

Hertfordshire County Council

# MEETING OUR EQUALITY DUTIES

2017/18 Progress Report



[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/equalities](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/equalities)



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## 1 Foreword

The last few years have been particularly challenging for local government. We have had to reduce our spending by £250 million since 2010/11 whilst protecting the services that are important to you. The next few years will also be tough. It is possible that the grant we receive from Government from national taxation will be phased out and increasingly our services will have to be funded solely from council tax, business rates and fees. We also face significant pressures due to the changing nature of our population as many people are living longer and need more care in older age. As at mid-2017, the estimated total [population of Hertfordshire](#) was 1,181,000 which is an increase of approximately 64,900 (5.8%) since the 2011 census; of which 194,300 are over 65 and 28,500 are over 85.

To meet the challenges requires us to continue at pace to improve the way we work and deliver our services, whilst ensuring that we are listening to our residents in a way that helps prevent, reduce or delay demands on public services while still maximising fairness overall. Through our Digital Citizens work stream, we have been working with our most hard to reach communities to better understand and enable digitization of some of our services. We have produced strategies on Hate Crime and Public Health, on which we will monitor actions and report back on progress. We will continue to co-produce the Hertfordshire All Age Autism Partnership Board, which released a [guide](#) aimed at employers in how to train their staff to have a better understanding and knowledge of the condition, as well as how to recognise behaviour and deliver a positive experience for autistic colleagues. Hertfordshire Libraries have also introduced [Autism friendly libraries](#) at larger libraries and trained staff on the disability.

Our staff is our greatest asset and it is essential that we are able to carry out our role in the most effective and efficient way possible to meet the rising demands on our services. The SmartWorking programme will help to create a positive, productive and trusting working environment and allow for greater flexibility for staff that may have other commitments such as caring responsibilities. Key to our delivery is our commitment to mainstream fostering of good relations, advancing equality of opportunity and eliminating discrimination.

## 2 Our commitment to Equality and Diversity

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to achieving diversity and equality of opportunity as a large employer of people and as a provider of services. This is about more than legal compliance: we want to ensure that Hertfordshire is free from discrimination and make every effort to positively promote equality and diversity within our workforce and across the services we are responsible for.

**As a deliverer of services**, we will promote diversity and equality in everything we do to improve the quality of life of everyone living in, working in and visiting Hertfordshire - to create a county of opportunity for all.

**As a provider of services**, we recognise, respect and celebrate the fact that our staff and the people we serve are all very different, whether this is in our ethnic background, family setting, gender, religion and belief or other factors. We believe that diversity can drive innovation, a culture of fairness and respect and equality of opportunity for all.

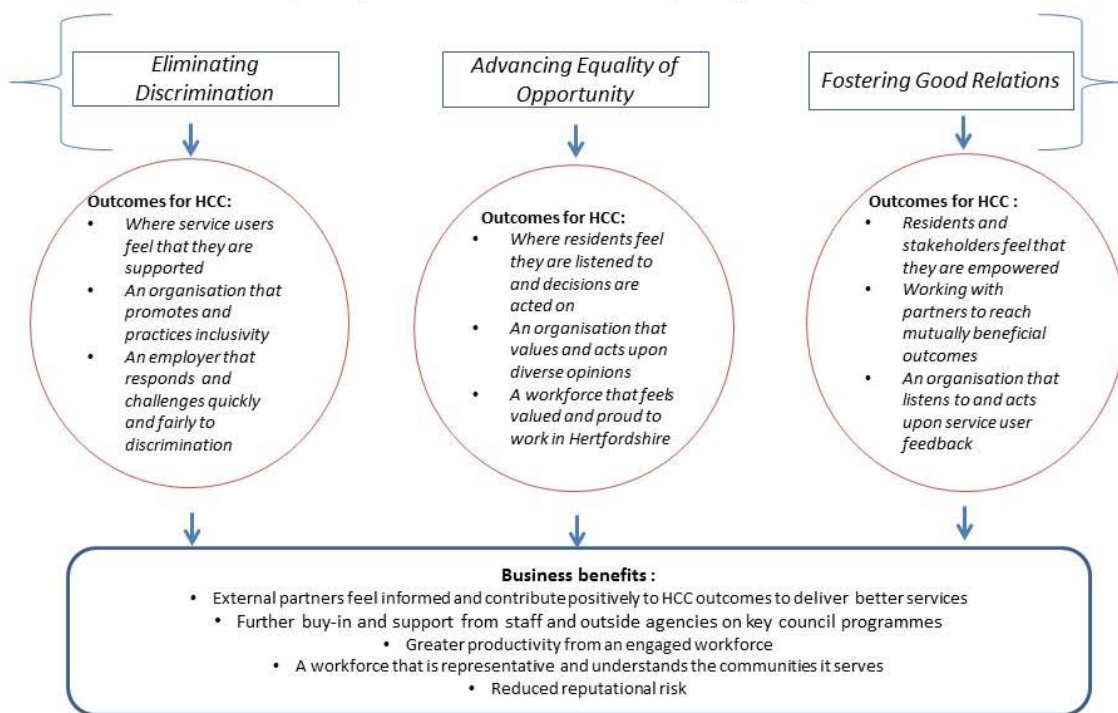
Our Equality Strategy sets out how we aim to achieve this and maintain real and lasting progress for diverse groups and individuals in Hertfordshire. Our [strategy for 2016-2020](#) sets out key objectives over this period.

