Essex County Council
Our Equalities Story

March 2016

‘Fairness is part of everything we do’
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Foreword

Essex is a commissioning-led council and we are proud fairness continues to be at the heart of everything we do, ensuring it is woven into the very fabric of our organisation. We are also proud to have been recognised as ‘Excellent’ by the Local Government Association (LGA) as part of the Equality Framework for Local Government, awarded to us in 2012. We were commended across all five performance areas of: knowing our communities; leadership, partnerships and organisational commitment; involving our communities; responsive services and customer care and a skilled and committed workforce.

We are excited by our revised Equalities Strategy, published in April 2015, which acts as an enabler to our ambition and commitment of advancing equality across Essex. The strategy supports our seven whole population outcomes, which in turn seek to enable every individual in Essex to realise his or her potential and enjoy a good quality of life. This includes residents of the protected characteristics of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and marriage and civil partnership.

Essex has come a long way since 2012; we have worked hard to act on the recommendations of the peer assessment in order to add value to our equalities practices. We remain committed to tackling the root causes of inequality, as opposed to merely reacting to the symptoms associated with it. This is why we have embedded equalities into our everyday processes, whether it be within our commissioning cycle, policy development frameworks or our employment practices. We believe that equalities is not an add-on, but is part of our business as usual activity.

We are now looking to the future and our new programme of change, called Essex in 2021, to respond to a range of future challenges. We have a prime opportunity to invite the Local Government Association back to the Council and experience first-hand the progress we continue to make in embedding a robust and effective equalities agenda at the heart of our organisation and in everything we do.
As a sector, local government faces a number of challenges; we know we must continue to target our finite resources to those people and places that are the most disadvantaged. We also know that we must work to remove the barriers to opportunities and narrow the inequalities gap for those most in need. Across Essex County Council we are working hard to do just that. The case studies that underpin our journey of the past four years highlight the continuous improvements we have made towards delivering our commissioning outcomes.

However, we recognise we must not become complacent in tackling inequalities within our communities. This is why our equality objectives add value to what we do by ensuring that, as a commissioning-led council, we continue to tackle inequality across the County of Essex. This is alongside the advancement of equality of opportunity for all and ensuring we continue to foster good relations between different communities. As part of our transformation journey we are embracing new opportunities to narrow the inequalities gap innovatively, so we may better understand and engage with the communities we find hard-to-reach. We believe that our journey to the present, and into the future, demonstrates our excellence across all five of the equality framework’s performance areas.

We would like to thank our employees, elected members and partners for their continued dedication and commitment to reducing inequalities across Essex. We hope that this narrative, supported by the case studies, demonstrates our continued efforts at bringing economic, social and health prosperity to every resident in Essex.

Councillor David Finch
Leader (with Cabinet responsibilities for Equalities)

Gavin Jones
Chief Executive
About this document

This narrative tells the story of the journey we have undertaken since the accreditation in 2012, and describes how we intend to move forward and continue to improve outcomes for communities across Essex. The case studies detail the evidence of our efforts and achievements and these can be found in the links and associated appendix.

You will note that we have steered away from using the traditional peer challenge equality lines of enquiry because we wanted to evidence our achievements in an authentic way. Our approach is one of continuous improvement in relation to embedding equalities in everything we do.
About Essex

Essex is one of the largest and most diverse counties in England, home to 1.43 million people living in a mixture of dense urban centres and idyllic rural villages. The council, employing more than 7,000 people, is responsible for a geographical area twice the size of Greater London and has seen its role, operational model and vision change dramatically in response to the continued challenge of austerity.

As one of the largest counties in England, Essex remains socially, culturally and economically diverse with differences across demographic groups and between people with protected characteristics. These differences are also apparent in the rural and urban geographical divide which exists in the county, with two thirds of Essex consisting of rural farmland and picturesque countryside. These differences were explored further in our published Equalities Strategy for 2015-18.
At Essex County Council (ECC) we know that the diversity of population will broaden. Predicted demographic change, reduced mortality rates and improved healthcare will lead to more people living with, for example, learning disabilities and these people will need to be cared for. Currently there are 146,000 people providing unpaid care for their loved ones and, of these, 32,000 are providing more than 50 hours care per week. Our response to health and social care integration is detailed further in case study 1.

The profile of our carers includes approximately 10,000 young carers aged 11 – 18 and 14 per cent of these young carers are caring for someone with complex needs such as drug and alcohol abuse. It is crucial to support young carers to ensure they have access to a range of opportunities in life.

Although we have supported carers in Essex for many years, the Care Act 2014 now places carers on an equal footing, giving carers the same rights as those for whom they care. Case study 2 demonstrates our approach to developing a carers strategy. Additionally, the Children and Families Act 2014 makes sure that young carers, and parent carers, get the support they need.

It is estimated that across Essex about 150,000 residents will be living with a mental health illness, with almost 50 per cent of them having developed this condition in their early teens.

Although our understanding is limited locally, we know that nationally lesbian, gay and bisexual people are at higher risk of depression and anxiety disorders with lifetime prevalence of suicide attempts higher in gay and bisexual men than the general population.

The children of Essex account for 333,000, with 212,300 of these children being of school age. Just over 25,000 (14 per cent) of children who are of compulsory school age or above are from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. There are more than 150 different languages and dialects spoken in Essex schools demonstrating the diversity of our population.

Essex faces great challenges in the future to ensure it continues to include and support all groups of protected characteristics and this will remain a priority for ECC.
Headline population statistics of the county of Essex

90.8% (1,264,877) of Essex residents are ‘White British’.
92% (128,700) are classified as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic.

19% (266,000) are under 16 (this includes 6% who are under 5).
61% (880,000) are working age (16-64 years old).
20% (286,000) are 65+

16,200 births in Essex in a year.
Essex is home to 1.43 million people.

64.7% (901,500) of residents have a religion/belief.

49% (699,500) of the population are male and 51% (732,400) are female.

7% (150) of people with Learning Disabilities are in employment.
5% (200) with Physical or Sensory who are also known to social care are in paid employment.

17.1% of Essex residents have a long-term limiting illness or disability, with variations across the county – in Tendring this figure is 25.5% while it is 13.7% in Uttlesford.

Essex has some very deprived areas: 9% of the Essex population live in the top 20% most deprived areas nationally.

In Essex 7% (150) of people with Learning Disabilities are in employment and 5% (200) with Physical or Sensory who are also known to social care are in paid employment.

In 2012, ECC was accredited as ‘excellent’ by the LGA for its approach to embedding equalities throughout the organisation. Yet as the demographic makeup of the council and the county of Essex have changed in the past four years, so too has the council’s approach to equalities.

In 2012, the LGA made a series of recommendations on how the council could add value to its excellent equalities accreditation. The following section contains evidence on what we did to address those recommendations and further evidence can be found in the appendix ‘You said, we did’.

