

# ***‘Opportunity for all’***

## **A Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework for Thurrock Council**

**2018-2022**

***“Promoting equality, embracing diversity”***



## **DRAFT Version 5 (January 2018)**

### **Revision History**

This document will be subject to amendments during the review period and will be updated during this time using formal change control procedures.

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Draft v.2	July 17	Feedback from Adults, Housing and Health SMT and Thurrock Community Safety Partnership	B. Price
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# A Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework for Thurrock Council 2018-2022

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## Introduction



Thurrock Council values the strength that comes with difference and the positive contribution that diversity brings to our borough.

As a community leader, service provider and employer, we will continue to work together with our partners to ensure that everybody has the opportunity to fulfil their potential, and that our neighbourhoods are places where people come together and prosper.

We will aim to eliminate prejudice and discrimination and to promote good relations between different groups of employees and citizens.

**Councillor Deborah Huelin**  
**Cabinet Member for Performance and Central Services**



We want Thurrock to be a place where all citizens feel that they are listened to and have a stake in the community, and which supports and values individual and community initiatives that bring people together.

This is reinforced by our Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework that now draws upon the findings of Thurrock Fairness Commission for the purpose of setting the equality objectives for the council over the next four years.

**Lyn Carpenter**  
**Chief Executive, Thurrock Council**





Equality and diversity is woven into the fabric of the council's work and can be noted as far back as 1957 when the arms of the borough were designed.

The supporting motto is "*Secundum Tamesim Quovis Gentium*" - 'By Thames to all the peoples of the World'.

Such an ethos remains integral to our plans and strategies today.

## **Thurrock Council's Equality Statement**

Thurrock Council is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, celebrating and valuing diversity, eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in all forms, and promoting good relations.

We are committed to achieving equality for all by reducing discrimination in employment and service delivery on the grounds of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

We go beyond the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 to include socio economic status (poverty), as we recognise that there are disparities across our communities.

Our Community Equality Impact Assessment (CEIA) process therefore takes consideration of both deprivation and protected characteristics.



## Anti-Semitism Statement



In December 2016, the Government formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition of anti-Semitism as follows:

*“Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews.*

*Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.”*

The following sets out Thurrock Council’s commitment to eliminating anti-Semitism:

*‘Thurrock Council condemns anti-Jewish hatred, in all its forms and supports government efforts directed at eradicating anti-Semitism and preventing extremist indoctrination and recruitment.*

*We support expanded education programs, including Holocaust programs that increase awareness and counter intolerance and discrimination.*

*We recognize the ever-present need to be vigilant about efforts to prevent and report acts of anti-Semitism, and other hate crimes and believe that communities that promote a climate of mutual understanding and respect among all citizens are essential to good governance and democratic life’.*



# Vision for Thurrock

Our Community Strategy was approved in September 2012 and refreshed in January 2015, following extensive consultation with our communities culminating in the following vision for Thurrock and five enabling strategic priorities:

***"Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish"***

- **Create** a great place for learning and opportunity
- **Encourage** and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- **Build** pride, responsibility and respect
- **Improve** health and well-being
- **Promote** and protect our clean and green environment

Thurrock has an ambitious growth strategy with six inspiring growth hubs including the world's most modern port, major public realm improvement schemes and the transformation of Purfleet. We anticipate the creation of a significant number of new jobs in the next 20 years.

We are committed to ensuring our approach to regeneration is shaped by those that live and work in the borough. We want to make a difference and recognise the scale and impact of our growing and changing communities and the importance of our role in place shaping and community leadership.

We are working together with our staff, partners and the community to drive growth in our role as champions for Thurrock and to make this borough an even better place to live, work and visit.

Our Single Equality Scheme and Corporate Equality Framework sets out our commitment to help to build pride, responsibility and respect with residents and employees until 2022. We value our role in promoting equality and embracing the diversity of our communities, this is central to how the Council operates. We are committed to advancing equality of opportunity, to eliminate discrimination and to promote good relations in both our community and our workforce.

We will continue to build on the success of our recent workforce initiatives and feedback from our staff and independent reviews, and provide an environment where employees feel they are treated with dignity and fairness, and where skills and experience are valued as we move towards new and innovative means for service delivery across the organisation.



## Background

The **Equality Act (2010)** brings together previous anti-discriminatory legislation into one single 'Act', to provide a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and to advance opportunity for all. Within the Act there is a Public Sector Equality Duty which applies to all 'public authorities', with a broad purpose to integrate the consideration of equality and good relations into day to day business.

There are three aims within the duty to which we must have 'due regard' in the exercise of our functions to enable us to meet the requirements of the Act.

