

# St Albans City and District Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2024

*Welcome Diversity*

*Challenge Inequality*

*Grow Together*

## FOREWORD

Diversity enriches our District. We are fortunate to have a very engaged population locally, with great civic pride, and an enormous amount of volunteering and goodwill.

Tolerance, kindness, friendliness and a sense of belonging are what turn a locality into a community. These attributes underpin the sense of community we share in our District and are what we want to ensure is preserved for the future.

The Council plays a key role in community leadership and place-shaping and we have developed this strategy because we believe equality, diversity and inclusion should be central to the delivery of our local services. We want to ensure our Council is a welcoming and accessible place where people have a voice, are listened to and get the quality services they expect and deserve.

Strong local partnerships are a feature of the way agencies work together in St Albans District. We hope that this strategy, which has had input from many of our partners, will help us as we work to transform more of our services. Examples of good work so far are the St Albans District Hub, and our Heathy Hub, both at the Civic Centre. These were developed with Hertfordshire County Council, the NHS, the Police, Communities 1<sup>st</sup> and Citizens Advice among other partners, to offer a range of first-rate local services in one location.

Our vision is a place where everyone feels welcome and where people of all ages, all ethnicities, all backgrounds, and all abilities have the opportunity to live happy, confident and independent lives. We are working to ensure we have safe, clean streets, and lively and welcoming city and town centres, inviting for local residents and visitors to enjoy. We know we have a local population that wants these too, and that many people are willing to play their part to make things better for everyone. Our action plan will help support everyone to do this.

***Amanda Foley.***

**Chief Executive, St Albans City and District Council**

---

## Why the Council produced this strategy

The Council has developed this strategy to help us understand the local challenges, what changes our community wants to see and how we can make those changes. It will help us deliver our legal responsibilities as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The **Equality Act 2010** is a law that protects everyone from discrimination. It means that discrimination or unfair treatment based on certain personal characteristics is against the law.

The Equality Act applies to discrimination based on these protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex (men, women, boys, girls and transgender)
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership (in relation to the first aim to eliminate unlawful discrimination).

The Act also means that public bodies such as councils have to prevent discrimination. This is called the **Public Sector Equality Duty**.

Councils must consider the needs of people with protected characteristics, when planning or carrying out their public duties or services.

The Council must make sure we do the best we can to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Improve equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Support people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it to get along together.

---

## **St Albans City and District Council's Equality Policy**

The policy describes the Council's promise to act fairly and tackle discrimination and harassment. It also says that we understand the importance of the diversity of St Albans District and its people. It includes how you can expect to be treated as a customer (including as a resident, stakeholder, business or organisation) using our services, as a business or organisation working with us, and as a Council employee.

The Equality Policy sits alongside this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

The Equality Policy was approved by the Council in April 2020.

---

## How the strategy was developed

- **Residents and Visitors.** We asked for views on how it would **feel** and what they would **do** and **see** in an inclusive, diverse district, and what they would like to see introduced or removed.

They told us:

*Ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion is not seen as a stand-alone item but rather an integral part of the Council's identity.*

What residents and visitors told us they would see:

- *“Happy, engaged members of the community supporting each other - being nice to one another, sharing the beautiful town we are fortunate enough to live in.”*
- *“Council staff and councillors from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities.”*
- *“People being more excited about things that matter to other communities as well as their own.”*
- *“Better cultural awareness, better sense of community, increase in respect to others, better tolerance and appreciation of one another.”*
- *“A safer, fairer, more decent and kinder place for BAME communities and those seeking sanctuary as refugees.”*
- *“The Equality Act upheld, and all groups given opportunities to shape policy.”*

How residents and visitors told us they would feel:

- *“Safe and that I belong, confident that those who are different from me feel the same and are equally respected.”*
- *“Healthier. I would care more about my local community and feel more respected.”*
- *“Proud to live in such a community.”*
- *“More connected to our neighbours.”*
- *“Equally valued and welcomed wherever I go.”*
- *“Happy to be part of a community where inclusion is actively developed.”*
- *“Like I belong here.”*

What residents and visitors told us they would do:

- *“Play a more active role in my community. Help to get others involved.”*
  - *“Be more encouraged to join in with local activities, groups and communities.”*
  - *“I would be more inclined to want to buy my home and get on the ladder.”*
  - *“Go out more. Enjoy swimming and physical activity as well as theatre and events.”*
  - *“Take up the opportunity to meet and make friends with others.”*
  - *“I would engage more with the council and take a more active role in the community.”*
  - *“I would enjoy meeting and socialising with a more diverse group of people. This would enrich my life.”*
  - *“Continue living here.”*
- **Community Groups.** We asked what the **issues and barriers** are for the people that community groups help, and what they need in order to develop best practice in Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