Examples of the ‘you said, we did’ can be found on the next pages.
You said...

“More consistent use of Essex Insight and other intelligence to inform Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA)”

In response we...

Developed and delivered an extensive equality impact assessment programme with employees across the council. This has included references to employees routinely using Essex Insight to inform EqIA development. More than 100 employees have attended.

Produced a specific chapter on groups at Risk of Disadvantage in Essex JSNA Chapter in 2015. This sets out to analyse inequalities based on the councils outcome indicator set linked to the delivery of our corporate outcomes.

Have continued to underpin our partnership work by undertaking robust needs assessments. For example, our partnership work to reduce domestic abuse within our Public Sector Reform Unit has included the development of a Joint Domestic Abuse (DA) Commissioning Strategy. The production of this was informed by a needs assessment developed in collaboration with Greater Essex partners. In reviewing our progress regularly against the DA Commissioning Strategy at the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board; review equality and diversity measures, eg the prevalence rates of DA incidents in ethnic minority communities.

"More consistent use of Essex Insight and other intelligence to inform Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA)"
"Further development and encouragement for elected members to understand the importance of equality"
You said...

“ECC to continue to lead by example”

In response we...

ECC have been selected in 2015 as good practice for the government’s Local Office Path Finder. This is because of the inclusion of parents, carers and children and young people in the design of the Local Offer.

Have been recognised as ‘highly commended’ at the 2013 Local Government Chronicle Awards in recognition of the partnership working the Essex Countywide Travellers Unit partnership has achieved.

Joined the Equality Network for Essex’s five Clinical Commissioning Groups and NHS to explore opportunities to work more closely in developing EqIA as part of the health and social care integration work.

Submitted good practice examples in 2015 for the House of Lords Select committee on reviewing the Public Sector Equality Duty in regards to disability.
You said...

“Rationalisation of equality and diversity governance”

In response we...

Developed a simple equality structure in terms of governance. Corporate Governance Steering Board (CGSB), chaired by the Leader with cross-party leader involvement and oversees equalities as part of its wider governance remit. An Equalities Champions group has been established representing all parts of the council. It is responsible for leading, implementing and monitoring the council’s associated equalities activities. Our equalities co-ordinators are the ‘go-to’ officers on all equalities matters for their respective teams. See figure 1 page 14 of the equalities strategy 2015-18.

Set a target of 85 per cent of all our published decisions which must have an EqIA completed. Current performance is 98.2 per cent. All our published EqIAs can be searched from the Committee Management Information System via the EqIA tab. This makes it easier for the public to locate EqIAs they might be interested in reviewing.
"Provide more clarity to the planning groups about their role and future”

Agreed a set of principles that commit us to moving much more towards a radically different co-productive model to secure better outcomes which will see residents and other stakeholders playing a much greater part in the design, decision-making and delivery of services. See co-production and ethnography case study.
You said...
“Identify ways to continue to support small local Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) organisations. e.g. through grants”

In response we...

Worked in collaboration with Essex Community Foundation (ECF) which manages four separate grant funds on behalf of ECC which are available for small local organisations to apply to and receive funding. ECF say it is in contact with more than 7,000 local VCS organisations in Essex, and that annually, approximately one third of grant applicants are new to ECF. Details of grant allocations are available upon request.

Provided the Independent Choice and Control Fund Grant to local VCS organisations. There are three types of grant available – Three Year Grants, One Year Test and Learn Grants and finally a Small Grants round targeting VCS organisations run purely by volunteers or with a turnover of below £25,000.

Encouraged all Community Volunteer Services and ECF to ensure that they support applications from a wide range of hard to reach VCS organisations working across a range of equalities issues.

Strengthened our relationship with the VCS by signing the Essex VCS Strategic Framework in 2014. We recognise that by signing up to the VCS Strategic Framework our commitment has been to encourage smaller, community-based organisations to engage in grant programmes.

Identify ways to continue to support small local Voluntary & Community Sector (VCS) organisations. e.g. through grants.
“Analyse funding for VCS groups to understand aggregate levels of support to different equality groups and communities”

Analysed grant allocations on a range of funding streams to better understand how funding is being allocated to meet the outcomes we want to see delivered. We have also analysed which equality groups are our main beneficiaries.
Delivered bespoke training for our Organisational Intelligence team to ensure we incorporate relevant protected characteristics in data sets and Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) chapters, as well as consultation reports.

“Training for employees on collecting equality information to build confidence and increase consistency”
Delivered in excess of 51,500 health checks in 2014/15 to our residents, an increase of more than 2,000 checks compared to 2013-14. This has been achieved by working closely with GPs and pharmacies and delivering a targeted outreach programme, concentrating on areas of low uptake. Mobile units were located in supermarkets and workplaces.

Undertaken a comprehensive health check programme aimed to help prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease. Everyone between the ages of 40 and 74, who has not already been diagnosed with one of these conditions, will be invited (once every five years) to have a check. Of those eligible for a NHS health check, 23 per cent (101,138) have received a check, the highest proportion of all the comparator areas for Essex.
"Employee engagement survey has revealed that employees from some minority groups are less satisfied than others."

Held qualitative focus groups to ascertain why some groups feel less satisfied about working at the council – and gathered suggestions on how we might improve this.

Perceptions of bullying fell from 11 per cent of survey respondents in 2012 (25.6 per cent of disabled employees were in this response bracket) to 6.7 per cent in 2015 (15.7 per cent of disabled employees gave this response).

Refreshed our Employee Diversity Networks.
You said...

“Address some property-related accessibility issues”

In response we...

Commissioned ‘Disabled Go’ to complete comprehensive accessibility audits of all of public facing buildings to provide clear and relevant access information via the Council’s website.

Published an accessibility matrix on ‘Condeco’, our meeting room booking system.

Reviewed all hearing support provision to ensure its suitable and effective.
Set a target of 85 per cent of all our published decisions which must have an EqIA completed. Current performance is 98.2 per cent. All our published EqIAs can be searched from the Committee Management Information System via the EqIA dab. This makes it easier for the public to locate EqIAs they might be interested in reviewing.

“More consistent approach to publication of EqIAs”
“Declaration rates for disability and LGBT should be improved further”

You said...

In response we...

Reduced our disability declaration gap from 19.4% of the workforce in 2011/12 to 14.7% in 2014/15. Of new starters under 25 just 2% chose not to tell us their disability status last year.

Seen continuing confidence in declaration rates of new starters. This means our religion and belief and sexual orientation data now stands at 57%, an improvement of 15% since 2012.
You said...

“Parts of the workforce profile not wholly representative:
  - diversity of senior management
  - disabled employees”

In response we...

BME representation at Band 7+ is now at 7.8 per cent of the senior level workforce (November 2015) up from 2.9 per cent (March 2013).

Reduced our disability declaration gap from 19.4% of the workforce in 2011/12 to 14.7% in 2014/15. Of new starters under 25 just 2% chose not to tell us their disability status last year.

