

EQUALITY PLAN: How are we meeting our five equality objectives? Annual update as at March 2021

Objective one: Leading by Example within the Community

Activities to achieve objective one	Our achievements
Publish our approach to equalities widely.	<p>We have a published Equality Policy and Equalities Scheme. We also have information on our website about our approach to equalities.</p>
Engage with groups representing people with protected characteristics.	<p>The council’s Community Partnership team held around 60 events in 2019/20, reaching out to all groups within the community. The events were targeted at all different groups within the community and focused on a range of special interests, to encourage engagement among everyone, including people with protected characteristics. Events ranged from local information days, food and cultural festivals, children’s activities, including our annual summer events programmes, sports activities, youth council, and many more.</p> <p>All list of all our events can be found here: https://www.welhat.gov.uk/events-search.</p> <p>The team has been working through the Covid restrictions with a series of on-line events</p> <p>We want to work with as many groups as possible so that our diverse community have every opportunity to benefit from the expertise available at the council. If you would like to be involved, please contact us. media@welhat.gov.uk</p> <p>We are developing a new customer engagement strategy, to ensure that we engage with all our different stakeholders in the best way, including groups representing those with protected characteristics</p>

<p>Ensure that partners and contractors delivering services on our behalf adopt our principles and approach to equalities.</p>	<p>A contractor's awayday was held by the council in July 2019. The aim of the event was to share with contractors the council's expectations in relation to values and objectives. It included the council's approach to equalities and our expectations for how contractors must engage with the council's customers, when delivering services on behalf of the council.</p> <p>The council's equality policy is shared with contractors as part of the tendering process, with potential new contractors required to demonstrate that they have the arrangements in place within their organisations to comply with the council's standards.</p> <p>We have been continuing to work with contractors and in particular to ensure that safeguarding measures are put in place in light of vulnerable households during Covid.</p>
<p>Work with partner organisations and community representatives to monitor the effects of Brexit on community cohesion.</p>	<p>This has been included within the council's Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Action Plan, of which the council plays a co-ordinating role. In the initial aftermath of the Brexit decision there was an increase in hate crimes in the community, but this has levelled off.</p> <p>This matter is now a regular discussion item within the CSP, with particular attention being paid to the Brexit deadline of December 2020, to ensure that any new surges are addressed.</p> <p>To date there are no known community impacts as a result of Brexit and this will continue to be monitored.</p>
<p>Monitor progress of Equality and Diversity objectives.</p>	<p>This is carried out at each of our quarterly Equality Steering Group meeting. Actions against the objectives are dynamic, reflecting new and emerging internal and external factors.</p> <p>We continue to meet quarterly</p>

Objective two: Value and Understand our Communities

Activities to achieve objective two	Our achievements
<p>Collect relevant information about our customers so that we can understand more about their needs and preferences for services delivery and to help us identify barriers or potential barriers to accessing our services.</p>	<p>We collect information about customers who receive council services where this will help us understand more about their needs. This helps us plan our services around our customers. Different teams in the council collect different types of information, depending on the services we provide and only where the information is needed to deliver these services in the right way. We don't collect information just to keep, where this does not have any purpose.</p> <p>The JADU system is currently being implemented.</p>

<p>.</p>	<p>This also helps us make sure that specific requests for service made by customers are taken into account. The council have selected a new partner, JADU, to develop a new platform and Customer Relation Management System. This system will allow residents to tell us how they want to be contacted and their individual preferences for service delivery.</p>
<p>Act on customer feedback when shaping our services, including information received through our complaints process and regular customer surveys.</p>	<p>A new Complaints Policy has been implemented within the council. The policy aims to make it clear to customers how they can contact us if they wish to complain about a service, and what to expect once they have made a complaint. This includes the council's approach to learning from customer feedback received as a result of complaints.</p>
<p>Deliver and support local events to ensure we raise awareness of diversity and encourage community participation.</p>	<p>In addition to the council's broad range of community activities, there have been events specifically targeted toward promoting diversity awareness. These events include the World Food Festival, participation in Herts Pride and holding the Holocaust Memorial Day involving active participation by local schools. In addition, the council co-ordinates annual Community Information days and takes a lead role in the Crucial Crew events for young citizens, focussing on the role of young people in our society.</p> <p>The Council has promoted the on-line publication of several culture specific videos focusing on how to stay safe during the Coronavirus outbreak. These are directly available to the public from the Council's website and can be found here: https://one.welhat.gov.uk/life-beyond-lockdown/staying-alert</p>
<p>Work with employees, local communities and Members to ensure that our valuing of diversity is reflected in our local democracy.</p>	<p>Regular employee and Member communications are provided by the council on all areas of its work, including corporate objectives and values. This is supported by all-staff briefings and the weekly staff newsletter. The corporate principle of #oneteam and #workingbettertogether, promote the principle of equality, fairness and inclusivity. We train all our staff, including equalities induction training for new starters. New Members briefings and equality training is also provided, for all Members.</p>

