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1. Foreword

Hertfordshire is a diverse place to live and work and our county’s demography reflects a broad range of people from different backgrounds. Hertfordshire County Council is committed to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do making it part of our DNA.

We are dedicated to making our services accessible for everyone; working with our communities and partnerships to ensure that our policies and practices are anti-discriminatory and inclusive.

The Council works with a number of partners and community sector organisations to make Hertfordshire a safe and inclusive County of Opportunity for all its residents. The Council recognises that there is more we need to do to achieve this goal and is committed to doing its best and play its part in the vital task of removing racism and discrimination in Hertfordshire.

The Covid-19 has raised important questions on health inequalities and the disproportionate impact it may have had on Black Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people. The Black Lives Matter movement and the death of George Floyd in the United States of America have brought to the fore challenges faced by our BAME communities including racism, health inequalities, language barriers and sometimes prejudice and hostility.

The Leader of the Council stated that “At a time where BAME communities globally are expressing their anger and frustration with institutional racism which disproportionately affects them, we would like to take this opportunity to restate our condemnation of racism, discrimination and hatred in all its forms”. This year the Council unanimously agreed to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism.

The Council acknowledges that, alongside the threat of overt racism, there exists deeply ingrained and often unconscious discrimination across all levels of society. As a county Council representing a diverse community, this year we launched the first part of our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which has an internal focus on the Council’s workforce which will ensure that our staff and services are both reflective of the community and making a commitment to being an anti-racist organisation. We have an important role to play in dismantling biases and systemic oppression. In 2021 we will be launching the second part of our Diversity & Inclusion Strategy which will have an external focus on further embedding equality, diversity and inclusion for all of our service users; communities and partnerships.

Owen Mapley  
Chief Executive  
Director of Children’s Services and Chair of Diversity & Inclusion Board

Ralph Sangster  
Executive Member, Resources & Performance

Jenny Coles

Hertfordshire is a diverse place to live and work and our county’s demography reflects a broad range of people from different backgrounds. Hertfordshire County Council is committed to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion in everything we do making it part of our DNA.
Hertfordshire is home to a diverse range of people from a broad range of different backgrounds. Hertfordshire has become more diverse in the last 10 years. According to data available from mid-year population estimate 2018, Hertfordshire’s population is over 1,189,500. This is an increase of 73,100 people since the last census in 2011.

We use this information to improve our services as we know that people from different backgrounds experience different life chances. This may be language barriers, higher unemployment, health inequalities, and sometimes prejudice and hostility.

Hertfordshire’s diverse ethnic minority community speaks over 120 LANGUAGES as a first language. The top 10 languages spoken, after English are: Polish, Romanian, Urdu, Gujarati, Tamil, Turkish, Italian, Spanish, Arabic and Portuguese.

Approximately 23% of the county’s school aged children are from BAME backgrounds.

The Black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities now make up approximately 19% of the county’s population. Over 14,000 estimated number of people who are Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender or other.

8.6% of Hertfordshire residents were born in a non-EU country. This is an increase of approximately 8% since the last census.

3.7% of Hertfordshire residents were born in an EU country that wasn’t the UK.

MALE 49% FEMALE 51%

Males are more predominant amongst those from Mixed, Asian and ‘Other ethnic’ groups. Males from Gypsy/Traveller backgrounds make up 5.1% less of the group’s population compared to the White British.

We recognise that all people are individual, and that their needs can be complex and varied.

Over 14.3% residents in Hertfordshire have their day-to-day activities limited to some extent due to a health problem or a physical disability.

Over 17% ADULTS between the ages of 16-74 have a common mental health disorder.

MAJOR RELIGIONS in Hertfordshire are; Christianity (58.25%), Islam (2.8%), Hinduism (1.93%), Judaism (1.91%), Buddhism (0.49%) and Sikhism (0.45%).

Over 26.5% do not follow any religion.
3. Our commitment to Equality and Diversity

The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) sets out anti-discrimination laws in the UK. It identifies protected characteristics as; age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnerships.

