

# Equality Information Report 2020

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If you would like this report in another format, for example large print or Braille, please email:  
[equality@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:equality@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

### **More information**

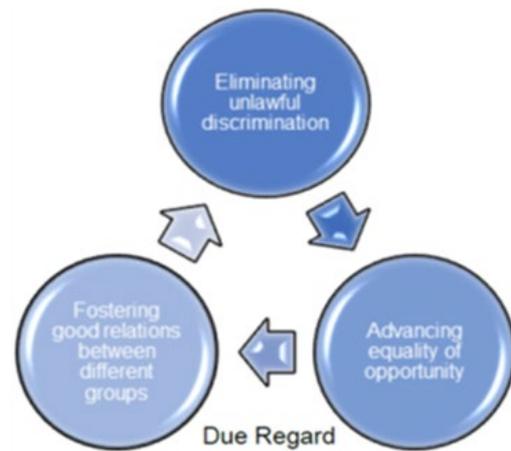
For more information about this report or any aspect of the Council's equality work see  
[www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk) or email [equality@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:equality@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

## 1. Introduction

Statement of commitment to equality

### Short Statement

Epping Forest District Council is committed to treating everyone equally and fairly, according to their needs. This means eliminating unlawful discrimination; fostering good relations between different groups; advancing equality of opportunity.



### Full Statement

- We are committed to ensuring that all individuals and groups are treated with respect and valued equally
- We will ensure that our services accessible to those who need them
- We will endeavour to eliminate unlawful discrimination through our services and employment opportunities
- We will consult and involve people from our community, where appropriate, in the design of our services
- We will collect information about our customers, where necessary, to ensure that our services are accessible and that we are providing the right services
- We will promote understanding and good relations between communities
- We will consider positive action to address under-representation and promote diversity in our workforce
- We will publish annual information about equality and update our Equality Policy/ Scheme at least every four years
- We will use procurement opportunities to drive equality
- We will ensure appropriate resources are available to meet our equality responsibilities
- We will ensure that equality and diversity training is provided for all elected members and Council staff

This report provides an update on work to deliver our equality objectives in 2020, an unprecedented year, where Covid-19 has impacted on all our lives. As an overview, it doesn't contain information on everything we do. As an organisation committed to equality, much of what we do is integrated into our daily work. This report sets out some of the activities we have undertaken to meet our equality objectives as part of our work to embed equality at the Council

## **2. Equality Legislation & Duties**

As a public body, we have several statutory duties with regard to equality. The Equality Act 2010 and public sector Equality Duty require the Council to have due regard to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people from different groups

### **Equality Duty**

The public sector Equality Duty was created by the Equality Act 2010 and places a general duty and specific duties on public bodies and those carrying out public functions. The aim of the general duty is to embed equality into our everyday work. Having due regard means consciously thinking about the aims of the general duty as part of what we do and the decisions we take. The term 'foster' means tackling unlawful discrimination and promoting good relations between different groups of people. Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves:

- Removing or minimising the disadvantages suffered by people with protected characteristics
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics where they differ from the needs of other people
- Encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low

### **Specific Duties**

We also have additional, specific, duties:

- To publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually
- To set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years.

(All information must be published in a way that is easy for people to access it)

### **Equality Objectives**

1. To apply robust equality requirements in commissioning, procurement and contract management
2. We will recruit and retain a diverse workforce, developing our capacity so that our employees have the knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver our plans
3. We will take into account the equality impacts of our emerging proposals and seek to mitigate any adverse impacts where possible
4. We will embed equalities in all we do and make it part of business as usual