1. **eliminate unlawful discrimination**, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
2. **advance the equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those that do not, and,
3. **foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those that do not.

To demonstrate 'due regard', the Council should assess the equality impact of its proposed or current policies and functions. This is to ensure that the authority can identify any adverse impact resulting from the policy or function, then amend the policy accordingly or justify the negative impact.

We ensure that equalities is a 'real' consideration during the formulation and development of our policies and functions, this is demonstrated through the completion of a Community Equality Impact Assessment by the relevant service lead. Community Equality Impact Assessments are used as a systematic process to consider each 'Equality Target Group' in turn. (Please refer to the 'Community Equality Impact Assessments' section of this document for further details).

The Equality Duty has extended the protection of individuals to nine different groups. These are referred to as protected characteristics.

### The protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Gender
- Disability
- Race
- Religion and Belief
- Sexual Orientation
- Gender Re-assignment
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and Maternity



As a public authority we publish certain equalities information to demonstrate that we comply with the Equality Act (2010).

The details that we publish incorporate:

- information relating to all our employees who share a protected characteristic;
- information relating to all those people who may be affected by our policies and practices, and,
- one or more equality objectives that can be measured and monitored.

## Thurrock Fairness Commission

Between March 2015 and December 2015 the Thurrock Fairness Commission – an independent group of individuals from across a wide range of interests including local residents, business people, councillors, professionals and academics – undertook an analysis of the evidence and the perception of fairness in Thurrock.

Through a series of meetings, presentations and a *Summer of Listening* to residents, the Commissioners received a wealth of information and hundreds of views before preparing a final report and recommendations to Cabinet in February 2016.

The Thurrock Fairness Commission established a set of ***Principles of Fairness*** to which Thurrock should commit as follows:

- **Eliminating unfairness**, promoting opportunities that benefit all people, whatever their background
- **Empowering people** to do things for themselves, working **with** rather than **for** the community
- Promoting **social responsibility** amongst local employers so Thurrock people have the earliest opportunities for employment and self-development
- Making decisions and running services **openly**, listening to communities and communicating outcomes and reasons in good time
- Giving priority to **those in greatest need** when allocating resources

Six additional recommendations for the Council were highlighted by the Fairness Commission with the following three now informing the Single Equality Scheme:

- Improve access to services;
- Reduce poverty, and,
- Build cohesion and create welcoming communities.

The full report and recommendations can be viewed here:

<https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/equality-and-fairness/thurrock-fairness-commission>



## What do we know about people in Thurrock?

The information we hold about our communities is gathered from a range of sources that include the Census 2011, our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Public Health England Health Profile, NOMIS (Official Labour Market Statistics), the Office of National Statistics (ONS) and our Annual Development Monitoring Report.

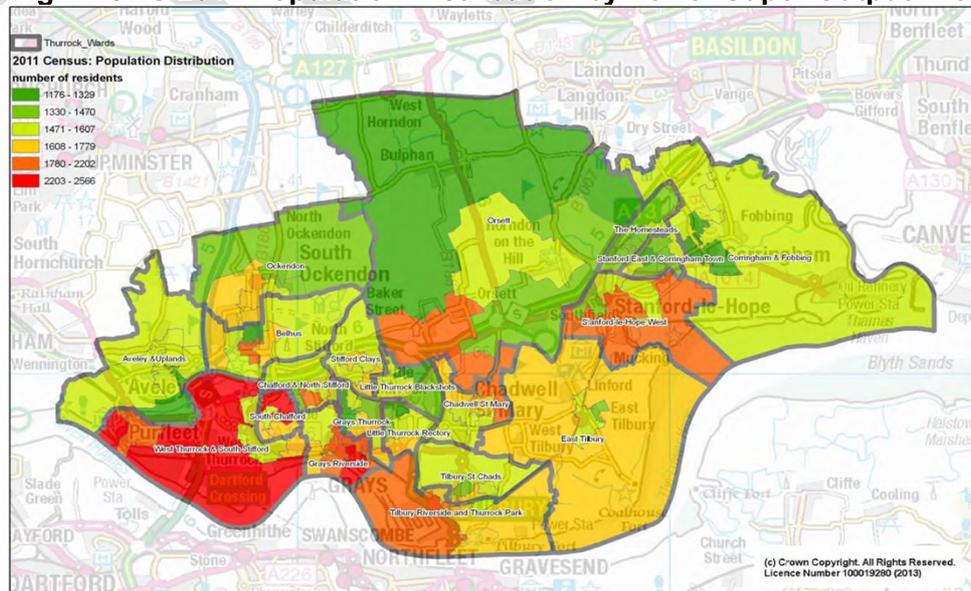
Only by understanding the composition of those that live and work in Thurrock will we be able to provide appropriate and good quality services that meet the needs of our diverse communities.

