

Cheshire East Council

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2025



Open

Fair

Green

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Foreword



As the Cabinet Member with responsibility for equality, diversity and inclusion, along with my joint administration colleagues and Member EDI Champion Cllr Marilyn Houston, we are absolutely committed to driving this agenda forward and delighted to introduce our updated strategy document for 2021 to 2025.

This new strategy builds upon the significant progress we have made and outlines our ambitions and plans to continue to promote and advance equality, diversity and inclusion throughout Cheshire East.

Equality, diversity and inclusion really does matter as every single person that we all work with, whether a fellow councillor, member of staff, resident or one of our many customers deserves to be treated fairly and with respect.

We believe we have made significant progress over the past few years. However, we also recognise this is not a start and stop exercise. It is, and needs to be an integral part of our culture and values - the way in which the council operates, placing it at the heart of all that we do.

We have the ambition that Cheshire East is known as a borough as rich in its heritage, as it is in removing barriers so creating real, equitable and lasting opportunities for everyone to thrive.

We also want Cheshire East Council to be an employer of choice and representative of the communities we serve. We will continue to work in partnership and collaborate effectively with stakeholders, partners and local communities to take forward this strategy. We will demonstrate we are monitoring and measuring the improvements we are making, showing successes where they are achieved and also those areas which still require further development.

Cllr Jill Rhodes

Portfolio Holder, Public Health and Corporate

1 Introduction

Cheshire East Council is committed to being an **Open, Fairer, Greener Cheshire East**.

Alongside this commitment the Council recognises that promoting equality, diversity and inclusion will improve public services for everyone. We want Cheshire East to be an area of equal opportunity where everyone has a fair chance and people from all backgrounds take part in community life. Our aim therefore is to make equality, diversity and inclusion an integral part of the way the Council works by putting it at the centre of everything we do.

Cheshire East is becoming an increasingly diverse borough due to its proximity and continually improving transport links to Manchester, Birmingham and London. It is also the home of choice for many migrant communities, towns in Cheshire East are home to varied communities from Eastern Europe, East Timor, Syria, India, Bangladesh and the Caribbean to name but a few and there are currently 108 languages spoken across the borough.

It is vital that the residents of Cheshire East see themselves reflected in the staff that provide their day to day services and to ensure that this happens we are committed to equality of opportunity for our entire workforce regardless of their protected characteristic including those who have hidden disabilities such as Asperger's syndrome, ADHD, Autism, Dyscalculia, Dyslexia and Dyspraxia as we work towards becoming a Disability Confident employer.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to outline our plans for how we propose to deliver our refreshed equality objectives and build on the work of our previous Equality and Diversity strategy of 2017- 2020.

This strategy lays out a new set of commitments to guide us through 2021 to 2025 and is done so in the context of our obligations under the Equality Act (2010) and our Public Sector Equality Duty.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010) requires us to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- 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.





Sex



Disability



Pregnancy and Maternity



Sexual Orientation



Gender Reassignment



Race



Age



Marriage and Civil Partnership



Religion or Belief

2 Our Vision for Cheshire East

2.1 Our Vision for the Council

Open

We will provide strong community leadership and work transparently with our residents, businesses and partners to deliver our ambition in Cheshire East

Fair

We aim to reduce inequalities, promote fairness and opportunity for all and support our most vulnerable residents

Green

We will lead our communities to protect and enhance our environment, tackle the climate emergency and drive sustainable development.

2.2 Our Vision for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our vision is to make Cheshire East a welcoming place, where equality, freedom, fairness and opportunity are open to all. We want everyone to feel valued, to celebrate diversity and to understand people's different needs and aspirations whether they are living, visiting or working here and we will celebrate backgrounds, experiences, beliefs and faiths, genders, sexual orientations, disabilities and ages.

- We will support the adoption of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia - "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness." If we are to achieve an open and fair society, we must tackle the issue of Islamophobia in our midst, and in wider society with serious commitment and action.
- We will reaffirm our support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism as a key pillar of the council's equality and diversity approach, which was originally adopted in 2018.
- We will celebrate the history, culture and language of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, as well as other Travelling communities including Showmen and Boaters. Through celebration, education and raising awareness we aim to tackle prejudices, challenge myths and to raise the voices of Gypsies and Travellers in wider society.
- We are committed to being a council that helps to provide equal life opportunities for all of our residents. We know that lots of things affect a person's ability to have a fulfilling and happy life. This includes well-paid sustainable employment, good physical and mental health and access to educational opportunities. Some people are able to access educational opportunities and well paid employment more easily than others whilst others face additional barriers and challenges. We will focus upon tackling these inequalities.
- We will work with our partners to reduce the gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived communities and improve educational outcomes and employment opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people in Cheshire East.

We will:

Include	Inspire	Integrate	Inform	Impact
Listen and involve all voices	Celebrate and promote our diversity and the positive opportunity it brings	Deliver and promote accessible services for all	Empower people to respectfully challenge discriminatory and poor behaviour	Support and deliver meaningful change



2.3 Our Values

Providing a great public service in an ever-changing world is something that we are passionate about in Cheshire East. Our promise of being an Open, Fairer, Greener Cheshire East is at the centre of this and can only be delivered upon by us all consistently living our five core values which we believe underpin our success.

Our values are embedded across the council and influence the behaviours of our staff as we work together internally and for the wider benefit of our residents through our front-line services.

Our Values

We are
flexible

We
innovate

We take
responsibility

We deliver
the **service**
that customers
need

We use
effective
teamwork

3 Our People and Place

Our borough is home to **380,800** residents and more than **175,000** households. It contains the major towns of Crewe, Macclesfield, Congleton and Wilmslow (with populations above 20,000). There are also a number of other significant centres of population (over 10,000) in Sandbach, Poynton, Nantwich, Middlewich, Knutsford and Alsager.

While most residents enjoy a good standard of living, there are pockets of deprivation, which impact on the quality of life and opportunities for some residents. Average life expectancy varies by around 12 years between the most deprived and most affluent areas, for both men and women.

Understanding our residents and communities is at the centre of everything we do and ultimately our decision making. We use a range of information to guide support and inform our policies and initiatives but recognise there is always more to do. The 2021 Census will give us an opportunity to better understand our residents and help us plan our services.

As our borough grows and changes, we want to be at the forefront of working together with all of our communities, to do this we need to be bolder, have a meaningful two-way conversation, and continue to strive to understand what will make the difference.

3.1 Our Borough Profile

Our Borough Profile provides a high-level overview of Cheshire East. It brings together data from multiple council and third-party sources into a single document. It contains information on demographics, learning, health and wellbeing, caring for children & adults, employment, households and crime.

Cheshire East Borough Profile

To understand the diversity of our borough a series of profiles have been prepared against each protected characteristic. These profiles have been built from existing data and aim to present a simple and easier to understand overview.

Cheshire East Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) or 'tartan rug' presents health and social care needs, ward-by-ward, across Cheshire East.