### 3 Key achievements in 2017-18, reporting on progress

Hertfordshire County Council carries out a wide range of work that challenges discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and promotes good relations between communities. This report does not capture everything we do in relation to Equality and Diversity; instead, it sets out a number of key achievements that show our commitment to improving equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity in Hertfordshire.

#### Reporting on the Equality duty and PSED: *Benefits and outcomes for HCC*

Equality Act and Public Sector Equality Duty 2010



#### Theme 1 - Eliminating Discrimination

*An organisation that promotes and practices inclusivity and challenges discrimination*

*Creates an environment where staff and service users feel that they are supported and listened to*

#### Ensuring our workforce is equal

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017, all public sector employers were required to annually publish calculations showing their gender pay gap. Based on data as at snapshot date of 30 March 2018, we are proud that the data indicates that there is a [very small negative pay gap](#) of 0.9%.

We will also be looking at how we can improve the Performance Management and Development Scheme (PMDS) process further – this will include using Performance Related Increments (PRI) equalities data to determine any areas where additional support/ training may be needed for managers and employees.

Our [annual workforce report](#) provides an overview of our workforce profile, key workforce issues and what is being done to address them; headlines from the 2017/18 report include:

- A continued increase of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff (from 13.6% in 2017 to 13.9% in 2018)
- A continued increase in the number of employees declaring a disability (from 6.0% in 2017 to 6.3% in 2018)
- Women continue to make up the majority of our workforce (67.1%)
- The age profile continues to be dominated by the age ranges from 40 – 59 (51.7% of the workforce). Under 25s have decreased by 0.3% and employees aged over 60+ have increased by 0.7% - the new approach to recruiting and developing apprenticeships is currently underway and will be working towards addressing this
- 1.8% of employees identified themselves as non-heterosexual (an increase of 0.4% but close to the estimated population of South East England at 1.6%)
- There has been a continued rise in the percentage of employees with no religious beliefs, from 31.7% to 33.5%. Christian religious beliefs continue to make up the majority of the workforce at 53.3% and other religious beliefs have slightly dropped from 7.1% to 6.9%
- 32.8% of the workforce have a caring or parenting responsibility (a decrease of 0.6%) - we supported Carers' Week in June by running information and support events for employees and managers across our main sites. We also continue to offer flexible working opportunities to help employees combine caring responsibilities with work

## **Protecting the most vulnerable**

In Hertfordshire we want all victims of hate crime to have confidence that the authorities will take them seriously; that we will treat them with respect and understanding and we will provide them with the right support for their needs whether that is helping them navigate the court process or simply listening to their concerns. We carried out extensive consultation with the community and developed a county-wide [Hate Crime Strategy](#) which was launched in Autumn 2017. The strategy will focus on key areas of preventing, responding, reporting and support for victims of Hate Crime.