Section 149 of the Act places a specific duty called the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) on public sector organisation to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people from different groups
- foster good relations between people from different groups

The Act also explains that advancing equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people, and
- Encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to advancing equality of opportunity for all our residents and workforce by removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people because of their protected characteristics.

4. Our key achievements in 2019/20

Hertfordshire County Council supports individuals and communities in all aspects of their daily life. The Council carries out a wide range of work that challenges discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and promotes good relations between communities. This report provides a snapshot of our activities in relation to Diversity and Inclusion for our service users and within our communities and partnerships.

Equality duty and PSED: The diagram below outlines benefits and outcomes for HCC

Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010

**Eliminating Discrimination**
- Outcomes for HCC:
  - Where service users feel that they are supported
  - An organisation that promotes and practices inclusivity
  - An employer that responds and challenges quickly and fairly to discrimination

**Advancing Equality of Opportunity**
- Outcomes for HCC:
  - Where residents feel they are listened to and decisions are acted on
  - An organisation that values and acts upon diverse opinions
  - A workforce that feels valued and proud to work in Hertfordshire

**Fostering Good Relations**
- Outcomes for HCC:
  - Residents and stakeholders feel that they are empowered
  - Working with partners to reach mutually beneficial outcomes
  - An organisation that listens to and acts upon service users feedback

**Business benefits:**
- External partners feel informed and contribute positively to HCC outcomes to deliver better services
- Further buy-in and support from staff and outside agencies on key Council programmes
- Greater productivity from engaged workforce
- A workforce that is representative and understands the communities it serves
- Reduced reputational risk
Theme 1 - Eliminating Discrimination

An organisation that challenges discrimination, protects the most vulnerable and creates an environment where service users feel that they are supported and listened to

Hertfordshire County Council’s Equalities Network conference

Understanding challenges and barriers to accessing services by our vulnerable communities

In October 2019, the County Council, in partnership with the Herts Equality Council arranged a countywide equalities conference.

The aims of the conference were:
• to identify current equalities issues in Hertfordshire
• to discuss ways in which Hertfordshire County Council can work together with community, voluntary and statutory sectors

The conference brought together a wide range of partners from statutory, voluntary and community sectors to discuss ways in which we can work together to tackle them. The event was hosted by the Council’s Executive Member for Resources and Performance, Cllr Ralph Sangster with support from the Chair of the Herts Equality Council, Kate Belinis DL.

Key outcomes of this event were:
• A better understanding of equality and diversity picture across Hertfordshire
• A better understanding of challenges and barriers to participation by groups and communities

• A discussion on ways to engage in a meaningful and constructive ways to help shape more effective future community engagement
Adult Care Services supporting victims of Domestic Abuse during pandemic

The coronavirus outbreak and the lockdown brought new challenges for people living through domestic abuse. Adult Care Services has worked closely with all services that victims and survivors may come in to contact with to ensure they are identified and still able to access help and support. In particular:

- A ‘one point of contact’ referral pathway was created so victims could call one number for an immediate response.
- Refuge expanded their offer by taking on out of hour calls on a rota basis with their Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA’s) rather than transferring to the national helpline – Keeping the calls to Hertfordshire IDVA’s.
- We have amended our public awareness work by putting posters in supermarkets - acknowledging that victims might be less able to find/access support due to COVID-19
- Provided a dedicated budget to our providers to support clients with ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ so they can support more victims
- Ensured safe transport from hospitals to safe accommodation for victims by reimbursing the cost to providers

Hertfordshire County Council established the Volunteer and People Assistance Cell in response to the coronavirus outbreak within which there were two key operations with a multi-agency governance structure. These were ‘Operation Shield’ and ‘Operation Sustain’. These initiatives supported over 20,000 residents by providing basic food packages and medicine and mobilised our voluntary sector to support those who need it including our vulnerable residents.