<p>Review, update and publish the demographic profile for the borough on an annual basis.</p>	<p>The council's Annual Monitoring Report provides updates on the local demographics, including ethnicity, age and disability. This is reported to Members through the council's governance arrangements and is published on the council's website.</p>
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Objective Three: Deliver Fully accessible, fair and inclusive Services

Activities to achieve objective three	Our achievements
<p>Publish a new Customer Service Strategy which sets out our commitment to delivering customer-focused services.</p> <p>Implement the Customer Service Strategy.</p>	<p>This was launched in 2018. The six principles of the Strategy that underpin the council's approach are that we will be: Customer Focussed, Clear, Accessible, Efficient, Reliable and Transparent. These principles link closely to the council's Equality Policy and our Customer Service Commitment is widely communicated to staff, Members and Customers, with visible presence throughout council officers through a series of posters.</p> <p>This is ongoing, with messages regularly reinforced through a range of staff communications, including briefings and newsletters. The aims of the Customers Service Strategy have been a key consideration in the council's evolving corporate Modernisation Agenda, including the new Delivery working group.</p>

<p>Offer a range of ways for customers to contact us and make sure that council offices and other public areas are accessible to people with limited mobility and different sensory abilities.</p>	<p>The council's corporate Modernisation Programme will help ensure a seam-free approach to customer service access and digital communications and service delivery.</p> <p>In 2019 the council launched the 'sign video' service, following feedback from the Welwyn Hatfield Deaf Club. The service enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing to communicate using sign language through an online translator, whether over the phone, or in person at our reception. The council developed this service through consultation with the Welwyn Hatfield Deaf Club.</p>
<p>Make the most of technology to provide 24/7 access to services and to help enable easy access to online services for people with different needs.</p>	<p>The council has adopted the international standard for web content accessibility. This will make sure that our web content and design is clear and simple enough so that most people can use it, regardless of a disability.</p> <p>The council's new customer management system, JADU, will enable residents to contact us in a consistent way across the council and will also promote 'self-serve', where possible. This system will also allow residents to tell us how they want to be contacted and preferences for service delivery.</p> <p>Progress is being made through the modernisation agenda. The Covid pandemic has helped to accelerate this work and different services continue to look at greater ways to engage with customers digitally.</p>
<p>Monitor the council's website to ensure it remains up to date and relevant.</p>	<p>This is an ongoing process. The council's website has gone through a major transformation during 2019 and is now more user-friendly, incorporating mobile and tablet-friendly interfaces. Through Customer Service and Digital development programme, service delivery will be moving more online across the council, while meeting the latest web accessibility requirements.</p> <p>We welcome any comments on how this can be improved. If you have any comments please contact us webadmin@welhat.gov.uk</p>