Building on success in Hertsmere, *Safe and Well* has now fully rolled out across Hertfordshire. The project has brought together Community Protection, Public Health and Adult Care to ensure that some of the most vulnerable Hertfordshire residents receive home visits that help them to remain safe, secure and healthy in their own homes. The project delivered successful countywide roll-out of Safe and Well visits following a pilot last year. Evaluation on the national project is taking place across five fire and rescue services and will inform any future developments of the programme.

We continue to work with multi-agency partners across the public and voluntary sectors to deliver the objectives set out in the 'Breaking the cycle' 2016-19 Domestic Abuse Strategy and to better co-ordinate services based on individual need and risk, and put greater emphasis on prevention, sustained recovery and early intervention. We have commissioned an Independent Domestic Violence Advocates service, which will be delivered by Refuge to

help and provide safety for women and children who are fleeing from Domestic Abuse. The contract for safe accommodation and community outreach was awarded to Safer Places, in partnership with St Albans & Hertsmere Refuge and Welwyn/Hatfield Refuge, and will offer services including safe accommodation, support on matters such as housing and money issues as well as Mental and physical health assessments and emotional wellbeing support.

Since 2015, the Modern slavery Act requires Local Authorities have a duty to notify any individuals who are suspected of being a victim of slavery or human trafficking. We have set-up a Modern Slavery Steering Group, which is multi-agency, now takes place on a quarterly basis. A Hertfordshire conference is planned for autumn 2018 at the Houses of Parliament. This will be a strategic framework meeting for Hertfordshire to raise awareness, share information and proactively work together to ensure a consistent and robust approach to tackling Modern Slavery.

### ***Case-study 1- Service redesign to support our communities***

The current Families' Centre programme and the Health Visiting and School Nursing Services have been aligned into a new Family Centre Service and will be launched in November 2018 following a 6 month mobilisation period. The new service will provide earlier identification of children at risk of neglect or abuse, and of maternal mental wellbeing across the per-natal stage. By co-locating teams who will work to clearly defined pathways and accountabilities, families will be able to access the right support earlier and will be seen by experienced professionals regularly and beyond the five mandated health visiting checks. In addition, the Family Support Service element of the Family Centre Service will support families up to the age of 11 years, increasing from 5 years in response to families asking for consistency over the transition into primary school.

Our Children's Services places the interests of children firmly at the centre of everything we do, working with families to offer quality advice, support and guidance; build children's confidence, self-esteem and prepare them for life ahead. Our multi-disciplinary family safeguarding teams of children's social workers, mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse specialists will work with families to address the difficulties they may be experiencing. We aim to motivate and support them to identify for themselves the changes needed to keep their children safe from harm. The overall aim is to bring about long term change within families which is driven by the parents themselves and is therefore likely to be more sustainable.

### **Making policy and training inclusive**

The new [Hertfordshire Public Health Service Strategy 2017-21](#) was launched in October 2017 and sets out how we will work together to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Hertfordshire based on best practice and best evidence. The themes of health inequalities and better health outcomes are embedded throughout the document and quarterly Health & Wellbeing Strategy dashboards are published on HCC's Hertfordshire Health Evidence website at [www.hertshealthevidence.org](http://www.hertshealthevidence.org)

### **Training for our staff**

All our staff have completed the online interactive Equality and Diversity iLearn module which includes interactive case studies covering all protected characteristics. The council has made this training mandatory of new starters and has been fully incorporated into HCC's induction process.

We continue to offer Unconscious Bias training, free of charge. From January 2017 to present, 104 managers have received the training and the content is being updated with a plan to re-launch it. We will also be looking to promote and review the impact of the latest Unconscious Bias training.

Increasingly exploring commercial opportunities, we will ensure that the Equality Duties are embedded in the drafting of our new Procurement Strategy which will take place over the autumn / winter 2018. The strategy will complement the new Commercial Strategy which is currently being written as part of the SMART commercial work stream.