Attracted BME candidates into a wider range of employment.
The Vision for Essex

Our ‘Vision for Essex 2013-2017 where innovation brings prosperity’ is the political ambition for all our residents. It embraces our commitment to embedding equalities within the ethos of our organisation. As our county continues to meet unprecedented financial challenges we are determined to ensure our most vital services reach and protect those most in need. Excellent equalities practice is not seen as an ‘add-on’ in Essex; it is part of our day-to-day activity.

Corporate Outcomes Framework

Our Corporate Outcomes Framework translates our Cabinet's political ambitions – outlined in their Vision for Essex – into a set of outcomes and supporting indicators that can guide the work of commissioners across ECC.

The Corporate Outcomes Framework also embeds the principles of Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) within Essex County Council. OBA is an established and effective approach for expressing, operationalising and ensuring accountability for outcomes. It provides a simple, common sense, low bureaucracy planning model supported by clear terminology.

Essex County Council has seven corporate outcomes that it wants to achieve for all members of the population of Essex:

- Children in Essex get the best start in life.
- People in Essex enjoy good health and wellbeing
- People in Essex have aspirations and achieve their ambitions through education, training and life-long learning
- People in Essex live in safe communities and are protected from harm
- Sustainable economic growth for Essex communities and businesses
- People in Essex experience a high quality and sustainable environment
- People in Essex can live independently and exercise choice and control over their lives.
A commissioning led organisation

The Council has undergone a significant period of change since the LGA last visited in 2012. The council began a second transformation programme that adopted a new operating model focused on outcomes rather than outputs and was led by a set of commissioning principles as opposed to the rigid inflexibility of traditional service delivery. In order to ensure we continue to provide high quality and responsive services and customer care, it was important to ensure the structure of the organisation reflected the political ambition of Essex.

The new structure focussed on functions and this recognised the cross-departmental work that was required to deliver outcomes. Our commissioning teams work with operational teams to set the direction, identify continuous improvement and create innovative approaches to complex issues. The commissioners engage with the most appropriate people across ECC, partners and other public bodies to effectively deliver outcomes.

The diagram to the right shows the elements of a commissioning cycle. Commissioning, however, is not cyclical and it is important to understand that the different stages are inherently indistinct and will happen in no particular order, and often simultaneously. The stages of the process can go back and forth, rather than consecutively.
Commissioning can be undertaken at a number of levels. In a local government context these are defined as follows:

- **Strategic** – At this level, commissioning is a strategy for challenge and change. Commissioning is primarily about effective resource allocation to meet the needs of a population, area or group of individuals. The outcome of this process is varied but most frequently results in re-configuration of existing services or provision of services through external or internal providers. Strategic Commissioning may require bringing together the commissioning intentions and intelligence of the Council and local partners with the aim of securing key community outcomes, while taking a long term perspective to the balance between needs, priorities and resources.

- **Local** – Local commissioning may be strategic or non-strategic in nature. Activities here are often concerned with joining up similar services through enhanced collaborative techniques and systems leadership. The term “local commissioning” can also be used to describe the devolution of commissioning to communities of interest or groups of people with similar needs.

- **Operational** - Some commissioning occurs at an operational level. This is particularly pertinent with the rise of outcome based commissioning and can often be evident where there is a prime provider contracting model.

- **Individual** – Where the individual, a family carer or a social worker arranges services to meet an individual’s needs, using personal budgets, direct payments or budget holding mechanisms.

Our Organisational Intelligence team is responsible for undertaking quantitative research using modelling and statistical analysis, and developing tools that support commissioners to assess needs and track outcomes. It also engages with users of services as well as those providing services to ensure they co-produce the best options for implementation.
Our commissioning strategies, created in 2014, have been developed to ensure we help improve the lives of those most in need by focusing on a range of activities. The strategies set the high-level outcomes we want to achieve for those that live and work in our county and strategies help us pay due regard to equality by helping us understand how best we can minimise as well as remove disadvantages faced by those most in need.

As part of the development of the commissioning strategies, detailed equality impact assessments were undertaken to ensure the outcomes we want to see delivered across Essex focused on removing barriers.

In addition to the commissioning strategies, a new Corporate Outcomes Framework has been developed which sets out the whole population outcomes we want to see delivered, guiding all business activity across the council. These outcomes, by focusing on the whole population, aim to create a fairer and more equal Essex. While we take this whole population approach, we recognise disadvantages exist between people who have a protected characterises.

It has been through adopting an outcomes-focused, commissioning-led approach we have not only improved the quality of life for residents across Essex but we have also embedded equality and diversity across all of our business-as-usual activity.
Essex County Council Organisational Structure March 2016

Chief Executive
Gavin Jones

Corporate & Customer Services
Margaret Lee

People Operations
Helen Lincoln

Place Commissioning
Sonia Davidson-Grant

People Commissioning
Dave Hill

Place Operations
David Wilde
Equalities in all areas of our organisation

We have developed an ‘Integrating Equality and Diversity in Procurement Guide’ to support how we embed equality and diversity within our procurement processes. It includes advice on using equality impact assessments to inform specifications, to ensure what we procure or commission reduces inequalities and meet the outcomes identified in the Commissioning Strategies. It also includes details of the council's contracting processes, where we will ask for a potential contractor’s approach to equality in terms of its employment practices and service delivery is considered by asking potential contractors relevant questions. The response to these questions is evaluated as part of the selection process to ensure what we procure meets the council’s equality requirements and can demonstrate contractors understand their responsibilities and that they operate in accordance with equality legislation.

In addition, we are currently developing a toolkit to support contract managers to identify additional equality and diversity questions when the procured service or item has a high level of interaction with service users, our employees and the wider Essex community, when it is appropriate and relevant. This is to ensure each contract has the most effective equality and diversity measures without being too burdensome for small businesses.
The Corporate Outcomes Framework has been designed to provide a clear foundation for the continuous development of commissioning strategies and plans for effective analysis of the impact business activity has on communities across Essex, including those communities at risk of disadvantage. In 2015, a detailed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment entitled ‘Groups at Risk of Disadvantage in Essex’ was produced in order to analyse what we know from a protected characteristics perspective of the outcomes we want to see delivered across Essex.

Groups at risk of disadvantage in Essex - JSNA

In order to support the seven commissioning strategies, the Groups at Risk of Disadvantage JSNA was commissioned to create a picture of inequalities in our county. The report presents an overview of what we know about the protected characteristics created by the Equality Act 2010. It looks at these groups of Essex people in relation to the outcomes we want to achieve for them and the indicators that we use to measure progress towards those outcomes. Case study 5 demonstrates this further.

We understand that we have a role to recognise and celebrate cultural diversity in Essex and in doing so, we have developed a strong cultural grants programme. Case study 3 describes how we do this.

