



# **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy**

## **2025 – 2030**

# **Dacorum Borough Council 2025-2030 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy**

## **Message from the CEO**

We are proud to present the Dacorum Borough Council Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy for 2025-2030.

Our commitment to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging will underpin all of the Council's work and support our Corporate Plan. The Council is committed to our vision of Dacorum as a safe and welcoming place for all communities, ensuring that our services are fair and accessible, and that all staff are treated with dignity and respect.

We recognise that our strength lies in our diversity: of ideas, perspectives, and experiences. By fostering an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered, we create a place where innovation and creativity flow, and deliver services that support the diverse needs of our customers.

We stand together on our zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and victimisation and our Strategy has been developed to support our aims of being a Council that nurtures and promotes Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging.

We recognise that this is a continuous journey. The strategy will be delivered through an action plan, with regular reporting and review. We will collaborate with our strategic partners, as well as employees, trade unions, community groups, service users, residents and customers, to co-produce initiatives and deliver the change we all aspire to for the benefit of all.

Thank you for taking the time to read this strategy. We look forward to working with communities, members of the Council, our partners, and employees to make it a reality.

By placing fairness at the centre of what we do, promoting equality of opportunity and celebrating diversity and community cohesion, we can help to build a fairer future for all.

**Darren Welsh**

Interim Chief Executive Officer  
Dacorum Borough Council

## **A message from our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Strategic Leadership Sponsor**

As the sponsor of Dacorum's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging working group, I am deeply committed to fostering an inclusive environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and empowered. Our vision is to create a community that not only recognises and celebrates diversity but also actively champion's equity and inclusion in all aspects of our governance and services.

I believe that a diverse Council is a stronger Council, one that reflects our community and better serves its needs. Together, we can drive meaningful change by integrating Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging principles into our policies, programs, and practices. This commitment is about more than just compliance; it is about cultivating a culture that embraces diverse perspectives and experiences, ultimately enhancing decision-making and paving the way for innovative solutions.

We need to ensure that our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging strategy is not only ambitious but also actionable. We will prioritise open dialogue, education, and awareness-building to dismantle barriers, challenge biases, and promote equitable opportunities for all.

As we move forward, let us be guided by our shared values of nurturing, honesty and accountability. Together, we will champion the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion, making a lasting impact that reflects the ideals of fairness and opportunity for every individual in our community and workforce.

**Catherine Silva Donayre**, Strategic Director- Corporate & Commercial Services

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# Introduction

At Dacorum Borough Council we recognise that fostering a culture of equity, diversity, Inclusion & Belonging is not only a legal requirement but a strategic advantage which enables us to attract and retain top talent, improve our services for our customers and communities and foster the right environment where individuals can thrive.

Our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging strategy embodies our commitment to our employees, communities and customers, where every individual feels respected, valued and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives.

The Council understand that with difference comes value and we are committed to enabling our employees to bring their authentic selves to work and be free from any form of prejudice, discrimination, harassment or victimisation.

The council will ensure that everyone has an opportunity to have their say, and it is our aim to foster good relations between all individuals, creating broader understanding of differences, raising awareness of our unconscious biases and encouraging individuals to be curious about the subjects and topics they are unfamiliar with.

The council acknowledges that some individuals face challenge in respect of finding work, promotion, development, communication and interpersonal relations, to name but a few, and we will work together as a council to create equity and support the advancement of equality of opportunity, empowering our people to reach their full potential. This will be reflected in the training we deliver and initiatives we identify.

In acknowledgement of the broad scope of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Dacorum Borough Council will be developing our focus to ensure equity, rather than equality, and advancing our focus on belonging.

The council believe this shift will ensure we remain focused on what is important to our employees, customers and our communities.

This strategy outlines the council's approach to ensure that we comply with the Equality Act 2010, [The Public Sector Equality Duty](#), own council values, specifically, Nurturing – *We will nurture Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* and Focus – *We put the needs of the customer first and we will be a customer focused organisation*, and supports our Management and Leadership Competency Framework in relation to the competency 'Inclusive Leadership'.

## Building a Foundation

Since our last strategy, which was developed in 2020, the council have made consistent progress in the achievement of the EDI action plan linked to the 2020 strategy, in addition to our focus on engaging our people in conversation on topics related to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging with our EDI working group.

