

Essex County Council Equality Objectives

Year 2 Progress Review Report 2024



EasyRead Version

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My name is Councillor Mark Durham.



I am the Cabinet Member for Arts, Heritage, and Culture at Essex County Council (ECC).



We, at ECC, are committed to making sure that all Essex residents are treated fairly.



We are also determined to make ECC an inclusive organisation.



The Equality Objectives in this report are from our **Everyone's Essex** strategy.



But we are also doing other things to improve equality in Essex.



We continue to review our objectives and plan our activities to make sure that they are the right things to do.

Introduction



ECC has a **duty** to make sure that everyone is treated the same.

A **duty** is something we must do by law.



We also have a duty to tell you:

- how we are doing this
- our goals to achieve this
- our progress towards achieving these goals



This report tells you how well we are doing against our objectives.



It also tells you what we plan to do next year.

Reduce Inequality in our Communities



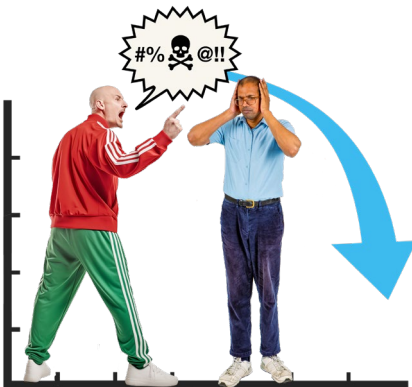
10.5% → 17%

The number of people from different ethnic backgrounds in Essex is growing.

In 2011 they made up 10.5% of residents.



This means that we must update our services so that they continue to meet the changing needs of our communities.



We know we must work with partnership organisations to reduce hate crime and keep our communities safe.

Hate crime is when someone is nasty to you or hurts you because of who you are.



We must also reduce differences between rich and poor areas so everyone has a fair chance to succeed.

Reduce Inequality in our Communities



To help us achieve these things we have 5 key areas of work. These are:

1. Working with partners to tackle health inequality.



2. Helping Children and Young People.



3. Bring an End to Hate Crime in Essex.



4. Bring an end to violence against women and girls in Essex.

Reduce Inequality in our Communities



5. Understanding Race Disparities in Essex.

This means understanding how people from different backgrounds are treated differently.

1. Working with Partners to Tackle Health Inequality



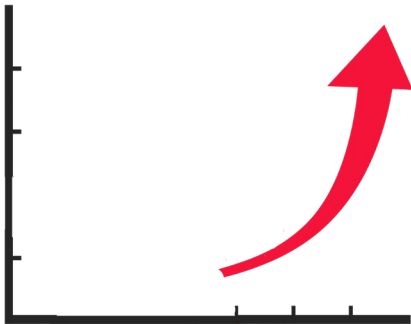
We want to improve the health and wellbeing of Essex residents.

We are following guidelines in the Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy.



Why we need to do this

More than 16% of Essex residents have a disability that makes it difficult to do day to day tasks.



Between 2023 and 2030 we believe that the number of adults with autism will increase by 5%.

The number of adults with learning disabilities and autism will increase by 4%.

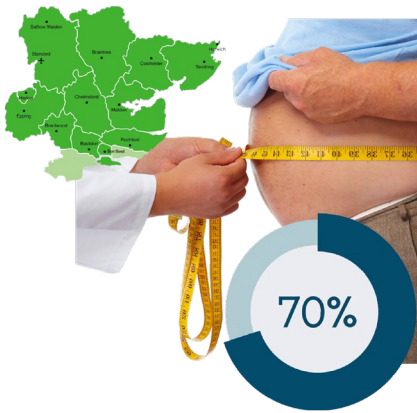


We expect a 2% increase in the number of adults with sensory impairments, including severe sight difficulties and hearing loss.

1. Working with Partners to Tackle Health Inequality



This year, more children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) have needed support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health.



Nearly 70% of adults in Essex are overweight, or obese.



Black and Asian adults with learning disabilities are more likely to be overweight.



Essex has had fewer suicides than the rest of the country for the first time since 2011.

