

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2028





**Brent's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy 2024 – 2028 is a commitment to tackle inequalities and support individuals and families to reach their full potential. It is at the heart of our vision to move Brent forward together and ensure no one is left behind.**

It is through understanding and celebrating differences and working together that we, as individuals, organisations, and communities can thrive. That is why our new Strategy is centred around equity and inclusion. We are extremely proud that Brent is one of London's most diverse boroughs. Our diversity is what makes us who we are. It brings together experiences, ideas and perspectives that are essential to making our borough the amazing place that so many people call home. This Strategy has been developed and designed through conversations with our residents, service users and staff.

We know the importance of strong, thriving communities and how living within such places can directly improve the lives of those within them through a range of positive individual health, community wellbeing and cohesion outcomes. We recognise the value of relationships in communities, informal networks of support that bind people together and the strengths and assets that exist amongst our communities. Through the engagement which underpins this Strategy, we have heard your ideas and suggestions on how to celebrate, engage and empower local people.

We are proud of our diverse workforce, yet we are also aware that diversity not only means recognising and celebrating the difference within our teams, but also channelling the power of diverse perspectives and experiences to drive innovation, creativity, and success. We are keen to go beyond representation and foster an inclusive work environment where everyone, at every level of the organisation is curious to learn and improve the council culture, and to use this knowledge to serve our communities more effectively. We want to be an employer of choice where people come to work every day with a clear sense of purpose, confident in the positive impact they are having on Brent's people, communities and businesses. We know we will always have more to do, and will never be complacent, so this Strategy also sets out our focus and priorities on building an inclusive workforce.

We look forward to updating you on our progress as we deliver on our ambitions.



**Cllr Donnelly-Jackson**

Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities & Culture



**Kim Wright**

Chief Executive of Brent Council





# Introduction

**As a Council, we place our communities, businesses and workforce at the heart of everything we do. As one of the most culturally diverse boroughs in London, we know our diversity is our greatest asset. We value the strength that comes with difference and the positive contribution that this brings to our community.**

Brent's vibrancy is reflected through the data. It is one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in the country as almost two-thirds of the population (65%) are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. This ethnic diversity is then reflected through the languages we hear across the borough as 34% of residents use a main language other than English, including Gujarati, Romanian, Arabic and Portuguese amongst those top spoken languages. Over half (56%) of the borough's population were born in countries outside the UK, with the highest number of residents coming from India, Romania and Poland. Brent has one of the largest European populations in the country and the data suggests the population has grown considerably since the last 10 years, reflecting significant migration flows from Romania, Portugal, and Italy, in particular. There is also a rich religious diversity with 80% of residents having a religion compared with 57% nationally. Our largest religious group is Christian (39%), followed by those of Muslim faith (21%) and Hindu faith (16%). We appreciate that within many of these different communities, even greater diversity exists. We are keen to

continue to understand, represent and serve all our residents, including more seldom heard voices across the borough.

Brent's diversity is also reflected in the make up of our workforce, where over two thirds (69%) of Brent employees are from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups compared with 44% across London. The Council has an older workforce with over half the workforce aged between 41-60 (54%), while this age group comprises just 38% of the working age population. Almost two thirds (64%) of the workforce are women which is well above the proportion of women in the Brent working age population. Just over 4% of the workforce identify as LGB+ and just under 1% of employees identify as transgender. Half of the workforce are of Christian faith, 15% are Hindu and 11% are from the Muslim faith. A further 16% of the workforce indicate that they do not have a religion. Within the council, disabled people are less well represented when compared to the working age population in Brent (8% vs. 18%).