Case study 3: Culture Diversity - supporting the community and voluntary sector

Essex County Council’s Cultural Development Team plays a fundamental role in enabling creative and heritage activities across the county and promoting cultural diversity. We have built a reputation for innovative work and best practice. We have supported BAME groups to promote cultural diversity and foster good relations.
In April 2015 we launched our revised Equalities Strategy 2015-2018 and associated equality objectives. The aim of the strategy sets out our ambition and commitment to advancing equality across Essex, by focusing broadly on those areas that mattered to those with whom we consulted.

The aim of the consultation was to ensure our draft equality objectives were focused on the areas that mattered most to our cohort group, and overall, the feedback on the objectives was positive. This included engagement with our residents, interest groups, our partner organisations and voluntary groups. Our Equalities Strategy consultation document was made Easy Read using the Inclusive Communications Essex team.
Based on our consultation exercise and additional thinking, our equality objectives state that we:

- Will identify, and where possible address, the root causes of disadvantage and discrimination
- Will ensure that equality is at the heart of our thinking as we strive to deliver outcomes for the residents of Essex, and that it is reflected in our commissioning strategies
- Will consult and engage with our communities on matters of service delivery, training and education, and take account of the diverse needs of our residents and businesses
- Will take account the equality impacts of our emerging proposals and seek to mitigate any adverse impacts where possible
- Will embed equalities in all we do and make it part of our business as usual practice
- Will recruit and retain a diverse workforce which reflects the communities we serve and ensure our people feel valued and respected
- We will foster good relations between different groups and communities.
At the same time, we also launched our Equalities Policy Statement, helping us set out our vision and approach. Key activities with monitoring arrangements in relation to tackling inequalities were also set in place.

The strategy is supported by a detailed activity plan that helps us track our equalities performance and it also has both an internal and wider community focus.

The principles set out within our 2015 - 2018 Equalities Strategy have formed part of the overall strategic approach we have taken towards achieving our commissioning outcomes. This has seen our equalities principles become embedded through the adoption of the outcomes-based approach. We do not see equalities as an add-on but as part of the principles and process that guides all of our business activity.

Underpinning our approach to evidencing and reviewing equality impacts, we refreshed our equality impact assessment framework in early 2015 in order to inform and underpin good decision making. Our new approach has helped officers and senior leaders across the council understand how the consistent use of good quality data can help identify and mitigate equality impacts of our decisions making processes.

At ECC, our equalities approach is rooted within a simple leadership framework that enhances the role all parts of the organisation play in embedding effective equalities practices, as well as helping reduce inequalities across the county. This helps demonstrate the role and responsibilities everybody has in playing their parts. This can be seen on the next page.
Essex County Council’s equalities governance

**Vision for Equalities**
Cabinet set our strategic vision for equalities. Our vision is to ensure that fairness is part of everything we do.

**The Leader of the Council**
has the Cabinet responsibility for equalities.

**The Member Champion**
is responsible for the day to day activities associated with equalities.

**Strategy**
Our Corporate Management Board is responsible for developing the Council’s strategy for equalities in Essex, ensuring that the Council is able to deliver its Equalities Strategy.

**Accountability**
Our Corporate Governance Steering Board ensures high-level oversight on equality and diversity issues involving a cross-party group of members.

**Deliver and monitor**
Our Equality Champions are responsible for leading, monitoring and implementing the County Council’s Equalities Strategy and associated activities.

**Manage**
Our Functional Leadership Teams are responsible for ensuring that there is a strong ethos of equalities within the Functions and routinely manage equalities performance.

**Support**
Our Equality Co-ordinators are the ‘go-to’ officers, the first point of contact within the relevant service areas of the Council. They provide the hands on support and signposting on all equality related matters.

**Voice**
Our Employee Diversity Networks are responsible for providing an environment where staff can access mutual support, information and guidance on issues that affect them. They also support the Council in meeting the seven outcomes.

**Knowing & engaging with our communities**
Our educational attainment

**Our future plans**
Essex 2021

**The future of equalities in Essex**

**Essex 2012 accreditation**

**The vision for Essex**

**A commissioning led organisation**

**Esqualities in all areas of our organisation**

**About Essex**

**Foreward**
Our organisational commitment to good governance allows us to ensure robust equality impact assessments (EqIAs) are undertaken for all political decisions taken by our members. These help us to ensure any potential impact on the protected characteristics, both negative and positive, are highlighted and any mitigating factors addressed. This helps our functions to deliver responsive services that are targeted to those communities that need them, more effectively ensuring the needs of Essex’s diverse communities are met.

Through ensuring the publication of EqIAs is a natural part of the decision-making process, we encourage functional areas across the council to:

- Engage and create opportunities for dialogue and effective engagement with all groups and communities across Essex
- Understand the potential negative impacts of decisions and reflect on how this impact could be mitigated.

Across the organisation our equalities coordinators, who act as a flexible resource within each of our functions, support good practice by providing bespoke advice and support as and when equality impact assessments (EqIAs) need to be undertaken across various teams. These coordinators also provide a level of general equalities support to their respective teams and wider service areas. This helps to embed our overall ethos that it is everybody’s responsibility.

It is this part of our story that provides an overview of where we are now, of our successes and our challenges whilst crucially providing examples of our ongoing commitment to improve the outcomes of all residents and communities in Essex.
Knowing and Engaging with our communities

The intrinsic understanding we have of our communities was highlighted as a key strength by the LGA in the 2012 accreditation and it is our strong local leadership and organisational commitment on equality issues which has allowed us over the past four years to make even greater progress on improving the equality outcomes for a number of communities with protected characteristics. This is evidenced in the case studies referenced in this section.

Since 2012, we have continued to use Essex Insight, which hosts national and locally available data, and our survey and consultation portal as a source of information to better understand our communities and inform our commissioning choices. This has allowed us to commission the right services which are more responsive to people’s needs. Furthermore, it has helped us to improve the quality of our data continuously and ensure we continue to know our communities.

Our approach to evidencing our progress against our outcomes is based on the robust use of data, and by drawing on this data – alongside local intelligence – we have a meaningful understanding of localised demographic changes that are taking place at district, ward and neighbourhood level. With the 2011 decennial census providing an in-depth data source on whole population statistics, we know that since the 2011 census or the LGA assessment of 2012 the population of Essex has increased and this increase is projected to continue.
The proportion of older age population, particularly those over the ages of 85, is one of the fastest growing age groups and working age proportion is increasing. Although national data about ethnicity has not been published since 2011, local information such as school census data helps us to understand changing communities and needs.

Within coastal districts such as Tendring, the age profile differs from urban centres such as Harlow, with 29 per cent of residents aged over 65 in the former compared to just 15 per cent in the latter.