Since the Council's Single Equality Scheme 2012-2015 was published in April 2012, data from the 2011 Census has been released improving our understanding of the people that live and work in Thurrock.

Since 2011, the number of people living in Thurrock has increased from 158,300 to 166,000 in 2016. By 2021, our population is expected to reach 174,800 according to projections prepared by the ONS, 2012. The population density and distribution in Thurrock varies considerably from low density in the more rural areas to high in the urban areas.

Distribution of population by Lower Super Output Area is shown in Figure 1 highlighting that the southern and central areas of Thurrock have the wards with the largest numbers of residents, often in quite small, built up areas such as within the Grays Riverside ward. When planning services, deprivation levels are taken into account as these are not uniform across the borough.

**Fig. 1: ONS 2011 Population Distribution by Lower Super Output Area**



Source: Census 2011



## Protected characteristics

The following section provides summarised information on the population of Thurrock in relation to the nine protected characteristics:

### Age

Understanding the age breakdown of our population is essential to help us to plan for service provision, assist in meeting the needs of our current service users and plan for the future. Data from the 2011 Census establishes the following:

- There has been a 20% increase in 0-4 year olds between 2001 and 2011 (equating to almost 2,000 additional residents in this age group since 2001). This age group makes up 7.6% of Thurrock's population which is greater than the proportion of the national population.
- The borough's population aged 60 years and above has increased by 16.5% since 2001. However, the proportions of people in each of the 60+ age groups are lower than the England and East of England averages.
- There has been a 47.5% increase in the over 85 population, equating to 846 more residents in this age group since 2001.

### Gender

Across the country, region and borough there is generally an equal split in the number of males and females. According to the ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates (2013), the gender composition of residents in Thurrock was 49.3% male and 50.7% female.

There are no available records to illustrate the number of individuals that identify as non-gender specific (e.g. non-binary, genderqueer).

### Disability

In 2011, 15.57% of people in Thurrock were limited in their day to day activities, or approximately 1 in 6 residents. This is slightly below the regional average (16.7%) and the national average (17.64%) and represents a slight reduction in the figure (16.8%) for Thurrock reported in the previous Single Equality Scheme.

The number of residents receiving support from Adult Social Care has increased steadily from 2,582 in 2012-13 to 2,697 in 2014/15. With an expected ageing and growth of the population, we can expect a rise in age-related disease and an increased demand on health and social care.

With the number of people aged 85 expected to grow significantly in the medium term, conditions such as dementia are expected to increase steeply.

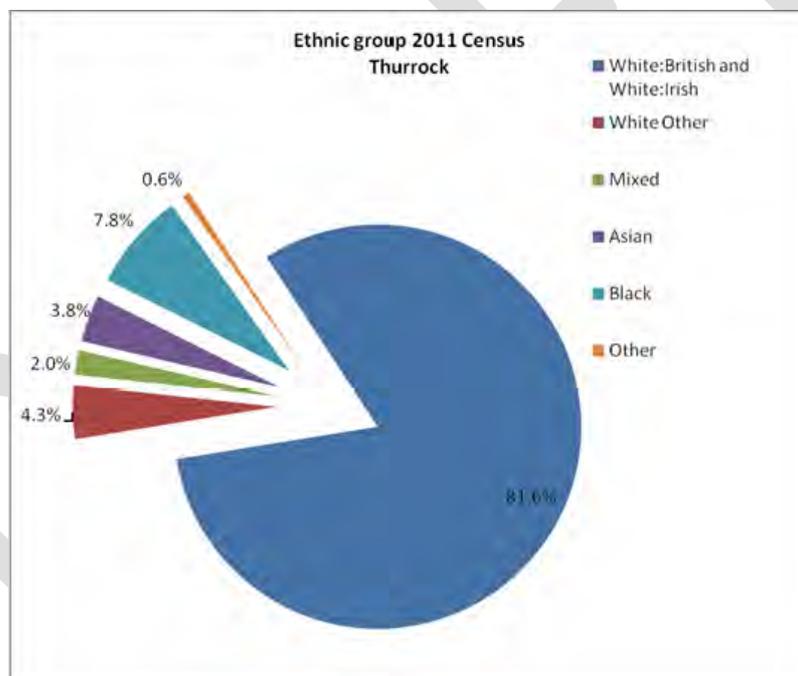


The South Essex and Thurrock Dementia Strategy 2017-2021 describes how support for people with dementia will be delivered in the future and identifies 9 priorities for action to make this happen.