Cheshire East's Village of 100 people

The diagram on page 10 shows a pictorial representation of our Borough using a scenario of if there was a 100 people in a room what the breakdown would be by protected characteristic.





3 Our People and Place



Sex
51 Females
49 Males



Disability
8 Limited a lot
82 Not limited
10 Limited a little



Pregnancy and Maternity
8 Pregnant within a year



Sexual Orientation
2 Lesbian, Gay or Bi



Gender Reassignment
1 Trans



Race
1 Asian/ Asian British
2 Mixed Ethnicity
2 Other White Ethnicity
94 White
British/English/Welsh/
Scottish/Northern Irish/Irish



Age
18 aged 0-15
59 aged 16-64
23 aged 65+

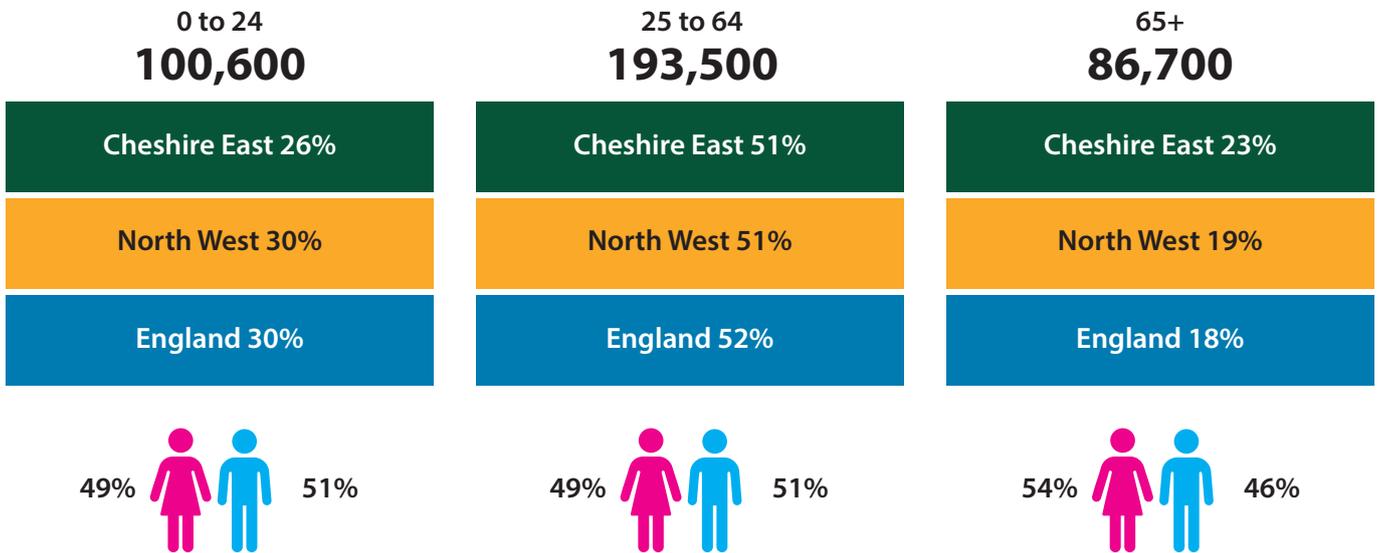


Marriage and Civil Partnership
52 Married



Religion or Belief
69 Christian
23 No religion
7 Not stated
1 Muslim

Sex and Age



The total population of Cheshire East is 380,800. Residents aged under 25 represent 26% of this total population, which is significantly lower than figures for both the North West (30%) and England (30%). There are more residents over the age of 65 in Cheshire East (23%) compared to both the North West (19%) and England (18%). There is little difference in gender between the age groups shown, with the exception of residents aged over 65 where the female population (54%) is notably higher than the male population (46%) partly reflecting differences in life expectancy between females and males.

Source: Mid-year population estimates 2018, Office for National Statistics



3 Our People and Place



Age

Proportion of residents under 25 years of age

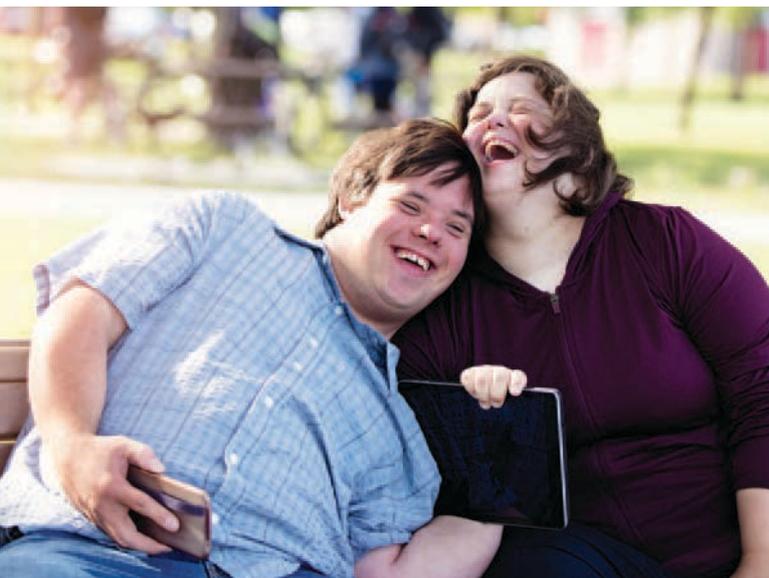
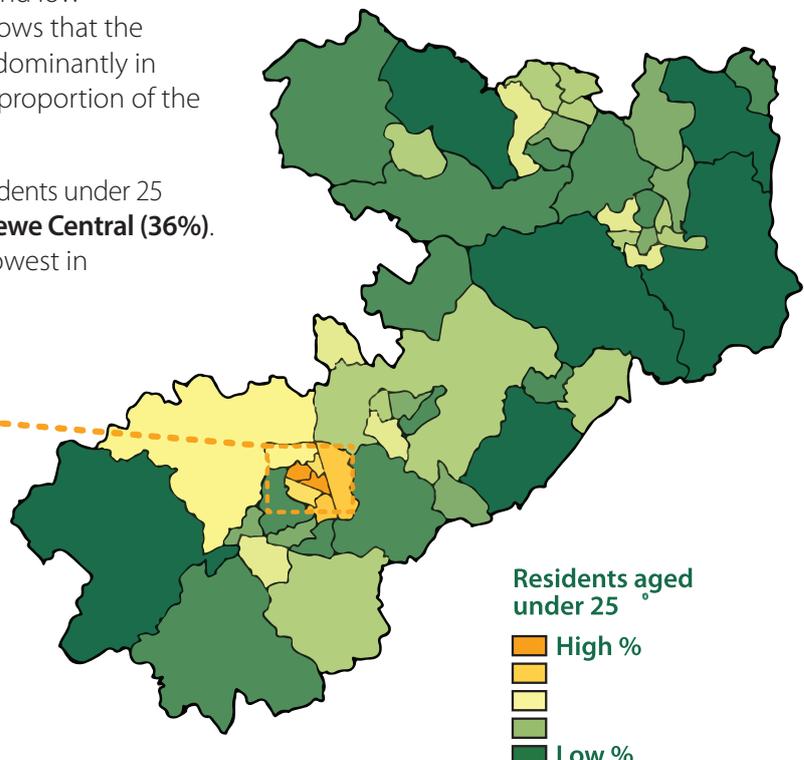
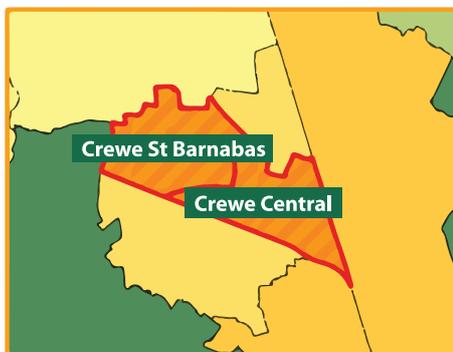
Source: Mid-year population estimates 2018

