

Hertsmere Borough Council's Response to the General Equality Duty 2023/24.

Introduction

This is the council's annual response to the General Equality Duty, setting out the achievements made in supporting equality, diversity and inclusion in Hertsmere during 2023/24. The report highlights key pieces of work undertaken by the council, and where relevant its partners and sets out the future direction in the provision of accessible, fair and inclusive services.

Progress is reported against the council's equalities objectives:

- We will value and understand the diversity of our communities, celebrating our heritage and identities
- We will consult with residents and our communities on matters which affect them, taking into account the diversity of the borough
- We will deliver fully accessible, fair and inclusive services
- We will provide equal opportunities to our employees and encourage a culture of equality within the workplace

Legislative Framework

As a public sector organisation, the council has statutory duties governed by the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 and related regulations. Under the Act, public sector organisations with over 150 employees are required to show that they have identified and considered the impact of their activities on people with "protected characteristics".

Protected characteristics are defined in legislation as Race; Age; Sexual Orientation; Disability; Sex; Religion or Belief; Gender reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity. In addition to considering the needs of those with protected characteristics.

The Equality Act 2010 also includes a general equality duty which requires the council to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

Due regard involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics and;
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups, where they are different from the needs of other people.

This general equality duty applies to the council as an employer as well as a provider and enabler of public services.

Hertsmere's Communities

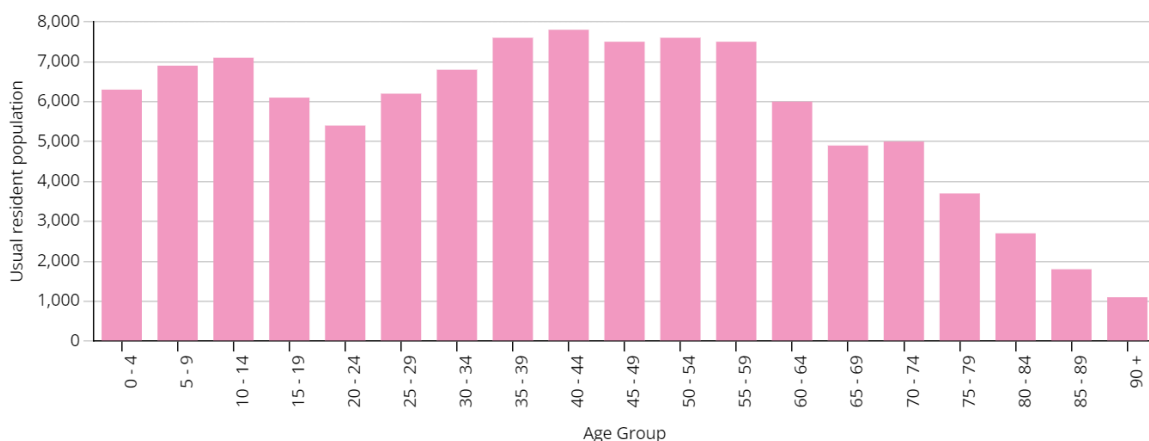
Hertsmere is a mixed rural and urban district to the north of greater London. It has a mixed population of 108,100 spread across the main settlements of Borehamwood, Bushey, Potters Bar, Radlett and the village of Shenley. Hertsmere is a relatively affluent area with low unemployment, good levels of education and a low crime rate. However, this hides significant inequalities between the wards.

Hertsmere Borough Council is committed to addressing equality and diversity, ensuring equality in all we do. Census 2021 data shows that Hertsmere's diverse communities are growing and that the borough is home to a wide range of ethnic groups. The borough is entre of Hertfordshire's Jewish community, who make up 17% of the population. Hertsmere also has a large Indian population and is home to the UK headquarters of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Bhaktivedanta Manor.

Population

- At the time of the 2011 Census, the usual resident population of Hertsmere was 100,031. In the 10 years to March 2021, this had risen to 107,800, an increase of 7.8%.
- The ONS states that the population increase in Hertsmere is higher than the overall increase in England where the population grew by 6.6% since 2011.
- Women continue to make up just over half of Hertsmere's population 51.9% being women, while men make up 48.1%. This is in line with the national picture, where women make up 51% of the overall population and men make up 49%.
- The number of households in the borough has risen from 39,778 in 2011 to 42,700 in 2021.