They told us:

Issues and Barriers:

- *“Methods of communication - everything online is not suitable for all.”*
- *“Understanding the system, different cultural background.”*
- *“Poverty is having a profound impact. This is leading to huge issues.”*

What they need:

- *“Access to training, free of charge.”*
- *“Useful statistics and data to inform services.”*

- **Our Staff.** We asked them what they would see, do and feel if we had an improved culture of inclusion, and what we can do to make St Albans City and District Council an **inclusive, welcoming place to work**. We asked our senior managers what changes to the corporate culture are needed to improve Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and what support they need as leaders to make the changes necessary.

Council employees told us what they would see:

- *“Staff who know exactly what to do when dealing with someone who may need additional help or support to access our services.”*
- *“A better customer service to all our customers, a happier work force.”*

- *“A more diverse group of people represented across all roles, as well as in more senior and leadership positions. In particular, it would be great to see more women, more people from minority ethnic backgrounds, those who identify as LGBTQI+, disabled, people from all religious beliefs.”*
- *“More cultural events targeted towards members of the BAME [community], LGBTQ+ community and people with disabilities.”*

They told us how they would feel:

- *“More included, as it would be clear that the Council's staff includes employees from all backgrounds and walks of life.”*
- *“Proud to work somewhere that was explicit and proactive in its approach to equity.”*
- *“Happy and confident that we were providing a service that was equally accessible to all without barriers.”*
- *“Comfortable to start more conversations, question situations and ideas more.”*

And they told us what they would do:

- *“Act with confidence in our roles as we have embedded the values of inclusion and diversity, we are proud of our workforce and who we are and we reflect the society that we serve.”*
- *“I would implement the learning from the policy and training into all aspects of my work, and regularly check my practice to ensure I do not become complacent.”*
- *“Be a better and more proactive ally.”*
- *“Embrace the new culture.”*

- **Parishes.** We asked local Town and Parish Councils to identify what they feel the **barriers to inclusion** for residents are and what they need to support parish councillors and champion equality, diversity and inclusion.

They told us the barriers are:

- *“Limited inclusive signage in and around the village – i.e., suitable for those with dementia, those with more limited skills reading English (young, illiterate, people whose first language is not English).”*
- *“Poor transport links to the outlying areas of the villages. This is a particular issue for older residents and those without private transport.”*

They told us what they would like to change:

- *“To actively seek to recruit a Parish Councillor from the BAME community.”*
- *“To recognise issues that prevent ‘hidden’ inclusion issues e.g., residents with dementia; people with hearing/sight problems.”*
- *“To ensure that every working group that is formed to undertake a council project addresses ways to achieve equality and diversity and a culture of inclusion. Our aim is for this become a ‘golden thread’ running through all our projects.”*

Parish Councils told us what they would like support with:

- *“The opportunity to receive training on this subject as we recognise a gap in our knowledge/education.”*
- **Councillors.** We asked District Councillors what they consider to be the barriers to inclusion for residents, what changes are needed to the District Council’s corporate culture, and what they need as leaders to support them to achieve the changes.

They told us:

- *“Formal procedures, jargon and language can be a potential barrier to becoming a Councillor.”*
- *“It is important to support the marginalised groups and celebrate diverse communities.”*
- *“We need to make equalities part of the Council structure.”*
- *“Our contractors need to share our values on inclusion.”*
- *“We welcome training in equality policies and strategy.”*

We spoke to Hertfordshire County Council Equalities Team to share ideas and good practice as they developed their new Equality Strategy. Along with Hertfordshire County Council we set up the **Local Districts Equalities Practitioners Group** to share good practice and support.

We also sought the views of a range of different groups of people.

We met people at:

- **Active Lifestyles** - a luncheon club for older people from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

They told us:

- *“We would like more events to bring people of different ages and ethnicities together.”*
- *“I would feel very proud of St Albans if it was more inclusive.”*
- *“I would like the bureaucracy to be removed; tell us whether it is county, district or parish council’s responsibility for different services.”*
- *“We would like to have more accessible clean toilets in the district.”*

- **The Daylight Club** - a social group for people with learning and physical disabilities and mental health needs.

They told us:

- *“We would like to be able to pay by cash not just card in the places we visit.”*
- *“If something changes, like the day our bins are collected, we would like to have lots of notice so we can plan.”*
- *“We would like to see signs that welcome everyone and pictures instead of writing.”*
- *“If St Albans was more inclusive, we would be more independent, go out more and help other people.”*

- **20<sup>th</sup> St Albans Ansar Scouts** - a uniformed group of 8-18 years old boys and girls.

