivering support alongside the local community, with a strong volunteer base. Together they bid for the £79,120 available to set up and run the provision in South Essex and the two organisations have since formed Hope CIC to deliver the project, which currently runs every Friday from Laindon Community Centre.

Working with ECC, Feeding Britain and Basildon Council, the team are looking at how they move this offer out to other communities in Basildon through identifying other community locations and exploring setting up a mobile provision.

To date the Hope Community Supermarket supports over 300 adults and 160 children through its growing membership.

**THE HOPE COMMUNITY  
SUPERMARKET SUPPORTS  
OVER 300 ADULTS AND  
160 CHILDREN**

## **2. Focusing on a key commitment in Everyone's Essex to work with children, young people and partners across the system to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children and disadvantaged groups.**

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### **What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

As a County Council we are under a statutory duty to work in conjunction with partners to support children and young people to achieve good outcomes. We know that some children are less likely than others to achieve good outcomes and that targeted early support is necessary to enable them to overcome the inequalities they face.

### **What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

Supporting all children and young people in Essex to achieve good outcomes, with a focus on vulnerable groups is the key purpose of all activity across our children's services and education functions. Over the past year our focus has been on:

- developing and launching our new Strategy for Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including the launch of a new Local Offer website
- addressing disadvantage in education through the work of our Essex Education Taskforce and around our Inclusion Framework

- trialling new approaches to providing earlier support for families facing multiple disadvantages in Tendring
- launching our new Anti-Racist Practice Strategy which aims to ensure ethnically diverse families, children and staff are provided with the right conditions in which to thrive.

### **What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

Service areas within Children, Families and Education are aware of the national developments that could impact on those groups we care for and support through the education system, such as the continuing cost of living crisis. We are also aware of how various changes to legislation and guidance could have the potential to have a further detrimental impact on vulnerable groups; the impact of potential changes will be monitored and action taken accordingly over the next year.

## CASE STUDY:

### Sport for All. How we have advanced equality

The Essex Multi-Schools Council was established to break down perceptions about children with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) and mental health challenges in schools and their wider communities. Work was undertaken by the team to support a young man with disabilities to change attitudes towards those with physical disabilities. When he first became involved, he was attending mainstream secondary school and was frustrated about the lack of opportunities for wheelchair users to access services. His biggest frustration was not being able to access public transport but also the lack of adaptation to what some may call 'mainstream sports'. The young man in question had lots to say but just needed that platform and support to be heard at a higher level.

He became a Multi-Schools Council ambassador and was supported on his mission of championing inclusion. Firstly, the team visited his school and there was an old lift that was not working properly which meant he could not access part of the school. He had the confidence to go back to the Head and challenge this – the lift is now working. He has spent hours with the team designing a disability sports awareness course which has now been recorded and supported by local organisations, giving leaders in sports insight to what it means for a young person in a wheelchair to access sport. He has also been

able to give a speech to over 300 young people about his challenges and inspire other to also have a voice when it comes to getting what they need.

As practitioners, when we talk about impact with our young people it is both on an individual and group level. Take the lift change for example, it means this young person can now access the space he needs but that others in the future can also do the same. This young man was asked to review a county-wide inclusion policy which had an impact on the sports course and has now been shared nationally as part of the youth sports trust inclusion week, enabling other leaders to adapt their practice. On an individual level it has given him confidence, enabled him more opportunities and most importantly helped him to feel included.

The impact of the policy will be measured over time but should be sustainable. The sessions that have been developed are opening-up new opportunities all the time to speak at events and there is now a link to these sessions on the Youth Sports Trust website. By becoming an ambassador through the Multi-Schools Council, which is being supported by the local authority in Essex, he now has a sustainable platform to make more change and to ensure others focus more on inclusion both in their communities and sport.



**3. Working with partners to deliver an effective and robust response to tackling Hate Crime across Essex and ensure communities are informed about, and confident in, reporting hate crime.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

As a County Council we are committed to improving our understanding of the nature of hate crime in Essex and who it impacts upon. To date, the work of the Strategic Hate Crime Prevention Partnership (SHCPP), which the County Council chairs, has meant that partners are confident in the overall operational responses to hate crime, promotion of reporting and support for victims across Greater Essex. However, we now need to add value to what we have been doing to gain a better understanding of our communities, and the specific perceptions and experiences of victims and families when reporting in order to develop more targeted interventions.