Age



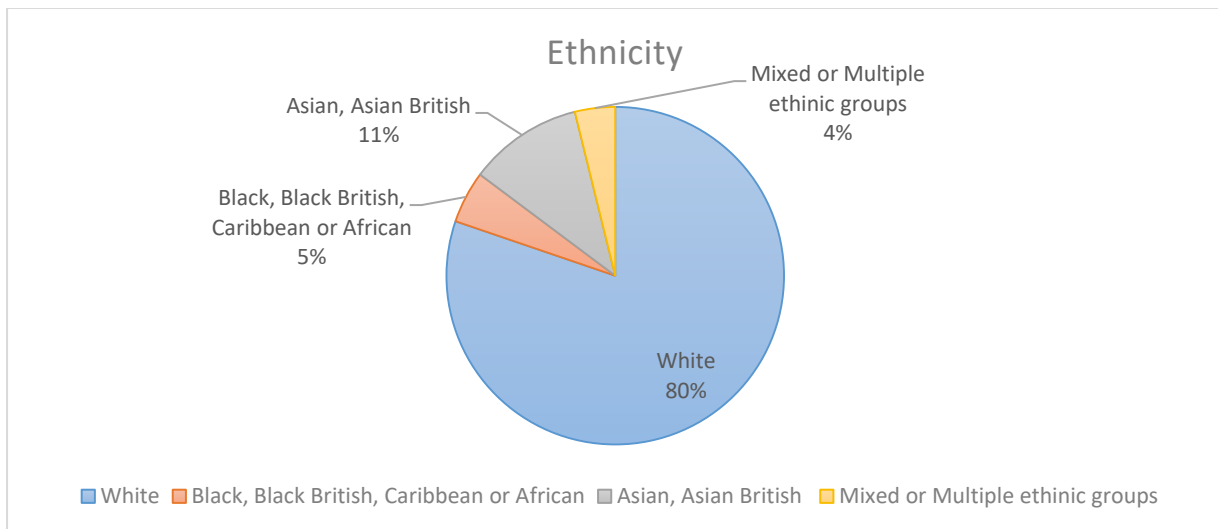
Looking at broad age groups, there has been a rise of 7.5% in those aged 0-15 years, 5.7% in those aged 15-64 years, and a 17.6% in people aged over 65 years. This is in line with the national picture, where there has been a rise in those in older age groups than ever before.

Ethnicity

The ethnicity data highlights the increasing diversity of Hertsmere. When compared to the 2011 Census:

- There has been a rise of 2.72% in those identifying as Asian, or Asian British: Indian, this group now make up 6.2% of Hertsmere's population.
- There has been a rise of 5.8% in those identifying as 'White: Other White' which accounts for people with a European background. These groups now make up 11.6% of Hertsmere's population.
- There has also been a rise of 2.8% in those identifying as 'any other ethnic group', these groups now make up 3.5% of Hertsmere's population.
- All other ethnic groups have seen smaller rises in those identifying with them.
- In line with the national picture, there has been a decline of 7.16% in those identifying as 'White, English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish or British' in Hertsmere.

The chart below shows the ethnicity of the borough from the 2021 Census.

