

# Annual Equality Progress Report 2022-2023



This information about Dacorum Borough Council's response to the Public Sector Equality Duty can be made available in a range of formats and languages by contacting email [edi@dacorum.gov.uk](mailto:edi@dacorum.gov.uk) or phone 01442 228513

## **Annual Equality Progress Report 2022-2023**

### **Equality and our legal duties**

This report demonstrates how the Council complies with General Equality Duties to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

And the Specific Equality Duties to:

- publish equality information at least once a year to show how we have complied with the equality duty
- prepare and publish equality objectives at least every 4 years

Protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Race (including nationality and ethnicity)
- Sex
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Religion or belief (or not having a religion)
- Sexual orientation
- Marital/civil partnership status



- Pregnancy or maternity

Although not a 'legal' protected characteristic some attributes are often linked to poorer life outcomes, such as being from a lower socio-economic background, a care leaver, a carer, single parent etc. The impact on different groups will be considered by the Council where appropriate.

## About Dacorum

The Borough of Dacorum is in west Hertfordshire. It is made up of the main towns of Hemel Hempstead, Berkhamsted and Tring, plus a number of large and small villages.

We are committed to creating a culture in which equality of opportunity is actively promoted in every aspect of service provision, delivery and the working environment. We aim to remove barriers, and improve access to our services and to achieve equality of opportunity in our employment practices.

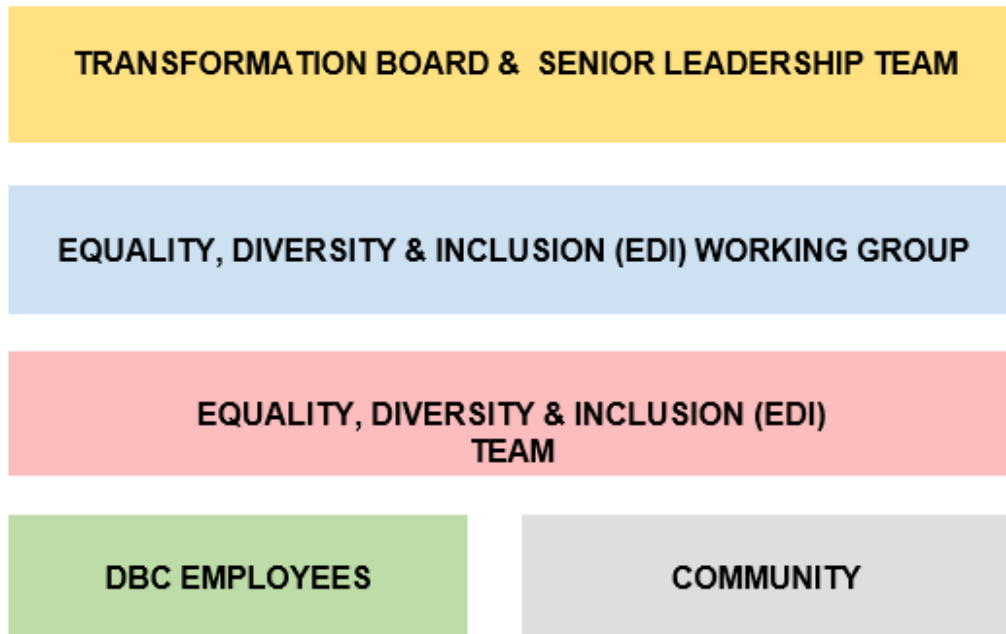
This is reflected in the Council's values which were revised in 2022 to include behavioural examples for each value. These now form part of the Council's infrastructure and are used to influence recruitment, reward and performance management across our workforce. Our equality value is:

### Nurturing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

- I treat everyone fairly, with courtesy and respect
- I empower people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different
- I do not tolerate racism or any form of discrimination and will appropriately challenge poor behaviour and attitudes
- I ensure everyone feels welcomed, heard and included
- I always consider the impact of decisions on our staff and communities



## Structures for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion



The EDI Working Group monitors progress against the strategy action plan.