More details of the work of how we work in partnership to tackle hate crime can be found here [Essex Strategic Hate Crime Prevention Strategy](#).

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

As a partnership we have agreed to develop a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment alongside a new profile from Police data. This will provide a more comprehensive overview of the population of Essex, reported hate crime across the county (including

location types) and the services available to victims and families to enable the partnership to better understand where it needs to focus its resources.

For Hate Crime Awareness Week 2022, we hosted a series of lunchtime learning events. These events focused on issues that the Strategic Hate Crime Partnership had identified and professionals from across the public and voluntary sector in Essex were invited. Sessions were held on Hate Crime Directed Towards Gypsy, Roma & Traveller People (with Friends, Families, Travellers), Anti-Muslim Hate Crime (with Tell MAMA), Restorative Justice & Hate Crime (with Why Me?) and Hate Crime Directed at those with Mental Health Problems (with Mind Thurrock & Brentwood).

The number of reported hate crime incidents across Greater Essex has reduced by 7% between reporting deadlines in 2022 and 2023. Partners are working hard to increase reporting by continuing to promote reporting routes and supporting the Hate Crime Reporting Centres.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

The Strategic Hate Crime Partnerships priority focus this year has been on the collection of reliable data to inform the work it wants to undertake to develop the Hate Crime Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

**4. Working with partners, to develop and implement a revised and updated Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy to address the issues impacting our communities, as identified through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

We play a significant leadership role in improving the Health and Wellbeing of our population through our convening power. Every local area must have a Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) setting out the priorities identified through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) that local government, the NHS and other partners will deliver together through the strategic direction of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The overall aim of the JHWS is that we see an improvement in health and wellbeing outcomes for people of all ages, and a reduction in health inequalities, by having a focus on supporting poor health prevention and promoting health improvement. The JHWS sets out a small number of key strategic priorities for action, where there is an opportunity for partners to have a real impact through local place based interventions.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

Informed by the updated JSNA, the Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy (22-26) was developed and approved by the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board (EHWB) in 2022. Implementation of the priorities and delivery is overseen by the EHWB. The overall ambition of the EHWB is to reduce the gap in life expectancy, increase years of healthy life expectancy and reduce the differences between health outcomes in our population. To reach these long-term ambitions, and as part of the development of this strategy, the following five key overarching priority areas were identified and agreed.

- 1. Improving mental health and wellbeing**
- 2. Physical activity and healthy weight**
- 3. Supporting long term independence**
- 4. Alcohol and substance misuse**
- 5. Health inequalities & the wider determinants of Health**

Through our Public Health team we are in the process of finalising a set of performance metrics to measure progress and track delivery against the priorities set out within the strategy. Tackling the wide-ranging priorities will require a whole system response. That is why a broad set of partners will help deliver the activities that will be required to meet the outcomes for residents set out within the strategy. This will include close alignment and working arrangements with the newly created Integrated Care Boards across Greater Essex.

### **What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

Again, through our Public Health team we will identify gaps and areas for improvement through regular EHWP deep dives into each priority area, and within the 3 ICB delivery plans that have now been agreed with us.

## **CASE STUDY:**

### **Positive impact of embedding inclusive physical activity using a whole-systems approach**

The Prevention and Enablement Model (PEM) is a test and learn Local Delivery Pilot (LDP) in Essex. Established to document and evaluate the impact of a whole system approach to adult health and social care, PEM places physical activity at its core, with an aim to measure the impact on improving the lives of people living with disabilities and/or long-term health conditions.

Driven by a strategic partnership between Adult Social Care at Essex County Council, Active Essex, and Sport for Confidence CIC, the initiative also involved a diverse range of wider partners across Adult

Social Care, the NHS, and the third sector (e.g., local authorities, Essex County Council teams, Provider Quality Innovation Team, and care homes).

As part of the model there was a focus on four work streams. These were: Physical Activity within Occupational Therapy, Strength and Balance, Community Partnerships and Care Homes. The biggest impact was seen in the **Community Partnerships workstream** within the model, which takes place at local leisure centres in Essex. Community Partnerships focused on supporting those living with disabilities and long-term health conditions by

encouraging access to Occupational Therapy (OT) support through Sport for Confidence CIC. As part of the programme individuals could take part in a variety of group physical activity sessions and make use of the leisure facilities.