Similarly, discrepancies exist between the life expectancy in different areas of Essex and women tend to live longer than men. For example, whereas females in an area of Harlow may enjoy a life expectancy of 90.1 years, in an area of Tendring life expectancy drops to 76.5 years - a difference of 14.3 years; among males this discrepancy is even wider with life expectancy falling from 87.2 years (an area in Harlow) to 71.1 years (an area in Tendring) - a difference of 16 years.
We recognise that over the past few years there have been changes to satisfaction levels of our residents on how they feel engaged and listened too. For example, as part of our regular engagement with residents to assess satisfaction with the council, residents since 2012 have been asked to what extent the council treats you fairly. In April 2012, 46 per cent of those surveyed stated that the council treats people fairly. This compares to 60 per cent in 2013 and 76 per cent in 2014 and remains stable in 2015, at 74 per cent. Analysis revealed that perception of this satisfaction level is associated with the way in which we as a council deliver effective customer care.

The council is continually improving the range and quality of data that is available. These population data sources are useful for developing a picture for the county of Essex as a whole; however these demographic contrasts can only be understood truly by analysing deeper and looking at individual districts. Each individual district has a local portrait which set out the health and wellbeing of each of Essex’s lower-tier authority areas. These portraits are used by elected members, community groups, public health colleagues and public servants for a variety of reasons, including community leadership.

We recognise that over the past few years there have been changes to satisfaction levels of our residents on how they feel engaged and listened too. For example, as part of our regular engagement with residents to assess satisfaction with the council, residents since 2012 have been asked to what extent the council treats you fairly. In April 2012, 46 per cent of those surveyed stated that the council treats people fairly. This compares to 60 per cent in 2013 and 76 per cent in 2014 and remains stable in 2015, at 74 per cent. Analysis revealed that perception of this satisfaction level is associated with the way in which we as a council deliver effective customer care.
In terms of how cohesive our communities feel, i.e., a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, data suggests that this indicator has improved since 2012 from 78 per cent to 80 per cent in 2014 of respondents answering favourably. Our engagement mechanisms, with children and young people, as detailed in case study 4 exemplify this.

![Image](image_url)

We have also seen changes within specific population groups such as school-aged children.

Essex Insight has provided the council with an in-depth Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), accompanying district portraits and specialist topic reports, that provides intelligence on some of our at-risk communities as demonstrated in case study 5 regarding the use of JSNAs. More recently a specific needs assessment was undertaken to address levels and patterns of domestic abuse across Essex. This highlighted how domestic abuse impacts a range of different community groups and how their experiences differentiate across different demographics and protected characteristic groups.
It is by knowing our communities, at both the strategic (countywide) level and the local (district) level that we have been prioritising our activities to ensure we deliver responsive services to meet the changing needs and demands of those we serve. Drawing from these data sources, as well as intelligence held by partners, commissioners and communities, we have been able to identify specific barriers faced by protected characteristics and design a bespoke solution for that group.

Our Inclusive Communications Essex service delivered from within Essex libraries is a dedicated communications service providing a range of support primarily to those with learning disabilities to help them communicate as outlined in case study, demonstrates how our services are responding to this challenge.

Through understanding and knowing our Gypsy and Traveller communities, we have successfully developed partnership working in this area in order to reduce inequalities faced by this community.

**Case study 7: Gypsies and Travellers**

Targeting the needs and improving the outcomes of Gypsy and Travellers was a key priority for us in 2012. This was based on robust data, as well as views expressed by the Gypsy and Traveller community. This included access to health services, education and suitable accommodation.
Since 2012 we have continued to focus on involving our communities more in the decision-making process through an increased use of public consultation – conducted primarily within Essex Insight - through our survey and consultation portal. We used insight and engagement mechanisms with people who have sensory impairments, including deaf blind people, to develop a sensory pathway.

Working closely with our Planning Groups and understanding the number of people with sensory impairments, we have developed a sensory pathway in order to tackle and reduce inequalities.

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**Case study 8: Sensory Pathways**

Working closely with our Planning Groups and understanding the number of people with sensory impairments, we have developed a sensory pathway in order to tackle and reduce inequalities.

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*Shafiq is an elective mute. Shafiq began using a Go Talk electronic communication device and is now able to use this to respond to others and make decisions and choices.*
In 2012, Essex was one of four national pilots for the Whole Place Community Budgets initiative, presided over by an inclusive Essex Partnership Board (EPB) which represents public, private and third sector organisations. Case study nine sets out more information about how we have successfully engaged and consulted with our partners on a range of issues that aim to support stronger communities.

**Case Study 9 – Strengthening communities and creating community resilience**

Essex has strong, resilient communities of active residents who are willing and able to take responsibility for themselves, each other and the places they live. We want every community in Essex to have an active network of ‘people helping people’. Through schemes such as Essex Time/Care Banks, we have generated more than 43,000 volunteering hours in eight months.

Building community resilience cannot take place without a robust partnership commitment between the council and third sector partners. Our commitment to developing strong and resilient communities – supported by a thriving voluntary and community sector – will be at the heart of a number of our partnership programmes going forward towards 2021. The Essex Compact, adopted in 2014, has allowed our relationship with voluntary and community groups to go from strength to strength and we now have effective working relationships with a number of high profile organisations such as Age UK. Our voluntary sector partners have been instrumental in delivering the Community Agent scheme.
Since then, partners have continued to lead sustained system change to enable responsive and agile public service delivery. See case study 10.

**Case Study 10: Community Agents: Increasing independence and wellbeing**

Community Agents Essex was commissioned by Essex County Council (ECC) in July 2014 to provide an alternative solution to traditional health and social care services, with the aim of supporting people to remain independent for longer. The scheme helps disabled, older people and their informal carers before their needs reach crises levels.

The Essex Partnership Board has a shared vision of partners across Greater Essex to ensure every individual, family and community in Essex has the opportunity to exercise control over their lives. This has grown into several partnership programmes. These seek to improve outcomes for those that are most vulnerable in our communities. For example, we have invested considerably in supporting survivors of domestic abuse across Essex and their families by ensuring the appropriate level of support is provided. Case study 11 gives further detail on how we provide this.

**Case study 11: Essex Partnership Board: reducing domestic abuse**

The Essex Partnership Board, chaired by the Leader and made up range of partners, including district and borough councils, police, health and our voluntary and community sector partners, undertook a detailed needs analysis of domestic abuse across Essex. The analysis of the prevalence of domestic abuse helped inform the equality impact assessment that was undertaken prior to the launch of the new joint commissioning strategy for domestic abuse 2015-2020.
Family Solutions is Essex County Council’s partnership approach to the government’s troubled families programme. Through partnership working, we have successfully turned round the lives of families with multiple and complex needs and we are nationally in the top quartile.

**Case study 12: Family Solutions (troubled families)** demonstrates our strong leadership, partnership and organisational commitment to help improve the outcomes for some of the most vulnerable families in Essex.
Our Educational attainment

Beyond the ‘Excellence’ rating awarded to us, we are clear and focused on continuous improvement in our equalities ethos and the strategies we can adopt to keep it immersed in the organisation. The Diversity Peer Challenge in 2012 made recommendations on how ECC could further improve in terms of equalities. Since then we have worked hard to embed those recommendations and improve our overall equalities practice.