1. Working with Partners to Tackle Health Inequality



What we have done so far

In 2023 we published our **Meaningful Lives Matter** plan. This aims to make Essex more inclusive for people with disabilities.



It has helped 450 people with disabilities to get a job, including 120 people who need the most support.



Our Autism Navigation Service supports neurodiverse residents when they receive their diagnosis.



We have a 10-year plan to help people maintain a healthy weight.

We aim to prevent people from becoming obese or underweight, especially in poorer areas.

1. Working with Partners to Tackle Health Inequality



We want people to be more active so our Pedal Power Scheme has given 4,000 bikes to people in our poorest communities.



Our Individual Placement and Support programme offers employment support for people with complex mental health needs and people who struggle with addiction.



What we plan to do next year

We will write a plan to improve care and support for carers.



We will make sure that provider organisations give better support for people with disabilities.

1. Working with Partners to Tackle Health Inequality



We will make sure that people with learning disabilities get better support into employment.



We will give more support to people with vision and hearing impairment and to people with physical disabilities.



We will create out of hours support services. These will be available in the evening and overnight.

2. Helping Children and Young People



We have a duty to help children to do well at school.



Why we need to do this

13% of children in Essex live in poor areas.

These children don't do as well at school as children from richer areas.



It is important for young children to go to nursery to help them be ready for school.



Free nursery places are available in Essex for poorer children.

Many families accept these places.

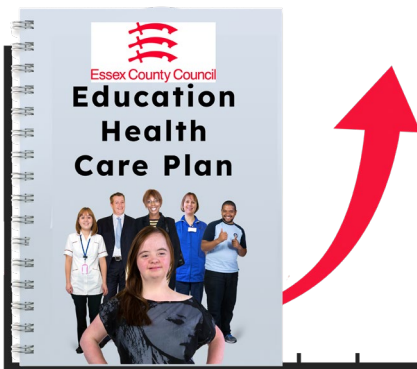
2. Helping Children and Young People



The number of children attending school from ethnic minority groups is increasing.



Many of these children speak English as a second language.



More families are asking for an Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) assessment.



What we have done so far

In 2023 we published our Inclusion Strategy.

This is a plan to help all children in Essex get a good education.

2. Helping Children and Young People



The plan includes reviews so that schools can check:

- their pupils' relationships at school



- their pupils' wellbeing

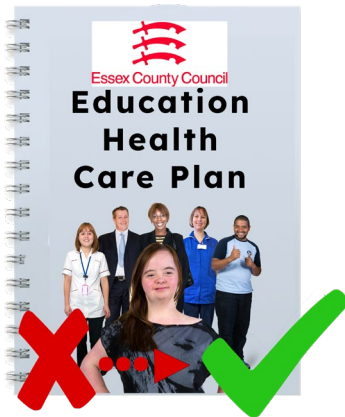


- their pupils' attendance at school



- what activities their pupils take part in

2. Helping Children and Young People



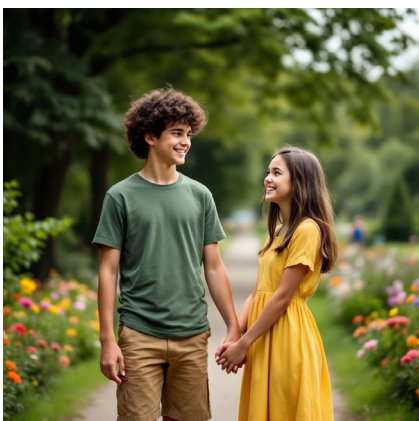
We have made it easier for families to apply for EHCPs.



We have provided more social care support for children with SEND.



We have studied how children aged 9 and older grow up. This included neurodiverse children.