### 3. Workforce Equality Profile

586 staff: 353 female, 233 male



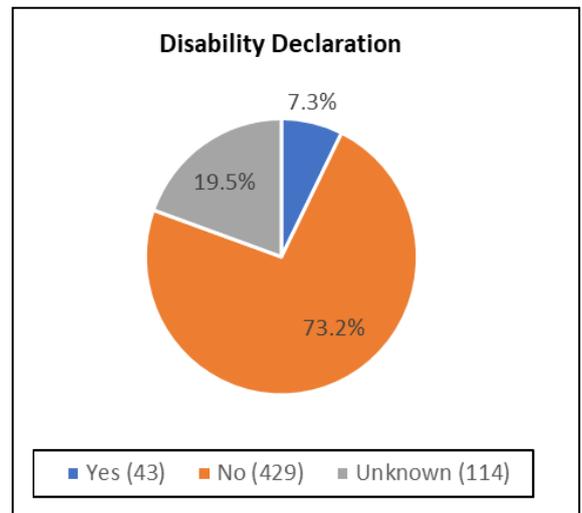
353 female



233 male

#### Age Profile

- **54% over 50**
- **Average age 48**



**7.3% of staff (43 people) have declared a disability**

#### Working Profile

75% of staff work full time, 25% part time  
64% of women work full time, 90% of men  
36% of women work part time, 10% of men

90% on permanent contracts, 10% fixed term  
88% of women on permanent contracts, 94% of men  
12% of women on fixed term contracts, 6% of men



## **People Team Achievements**

- Staff Wellbeing Hub launched
- 1 in 10 employees trained as Mental Health First Aiders
- Essential Mental Health First Aid training for all managers
- Essential Inclusivity training for all managers
- New E learning programme launched on Diversity and Inclusion
- Work with the Shaw Trust to recruit more diverse employees
- iRecruit launched making it easier for individuals to apply for roles
- Change 100 graduate internship in Housing
- Disability confidence Level 1 achieved
- Perkbox benefits and Employee Assistance Programme launched

## **4. Equality Initiatives & Progress**

### **Domestic Abuse**

2020 saw a large increase in calls to domestic abuse support lines between April and December:

34% increase - National Domestic Abuse Helpline

36% increase - National LGBT+ helpline run by Galop

50% increase - Calls from 16-24 year olds

79% increase - Karma Nirvana helpline (so-called 'honour-based' abuse)

39% increase - Respect helpline for male victims of domestic abuse

62% increase - Respect helpline for domestic abuse perpetrators looking for help to stop

Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership leads the Community J9 Project. The J9 initiative is named in memory of Janine Mundy, who was killed by her estranged husband while he was on Police bail. It aims to raise awareness of domestic abuse and assist victims to access help and support.

J9 training open to anyone in the community and helps people to recognise the signs of domestic abuse and respond appropriately to survivors. The free, online, sessions equips participants with the tools to recognise abuse, respond appropriately and help people access the support they need. Following the

training, participants receive access to a J9 information pack that they can make available to anyone to who needs it.

Abusers isolate their victims making it difficult, if not impossible, to seek help. By empowering members of the community, we can enable more people to access the help they need.



We developed a new service, the Sanctuary Scheme to help domestic abuse victims feel safer in their homes. This includes work to upgrade door security, windows and lighting, to provide personal safety alarms and property marking. Two support packages are offered as part of this free service to victims. Basic Security provides: two locking points, a door chain and viewer to the front door; three locking points to back and side doors; window locks on ground floor windows; locking devices to upstairs windows that give access from extensions etc. Basic Plus Security provides all of these plus a Birmingham/London bar that strengthens door frames against forced attacks; a double locking night latch; personal safety alarm, property marking kit; segment timer for interior lighting.

More information can be found at: <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/frontline-help-when-you-need-it/>

## **Faith & Communities**

We are an active part of the Faith and Communities Tactical Co-ordination Group, set up in response to COVID-19. Underpinned by a collaborative mindset and a desire to achieve collective impact, the Group brought together faith and community leaders to work with public services in a way that hadn't been seen before.

Key activities included providing guidance and communications on places of worship, ceremonies and marking key religious, cultural and community events; coronavirus advice for Black, Asian and minority ethnic people; advice and guidance to employment sectors where there is a high risk from COVID-19 e.g. taxi drivers, security personnel. Working groups were set up focusing on Faith and Dementia and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the LGBTQ+ community to further advance equality.