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service supporting partners with their response to the COVID pandemic

Our Community Protection have been working with partners countywide to deliver food and essentials to residents who were asked to self-isolate by the Government and NHS for 12 weeks due to underlying health conditions.

- Chief Fire Officer, Daryl Keen, offered the service of Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue operational crews to carry out a door knocking exercise on their local station ground.
- During the ‘door knocking exercise’ crews followed social distancing and implemented safety messages to ensure the safety of the crew and the resident. While speaking with the occupant, crews were able to ascertain if there were any additional needs for support needed and made all the relevant referrals to get them any help which they needed.
- Crews ensured support to our most vulnerable including the elderly and disabled
- As food parcels were disseminated, we ensured that food parcels were delivered by considering cultural/religious requirements.
- Over a six-week period crews carried out visits to all 1,500 properties. This allowed the district safety coordinators to collate the data and feed this back to the County Council, who in turn could inform our partners at the NHS. During the visit’s crews were able to identify addresses of concern, make referrals for safeguarding issues, enlist support from partner agencies and gain access to resources they may have needed.

Hertfordshire Resilience Forum COVID-19 BAME Action Plan

Multi-agency experts from Hertfordshire County Council’s Equalities Team and Public Health Team, District and Borough Councils, elected members and county wide community organisational leads, are working collaboratively to co-produce a county wide strategy across the key partners with experience in BAME inequality and policy. A BAME Action Plan has been produced in order to rebuild trust, fairness and reduce fear of using health and other public services in the aftermath of COVID19.

Hertfordshire’s BAME Action Plan has four workstreams which will consist of various packages of work including; providing infection control support to Taxi Drivers and High Risk Settings, ensuring GPs run risk registers on BAME patients at high risk of severe disease to ensure good health, target SMEs for support and provide Vitamin D in care homes and for shielding population.

Hate Crime in Hertfordshire

Between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, a total of 1,518 hate offences were recorded in Hertfordshire across the five hate crime strands, which are the same as those captured by the Home Office: race/ethnicity, religion/belief, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity. This shows an increase of 33.8% when compared with the same period in the previous year (1 April 2018 – 31 March 2019).

The table below shows recorded Hate Crime by Strand in 2019-20 in Hertfordshire.

Hertfordshire: Recorded Hate Crime by Strand 2019-20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hate strand</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial</td>
<td>77.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Hate Crime Partnership in Hertfordshire is made up of key public sector, voluntary sector and communities in Hertfordshire and are currently refreshing the Hate Crime strategy for Hertfordshire which will be published in October 2020. The key focus of the strategy will be to ensure that victims of hate crime are fully supported and will raise awareness of all crimes of hate crimes in county.
Case Study: The SEND Transformation Programme Equality and diversity in our SEND Transformation

Two years ago, Hertfordshire County Council set a goal to deliver services faster and more effectively to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families and embarked on improving our SEND offer.

The SEND Transformation programme tasked with developing and implementing change across SEND Services has worked to actively include key stakeholders and representative groups from conception. The SEND team has recruited three experts by experience who work alongside the team to inform and develop projects on a day to day basis (link to Expert by Experience blog).

Annual Health Checks.

A public consultation took place in Spring this year on proposals for an improved SEND Information, Advice and Support offer for families to ensure the IAS (Information, Advice and Support) increases its reach of quality information, advice and support. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed before the consultation and 236 people responded with equalities related concerns. These are all being considered before a final decision is made on next steps. Meanwhile, SENDIASS (the statutory service for impartial SEND information, advice and support, continues to deliver its service directly to families despite Covid19 challenges while meeting needs of diverse populations.

For example, SENDIASS arranged for an interpreter to support a family in meeting with the school, which they were also attending, via Microsoft Teams.

