



# **Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Progress Report 2023-2024**

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, Diversity and Inclusion Progress Report 2023-2024**

### **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 always ensure everyone feels welcomed, heard and included
- I always consider the impact of decisions on all our staff and communities
- I do not tolerate racism or any form of discrimination and will appropriately challenge poor behaviour and attitudes

## **Structures for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Transformation Board and Strategic Leadership Team

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Working Group

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team

DBC employees and Community

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 the winter of 2024.

## **EDI Strategy and Strategy Action Plan**

The EDI 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 EDI Working Group, (made up of representatives from across the Council, at all levels), on a regular basis, 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 surveys and feedback from teams and/or residents across the Council.

## **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 to 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.

## **Employee Data**

All new starters to the Council are asked to complete equality monitoring information as a part of their new starter paperwork. We also ask EDI monitoring questions as part of the recruitment application process and continue to explore ways in which we can remove barriers in our recruitment process. We have become a Disability Confident Level 2 employer which we hope will further demonstrate our commitment to employing people with disabilities and encourage our employees to openly share their personal, related data with us.

We have simplified our EDI monitoring form to enable our staff to keep their details up to date and we send annual reminders to ensure any changes to the data are made and therefore accurately reflected in our staff reporting.

This data will be used to shape our EDI strategy, and actions, and will help to improve performance, engagement, recruitment and staff retention. It will also enhance employee well-being, productivity and workplace satisfaction. The following data on staff is also published annually:

- **Staff report; Staff by protected characteristics**
- **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](http://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. You can find some examples of the data at the end of this report.

## **Community Engagement**

We recognise that people have differing needs and expectations, and we 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

Over the last 12 months, our focus has been on embedding Equality, Diversity & Inclusion into our culture at Dacorum.

Our EDI working group has focused on raising awareness of EDI across the Council and creating a culture where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Below is a list of all the activities we have undertaken this past year; one of the key elements that the EDI working group supported is the implementation of the Menopause policy. This policy supports those in the workplace experiencing menopause symptoms and raises awareness of the challenges both physically, emotionally and mentally for our staff. In addition, the EDI working group has recently introduced three specific pillars to enable us to focus our work, embed EDI more fully and to support us in communicating and creating a fully inclusive workplace.

These Pillars are around Communications – how we will communicate to our colleagues about what we are doing from an EDI perspective, Culture and Awareness through events, ensuring that we celebrate, discuss and create space to talk about all aspects of EDI in our everyday working environments and experiences, and EDI Learning – where we share learning opportunities, webinars, books, articles, music, culture events and much more all related to increasing knowledge and awareness of all protected characteristics.

### **Activities Undertaken**

- Implemented a Reasonable Adjustment Policy and successfully achieved Disability Confident Employer – Level 2. We are in the process of partnering with Skills 2 Step and the Jobcentre, with a focus on increasing our reach to disabled candidates.
- Simplified our EDI monitoring form to enable our staff to keep their details up to date and improve EDI reporting, ready for staff launch in the Autumn 2024.
- Implemented and rolled out a Menopause Policy across the Council to include, mandatory managers and HR training, staff awareness sessions and safe space group for open discussions on the effectiveness of the policy, ideas, experiences and additional support for Menopause in the workplace. This group is open to all.
- Continued to support LGBT+ Ally Scheme through sharing of support documents and Workplace Ally training. Included scheme in induction slides and further promotion.



- An EDI sponsor from the Strategic Leadership Team has been assigned to the EDI working Group. This support will help with the implementation of the EDI strategy across the council and offer top level support in the decision made. This also demonstrates cross-functional and multi-level representation of all staff to reflect the diversity and needs of the council.
- Continued to roll out mandatory EDI training across the Council and increased EDI awareness. We also reviewed the course content to ensure it remained up to date, relevant and fit for purpose. Our staff feedback also played a key part in ensuring the right content was being delivered in the training.
- Included EDI objectives as part of the Performance Development Review process and the service planning process to ensure all employees have a focus on EDI in their work and interactions.
- EDI working group formulated a plan to highlight and support key EDI topics to raise awareness through the celebration of key events throughout 2024. The first one was delivered for International Women’s Day in March.