## Race

Ethnic diversity is increasing in Thurrock. Between the 2001 and 2011 Census', all main ethnic groups (excluding White British and Irish groups) have increased both in number and proportion, particularly within the Black groups and Other White groups.

Despite an overall population increase, the White British and Irish groups have decreased in number from 134,348 residents in 2001 (representing 93.9% of the Thurrock population) to 128,348 in 2011 (representing 81.6% of the total population).



Source: 2011 Census

## Religion and Belief

The 2011 Census identified that 63.34% of the population of Thurrock are Christian, with 2.01% that are Muslim.

In 2001, just 6.4% stated that they followed no religion. By 2011 this had increased to 26.04%.



## **Sexual Orientation**

The Council is working with an in-house Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender (LGBT) staff forum and Stonewall to take steps that will allow it to better understand how many lesbian, gay and bisexual people are accessing services and what they think of them to determine where improvements may need to be made.

There is no statistically reliable data relating to the proportion of Thurrock residents who declare themselves as LGBT. In 2017, Stonewall, the national charity working for equality for LGBT people, state that a reasonable estimate for the UK's population of LGB people would be 5-7%. If this ratio is applied to Thurrock, it is possible to predict that between 8,300 and 11,620 residents are LGB. Data concerning transgender individuals is noted in the following section.

## **Gender Re-assignment**

The Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) estimate that approximately 1% of the British population are gender nonconforming to some degree. The number of trans-boys and trans-girls are about equal with the number of people seeking treatment growing each year. There is no statistically reliable data relating to gender re-assignment in Thurrock for the purpose of analysis.

## **Marriage and Civil Partnership**

A new category of 'Same Sex Civil Partnership' was added to the 2011 Census.

There are 170 Civil Partnerships in Thurrock, equating to 0.14% of all households. According to data released by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) in September 2016, this figure is comparable to the national average which was 0.1% in 2015.

34% of residents in Thurrock are single, which is lower than the national average of 51.5% according to data released by the ONS in July 2015. The percentage of people married in the borough is 17.7%, equating to 47.6% of the population as a whole.

## **Pregnancy and Maternity**

Population change is affected by the number of births in an area.

In Thurrock, there were 2,326 live births - 68.7 births per 1,000 women aged 15 – 44 in 2013, which is higher than the regional average (63%) and national rates (61.7%) for the same period. It can be observed that the General Fertility Rate has decreased since 2012 in line with both regional and national trends.



## Our Equality Objectives

We recognise that our residents and employees come from different communities and different circumstances.

The findings and recommendations from Thurrock's Fairness Commission have provided us with local feedback from our residents and partners to help us to create a fairer society.

We have used this information, along with information from recent workforce initiatives within the council, to establish the following four equality objectives to:

- improve access to services
- reduce poverty
- build cohesion and create welcoming communities
- develop a workforce that is equipped with the skills and confidence to support and enable our changing organisation and communities

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## What we have already done to fulfil our objectives

The following section of this report sets out the context and some of the key plans and strategies we have in place to achieve each of our equality objectives, addressing some of those challenges arising from the findings and recommendations of Thurrock's Fairness Commission, whilst meeting our responsibilities to residents and employees placed on us by equalities legislation.

### Objective 1: Improve access to services

Research completed by the Fairness Commission identified the importance of improving access to services including health care. The quality and availability of primary health care was also highlighted as a significant area for improvement not least to avoid the need for people to travel.

[Thurrock's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy \(2016-2021\)](#) was co-created with health partners and the community before it was approved by Council in March 2016. Extensive consultation and engagement through the development of the Strategy highlighted the relationship between 'people' and 'place' agendas and the potential impact of the 'place'; on the health and wellbeing of Thurrock residents.

The Strategy and its supporting action plans set out a shared approach to improving health and wellbeing outcomes and to reducing health inequalities. It brings together all agencies and communities in their joint roles in supporting prevention and early intervention. Its vision is to 'add years to life and life to years'.

The Council has also developed a [Customer Service Strategy: 2017-2020](#) and [Digital and Information Technology Strategy: 2017-2020](#) that maps out how it will meet the needs of the whole community and mainstream equality and diversity helping us to provide effective, efficient and reliable services to our citizens.

These strategies form part of a wider suite of transformation programmes and projects taking place within the Council and will be applied for the purpose of informing service plans and other Council documents and procedures. Provision for a range of contact channels either has or will be provided for each Council service with accompanying support to ensure access for individuals with special requirements, vulnerable residents and those that require assistance to self-serve.

Our commitment to improving access to services is also evident through the Community Hubs programme that is expanded in further detail beneath the '**Build cohesion and create welcoming communities**' section below.