To explore the work that we have been doing you can review our annual progress report, which is available by clicking this link on the Dacorum Borough Council website

<https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/council-democracy/equality-and-diversity> and then scrolling down to Equality Information and Progress Reports.

You can also find out more about the communities we serve and our employees' profile by visiting the following links:

[Employee Protected Characteristics Report](#)

[Local communities | Herts Insight](#)

To ensure that our approach remained focused, we worked to the [Local Government Equality Duty Framework](#) which is a comprehensive framework to help Public Sector bodies meet their obligations under The Public Sector Equality Duty. The framework focuses on the following 4 areas:

- Knowing your communities
- Leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Involving your communities
- Responsive services and customer care

The action plan (which you can find here: [Action Plan](#)) that we had been working through to support our 2020-2024 strategy was created in line with the framework and with stakeholders across Dacorum Borough Council, and it is our intention to continue to use the framework for our 2025 -2030 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging strategy.

## What do we mean by Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging?

**Equity** is about fairness based on individual needs. Equity acknowledges the historical, systemic and structural disadvantages that different protected groups may have been subjected to and strives to reduce barriers. For the council about ensuring that our employees, communities and customers are understood and have their individual needs considered to support them. Equality on the other hand is about treating everyone the same.

**Diversity** is acknowledging and celebrating the different backgrounds, genders and sexual orientation of our employees, communities and customers. It's about valuing these differences and what they bring to Dacorum. Enriching experiences, thinking, creativity and how we do things.

**Inclusion** means actively working to meet the needs of our employees, communities and customers and taking action to remove any barriers to participation.

**Belonging** is about creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and heard regardless of their protected characteristics.

## **How the strategy was developed**

This strategy was developed with teams from across the council who came to share their views, perspectives and opinions on the activity we have done so far, and the activity that we should continue or focus on in the future.

We also consulted with our Strategic and Corporate Leadership Teams, Trade Unions and our Members, ensuring that our strategy supported the needs of all employees, communities and customers.

The work around understanding our communities' voice continues to evolve and forms part of the council's improvement journey within this area. So far, we have connected with internal teams who work within the community and developed our plans to improve the data we hold to help us in shaping our services and strategy further.

In the future the council plan to develop our community networks so that we can capture more meaningful data, hear what matters to our communities and residents first hand and shape our services and community around this. This continued feedback source from our residents will provide invaluable data to further shape our action plans in the future.

## **Our 2025 – 2030 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy**

### **Increase the data we hold and use this data to inform our decisions**

At Dacorum Borough Council, we believe that good governance and service depend on how we use data. The council is committed to improving both the amount and quality of data we collect to help us make better decisions, improve our services, and support our community, customers and employees.

The council will focus on using data to work more efficiently while making sure everyone's voice is heard. Our diverse community has many cultures and backgrounds, and we want our data collection to respect and reflect these differences. This way, the council can create services that meet the unique needs of those individuals, where applicable.

By putting inclusivity at the heart of our data practices, the council aim to provide services that everyone can access and benefit from. The council want to turn the insights we gain into practical strategies that improve our residents' quality of life. This includes making resources easier to access, developing programs tailored to specific groups, and ensuring our initiatives are relevant and responsive.

The council also understand how important it is to support our employees. By using data to guide our approaches, we can enhance our services and create a better work environment.

With data, the council can ensure that the unique perspectives and experiences of our employees are acknowledged and respected. This will also allow us to implement targeted initiatives that address disparities and support underrepresented groups, which, research suggests<sup>1</sup> leads to greater satisfaction, higher retention rates, and a stronger sense of belonging for everyone at Dacorum Borough Council.

In summary, Dacorum Borough Council is committed to using data as a tool for improvement. Our focus on inclusivity, cultural awareness, and employee support helps us meet the changing needs of our community and empowers our workforce to provide the best services possible. Together, we are building a future that values respect, understanding, and teamwork, all informed by data.

