

Progress To Date

- Adoption of an anonymised recruitment process. This means that applicants' names and other key characteristics such as gender, ethnic background (where this information has been given), school and university are removed from the job application before it is considered. This is done with the aim of limiting the potential for bias relating to these characteristics to affect the decision of the hiring manager.
- Use of an online tool to check that the language of job descriptions is as neutral as possible and not likely to dissuade certain groups of people from applying.
- In line with the Employment Service Two Ticks Scheme, all applicants with a disability who meet the essential criteria for a job vacancy are invited to interview.
- Included Equality and Diversity Training in our corporate induction training for staff, and courses on The Equality Act; Equality in the Workplace; and Unconscious Bias on our e-learning platform. The training informs staff about the duties of local authorities with regards to equality, treating people with respect and dignity in the workplace, how to respond to situations which may arise in the workplace, and how to support neurodiverse employees, amongst other topics.
- Included information on equalities in the employee handbook, the Equality and Diversity Intranet page, and in the Equality and Diversity Policy.
- Publish an Annual Gender Pay Gap Report and an Equalities Report which indicates the profile of the workforce, including the breakdown of staff's protected characteristics and the protected characteristics of those who apply to our job vacancies. [Workforce profile | North Herts Council \(north-herts.gov.uk\)](https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/workforce-profile).
- Regular Equal Pay Audits which help us ensure that our pay is fair, by reviewing areas where inequalities are likely to exist and analysing the protected characteristics against pay grades.
- Equalities questions asked of prospective suppliers of goods/services above a certain threshold during the procurement process, via the Selection Questionnaire.
- Consider equality implications for all decisions taken by Council, Cabinet Committees, and delegated decisions. Officers are required to conduct a fuller Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) if implications are identified in the initial consideration.
- Conduct an Annual Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment, which involves reviewing Council and Cabinet key decisions and other relevant reports which conducted a full Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA), to gain a broader view of the overall impacts of council decisions and identify any potential issues.
- The Shaping our Future initiative which has set in motion work to develop the organisation, including securing a diverse, inclusive, and resilient workforce who can meet the needs of our communities. This work has included embedding revised organisational values, and reviewing recruitment processes.

- The creation of The Inclusion Group which looks to understand the experiences of staff, particularly in relation to the protected characteristics or other vectors of disadvantage; and to explore how inclusion could be improved across the council. The group also seek to gauge levels of awareness of equality issues amongst staff and identify training needs.
- Compiled a list of Inclusion contacts who staff can contact to raise questions and concerns, and share experiences in confidence. Contacts can signpost staff to further advice and support where needed.
- Joined Employers for Carers, a forum which is part of Carers UK. Membership gives the council access to resources for employees and managers who have carers in their teams.
- Staff access to Mental Health First Aiders, the Employee Advice Service, (including counselling), and to hold Mental Health mornings to support staff health and wellbeing.
- Creation of a Councillor Parental Leave Policy to support those members who need to take time off for maternity, paternity, shared parental leave, or adoption leave.
- Identified tackling Violence Against Women and Girls as one of our Strategic Priorities for 2022-23 in our Community Safety Action Plan.
- Distribution of Community Grants to not-for-profit organisations working for the benefit of North Herts communities, including support for mental health, those in food poverty, children, older people, and minority groups. (Also including the Covid-19 Community Support Fund).
- Working with organisations like North Herts Centre for Voluntary Services (CVS) and Herts Welcomes Refugees to create links between groups and assist events to support refugees.
- North Herts Museum holds a range of diverse exhibitions and events to increase representation and awareness of groups such as the LGBTQ+ community and British South Asians.
- Leading the Co-operative Councils Innovation Network's policy lab on arts and culture, and the role this can play in improving community cohesion and fostering good relations between different groups.
- Designated Safeguarding Officers to help those with safeguarding concerns to make a referral; and all staff required to undertake safeguarding training at a level relevant to their role.
- Training on Modern Day Slavery made mandatory for all staff, and the inclusion of modern slavery and human trafficking in safeguarding training.
- Third Party Reporting Centre for hate crimes, allowing residents an option to report a hate crime without having to go directly to the police. Hate Crime Champions are able to assist recording and referring details of the crime on to police.