The Community Partnerships Workstream ensured that the programme was co-designed with potential users to be fully inclusive. Firstly, the activity sessions in leisure centres had a ‘no labels’ approach, meaning the group activities weren’t just for those living with a specific long term health condition or disability, everyone who was accessing the OT support could take part in the sessions together. Bringing users to the centre to access the OT support and activity sessions meant that the individuals could build up their confidence and independence in a community setting. For example, the OT would help users to understand the building and amenities, how to pay for sessions or food at the café and who to communicate with at the centre if they needed anything. In addition to the OT support, sports coaches leading the activity sessions were also trained to ensure activities would be fully inclusive and adapted to all abilities.

The impact of the community partnerships model showed that for every £1 invested this has created a £58.71 return on social investment. In addition, the community partnerships workstream was able to significantly improve individuals’ confidence, independence, activity levels and happiness. The evaluation showed that individuals had a self-reported decrease in service use (e.g. GP appointments and day care use). The full evaluation report and summary can be found here: [www.activeessex.org/local-delivery-pilot/our-bigger-projects/pem](http://www.activeessex.org/local-delivery-pilot/our-bigger-projects/pem)

The PEM pilot in the above format came to an end in March 2023. There is still a continuation and expansion of the model. The ‘Community Partnerships’ workstream is continuing as a newly named model called ‘Reconnect’ and now includes Canvey as an additional delivery site. The strength and balance workstream is delivered via NHS health alliance commissioning within North Essex, Basildon and Brentwood. Additionally, the learnings from workforce development and training with OT’s and care homes has become embedded within existing services such as PROSPER.

**FOR EVERY £1 INVESTED  
THIS HAS CREATED A  
£58.71 RETURN ON  
SOCIAL INVESTMENT**

## **5. Working with partners to tackle violence, intimidation and abuse against women and girls in Essex communities, as well as working with communities to improve feelings of safety in public spaces.**

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### **What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

We established the Safety Advisory Group (SAG) following the murder of Sarah Everard and the subsequent public calls for greater action in tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). We established this to be able to identify changes needed to be made to protect women against violence in Essex and also to help reduce the fear of violence.

The SAG undertook a listening and learning exercise. A survey was carried out, accompanied by focus groups and social media polls. We also reviewed other local and national research and surveys, including the details from testimonials on national websites.

### **What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

In March this year we launched the online Bystander Intervention Initiative. The online module enables participants to learn more about sexual harassment, the myths and stereotypes that continue to enable and facilitate sexual harassment in our communities, and the importance of not colluding with these myths or minimising unacceptable behaviour. The aim of the initiative has been to upskills participants to:

- understand what is meant by ‘unwanted sexual behaviour’
- know how to intervene safely and be an active bystander
- know where to refer victims should they want to report to the police or access support

We also worked with VAWG Firebreak. This was a 5 day programme run by Essex County Fire & Rescue Service (ECFRS) for small groups of young people where they work with trained firefighter mentors to increase their personal development and transferrable skills, all centred around operational firefighting drills. For this VAWG centred Firebreak they also take the young people through sessions exploring healthy relationships awareness and the consequences of low-level behaviours which may lead to violence, misogyny and harm towards women and girls. The sessions have all been completed (all within Levelling Up areas). The evaluation undertaken by the University of Essex shows positive behavioural change.

### **What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

Through work with our Partners, we have particularly identified a need to look at VAWG perpetrated online. This is an area where there has been a limited focus as a partnership.

## CASE STUDY:

### Bystander Intervention initiative

Our Bystander Intervention initiative launched 13th March 2023. It aims to provide residents with information and guidance on what they could do if they see inappropriate or threatening behaviour and gives advice on how they could address it in a safe way.

Research conducted by the Safety Advisory Group in late 2021 found that 81% of women who responded were not confident that passers-by would help them if someone was acting inappropriately towards them. The same research showed that 60% of male respondents and 70% of women respondents didn't feel confident that they would be able to safely intervene if they saw someone behaving inappropriately towards a woman.