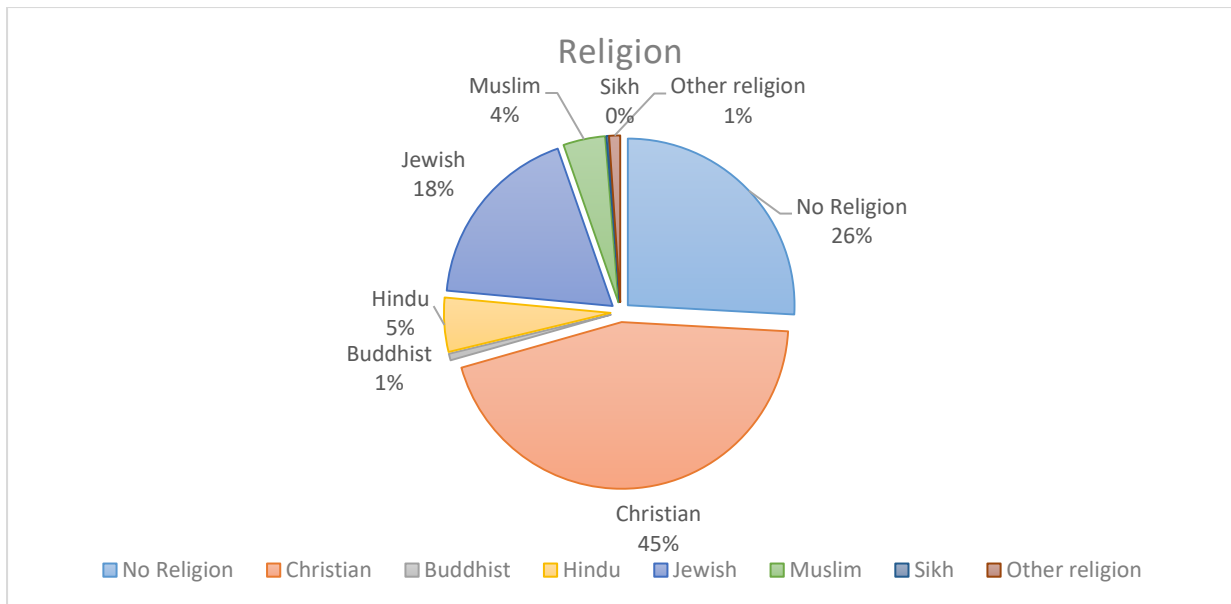


Religion

When compared to the 2011 Census there has been:

- A rise of 5.3% in those saying that they have no religion. Overall 24.2% of Hertsmere's population say that they have no religion.
- A decrease of 9.95% in those identifying as Christian. Overall 41.8% of Hertsmere's population say that they are Christian.
- A rise of 2.73% in those identifying as Jewish. Hertsmere's Jewish population make up 17% of Hertsmere residents.
- An increase of 1.37% in Hertsmere's Muslim population, which now makes up 3.8% of Hertsmere residents.
- An increase of 1.78% in Hertsmere's Hindu population, which now makes up 4.9% of Hertsmere residents.

This is summarised in the chart below.



Sexual Orientation

Census 2021 data show that:

- 90.42% of residents aged over the age of 16 identify as heterosexual
- 0.98% of residents over the age of 16 identify as gay or lesbian
- 0.82% of residents over the age of 16 bisexual
- 0.30% of residents over the age of 16 say that they have another sexual orientation
- 7.48% of residents did not answer the question

We note that this is the first time residents have been asked about LGBTQ+ status. As such, we will continue to use local insight and monitoring where possible to monitor any changes in these figures.

Gender Identity

Census 2021 data shows that:

- 93.69% of residents aged over the age of 16 have the same gender identity as their registered sex at birth
- 0.43% of residents aged over the age of 16 have a different gender identity than their registered sex at birth
- 5.88% of residents did not respond to the question

We note that this is the first time residents have been asked about gender identity. As such, we will continue to use local insight and monitoring where possible to monitor any changes in these figures.

Council Staff

In addition to looking at improvements to services in the context of equality and diversity, this progress report also provides information about council staff. As part of the requirement to

publish Equality Data, the council publishes undertakes regular monitoring of the workforce. A report is expected later in the year, detailing the composition of our staff compared to the background population of Hertsmere Borough.

The council's [gender pay gap](#) is published separately at the end of each financial year.

Delivering Council Services

This section identifies service provisions, projects and improvements targeted for those with protected characteristics. Some of the projects, services or initiatives address a range of equalities issues and often relates to intersectionality (multiple protected characteristics).