They told us:

- *“We would like to see more diverse events.”*
- *“If St Albans was more inclusive, there would be less complaints, it would be fairer, and everyone would be happier.”*
- *“We would like a place where you can be yourself, without judgment.”*
- *“Equality, diversity and inclusiveness is what makes a good community.”*

- **Herts Pride 2021** - a large public event where we met with residents and visitors to the District who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+).

They told us:

- *“We would like a campaign in the local area to help tackle homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and a service for confidential reporting of intolerance.”*
- *“If St Albans was more inclusive, I would feel better about being me.”*
- *“I would like to see more inclusive buildings for wheelchair users.”*
- *“I would like there to be more clubs and events for young people.”*

We also spoke to:

**Faith and Culture Enterprise (FACE)** - a network of local faith and black, minority and ethnic groups and individuals providing support, advice and social opportunities for people of all cultures and faiths or none.

They told us:

- *“We need to find out if people from different cultural backgrounds are accessing services and if not, why not.”*
- *“There is a lack of community spaces for different groups to get together.”*
- *“Young people’s trust in services needs to be built.”*

**St Albans and District Access Forum (SADAF)** - A group of residents who have direct experience or family members with a disability and representatives from community organisations.

They told us:

- *“More accessible parking spaces are needed in the district.”*
- *“We want to be properly listened to and be able to make a difference.”*
- *“Accessible, clean toilets are vital to people with disabilities [so they are] able to go out and take part in everyday activities.”*
- *“We need clarity on which council to talk to about accessibility, particularly on streets and pavements.”*
- *“Clearer signage in public places will help people navigate their way around.”*

**Communities 1st Stronger Together Networks** - Networks bringing together local voluntary and community groups under the common themes of: older people; mental health; transport; culture and environment; disability and children; and young people.

They told us that some of the main barriers to inclusion are:

- *“Stigma especially with mental health.”*
- *“People are given labels, not support.”*
- *“Staff need more knowledge of local services for signposting.”*
- *“Lack of understanding of different cultures.”*
- *“Methods of communication - everything online is not suitable for all.”*
- *“Lack of trust of officials.”*
- *“Poverty is having a profound impact especially in particular areas.”*
- *“Assuming that people know what is available, not knowing what you are entitled to.”*



- *“No available translation services.”*
- *“Lack of ‘whole family’ engagement - trying to work with one individual who exists in a context of family/peers.”*

They told us what would help make the District and services provided more inclusive:

- *“Understanding cultures - what is behind people’s behaviours or engagement.”*
- *“Council alongside community organisations to provide leadership and ambassadorship in Equality and Diversity.”*
- *“Access to multi-lingual translators.”*
- *“Informing service providers of religious customs prior to engagement.”*
- *“Grants and funding to help address inequalities.”*

## **What we know about St Albans District**

- Population 148,200 (2021).
- The health of people in St Albans District is generally better than the England average. St Albans is one of the 20% least deprived districts/unitary authorities in England.
- The district overall ranks 306 out of 317 lower tier local authorities in England with rank 1 being the most deprived.
- However, some pockets in the district are higher in the 2019 indices of multiple deprivation in particular within the wards of Batchwood, (34), Sopwell (47) Cunnigham, (119) Colney Heath (134) Redbourn (138) and Harpenden East (170). Note: 1 is the most deprived and 690 is the least deprived.
- According to Department for Work and Pensions data from 2018-19, 8.3% (2,355) children live in relative low-income families, 6.5% live in absolute low-income families.
- In 2019, 9.3% of households in St Albans District were estimated to be in fuel poverty.
- At 2018-20, life expectancy at birth was 81.8 for males, 85.4 for females (according to ONS Health state life expectancies)
- Office for National Statistics Data from the 2011 census reveals that 18.9% of St Albans District residents were from an ethnic minority, that is, not White British (88.4% were White; 6.4% Asian/Asian British; 1.7%, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British; 2.8% mixed/multiple ethnic groups; 0.7% other ethnic group).
- In 2011, the religious make-up of the District was as follows: Christian 59.7%; no religion 25.8%; religion not stated 7.4%; Muslim 3.7%; Hindu 1.3%; Jewish 1.2%; Buddhist 0.4%; Sikh 0.2%; Other religion 0.3%.