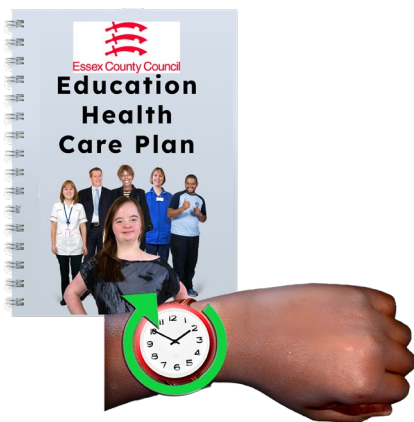


We also looked how they deal with unfair treatment, their feelings about sexuality and their gender.

2. Helping Children and Young People



We will use what we have learnt from this study to improve our support for children.



What we plan to do next year

We will speed up and improve Education Health and Care Plans.



We will hire more Education Psychologists to assess children sooner, give advice to families, and communicate better.



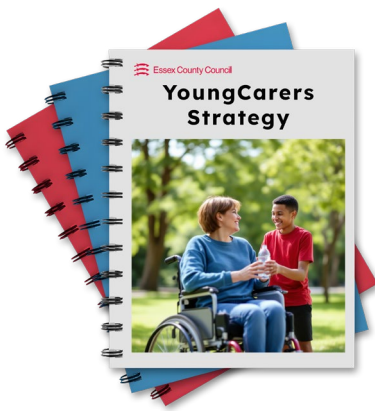
We will write an Equality and Diversity guide for schools.

This will help them to sort out any problems.

2. Helping Children and Young People



We will research what happens to children and teenagers and how they feel.



We will continue to develop our strategies for Inclusion, Children in Care and Young Carers.



We will create new homes for vulnerable children.

3. Bring an End to Hate Crime in Essex

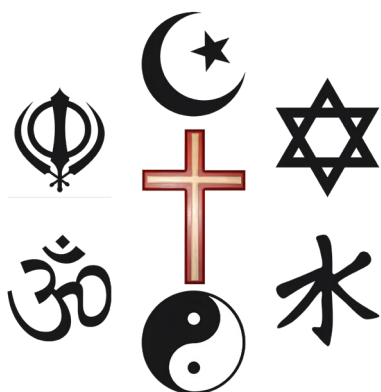


We have a duty to protect our residents from hate crime.



Hate crime is when someone is nasty to you because of:

- the colour of your skin or where you come from.



- your religion.



- your disability.

3. Bring an End to Hate Crime in Essex



- your sexuality (if you fancy men or women).

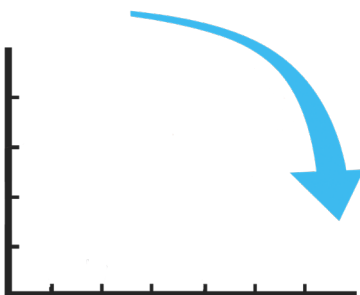


- your gender identity (if you were born a man but feel like you are woman, or born a woman but feel like a man).



- Hate crime can be attacks on people in person, through words, or on the internet.

Why we need to do this



In Essex the number of hate crimes reported between 2022/23 and 2023/24 dropped by 9.1%.

3. Bring an End to Hate Crime in Essex



In 2023/24 most hate crimes were because of race (the colour of people's skin or where they come from).



Other forms of hate crime, including because of disability went down over the last year.

What we have done so far



In 2024 we worked with the police to talk to victims of hate crime to find out why they did not report it.



They told us that they did not think anything would happen if they reported the crime.

3. Bring an End to Hate Crime in Essex



What we will do this year

We will tell people what happens when they report hate crime so that they feel more confident to speak up.



We will create an online resource so that businesses can report hate crime.



We will improve training on hate crime.

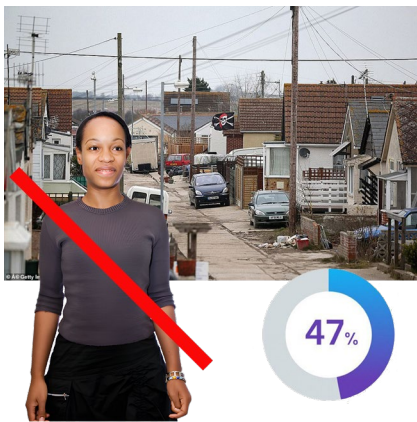


We will share information about hate crime.