The proportion of residents under 25 in Cheshire East (26%) is lower than the figures for both the North West (30%) and England (30%).

The map to the right shows the population under 25 by ward, with high proportion wards being orange and low proportion wards being green. This map shows that the under 25 population in Cheshire East is predominantly in Crewe wards and represents a much lower proportion of the ward populations in rural areas.

The wards with the highest proportions of residents under 25 were **Crewe St Barnabas ward (36%)** and **Crewe Central (36%)**. The proportion of residents under 25 was lowest in **Mobberley (21%)** and **Gawsworth (21%)**.

Region	Proportion under 25
Cheshire East	26%
North West	30%
England	30%





Age

Proportion of residents aged 65 and over

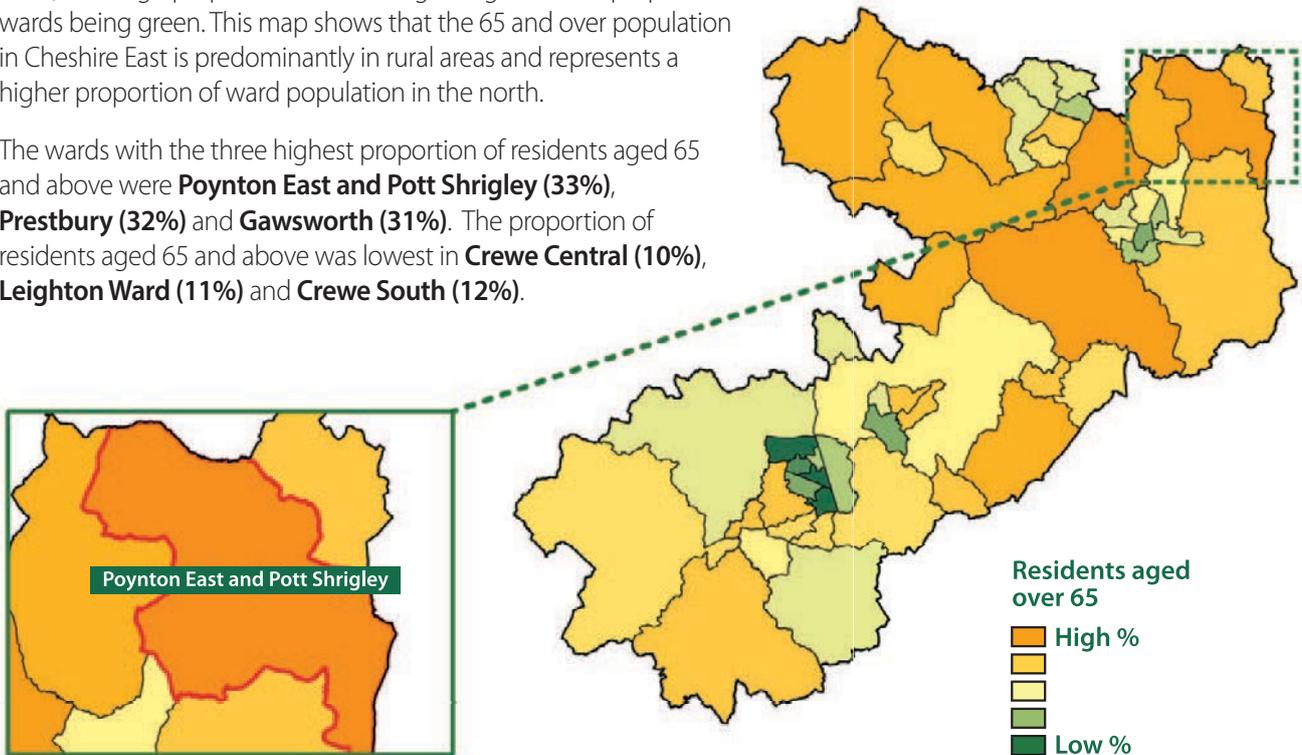
Source: Mid-year population estimates 2018

The proportion of residents aged 65 and over (23%) is significantly higher than the figures for both the North West (19%) and England (18%).

The map to the right shows the population aged 65 and over by ward, with high proportion wards being orange and low proportion wards being green. This map shows that the 65 and over population in Cheshire East is predominantly in rural areas and represents a higher proportion of ward population in the north.

The wards with the three highest proportion of residents aged 65 and above were **Poynton East and Pott Shrigley (33%)**, **Prestbury (32%)** and **Gawsworth (31%)**. The proportion of residents aged 65 and above was lowest in **Crewe Central (10%)**, **Leighton Ward (11%)** and **Crewe South (12%)**.

Region	Proportion aged 65+
Cheshire East	23%
North West	19%
England	18%



3 Our People and Place



Race

In the Equality Act, race can mean your colour, or your nationality (including your citizenship). It can also mean your ethnic or national origins, which may not be the same as your current nationality. Typically, Ethnicity is the most commonly used measure; however Ethnicity is not a single measure, but a composite measure of many different factors that make up an individual or community. Ethnicity is not fixed and is a transient state making it difficult to measure.

