

---

# Equality Policy 2020-2023

---

Approved by:	Cabinet member
Date approved:	1 October 2020
Version:	14
Last revised:	Sept 2020
Review date:	December 2023
Category:	Corporate Policy
Owner:	Head of Information Compliance and Equality
Relevant audience:	Members of the public and others who contact the council, council managers, employees and Councillors



If you would like help to understand this document, or would like it in another format or language, please call the Equality Team on 01432 260216 or e-mail [diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:diversity@herefordshire.gov.uk).

Any easy-read version of this policy is available from our [web page](#).

# Contents

Foreword .....	3
The legal requirement.....	4
Our Equality Objectives .....	5
Objective 1: Address social issues that impact on equality .....	5
1.1. Community cohesion and hate crime .....	5
1.2. Domestic abuse .....	5
1.3. Female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and honour based violence .....	6
1.4. Modern slavery and adult sexual exploitation .....	6
1.5. Radicalisation.....	7
1.6. Child sexual and criminal exploitation .....	7
1.7. Health inequality .....	7
1.8. Housing.....	8
Objective 2: Promote our values and acceptable standards of behaviour .....	9
Objective 3: Make fair and equitable decisions .....	10
Objective 4: Recruit fairly and support our workforce .....	11
4.1. Support for staff .....	11
4.2. Better ways of working .....	11
4.3. Recruit fairly.....	11
4.4. Gender pay gap .....	12
4.5. Increase the diversity of our elected representatives.....	12
Objective 5: Make our services accessible .....	13
5.1. Accessibility of buildings and the built environment.....	13
5.2. Language and alternative formats .....	13
5.3. Digital access to services .....	14
Objective 6: Provide tailored support .....	15
6.1. Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) communities.....	15
6.2. Children in education: peer-on-peer abuse .....	15
6.3. Children for whom English is an additional language .....	16
6.4. People with a Learning Disability.....	17
6.5. Armed Forces .....	17

# Foreword

We have both a moral and a statutory obligation to reflect the needs of our diverse population and workforce, and this is a requirement in everything we do, which includes:

- providing services
- purchasing and procuring services
- recruiting and retaining staff
- working in partnership with other organisations
- engaging with our communities

We recognise that all individuals should have equitable rights in relation to employment and services so that they can participate fully as citizens. However, we understand that an individual's identity, background and their life experiences can impact on their ability and willingness to participate. We believe that promoting equality is essential for the creation of a cohesive society and for a strong economy.

This policy is designed to demonstrate our compliance with the Equality Act 2010. Its purpose is to:

- detail our equality objectives
- evidence the work across various council services which currently addresses equality issues
- highlight areas where additional actions are proposed

There have been major political and social shifts in 2020 arising from the Covid-19

pandemic and global anti-racism protests. The council will keep abreast of research and events, and will be mindful of its legal and moral duties to challenge disadvantage and discrimination wherever it has the power to do so. We are proud to show our solidarity for those protesting against racism.

Our challenge as a local authority is to work towards a society:

- where everyone is important, and is treated with respect, dignity and fairness
- which is fair and just, and empowers every person to secure the best possible standard of service from public authorities
- which supports people, communities and organisations to challenge the prejudices that can lead to unlawful discrimination
- which respects human rights
- which empowers individuals to take responsibility for their lives, and to live independently
- which rejects any form of extremism, discrimination, prejudice, harassment, victimisation or violence

An appendix with statistics and background information accompanies this policy.

Herefordshire Council takes its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 seriously, and we expect all staff and councillors to bear personal responsibility and take ownership for their actions and decisions.



**Cllr Liz Harvey**  
**Portfolio Holder**  
**for Equality**



**Alistair Neill**  
**Chief Executive**

# The legal requirement

The **Equality Act 2010** (the Act) protects people from unlawful discrimination in the provision of services and public functions, employment, premises, education and associations. Its broad purpose is to integrate consideration of equality and good relations into the day-to-day business of public authorities.