## **Activities Planned**

### **We are:**

- Reviewing our recruitment practices and how we can be more inclusive in our recruitment processes.
- Establishing partnerships with key organisations (such as Jobcentre plus and Step 2 Skills) to support and enhance our recruitment activity in alignment with being a Disability Confident Employer – Level 2.
- Reviewing current special leave policies to ensure fairness and consistency is demonstrated for all staff as well as wellbeing being viewed as a key priority across the Council.
- Planning the celebration and awareness raising of the following key events as decided by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) working group; Mental Health Awareness Week, World Menopause Day, World Suicide Prevention Day, Neurodiversity events and Ramadan, alongside others.
- Reviewing the EDI training offer that currently exists to identify any gaps as well as to enhance and expanded awareness across all protected characteristics, for

example gender, ethnicity, age and disability. It is very important that all our employees feel confident that they can bring their full authentic selves to work, feel a sense of belonging and flourish in the work they do.

**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.

**Performance against target (to date):** We have now implemented level 2 of the Disability Confident Scheme and work continues to build on this. We have also increased some aspects of self-declaration of staff data, particularly in relation to Gender reporting which **has increased by** 15% from employees who have chosen to disclose their personal information. In relation to our disability reporting, we have seen an increase of 8% for colleagues who have declared a disability, compared to 3.3% last year.

**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 promote our zero-tolerance approach towards hate incidents and hate crime.
- Develop working relationships 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**

- A review of all data collected by the Council has taken place and work will continue on developing key digital platforms to align our data collection to ensure consistency of information captured and ease of reporting.
- Dacorum now has a dedicated Humanitarian Response team, led by a Programme Manager – with an additional 5 Officers; officially formed in October 2023. The Humanitarian Response Team is busy providing support, advice and assistance to refugees being resettled via safe and legal routes as well as new refugees who have been given leave to remain. The team liaises with partners to maximise opportunities of inclusion into the community and reduce the risk of homelessness and rough sleeping.
- The Council's Chief Executive is the East Region Full Dispersal Chief Executive Officer (CEO) lead and our Assistant Director – Housing Operations & Safe Communities is the East Region Full Dispersal strategic housing lead.
- In partnership with Hertfordshire County Council, Prevent training has been delivered across all Dacorum asylum sites, to Home Office accommodation agents, Voluntary Community Sector staff and Dacorum Officers.
- In collaboration with a local Voluntary Community Sector partner, Dacorum is currently in the process of establishing a women's group for the community with the aim of reducing social isolation and supporting, delivery of education, training and social networks.
- Pride month, Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day were highlighted with different activities taking place e.g. The forum was lit up purple to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Cost of Living pop up sessions were run in the community to support anyone struggling with the cost of living crisis. These sessions brought together key organisations and professionals who were able to support and guide our community based on their needs.

- The Safer Communities Team has engaged with the local community via the Safer Communities Survey, Service user forums, School Initiatives.
- Community events have been undertaken with statutory partners in the Community Safety Partnership to ensure compliance with the Community Safety Partnership Action Plan, with a focus on hotspot areas, under-represented groups and local demand.
- A community event to commemorate Windrush 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary attended by the Mayor including raising the Windrush flag and numerous celebrations such as drummers, school competitions and films shown at our theatre.
- 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 for them to be more accessible for disabled residents
- We have updated our Domestic Abuse policies (for Residents, Tenants, Leaseholders & Members, and Employees).
- Mandatory Manager training on Domestic Abuse was rolled out so that managers are better equipped to deal with domestic abuse incidents with their teams.
- Library staff were trained on how to identify and support possible victims of domestic abuse.
- Hate crime awareness week national campaign, public drop-in with partners held in the Forum.
- White Ribbon campaign session held at West Herts College promoting awareness and engagement with young males.
- Bike marking events in partnership with DENS (for people in Dacorum facing homelessness, poverty, and social exclusion) Bike Project and Herts Police.
- Supporting Police on Op Sceptre – national knife crime awareness campaign
- Community Safety and Safeguarding drop in sessions for staff held 6 weekly providing guidance and advice. Further guidance and signposting also available online on a new internal Community Safety intranet site.
- Partner engagement and relationship building with statutory and third sector partners to improve attendance at partnership meetings and to provide customers with a more streamlined approach and early intervention.
- Supported Police Operation focused on shoplifting.

- Housing Open Day attendance in partnership with Police.
- Partnership working with Herts County Council to improve relationships and engagement with a local traveller site.
- Amended and updated our community promotional material to reach a wider demographic and strategically placed our posters in key locations.
- Updated our Antisocial Behaviour Case Review procedure.
- Updated our Antisocial Behaviour Policy.