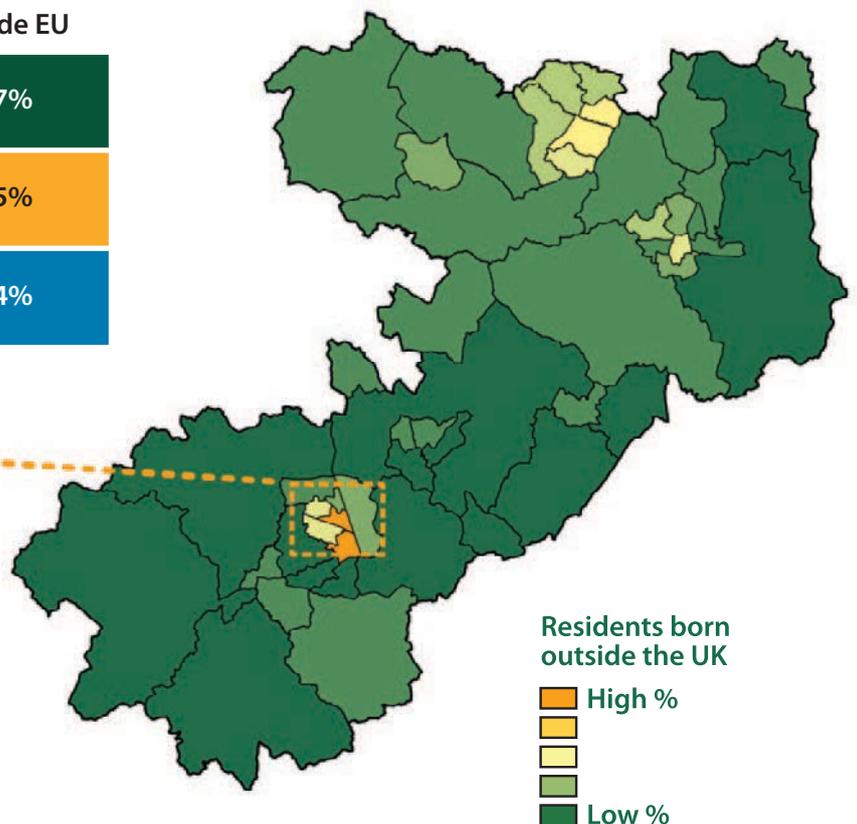
Region	Born outside UK
Cheshire East	5.5%
North West	8.2%
England	13.8%

Proportion of usual residents who are 'born outside the UK'

Source: 2011 Census

The proportion of the population in Cheshire East that were born outside the UK is 5.5%, significantly lower than the figure for both the North West (8.2%) and England overall (13.8%). The highest proportion of residents born outside the UK was in the Crewe Central ward (17%) followed by Crewe South (16%). Thirty two (62%) of Cheshire East's wards' proportion of residents born outside the UK less than five percent.

Region	Born in EU	Born outside EU
Cheshire East	2.8%	2.7%
North West	2.7%	5.5%
England	4.4%	9.4%





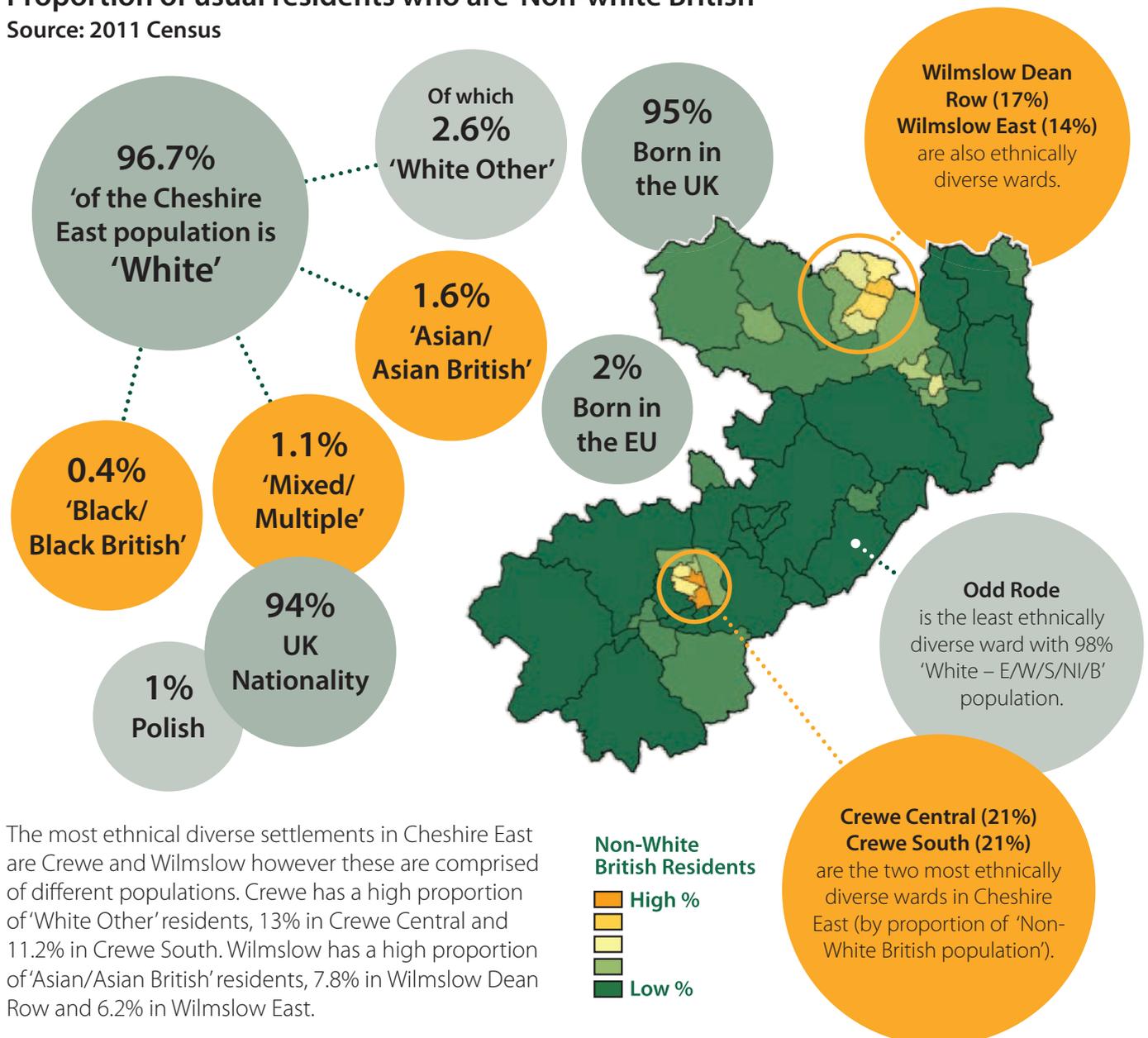
Race

Ethnicity refers to a category of people who identify with each other based on a shared commonality. These can include such factors as cultural heritage, language or ancestry for a few examples. Ethnicity is therefore not a single measure at its core but a composite measure of many different factors that make up an individual.

The most reliable source for data on ethnicity remains the 2011 Census. This is an 18 category self report measure with an 'any other' write in option. Cheshire East has a high proportion of 'White' residents at 96% of the population, higher than the national (86%) and regional average (90%). The figure for 'White: other' population is included above as this represents the largest minority group population in Cheshire East (2.6%) but is hidden due to the way 'White' is considered a single homogenous group when reported.

Proportion of usual residents who are 'Non-white British'

Source: 2011 Census



The most ethnical diverse settlements in Cheshire East are Crewe and Wilmslow however these are comprised of different populations. Crewe has a high proportion of 'White Other' residents, 13% in Crewe Central and 11.2% in Crewe South. Wilmslow has a high proportion of 'Asian/Asian British' residents, 7.8% in Wilmslow Dean Row and 6.2% in Wilmslow East.