The Act brought into law the **public sector equality duty** which requires that, when exercising public functions, public service providers must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

The equality duty covers the nine **protected characteristics** (see Appendix 1):



The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low

The general duty is supported by **specific duties**, which require public bodies to:

- publish information to show their compliance with the equality duty, at least annually
- set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years
- publish diversity data of their workforce annually (if more than 150 employees)

All information must be published in a way which makes it easy for people to access it.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is responsible for assessing compliance with the equality duty. It has powers to issue a compliance notice to a public body that it believes has failed to comply, and can apply to the courts for an order requiring compliance.

Despite the Equal Pay Act 1970, women still earn less than men in Britain today. From April 2018 all organisations with more than 250 staff have to publish information about **gender pay**.

**The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018** came into force in September 2018. The regulations build on existing obligations for disabled people. They require public sector bodies to make their website and mobile apps fully accessible by making them 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust'.

# Our Equality Objectives

The specific duty of the Equality Act 2010 requires public service providers to publish at least one equality objective to demonstrate how it will meet the general equality duty. A report of progress on the objectives from 2016-19 can be found at Appendix 4.

## Objective 1: Address social issues that impact on equality

Although rural, Herefordshire experiences many of the same social issues as the rest of the UK, some of which impact disproportionately on one or more protected characteristic. Many of these social issues require a multi-agency approach (ie. the council cannot address them without the help of partners).

### 1.1. Community cohesion and hate crime

A [hate crime](#) is when someone commits a crime against someone because of their disability, gender identity, race, sexual orientation, or religion. Nationally, reports of hate crime are consistently rising (see Appendix 2). However Herefordshire remains the region in the West Midlands where hate crime is lowest<sup>1</sup>.

Action	Who benefits	Who
Maintain public “No Prejudice in Herefordshire” campaign and mark it annually with an event.  Support the Police on their hate crime awareness week.	Victims of hate crime (all protected characteristics) and people particularly from minority groups eg. BAME <sup>2</sup> , LGBT <sup>3</sup>	Community Cohesion Officer
Other detailed actions/objectives can be found within the <a href="#">Herefordshire Community Safety Strategy</a> .		Community Safety Partnership

### 1.2. Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse remains one of the most prevalent crimes in England and Wales. An estimated 7.9% of women (1.3 million) and 4.2% of men (695,000) experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2018<sup>4</sup>. A [2019 report by the National Rural Crime Network](#) highlighted the "hidden" problem of domestic abuse in rural areas, concluding that "for rural areas, the scale of the barriers faced is significantly greater than for urban victims. In rural areas a range of additional impacts stemming from geographic, cultural and social differences and isolation have an impact which makes reporting abuse a much harder thing to do for rural victims to the extent they may delay or inhibit reporting altogether". The Council’s Strategic Intelligence Team have produced some [statistics on the prevalence of domestic abuse](#) in the county.

<sup>1</sup> Herefordshire Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment 2017-2020

<sup>2</sup> BAME: Black, Asian and Other Minority Ethnic

<sup>3</sup> LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans

<sup>4</sup> Crime Survey for England and Wales year ending March 2018

Actions	Who benefits	Who
Make Herefordshire a place where domestic abuse is totally unacceptable. Provide safe supported “satellite” accommodation for victims of domestic abuse to complement the existing refuge service. Offer targeted interventions supporting children and young people. Other detailed actions/objectives can be found within the <a href="#">Herefordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-22</a> .	Victims of domestic abuse (all protected characteristics, but particularly women)	Community Safety Partnership

### 1.3. Female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and honour based violence

FGM refers to procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. FGM has been illegal in the UK since 1985, with the law being strengthened in 2003 to prevent girls travelling from the UK and undergoing FGM abroad.

The [incidence of FGM](#) is considered low in Herefordshire, although statistics are notoriously difficult to compile. Herefordshire Council works with Gloucestershire Sisters to share information and provide training to staff.