As of July 2020

6,914 children were on Education Health Care Plan

22,663 children receive SEN support
Local Offer website
In January 2020, the Council launched the ‘SEND Local Offer’ website. The Local Offer lets parents, carers, young people and professionals know what Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) services are available in Hertfordshire and who can access them. The initial feedback on the new website has been very positive. The link to the Local Offer website: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/localoffer

Preparing for Adulthood
This programme has implemented parent representation at board level through to the task and finish groups to ensure parent feedback and experience is understood to develop services and provision and understand the key challenges in relation to transition into adulthood.

SEND Transport Programme
A SEND Transport School Working Group has been set up with a view to understanding more about the relationship our young people, parents and families have with their schools and education settings. This group will help us develop the transport offer to support preparation for adulthood through independent travel. Through improving working relationships with schools and service providers we provide clearer messaging and services for the children and young people we support.

SEND Cluster has worked to oversee and support the delivery of services during the Covid19 pandemic. A support group was set up at the start of the pandemic and was representative of all services as well as including parent representation. The involvement of parent and carer has enabled swift and effective sharing of parental challenges faced, understanding of the impact of on our children and young people and the opportunity to develop innovative ways of delivering services throughout the crisis. Targeted and accessible communications continue to be regularly posted to help families with SEND children to digest key national and local policy messages. A resources page was quickly compiled to help families pick and choose relevant learning opportunities while many children with SEND were not able to be at school.

Hertfordshire’s Sensory Strategy 2020-2023
Earlier this year, a range of stakeholders, service users and service providers came together at the launch of Hertfordshire’s Sensory Strategy 2020-2023. The Strategy is a joint approach to addressing sensory needs and is aligned with Connected Lives, Hertfordshire County Council’s new social work assessment framework. This Strategy builds on our statutory duties as defined in the Care Act 2014 and Children & Families Act 2014. The event showcased some of the new and innovative ways of supporting those with Sensory Needs. Our Sensory Services assist adults and children who are; Blind or sight impaired, Deaf or hard of hearing, and Deafblind or have a degree of dual sensory loss.
Hertfordshire County Council is committed to advancing equality of opportunity for all. We strive to make all our residents feel valued and included in our decision-making processes and for this we are committed to making inclusion part of our DNA. We recognise that all people are individual, and that their needs can be complex and varied. The Council strive to positively promote diversity and inclusion within our workforce and across the delivery of our services.

Use of data in shaping our services

Hertfordshire County Council’s microsite Herts Insight provides information and statistics about Hertfordshire and its local communities. Herts Insight is available as a demographic evidence base to all, supporting service planning and delivery. This site is frequently promoted to encourage the usage of this tool. The team also provides analytical support for projects as commissioned.

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment supports evidence-based decision making

Commissioners of health and social care services are supported to make evidence-based decisions through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process. The Public Health Evidence & Intelligence team works with commissioners and professional stakeholders to assess the needs of the population and the evidence of what works to meet those needs and to identify gaps in provision. Recommendations to inform commissioning decisions are made in JSNA reports based on this evidence. Recent examples include:

- a JSNA on early help for alcohol misuse which explored local data on adults with hazardous or harmful drinking and provided recommendations for evidence-based, cost-effective interventions to prevent problematic alcohol consumption and reduce the health and community impact of alcohol;
- a JSNA on housing-related support which informed the commissioning of Hertfordshire’s housing-related support services for adults with a complexity of needs, based on the available data and published evidence and guidance.
Equality Impact Assessments

The Council’s process of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) help ensure non-discriminatory service provision and allows service providers to think about how these services and policies might affect different groups of people protected by law, for example in our annual budget setting process. This helps the Council identify differential impact on protected groups and find appropriate mitigating actions.

In Summer of 2019, an audit of a selection of EqIAs was undertaken. The findings were reported to the Diversity Board. The EqIAs for all directorates were found generally good with a recommendation to enhance action plans and wider involvement of stakeholders.

The COVID-19 equality impact assessment enabled the Council to identify differential impacts on various protected characteristics and start thinking about relevant mitigating actions early in the pandemic. The multi-agency Community Reassurance Cell which looks at medium to long-term impacts of the pandemic on our communities incorporates the COVID-19 EqIA findings in its action plan.