- In 2011, 5.4% of St Albans residents had a long-term illness or disability that limited their day-to-day activities a lot; and 7.4% had a long-term illness or disability that limited their day-to-day activities a little.
- 2021 Census shows that there has been an increase of 17.6% in people aged 65 years and over, an increase of 2.3% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 6.0% in children aged under 15 years in the district.
- 4,950 households in the District have council tenancies; 32 residents are in sheltered housing; 1,200 are housing association tenants; 100 people live in temporary accommodation (as of May 2022).

(Note: to ensure we have the latest data, this section of the Strategy will be updated after October 2022, when further detailed 2021 census data is expected to be released).

---

## **Our approach for the future**

### **Having listened to what people told us, we will:**

- Make equality, diversity and inclusion central in our approach to everything we do;
- Work with local groups and organisations to make sure we have a fair and collaborative approach to providing what they need to help local people;
- Treat all our customers (including residents, stakeholders, businesses and organisations) fairly and make sure those who need the most help get the support they need;
- Help people who are lonely and want help, to get the support they need;
- Challenge racism and discrimination in whatever form it shows itself;
- Make sure we listen to residents, staff and partners and involve them in our plans so that everyone is part of making our District a good place to live, work, study and visit.

## **Housing, safety and wellbeing**

### **We will:**

- Continue to provide homes for social rent to eligible people and build more homes either ourselves, or with partners;
- Support people who are experiencing poverty to access help and advice;
- Ensure that the grants we provide to local groups target the people who need most support;
- Work with the Police to help make the District a safe place for everyone;
- Listen to young people to understand what we can do to support them to continue to live, work and study in the District if they wish to.

## **Public Areas**

### **We will:**

- Make sure that the District's leisure and cultural centres are accessible and affordable and that our parks and green spaces are welcoming and safe places for everyone to enjoy;
- Make sure that if you have a disability, you can use our car parks and parking spaces;
- Work with Hertfordshire County Council to make changes so that if you have a disability you can enjoy the District's public spaces;
- Create more Changing Places toilets and encourage local businesses to make their toilets available for visitors;
- Work with local groups to make sure our big street events are accessible and that people from all different backgrounds can join in.

## **Delivering an excellent service**

### **We will:**

- Make sure all our staff and councillors have excellent equality, diversity and inclusion training. We will also invite contractors who work for us to train alongside us;
- Check our job advertisements, application forms and the way we treat our staff to see if we are doing the best to encourage people from all different backgrounds to work for us and thrive in the workplace;
- Share what we know about equality and diversity, and our community, with local businesses so that they can equip themselves to ensure they are inclusive too;
- Make sure that when we are deciding which suppliers to use, we prioritise high standards in equality, diversity and inclusion;

## **Communication and Accessibility**

### **We will:**

- Make sure that we prioritise accessibility and inclusion when we communicate about our services on our website, in print and in our interactions with our customers (residents, stakeholders, businesses or organisations);
- Help people to learn to use computers or mobile phones for council services if they do not already know how;
- Write or meet face to face if people cannot use a computer or mobile.

We will make sure our other key strategies align with this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy including:

Corporate Plan  
Customer Engagement Strategy  
Health and Well Being Strategy  
Procurement Strategy  
Homelessness Strategy  
Housing Strategy  
Sustainability Strategy

---

## **How will we make sure we are doing what we say?**

### **Equality Impact Assessments**

We will carry out a check called an Equality Impact Assessment whenever we plan a new service or project or if we write a new policy. If these checks show what we are planning will make the service worse for people with protected characteristics we will look at what we need to change.

### **Training**

We will provide training for our staff and councillors in equality, diversity and inclusion-related matters. We will also invite community groups that work with us, and the contractors that work with us, to join the training. We will also have regular awareness sessions on different topics throughout the year.

### **Staff Diversity Champions**

We will invite staff to join our new scheme so that they can help deliver our action plan and support colleagues.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership Group.** This group will oversee the delivery of the strategy. The group will include:

- Community Partners including Communities 1st and Citizen Advice St Albans.
- Representatives from St Albans Access Forum (SADAF) and Faith and Culture Enterprise (FACE).
- Staff Diversity Champions.
- Community Diversity Champions – these are residents and those working or studying in the District who tell us they want to help make St Albans City and District a fairer, more diverse and inclusive place.

### **Monitoring and Performance – evidencing change and progress**

We will set up the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership Group to oversee the delivery of the strategy which will report back to the Housing and Inclusion Committee.

The Strategy, Policy and Transformation Directorate will lead on the strategy implementation overall and specific targets will be added to team's action plans so that everyone knows what they are expected to do.

We will publish information on our website, and in our Community News publications to update everyone on progress made.