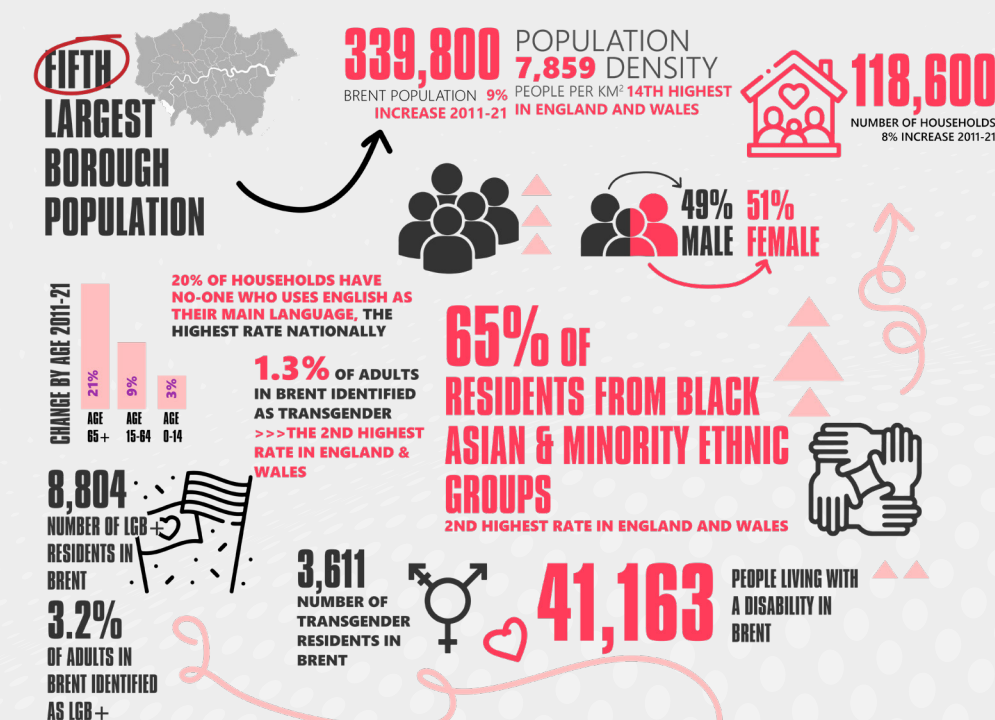
We recognise the challenges being faced across the borough and what is required to have a real recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and to tackle the unequal effect of the cost-of-living-crisis. Our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy sets out how we plan for everyone living, working, and studying in Brent to have the same opportunities and access. We want Brent Council to be the employer of choice for our residents and beyond. Addressing these challenges and developing a bold, ambitious response is critical for us to achieve these goals.

Our level of boldness is also reflected in the accompanying Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan which outlines our journey to become an anti-racist organisation. It includes and reflects how we will work with other organisations to tackle racial injustice, this is demonstrated as we sign up to the London Local Government Anti Racism Statement and UNISON's Anti-Racism Charter.

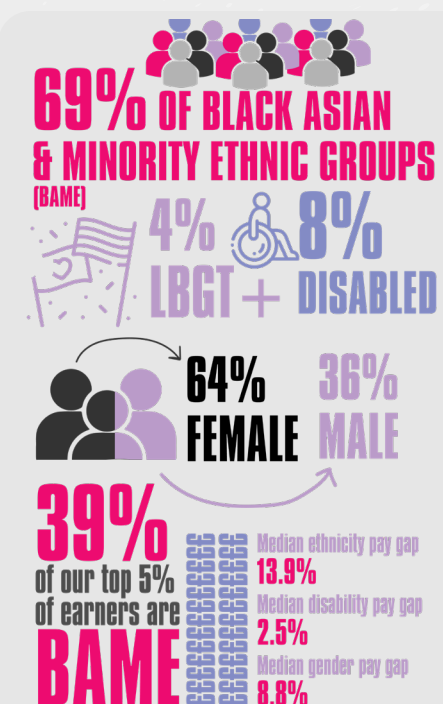
Over the past four years, we have made significant strides within the equity, diversity and inclusion arena. These programmes, events and initiatives provide us with strong foundations to move Brent from a diverse place to work and live, to one that is truly inclusive; where people of all cultures and backgrounds are represented, celebrated and most importantly feel that they belong.

The EDI Strategy 2024-2028 provides a platform for us to work towards building a more inclusive Brent. We have spoken with our service users, our communities and our staff to understand what makes people feel valued and what encourages people to participate fully in, and contribute to, building a strong cohesive community within Brent. We hope that this Strategy will bring power to these words as it outlines how we will take action and move Brent's EDI ambitions and priorities forward.