## Objective 2: Reduce poverty

At a time when the potential for economic growth in the borough is at its greatest. Our [Economic Growth Strategy 2016-2021](#) establishes the need to increase the skills base in Thurrock to tackle inequality using economic prosperity as a means to end poverty.

We recognise employment is the main route out of poverty and the need for parents to receive a living wage, and support for skills development, to break the cycle of in-work poverty. As one of the largest employers, we introduced the Living Wage in April 2013. With 80% of our workforce made up of Thurrock residents this was a significant move by the Council. Through the implementation of the Council's [Social Values Framework](#) and Procurement Strategy, we extend this expectation to our providers, contractors and sub-contractors.

### Child poverty

According to data released by HMRC in 2014, a fifth of children in Thurrock live in relative poverty. This means that 7,955 children (or 18.6%) live in families with an income below 60% of the national average income. Taking into account the projected population growth, we intend to reduce the number of children in relative poverty by at least 4,000 children by 2020 involving the whole community including employers, faith groups, voluntary organisations and residents to work alongside public agencies to achieve this outcome.

Both our [Children and Young People Plan \(CYPP\)](#), [Child Poverty Strategy and supporting action plan](#) provide additional context, priorities and means to enable the Council and its partners to reduce child poverty in Thurrock.

### Welfare reform

A cross agency group meets on a regular basis to review the impact of welfare reform in Thurrock and to consider actions to mitigate negative impact. The group supports planning for key policy changes (e.g. the roll out of Universal Credit) and is chaired by the Council's Corporate Director for Adults, Housing and Health with representation from a range of partners from the Department for Work and Pensions and community and voluntary sector.

The impact of welfare reform is evident on many of our residents. The Council operates a [Fair Debt Policy](#) which aims to support people with a view to agreeing reasonable payment arrangements, minimising recovery action and helping to alleviate hardship.



## Objective 3: Build cohesion and create welcoming communities

Communities may define themselves by neighbourhood, ethnicity or culture, age group, faith, sexual orientation, language, gender or other characteristics or interests. Community cohesion describes the ability of all communities to function and grow in harmony together rather than in conflict.

Its purpose is to build communities where people feel confident that they belong and are comfortable mixing and interacting with others, particularly with people from different ethnic backgrounds or people of a different faith.

Building cohesion within and between communities is an essential step towards improving people's quality of life. Viewed from outside, a cohesive community is one in which people will want to live and invest and feel welcomed when they do.

Key indicators of community cohesion relate to how people feel about their local area. It can therefore be used as a measure of how well different minority and majority communities develop and relate to each other.

This section of the Single Equality Scheme provides:

- feedback from the council's most recent [Residents Survey](#)
- an overview of the Stronger Together Partnership
  - Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)
  - Local Area Coordination (LAC)
  - Community Hubs
- Hate crime and Prevent



## Residents Survey

During November and December 2016, an independent research organisation was commissioned by the council to interview 1,000 residents by phone asking a series of questions to determine their satisfaction with the local area, feeling part of a community and their safety. Interviewees were targeted from different wards, ages and genders. Feedback from the survey told us that almost 7 of every 10 residents (69%) are satisfied with their local area as a place to live, whilst nearly 2 in 10 (19%) are not satisfied with those living in Corringham and Fobbing, and Stanford-le-Hope West most satisfied (89%) and those Tilbury Riverside and Thurrock Park (52%) followed closely by Grays Riverside (49%) and Tilbury St Chads (47%).

When asked about common problems in their local area, residents said there were problems with issues including rubbish or litter lying around (44%), groups hanging around the streets (42%), people using or dealing drugs (36%), vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles (33%) and people being drunk or rowdy in public places (28%).

Almost 9 out of every 10 residents (89%) say they feel safe when outside in their local area during the day, whilst nearly 6 in 10 (56%) feel safe when outside in their local area after dark with around 3 in 10 (31%) say they feel unsafe when outside in their local area after dark.

The results from the Residents Survey will inform the key performance indicators (KPIs) for the council going forward to reflect the issues of most concern to residents as well as providing evidence to help with policy direction and decision-making.

Whilst the majority of residents surveyed were satisfied with Thurrock as a place to live and have a sense of belonging, we recognise we need to achieve more in order to successfully encourage communities to engage with and shape local opportunities that can impact on an area's quality of life.

Ensuring Thurrock actively welcomes different communities, and recognises the range of skills and benefits which diversity brings, is essential to increasing the confidence of new communities to participate with networks across the borough.



## **Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)**

A key feature of our approach to community cohesion is to see positive community engagement as the pivot, or enabler. If people feel they can influence the decisions that affect their lives, they are likely to feel a greater investment in where they live.