## **Theme 2 - Advancing Equality of Opportunity**

*Where residents feel they are listened to and decisions are acted on*

*An organisation that values and acts upon diverse opinions and where a workforce that feels valued and proud to work in Hertfordshire*

### **Ensuring our digital offer is inclusive**



In June, HCC won the Website of the Year award, which is part of the UK Public Sector Communications Awards. This comes after Socitm gave <http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk> a top 4-star rating based on mobile, accessibility and task-based testing.

We carried out user testing throughout development with a customer user testing panel of 500 people who were consulted weekly on website developments. User testing for the new website included those with hearing and sight impairments. The website has Easy Read templates and section AA accessibility was achieved and we're carrying an ongoing review and are working with services to encourage improved accessibility of changing guidance/legislation.

The Families First Portal was launched last year at Hertfordshire Children's Safeguarding Board Parents conference and has a directory of services for each district and a practitioner's area for sharing good practice and tools. Currently we are organising parent user groups to keep developing the portal.

Our new career pages for recruitment (which meet accessibility standards) have been launched. We are currently focussing on feedback we have had from service users with disabilities on how we can further improve these pages and become an exemplar employer. Our Connected Counties Broadband Programme – a partnership between Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership and Buckinghamshire County Council – is focused on extending fibre broadband coverage to hard-to-reach and most rural communities' areas of the county, who can feel isolated due to the lack of connectivity. This superfast broadband infrastructure means residents and businesses have fast and reliable upload and download speeds and can access a wide range of online services.

Our Smartworking programme continues to provide employees with the tools and training they need to work flexibly and efficiently in a way that suits their individual needs; for

example, creating more touchdown areas and successfully launching the new video conferencing tool to help staff work remotely. This will help staff who may have specific caring responsibilities and enable employees to improve their work-life balance and overall wellbeing.

We have also created a more flexible 'pick and mix' learning and development offer to meet all employee needs. Learning and practical tools are available at the time people need them to enable agile working.

## **Mainstreaming equalities to inform our decision making**

Having accurate, up to date and relevant information and intelligence is critical to ensuring our decision making is informed by robust evidence.



Working with commissioners and project leads we are using the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to inform commissioning decisions and strategy setting has been promoted through a combination of formal and informal sessions with elected members, commissioners, Clinical Commissioning Groups, hospital Trusts and the Voluntary Sector (including explicit awareness-raising of the JSNA 'information for EQIA' appendices as a part of the new standard JSNA report format). This work is ongoing.

We have reviewed our Reasonable Adjustments Guidance to make it clearer and have included further support on specific conditions (e.g. Dyslexia) and the ability to report on spending on adjustments. As part of this work, we have improved the way we capture data to provide more relevant information about the nature of disability and relevant reasonable adjustments. We have updated our employee records system (SAP) to now collect disability categories and regularly encourage employees to self-declare data.

## **Theme 3 - Fostering Good Relations**

*An organisation that listens to and acts upon service user feedback and works with partners to reach mutually beneficial outcomes. Residents and stakeholders feel that they are empowered and enabled to make decisions*

### **Working in partnership**

We believe that those who use a service are best placed to help design it. Co-production is about developing equal working partnerships between people who have experience of using care services (experts by experience), carers and paid officers; bringing together different ways of seeing things, knowledge and experience to design and help make services better. We agreed standards and principles for co-production to create further opportunities to work with service users to co-produce new service developments. We rolled out our co-production training in the summer to promote to staff during national co-production week in July. Our coproduction standards and payment





guide was launched in March and can be found here: [www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coproduction](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/coproduction)

The Hertfordshire Compact provides an effective partnership between the statutory sector and voluntary and community sector to help achieve a strong, diverse and independent voluntary and community sector. A training resource about the Hertfordshire Compact has been developed for HCC officers. Compact Champions continue to take responsibility to ensure the officers in their directorate are aware of the Hertfordshire Compact and the implications to their work. The Compact forum is a place for everyone to discuss ideas, seek advice and share good practice and stories of success relating to their experiences of the Compact way of working. We will continue to promote this throughout the organisation and monitor take-up.