## The Profile of Brent



## In the workplace





## Our Progress Since 2019

Our Equality Strategy 2019-2023 detailed our vision: 'Removing inequality – building a better Brent' which included our four priority equality objectives:

1. **Understand the barriers to equality experienced in Brent and act to remove them.**
2. **Provide accessible information and services that are tailored to peoples' needs.**
3. **Tackle hate, harassment, and victimisation.**
4. **Lead the way in encouraging diversity to flourish in Brent.**

We have successfully been delivering these objectives through a range of initiatives and actions. Our progress has been demonstrated through some of the following achievements:

- Our **Brent Health Matters** initiative which works with communities to improve their health in the ways they want. Our outreach events provide health and care services in the community at a time and place that suits our residents. In 2023, 115 outreach events took place, being attended by over 4,000 people. Through this initiative we continue to improve our understanding and target our services on reaching those most impacted by health inequalities. For example, we responded to community concerns by working with the Royal Marsden to address the barriers Black men told us they faced in getting screening for prostate cancer.
- **The Moving on Up** programme provided support by specifically engaging and supporting young Black men towards employment outcomes. It also aimed to raise awareness amongst employers of the issues and barriers these men may face. It supported 484 young Black men into jobs and careers over the duration of the project, which delivered employment support, working with employers and mentoring support to those within the programme.
- Our **Black Community Action Plan (BCAP)** was co-designed in 2020 with our local Black communities to tackle race inequality. This is a 10-year plan to strengthen community leadership and address priorities for change. In its first 3 years, the plan has focused on education and employment through this the BCAP has supported over 600 adults and young people in projects providing support in schools, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, digital skills, support into jobs, and mentoring.
- The Council's work on **community safety** and reducing violence has focused particularly on **reducing violence against women and girls** through our Safer Brent Partnerships. We have signed up to the Women's Night Safety Charter and continue working with staff in the night-time economy to improve women's safety across Brent.
- The Council has been recognised as a **Disability Confident Leader** and leads engagement with businesses to support them also becoming Disability Confident. Brent currently has 64 local employers registered with the Disability Confident scheme. We continue to improve accessibility to our buildings and ensuring we are inclusive through the information we disseminate.

- Brent Council has been delivering a **Supported Internships Programme** since 2020. The programme provides young neurodiverse residents (17-24 years old), the opportunity to gain vital work experience and employability skills to kickstart their careers. The programme is based at Brent Civic Centre and includes neighbouring employers. To date, 68 residents have participated, with 33 interns completing the programme, 14 interns have secured employment and a further 12 interns have gone into further education.

We will continue to evaluate the work that has been delivered through the previous Strategy and use it to push our ambitions on EDI and challenge ourselves further. The true power of Brent's diversity will be in its ability to foster a culture of inclusion where everyone feels valued and empowered, providing an environment for growth and innovation both within the community and workplace.

## Our Commitment



The overarching focus of the Strategy is 'inclusivity'. Inclusion is about how well the contributions, presence and perspectives of different groups of people are valued and

integrated into an environment.

Within our communities, this is about supporting both our established and emerging communities to feel connected and valued. We are keen to work with our communities to create opportunities for community leadership, develop greater community cohesion to encourage greater feelings of togetherness and a sense of belonging.

Within our workforce, this is about our collective mindset and organisational culture. As a Council, we are seeking to become proactive in the way we view EDI – being more curious to learn, more culturally aware and building the confidence to challenge discrimination and injustice when it is present.

Our Borough Plan sets out our ambition to be a borough where all residents can fulfil their potential and access the services they need in Brent. Our EDI Strategy supports those commitments and sets out the high standards we expect of ourselves in how we treat our workforce, and engage with and deliver services for our residents and businesses. This is underpinned by robust data collection and a commitment to monitor and evaluate impacts our proposed actions may have on access and outcomes for our communities and employees.

**Our EDI Strategy aligns with the key priorities of the Brent Borough Plan:**

**Prosperity and Stability in Brent**

**A Cleaner, Greener Future**

**Thriving Communities**

**The Best Start in Life**

**A Healthier Brent**

Equity, diversity, and inclusion cuts across all five and is central to everything we do as an organisation. We understand that delivering high-quality, effective, and inclusive services to residents, having a workforce that reflects our diverse population, and ensuring that residents and employees can achieve their potential and make a positive contribution to Brent and beyond will require an ambitious and bold response.

An important component of our EDI ambitions and commitments is to tackle racial injustice. To help realise this we are striving to become an anti-racist organisation and we have developed an accompanying Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan that describes the organisation's anti-racism journey (link to action plan). The action plan complements our focus on inclusion, particular in relation to our workforce.