Actions	Who benefits	Who
Herefordshire’s response to these issues is coordinated under the <a href="#">Herefordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy 2019-22</a> .	Girls and young women, particularly those whose family has migrated to the UK from areas such as Africa or Asia (where FGM is common) or South Asia (where honour based violence is prevalent), also Gypsies and Travellers	Community Safety Partnership

### 1.4. Modern slavery and adult sexual exploitation

The [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) places specific responsibilities on organisations to ensure slavery and human trafficking does not exist within its supply chain or in any part of its own business.

Action	Who benefits	Who
Ensure that we use our powers, influence and responsibilities to prevent and act against modern slavery, as set out in our <a href="#">Modern Slavery Statement</a> .	People from abroad seeking work in the UK (eg. Albania, Vietnam <sup>5</sup> ), vulnerable British people especially children from disadvantaged backgrounds, women	Community Safety Partnership

<sup>5</sup> 2019 UK Annual Report on Modern Slavery

## 1.5. Radicalisation

“Prevent” is the name given to part of the government's [CONTEST](#) strategy to prevent terrorism by reducing the possibility of radicalisation. Councils have a statutory responsibility to lead on [Prevent](#), and Herefordshire Council has a Prevent steering group which meets regularly.

Action	Who benefits	Who
Hold monthly meetings of Herefordshire's <a href="#">Channel Panel</a> . Publish Channel procedure document. Continue to deliver enhanced “Workshop to Raise the Awareness of Prevent” (WRAP) training (delivered regularly to schools and council staff).	People vulnerable to being drawn into violent extremism or supporting terrorism (there is no single profile of a person likely to become involved). All the people of Herefordshire.	Community Cohesion Officer
All staff and councillors undertake mandatory Prevent training.		Employee Relations Business Partner

## 1.6. Child sexual and criminal exploitation

In Herefordshire, there is a [Child Exploitation and Missing](#) group which co-ordinates and ensures the effectiveness of preventing child exploitation.

Action	Who benefits	Who
Ensure an effective response to children and young people at risk of, or being, sexually exploited, including those who go missing from home or care as well as those who are trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation and criminal exploitation.	Children and young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds	<a href="#">Safeguarding Children and Young People in Herefordshire Partnership</a>

## 1.7. Health inequality

Health and wellbeing are products of the complex interaction of genetics, wider determinants of health (social, economic and environmental factors), and lifestyle behaviours. Factors that make and keep us healthy include such things as social and community connections, good living conditions, good employment, good education and access to good food. These factors are not evenly distributed throughout society and some groups of people experience more factors that negatively influence their health and wellbeing such as poverty, lack of education, unemployment or isolation.

The impact of inequality on health and well-being is stark, and can affect people even before they are born. The [2018/19 Herefordshire children's integrated needs assessment](#) presented evidence of some of the inequalities faced by children living in the most deprived areas of the county. These children are more likely to need social care intervention or special educational provision, to be admitted to hospital in an emergency, and to be obese or have tooth decay.

The [2019 Director of Public Health independent annual report](#) identifies how rurality impacts on health and wellbeing in Herefordshire. Whilst it reported that the health and wellbeing of Herefordshire's rural population was, on average, slightly better than those living in urban areas for many indicators (with the exception of the proportion of households in fuel poverty), there were significant pockets of deprivation and poor health outcomes in rural areas.

The emergence of Covid-19 has brought to the fore numerous health inequalities which are not yet fully understood. Across the world, men, older people, and people with long-term health conditions are at higher risk of serious illness and death from the virus. Here in the UK, we have seen higher numbers of deaths from Covid-19 than in the general population, among black and minority ethnic communities, people living in socio-economically deprived areas, those working in professions like social care, and those who require care in their own homes or a care home. There is also likely to be a longer term impact - as yet undefined - on certain groups through the loss of education and employment.