### **Our Action Plan**

The action plan is organised under the four improvement modules set out in the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG). The EFLG helps local authorities, in discussion with local partners including local people, to review and improve their performance serving and supporting people with characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010.

We will also use the LGA's Diverse by Design guide in determining best practice for the future (<https://www.local.gov.uk/diverse-design>)

### **In 2022-2023 we will:**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Lead Directorate</b>	<b>By when</b>
<b>Leadership and Organisational Commitment</b>	Establish an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership Group to scrutinise and drive forward this strategy.	Strategy, Policy and Transformation	September 2022
	Implement training on leadership in Equality and Diversity and Unconscious Bias training for all strategic directors, managers and elected Councillors.	Strategy, Policy and Transformation	December 2022
	Review and improve our Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) process and publish completed EIA's on the Council's website.	Strategy, Policy and Transformation	January 2023

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>By when</b>
<b>Understanding &amp; Working with Communities</b>	Establish a Community Diversity Champions scheme for residents interested in supporting delivery of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion efforts by communicating with the communities they are part of and providing feedback to the Council.	Strategy, Policy and Transformation	September 2022
	Establish support mechanisms to St Albans Faith and Culture Enterprise (FACE) to enable it to challenge discrimination, bring people of all faiths and none together and celebrate the diversity of the District.	Strategy, Policy and Transformation	November 2022
	Establish support mechanisms to St Albans District Access Forum to enable it to be a voice of influence and change for people with disabilities and their families.	Strategy, Policy and Transformation	November 2022
	Develop engagement with LGBT+ residents and community groups to increase visibility and deliver joint initiatives.	Community and Place Delivery	February 2023

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>By when</b>
<b>Responsive Service and Customer Care</b>	Work with Royal National Institute for Deaf (RNID) and local organisations to implement recommendations from the Louder Than Words report to make services accessible for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.	Customer, Business and Corporate Support	October 2022
	Work with our local partners to make our services and buildings Dementia Friendly.	Customer, Business and Corporate Support	March 2023
	Undertake a review of our website pages and written communications to check that our communications are accessible and inclusive.	Customer, Business and Corporate Support	March 2023

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>By when</b>
<b>Diverse and Engaged Workforce</b>	Establish a staff Diversity Champions scheme – a new initiative for staff who want to actively support the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, by helping organise awareness activities and being a listening ear to their colleagues on equality matters.	Customer, Business and Corporate Support	September 2022
	Develop an ongoing learning programme to equip Council	Customer, Business	October 2022

	staff with an understanding of best practice in equality, diversity and inclusion related matters.	and Corporate Support	
--	--	-----------------------	--

**In 2023-2024 we will:**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Directorate</b>	<b>By when</b>
Become an awarded member of the City of Sanctuary network to fulfil our commitment to welcoming and supporting people seeking refuge in our district	Strategy, Policy and Transformation	July 2023
Scope the provision of responsive translation and interpreting services which serve customers' needs at point of contact.	Customer, Business and Corporate Support	April 2023
Work in partnership with Hertfordshire County Council colleagues to better understand barriers to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities accessing services.	Community and Place Delivery	June 2023
Undertake a review of recruitment, retention and promotion practices and relevant data with equality, diversity and inclusion in mind.	Customer, Business and Corporate Support	September 2023
Develop a plan to increase engagement with young people in the District and explore ways of increasing participation in decision making.	Strategy, Policy and Transformation	March 2024
Undertake a review of procurement and commissioning processes and practice to ensure they reflect best practice.	Strategy, Policy and Transformation	December 2023
Initiate a Community Toilet Scheme including supporting the increase of Changing Places facilities in the District	Community and Place Delivery	January 2024



with support of businesses and other parish and community partners.		
---	--	--

## 2024- 2025 onwards

This strategy, and the Action Plan, will be reviewed in July 2023 to see what is working and what we need to change or add. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership Group, Community Diversity Champions and Staff Diversity Champions will all be invited to take part in the review.

---

*This document is about what St Albans City and District Council will do to make sure that the services we offer are accessible and everyone living, working and studying in the District is treated fairly. If you would like this document in a different language or format please contact us.*

Bengali

Urdu

Arabic

Hindi

Polish

Farsi

Italian

French

Cantonese

[The above statement will be in these languages. This is not an exhaustive list, we may need to add more following advice]

If you would like this document in Easy Read, please contact us.

To find out more about the strategy and how to get involved, please contact: [equality@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:equality@stalbans.gov.uk), call 01727 819340 or write to us at St Albans City and District Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3JE.