3 Our People and Place



Disability

The term 'disability' is used to refer to a limiting long term illness, health problem or disability (LLTI) which limits a person's day-to-day activities. This is usually captured using the decennial Census.

The proportion of LLTI residents was 18%, equal to the national figure (18%) but slightly lower than the North West average (20%). Ten percent of residents stated their activities were limited a little and eight percent stated their activities were limited a lot.

The wards with the three highest proportion of LLTI residents were **Sandbach Heath & East (22.4%)**, **Macclesfield Hurdsfield (21.7%)** and **Macclesfield West & Ivy (21.6%)**. The proportion of residents with LLTI was lowest in **Leighton Ward (9.9%)** and **Wilmslow Dean Row (11.6%)**. As might be expected, the prevalence of LLTI broadly increases with an areas' average (median) age.

Proportion of usual residents with a 'limiting long term illness or disability'

Source: 2011 Census

Residents with a limiting long term illness or disability

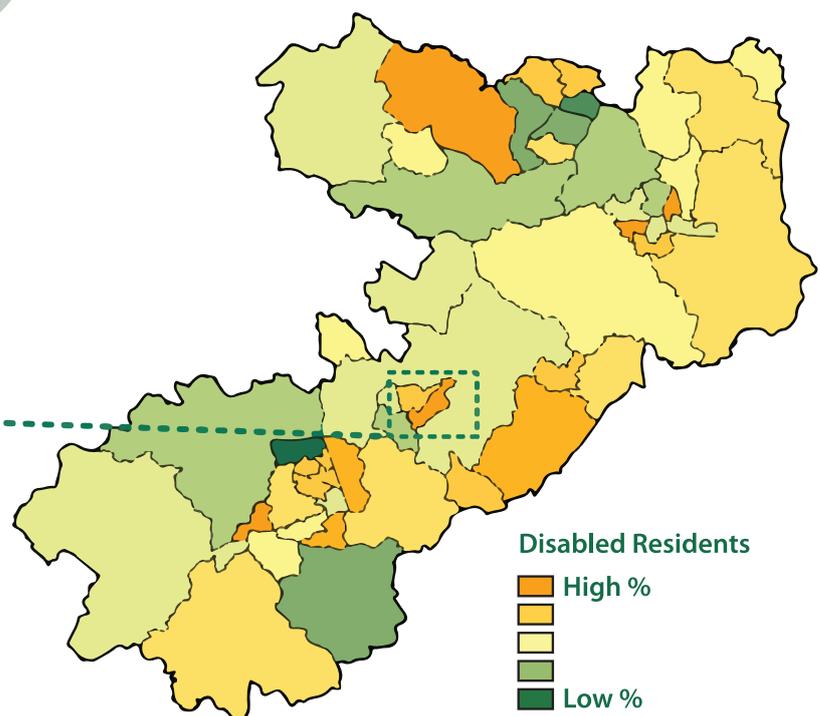
Region	Residents with a limiting long term illness or disability
Cheshire East	18%
North West	20%
England	18%

For every 100 residents

82 had no limiting illness or disability

8 were limited a lot

10 were limited a little





Religion

Region	Religious	Religion not stated	No Religion
Cheshire East	70.7%	6.7%	22.7%
North West	74.0%	6.2%	19.8%
England	68.1%	7.2%	24.7%

The majority of the Cheshire East population is religious (71%). Whilst this figure is lower than the figure for the North West (74%), it is higher than England overall (68%). Additionally, the proportion of the population that is not religious is lower in Cheshire East (23%) and the North West (20%) than in England overall (25%). These figures come from the 2011 Census and are the most reliable and accepted figures on religion.

Region	Christian	Muslim	Hindu	Buddhist	Jewish	Sikh	Other
Cheshire East	68.9%	0.7%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%
North West	67.3%	5.1%	0.5%	0.3%	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%
England	59.4%	5.0%	1.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.8%	0.4%

Considering the total population, the majority of Cheshire East residents are Christian (68.9%), which is marginally higher than the figure for the North West and significantly higher than the figure for England overall (59.4%). The second most practiced religion in Cheshire East is Islam (0.7%). However, while Islam is also the second most practiced religion in both the North West and England, the percentage of the population it represents is much higher in the North West (5%) and England overall (5.1%). These figures also come from the 2011 Census.



3 Our People and Place



Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella concept, which includes sexual identity, behaviour and attraction. There are no reliable local, Cheshire East estimates for the proportion of residents identifying as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (LGB). However, over the last five years national estimates of LGB have increased from 1.5% in 2012 to 2.0% in 2017 for the population aged 16 years and over.

Using these prevalence rates, **more than 6,000 Cheshire East residents aged 16 and over may be estimated as identifying as LGB.**

Nationally, Males (2.3%) were more likely to identify as LGB than females (1.8%) in 2017. Also people aged 16 to 24 years were most likely to identify as LGB in 2017 (4.2%).



Gender Reassignment

There is no accurate figure for how big the transgender community is. Research funded by National Government, carried out by Gender Identity Research and Education Society (GIRES) **estimated the trans population as approximately 0.6%-1% of the UK adult population, this would equate to 1,900 to more than 3,000 of Cheshire East adult residents.**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) reported that 100 people out of 10,000 (1%) answered yes to undergoing part of the process of changing from the sex you were described as at birth to the gender you identify with, or do you intend to.

Gender variant people present for treatment at any age. Nationally the median age is 42.



Pregnancy and Maternity

In 2017 there were 4,607 conceptions to women in Cheshire East.

This equates to conception rate of 75.5 per 1,000 or approximately 8% of women aged 15 to 44.



Marriage and Civil Partnership

At the time of the 2011 Census, **52% of adult residents were married and a further 0.2% were registered in a same-sex civil partnership.**

Since 2009, there have been a total of 167 civil partnerships. Most of these partnerships were formed before 2014 when same-sex marriages were introduced.

Sources:

Race: Ethnic Group Census 2011 (QS201EW)

Religion: Religion Census 2011 (KS209EW)

Age: Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age (2018)

Day to Day Activities: Long-term health problem or disability Census 2011 (QS303EW)

Pregnancy: Based on female population of child bearing age (15 - 44). Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age (2018). Conception Statistics, England and Wales, 2017

Marriage: Marital and civil partnership status Census 2011 (KS103EW)

Sex: Population estimates - local authority based by single year of age (2018)

Sexual Orientation: UK Prevalence Rate, no data for Cheshire East level only (2017)

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2017>)

Gender Reassignment: No data for Cheshire East, UK prevalence rate from Stonewall:

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/truth-about-trans#trans-people-britain>

3.2 Hate Crime

Hate crime is any criminal offence committed against a person or property that is motivated, or perceived to be motivated, by hostility or prejudice based upon the victim's:

- Race, colour, ethnic origin, nationality or national origins
- Religion or belief
- Gender or gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability
- Age

Everyone has a right to live without fear and harassment and if an offender targets a victim because of how they look their gender identity, sexuality or because of their beliefs, the law provides additional penalties.