<p>Monitor complaints and investigate where there are concerns that people with one or more protected characteristic are impacted negatively by our services or lack of service provision.</p>	<p>Our new Complaints Policy focuses on how we learn from customer feedback. Where a complaint is related to an individual's protected characteristic this is investigated as parts of the complaints process. The council's comprehensive approach for carrying out Equality Impact Assessments extends to the amendment of existing policies and creation of new policies and aims to 'design out' unintentional discrimination. In this way, we take a proactive approach, which should reduce the need for customers to complain.</p>
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<p>Assess the impact of our services and policies on our customers, taking into account the diversity of everyone we work with and for.</p>	<p>During 2019 the council launched its updated and more simplified approach to carrying out Equality Impact Assessments. EQIAs are carried out where a new policy is being developed, which impacts on either internal or external customers. This also applies where an existing policy is being amended. EQIAs must be completed as a desk-top exercise initially and must identify whether stakeholder consultation is required as part of the process. Where consultation takes places, the EQIA must be updated to reflect the outcome of the consultation.</p>
<p>Take a consistent approach to carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and ensure the process is clear for employees and simple to implement. Provide training to employees and publish a guidebook which explains how and when they should be carried out.</p>	<p>We have a published a clear and easy to understand guide for staff and Members. All Members reports contain a section which must be completed officers, and which specifies whether an EQIA has been carried out (and if not, why this is the case), along with the findings from the EQIAs.</p> <p>Training is provided to all staff and this is included in Members' Equality and Diversity training.</p> <p>Update training is in the process of being provided.</p>
<p>Monitor completed EqIAs to ensure they comply with the standard set by the council.</p>	<p>All EQIAs are monitored, quality-checked and reported to the Equality Steering Group.</p> <p>Continues</p>
<p>Ensure that elected Members understand how to interpret the findings from Equality Impact Assessments so that they can make informed decisions on matters relating to changes to policies and services and the introduction of new ones.</p>	<p>This is included in Members' Equalities training, as referred to above.</p> <p>A new round of members training will take place in the new municipal year</p>
<p>Initial access audits of sites.</p>	<p>A Disability Discrimination Act 1995 compliant access audit was conducted of all council sites during 2019/20. The aim has been to ensure that all sites, whether customer facing or for back-office functions are fully accessible and/or all reasonable adjustments have been made to facilitate access by staff, Members, residents and external customers and visitors.</p> <p>Any issues of concern have been brought back for discussion within the Equalities Steering Group and appropriate changes implemented, as deemed 'reasonable' within the context of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.</p>

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<p>As digital service options are progressed, undertake an 'inclusivity audit' to identify if any barriers or risk of disproportionate access exists towards different sections of the community.</p>	<p>This will be an integral part of the roll-out of the JADU customer service management system. It is designed simplify and bring up to date our approach to customer service access and digital communications and service delivery.</p>
<p>To put in place arrangements for managers to request workplace adaptations for new staff who need them.</p>	<p>This has been promoted through the staff newsletter, in a special edition. We will continue to promote this. This is also discussed with new employees, prior to starting work with us.</p>

Objective four - Provide equal opportunities to our employees

Activities to achieve objective four	Our achievements
<p>We will promote our positive approach to diversity in the workplace, including providing assurance that we will make reasonable adjustments for employees so that they can participate fully in life as an employee of Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.</p>	<p>As part of the council's approach to ensuring an accessible workplace, adaptations are provided to council sites to accommodate employees. Reasonable adjustments are made for employees upon request and the council's sickness policy ensures that employees returning to work have a discussion with their manager on any specific requirement. We monitor our managers' performance to make sure they are doing this and reports on this performance are shared regularly with Corporate Directors</p> <p>The council works closely with our specialist occupational health service to help assist employees. All employees also have access to an employee assistance programme. Managers offer this service to all employees returning to the workplace after any sickness absence.</p> <p>Covid 19 – regular staff surveys have been conducted to monitor the wellbeing of staff who are affected by changes to working practices, including home working as a result of the pandemic. Managers are required to have regular contact with staff, and staff are asked to feedback on this as part of this survey process. We publish the results of these surveys to all staff, along with any advice on where to get extra support, where issues are raised in the surveys.</p>

	<p>We are now working on supporting staff as we begin to see the end of lockdown and will be engaging with staff as we prepare to come back to the workplace.</p>
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<p>Closely and regularly monitor the demographics of our workforce population and work towards redressing any disparity between the diversity of our community and our employees. We will do this by ensuring that our recruitment processes are fair and job opportunities are widely advertised. We will ensure that officers involved in the recruitment process are trained and understand the council's approach to equality and diversity so that this is reflected in all recruitment processes. We will ensure that the recruitment process is accessible, and we will make it clear that we will make reasonable adjustments for applicants so that they do not face barriers during the application process.</p>	<p>The council's Human Resources team collects data on employees during the recruitment process and the workforce is regularly monitored and reported on quarterly. Where there are any concerns coming out of the reporting process, these will be reported to the Equalities Steering Group and investigated.</p> <p>The council is an equal opportunities employer and makes this clear throughout the recruitment process. All employees are asked to attend an exit interview when they leave the council's employment and any issues of concern raised by employees are addressed with managers, heads of service, and where appropriate, Corporate Directors.</p>
<p>Produce an analysis of the 'life cycling' profile of employees. This will apply to all protected groups where self-reported by employees or where information on their protected characteristics comes to light through the course of their employment with the council.</p>	<p>The council's quarterly monitoring reports provides an up to date analysis of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of employees • Employees by gender • Employees by disability • Employees by ethnicity • Employees by age • Leavers by service area • Reason for leaving • Length of service by gender <p>The latest quarter's statistics can be found here:</p> <p>https://www.welhat.gov.uk/equality-diversity/quarterly-report</p> <p>End of year data to be published shortly</p>