## Activities Planned

- A wider piece of work (part of the Digital Transformation Programme) looking at data across the Council is currently taking place which will pave the roadmap for us to deliver our digital platform. A working group is already set up and is planning how best to collect and report on equality data. This will define the requirements for an online form to capture data on equality once the Digital Platform goes live and will enable us to more effectively plan and support our communities.
- Once work has been undertaken on the development of the digital platform, each service area will be asked to agree Equality Key performance indicators regarding data in their areas.
- 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.
- The Council is continually working towards being accredited by the [Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance](#) . This is likely to be achieved by the next financial year in 2025. The accreditation process requires a commitment of Domestic Abuse Awareness raising, which is something we continue to do.
- 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.
- Community Safety Action Day involving multiple partner agencies to be scheduled for summertime.
- Regular distribution of a Community Safety Newsletter.

- Collaborative working with fire service at local secondary schools focusing on road safety.
- Promotion of St Albans and Dacorum Youth Action Panel and the No More Youth Service.
- A plan to raise awareness and run events in relation to; Antisocial Behaviour Awareness Week July 2024, White Ribbon and 16 Days of Action 2024 and Hate Crime Awareness Week 2024.

### **Priority Areas**

The 2024 Strategic Assessment along with analysis from the Community Safety Survey will highlight priority areas locally to ensure appropriate allocation of resource for the Community Safety Partnership from April 2024 onwards.

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

### **Performance against target (to date):**

We are currently in the process of migrating to our new digital platform that will enable us to gather all customer data centrally. In the meantime we have implemented an engagement platform that gathers all customer views and feedback on specific projects that feed towards our council improvements. To date, this data has allowed us to identify areas that require more engagement.

### **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**

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion has been included as part of the annual Service Planning process.
- The EDI Action plan was shared with the Strategic Leadership Team and will continue to be presented every 6 months.
- Diverse image bank for internal and external communications is in use and internal intranet page is being reviewed to update content and images.
- Work continues to review our website to improve its content and structure and ensure it is more accessible for all. For example:
  - We have produced a detailed web content guidelines document to help our service editors create accessible, easy-to-use content.
  - We are using a tool to ensure our website is accessible by screen readers.
  - The accessibility of the website is also regularly checked and updates considered and/made as necessary.
- Our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process has been reviewed and recommendations made include early inclusion of EIA considerations in all supporting documents and reports (Project Boards for example) and the implementation of our Corporate Leadership Team reviewing all EIAs that are completed to ensure they are fully considered and to feedback any areas for further consideration/review.

### **Activities Planned**

- Establish a standard for EDI compliance in relation to our suppliers and contractors.
- 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.
- All policies/ processes/ action plans referred in this document (Hate Crime Action Plan, Menopause Policy, Community Safety Action Plan, HR policies) will be reviewed to ensure equality issues are taken on board.

- Implementation of Equality Impact Assessment recommendations – both the cultural and practical elements of this revised approach.
- Develop Dacorum’s EDI Strategy (2025-2029) and associated action plans.

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

**Performance against target (to date):**100%

### **Borough Data**

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 from 2018-2022. The population increased by 7.1% between the 2011 and 2021 census which is 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, dual heritage & other ethnic groups 4.6%.
- Women have a higher life expectancy of 84.4 years compared to 80.6 years for men.
- Romanian was Hertfordshire's most spoken non-English language (1.3% of residents), followed by Polish with 0.9% of residents.
- Out of 93 neighbourhoods in the borough, 4 are in the 20% most income deprived in England.
- 3.1% of households in Dacorum in 2021 had nobody who spoke English as a first language.
- 7.4% of children under the age of 16 live in families in absolute low income in Dacorum (2021/2022 Department of Work and Pensions).
- 3.1% of households do not have English as a first language which is lower than the Hertfordshire average of 4.3%.



- 303 Anti-Social Behaviour incidents were reported in Dacorum in April 2024.
- Dacorum had 14.7% fewer Domestic Abuse offences reported in 2021 than in 2020.
- As at November 2023 Dacorum had 2.8% of residents claiming Jobseekers Allowance.
- In 2022 Dacorum's population of residents aged 65+ was at 18%.

We have access to the following data sources that also keep us up to date with the data of our community:

- [Dacorum 2024 Dashboard](#)
- [Local communities | Herts Insight \(hertfordshire.gov.uk\)](#)

Please see actions within the action plan in relation to the steps the Council is taking to improve the data on our residents/customers.

Contact details:

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