The action plan is regularly reviewed by the Strategic Leadership Team and will be next reviewed in November 2023.

### [EDI Strategy and strategy action plan](#)

The strategy sets out our equalities aim:

“Challenge discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, improve access to services, champion mutual respect and increase participation in local decisions”

The strategy action plan sets out our 3 equality objectives and actions being undertaken which will support the 10 commitments set out in the strategy.

The action plan is reviewed at the Equality Reference Working Group (made up of representatives from across the Council), and progress is published annually.

New actions will be added as more information is available. This action plan will evolve as data is received from staff networks staff, survey and feedback from teams across the Council.

The Strategic Leadership Team will review the action plan in November 2023.



## Equality Framework for Local Government

The [Equality Framework for Local Government](#) has been specifically designed as a benchmarking tool for local authorities.

The framework has three levels:

- Developing
- Achieving
- Excellent

The framework requires a local authority show what work is undertaken in the following four performance areas:

- understanding and working with your communities
- leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- responsive services and customer care
- diverse and engaged workforce

Dacorum is currently working towards the Achieving level, we have therefore aligned our objectives and commitments to the relevant performance area.

### Staff Data

All new starters to the Council are asked to complete equality monitoring information as a part of their New Starter Paperwork. We are currently working to implement monitoring questionnaires for the recruitment application process and exploring ways to remove any barriers in recruitment. Alongside this exploration, work is underway on how we ensure staff details are kept up to date during employment with the Council. We will be utilising a new HR system to ensure reminders are automatically sent with context of explaining how important this information is for the Council to ensure equality for all.

The following data on Dacorum staff is also published annually:

- [Staff report: Staff by protected characteristic](#)
- [Gender pay gap:](#) The gender pay gap is an equality measure that shows the difference in average earnings between women and men



## Borough Data

The Council uses internal and external data to plan and develop services. External sources are collected from valid sources such as the Welcome to Herts Insight | Herts Insight ([hertfordshire.gov.uk](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)) which provides links to other sources including Census 2021, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, data on public health and deprivation. Other data is provided by Hertfordshire County Council e.g. [Hertfordshire Supporting Adults with Complex Needs strategy 2019](#) or using our own internal databases is used in the [Prevention of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-24](#)

Below are some examples of the data we have sourced from the above. Where possible we try to use the most up to date information. All information below is based on data 2018-2022.

- The population increased by 7.1% between the 2011 and 2021 census marginally below the whole county's increase of 7.4%
- Census data show the ethnic profile of Dacorum to be White 86.8% Asian/Asian British 5.8% Black/African/Caribbean/Black British 2.8% Mixed & other ethnic groups 4.6%
- Women have a higher life expectancy of 84.1 years compared to 81.2 years for men
- Romanian was Hertfordshire's most spoken non-English language (1.3% of residents), followed by Polish with 0.9% of residents
- 14.7% of residents have a limiting long term health condition
- Out of 93 neighbourhoods in the borough 4 are in the 20% most income deprived in England
- 3.1% of households do not have English as a first language which is lower than the Hertfordshire average of 4.3%
- 160 hate crimes were reported in
- Dacorum had 14.7% fewer Domestic Abuse offences reported in 2021 than in 2020.
- Hemel Hempstead Town and Highfield wards, which have the highest proportion of tenants waiting for adapted properties (approximately 21%)
- 24% of adult residents reported feeling lonely
- 103 logs related to cuckooing (where someone takes over a residence, often of a vulnerable person, for use in criminal activities) at 42 addresses



- Dacorum has a higher percentage of people living in temporary housing than the Hertfordshire average
- More males are homeless than women with mental health and substance use being key factors

### **Community engagement**

We recognise that people have differing needs and expectations, and will continue to provide a range of ways in which residents can become involved in discussing their views.