Of the 333,000 children in Essex, 212,300 of these are of school age. Diversity in schools has increased steadily over the last four years. Diversity brings new challenges to learning, in part due to the multiple languages spoken, with more than 150 languages now being spoken in our schools.

Although this remains a challenge for schools and their educational partners, 2015 KS4 results show good performance among ethnic minority groups in Essex. The overall performance for some groups has improved.

- The highest performing ethnic group in Essex are Indian pupils with 88 per cent achieving 5+ A*-C including English & Maths (this compares to just 72 per cent nationally).
- 58 per cent of White British pupils achieved 5+ A*C including English & Maths, a 2 per cent point improvement from 2014 (v 57 per cent nationally).
Children in care 5+ A*-C (including English and Maths) performance improved by 3 per cent points from 16 per cent in 2014 to 19 per cent in 2015. Essex pupils who are in care are now 3 per cent points higher than the national average.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) support continue to perform lower than their national peers but the position continues to improve. Moving from 6 per cent points lower than the 5+ A*-C (including English & Maths) England average in 2013 to just 2 per cent points lower than England in 2015 (21 per cent Essex v 23 per cent England). Pupils with a Statement of SEN or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan continue to improve, with performance now in line with the England average, rising from 7 per cent to 9 per cent.

We recognise that in order to protect and improve outcomes of Essex’s most vulnerable people, effective equalities practice should be embedded in our safeguarding processes. The Children’s and Families Function has improved its partnership working around protecting vulnerable children, while having a strong and robust involvement of our Children in Care Council to make sure children and young people have a say in their care. We have seen improvements in the way in which we engage from underrepresented communities in respect of fostering and adoption.
More detailed information on how we are ensuring our services are responsive to the diverse needs of vulnerable children is outlined in case study 13.

**Case study 13: Safeguarding vulnerable children and young people**
Since 2012 Essex County Council has seen considerable improvements in the standard of how we protected our most vulnerable children.
Our workforce profile and employee voice

ECC currently employs 7,371 employees (as of 2015), and although this has represented a steady fall over the past four years, we have enhanced the level of support available to all employees. This support has seen excellent results in our recruitment practices, where we have mitigated the barriers to employment of certain groups and achieved a greater diversity representation throughout the council; for example 11 per cent of our workforce is from a BAME group, which exceeds the Essex county area itself (where Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic groups represent 10.3 per cent of the economically active population).

Further evidence of this is shown in the increased declaration rates amongst new starters. Disability data accuracy is 86 per cent, ethnicity at 94 per cent, with religious belief and sexual orientation at 57 per cent – the latter is an improvement of 15 per cent since 2012. We have also seen wider ethnic minority representation across the workforce - for example, in our Transformation Support Unit (TSU) where BAME applications and appointments have risen from 18 per cent in 2012-13 to 28 per cent in 2014-15. This has led to a more proportional and diverse workforce.

Annually we publish our equalities workforce monitoring information and commentary which identifies how we have changed, where we excel and where we need to improve. With the 2014-15 data now available, ECC has succeeded in remaining representative of the Essex economically active BAME community. During a time of a reducing workforce, we have slightly increased our proportion of disabled employees and younger age range (under 25s). This helps to paint a picture of an increasingly diverse and representative workforce leading the way for other organisations across Essex.

We are currently entering delivery of a new contract with our recruitment partner and employment support organisations (such as Realise Futures and NEP/Employability) to source candidates through our new 'socially responsible supply chain', and we are excited that this will help us deliver a more representative workforce, and support our Family/Adult Operations objectives in (for example) reducing NEETS, or converting disabled job seekers into employees or apprentices.
The data below describes the diversity disclosure information of applicants we receive through our recruitment and selection process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Applications Received</th>
<th>Diversity Information Supplied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>17,600 80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>10,400 85%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>21,968 81%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>18,193 98%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>21,335 96%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The data below describes the ethnicity of applicants we receive through our recruitment and selection process and the undisclosed ethnicity data. For undisclosed disabled data refer to page 22.

![Recruitment and Selection (Ethnicity of Applicants)](chart)

- **White British**
  - 2011/12: 63%
  - 2012/13: 58.5%
  - 2013/14: 71.6%
  - 2014/15: 66.9%

- **BME**
  - 2011/12: 21.5%
  - 2012/13: 22.5%
  - 2013/14: 27.1%
  - 2014/15: 28.7%

- **Undisclosed**
  - 2011/12: 15%
  - 2012/13: 18.9%
  - 2013/14: 1.3%
  - 2014/15: 4.4%

![Undisclosed Employee Ethnicity Data](chart)

- **Undisclosed**
  - 2011/12: 8.2%
  - 2012/13: 7.1%
  - 2013/14: 6.1%
  - 2014/15: 5.5%
The annual workforce equalities monitoring report allows senior leaders within our organisation to develop appropriate strategies to build and maintain a skilled and committed workforce. This knowledge of council employees has become ever more important as we continue our transformation journey of becoming an outcomes-focused, commissioning-led organisation. The strengthening of equalities governance and a growing appreciation of benefits of this way of reviewing the workforce data and analyses, has resulted in in-depth engagement and steer at the highest levels.

We have strengthened our working relationships with the recognised trade unions, as evidenced through recent pay strategy successes relating to employees graded bands 1-3. This will come into effect later in 2016 and ensure the majority of our employees from frontline to senior directors are all included in the performance pay scheme. These improvements are helping reduce inequalities within the organisation, as does the introduction of new technology to support mobile and flexible working arrangements.

We engage with our employees and continue enabling them to be a skilled and committed workforce. The annual Your Voice survey conducted by a third party, includes questions relating to employee wellbeing, how well they feel supported, trusted and empowered to carry out their jobs. The full feedback reports also include a detailed analysis by protected characteristics. In terms of leadership and organisational commitment to equalities, this analysis is shared with our senior leaders annually with a view to addressing employee concerns.
Your Voice 2016 Headline results

Our annual employee survey (Your Voice) report is analysed by diversity characteristic. The infographic below sets out some key outcomes:

- **62%**: Wellbeing (same result as the previous year)
- **62%**: Engagement score (up 2 percentage points from 2015)
- **73%**: Response rate (up 3 percentage points from 2015)
- **76%**: I am treated with fairness and respect by the Council (up 1 percentage point from 2015) 75.4% - 2015; 71.5% - 2014
- **84%**: I believe ECC is an equal opportunity employer – (down 1 point from 2015); 84.8 – 2015; 84.6 – 2014 and 6 points above Local government average) This result has improved by 7 points in the last 6 years
- **5%**: In the last year, while working for the Council, have you been treated in a way which you would describe as bullying? (improved 1 point from 2015) 6.7% - 2015; 8.3% - 2014
- **3%**: In the last year, while working for the Council, have you been treated in a way which you would describe as discrimination? (improved 1 point from 2015) 4.3% - 2015; 5.5% - 2014
While we have comparatively high levels of wellbeing at 62 per cent, those employees who classified themselves as disabled or LGBT scored below this by up to 5 per cent. In the summer of 2015 we convened a more detailed discussion group with all our Employee Network Chairs to explore responses in more detail. Case study 14 demonstrates in more detail our approach to engaging with employees.