Ensuring equality in procurement - Importance of equality in procurement

Each year, the Council enters into contracts worth many millions of pounds. The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that public money is spent in a way that ensures value for money and advances equality of opportunity.

The Buying Better Outcomes guide states that whether services are provided directly by the Council or by other organisations on our behalf, we must meet our legal obligations and duties set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. But this isn’t just about meeting legal duties, it also makes good business sense as considering equalities in procurement process help us to:

- Improve the quality of services and provide value for money
- Deliver services that meet residents’ need, help those who need it most
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Achieve wider social benefits, such as creating training or employment opportunities
Case Study:

Ensuring the core principles of reducing health inequalities and promoting better health outcomes for our communities are embedded in our Public Health Strategy

Public Health continues to put the reduction of health inequalities at the heart of everything it does, and it forms the basis of the Hertfordshire Public Health Strategy. A key part of this is gathering and evaluating data to inform decisions. Each year the Public Health Evidence & Intelligence Team produces and publishes new Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) documents on a wide range of topics [https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/JSNA](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/JSNA), including the 2019-20 assessment on learning disabilities. Each Joint Strategic Needs Assessment includes an equalities impact assessment exploring how the topic relates to protected characterises and other factors such as carer status and armed forces.

The Public Health Team then uses this information to develop service specifications to meet the needs of the local population, providing targeted interventions where a need has been identified. Examples of this are the current pilot to incentivise pregnant women to stop smoking, the #JustTalk campaign to support young people to maintain good mental health, recent work on BAME communities and COVID-19 and work on helping those at greater risk of complications from COVID improve their health such as quit smoking. Understanding how some protected characteristics make people more vulnerable is also important in ensuring services meet need and are accessible e.g. gender, sexual orientation, mental health may lead to greater substance misuse. Population Health Management work with the NHS, including the ongoing provision of advice and support to the NHS led by two Consultants in Public Health working with the CCGs, continues to focus on reducing inequalities.
Hertfordshire County Council raised Pride flag

As a Council we strive to create a workplace which values equality, diversity and inclusivity, and we endeavour to demonstrate these values to our residents as we work in our local communities every day. That’s why in celebration of Hertfordshire Pride in August and to promote these important values, the Council raised the rainbow flag at its main site, County Hall in Hertford.

The pride flag was designed as a symbol of LGBT+ equality in the USA in 1972 as a way of bringing together the various symbols which represented individual parts of the gay rights movement. The flag has since become an international symbol of LGBT+ rights and is synonymous with pride events around the globe.

In addition, during August the Council changed the logo on our website and social media accounts.

Hertfordshire County Council sponsor the Health and Wellbeing marquee at the annual Hertfordshire Pride. This provides an opportunity for Council services to engage with the public and promote the services available. Services who attend include YC Hertfordshire (services for young people), Herts for Learning (support for schools), Adoption and Fostering Services, Trans Support Group.

The Herts Pride event is in its 9th year. Herts Pride is about celebrating diversity and inclusion; taking pride in who we are as a community and challenging prejudices and ending discrimination. The organisers are proud of their achievements in establishing an annual Pride event where everyone is welcome to come and celebrate Hertfordshire’s fabulous LGBTQ+ community. Due to the pandemic, Herts Pride was a virtual event in 2020 with a number of LGBT awareness activities including competitions and entertainment.
Case Study:

Co-production in Hertfordshire is helping to shape our services Considering individual needs of our vulnerable groups and shaping our services accordingly

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to making our services better for everyone.

Last year, our Adult Care Services established the Strategic Co-production Board by carrying out needs analysis which helped identify gaps in service provision.

Co-production is an approach where we bring together a range of people as equal partners including; people who have experience of using services (experts by experience), family members and carers, organisations and staff in Hertfordshire.

Co-production is a really different way of working. It is challenging, inspiring, spirited and ambitious.