Action	Who benefits	Who
<p>Protect and improve the health and wellbeing of Herefordshire residents and reduce health inequalities.</p> <p>More detail on actions and objectives can be found within the <a href="#">2019 Director of Public Health independent annual report</a> (see also Appendix 2) and <a href="#">Herefordshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy</a>.</p>	<p>All protected characteristics, but particularly people with a learning disability or poor mental health, Gypsies and Travellers and other BAME groups. Older people, people from disadvantaged or low-income backgrounds</p>	<p>Health &amp; Wellbeing Board</p>
<p>Work with health partners to analyse on-going Covid intelligence, and develop actions to reduce identified inequalities.</p> <p>Publish summary of Herefordshire's Covid data.</p>		<p>Public Health and Intelligence Unit</p>

## 1.8. Housing

Herefordshire council works closely with housing associations and private developers to deliver affordable housing in Herefordshire.

Action	Who benefits	Who
<p>Undertake a needs assessment specifically for vulnerable groups. The outcomes from this assessment will feed into the upcoming <a href="#">housing strategy</a> and will provide evidence for the provision of additional specialist housing and/or support if required.</p>	<p>All protected characteristics, but particularly older people, disabled people and low-income families</p>	<p>Housing Strategy Officer</p>



## Objective 2: Promote our values and acceptable standards of behaviour

All of our [staff](#) and [councillors](#) commit to upholding the [values of Herefordshire Council](#), and adhering to the seven principles of public life which are set out in our Code of Conduct. We will always treat people fairly, and with respect and dignity, which includes:

- being patient and helpful
- communicating clearly
- being courteous and polite
- respecting cultures and values different to our own
- recognising our own prejudices and guarding against unconscious bias, stereotyping and assumptions
- using appropriate language
- challenging language and behaviour which is contrary to Herefordshire Council's values

People who manage others within the organisation have further specific responsibilities. Amongst other duties, and at all times, our managers will seek to:

- address any discriminatory, intimidating or unfair behaviour within their teams in a timely and constructive manner
- challenge stereotypes in the workplace
- act as a role model for others
- understand how to apply HR policies and processes, and apply them fairly
- communicate effectively with their team
- manage staff according to individual needs, rather than treating everybody the same
- provide all staff, regardless of their social identity or protected characteristics, with equitable opportunity for career development and training opportunities

Action	Who benefits	Who
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff and councillors adhere to the Code of Conduct.</li> <li>• All staff and councillors undertake mandatory equality training (which incorporates unconscious bias) in order to embed our values and make our expectations clear.</li> <li>• Our annual "Performance &amp; Development Plan" asks every individual member of staff how they have demonstrated the council's cultural behaviours and values in the workplace.</li> <li>• Regularly review policies which support our councillors and staff if they experience offensive behaviour, harassment, sexual harassment, cyber bullying or assaults by members of the public.</li> </ul>	All staff, councillors and service users, all protected characteristics	Employee Relations Business Partner and Head of Information Compliance and Equality

### Objective 3: Make fair and equitable decisions

Herefordshire Council manages a substantial budget, and is obligated to those who live and work in the county to make sound, fair and transparent decisions about the services that it delivers.

The council's [constitution](#) sets out the principles it will follow when making decisions, and these include the requirement for the decision-maker to give due weight to equality considerations before and at the time a policy or practice is decided upon. The principal way of doing this is by producing an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA). An EIA is a risk assessment focused on fairness, access and inclusion. It is a way of considering a policy, service or process in terms of how it might impact differently on different groups protected in law. We use EIAs to find and remove barriers in services which might stop people knowing about the service, using it, and getting the best from it. It is a statutory requirement that we are able to evidence how we have considered equality in decisions that we make.

As a council, we aim to commission the right services, from the right provider, at the right price. We embrace the objectives of the [Social Value Act](#) and are working to embed social value in all commissioning and procurement practices, and in the direct delivery of services.

Action	Who benefits	Who
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure that decision makers have sufficient evidence of the impact that proposed policies and practices are likely to have on people with different protected characteristics.</li><li>• Ensure that we award contracts only to organisations who can evidence that they are fully compliant with the Equality Act and Modern Slavery Act, and ensure that contractual terms and conditions stipulate this.</li></ul>	All protected characteristics, but particularly minority groups (eg. disabled people)	All council staff

## Objective 4: Recruit fairly and support our workforce

### 4.1. Support for staff

Individual members of staff are supported throughout their employment by managers who recognise their needs. This might include providing “reasonable adjustments” for a disabled member of staff, or recognising the difficulties experienced by parents of young children, or those with caring responsibilities.