Hertfordshire Pride event continues to be a shining success. Hundreds of people turned up and joined HCC to celebrate the LGBT community by proudly supporting Herts Pride 2017. The event took place in Gadebridge Park, Hemel Hempstead where families and friends of all ages enjoyed a full day event of food, a funfair and live music. Promoting the valuable work HCC does in supporting the LGBT community, services were represented by Herts Fire and Rescue, Herts for Learning, the Registrars and Citizenship service, Fostering and Adoption and YC Hertfordshire.

### ***Case study 2- Multi-agency working***

Empowering children, young people and families and helping them to become more resilient is key to our early help offer. Families First is the “Umbrella” term for how we aim to empower families, professionals from all sectors and local communities to work collaboratively in order to make Hertfordshire the best place in which to grow up. We have done this by joining up a range of partners agencies and VSC into 9 district based virtual hubs. There is a multi - agency implementation group in each district driving forward the key principles of Families First in delivering whole family working. Families First Triage Panels are held weekly in each district and are attended by a range of multi – agency partners, 1500 families have consented to have their information shared and a key worker identified to co- ordinate the Team around the family.

### ***Case study 3- Partnership working***

Hertfordshire library services runs ‘Slipper Swaps’ events in partnership with the Age UK, the Alzheimer’s Society, Carers in Herts and Fire Safety to provide information and advice to help vulnerable elderly people avoid serious falls, often caused by poorly-fitting slippers and to stay well. The events publicise social care information and promote Hertfordshire’s Reminiscence Collection and Home Library Service. New anti-slip slippers are provided through the Council’s Healthy Homes Campaign. Occupational therapists use the events to teach people simple fall prevention exercises and tips.

Hertfordshire also hosted Scam Awareness Roadshows in summer 2017 as part of ‘Stop Scams’ campaign to give older and vulnerable people an opportunity to find out more about doorstep, phone and criminal cons and cheats and how to avoid them. The advisors from Trading Standards, Neighbourhood Watch, Citizens Advice Bureau and Age UK and the local police community Safety officers were in attendance to provide advice and support.

## Caring for our Veterans

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly. Hertfordshire CC signed the Covenant in 2011 and encourages local communities to support the armed forces community in their areas and to recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the armed forces community and to help integrate the armed forces community into local life



We continue to demonstrate our commitment to the Hertfordshire Community Covenant and specifically providing families about applications to schools and encouraging veterans to take-up services. The HCC website now has a schools page which includes a specific section relevant to service families. This provides advice and information on how to make an in-year application. The Joint Service Families

Federation representatives on behalf of HCC provide advice to service families planning to re-locate to Hertfordshire and make any unusual cases known to the admissions teams.

A new e-Learning module has been made available to all HCC staff to improve understanding of the unique needs and circumstances of the armed forces population. We continue to encourage veterans to access and 'take-up' mental health services through joint communication campaigns with the NHS and external partners and via Veterans Support groups. A new e-Learning package has been rolled out to all GPs to improve understanding of veteran needs. GP patient recording systems have been adapted to help identify veterans. A GP poster campaign encouraging patients to declare their veteran status is ongoing. A project is underway to collate available data to establish the current size and location of the armed forces population in Hertfordshire. We expect the data to help inform future action plans and develop a more targeted approach.



## Supporting our employees

We have increased our employee-run equality awareness events and internal communications. We have successfully engaged employees and managers with getting involved in (and running) a number of internal events/communications campaigns to raise awareness and encourage colleagues to connect and learn from each other on a variety of subjects including mental health, LGBT History Month and various faith groups

We will be developing guidance to support staff interested in setting up and running employee network groups and encouraging employees to take ownership. We will also continue to promote our Employee Assistance Programme and Herts Rewards, the employee reward package.

Designed for all ages, either school, college leavers or for those looking to change careers, our apprenticeships provide an opportunity to secure a permanent role within the council,

while receiving on-the-job training alongside gaining a qualification. In line with the new Apprenticeship Levy HCC have so far enrolled 52 apprentices since April 2017 (of those, 21 are newly recruited) and a further 59 are going through the recruitment process. Public Sector bodies are encouraged to ensure 20% of apprenticeships are from a BAME group and we will seek to work towards this.

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