## Building the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy

To shape our ambitions, we built on the findings from wider engagement undertaken for the Borough Plan and conducted targeted engagement to understand the issues and challenges that certain residents, service users and staff may face. We engaged with people through focus groups, workshops, and staff events to capture the voices of people who live and work in Brent. The findings from these conversations have helped to prioritise the key issues and shape our three key EDI objectives.

A copy of the consultation and engagement findings can be found here ([link to consultation report](#))

### Objective 1: Inclusion: Accessibility and Cohesion

Listening to the feedback, we heard a strong sentiment that the Council needs to be genuinely accessible for everyone. This means that Council services should be physically accessible and all communications must be inclusive and cater to different needs and preferences, ensuring everyone is engaging with the same quality of information regardless of how they access it.

To ensure needs of residents, communities and service users are being met, you told us that the Council must continue to collaborate and understand what matters most. Vital components to this include

providing opportunities to celebrate Brent's rich diversity and providing communities with a voice. You suggested that community events, programmes and initiatives are important ways of making Brent a more inclusive place. Therefore, the Council should assist in creating a stronger feeling of togetherness and a more cohesive borough through such opportunities, particularly with, and for the new and emerging communities.

### Objective 2: Narrowing the Gap: Tackling Inequalities

To understand and address inequalities it is crucial that we collect the right data, from the right people in the right way. Engagement suggested that we continue developing local solutions that address the needs of our diverse communities, ensuring no one is left behind. You told us to work with seldom heard communities and use data to target key areas of concern. For example, providing improved support and opportunities for young people and greater resource towards providing safety for all and reducing youth violence.

### Objective 3: Establishing an Inclusive Workforce

Our staff provided very clear and high aspirations around having a more inclusive workplace. Staff highlighted that a more inclusive workplace will bring better understanding of employees and their backgrounds, enabling them to bring their authentic self into work and in turn, positively impacting on the communities they serve. With two-thirds of our employees living within the borough, our staff provide an invaluable insight into the needs and concerns of our communities.

Improving the diversity and representation at all levels of the organisation, including at senior levels was another key area of focus, alongside the need for the Council to have a greater understanding of our staffs' lived experience. They conveyed a keenness to review Council policies and practices across the employee lifecycle (i.e. from recruitment, progression, learning and development to leaving the organisation) to ensure they are inclusive for all.

Staff also expressed their ambitions around becoming an anti-racist organisation, these have been captured specifically within the Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan but they also interrelate and complement this objective.

## Our Equity Objectives

Our objectives have been established by combining the Borough plan priorities and the engagement findings. The equity objectives below frame how the Council is driving greater inclusivity across Brent.





Inclusion: Accessibility and Cohesion

A diverse, inclusive and accessible borough is one where individuals from different backgrounds and identities feel welcomed, respected, and valued. We will empower our communities to involve them in decision making and enable them to shape services that anticipate and respond to their needs.

What You Said	What we will do	How we will measure it
Use inclusive language and improve the accessibility of all Council communications	Refresh our Communication Strategy, ensuring that our communications are easy to understand and accessible, and take the different needs of our diverse communities into consideration	Usage and uptake of our accessible services such as SignVideo and translation services
Improve information and communications about services, support and opportunities for residents and service users	Review our internal approach and use of inclusive and accessible language to ensure our corporate terminology and language is up-to-date, relevant and appropriate	Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of bespoke services and methods of engagement for new and emerging communities
Greater involvement of local people in decision making	Raise awareness to services users and across the organisation, of our accessible website, SignVideo, other specialist websites and translation and interpretation services	
	Increase awareness of, and establish new forums to gain a greater understanding of the views, ideas and concerns of our residents and communities, such as the Brent Community Review Panel, Brent Connect programmes, Care in Action and SEND Youth Forum	Greater representation of views and impact of engagements on decision making and shaping future plans