The eLearning helps participants learn more about sexual harassment, the myths and stereotypes that continue to enable and facilitate sexual harassment in our communities and the importance of not colluding with these myths or minimising unacceptable behaviour. Participants learn what actions they can safely undertake to intervene or to refer or signpost victims to suitable support services. As of April 2023, 449 users had engaged in the initiative.

**81% OF WOMEN  
WHO RESPONDED  
WERE NOT CONFIDENT  
THAT PASSERS-BY  
WOULD HELP THEM  
IF SOMEONE WAS  
ACTING INAPPROPRIATELY  
TOWARDS THEM**

**6. Using the Census 2021 to provide a high level of insight into the needs of our communities to influence the shaping of inclusive policy and practice going forward.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

The census is the definitive source of population data, including protected characteristics. Most questions asked around protected characteristics are unchanged between the 2011 and 2021 census, allowing us to look at how protected characteristics have changed in our communities over the past decade

The publication of census outputs provides the information that public services need to develop policies, plan and run deliver services, and allocate funding.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

Since the publication of the census data, we have produced a range of summary packs looking at each protected characteristic (available at [Essex Open Data](#)).

We have also undertaken a local piece of work combining census data with deprivation, looking at how each protected characteristic is over/under-represented at different levels of deprivation.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) have recently released multi-variate data allowing us to look at outcomes by protected characteristics (e.g., highest level of qualification by ethnicity). Over the next year we will be developing further summary packs which will provide insight into the forthcoming data releases.

## CASE STUDY:

### Census 2021 Insight Packs

The census is the definitive source of demographic information. Done once every decade, the census provides data on demographics, protected characteristics, and living/work arrangements of our residents.

In order for census outputs to inform service development for our communities, we want to ensure our analysis covers areas such as:

- Getting a better understanding of our residents – how has Essex changed over the past 10 years
- Identifying increases in the population of certain protected characteristics
- Highlighting how changes impact on ECC and how can we ensure we tailor our work to our residents

We have produced a series of data and insight rich products as each census data topic was released. These were shared internally across the organisation, to Members and to the districts and unitaries across Greater Essex.

The products were the ‘definitive source’ of census information and ensured that a consistent message was shared internally and across our partners about the demographics of Essex. The packs were particularly well received by the district councils, as some do not have the analyst capacity to quickly turn the raw census data into insights.

The current packs to date are univariate – they only look at one characteristic at a time. Looking forward, ONS are planning to release multivariate data, which will allow us to produce more packs looking at outcomes, answering questions like how do outcomes (e.g., highest qualifications) vary across the protected characteristics.

To date, these summary packs have been shared internally across our organisation, to Members and to the districts and unitaries across greater Essex. At a more local level they have been shared with local authorities such as Brentwood, Maldon, Rochford and Uttlesford. They have also been posted on their respective Census webpages and shared via a range of members bulletins.

Ultimately, the packs will help to provide an understanding as to how local communities have changed over the last 10 years and help policy development.

**THE PACKS WILL  
HELP TO PROVIDE  
AN UNDERSTANDING  
AS TO HOW  
LOCAL COMMUNITIES  
HAVE CHANGED OVER  
THE LAST 10 YEARS**



**7. Improving our understanding of the race disparities that exist in the provision of our service delivery to Essex residents and work with service users and local communities to address them.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

National evidence reveals that there is a disparity in the level of trust with public institutions – with lower trust felt amongst those from ethnic minority groups, driven by socioeconomic factors, personal histories, lived experience and racism – which can lead to a lack of engagement, participation, and social cohesion. These disparities can lead to a lack of access of services for some and an inability to meet communities’ needs.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

The Essex Renewal Project, of which we are a key member, reviewed this area and have put forward a recommendation to establish a series of Community Involvement panel across Essex - see [here](#).

A small scale qualitative piece of research with Essex residents is being scoped in more detail to understand the challenges around embedding trust in public organisations for minority ethnic groups.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

The focus this year has been on understanding overarching disparities and barriers to trust and engagement – and has not been focused on specific service areas.