Hate crimes are one of the highest priorities for Cheshire Constabulary. In partnership with external agencies, they support the needs of victims, their families and their communities to make them safer and prevent re-victimisation.

Hate crime can take many forms including:

- physical attacks - such as physical assault, damage to property, offensive graffiti, neighbour disputes and arson
- threat of attack - including offensive letters, abusive or obscene telephone calls, groups hanging around to intimidate and unfounded, malicious complaints
- verbal abuse or insults - offensive leaflets and posters, abusive gestures, dumping of rubbish outside homes or through letterboxes, and bullying at school or in the workplace

Hate crime can be reported Online, by ringing 101, by visiting a police station or by visiting a hate crime reporting centre.

In Cheshire East, there are 17 hate crime reporting centres, these are places that are open for advice from trained people if a person doesn't want to go to the police.

<https://www.cheshire.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/hco/hate-crime/how-to-report-hate-crime/>

2018/2019 Data

The total number of recorded hate crimes for the 12-month period ending March 2020 for Crewe and Macclesfield (Cheshire East Local Policing Units) was 636. In terms of specific 'offence' types the most frequent hate offence related to causing 'public fear alarm or distress'.

Hate crime reporting specific to a protected characteristic for Crewe and Macclesfield for the 12-month period ending March 2020 is as follows:

Year	Month	Racial	Religion or Belief	Disability	Sexual Orientation	Transgender
2019	Apr	32	4	6	8	2
2019	May	41	3	6	6	1
2019	Jun	38	1	4	10	4
2019	Jul	32	1	3	19	7
2019	Aug	23	1	5	9	1
2019	Sep	28	1	8	10	2
2019	Oct	46	2	7	8	4
2019	Nov	28	3	10	6	4
2019	Dec	36	1	5	5	1
2020	Jan	36	4	8	9	1
2020	Feb	28	1	9	10	2
2020	Mar	28	4	4	10	0
Total		396	26	75	110	29

3 Our People and Place

3.3 Our Workforce Profile

At Cheshire East Council we employ around 3,500 staff; who are our most important asset in delivering the outcomes we want to achieve for the people of Cheshire East.

The Council is committed to fairness and equality and in particular, promoting equality of opportunity for all and a culture that values differences. As an employer, we want to ensure our workforce is representative of the community it serves and that we attract and retain talented employees from a wide range of backgrounds and with diverse skills and experience. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is an important part of achieving this.

We are aware that our workforce profile data needs improving. We need to build confidence and trust with our staff so that they feel comfortable to share this information with us. In line with a lot of large organisations we continue to see a large number of records where data is not reported or disclosed (indicating that they 'prefer not to say') especially in relation to sexual orientation, gender reassignment and disability.

This needs to be taken into account when considering the following information. All data presented is correct as of September 2019.

3.3.1 Age

The age profile of the Council shows that nearly 74% of our workforce is over the age of 40, with only a small cohort of staff under the age of 20.

Age Group	Workforce %
Under 20	0.6%
20 – 29	9%
30 – 39	17.6%
40 – 49	25.7%
50 – 59	33.5%
60 – 69	13.5%
Over 70	1.1%

3.3.2. Sex

Around 75% of our staff are female and 25% are male. The majority of our part time staff are female meaning that the average gender pay gap for the council for 2019/20 is 14.5%, which means that female employees receive 14.5% less average pay than male employees.

3.3.3 Race

In terms of ethnicity, 86% of staff have reported as White British, with Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff accounting for just 3% of our workforce. The remaining 11% of staff have not reported their ethnicity.

3.3.4 Disability

We have limited information on the disability status of our workforce, with only 1% of staff reported as having a disability, and the remaining 99% either not reported or not disclosed.

3.3.5 Religion or belief

Of the staff that has reported their religious belief, 24% of staff reported that they are Christian, 8% state that they don't have a religion, and only 1% of our staff report as either Muslim, Sikh, Jewish, Buddhist and other. 61% of our staff have not reported their religion and 6% did not want to disclose this information.

3.3.6 Sexual Orientation

Similar to religious belief, 62% of staff have not recorded their sexual orientation with 4% preferring not to disclose. 33% of staff reported that they are heterosexual and 0.75% of staff reported that they identify as gay, lesbian or bi.

3.3.7 Gender Reassignment

Reported and recorded responses to this protected characteristic are not sufficient or reliable for consideration. Further work is needed to understand how we can encourage our workforce to feel that they would like to respond and to therefore improve our response rates.

3.3.8 Marriage & Civil Partnership

Just over half of our workforce are married or in a civil partnership (51%), with 15% of staff reporting that they are single, and 18% of staff not disclosing their status. The remaining 16% report a variety of relationship status such as; divorced, widowed, separated, partner or not married.

3.3.9 Pregnancy & Maternity

Our current HR workforce data system does not collect council wide pregnancy and maternity data; this is collected and understood at a service level, with team managers being responsible for ensuring that we meet our equality obligations under this protected characteristic. Our maternity policy (2019), outlines our commitment to ensuring that our staff are fully aware of their rights and our responsibilities for staff that are pregnant or have recently given birth. This is complemented by the Council's Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

3.4 Gender pay gap

The gender pay gap shows the difference between the **average** (mean) earnings of men and women. This is expressed as a percentage of men's earnings e.g. women earn 15% less than men. Used to its full potential, gender pay gap reporting is a valuable tool for assessing levels of equality in the workplace, female and male participation, and how effectively talent is being maximised.

Gender pay gap reporting legislation requires employers with 250 or more workers to publish specific data in relation their workforce.

These requirements include how large the pay gap is between male and female staff along with the distribution of male and female workers in the organisation.

It is important to note that the gender pay gap is different to equal pay. Equal pay relates to men and women receiving equal pay for work of equal value where a direct comparator must exist.



3.4.1 Gender pay gap in Cheshire East Council

For 2019/20 the average gender pay gap for the Council is 14.5% which means that female employees receive 14.5% less average pay than male employees.

The average pay gap increased by 0.8% between 2017/18 and 2018/19, producing similar figures to those reported for 2016/17. The average pay gap remained at 12.7% in 2018-19; this is the same as 2017/18, during which period it had reduced by 0.7% since 2016/17

These pay gaps do not indicate that male and female employees are being paid differently for equal work. The Council operates a robust grading structure based on a non-discriminatory job evaluation scheme to ensure that it complies with equality legislation and provides equal pay for work of equal value.

Reporting for the 2020/21 gender pay gap is not due to be published until October 2021 in line with reporting requirements.

4 Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Journey

In February 2017 our first Equality and Diversity strategy was launched to deliver the following Equality Objectives.