The Strategic Co-production Board regularly discusses the challenges faced by the Council having to support more people with less money. Their feedback on priorities is incorporated into ACS decision making relating to the budget.

There are nine linked co-production boards for Older People, Dementia, Physical Disability and Sensory Needs, Learning Disability, All Age Autism, Drug and Alcohol and Mental Health.

Current estimates suggest:
- 21,000 people have a Learning Disability
- 70,000 people have a Physical Disability that has a significant impact on their daily lives
- 11,000 people estimated to have an autism spectrum condition
- 15,000 people over the age of 65 are living with dementia in Hertfordshire.

DISABILITY

DEMENTIA

In Hertfordshire over:
Children’s Services’ Young Commissioners help shape services

Hertfordshire’s Young Commissioners Programme offers a mechanism for co-production in the commissioning of services to ensure positive outcomes for both commissioners and young people.

Young Commissioners comprise a panel of young people aged 11-19 (up to 25 for those with special educational needs) that can be called to make an input to the commissioning of services for young people, mainly in the following areas:

- Children Looked After (CLA) and Safeguarding;
- 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND);
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Young Commissioners are brought into all stages of the commissioning cycle to help ensure that services for young people reflect their needs and perspectives. They are supported by YC Hertfordshire Youth Workers to gain the knowledge, understanding, confidence and skills they need effectively to participate and to make a difference, and to carry out their role.

Young Commissioners contributed to a variety of key programmes including:

**Preparing for Adulthood (SEND project)**
covered their aspirations and goals and what support they need in order to meet those goals to become economically active and as independent as possible.

**Financial information leaflets (SEND project)**
Young commissioners from North Herts College reviewed a draft factsheet providing financial information.

**Recommission of 16+ services for young people who are looked after (CLA project)**
Participated in the scoring of tenders for 16+ services which included different levels of support for young people in care including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and those with high needs or challenging behaviours.

**Feeling Good Week 2020 (CAMHS project)**
Young Commissioners were involved in deciding the theme for Feeling Good Week 2020. They decided on the theme of ‘Be You-nique’ to celebrate and embrace people’s differences and that it is ok to be yourself. Young Commissioners then came together to score the applications against criteria which included how well they met the team.
Theme 3 - Fostering Good Relations

An organisation that listens to and works with partners to reach mutually beneficial outcomes. Residents and stakeholders feel that they are empowered and enabled to make decisions.

Hertfordshire County Council recognises importance of working in partnership with community and voluntary sector organisations in order to ensure voices of all members of communities are considered in its decision-making processes.

The Council has put in place mechanisms to receive feedback from our partners and stakeholders by way of consultations and complaints processes. We understand the importance of the use of data in understanding our communities and therefore we commission relevant data services from our Community Intelligence as well as gather information from other sources including public sector and voluntary sector organisations. This intelligence provides valuable information about emerging hidden communities.

There are a number of different partnerships covering different protected characteristics that the Council is part of. For example; Herts Interfaith Forum, Herts Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender partnership, Herts Migration Forum, Learning Disability Partnership, Herts Pride.

Diversity in Fostering

Hertfordshire County Council is committed to ensuring our foster carers reflect the diverse community that we serve and the wide range of children that we care for. Our foster carer recruitment and advertising is targeted at busting traditional myths about who can foster through promoting positive, real life stories from our diverse range of foster carers. Our training and ongoing support is tailored to meet each foster carers individual needs. Our support groups for foster carers also reflect the diverse foster carer population we have at Hertfordshire. We monitor our diversity data on a monthly basis to ensure we are continuing to build a diverse group of foster carers. Here are a few of our fantastic team of foster carers providing our children with stable, happy, loving family homes.
Supporting our Armed Forces Community

Hertfordshire County Council is proud to be a forces-friendly organisation, providing support to all employees and residents who are members of the Armed Forces Community whether as reservists, veterans, cadet force adult volunteers or as military spouses.