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## 8. Our Equality priorities for Year 2

**Objective 1: We are committed to addressing inequalities and levelling up life chances for our residents and advancing equality of opportunity for our communities.**

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Priority	Delivery activity
<b>Implementing our Levelling Up strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continued implementation of projects</li><li>• Development of new projects and approaches in places and to bring the strategy to life amongst those affected.</li><li>• Level-Up using ECC assets – including people and spending power.</li><li>• Work in partnership in places, with business and with the community and voluntary sector.</li></ul>
<b>Continue to focus on key commitments in Everyone’s Essex to work with children, young people and partners across the system to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable children and disadvantaged groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work in line with agreed business plans for Children’s Services and Education to tackle inequalities by embedding new strategies and initiatives started in Year 1, including on SEND, Anti-Racist Practice, <u>Early Years and Childcare</u>, <u>Domestic Abuse</u>, and Emotional Health and Wellbeing.</li><li>• Coordinate action to address particular challenges around the needs of migrant children, both those living with their families and those who are separated from them, and to improve the availability and suitability of placements for our children in care.</li><li>• Begin an 18-month piece of research into ‘Childhood in Essex’ which will include examining the experience of being a child or young person in Essex today through the lens of different equalities groups, including those where we have less developed knowledge such as LGBTQ+ young people. We will use the outcomes of this research to identify required areas of focus and to influence future work planning and commissioning.</li></ul>

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Priority	Delivery activity
<p><b>Deliver key components of the Essex Hate Crime Strategy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission research aimed at hearing from the voice of victims and families that are subjected to hate crime, as well as understanding their experiences of reporting (or barriers to reporting) through the criminal justice system.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Deliver against the priorities set out within the Essex Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and agree a set of performance measures that can track performance against the priorities set out within the Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy- including the specificity of the protected characteristics affected.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Continue to deliver against our commitment to addressing violence against women and girls</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extend the reach of the bystander awareness initiative, with a focus on public transport and on young people- as areas highlighted by our research.</li> <li>• Explore and implement interventions to address the issue of VAWG perpetrated online.</li> <li>• Work with partners to tackle violence, intimidation and abuse against women and girls through improving feelings of safety in public spaces.</li> <li>• Collaborate with the University of Essex on research into women’s safety within the Night-Time Economy.</li> <li>• Strengthen the Essex Design Guide to ensure that it takes into account safety of women when planning new developments.</li> </ul>

Priority	Delivery activity
<b>Effectively utilise the release of the Census 2021</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Undertake further analysis of outcomes for our residents by protected characteristics.</li><li>• Explore the development of a local dashboard of protected characteristic data available at small geographies, making it easier for public services to look at protected characteristics in their work e.g., to inform policy development and equalities analysis assessments.</li><li>• Capture protected characteristics data and insight from our key external commissioned services by working with our Functions so that we can address outcome differentials.</li></ul>
<b>Improve our understanding of the race disparities that exist in the provision of our service delivery to Essex residents, and work with service users and local communities to address them</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish the mechanisms to set up Community Involvement Panels that can be used to better involve broader voices of the community into decision making - improving civic and public engagement.</li></ul>

# WORKFORCE FOCUSED EQUALITY OBJECTIVE:

We are committed to being an employer that values difference and attracts, recruits and retains talented individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds. We will support and encourage our employees to be the best they can be at work and provide them with an employment deal that is fair and inclusive. We will achieve this by:

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## 9. Working towards making selection pools for senior roles more diverse in terms of gender, disability and ethnicity.

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### What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.

Through our Corporate Resourcing Strategy 2022 – 2025 we have set out our commitments to ensure that we set ourselves apart as an employer of choice. This includes putting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) at the heart of our recruitment agenda, including making selection pools for senior roles more diverse in terms of gender, disability and ethnicity.

### What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?

In 2023, we launched our EDI workforce strategy. Our strategy also draws on best practice from across sectors, research papers and insight from EDI thought leaders, alongside

recommendations from CIPD and the Local Government Association. The EDI strategy has a number of interdependencies with our Corporate Resourcing Strategy which includes supporting diversity and inclusion within the selection process. One area of focus has been our work in developing a ‘Panel Standards’ policy. This involves setting out the number and grade of panel members required for interviews held across all job grades.

### What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?

As this is a new policy, we will review its effectiveness following a period of implementation. This will help us to evaluate our recruitment process in relation to diversity and inclusion.