Staff can access occupational health, physiotherapy and face-to-face counselling services as necessary. We also offer an Employee Assistance Programme, which is a free, independent and confidential counselling and advice telephone service to help staff during difficult times.

Actions	Who benefits	Who
Carry out review of all human resources policies to ensure that they take into consideration the protected characteristics, and the diverse nature of families (eg. providing equity for people in same-sex relationships, or people undergoing gender reassignment).	Staff (all protected characteristics)	Employee Relations Business Partner
Develop an intranet page to support staff wellbeing, to include guidance on a wide range of equality issues, eg. menopause, mental health, neurodiversity (autism, dyslexia, etc), carers, new or expectant parents, LGBT+.	Members of staff who are disabled, carers, parents, LGBT+, women, etc	Employee Relations Business Partner

### 4.2. Better ways of working

“Better ways of working” is the council’s policy of transforming how and where our staff work. It allows for flexible working - specifically working from home - and helps us to achieve a good work/life balance. This is an important factor in our working lives and is core to good employee engagement, loyalty, productivity and health and wellbeing, by enabling employees to manage their work priorities and personal circumstances effectively. As a result of Covid-19, many more staff members will be working from home, and for longer periods of time.

Action	Who benefits	Who
Managers to continue to have one-to-one discussions with each member of their team to discuss their personal circumstances and ensure that they are supported to work from home, or to work safely in a <a href="#">Covid-secure</a> workplace.	All protected characteristics	All managers

### 4.3. Recruit fairly

The Council is approved to use the [Disability Confident](#) symbol, which aims to help employers successfully employ and retain disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. We know from our [2019 workforce analysis](#) that the number of employees identifying as disabled (3.2%) is low compared to the estimated number of disabled people in the working age population (7.8%). We are addressing this gap by a number of measures, such as offering guaranteed interviews to disabled applicants who meet all the essential job criteria, and looking creatively at “reasonable adjustments” in the workplace to eliminate disadvantage.

In addition to disabled applicants, the council also offers guaranteed interviews (if the essential job criteria are met) to:

- People who indicate in their supporting statement that they are an Armed Forces Veteran or Reservist. This is part of our pledge to support the Armed Forces Covenant (see Appendix 3)
- People who indicate in their supporting statement that they are a Herefordshire care leaver. This is part of our commitment to supporting young people leaving our care

In 2019 a series of employee training sessions was introduced on the subject of unconscious bias, and a reference to unconscious bias is also now included in mandatory equality training.

Action	Who benefits	Who
Maintain our compliance with the Disability Confident initiative.	Disabled people - staff and job applicants	Assistant Director for People
Develop and deliver Disability Equality training sessions to improve knowledge and confidence of staff and managers – incorporate information on reasonable adjustments.	Disabled people – staff, job applicants, service users	Equality Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annually monitor the protected characteristics of our staff (including the monitoring of grievance and disciplinary procedures by protected characteristic of the individual involved).</li> <li>• Increase amount of diversity data collected from employees (as seen in our <a href="#">2019 workforce analysis</a>) to improve our understanding of the diversity of our workforce and highlight any anomalies.</li> </ul>	All protected characteristics, but particularly minority groups such as LGBT, disabled people, BAME	Equality Officer

#### 4.4. Gender pay gap

Since 2018, all public sector employers (with 250 or more employees) are required to publish information about the difference between pay for male and female employees. This is called the gender pay gap. As at March 2019, the council's gender pay gap was 9.84%.