	<p>Equality & Diversity statistics</p> <p>Gender The authority has a higher number of female employees than males. This might be explained by the opportunity to work part time hours and the nature of some of the positions which has customarily attracted more females. We generally receive more applications from females than males. We constantly review our recruitment campaigns to attract the widest possible pool of talent.</p> <p>Disability We believe that our disability statistics are under reported. There is no requirement for employees to declare a disability. New recruits are more likely to provide this information than existing employees who do not feel the need to so as they frequently report that it does not affect their ability to undertake their duties.</p> <p>Ethnicity Although our workforce is predominantly white, it is broadly comparable to the local community. We continue to attract the widest pool of talent to vacant roles.</p> <p>Age bands We have fewer employees in the under 20 age band, but this has increased by offering apprenticeships to local school leavers.</p> <p>Turnover Turnover statistics are relatively low at the current time.</p> <p>Where reported data suggests a disparity in terms of diversity, an explanation is provided on what measures are being taken to proactively work towards reducing this.</p>
<p>Monitor the council's intranet to ensure it remains up to date and relevant.</p>	<p>This is monitored and kept regularly updated, as part of our approach to keeping staff informed on the council's approach and initiatives relating to Equalities.</p>

<p>Provide appropriate training to employees and elected Members so that they understand the council's approach to equality and how this translates into service delivery and human resources services for all customers and employees.</p>	<p>New employees are required to undergo equalities induction training. Members are also invited to attend regular equalities training. The aim of the training is to provide an overview of the council's legal and moral responsibilities towards our diverse communities and our workforce. The council is in the process of procuring refresher online equalities training for all staff.</p> <p>A new three tier training programme has been introduced.</p>
<p>Ensure that as far as is possible all corporate policies are aligned so that the council's commitment to equal opportunities is reflected in all areas of work.</p>	<p>Corporate policies are reviewed at a number of stages, including the council's Corporate Management Team and by Members, at a meeting appropriate to the council's constitution, depending on the type of policy. Any report introducing a policy must contain an Equality Statement, including details of the EQIA undertaken in respect of that policy.</p>

Objective Five: Consult with residents and the community

Activities to achieve objective five	Our achievement
<p>Make reasonable adjustments to ensure that there are no barriers to prevent people participating in a way in which they feel comfortable.</p>	<p>We are able to deliver services in different ways, based on the needs of our customers.</p> <p>This includes customers who need face to face contact with our officers. Through our access audits of all public council sites, we have made sure that our buildings are accessible to people with disabilities, based on Disability Discrimination Act 1995 standards.</p> <p>For customers choosing to access services online we are developing an inclusive approach, through our Customer Service and Digital Transformation work programme.</p> <p>This approach is supported by the information we collect about our customers, as described above.</p>
<p>Encourage people to have their say through a framework of resident and stakeholder consultation methods including</p> <p>Borough Panel</p> <p>Tenants Panel</p> <p>Focus Groups</p> <p>Specialist Groups facilitated by the council, including the Disability Access Group</p>	<p>We are developing a new customer engagement strategy looking at all our stakeholders, including groups representing people with protected characteristics. One of the priorities identified is to make engagement with the council as easy as possible, and we are investigating the potential for widening the use of social media and other online tools to do so.</p> <p>In addition to our wider consultations, we engage in a targeted way with different groups of customers, including council tenants (the Tenants Panel) and our Borough Panel. We work with the Youth Council and hold special interest focus groups from time to time.</p> <p>The engagement for housing tenant and lease holders is being reviewed in light of the housing white paper to be implemented in April 2022</p>
<p>Engage with other organisations through a range of forums including Welwyn Hatfield Alliance and other strategic partnerships</p>	<p>The council plays a vital role in leading on and contributing to a wide range of community-focussed partnership groups. We work directly with special interest groups to help improve our understanding of the needs of different groups of people in our communities and we engage through our Chairmanship of the Welwyn Hatfield Strategic Alliance. These are detailed in Appendix 1.</p>