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**10. Developing a ‘women in leadership’ programme and improving the proportion of women in senior leadership.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

Our Gender Pay Gap Reporting results show a positive move in the right direction. The mean average for 2022 demonstrates that women earn 8.2% less than men - this is down 0.8% since 2021. The median average is 10.1%, which is down by 1.3% since 2021.

It’s important to note that having a gender pay gap does not mean there is an equal pay issue. Equal pay means that there should be no difference in the pay and contractual terms of women and men doing the same or similar work (or work of equal value) for the same employer. It is unlawful to pay people unequally because they are a man or a woman.

This year we have launched our Women in Leadership programme. Our Women’s Network continue to raise awareness amongst the wider workforce on gender biases, empowerment and leadership.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

As an organisation we have received 93 applications for our Women in Leadership programme. We will now be training a number of assessors to help identify individuals who will move to the development centre ahead of securing a place on the programme. We envisage the final cohort to complete the training in 2024/25 which will help to narrow the gender pay gap in the medium term.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

We envisage the final cohort to complete the training in 2024/25 which will help to narrow the gender pay gap in the medium term.

**THE MEAN  
AVERAGE FOR 2022  
DEMONSTRATES  
THAT WOMEN  
EARN 8.2% LESS  
THAN MEN -  
THIS IS DOWN  
0.8% SINCE 2021**

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**11. Being an inclusive employer, with greater representation of people with both visible and non-visible disabilities.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

We recognise that we need to be an inclusive employer- where there is a greater representation of people with both visible and non-visible disabilities across our organisation.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

We have worked collaboratively with key stakeholders including the Disabled Employees Network. We continue to be a disability level 3 leader and have also re-evaluated and launched a new employee value proposition that highlights the diversity of ECC. We are also reviewing our current job boards to target recruitment drives aimed at under-represented groups. This has involved reviewing our recruitment and selection process to remove any potential biases that exist during the recruitment process. This includes strength-based interview questions,

inclusive training and having better diversity of personnel on interview panels. Our re-accreditation as a Disability Confident Leader allows us to follow a number of actions to help us improve how we recruit, retain and develop disabled people. Finally, we are developing further guidance for managers to have meaningful discussions with staff who have completed a workplace adjustment passport.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

Work is underway to ensure that people who enter our workforce are provided with the necessary adjustments within a reasonable timeframe in order for them to be as effective as possible at ECC. More targeted communications and support to enable individuals to disclose their disability electronically is also being planned.

**WE CONTINUE TO BE A  
DISABILITY LEVEL 3 LEADER  
AND HAVE ALSO RE-EVALUATED  
AND LAUNCHED A NEW EMPLOYEE  
VALUE PROPOSITION THAT  
HIGHLIGHTS THE DIVERSITY  
OF ECC**

## CASE STUDY:

### Breaking Down Barriers for our Autistic Residents

With only 1 in 6 autistic adults having a full-time job in the UK, Essex County Council (ECC) developed their Autism Internship programme to create a pathway to employment for their Autistic residents. ECC is a disability confident leader and operate three job interview schemes for applicants, as such the programme further underpins the organisations commitment.

The Autism Internship is run each year by the Entry to Work Team, who created a 20-week paid internship programme for individuals with a diagnosis of autism, aged 18 years old and over. Interns join ECC for a minimum of 18 hours per week, with working patterns centred around their capabilities and working preference.

To ensure inclusivity and reduce barriers, advertisements use clear language and relevant information. Applicants also undertake a vocational profiling session with the Team to ensure the vacancy aligns to their aspirations. Ahead of the in-person interview, each applicant receives the interview questions and prompts, images of the office and interviewers. The applicants are encouraged to have someone attend for support.

Ahead of the Internship, line managers and work buddies undertake mandatory training with Ambitious About Autism, including

interviewing and onboarding techniques. During the Internship, each Intern is supported by their line manager and work buddies who provide support and guidance. The Entry to Work Team also hold regular check ins with Interns and feedback to managers with any issues.

The most recent cohort has seen all Interns who completed the programme secure roles within ECC, either on an Accessible Apprenticeship or as Business Support Assistants. Interns from previous cohorts also have gone on to achieve further roles such as Procurement Support Officer within ECC.