What You Said	What we will do	How we will measure it
Identify and remove barriers that may prevent certain groups from engaging with the Council	Continue providing specialised employability services through Brent Works and specialist commissioned delivery, focused on assisting members of the community currently experiencing disadvantage in the labour market, including those who need support to develop their digital skills. These programmes aim to improve life opportunities and social mobility	Monitor and evaluate impact of events co-designed with community groups
Foster greater community cohesion by creating a borough where difference and diversity is understood, celebrated and valued	Assess Council refurbishments and continually review our buildings to make sure they are accessible to all.	Evaluation of events and initiatives to continually monitor and improve our offer
	Embed an engagement programme in schools giving young people a comprehensive overview of Brent’s history and heritage through Libraries, Arts and Heritage	Maintaining our Disability Employer Level 3 status
	Adapt services to provide flexible options for residents and service users to better suit their needs, such as through our Brent Hubs and Libraries	
Improve social mobility and employment opportunities for those finding it hard to enter the labour market	Establish a new approach to EDI events, centred around empowering communities to mark and celebrate occasions that matter to them	Monitor the number of residents supported into work, apprenticeships and training and identify and tackle barriers to employment

## Narrowing the Gap: Tackling Inequalities

As inequalities persist, we will focus on who, in our communities, are experiencing the worst outcomes or those with the most urgent need to narrow existing inequalities and differences in life chances. This not only includes people with protected characteristics, but also those from other backgrounds experiencing disproportionate inequalities, such as carers, care leavers and people from lower socio economic backgrounds.

We will listen to and understand the diverse needs of communities and improve how we collect information across different services so we can understand impact. We recognise this is particularly important for our new and emerging communities. We will strive for our service delivery to be appropriate, accessible, and for our Council decisions to be properly informed by evidence. This means leaving no one or group behind but also adopting some focus on the needs that are identified through data, insights and community voices.

What You Said	What we will do	How we will measure it
Ensure EDI issues are reflected in decision making and service delivery	Improve our Equality Impact Assessment approach helping decision makers to have a more comprehensive understanding of impacts of policies or proposals. This includes exploring the adoption of the Socio-Economic Duty	Delivering Cumulative EIAs for substantial service or policy proposals to understand potential impacts on protected groups
Collect and use robust data to target services on reaching those impacted the most	Continue to establish 'safe spaces' for residents fearing for their safety, across the Borough and online	Outcomes monitored by key EDI demographics, particularly gender, age, disability and ethnicity, alongside other key performance indicators
	Improve our understanding of where and why health inequalities exist, in partnership with the NHS, and tailor our services appropriately for adults and children and young people	
Gain greater understanding of what different communities needs are	Continue to build on our digital offer by identifying areas of digital exclusion and providing further support where required, such as connectivity, skills and access to devices	Feedback from service users, regularly monitored by protected characteristics for differences, trends and patterns
	Provide targeted programmes which combat disadvantage using cultural and literacy initiatives through our libraries, arts and archives service	

What You Said	What we will do	How we will measure it
Foster greater community cohesion by creating a borough where difference and diversity is understood, celebrated and valued	Address disproportionality in attainment levels for vulnerable groups, including looked after children, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and children of specific ethnicities in partnership with Brent schools	Monitor and act upon disproportionate outcomes in partnership with our schools and continue to roll out our 'Leading from the top' anti racism campaign Maintaining our Disability Employer Level 3 status
Improve social mobility and employment opportunities for those finding it hard to enter the labour market	Continue providing specialised employability services through Brent Works and specialist commissioned delivery focused on assisting members of the community currently experiencing disadvantage in the labour market, including those who need support to develop their digital skills. These programmes aim to improve life opportunities and social mobility	Monitor the number of residents supported into work, apprenticeships and training and identify and tackle barriers to employment
	Address disproportionality in fixed and permanent exclusions in Brent schools in partnership with Brent headteachers	
Use data and feedback provided by service users and employees to inform policies and processes	Continue to develop and adapt our support and advice offer in Brent Hubs to help residents who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis	Evaluate our engagement campaigns to monitor uptake in services and outreach, particularly to seldom heard, new and emerging communities
	Continue to design and produce services with our communities, building on the existing model we have applied to programmes such as our Community Hubs, Family Wellbeing Centres and Community Wellbeing project	
	Establish an EDI monitoring dashboard and process to collate and share feedback and information that can shape our services and practices	

Establishing an Inclusive Workforce

We want Brent to be a truly diverse and inclusive workplace. A workplace that makes everyone, regardless of who they are or what they do for Brent Council, feel equally involved in, valued and supported at work. To ensure this, we will continually learn from the experiences of our employees and capture their voice to understand concerns and perspectives, this includes optimising the use of our staff networks and champions.

We want to ensure the council is an environment where everyone is able to thrive.