1. **Strengthen our knowledge and understanding of our communities**
2. **Listen, involve and respond to our communities effectively**
3. **Improve the diversity and skills of our workforce to ensure equality of representation at all levels across the organisation.**
4. **Demonstrate a positive culture with strong leadership and organisational commitment to excellence in improving equality outcomes, both within the council and amongst partners.**
5. **Ensure that the Council's services are responsive to different needs and treat service users with dignity and respect.**

To deliver the strategy an **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board** was established which is chaired by the Executive Director of People and has senior representation from across the Council. We appointed our first Equality, Diversity and Inclusion officer who, alongside 40 staff Equality Champions, has raised the profile of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion amongst our residents and staff.



4.1 Our Achievements 2017-2020



As part of the **Armed Forces Covenant**, a pledge that together we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives, we achieved the MoD Employers Recognition Scheme.



Recruited and trained 50 Mental Health First Aiders to support our staff.



In 2018 we signed the Time To Change pledge

to commit to changing the way mental health is perceived and talked about within the council and wider borough. In 2020 we held a 'no email' day to encourage staff to talk to each other.



In 2018 we held our first International Women's Day event in Macclesfield. A successful event which is now an annual fixture on our EDI calendar. The events have included presentations from influential and motivational women from within the council, ward members and within the community to talk about their experiences of gender balance in the workplace. Each year this event is oversubscribed with 100+ delegates.



Each year Cheshire East Council holds an event to remember the Holocaust of World War II

and various other mass genocides that have happened since. Hosted by the Cheshire East mayor, we are proud to welcome Holocaust survivors to the event to share their experience.



Every two years we hold a multi-faith conference organised by our Communities team.

This brings together our faith organisations from across the borough, working together to identify and agree the opportunities to help our more vulnerable residents. The 2019 event focussed on tackling social isolation with over 140 people attending.



In July 2019 we worked with the charity Mandela8 to provide primary and secondary schools in the borough with lesson resources and copies of Nelson Mandela's 'Long Walk to Freedom'.

A total of 15 schools and 6,679 pupils were involved. This supported work that the schools were already undertaking about respect and inclusivity. We also celebrated Nelson Mandela day within the council, encouraging staff to give 67 minutes of their time to do something good for someone.



In 2019 we held our first International Men's Day event at Nantwich Football Club. Guest speakers included senior officers from Cheshire East Fire and Rescue, Cheshire Constabulary, Body Positive and Cheshire East Council Public Health. The session was focussed on male role models and men's health. The event was attended by 50 staff (90% male) and is now an annual event in our EDI calendar.



Over the last three years we have flown the rainbow flag at our corporate buildings to celebrate and acknowledge LGBT+ history month. This is in addition to wider social media campaigns and internal staff events.



Each October we celebrate Black History Month with a social media campaign and internal learning and awareness raising.



A Council led borough wide, community LGBT+ Pride event is held each year.

This has grown in momentum since our first event in 2018 and our ambition is that it will continue to grow and eventually achieve its own charitable status. We have also supported the independent local Pride organisations in Congleton, Macclesfield and Nantwich.

4 Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Journey

4.1.1 Staff Network Groups



As part of our commitment to a positive workplace culture, we actively encourage our staff to connect with each other through peer networks and staff events. There are many now active and well attended across the council.

We are looking to expand the range of groups that take place with a specific focus on equality and inclusion and for 2021/22 we will be supporting the launch of a new Men's staff network group to compliment our existing groups.

- **Equality Champions Forum** – The Equality Champion role is voluntary for staff and supports the work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion officer. We have 40 active Equality Champions and the forum provides a chance for them to meet and discuss what is happening in EDI within the council and the wider community. During each forum we take the opportunity to refresh skills and understanding across all protected characteristics.

Training has been delivered on the following subjects:

- Hate crime
- Gypsy, Roma and Travellers
- History of Pride and LGBT+ issues
- Being a Cancer Champion
- Mental Health Awareness
- **Mental Health First Aiders Forum** – This forum allows our Mental Health First Aiders protected time to network and support each other whilst discussing any emerging themes or concerns that they are aware of across the council.
- **LGBT+ & Allies Group** – The LGBT+ group, VibranCE, meets at all our corporate buildings across the council. This is an open network group for our LGBT+ staff and their Allies, and provides peer support to each other and anybody else within the council who needs a friendly ear, help or advice on LGBT+ issues.
- **Menopause Network Group** – After a successful Menopause Awareness Day event in 2019 we now run a Menopause Group where staff can meet up informally to support each other and share their own experiences.
- **Disability Network Group** – Our Differently Abled group was set up in October 2020 to provide peer support for Disabled and Neurodivergent people and carers working across the authority
- **BAME Network Group** – The BAME network group meets informally to provide peer support and regularly meets with senior leaders to share their experiences of living and working in Cheshire East.

Holocaust Memorial Day
January



Holocaust Memorial Day 2021
Be the light in the darkness

International Women's Day
March



International Men's Day
November





4.2 Equality and Diversity Events

Each month we celebrate and promote a range of awareness days and events, and host four larger annual borough wide events for our staff and residents.

A full month in November celebrating children's rights and participation, including takeover of key roles in the Council.



4 Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Journey

4.3 Working with and for our communities

The Council delivers and commissions a wide range of support services for our communities. The People Directorate lead on commissioning, community cohesion and integration, and are committed to:

- Providing organisations, public services, voluntary and faith sector an opportunity to have a voice to help shape service delivery.
- Working together to identify gaps in knowledge on the diverse communities in Cheshire East.
- Enhancing partnerships to create strong, integrated communities, as well as calling out practices and behaviours which impede integration.

In the last 18 months, there have been many achievements, a few examples being:

- **38 Connected Communities Centres**, which provide a single point of contact in a community, enabling people to access local services and connect with local people.
- Successful in a bid to support community cohesion in Crewe and were **granted £122,961 via the Government Controlling Migration Fund (CMF)**. These funds have been used to support improved health and wellbeing for migrant families. There are

three Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) who speak a total of seven languages, who work with schools and migrant families to improve wellbeing.

- **My Life, My Choice** a Strategy for people with Learning Disabilities in Cheshire East has been produced which sets out the vision, ambitions, and commissioning intentions for people with learning disabilities of all ages living in Cheshire East. The strategy was co-produced with individuals who have a learning disability and their parents and carers, and organisations that support people with a learning disability.
- A **Mental Health Floating Support Service** has been established in Cheshire East. The service has a preventative focus and works to empower people to remain independent, improve health and wellbeing and use strength-based approaches to build resilience and reduce the requirements for long term intensive support services. The service also helps people to improve their own social relationships and connections and prevent social isolation and loneliness
- We continue to support our **Gypsy and Traveller community** through our contribution to the Cheshire and Warrington Traveller Team (CWTT). The team are hosted by Cheshire West and Chester Council but work across the Cheshire sub-region in partnership with the four local authorities and Cheshire police.