Our approach in Thurrock has embraced ABCD within the context of a wider [Stronger Together Partnership](#) involving the council and partners from the community and voluntary sector. The partnership works with grass roots organisations and residents groups wherever possible, adopting a peer to peer approach to help build connections between people. The partnership supports the delivery of a number of initiatives including Local Area Co-ordination and the Community Hubs programme:

### ***Local Area Co-ordination***

Local Area Coordination supports our residents to stay strong, safe, well, resilient, independent and contributing citizens to their local communities. Local Area Coordination is a long-term, person centred, strength and evidence-based approach to supporting people who may be socially isolated, lonely, excluded or marginalised.

Introduced in June 2013, Local Area Coordinators (LACs) work to strengthen the capacity of communities to welcome and include people and to make services more personal, flexible and accountable. LACs connect people in their local neighbourhood and work alongside people in very practical ways, always looking for local no / low cost solutions through the networks and resources that they know within the community. LACs support people to create their own solutions within communities that are inclusive and supportive. They believe in the strength and contribution of all local people (including those who are labelled as service users / clients or social care recipients) to build and pursue a positive vision for Thurrock. Local Area Coordinators build partnerships with local people, communities, organisations and services - nurturing and sharing the resources within our communities and ensuring that **marginalised individuals** are active and valued. LACs support people to find ways to make a better life. They cover all areas in Thurrock and are based in towns and villages. They ask people "**what would make a good life for you**", and support them to lead that life in their local community.

To date, **over 2000** local people have been supported with a range of positive outcomes arising from direct contact with LACs extending from access to housing, training and employment together with volunteering.

A report relating to the value of LAC in Thurrock was completed in October 2015 and is entitled 'Social Value of Local Area Coordination – A Forecast Social Return on Investment for Adult Social Care, Thurrock Council'. The report can be viewed here:

[https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/lac\\_report\\_2015.pdf](https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/sites/default/files/assets/documents/lac_report_2015.pdf)



## **Community hubs**

At the time of publishing, Thurrock has six operational 'community hubs' in South Ockendon, Tilbury, Chadwell St. Mary, Stifford Clays, Purfleet and Aveley.

These are largely volunteer-led in their service offer but support residents access a wide range of public services. A core element of the Hub offer is supporting people to access on-line services, including benefits that complement the Council's [Customer Service Strategy: 2017-2020](#).

Hubs are very inclusive and can be pro-active in helping meet local need by involving residents in designing the solution to local issues. As our population grows, Hubs will be an increasingly important resource for new residents to help navigate the borough, its services, and opportunities for engagement.

Further information on the location and services available in community hubs is available at [www.strongertogether.org.uk](http://www.strongertogether.org.uk)

## **Hate Crime and Prevent**

Thurrock has a proactive approach to raising awareness around hate crime and reporting. A number of Hate Crime Reporting Centres have been established and are currently the subject of review to determine how best to promote and support their expansion across the borough. Targeted work has reduced hate crime in hot spots, and this approach will be rolled out to other areas as necessary. Since our last Single Equality Scheme was prepared, reported incidents of racial hate crime in Tilbury for example have reduced as a result of community events, working with schools and targeted awareness campaigns.

This work is led by Thurrock's Community Safety Partnership and depends on close working with the community and voluntary sector, as are 'Stay Safe' events targeting adults with learning disabilities. Thurrock Community Safety Partnership (TCSP) comprises representatives from Essex Police, Thurrock Council, Thurrock Youth Offending Service, Thurrock Drug and Alcohol Team, Essex Fire and Rescue Service, Office of the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, Thurrock CCG, Essex NHS, National Probation Service, and, Essex Community Rehabilitation Company.

The group have established a number of key priorities that incorporate reducing harm and safeguarding vulnerable victims from hate crime along with following the government's counter terrorism strategy – Prevent. Priorities and actions are set out in a shared [Thurrock Prevent Strategy and Thurrock Community Safety Partnership \(hereon CSP\) Delivery Plan](#).

The priorities were informed by a strategic assessment, a legal requirement, which identifies the scale and scope of crime, disorder and community safety issues within Thurrock.



As the Government's Prevent agenda becomes more relevant to all areas and all public bodies, we will continue with our approach to supporting integration and cohesion. Reducing community tensions is a priority for Prevent in Thurrock. The nature of tensions, conflicts and divisions differ from one area to another: there may be tensions and mistrust between different ethnic or faith groups, urban and rural dwellers, new arrivals and long-term residents, inter-generational lines or as a consequence of national or international incidents.

Prevent in Thurrock provides a framework for assessing risk and supporting communities at such times, as well as raising risks within a safeguarding framework.