With regards to skills and knowledge developed by the Interns as a direct result of undertaking the programme, they have developed additional skills such as minute taking, financial data tracking, project planning / scheduling.

**THE MOST RECENT  
COHORT HAS SEEN  
ALL INTERNS  
WHO COMPLETED  
THE PROGRAMME  
SECURE ROLES  
WITHIN ECC**



The Autism Internship is a specific annual programme that has been running since 2019. As such our hiring community create their strategic workforce planning around the programme with previous managers returning year on year.

Over the years, the Autism Internship has developed to ensure that the Intern remains at the heart of the programme, this has included increasing the number of weeks for the placement, duties, and location of work.

The biggest lesson learnt is not to assume what an Autistic individual will want as part of their role. Each Intern will bring their own specific skills which need to be nurtured and grown to ensure they have a meaningful experience. Ultimately, we are developing our future workforce.

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**12. Identifying specific roles where women or men are underrepresented compared to the population of Essex, and actively promote to, and encourage applications from, that group.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

Our overall workforce is 75% women however we have areas of our business where we have under-representation of women in senior management positions. We also have under-representation of men in certain areas of our business.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

Our Women in Leadership programme launched in early 2023. The programme is designed to support women who want to

apply for senior positions. Our EDI workforce strategy supports the work of Talent Management and Development Team to ensure that our strategies align and that our recruitment process reflects and responds to the current workforce and future needs of the business.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

Further work is required to identify areas of underrepresentation across the organisation, including for both women and men.

**13. Consciously placing adverts and approaching agencies who reach and proactively support black and minority ethnic candidate communities, along with other underrepresented groups such as disabled candidates.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

We know we need to do more to improve how we attract more ethnically diverse individuals and people with disabilities into the workforce. This is important for us. Working with specialists, we will be able to better understand how we can attract the best diverse talent and to be reflective of the communities we deliver services for. This is a key objective within the EDI workforce strategy.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

As part of our Corporate Resourcing Strategy, we have developed a number of actions to support better outreach and promotion of our vacancies. These include:

- Ensuring our advert wording and Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is inclusive and encourages diverse applicants.
- Ensuring our vacancies are on prominent diverse attraction sites.
- Partnering with external organisations with subject matter expertise who can maximise our position as an employer of choice to a diverse workforce.
- Resourcing employee networks to have greater involvement in the development of attraction methods.
- Building on the foundations of effective business as usual attraction channels.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

The ongoing work will identify further opportunities to transform.

**14. Using our Ways of Working programme as a way of challenging how, when and where we work, opening up opportunities for more diverse talent.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

The move for many of our roles from predominantly officed based working, to hybrid working, has provided opportunities to attract a wider talent pool than previously achievable.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

Through our Ways of Working programme, we have developed new workstyles, helping to improve the level of applications from diverse populations. Applications from disabled people have grown by 8% since before the pandemic. Applications to roles from minority ethnic groups has grown 7% since before the pandemic.

We have also worked with external consultants to understand opportunities to improve our workplace to support current and future employees.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

Additional areas of improvement include:

- Our workplaces being better equipped to support employees and retain and attract talent.
- Ensuring that there is consistency in our current workplaces. Currently some provide a better experience than others.

**APPLICATIONS FROM DISABLED PEOPLE HAVE GROWN BY 8%.**

**APPLICATIONS TO ROLES FROM MINORITY ETHNIC GROUPS HAS GROWN 7%.**

**15. Reviewing our current level of learning and development offer around diversity and inclusion and its effectiveness – informed by employee networks**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

We know how important it is that we have a workforce that is continually learning and developing a better understanding of the benefits of diversity and inclusion. As well as learning the importance of our statutory obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) we will work to educate our workforce on areas such as inclusive leadership, cultural and emotional intelligence.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

We are currently reviewing our current equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) intranet pages in line with the launch of the intranet site which will better signpost individuals to our training offer.

We have also reviewed our My Learning EDI offer and are seeking opportunities to include further specific EDI modules. This will help to broaden our current offer on EDI modules including allyship training. We are also developing new manager training to include Cultural Intelligence (CQ) learning for 2023. We have held a number of webinars on EDI including topic areas such as neurodiversity and autism. We are also scoping to hold series of inclusive leadership training with senior leaders.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

We will continue to work with key stakeholders to identify gaps and additional areas of training.