Although we are proud of our diverse workforce, we are aware that diversity not only means recognising and celebrating the differences within our teams, but also channelling the power of diverse perspectives and experiences to drive innovation, creativity, and success. We are keen to go beyond representation and foster an inclusive work environment where everyone, at every level of the organisation is curious to learn and improve the Council culture, and to use this knowledge to serve our communities more effectively. Becoming an anti-racist organisation is also central to our vision of an inclusive workforce, therefore the ambitions outlined in the accompanying Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan also contribute to delivering this objective.

What You Said	What we will do	How we will measure it
Provide relevant equity, diversity and inclusion training to all employees promoting greater awareness of intersectionality and improving the way in which services are delivered	Improve our corporate learning and development offer which contributes to embedding EDI within the organisation	Capture and use feedback from employees to inform learning and development offer, such as training on neurodivergence and anti-racism
Ensure that policies and processes throughout the employee lifecycle are truly inclusive	Establish a data informed journey of the employee lifecycle identifying trends relating to protected characteristics	Monitor, evaluate and address findings from reports, surveys and action plans such as the Workforce Report, our staff survey, and the Anti Racism Action Plan
Work towards a workforce that is reflective of the local community at all levels of the organisation	Establish and embed the internal Brent Council Anti-Racism Action Plan	Increase disclosure rate for employee’s protected characteristic data

What You Said	What we will do	How we will measure it
Improve the way we capture and analyse workforce ethnicity data to ensure ideas, initiatives and projects are evidence led and transparent	Support our young SEND residents with work experience within the Council	Monitor uptake for specific initiatives and programmes for people from protected backgrounds
Target initiatives and programmes supporting employees from protected backgrounds	Support care leavers with work experience and apprenticeships within the Council	Annual analysis of recruitment and progression data that includes but is not limited to the proportion of Black, Asian and minority ethnic applicants compared with ethnicity of successful applicants
Ensure an environment where everyone feels safe to be themselves and continue to support the Council’s Staff Networks	All staff to have performance objectives on EDI that are tailored to organisational, service or individual needs	Monitor and evaluate information on leavers exiting the organisation, including data on protected characteristics
Reduce the ethnicity, disability and gender pay gap	Enable our staff networks to provide a space for open and honest dialogues about concerns and issues affecting them, educate staff about these issues and empowering staff to establish further groups and networks, where appropriate	Growth and expansion of the collective Staff Network offer
		Monitor the ethnicity, disability and gender pay gap on an annual basis



## How we will monitor and deliver

We will continuously check and review the services we provide. This will be done through the learning from data and information we gather through the measures outlined in this Strategy, alongside what our residents and employees tell us. **To do this we will:**

- Establish an EDI Board which will champion and steer the organisation's priorities on all matters relating to equity, diversity, and inclusion. This includes effective monitoring and review of all related work streams, projects, initiatives and action plans. The EDI Board will ensure services are held accountable for their progress in embedding best practice and will be responsible for oversight and implementation of key strategic workstreams, namely the EDI Strategy, including the internal Anti-Racism Action Plan.
- Continue to improve our Equality Impact Assessment process, to ensure that the method for completing, assessing and monitoring the impact our policies and decisions may have on different groups of people is as robust as it can be.
- Share best practice and benchmark with our partners so that we can collaborate, learn and improve from others where possible.

## Equality Act

Brent Council will continue to take a proactive approach to equity, diversity, and inclusion and meet the statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 introduced the public sector equality duty. The duty required that all public bodies, such as the Council, consider all individuals when conducting their day-to-day work, shaping their policies, and delivering services. The Act also outlines the 'protected characteristics' – the specific aspects of identity protected from discrimination. As an organisation providing services to a diverse community, it is vital for us to consider the protected characteristics in all we do.

The nine protected characteristics are:

- **Age**
- **Disability**
- **Gender reassignment**
- **Marriage and civil partnership**
- **Pregnancy and maternity**
- **Race**
- **Religion or belief**
- **Sex**
- **Sexual orientation**

The PSED requires public bodies, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to:

- **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation,** and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- **Foster good relations** between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition to these 'general' duties, there is also a 'specific' duty. This includes a requirement for public sector bodies to prepare and publish one or more equality objectives at least every four years.

Further information can be found on the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion section of the Council's website.