4. Bring an End to Violence Against Women and Girls



We need to protect our woman and girls from violence and help them to feel safe.



Why we need to do this

In 2022, 47% of women said they did not feel safe at night in our towns and cities.



Younger women and women with disabilities feel less safe.



Women said that, at night, they do not feel safe:

- in car parks.
- in green spaces.
- on the streets.

4. Bring an End to Violence Against Women and Girls



They told us that poor lighting and not enough police are the main reasons they do not feel safe at night.



What we have done so far

In 2023 we created the Violence Against Women and Girls Steering Group.

This group is made up of members from other councils and the police.



This group works to find ways to protect our women and girls.



We have published the **Essex Design Guide**.

This guide tells builders how to consider safety for women when they plan new housing estates.

4. Bring an End to Violence Against Women and Girls



ECC is a White Ribbon UK Accredited Organisation.

This means that we have done a good job helping to protect women and girls from violence.



What we will do this year

We will check and change our policies to make sure they match the Home Office's guidelines on preventing violence against women and girls.



Council Leaders will lead the way in supporting and promoting protection of women.



Our partnership organisations will also work to protect women.

5. Understanding Race Disparities in Essex



Why we need to do this

The number of people from different ethnic backgrounds in Essex is growing.



People from ethnic minority groups tend to live in towns nearer to London like Epping and Harlow.



They tend to be younger.



They are less likely to have disabilities.

5. Understanding Race Disparities in Essex



Many are well educated.



Many people in these groups have poorer outcomes because:

- they are poor.



- they have language difficulties.



- they face discrimination.

5. Understanding Race Disparities in Essex



What we have done so far

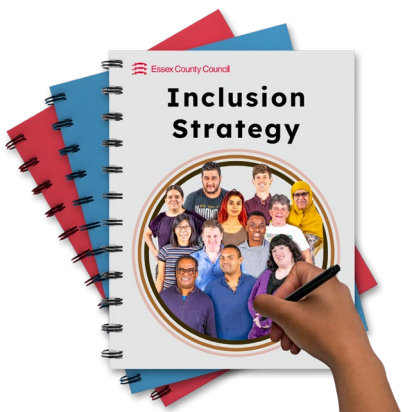
In 2024 we studied what happens to people from ethnic minority groups and different religions.



This highlighted the difficulties that people from these groups face due to discrimination and language barriers.



We also found out that people from these groups are also worried about not being treated fairly when they apply for jobs.



What we will do this year

We will write a strategy to help us include community groups that are often excluded.

5. Understanding Race Disparities in Essex



We will train our staff to explain why it is important to collect and record information about equality.

An 'easy read' form titled 'Please fill in this easy read form'. It features a small 'easy read' logo with a woman's face. Below the title are three sections: a photo of a diverse group of people, a language selection area with icons for Polish (Polski), Welsh (Cymraeg), and Arabic (الصومالية), and a religious symbols area with icons for Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

We will collect information about people with **protected characteristics** in Public Health and Customer Services.



Protected characteristics are the things about your identity that are protected by law against discrimination.



This will help us to plan better services for residents who are often left out.

Equality in the Workplace



At ECC we want everyone to feel valued and be happy at work.



We want our workforce to be diverse and to reflect Essex communities.



All of our employees should be treated fairly and with respect.



Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy tells you about our equality in the workplace objectives.

Equality in the Workplace



Last year we reported on 9 aims from this strategy.

This can be found in the Appendix on Page 50.



This year we have used these 9 aims to give us 3 key areas of work

1. Understanding our workforce.



2. Building an inclusive culture.



3. Promote equality.

1. Understanding our Workforce



Why we need to do this

8,142 people work for ECC.



Almost 17% of our staff are from ethnic minority groups.

This is higher than the non-white population of Essex.