## **Community Resilience**

In 2020 we commissioned the Horizon Project, Phoenix Futures, funded by the Department of Work and

Pensions. This ongoing project is aimed at people suffering significant multiple disadvantage - substance issues, offending behaviour and homelessness. Working with a small number of clients, practitioners have as much time as they need to provide people with one to one support and access to multi-agency expertise. Successes included people being able to return to family life, start work, get help with welfare benefits, access healthcare and find a safe place to live and save.

### **Digital Inclusion & Accessibility**

Although Covid-19 created physical barriers, we inspired people to connect in new ways and sought to ensure that everyone felt part of a community. Our many partnerships with community, charity and voluntary groups included Unite in Kind who are creating an online community of kindness. Their work helps people to connect with friends, neighbours and strangers to overcome feelings of isolation.

Working with Digital Unite, we developed a programme of digital skills learning to support residents and help them access and engage with the ever-increasing digital world. The programme included a range of guidance on computer basics, document creation, email and internet telephone, social networking and blogs, government services internet security. Our Older People's Team and Digital Buddies also provided a support line and access to a briefing scheme for residents in sheltered accommodation.

New legislation came into effect in 2020 which required our website to comply with new accessibility standards. Although we had previously developed a new website we engaged the Shaw Trust to undertake a Digital Accessibility Assessment. The Shaw Trust are a charity who strive to enable disabled individuals to live more independently and engage in community life both on and offline. Following their assessment, we made a number of improvements to the website through our own in-house teams and with the support of a specialist contractor. Further inspections were carried out through the Cabinet Office leading to further updates and improvements towards the end of the year and we continue to work on website accessibility, which remains a high priority. 2020 also saw a 25% increase in mediated support for online Council Tax and Rental payments. To better understand this research was undertaken on payment preferences and to understand the barriers paying digitally. In 2021 we will produce a plan to address the needs of our cash paying customers.

### **Culture & Community**

Epping Forest District Museum received an Art Fund grant of £35,000 for the 'Bringing the Museum to You' project. This focussed on developing digital opportunities for the community to engage with the museum during Covid in a fun, interactive and accessible way. The grant was awarded through the Art Fund's Respond and Reimagine programme and a new app will allow families to explore the museum in an interactive way when visiting in the future as well as allowing the fun to continue at home.

The Museum is currently reviewing how people engage with and interpret the collections to ensure that they are accessible and enable everyone to relate to them. A mission statement will be developed to ensure full accessibility to the collections by people from all ethnic, social, religious and diverse backgrounds through the interpretation and storytelling of the objects. It is planned to also create roles in the team to specifically ensure inclusion, equity and diversity.

### **Landlord Services**

As a landlord, to ensure that we can respond swiftly and effectively to complaints, we were asked to self-assess against the Housing Ombudsman (HO) Complaint Handling Code. Two improvements were identified and progressed for publication. These were aligning the definition of a compliant with the suggested wording from the Housing Ombudsman and adding a Reasonable Adjustment section in our complaints policy, in-line with the Equality Act 2010.

## **5. Looking Ahead**

While equality is integral to our work, embedding it is a continuous process that needs to inform everything we do.

- In 2021 we will review our equality objectives and produce a new Equality Policy or Scheme.
- Our newly published objectives will be supported by a framework for measuring performance and evaluating the effectiveness of all our work on equality.
- The Annual Equality Statement will contain improved analysis, including trend monitoring and more sophisticated analysis of intersecting equality characteristics. This will include statistical modelling and information on the relationship between protected characteristics and socio-economic factors.
- Each Service Plan will describe how EDI is embedded in service and partnership delivery.
- We will review our Equalities Impact Assessment to focus more on the role of evidence and analysis in understanding the impact of our policies, practices, events and decision-making processes. This supports our commitment to ensure that these are fair and do not present barriers to participation or disadvantage to any protected groups from participation.
- We will engage and learn from our communities about the challenges they face and ensure that policy development, innovation and growth are inclusive and put people on an equal footing.
- We will report on how we have leveraged equality from our suppliers, business partners and Qualis under the Public Services (Social Value) Act and Community Infrastructure Levy and Section 106 agreements.