Action	Who benefits	Who
Annually publish the council's gender pay gap within the overarching <a href="#">equality analysis of the workforce</a> , published in January each year.	Female members of staff	Equality Officer
Develop an action plan to address the council's gender pay gap	Female members of staff	Assistant Director for People

#### 4.5. Increase the diversity of our elected representatives

[Research has shown](#) that a diverse group of people can be far more effective and creative than a group with limited diversity. In public services, bringing together leaders from varied and minority backgrounds, and with different perspectives, means that more people within the community are likely to be understood and represented.

In May 2019 a new cohort of 53 councillors took office in Herefordshire. Each was asked to identify their protected characteristics, and the results are available in our [Equality in Employment](#) analysis. Prior to the 2019 election, a significant amount of work was done to encourage greater diversity of candidates, including the "[Be a councillor](#)" section of our website.

The most significant improvement in representation from the previous cohort was an increase in female councillors from 28.3% in 2015, to 39.6% in 2019.

A section in Appendix 2 compares our local data with national data. It shows a varied picture, where we have higher representation of women and people identifying as LGBT than the national figure, however far lower representation of BAME and younger people (although this does reflect the general make-up of the county's population).

Actions	Who benefits	Who
<p>For all future elections of councillors and parish councillors, continue our efforts to increase representation of minority groups.</p> <p>Continue to monitor the protected characteristics of candidates and elected councillors.</p> <p>Continue to review the policies in place for councillors, so that they support candidates from diverse backgrounds. Also investigate the feasibility of putting in place maternity and parental leave for councillors.</p>	All protected characteristics	Democratic Services Manager

## Objective 5: Make our services accessible

### 5.1. Accessibility of buildings and the built environment

Accessibility and inclusive design is a principal consideration for the council. There is a continual programme of improvements in venues and parking. For our staff, we aim to provide an accessible, modern work environment, which can have a positive impact on morale and productivity.

Action	Who benefits	Who
<p>When designing infrastructure schemes and redesigning the public realm in our city and town centres, we will work with user groups to ensure that the design improves access for all.</p> <p>In all our proposals, we will aim for the highest level of accessibility, to make things easier and safer for parents (eg. areas for breastfeeding), for disabled people (eg. Changing Places toilets), older people (eg. suitable benches), etc.</p>	All protected characteristics, particularly disabled people, older people, women, parents	Head of Infrastructure Delivery

### 5.2. Language and alternative formats

All of our external documents carry an "alternative formats statement" which commits us to providing the information in different ways if requested, and where reasonable. Alternative formats include Braille, large print, easy read, audio, and other languages.

Herefordshire Council runs its own language agency, the [Herefordshire Language Network](#), which provides swift and easy access to translation and interpreting at significantly lower cost than if we were to use an external company.

Actions	Who benefits	Who
<p>Maintain efficacy of Herefordshire Language Network by a continual programme of review and training.</p> <p>Continue to educate staff on the need for alternative formats.</p>	Non-English speaking residents of Herefordshire, Deaf and disabled people	Equality Officer

### 5.3. Digital access to services

Herefordshire Council has signed the [Local Digital Declaration](#), which affirms a collective ambition for local public services in the internet age, and we have a rolling programme of digital transformation to help ensure that we offer the best possible online experience for everyone. All of the council owned websites and apps, and many of those hosted by commissioned services and providers, must meet the appropriate level of accessibility to comply with the Public Accessibility Regulations 2018. The 2018 regulations build on existing obligations to disabled people under the Equality Act 2010.

While Herefordshire Council is “digital-first”<sup>6</sup>, we acknowledge there are some audiences who may experience “[digital exclusion](#)” - an estimated [7% of Herefordshire’s adult population](#) have never been on the internet<sup>7</sup>. During the Covid-19 lockdown, not all children and families had equal or adequate access to digital devices and broadband and therefore some children were unable to access good quality teaching. This is not always about family income (eg. some medium to high income families have slow or poor quality broadband coverage), however those who are on low incomes have been disproportionately disadvantaged.

The [Fastershire](#) project runs a digital inclusion programme in order to improve individuals’ access to the internet. There are free-to-use public computers and free Wi-Fi at all council libraries and at Blueschool House (our customer service centre in Hereford). Fastershire has also largely improved high speed broadband for residents and businesses, with a coverage so far of 91% premises with access to superfast broadband (from less than 1% in 2012 at the start of the programme).