We have a number of different ways housing residents can [get involved](#) in decisions affecting them including:

- Resident Scrutiny Boot camp sessions
- Tenant Improvement Grants Panel
- Supported Housing Forum
- Tenant & Leaseholder Committee
- Policy & Good Practice Working Group
- Pop up events/Neighbourhood Engagement Days

These groups are made up of residents, Council staff and other interested groups, through these people can participate in Community Impact Assessments.

We are [Tenant Participation Advisory Service](#) Pro Landlord Accredited and use this to review and improve our engagement methods.

We will ensure that non-Council venues used for Council events and purposes are checked for accessibility and other diversity requirements such as food provision and staff awareness.



## Progress against objectives

The 10 commitments set out in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy support the three equality objectives and Equality Framework for Local Government as follows;.

### **Objective 1: The workforce feels equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging is highly valued and there is a commitment to continuous improvement in this area.**

- Ensuring that the Council has a representative workforce; reflecting the diverse makeup of the area in which we operate
- That Members and staff continue to receive the latest best practice and training on equality, diversity and belonging, including neurodiversity
- Continue to encourage staff to challenge stereotyping and discriminatory practices within the offices and outside.

Equality Framework for Local Government Performance area(s):

- Leadership partnership and organisational commitment
- Diverse and Engaged Workforce

### **Activities undertaken**

- Staff events were organised to discuss race, gender and accessibility in the workplace
- A Gender Equity Group has been set up and will meet quarterly.
- The organisation is level 1 accredited for the Disability Confident Scheme
- We have implemented the LGBT+ Allies Scheme developed by the HCC LGBT+ Staff Group and have around 80 members
- We have signed the Menopause Workplace Pledge, showing our commitment to making our organisation a place of support and understanding for those going through menopause and have a related policy.
- An on-line mandatory equality, diversity & Inclusion training for all staff has been implemented.
- We have recently created a faith and maternity room in our offices





## Activities planned

- We are working toward Level 2 of the [Disability Confident Scheme](#) and implementing a Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- A number of staff have not recorded information about their protected characteristic on our HR system, an awareness campaign will be run to increase data by 15% and we will utilise the HR system to send out reminders to staff.
- Work will be undertaken on how we can accommodate more types of flexible working.
- We will be championing people with hidden disabilities and joining [Sunflower scheme](#) to allow those who choose to make people aware that they have a hidden disability

**Performance Target:** To improve self-declaration of protected characteristics amongst staff by 15% by April 2024 and to have implemented level 2 of the Disability Confident Scheme

## Objective 2: To enhance understanding and support for our communities by improving community engagement and how we collect, share and analyse data.

- That residents representing all protected characteristics are encouraged to become involved in shaping services
- To increase the data we hold on our service users and that this evidence is used to better inform service delivery.
- Further promotion of our zero-tolerance approach towards hate incidents and hate crime
- Develop working relations with more “third sector” agencies representing and supporting diverse communities and groups
- That victims and survivors of domestic abuse (residents and colleagues) are supported and signposted to the most appropriate agencies
- Increase awareness of diversity-related safeguarding issues including extremism and radicalisation, child sexual exploitation, modern slavery and young gangs among staff, Members and the community



Equality Framework for Local Government Performance area(s):