### Violence against women and girls

**The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership is committed to meeting the needs of both women and men by tackling all forms of exploitation and abuse across Thurrock and by delivering protection and legal redress for all and have in place a strategy to address Violence against Women and Girls" (VAWG).** The Vision of this Strategy is for everyone in Thurrock to live a life free from domestic and sexual violence and abuse and harmful practices, which encompasses a range of unacceptable and deeply distressing crimes, including domestic violence and abuse; sexual violence; child sexual abuse; stalking; so-called "honour-based" violence – including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM); gang-related violence; and human trafficking.

## **Objective 4: Develop a workforce that is equipped with the skills and confidence to support and enable our changing organisation and communities**

We appreciate that equality of opportunity is fundamental to maximising the engagement and performance of our people and we strive to create a positive environment through education and awareness-raising of equality and diversity both within the organisation and the wider borough.

By living the standards we set, we will provide a customer first approach, with a workforce that is representative of the borough's demographic profile, carrying the capacity and skills to deliver what is required to support all of our communities and harness the diversity of our working environments.

In this regard, we have adopted a People Strategy for the period 2017-2020 that overlaps and enables the delivery of the Council's [Customer Service Strategy: 2017-2020](#) and [Digital and Information Technology Strategy: 2017-2020](#) setting out our commitments to our workforce to provide confident and competent, customer



focussed, efficient and effective services working in collaboration with partners.

Within the context of the People Strategy, we are developing a suite of tools to ensure that our staff have the skills and confidence to complete meaningful engagement with service users and wider communities, enabling an ethos of inviting and progressing locally led-solutions over more traditional service delivery models.

We will ensure that every member of staff also feels engaged, and has a range of channels, including a series of staff forums and a Corporate Workforce Group, to express their views and opinions freely and have their contribution recognised.

We have a range of policies currently in place to ensure that our staff are supported including a/an:

- Disabled Persons in Employment Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Religion and Belief in the Workplace Policy
- Sexual Orientation and the Workplace Policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Staff Transitioning Policy
- Working Families Policy and Procedure
- Harassment and Bullying Policy

## **Corporate Equality Framework**

The Corporate Equality Framework (CEF) has been integrated with the Single Equality Scheme as it sets out some of the operational practice in place to allow us to meet our statutory equality duties. The framework further describes our commitment to future engagement with individuals, groups and wider communities along with monitoring and evaluating delivery of the objectives highlighted in the Single Equality Scheme (SES) and external validation of the same.

### **Governance arrangements**

A key mechanism for improving equality outcomes is how the organisation implements its corporate priorities ensuring that all relevant strategy and policy development reflects our equality objectives.

The following section provides an overview of those boards and groups within the organisation that support the monitoring and delivery of our equality objectives. Additional information relating to the partnerships we work with are also outlined in this section.



## **Directors Board**

The primary purpose of Directors Board (DB) is to enable the Council's most senior officers to collectively manage the day to day business of the Authority and to ensure that the management of the Council is given strategic direction in line with the Council's overall objectives not limited to the commitments to equality and requirements set out in related legislation.

## **People Board**

Building and fostering a truly customer-focused culture requires cultivating a real commitment to equality across the organisation. People Board facilitates the joining up of HR, Equalities and Cultural Change activities across the council.

The Board plays a key role within the implementation and monitoring of the SES and CEF for the purpose of improving the organisation's performance relating to diversity through joint work across recruitment, selection, induction, probation, training and development, career progression, succession, service planning, and capability processes.

## **Directorate Management Teams (DMT)**

Directors through their management teams have a strong role to play in terms of addressing the commitments and actions set out in our corporate plans, and ensuring that service design, planning and delivery reflects all relevant statutory equality requirements. Management teams plan for risk, monitor service delivery and review progress in many areas. While it may be necessary to establish working groups to progress specific equality projects or work, departments ensure issues and opportunities around equalities are addressed as part of normal SMT meetings. This ensures that planning, delivering and monitoring equality becomes a business as usual operation rather than a separate activity.

## **Service Teams**

The delivery of improved equality outcomes will depend on the work of managers and their teams. Managers will ensure staff are aware of this combined SES and CEF and particularly the four equality objectives highlighted.

Team Managers will also ensure that individuals, through team plans and the performance and review process, have clear ownership of actions.

This approach will require closer working between teams, service users, and community groups to ensure a real partnership approach. To underpin this focus, managers will ensure performance reviews reference the performance and



behaviour framework. The behaviour framework highlights the behaviours and competencies required to support our equality priorities.

## Staff Forums

The Council has six staff forums representing protected characteristics and specific matters relating to: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), Disability, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual + (LGBT+), Mental Health, Women and Men.

The forums provide a mechanism for staff to contribute to service improvement activities and communicate with the council on equality issues that impact on staff welfare.