## 16. Having inclusive recruitment training in place.

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### **What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

We recognise that recruitment training is important to understand both biases and cultural differences. Training will be scoped as detailed in the EDI Strategy and talent management capability work and implemented as part of the Assessment and Selection Training project.

- processes to support disabled applicants around reasonable adjustments including those with neurodiversity
- new lessons around Interviews and best practice
- a new approach to the importance of selecting objectively, as well as Safer Recruitment (ideally for all functions but especially Social Care).

### **What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

We have scoped a piece of work that will help us become a much more effective recruiter. This will include reviewing and implementing:

- The in house Cornerstone recruitment platform
- a new Inclusive training and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

### **What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

We will continue to identify improvements as part of evaluation of the effectiveness of our training offer.

**17. Ensuring that any talent programmes developed will include the ability to track participants and their career progression.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

Tracking how our staff are progressing within our organisation is important. This will help us understand how effective our talent programmes are in increasing employee diversity into higher positions.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

This year, work in this area has aided the development of the launch of our Women in Leadership programme.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

Tracking progress of cohorts of employees is a developing area. Within the Women in Leadership programme we will track participants and monitor career progression.

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**18. Creating listening forums where senior leaders take part so that they can understand the experience of our workforce.**

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**What is the issue(s) and area(s) of focus.**

Creating a psychological safe space can create better understanding of issues affecting staff from diverse backgrounds.

**What progress and impact has been made in Year 1?**

As a County Council we have enabled the Ethnically Diverse Employee Network (EDEN) and Quest programme (a programme

designed to ensure diversity is continually embraced and there is inclusion for all within Adult Social Care) to present findings and recommendations to both functional and corporate leadership teams. The Quest recommendations have been incorporated into the organisational EDI workforce strategy.

**What are the gaps/additional areas of improvement identified?**

No gaps identified.

## 19. Our Equality priorities for Year 2

**We are committed to being an employer that values difference and attracts, recruits and retains talented individuals from a diverse range of backgrounds. We will support and encourage our employees to be the best they can be at work and provides them with an employment deal that is fair and inclusive**

Priority	Delivery activity
<p><b>Implement the Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the EDI dashboard to improve monitoring of selection pools for senior roles in relation to diversity.</li> <li>• Continue to monitor and track participants as they progress through the Women in Leadership course We will also be actively promoting and encouraging people with disabilities to come forward and apply for roles at ECC.</li> <li>• Track and monitor progress of disclosed applicants through an EDI dashboard.</li> <li>• Develop and implement a reasonable adjustment policy and guidance for hiring managers.</li> <li>• Develop and implement a reasonable adjustment check to each stage of the recruitment process.</li> <li>• Develop an EDI data tracker, which will allow us to better identify areas of underrepresentation, including women and men.</li> <li>• Develop and implement improvements to our workplace to better support our workforce such as the creation of ‘wellbeing rooms’.</li> <li>• Embed our training offer and monitor and evaluate outcomes.</li> <li>• Review the effectiveness of training and monitor the number of individuals who completed training.</li> <li>• Continuous measurement of effectiveness of talent programmes.</li> <li>• With support of organisational staff networks, develop regular listening forums and feedback loops with senior management.</li> </ul>

# GLOSSARY

<b>BAME</b>	Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic
<b>CQ</b>	Cultural Intelligence
<b>DEN</b>	Disabled Employees Network
<b>EDEN</b>	Ethnically Diverse Employee Network
<b>EHWB</b>	Essex Health and Wellbeing Board
<b>EQ</b>	Emotional Intelligence
<b>EVP</b>	Employee Value Proposition
<b>ICP</b>	Integrated Care Partnership
<b>JSNA</b>	Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
<b>ONS</b>	Office for National Statistics
<b>PEM</b>	Prevention and Enablement Model
<b>PSED</b>	Public Sector Equality Duty
<b>SEND</b>	Special Education Needs and Disabilities
<b>SHCPP</b>	Strategic Hate Crime Prevention Partnership
<b>VAWG</b>	Violence against Women and Girls



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