### **Our aims to support our strategy:**

- In alignment with our GDPR/Data Protection Policy, the council will utilise the data we collect to inform service design and planning and service delivery across the council.
- Ensure that our employees are safeguarded and have the right data to support our resident's needs.
- Ensure commissioned services align with demographic needs and data insights.
- Conduct surveys, focus groups, and interviews to understand the specific needs and preferences of different demographic groups in our community and among our residents, as well as our employees.
- Utilise the data to support us in making informed decisions on our policies and services as part of our Equality Impact Assessments.
- Include Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging insights as part of our board reporting.
- Establish clear, measurable performance metrics tied to demographic insights to evaluate the effectiveness of commissioned services.
- Train our employees on understanding different cultures, using data well, and adjusting services to serve all people's needs.
- We will adapt our methods of communication to meet the needs of our communities.
- Engage with underrepresented or marginalised groups and understand their needs.

### **Connect and foster relationships with our communities and customers**

Dacorum Borough council is committed to actively connecting with our residents and customers. To keep this at the heart of what we do, we understand that building meaningful relationships is essential for fostering trust and collaboration, which is why we plan to increase the methods we use to enhance community engagement within our decision-making processes.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/content/news/strong-di-strategy-keeps-employees-engaged-and-motivated/>



The voice of our employees and customers is important to us and the council plan to continue to listen. As part of this strategy, the council is committed to ensuring that their needs and aspirations are reflected in our projects, services and initiatives. By forging strong partnerships with local organisations and groups, the council aim to create a network of support that empowers individuals and promotes a sense of belonging in the borough of Dacorum.

Our goal is not only to provide services, but to be authentic in what we do, through what we commit to. The ideas, concerns and feedback of our employees and customers plays a central role in creating a better future for everyone in Dacorum. Transparency and accountability will be key in helping us build a stronger and more resilient community and workforce and our strategy will support us in achieving this.

### **Our aims to support our strategy:**

- Foster good relationships with those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not through understanding our demographics, their wants/needs and developing initiatives that support this as well as bringing communities together
- Develop a shared vision of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging for our customers and employees. Develop communications and documentation that supports the needs of a diverse customer base, to include the use of gender neutral language, ensuring documents are created to support accessibility and easy translation.
- Work towards creating community cohesion across Dacorum where all residents feel a sense of belonging.
- Engage with all communities across Dacorum and create effective feedback mechanisms to support us in creating an inclusive borough that celebrates both our local heritage and history as well as our rich diversity.

### **Champion diversity, inclusivity and belonging as part of our culture and eliminate any unlawful treatment**

Dacorum Borough Council have ambition to not only be an employer of choice but also be a place where individuals can bring their full, authentic selves to work and flourish whilst doing so.

For individuals to be able to do that we will focus on being an inclusive organisation that celebrates difference. We will enable safe and authentic conversations amongst our employees and encourage them to share their experiences and bring their own unique perspectives to everything that they do, because we understand the value within this.

The council will create an environment where everyone feels they belong and can be themselves. We will implement clear guidelines and create a workplace culture that eliminates any form of unlawful treatment. This will also be highlighted in our policies and training programmes.

We will focus our efforts on attracting a diverse range of candidates, ensuring that there is equity of opportunity in development and career progression and foster good relations between all groups of people across Dacorum Borough Council.

This means valuing the unique perspectives, strengths and attributes that everyone brings. We will do this through ensuring that there are ample opportunities for all to bring their best selves to work, progress within Dacorum and share their unique perspectives and experiences in a safe and supportive environment.

We will work towards embedding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging into the foundations of who we are and what we do, with everyone taking accountability for our environment and the experience of others.

We will ensure that we educate our people on every aspect of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging through training, conversation, opportunities to safely challenge perspectives and views and experiences.

We will drive our message for zero tolerance towards bias or offensive behaviours through our policies and ensure we have processes to respond to such concerns promptly and effectively.

### **Our aims to support our strategy:**

- Continue to utilise our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Working Group to champion Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging across Dacorum Borough Council.
- Lead by example – Ensure our leaders understand the importance of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging by, where possible, implementing performance measures relating to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging and championing the Equality Impact Assessments as part of everything we do.
- Train and support our people managers and leaders to focus on creating an inclusive culture and environment within their teams through the delivery of our management and leadership competency framework and our supporting development programme.
- Support our people managers to discuss sensitive issues pertaining to protected characteristics, with their teams on a regular basis.
- Develop effective strategies for supporting employee wellbeing to include focus and support groups, easily accessible tools and resources and ensuring our managers and leaders are equipped to recognise those who may need support and how to positively manage wellbeing.
- Create a culture of continuous learning on topics related to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging through training courses but also marking related events, awareness campaigns, employee networks and individual conversations.
- Focus on attracting diverse pools of candidates through working with key external parties and ensuring that our recruitment practices are accessible, adaptive and flexible, taking account of individual needs.
- Continue to champion the creation of staff networks by strengthening our workplace ally programme and exploring the topics that matter the most to our employees.