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<p>Put in place appropriate arrangements to share relevant equality information with partners taking into account GDPR. Working with the council's Data Protection Officer, agree individual data sharing protocols.</p>	<p>The Council has taken a robust approach in ensuring compliance with GDPR, with a number of data sharing agreements in place with individual agencies and partnerships.</p>
<p>Participate in relevant groups which operate in the borough, specifically those which meet the needs of people with different protected characteristics.</p>	<p>We have a working relationship with the Deaf Club and encourage other groups to share ideas with us. Our local strategic partnership, the Welwyn Hatfield Alliance is key to ensuring that the needs of all our communities are; provided for, using an effective, multi-agency approach.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; gap: 20px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Wel Hat Alliance Infogram.pdf </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  Your WelHat Alliance (Web Document).pdf </div> </div>
<p>Encourage discussion with groups representing the interests of the diverse communities and facilitate their work where practical.</p>	<p>As above, we would encourage other groups to contact us for idea sharing and conversation. We would love to hear from you if you are interested in working with us, to promote your group communitypartnerships@welhat.gov.uk</p>
<p>Work with the Interfaith Group to encourage more schools to get involved with Holocaust Memorial Day</p>	<p>The council works actively with the Welwyn Hatfield Interfaith Group and has delivered the Holocaust Memorial Day and a Peace Gathering event during 2019-20. The council looks forward to continuing this close working arrangement in the future. A successful on-line memorial took place in January involving local schools who worked with the council to develop a series of films.</p>
<p>Hate crime reporting scheme Developed in partnership with the police and community safety partners.</p>	<p>The Hate Crime scheme has been successful in encouraging victims of Hate Crime to come forward and report issues in a location of their choice. The council has been a key partner in the scheme and has trained a number of staff to be on hand where a victim attends on a 'walk in' basis. 44 Hate Crime reports have been made during 2019/2020. A breakdown of the reasons for Hate Crime reporting are set out in Appendix Two. These will be reported at year end. The number of hate crime reports will be updated at the next meeting. The ASB Team will be picking up hate crime in the refreshed CSP action plan. Also the hate crime champions and ASB team will receive further hate crime</p>

	training around this. The lead officer for this will be Kerry Clifford.
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Appendix one Partnerships

Name of group	Partners	Council's role
Responsible Authorities Group	15 partners	Lead
Joint Authorities Group and associated sub groups	40+ partners	Lead
Welhat 11-19 Group	40+ partners	Lead
Alliance Board	20+ partners	Lead
Community Inclusion Partnership	25+ partners	Lead
Hatfield Town Centre Forum and Business Forum	20+ partners	Lead
WelHat Sports	120+ partners and clubs	Lead
Hatfield Community Sport Fund Board	9 partners	Lead
Sports facilities strategy steering group	25+ partners	Administer
Herts Community Safety Managers Group	15+ partners	Sit on (vice chair) + Administer
Herts legacy and Lifestyle partnership	25+ partners	Sit on
Herts Sports Partnership Local Authority Group	12+ partners	Sit on

Appendix two – Hate Crime report types, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, 2019/2020

2020 Hate Crime 1st March to 21st May – 18 Crimes recorded

Offence	Number	Date
Racially or religiously aggravated common assault or beating	15	1st March - 21st May 2019
Racially or religiously aggravated intentional harassment, alarm or distress	11	1st March - 21st May 2019
Racially or religiously aggravated assault or assault occasioning actual bodily harm	1	1st March - 21st May 2019
Assault without Injury - Common assault and battery	1	1st March - 21st May 2019
Hate Incident - Racial	0	1st March - 21st May 2019
Threats to kill	0	1st March - 21st May 2019
Threaten with an offensive weapon in a public place	1	1st March - 21st May 2019

2019 Hate Crime 1st March to 21st May – 26 crimes recorded

Offence	Number	Date
Racially or religiously aggravated common assault or beating	1	1st March - 21st May 2020
Racially or religiously aggravated intentional harassment, alarm or distress	3	1st March - 21st May 2020
Racially or religiously aggravated assault or assault occasioning actual bodily harm	1	1st March - 21st May 2020
Assault without Injury - Common assault and battery	1	1st March - 21st May 2020
Hate Incident - Racial	11	1st March - 21st May 2020
Threats to kill	1	1st March - 21st May 2020
Threaten with an offensive weapon in a public place	0	1 st March – 21 st May 2020