Community support



The aims of the CWTT are to:

- a. Deal speedily and effectively with unauthorised encampments in line with agreed protocols;
- b. Improve services to travelling communities, the settled communities and other public bodies, by acting as a single point of contact with a consistent approach, balancing the rights and responsibilities of all;
- c. Manage local authority owned sites, both permanent and transit, applying a consistent approach to all;
- d. Facilitate Travellers' to access appropriate services; health, education, social care and accommodation, ensuring appropriate support, if necessary, is in place;
- e. Make savings through economies of scale with better outcomes for all in a more effective and efficient manner;
- f. Reduce friction between Travellers and the settled communities in order to bring forward new sites and increase community cohesion;
- g. Offer training to all agencies in particular around new policy development and legal implications;
- h. Access funding to support new developments;
- i. Support the strategic work of the Parties around Gypsy and Traveller accommodation and local plan agendas.

4.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

An equality impact assessment (EqIA) is an analysis of a proposed organisational policy, or a change to an existing one, which assesses whether the policy has a disparate impact on persons with a protected characteristic.

Assessing the impact on equality of proposed changes to policies, procedures and practices is not just something the law requires, it is a positive opportunity to help us make good decisions and evidence how we have reached these decisions, saving money and time.

We use EqIAs to identify and remove barriers in services which might stop people knowing about the service, using it and getting the best from it. This is part of our legal duty under the Equality Act.

In 2021 we will be refreshing our EqIA process and will be providing guidance and training for all staff that are required to undertake an assessment.

We are committed to publishing all EqIA's on our council website, providing transparency for residents and interested parties to access and gain a wider understanding of what we have and have not considered as part of our decision-making journey.

Pictured from left to right:

- Gypsy and Traveller community support
- My Life, My Choice Strategy for people with Learning Disabilities



5 Our Equality Objectives 2021-2025

1 Include

Listen and involve all voices.

2 Inspire

Celebrate and promote our diversity and the positive opportunity it brings.

3 Integrate

Deliver and promote accessible services for all.

4 Inform

Empower people to respectfully challenge discriminatory and poor behaviour.

5 Impact

Support and deliver meaningful change

In delivering our Equality Objectives we have identified a number of aims and supporting actions for delivery. These will be continually reviewed and supported by an annual work programme, and are not in any way the only things we will be doing but serve as worked examples in the short term. We will continue to engage over the lifetime of the strategy to ensure we are focussing on the right things.

Our equality objectives were developed in collaboration with our equality champions, council staff and members and a public consultation exercise. They have been developed to be clear and simple to understand.



5.1 Include

Listen and involve all voices

We will:

Promote inclusive opportunities for two-way conversations.

- Develop our network of equality champions both internal and external to the council, as advocates and promoters of equality and inclusion.
- Commit to sharing and presenting information in appropriate and accessible formats.
- Work collaboratively with voluntary, community and faith organisations to share key messages and opportunities for engagement.

We will:

Seek to listen in order to understand.

- Expand our opportunities and methods of engaging with residents, partners and stakeholders to ensure we are proactive and inclusive.
- Know our audience and communities through robust and up to date stakeholder mapping and management.
- Use and consider information including data and intelligence to inform our thinking and action.



5.2 Inspire

Celebrate and promote our diversity and the positive opportunity it brings

We will:

Promote local events and activities that seek to reduce isolation, raise awareness and encourage participation.

- Develop a communications and engagement plan, to identify key events and activities that the Council will promote and support each year.
- Support and promote community action and cooperation across our partnerships to improve cohesion.
- Support our staff through peer networks and events.

We will:

Proactively take action to ensure our workforce is diverse and representative of the communities we serve.

- Apply fair recruitment and selection procedures.
- Make reasonable adjustments to ensure the work environment and culture meets the needs of all our staff.
- Monitor and review employment practice and our policies and procedures that support them.



5.3 Integrate

Deliver and promote accessible services for all

We will:

Ensure that we consider, communicate and consult with all people regardless of their protected characteristics when developing or changing our services.

- Undertake Equality Impact Assessments across all development and change activities including services we buy and commission.
- Provide training and guidance to ensure equality impacts are fully understood.
- Publish all equality impact assessments to provide transparency, assurance and information on our decision making.

We will:

Ensure that all services we commission meet their obligations under the Equality Act.

- Engage and work with our local communities to co-produce and co-design our local service offer and the design and delivery of major projects such as town centre regeneration schemes and improvements to local neighbourhoods.
- Require our suppliers to provide appropriate and timely equality monitoring information.
- Ensure that any venue we use or event we promote does not discriminate on the basis of an individual's protected characteristic.

5 Our Equality Objectives 2021-2025



5.4 Inform

Empower people to respectfully challenge discriminatory and poor behaviour

We will:

Take a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, taking positive and immediate action where possible.

- Continue to reinforce and promote the Council's values and behaviours to promote a positive and inclusive workplace culture.
- Provide access to clear and robust HR policies and procedures to support officers and managers when challenging poor or unacceptable behaviour.

We will:

Work in partnership to keep people safe and connected

- Contribute and collaborate with partners and stakeholders to tackle hate crime and promote hate crime reporting.
- Take targeted action to educate, inform and challenge the stereotypes faced by our marginalised communities (e.g. migrants, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers).
- Promote and signpost to networks that provide advice and support to anyone impacted or experiencing discriminatory behaviour or action.



5.5 Impact

Support and deliver meaningful change

We will:

Be open and transparent in publishing the progress of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives

- Publish an annual report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Cheshire East in the public domain.
- Publish the Gender Pay Gap report in the public domain.
- Ensure that evaluations for each event are available for publication.
- Commit to sharing and presenting information in appropriate and accessible formats.

6 Next steps and Conclusion



Next steps

Our refreshed equality objectives are at the starting point of our next chapter. They will be supported by an annual work programme which is monitored by the EDI Board.

An annual report of progress will be prepared and published on the Council's website.

Delivery of the activities within the work programme aspires and aims to bring people along on the journey that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion at Cheshire East is taking.

It is also the role and responsibility of everyone at the Council to deliver our vision for equality and inclusion.

Conclusion

We recognise that the diversity of Cheshire East's communities is expanding and that this should be welcomed and valued. There will be many opportunities and challenges over the next four years as we work with residents to improve their lives and reduce the incidences of discrimination and harassment.

Our refreshed equality objectives will allow us to build on the achievements of the previous three years and continually improve.

Our five keywords, **include, inspire, integrate, inform** and **impact** will underpin everything that we do, allowing us to achieve the highest standards in service delivery, decision making and employment practice.

This will make Cheshire East a great place to work, live and visit where people feel safe, valued and supported, wherever they go and whoever they come into contact with.

If you would like to contact us about any of the information contained in this strategy please email: EqualityandInclusion@cheshireeast.gov.uk

Feedback

Be involved in decision making in Cheshire East...

If you would like to be involved in consultations undertaken by Cheshire East Council, you can do so by registering for updates on the Consultation pages or joining the Digital Influence Panel. Please visit [cheshireeast.gov.uk/consultations](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/consultations)

If you would like to view the results of previous consultations undertaken by Cheshire East Council, please visit [cheshireeast.gov.uk/consultations](https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/consultations)



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