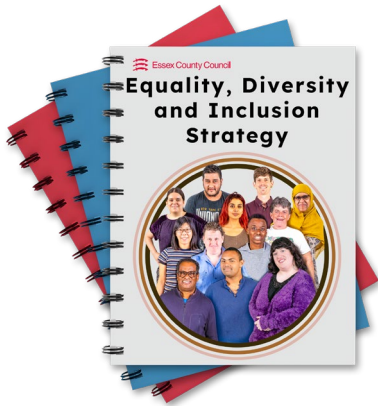


Just under 5% of our employees have a disability.



When we hire new staff we use diversity data to make our workforce more diverse.

1. Understanding our Workforce

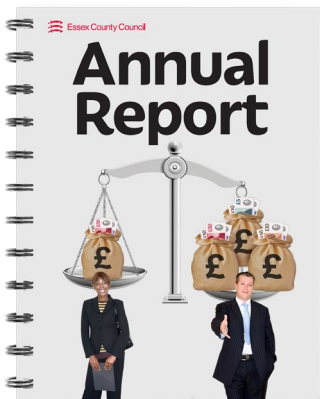


What we have done so far

In 2023 we published our **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy**.



We used ideas and suggestions from other areas of work, including the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) to write this strategy.



We produced our annual pay gap report.

This compares how much women earn against men.

It also compares the difference in pay among different ethnic groups.



In 2024 women earned nearly 6% less than men.

This is a smaller difference than last year.

1. Understanding our Workforce



Employees from ethnic minority groups earn 1.3% more than white workers.

An 'easy read' form titled 'Please fill in this easy read form'. It features a small photo of a woman and a large empty box for a photo. Below the photo box are three sections: the first contains icons for 'Pobol' (Cymraeg) and 'Somalia' (Somaali); the second contains icons for various religions including a cross, a crescent moon, a star, a yin-yang, and a water symbol; the third contains a large empty box for additional information.

We need to collect information about protected characteristics to understand our workforce better.

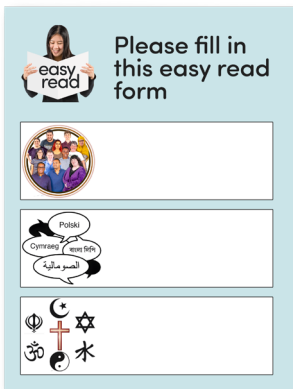


But our system makes it difficult for some people with disabilities to tell us about their protected characteristics.



We have created a working group to talk about how we can improve how we keep and share personal information.

1. Understanding our Workforce



What we will do this year

We will use staff surveys to continue to collect diversity data.

This will make sure that we have a rich and diverse workforce.



We will use People Performance Reports to track how well we are doing against our aims.



This review will help us to check the progress on reducing the pay gap for both men and women and ethnic groups.



We will continue to use information about our workforce when selecting interview panels.

This will make sure our recruitment process is fair.

2. Building an Inclusive Culture



Why we need to do this

82% of our staff feel that they can be themselves at work.



We want to build on this and continue to celebrate our differences.



We want to use lived experiences to help deliver better and more inclusive services to our residents.

What we have done so far

We have increased membership to our employee networks.



2. Building an Inclusive Culture



These networks play an important part in building an inclusive workplace and include:

- Women's Network
- LGBTQ+ Network
- Inter-faith Network
- Parent's Network
- Young People's Network



We have engaged with the Differently Adept Employees Network (DAWN) about improving how we make reasonable adjustments within our work spaces.



We have started a recruitment training programme so that managers better understand cultural differences.



We have also started using more diverse interview panels.

2. Building an Inclusive Culture



We have introduced Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) workforce packs.

These packs give information about diversity in the workforce.



We have worked with our employee networks to improve our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training.



Our Children and Families service paid for an Anti Racist Practice project.

This project focuses on finding racism in social care practice.



350 employees have attended anti-racism training.

2. Building an Inclusive Culture



What we will do this year

We will recruit a Practice Education Lead.



This person will help to extend the role of the Anti-Racist Practice project and make sure that anti-racist practices are put in place.



We will continue to develop our employee networks, especially our Access to Work working group.



This group will help improve reasonable adjustments within the workplace.