**Case study 14: Engagement with employees**

We have an acknowledged record of engaging with employees - this two-way conversation also alerts us to issues as and when they arise. Surveys show that our engagement levels (60 per cent) and wellbeing levels (65 per cent) are high. Mechanisms, such as our annual Your Voice survey and our employee network groups, help us identify issues and provide us with information on how to overcome them.

Along with on-going areas of work, anti-bullying and harassment strategies, we have put in place new initiatives to help address this.
While we recognise and value our engagement processes with our employees we also recognise influences which can affect their wellbeing both in the workplace and outside of it. This is why we have a zero tolerance policy on bullying and harassment in the workplace. For example, we continue to have a dedicated 24hr anti-bullying and email service which is confidential and aimed at increasing levels of trust and confidence in the organisation in order to respond effectively to bullying. More detail is outlined in case study 15.

**Case study 15: Anti-bullying and harassment**
Essex County Council’s work on addressing bullying and harassment begun in July 2012 initially arose from the ‘Your Voice’ annual employee engagement survey. We have seen the percentage of employees who have experienced bullying or harassment decline from 11 per cent to 7 per cent since 2012.

Valuing the diverse nature of our workforce doesn’t stop here. We have created a workplace where everyone is treated with dignity and respect. For example we have re-launched our Employee Diversity Network Groups that exist across the Council. These networks are run by employees themselves and engage, support and consult individuals regarding disability, Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues, as well as young people and apprentices. Also new this year is the Carers Forum.

This increased engagement with our workforce is one of a number of ways we are supporting a skilled and committed workforce. Mobile and flexible working was introduced across the council, in the form of new technology and working practices, driven by our philosophy that ‘work is something you do, not somewhere you go’.
For our employees, this means they are empowered to decide where and when it is best for them to work (subject to business needs and line manager discussions). This approach has specifically supported disabled employees, those with young children or those with caring responsibilities. Through two-way dialogue, when employees identify with their managers that they require additional support, we ensure this support is accessible to all who need it, including via the Access to Work programme.

**Case study 16: Flexible working**

Employees are empowered to decide where and when it is best for them to work, subject to business needs. This can support disabled employees, those with young children or caring responsibilities. 86 per cent of our employees are happy with flexible working arrangements. Further detail of flexible working can also be found in the Business Support case study.

While planning and rolling out new technology to enable mobile and flexible working, we have made improvements to our implementation of reasonable adjustments. Our Information Services Development Officer is now also formally leading on IT access matters across the council and is also a member of the Disabled Employees Network and one of ECC’s users of JAWS software.

We recognise embedding equalities into our daily processes is not enough to secure progress for all employees, residents and communities in Essex. To help support these processes, a comprehensive set of learning and development opportunities to embed effective equalities practice are in place for all of our employees and our elected members. One of these modules is mandatory while others are tailored for those individuals with additional responsibilities. We are proud that more than 91% of our employees have completed the mandatory equalities e-learning module, with 86.5% of members.
Our future plans

It is with a good understanding of our communities, our workforce and the challenges we face that we embark on the next phase of our journey. Despite the challenges we collectively face, we believe our organisational commitment to continuously improve the services we provide will allow us to further reduce inequalities across Essex.

The improvements made within the council to date have allowed our workforce to provide responsive services with excellent customer care. As we look to the future and reflect on what life in Essex will be like in 2021, this part of our story reflects on the improvements we have implemented since adopting our new operating model that will continue to drive excellence across each functional area of the council.

These successes and improvements have not just been achieved within the organisation and neither is our belief in continuously improving the environment limited to the council. We are continuously seeking to improve services by involving our communities in decision making and service delivery. A prime example of this is the partnership approach we took in improving the early years and child care setting across Essex.

Case study 17: Working in partnership with Early Years and Child Care settings: creating inclusive environments

We work proactively with children’s centres, child minders, pre-schools and nurseries in the public, private and voluntary sectors to ensure every young child and their families are welcomed and made to feel included within Early Years setting. We have seen improvements in Ofsted inspections on inclusion and improvements - in outcomes for children learning English as an Additional Language.
As this narrative has articulated, we have made great strides in understanding ourselves, and our communities. As we move into the future and work towards what we want Essex to look like in 2021, we are beginning to take this understanding and use it to drive improvements in community engagement, to better use co-production and to continue to build a county where innovation brings prosperity.

As demonstrated in case study 18, working in partnership with BT we aim to install ultrafast fibre-optic broadband across all our rural communities by 2019. Within Epping Forest alone this will mean 4,545 rural isolated homes will have access to high speed broadband, helping reduce the isolation that rural communities can experience. By engaging these communities with proactive and tailored communication campaigns, we enable isolated individuals, particularly older people in rural areas, to better inform us of their needs, including whether they require further support to make best use of improved internet access. This example is one of a number of ways that we will involve our communities in the delivery of services, and by doing so improve community resilience despite the increasingly diverse nature of our communities.

The installation of ultrafast broadband is one example of how we are working with residents and communities to improve the quality of life in local areas – our Strengthening Communities project, part of the Public Service Reform Unit, hopes to achieve even more over the coming five years.
At the start of our story in 2012, we had a number of planning groups made up of community representatives which assisted our operational teams to ensure that the services Essex County Council provided were tailored to local needs. When we reviewed this model, we concluded this approach did not fully explore the needs of all demographic groups, and as a result was not wholly representative of those groups with protected characteristics. The voice of planning group representatives tended to disproportionately focus on supporting disabled residents and those of advanced age. While this support is vital, we recognised that this approach did not fully engage and interact with all those communities and demographic groups that reside within Essex. Going forward, we intend to improve our dialogue with faith groups and to recognise how we can build community cohesion through these networks; we will also continue to identify underrepresented groups and take appropriate action to engage them in the design and delivery of local services.

Looking ahead, we are keen to move towards a model of greater co-production, where residents and stakeholders play a much larger part in the design and delivery of services. It is by involving our communities in the decision making process we can best ensure the provision of responsive services and excellent customer care. This is the direction that our People Commissioning Function is travelling in, and it has already had successes in co-producing the Local Offer, where 93 per cent of those involved in the process found the experience ‘Excellent’ or ‘Good’ – a sure sign the co-production model works.
Underpinning this co-production model is the development of ethnography as a concept across the council in order to expand the range of insight data that commissioners draw upon to understand the lived experience of service users. Although this remains at its formative stages here in Essex, ethnography has already helped develop a clearer picture of experiences related to mental health, dementia, learning disabilities and early years.