The forums are operated through staff chairs independently elected by forum members.

Forum Chairs come together regularly with Human Resources, Organisational Development, the Community Development and Equalities Team and trade unions through a Corporate Staff Forum where collective matters are shared ranging from strategic to operational matters affecting the workforce.

The Chief Executive meets with staff forum chairs at regular intervals to understand the issues and opportunities arising from membership and People Board sponsor and ensures that staff issues are effectively addressed or progressed at the highest level.

## Corporate Workforce Group (CWG)

The Corporate Workforce Group works to shape the council's People Strategy and to build on the positive culture in the organisation. The group is made up of representatives from all directorates and meets at quarterly intervals.

CWG is chaired by members of the group and attended by the Chief Executive.

Functions of the group include:

- co-ordination and running of directorate workforce groups to discuss issues within directorates for taking forward;
- providing a critical friend to Directors' Board and other operating boards within the council;
- supporting, by attendance and consultation, workforce related projects across the organisation, and,
- championing workforce initiatives, including the staff survey.



## **Partnership Boards**

How the organisation plans and manages its external partnerships and internal resources in order to support its policy and strategy and the effective operation of its processes is critical to ensuring that we meet our statutory duties.

The council has a number of statutory partnership boards which include the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Community Safety Partnership and the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

These boards all have specified duties and responsibilities, supported by a network of sub-boards and delivery work-streams. Key officers act as critical friends to these partnership boards, to ensure relevant equality issues are effectively addressed.

## **Consultation and engagement**

In line with the planned regeneration and growth for the borough, Thurrock's population is set to grow further. More homes are to be built and our neighbourhoods will expand, potentially changing the 'urban village' feel of Thurrock. As a result, our population will continue to become more diverse.

We must know and understand all our communities – including emerging communities. Engaging positively with all communities will help us to ensure people come together around the issues they share concern about and helping to build stronger communities.

The Council is currently refreshing its Community Engagement Strategy to support an efficient means for engaging our diverse communities as Thurrock embarks on further growth, regeneration and demographic change. The strategy will have a supporting implementation plan that will build on the opportunities communities identify through engagement to build resilience and cohesion, improve resident satisfaction and promote citizenship. It will also seek to increase the potential to support opportunities to help communities deliver alternative activities and solutions to those delivered by statutory agencies.

## **Community Equality Impact Assessments**

Community Equality Impact Assessment is a critical examination of a policy, practice or procedure in order to identify any adverse, detrimental or negative outcome that it may have on any individuals or specific groups of people.

All Council policies, strategies, functions and services are assessed in terms of the impacts they have on the different groups which make up our community.

Carrying out a Community and Equalities Impact Assessments (CEIA) helps us to:



- ensure our services are accessible to all and meet the needs of our customers and staff,
- ensure that we deliver our policies and strategies in a practical way, and,
- meet our legal responsibilities and duties set out in relevant legislation

We are committed to ensuring we understand the implications of our services to serve our diverse community appropriately. This ensures that our services are provided fairly, are genuinely accessible to all and avoid any unintentional negative impact on any group of people.

## Annual Equality Report

We collect and publish a range of equality related information as required by the Equality Duty. We gather information covering all the protected characteristics as and where relevant, this includes: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

Our equality information helps us identify and understand potential key equality issues across our functions including employment and service delivery areas influencing Council policy and practice.

To view the Council's most recent Annual Equality Report, please refer to: <https://www.thurrock.gov.uk/equality-and-fairness/equality-duty>

## Equality standards

The Council is committed to a range of existing external validation assessments that measure our commitment to equality although we expect these to grow across the lifetime of this combined SES/CEF.

All managers and service heads will be aware of the specific requirements of these standards and how they relate to their areas through regular internal communications and additional briefings where relevant.



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## Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
Bisexual	The Encompass Network defines bisexual as “romantic and sexual attraction toward both men and women”.
Discrimination	The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people
Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	An assessment of whether the Council’s strategies, policies, projects, contracts, major changes in services, and decisions affect different groups of people in different ways , and whether there are any steps that can be taken to reduce any adverse impacts
Ethnicity	Belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural tradition
Gay	The Encompass Network defines gay as “sexual and romantic attraction to a person of the same gender as the individual”.
Gender reassignment	The Equality Act 2010 defines gender reassignment as someone who “is proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.”
Harassment	Aggressive pressure or intimidation
Lesbian	The Encompass Network defines lesbian as “a woman who is primarily or solely attracted (romantically and/or sexually) to other women”
LGB	Lesbian, gay and bi-sexual
LGB&T	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer or questioning.
Prejudice	Preconceived opinion about someone that is not based on reason or actual experience