These have been summarised for each objective:

OBJECTIVE 1: We will value and understand the diversity of our communities, celebrating our heritage and identities

- We have taken a pro-active role in ensuring community cohesion following the 7 October 2023 attack in Israel. This has involved working closely with our Jewish and Muslim communities to understand and respond to their concerns. The Council has provided regular shared information briefings, bringing together information from Herts Police, The Community Security Trust and ourselves. This provided a trusted source of information in the community.
- Through our grants programme we have provided support to organisations, which reflect the growing diversity of the borough. This has included Spirit of Africa, which provided Black History Month workshops for children in Hertsmere, Diwali events, Potters Bar Christmas lights, in addition to funding for the well-established Camp Unity, which brings together children from different religious and cultural backgrounds.
- Hertsmere Borough Council recognised Pride month with a flag raising ceremony and sponsored and attended HertsPride. In addition, the Pride Progress flag was flown during LGBT History month in February 2024.
- Hertsmere Borough Council marked Armed Forces Day through a flag raising ceremony and we held a service to mark Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Hertsmere Borough Council attended the Eid in the Park events, organised by the Borehamwood Islamic Society.
- The Black History Month Flag was flown during October 2024.
- In October 2023, the Mayor held his Annual Civic Service. This brought together Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Humanist, Church of England, Jain and other faith leaders to celebrate the vibrancy of the diversity of the borough.
- Hertsmere Borough Council has marked all key religious festivals for the borough's diverse communities.
- To mark World Book day, the Mayor secured funding to provide five sets of Titilola Babarinde's 'We Are Friends' book series to every primary school across the borough. The books introduce the concept of diversity and inclusion to all.

OBJECTIVE 2: We will consult with residents and our communities on matters, which affect them, taking into account the diversity of the borough

- The ZenCity Engagement Platform launched in 2023 provides the Council with a single place to coordinate consultation and engagement. We have already carried out a number of consultations with the first asking specifically about how we communicate

and another to identify community priorities. We have also carried out a number of service specific consultations. The hub enables us to publish feedback and project updates alongside engagement results. Alongside these one-off consultations we also carry out regular Community Surveys which will provide a temperature check on residents perceptions of their quality of life alongside satisfaction with council services and feelings about the authority. The first survey took place between December 23 and February 24 with the next launching in June 24 and results expected in September.

- During this year we undertook a Community Priorities survey to assess the importance or impact of a range of current issues on the residents of Hertsmere and which were presenting the largest concerns to our residents. 209 responses were gathered from across the borough through two methods, the survey was based online using the Zen City platform and was supplemented with the community engagement team reaching out to local groups to improve the sample size of the survey and address potential digital inequality. This outreach activity meant 144 additional responses were gathered. The main question in the survey asked respondents to choose their top three priorities/concerns from a list provided and to put them in order of highest priority first. The community engagement team intends to use the results of the survey to direct its work more effectively to ensure the team is able to offer support for the issues that residents find are impacting their lives the most.

OBJECTIVE 3: We will deliver fully accessible, fair and inclusive services

- All council meetings are webcast live, to increase accessibility to the councils democratic processes.
- Hertsmere's municipal calendar is updated annually and meeting dates are set to avoid Jewish festivals as a large proportion of councillors, and the population of Hertsmere, are Jewish. Other religious festivals also avoided are Eid (Islam), Diwali (Hindu) and Christian festivals.
- The Community Support Service, part funded by the council, supports residents with their mental wellbeing needs through proactive outreach. In 2023/24, the service supported 205 people in 2023/24¹.
- The Community Safety Team in partnership with a number of agencies have held a number of Older Persons Advice, Learning and Safety events across the borough, ensuring that older people have access to a wide range of services that are available to them.
- Four Women's Safety Awareness sessions were delivered in 2023/24 across the borough, with 85 women in attendance. The sessions equip those attending with basic skills to stay safe on a daily basis.
- Hertsmere Borough Council's award nominated Hertsmere Cancer Screening Uptake project, raises awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer. The project has brought together partners across the NHS system to develop a service, which offers patients who have not responded to cancer screening invites a straightforward and easy way to book their screening appointments. To date, over 2,200 women have been booked for cervical screening, over 300 women have been booked for breast screening and almost 60 black men have come forward to PSA testing. In addition, we have organised two health awareness events one during Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October in 2023 in Potters Bar. The second in Borehamwood during prostate cancer awareness month to promote conversations around men's health and wellbeing. This event also included a performance from the Purple All Stars, who promote health

¹ At the time of writing, data is only available until the end of Q3.

messages through dance. Both events provided an opportunity for residents to access health information in an accessible way.