To ensure support to those living in our communities, the Council is a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant and is responsible for organising and supporting the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board, promoted locally as Hertfordshire Heroes. The Board works in partnership with business, military organisations, charities, NHS and local authorities to ensure that no veteran faces a disadvantage when accessing public services, the armed forces community is honoured and celebrated for the sacrifices they have made, and the military and civilian communities are well integrated.

In 2019, we were delighted to be awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme – Gold Award which represents the highest badge of honour available to those that employ and support the Armed Forces community, including veterans and their families.

Case Study:

Embedding equalities in our Household Waste Recycling Centres

Hertfordshire County Council’s Waste Management Unit is determined to improve customer care at Hertfordshire’s Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs).

At the time of introducing their Enforcement Policy, designed to protect staff and customers from abuse at the HWRCs, as well as dealing with abuse of the van permit scheme and fly tipping incidents at our sites, the Waste Management Unit undertook an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA).

This process identified some equalities implications including; some customers may have difficulty understanding the policy if their first language were not English. So, it was suggested to ensure that staff had access to interpreters as needed. Through HCC’s INTRAN service, the team ensured the use of telephone interpreting via Language Line was available at all HWRC sites.

The team produced posters, signs and training materials for the introduction of telephone interpreting. A practical training session was arranged for the site supervisors to enable them to feel confident with the system.

The EqIA also identified that some of our elderly customers and people with mild dementia may need a little extra help when using the HWRCs. The team produced ‘Hints and Tips for Working with the Elderly and People with Dementia.’ These measures have been well received.
Case Study:

**Stronger Together - Herts Inter Faith Conference supports faith communities in Hertfordshire**

On 3 March 2020, Hertfordshire County Council and the Herts Inter Faith Forum (HIFF) brought together faith leaders, dignitaries and over a hundred delegates from faith, interfaith, public and voluntary sectors in Hertfordshire for ‘Stronger Together – a Herts Inter Faith Conference’.

The conference was held at the Focolare Centre for Unity in Welwyn Garden City.

The Council has been working with the Herts Inter Faith Forum since its inception in 2014 with the purpose of providing a strategic voice for faith communities in Hertfordshire through interfaith dialogue by sharing good practice, promoting community cohesion, understanding and respect. HIFF has representation of the district interfaith groups.

In 2019, following recent atrocities across the globe involving people of faith and those with no faith, the Equality and Diversity Team formed a planning group to hold the Herts Inter Faith conference to create opportunities for a dialogue in understanding ways in which faith communities can contribute to addressing some key challenges.

The conference provided an opportunity to hear from a spectrum of views in order to gain a further understanding of how communities by working together become Stronger Together. The speakers included a panel of eminent faith leaders; Rt Rev Richard Atkinson OBE, Rabbi Alan Garber and Imam Ibrahim Mogra who came together to discuss how faiths can become Stronger Together.

The panel was chaired by Jehangir Sarosh, OBE Executive Director Religions for Peace UK.

The conference was opened by the Lord Lieutenant for Hertfordshire, Robert Voss and alongside the High Sheriff, Sarah Beazley and County Councillor Bob Deering addressed the conference on improving interfaith relations in Hertfordshire.

There were workshops on offer on Environment and Climate Change, Health, Wellbeing and Faith, Life Opportunities and Extremism and Challenging Prejudice.
5. Next steps

In 2021 the Council will launch the second part of it’s Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, with an external focus on service users, communities and partnerships.

There will be workshops held with key partners to ensure collective buy-in. The Council understands the need to empower communities and provide them with necessary support in voicing their opinions in order to enhance our service delivery. The Council recognises that service users’ needs could often be complex and at times challenging. The Council values and celebrates diversity of cultures and is determined to provide our diverse communities opportunities to voice their opinions about the services they receive.

The second part of the new Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will highlight the Council’s commitment to recognising the diversity amongst our service users, communities and partnerships. We will be engaging with all of these groups to ensure that our strategy outcomes are equality, inclusion and opportunity for all.