- Develop strategies to understand the barriers to and increase engagement with key programmes and processes (apprenticeships, recruitment, flexible working, mentoring as example) across protected groups.
- Ensure the process for all employees to raise concerns and complaints in relation to discrimination, harassment, inappropriate behaviour (micro aggressions for example) is accessible and where possible monitor and analyse this data.

### **Provide accessible services that allow us to reach all corners of the Borough**

The council recognise that the needs of those within our communities, our customers and partners are the cornerstone of what we are here to do. In an ever-changing landscape, our focus is on creating environments where individuals feel safe and included in the services the council provide and key decisions we make.

The council's role within this is to understand the needs and create services that enable and support individuals from protected groups.

The council will develop improved relationships with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties and suppliers to ensure that all parties are aligned to this strategy, specifically in relation to service provision and property development, with a focus on getting it right, first time.

The council will work to remove barriers to accessing our information and services and provide our employees with education and understanding on inclusive communication with individuals from protected groups, further developing relationships and building trust.

### **Our aims to support our strategy:**

- Adapt to the changing demographic and needs of our communities.
- Ensure our properties and buildings for the public are aligned to support and meet the needs of individuals and groups using them.
- Understand the accessibility issues impacting customers and communities and develop initiatives to tackle these.
- Ensure that services have access to EDI insights data to inform decisions that impact upon our employees or customers.
- Establish a Community Diversity Champions scheme for Dacorum residents and communities interested in supporting delivery of the council's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging strategy, linked to our Tenant Voice work stream.
- Regularly review our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging data to inform and improve our services and decisions (for example review complaints received related to Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging and take appropriate action/develop plans to tackle and raise awareness/training etc. of staff, contractors etc.).

# Governance and Measuring Progress

Dacorum Borough Council acknowledge that to be successful in the aims set out in this strategy everyone needs to be accountable.

To ensure that Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging is owned by everyone across Dacorum and driven by our leadership teams we will ensure the following:

- All directorates will identify key objectives related to the delivery of this strategy as part of annual service planning.
- The progress of these objectives will be reported and monitored on a regular basis by the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Lead Officer with updates shared on a periodic basis to our Strategic Leadership Team.
- All employees will set at least one objective relating to equity, diversity, inclusion & Belonging on an annual basis during our Performance Development Reviews (PDR).
- We will break down silos by discussing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging at key meetings, to include our Corporate Leadership Team meetings and Strategic Leadership Team meetings.
- All projects, policies etc. will start with an Equality Impact Assessment pre-screener which focuses on the direct impacts on protected groups and what this means (whether positively or negatively impacted). This enables us to consider equalities impact at the very beginning of any new policies, processes, services or initiatives and enables our employees to think equality first in everything that they do. These pre-screeners will be initially checked by the Corporate Leadership Team to review level of thought, detail and utilisation of data to inform decisions, and quality checked by the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging team to identify areas of further training or support.
- Leadership and Members will actively review, challenge and scrutinise Equality Impact Assessments to ensure that due and thorough consideration is being given to Equality matters.
- We will create a central action plan to capture activities and initiatives that support the delivery of our strategy across all four areas (1. Provide accessible services that allow us to reach all corners of the Borough, 2. Champion diversity, inclusivity and belonging as part of our culture and eliminate any unlawful treatment, 3. Connect and foster relationships with our communities and customers and 4. Increase the data we hold and use this data to inform our decisions)
- Our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Working Group will support the delivery of key aspects of this strategy and champion this within their teams and across the council.
- Report annually on our progress and delivery against our strategy.

# Glossary

**EDI&B** – Equity Diversity and Inclusion

**Equity** is about fairness based on individual needs. Equity acknowledges the historical, systemic and structural disadvantages that different protected groups may have been subjected to and strives to reduce barriers. For us it's about ensuring that our employees, communities and customers are understood and have their individual needs considered to support them.