Actions	Who benefits	Who
Ensure that all Herefordshire Council-owned websites, intranet and apps comply with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations.	All web users who visit council-owned websites, but specifically disabled people	Head of Communications
Continue to ensure that alternative methods of engagement, communication and service delivery are available for people who do not use the internet.	All protected characteristics, but particularly older people and disabled people	All council staff
Maintain and increase the access to high quality virtual learning materials for all.	Children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds	Assistant Director Education Development and Skills
Deliver <a href="#">Fastershire grant scheme</a> in order to continue the roll-out of superfast broadband to difficult-to-reach areas.	Web users living in rural and isolated areas	Operational Manager

<sup>6</sup> As many council services and transactions as possible are made available via the internet

<sup>7</sup> Office of National Statistics

## Objective 6: Provide tailored support

### 6.1. Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) communities

[According to a 2019 Government report](#), Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people have some of the worst outcomes of any ethnic group across a huge range of areas, including education, health, employment, criminal justice and hate crime. In Herefordshire, the Gypsy & Traveller Strategy Group was established by Herefordshire Council, and is attended by representatives of West Mercia Police and Herefordshire Traveller Support Group. The group aims to share good practice, support projects and training, and improve knowledge and understanding of GRT communities.

The Council is committed to improving both the quantity and quality of the accommodation it offers for rent, and has committed significant amounts of capital expenditure in order to facilitate this. Funds have been agreed to continue this programme of works and is well supported by both officers and Elected Members. The six Council-owned sites provide 53 pitches and are audited regularly. Stock condition surveys are carried out to help us identify areas for improvement and plan modernisation works.

New pitches are proposed on some of the council sites and this is detailed in the [Traveller Site Development Plan](#) adopted in October 2019. This plan also identifies a temporary stopping place which will provide an area of hard standing where basic facilities can be brought onto the site.

Herefordshire Council Learning and Achievement Service employs two outreach workers who support the access to education, and inclusion of, GRT children and young people aged 0-19. We are proud that, unlike the current picture nationally, the vast majority of Herefordshire's 350 GRT children and young people access early years settings, attend school from 4-16, and frequently achieve post 16 qualifications. We would like this good representation to translate into good GCSE results, year on year, at the end of Key Stage 4. There is a small number of GRT parents who choose to educate their children at home.

Action	Who benefits	Who
Consistently follow the formal <a href="#">allocation policy</a> to ensure that people applying for a pitch can be assessed using a fair and transparent method.	Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Communities	Licensing, Travellers & Technical Support Service Manager
Continue to action the planned rolling programme of improvement to Traveller sites.		
Further, detailed actions can be found within the <a href="#">Traveller Site Development Plan</a> .		
Continue to work with GRT families, to ensure they are supported and informed regarding access and inclusion to education.		GRT Learning Mentor
Assess the longer term requirement for new pitches.		Senior Planning Officer

### 6.2. Children in education: peer-on-peer abuse

Peer-on-peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and/or coercive control exercised between children and young people. [Harmful sexual behaviour](#) has been the subject of some media coverage in the last year or so due to increasing occurrence and [greater awareness](#). See Appendix 2 for statistics.

Peer-on-peer abuse can happen on-line or in person, and both in and out of school premises. The Department of Education has produced [statutory guidance to schools and colleges](#) on this subject. Schools will set out their process for dealing with peer-on-peer abuse in their individual safeguarding/child protection policy. Every school and college will have a Designated Safeguarding Lead who will have been trained regularly in all aspects of safeguarding including peer on peer abuse.

[Herefordshire Council](#) has a safeguarding responsibility for all children in the county, and a targeted review of peer-on-peer abuse was held by the council in December 2019. The review resulted in twelve multi-agency recommendations. We strive to prevent any cases of peer on peer abuse. If any do occur however, we will act swiftly and in line with current guidance to minimise the impact on those affected. This will include learning from previous cases so we can provide a better response in the future.