- Understanding and Working with your Communities

### Activities undertaken

- The Safer Communities Team have engaged with the local community via the Safer Communities Survey, Service user forums, school initiatives.
- A community event (expand) to commemorate Windrush 75th [anniversary](#), attended by the Mayor including raising the Windrush flag and numerous celebrations such as drummers, school competitions.
- A four week pop-up museum by 'No Ordinary Bookshop' on Black History was put on in Marlowes Shopping Centre
- Our [Dacorum Life magazine](#) reminded people to keep pavements clear after waste collection in order to be more accessible for disabled residents
- We have updated our [Domestic Abuse policies](#) (for Residents, Tenants, Leaseholders & Members, and Employees).
- The Supported Housing Forum (members of accommodation for older people) are involved in planning their activities, darts, armchair dance has been offered.
- Neighbourhood engagement days have been run in different neighbourhoods responding to complaints about rubbish and to get the views of residents that may find it harder to engage with the Council
- Manager training on Domestic Abuse was rolled out so that managers are better equipped to deal with domestic abuse incidents that their teams may come across.
- Library staff were trained on how to identify and support possible victims of domestic abuse.
- Holocaust Memorial Day, International Women's Day, Black History Month were highlighted with different activities taking place e.g. The Forum Officers was lit up for Pride month.

### Activities planned

- The Forum will be lit up to celebrate [Ukrainian Independence Day](#)



- A need has been identified regarding more accurate data on our service users. A Working Group will be set up to improve consistency in how equality data is collected and effectively used across the Council.
- All online reporting processes are being reviewed to ensure they are accessible for all residents, how data is collected will form part of the review.
- A single equality form for use across all services (where data is captured online) is to be established
- The Council is developing a Hate Crime Plan as part of the Community Safety Strategy to address forms of hate crime.
- Training around the [PREVENT and Channel](#) duty will be updated.
- As refugees from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine have settled in Dacorum our Humanitarian responses will be strengthened, Dacorum will be the Eastern Region's strategic lead on asylum and will have a dedicated Humanitarian Response Team.
- The council will be [Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance](#) accredited in 2024 and will participate in Domestic Abuse Awareness month every October
- The Domestic Abuse Team will attend Hertfordshire Pride.
- Further investigation is to be undertaken to better understand why some wards have more adaptations being made to housing than others
- A voluntary and community sector grants/ contract review will be completed to see who applied for funding, who was successful etc.

**Performance Target** – to increase protected characteristics data on service users by 15% (April 2024)

### Priority areas

The Council has identified the following as issues affecting 'protected' and 'vulnerable' groups and is working on addressing these areas as a priority.

- Extremism
- Hate Crime
- Domestic Abuse / Violence
- Child Sexual Exploitation



Our Community Safety [Partnership](#) is working with stakeholders across the public, private and community sector to review these priority areas and action plans are being developed to progress work in these areas.

### **Objective 3: The Council ensures that policies and processes are in place to best support equality, diversity and inclusion.**

- That our procurement practices continue to ensure contractors and suppliers demonstrate a genuine culture of inclusion and equality of opportunity
- Improve our performance in ensuring resident-facing policies and procedures are subject to effective community impact assessments

Equality Framework for Local Government Performance area(s):

- Responsive Services and Customer Care

#### **Activities undertaken**

- Every report taken to Council formal meetings including Cabinet and Scrutiny has an accompanying Community Impact Assessment
- Embedded an EDI section in all service plans to increase awareness and create future plans to improve EDI developments
- Implemented an enhanced value reflecting expected staff behaviours of Nurturing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace. Staff are recruited, reward and managed as part of these required behaviours.
- The Homes for [Ukraine scheme](#) was put in place setting out policy and process for housing refugees.
- Residents were in consulted on the Housing Decant Policy and made changes to make the policy more accessible for neurodiverse residents

#### **Activities planned**

- Internet and intranet pages will be reviewed to ensure information is accessible
- The EDI Action plan will go to Senior Leadership Team for information and action annually. Next date is November 2023.



- All policies/ processes/ action plans referred to in this document (Hate Crime Action Plan, Menopause Policy, Community Safety Action Plan, HR policies) will be reviewed to ensure equality issues are recognised and addressed.
- Equality consideration in the budget process will be taking place late 2023.
- Following the [Housing Satisfaction Survey](#) those who were not satisfied with the way repairs were conducted have been asked to provide feedback which will inform requirements of future contracts.

**Performance Target** - 100% of Cabinet Reports have an accompanying Community Impact Assessment when there is a change in policy/service/strategy.

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