- Hertsmeres Borough Council's award winning We Move She Moves physical activity project is now in its 10th year. We Move She Moves is a movement aimed at getting women and girls in Hertsmeres to take up physical activity. There are a wide range of sessions on offer, with something to suit all ages, abilities, and fitness levels.
- Our leisure provider, InspireAll run a comprehensive GenerationPlus programme for older adults including tennis, pickleball, table tennis, badminton, walking netball and day trips.
- Older adults and those on certain benefits are able to apply for a concession card, making it easier for them to access local leisure facilities.
- InspireAll run a number of community events, which are intergenerational, the Easter egg hunts and fun in the park have a strong focus on younger residents.
- During this year, parkplay was launched at Aycliffe Park in Cowley Hill. The free weekly sessions provide 2 hours of fun and play for all ages.
- InspireAll offer free pool space for disability swimming clubs.
- The council continues to provide an assisted collection bin collection service, usually taken up by elderly residents or those with a disability.

OBJECTIVE 4: We will provide equal opportunities to our employees and encourage a culture of equality within the workplace

- We promote equality of opportunity for all by ensuring that all council employees receive pay for work of equal value. A copy of our equal pay statement can be found [here](#).
- All staff are required to complete mandatory training for all to increase knowledge of equality and diversity. This helps improve interaction with service users and colleagues and make staff aware of obligations under the related legislation that has taken place.
- Hertsmeres Borough Council is a Disability Confident Employer and as such guarantee interviews to people with disabilities who meet all essential job criteria.
- Hertsmeres Borough Council undertake equality monitoring to assess our workforce profile against census information for Hertsmeres. This will allow us to see if any action needs to be taken to address any significant differences.
- Hertsmeres Borough Council conduct annual gender pay reviews to identify if there are any differences in pay between male and female employees
- Hertsmeres Borough Council have a robust anti-harassment and bullying policy and take proactive action to respond to any concerns.
- Hertsmeres Borough Council has undertaken a comprehensive staff survey. Over 120 responses were received and these are currently being analysed by Human Resources. Initial results show that 95% of employees see Hertsmeres as an inclusive place to work.

Other Inequalities: Veterans

Census 2021 was the first census in which residents (aged 16 years and over) were asked whether they had previously served in the UK armed forces, either as a regular, as a reserve or both. This includes those who have served for at least one day in the armed forces, either regular, reserves or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations.

Census 2021 data shows that:

- 1.6% of the adult population had served in the Armed Forces
- 0.6% of the adult population had served in the Reserve UK Armed Forces

- 0.1% of the population had served in both the Armed Forces and the Reserve UK Armed Forces.

The council is committed to the Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant. This is a statement of support between the civilian community and its local Armed Forces community. Further information on the Covenant can be found at [Hertfordshire Heroes](#).

The council is an active member of the [Hertfordshire Armed Forces Covenant Board](#) who work in partnership to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant locally. It brings together business, military organisations, charities, NHS and local authorities in a shared commitment to ensure that those who serve and have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

Summary

Reflecting on the actions undertaken by the council, these demonstrate the steps the council has taken to achieve the statutory duties governed by the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 and related regulations.

The potential impact of projects and policies on people with “protected characteristics” is considered, reviewed and managed during the policy writing and review process.

The work undertaken in relation to the objectives show how the council is taking steps to achieve the following:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
- Foster good relations between different groups

The Way Forward

This report includes many examples of how the council, working with its partners, is providing for the needs of “protected” and underrepresented groups in the borough.

It provides a snapshot of the work taking place to prevent and where necessary address, disparities arising from protected characteristics, where people live, their income or skill level.

This work is presented in the context of the longer-term impacts of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, both of which have impacted the way that the council delivers its services, greatly influenced partnership working with the community and voluntary sector and continue to have a disproportionate impact on those whose protected characteristics increase their vulnerability.

The council will continue to maintain and where possible further develop its equality and diversity work in the year ahead.