2. Building an Inclusive Culture



We will review our diverse interview panel scheme to make sure it works.



We will publish a new Talent Strategy. This will help to improve diversity in the workplace.

3. Making Sure our Equality Policies Work



Why we need to do this

We want people to see ECC as a great place to work.



The number of women who have a senior job has fallen from 61.5% in 2015/16 to 54% in 2024.



The number of employees from diverse backgrounds has increased from 11.5% in 2015/16 to 17% today.



In Essex there are 7,935 adults with learning disabilities.

3. Making Sure our Equality Policies Work



But only 5% of adults with learning disabilities have a job they get paid for.



What we have done so far

We have introduced a hybrid ways of working programme.

This means employees can choose to work from home or in the office.



They can also choose when they work for some tasks.



The number of disabled people applying for jobs at ECC has increased by 8% since Covid.

3. Making Sure our Equality Policies Work



The number of people from ethnic backgrounds has increased by 7% since Covid.



We are a Disability Level 3 Confident Leader.

This means it is easier for disabled to apply for some jobs.



When we advertise jobs we make sure that it is clear that the both women and men can do the job.



In 2023 we launched our Women in Leadership programme.

3. Making Sure our Equality Policies Work



This programme provides management training for women who want to become senior managers.



As part of our Corporate Resourcing Strategy we have improved the way we advertise our jobs. To do this we have made sure that:

- our adverts use language that makes it clear both women and men can do the job.

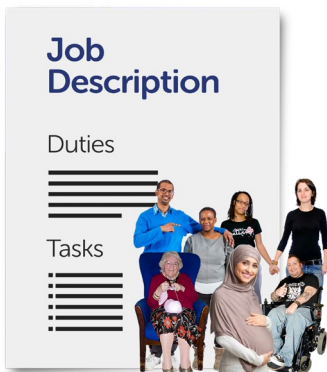


- we advertise our roles where people from diverse backgrounds will see them.



- we continue to work with partnership organisations to advertise our roles.

3. Making Sure our Equality Policies Work



- we continue the work we have done to attract people from different backgrounds.



Our Entry to Work Team makes it easier for people who need reasonable adjustments to work for us.



This year they have:

- given work experience places to 20 young people who have been in care.



- given a 20 week work placement for 12 people with Autism.

3. Making Sure our Equality Policies Work



- given jobs to 25 black people through the 10K Black Intern Foundation.



What we will do this year

We will take part in the Race Equality Standard.

This was introduced by NHS England to improve race equality.



It aims to improve opportunities for people from different ethnic backgrounds.



This year we will focus on diversity data to find out if there are any gaps.

3. Making Sure our Equality Policies Work



We will continue to support our employees on the Women in Leadership programme.



We will extend the Women in Leadership programme to include people from other minority groups.



We will continue to advertise our roles where people from diverse backgrounds will see them, and use diverse interview panels.



In 2022 we agreed a set of equality objectives.



1. Make a programme that helps women get more important roles and become leaders.



The first goal is to help make things fairer for everyone in the community.



2. Encourage people with disabilities to apply for roles at ECC.



The second goal makes sure that the council is as diverse as the people they serve.



3. We need to find jobs for men and women who are not represented in that role.



4. Advertise our roles where people from diverse backgrounds will see them.



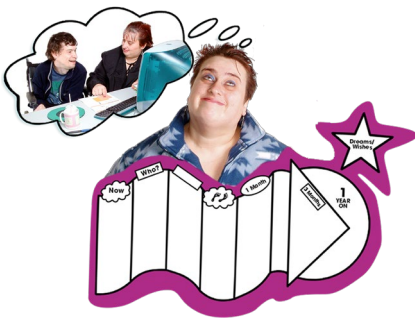
5. Think about new ways of working and how to enhance diversity and inclusion in our teams.



6. Review our diversity and inclusion training.



7. Continue our inclusive recruitment training for staff.



8. Think about career paths for all staff.



9. Create listening forums for senior leaders so they can understand the experience of the staff better.

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council Corporate Strategy Team

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Published >><< 2024

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