**Case study 19: Coproduction and ethnography**

For more than two years now we have been working with our Learning and Innovation partner, ThePublicOffice, to grow our capability to think and do differently, to drive innovation in how outcomes for citizens can be improved. We now have an in-principle commitment as a council to move towards a more radically co-productive model to secure better outcomes which will see residents and other stakeholders playing a much greater part in the design, decision-making and delivery of services.

An important starting point has been the way we are working to make ethnographic research and enquiry-based approaches core to our practice. We have used this practice to help inform services including early years and dementia services.

It is not just about better understanding and involving our communities, but creating a more skilled and committed workforce to work with these communities. This ongoing journey is built upon the need to expand our learning and development and support offer to all employees, including those belonging to groups with protected characteristics.
We will continue to enhance and expand the support offered by the Employee Diversity Networks; for example, we recently rolled out our pilot Apprentice and Young Persons Network across the organisation, to better support apprentices and young people (16-25) working for the council. This practice of providing additional support for specific groups is also planned for those with caring responsibilities, as a new Carers Forum is further developed after its launch in late 2015.

We are also set to expand our understanding of our communities, not only with quantitative data but with qualitative insight that we will gather through face-to-face (F2F) engagement activities. The ultimate objective of this process is to generate a JSNA report which brings together our already robust quantitative knowledge with an improved understanding of qualitative insight. As our population is set to change dramatically up to 2021 and beyond, this combinative approach will become ever more important.

We know that through super-diversity, ie people and communities moving more freely across European borders, the composition of our communities will change. This will require is to think even more radically about how we respond to the needs of diverse community groups. This is exemplified through our preparedness as a council to respond to the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Programme, and how we coordinated Essex's response to this.

**Case study 20: Response to refugee crisis**

Essex County Council took a proactive approach to the refugee crisis by setting up a partnership working group to establish what role ECC, the voluntary sector and the public can play in supporting any refugees. We have provided information and advice including a welcome pack for the refugee families. We have already housed families and expect to house 20 more over 2016.
Essex in 2021

Essex 2021, the next phase of our transformation journey, will see greater community involvement in helping design and deliver responsive services, built upon an organisational, leadership and partnership commitment to use the public sector as an enabler to unlock community.

Our ambition is clear:
Essex's public services, businesses, voluntary and community groups, communities, families and residents take pride in their county and in their identity.

- They share a collective commitment to improve their lives, their communities and their county. Their collective effort helps to ensure: Public services that are sustainable, affordable and fit for the future – ECC will build on its own record of sound financial management and remain a low-tax authority. It will ensure that residents can access the support they need while ensuring value for money;
- First-class skills for the Essex workforce – people across Essex have the skills to meet the needs of businesses and fulfil their own aspirations;
- Care for vulnerable people – ensuring that all people in Essex remain safe, are protected from harm and can live independently, exercising control over their own lives;
- Our county remains an economic engine-room – on course to become the fastest-growing economy outside London with an annual Gross Value Added (GVA) of c. £60bn supported by multi-million pound investments in infrastructure and its on-going maintenance;
- People have a greater say and play a greater role – people take greater responsibility for their own lives, for their families and for the wellbeing of their neighbourhoods. They make choices that enable them to lead safe, healthy, prosperous and fulfilling lives.

If we are to deliver the Essex in 2021 vision, we must ensure we remain focused on our outcomes, and led by our commissioning strategies. In order to do this, we are committed to the continuous improvement of the services we provide, the people we employ and the partners we work alongside.
Life in Essex 2021

This image is designed to depict some elements of what life would be like for residents of Essex in 2021.

People are empowered to self-serve and seek the services they need, regardless of the provider – ECC enables people to do more for themselves and their communities.

Employees take full advantage of technology to work more efficiently.

Smart and assistive technology is routinely used in health and social care, enabling people to remain independent for longer.

ECC has greater influence and investment in housing, which boosts income and helps to reduce care costs through the use of adaptive/assistive technology.

Buildings, other assets and resources are shared by public services and our partner organisations.

Life in Essex 2021

Foreward

A commissioning led organisation

Equalities in all areas of our organisation

Equalities strategy 2015-18

Knowing & engaging with our communities

Our educational attainment

Workforce profile & employee voice

Our future plans

The future of equalities in Essex

Essex 2021
The future of equalities in Essex

Our story of embedding equalities and improving outcomes for the residents of Essex does not stop in the present; rather it is a continuous journey of growth, improvement and excellence. We are aware of the successes we have enjoyed over the last four years, and we remain committed to identifying those areas that require further development; in essence we are determined to avoid becoming complacent.

As we now look forward to where we are going as a council, a county and a community, it is essential our belief in continuous improvement is maintained. It is through robust leadership, as well as constant engagement with our workforce and our communities, that we can ensure our vision for Essex 2021 is delivered.

We are developing ambitious plans to ensure all our elected members have an in-depth understanding of the data and intelligence that informs local issues and needs. This is in addition to ensuring they have the necessary skills and knowledge to understand and act upon equalities issues, and we intend to incorporate this training into every councillor's mandatory induction following their election to Essex County Council in May 2017. For our workforce, our new electronic platform links performance management with access to learning. We have begun systematic workforce planning against ECC's future aspirations, taking a more systematic approach to talent, attracting diverse skills to benefit the community, along with easier tracking for equality impact. Over the past 2 years we have attracted greater diversity within senior management, and expect this to continue. Through the new recruitment contract Capita will specifically target under-represented job seekers, as well as promoting short-term work experience to increase confidence and employability.

The challenges Essex County Council will face over the next five years are unprecedented. Yet our planned improvements to data analysis, community engagement and service design will ensure we continue to understand and respond to the changing inequalities issues in Essex. Our innovative programmes of work in areas such as housing, ethnography, community resilience and system-level collaboration will see the council and its partners work together to tackle the root causes of inequalities.
Furthermore, we are confident our equalities governance arrangements will complement the future direction of council and the public sector landscape at large. Collectively ECC, Partners, communities and our employees will be in a stronger position to reduce inequalities and improve the quality of life for all residents.

As we continue to transform the way we work we continue to integrate fully our Equalities Strategy and principals into the very fabric of the organisation. Our next commissioning cycle, due to begin in 2017, will see our equality objectives become much more integrated into the whole population outcomes that we seek to achieve for Essex residents, businesses and communities. As we integrate more with our health partners, our equality information and knowledge will support us to more effectively to personalise services to meet the diverse needs of different population groups, ensuring that our limited resources are more effectively targeted to those in need.

As we now look forward to where we are going as a council, a county and a community, it is essential our belief in continuous improvement is maintained. It is through robust leadership, as well as constant engagement with our workforce and our communities that we ensure our vision for Essex in 2021 is delivered.