**Diversity** is acknowledging and celebrating the different backgrounds, genders and sexual orientation of our employees, communities and customers. It's about valuing these differences and what they bring to Dacorum. Enriching our experiences, thinking, creativity and how we do things.

**Inclusion** means actively working to meet the needs of our employees, communities and customers and taking action to remove any barriers to participation.

**Belonging** is about creating an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and heard regardless of their protected characteristics.

**Unconscious biases** - Automatic associations and reactions that arise when we encounter a person or group. Instead of maintaining neutrality, we tend to associate positive or negative stereotypes with certain groups and let these biases influence our behaviour towards them.

**Protected characteristic** - A "protected characteristic" refers to specific attributes or traits that are protected by law from discrimination. In various legal contexts, particularly under anti-discrimination laws, these characteristics ensure that individuals are treated fairly and equally, protecting them from bias or unfair treatment in areas such as employment, services, and education.

In the United Kingdom, for example, the Equality Act 2010 outlines several protected characteristics, including:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Marriage and civil partnership
5. Pregnancy and maternity
6. Race
7. Religion or belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual orientation

Therefore, discrimination based on any of these characteristics is considered unlawful, promoting equality and diversity in society.

**Governance** - In a governmental context, governance can involve the formulation of policies, implementation of laws, and the management of public resources, ensuring accountability, transparency, and participation of various stakeholders. In corporate governance, it focuses

on the way business entities are administered and controlled, including the interests of shareholders, management, and other stakeholders.

**Diverse Communities** - A "diverse community" refers to a group of people who come from various backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, races, religions, languages, and social or economic statuses. This diversity can encompass differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, abilities, and perspectives. A diverse community is characterized by its inclusion of a wide range of experiences and viewpoints, which can enrich social interactions, foster creativity, and promote understanding and tolerance among its members. The celebration of diversity can lead to a more vibrant and resilient community overall.

**Cultural awareness** - refers to the understanding and appreciation of the differences and similarities between various cultures. It involves recognising the values, beliefs, customs, and social behaviours that characterise different groups of people. Cultural awareness is essential for effective communication, fostering respect, and promoting inclusivity in diverse environments.

Being culturally aware enables individuals to navigate multicultural settings more effectively, helps to prevent misunderstandings and conflicts, and contributes to positive interactions in both personal and professional contexts. It often includes developing empathy and an open-minded approach towards the perspectives and experiences of others.

**Safeguarding** - refers to measures taken to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of individuals, particularly those who are vulnerable or at risk. This concept is commonly associated with the protection of children and vulnerable adults from harm, abuse, and neglect. In various contexts, safeguarding can involve policies, procedures, and practices designed to ensure safety and promote welfare in settings such as schools, social services, healthcare, and community programs.

In summary, safeguarding encompasses actions and protocols aimed at preventing harm and ensuring that individuals are supported and protected in social, educational, and healthcare environments.

**Demographic groups** - refer to categories of people who share similar characteristics, often used in statistical analysis and research to understand trends and behaviours within populations. These characteristics can include:

1. Age: Groups defined by age ranges, such as children, teenagers, adults, and seniors.
2. Gender: Categorized typically as male, female, or non-binary.
3. Race and Ethnicity: Grouping people by shared cultural or ancestral traits, such as Hispanic, Black, Asian, etc.
4. Socioeconomic Status: Classifying individuals based on income, education, occupation, and wealth.
5. Geographic Location: Dividing populations based on where they live, such as urban vs. rural, regional divisions, or countries.
6. Religion: Groups defined by shared beliefs and practices related to spirituality.
7. Education Level: Classification based on the highest degree or level of education attained.
8. Marital Status: Categories like single, married, divorced, or widowed.

Analysing demographic groups helps organisations, businesses, and governments understand the needs, preferences, and behaviours of different segments of the population, aiding in decision-making, policy development, marketing strategies, and social services planning.

**Equality Act 2010** - [Equality Act 2010](#)

**Public Sector Equality Duty** - [Public Sector Equality Duty: guidance for public authorities - GOV.UK](#)

**Local Government Equality Framework** - [Equality Framework for Local Government | Local Government Association](#)