Action	Who benefits	Who
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote to all Herefordshire schools the benefit of having a distinct, stand-alone peer-on-peer abuse child safeguarding policy.</li> <li>Ensure that school exclusion policies explicitly state the forms of peer-on-peer abuse that will result in permanent exclusion.</li> <li>Establish a pool of resources for schools to address complex cases of peer-on-peer abuse.</li> <li>Identify and provide extra resources for family support workers who work with schools.</li> <li>Include reference to peer-on-peer abuse in all relevant council policy (eg. the children and young people plan).</li> </ul>	Children in education, particularly girls	Assistant Director Education Development & Skills

### 6.3. Children for whom English is an additional language

The educational attainment and welfare of “English as an additional language” (EAL) learners in Herefordshire schools are supported by the [English as an additional language team](#). The role of this team is primarily to monitor the progress of EAL learners and to develop schools’ capacity in raising their achievement. As at summer 2019, there were 1,952 recorded EAL learners in Herefordshire (8.2% of school population). See Appendix 2 for more information.

Action	Who benefits	Who
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue with teaching/interventions and learning support to enhance attainment of EAL pupils.</li> <li>Specifically target and offer monitoring assessments to track language proficiency and academic progress of the most vulnerable EAL learners affected by interrupted learning throughout Covid-19.</li> <li>Bring the needs of refugee children in Herefordshire schools into focus; their needs identified and precisely addressed to ensure the positive contributions that they bring to the county are celebrated and acknowledged.</li> </ul>	<p>Children for whom English is a second language, local community and society as a whole</p> <p>Dispersed vulnerable children and their families, society as a whole</p>	EAL team, teachers, and wider community



## 6.4. People with a Learning Disability

People with a learning disability experience disadvantage in many aspects of their lives, such as poor educational attainment, high unemployment, and poor health<sup>8</sup>.

In Herefordshire, we have a [Learning Disability Partnership Board](#) which meets four times a year to discuss the work that is going on to help people with learning disabilities. It also provides a voice for disabled people to help them input into the design of services.

Action	Who benefits	Who
The <a href="#">Learning Disability Strategy 2018 to 2028</a> sets out the long term plans of Herefordshire Council and Herefordshire Clinical Commissioning Group. An <a href="#">easy-read version of this strategy</a> is available.	People with a learning disability, their family and carers	Head of Care Commissioning

## 6.5. Armed Forces

Herefordshire has a long and close relationship with the armed forces. Many residents, estimated at around 25% of the population of Herefordshire, have a strong and proud connection to the military (ie. serving personnel, ex-serving personnel, family member or carer).

While clearly this is not a protected characteristic, there is some evidence that those connected to the armed forces may experience disadvantage in accessing some services. Detail can be found in Appendix 3 but, briefly, this includes:

- Healthcare
- Housing
- Education and school admissions

A great deal of work has been done by the [Armed Forces Covenant](#) and local authorities to ensure those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. Herefordshire Council is an exemplar as one of the first local authorities to pledge to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012 and has just acquired the highest accolade of Gold Status as part of the MOD's Employer Recognition Scheme. It remains committed to ensure serving and ex-service personnel and their families living locally have access to the services they need and are not disadvantaged as a result of their service. The Covenant ensures that the military community are a protected group and as such the Government is currently taking further steps to making it mandatory. New legislation (proposed for 2021) will place a legal framework around the Covenant, meaning that local authorities will have a duty of due regard which they will need to demonstrate if they are challenged.

Action	Who benefits	Who
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The armed forces community is identified as a distinct group and becomes a key consideration in the council's governance and decision making process when developing policies and strategies.</li> <li>• All front line staff to routinely ask customers whether they are a current or ex member of the armed forces, related to, or a carer of either.</li> </ul>	Armed forces personnel and veterans, and their spouses, family members, and carers	Armed Forces Partnership Covenant Officer

<sup>8</sup> [England's most disadvantaged groups: People with learning disabilities](#)