

Kent County Council

Draft - Annual Equality and Diversity Report for April 2021 to March 2022

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Useful information

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local Authorities have a legal obligation to publish an annual report as part of fulfilling the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). This report provides detail of how Kent County Council (KCC) has complied with equality legislation between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, including progress and activities contributing to KCC's equality objectives as set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.
- 1.2 The report sets out progress against our objectives using the Equality and Human Rights Commission's six domains, or 'areas of life' that are important to people and their quality of life:
 - [Work](#)
 - [Education](#)
 - [Living Standards](#)
 - [Health](#)
 - [Justice and personal security](#)
 - [Participation](#)

2. Equality Policy and Local Context

Policy

- 2.1 In 2016, the Kent County Council published the Equality and Human Rights Policy and Objectives 2016-2020. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact across the county, this policy and its objectives were extended until the end of the 2021-22 financial year. A summary of the policy is provided below.
- 2.2 The Council recognises the diverse needs of our community and is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in employment, commissioning and service delivery.
- 2.3 We value diversity and believe it is essential to provide services which work well for all residents and staff. The services KCC designs and delivers, on its own or with partners, should focus on maximising independence for people, families and communities. We will treat people with dignity and respect and help people to be safe and socially included. We will support and enable people to make informed choices, so that they will have control over their lives. We are committed to working with all statutory partners, businesses and the voluntary sector to ensure the best possible outcomes for those who live in, work in and visit Kent.
- 2.4 We will challenge discrimination and encourage respect, understanding and dignity for everyone living, working and visiting Kent. This will be achieved through our influence in the community, strategic planning, and commissioning and policy development in employment and through service delivery.

2.5 As a public sector organisation, we follow the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act 2010, to protect individuals from discrimination on the basis of their protected characteristics. The characteristics are:

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

Kent's profile as a County

2.6 With a resident population of just under 1.6 million, Kent (excluding Medway) has the largest population of all the English counties. The following information is taken from the 2011 Census.¹

- 93.7% of all Kent residents are of White ethnic origin – this includes those who are White British as well as other identities such as Irish, Eastern European origin etc. Kent also has Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller populations greater than the national average.
- The 2011 Census recorded that 6.3% of Kent residents are classified as Black or Minority Ethnic (BME). This proportion is lower than the national average for England, which is 14.6%.
- People living in urban areas make up 73% of the Kent population but only occupy 21% of the total land area in Kent.
- The mid-year population estimates note that 51% of the total population of Kent identify as female and 49% as male.
- Significantly in terms of future challenges, Kent has an aging population with the number of +65-year-olds forecast to increase by 45% between 2019 and 2039.
- Kent has a greater population of children and young people aged 5-19 years old and people aged 45+ years old than the England average.
- There is no single quantifiable measure of the number of disabled people in Kent (or the UK) because identifying as disabled relies on individuals' self-perception, but it is estimated that 17.6% of Kent (excluding Medway) residents have a disability.
- 1,554 civil partnerships were formed between 2006 and 2020 in Kent. This dataset only relates to civil partnerships that are formed within Kent. It does not necessarily provide a true reflection of the sexual identity of people living in Kent.

Further information on social, demographic and economic aspects of Kent can be found on our website, by clicking on the [Kent Facts and Figures page](#).

¹At the time of writing, the 2021 Census information is not yet available. It is expected to be published in stages from October 2022 – December 2022.

Kent County Council's Workforce Profile

- 2.7 KCC recognises that the diversity of its workforce is one of its greatest strengths. It is committed to promoting equality and inclusivity and combating unfair treatment by providing a safe and accessible working environment with fair access to learning and development opportunities. The Council encourages and supports all staff in fulfilling their potential.
- 2.8 The section below contains details on how the Council's workforce is made up, focusing on headline statistics, as of March 2022.

Table 1: KCC Workforce statistics

	As at March 2022
Current total number of FTE (non-schools)	7,593.50
Current total FTE on grades KR6 or below (non-schools staff earning salaries up to £22,072)	2,426.17
% Staff who are female	79.3% (51%)*
% Of staff who are Black and Minority Ethnic	8.4% (6.6%)*
% Of staff who have declared a disability	4.5%
% Of staff who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual	2.9% (2.2%)+
% Of staff who are Trans-sexual	0.5%
% Of KCC's leadership group who are women	59.7%
Average age of staff	45.5
% Of staff aged under 25 or below	7.5%
% Of staff aged over 50	40.5%
% Of staff aged over 65	4.3%

*The figures in brackets are the percentage of Kent's population from those groups, as identified in the 2011 Census. There are likely to be significant changes in some metrics – we are awaiting the 2021 Census results, expected in Autumn 2022.

+The figure in brackets is the percentage of people in the South East identifying themselves as LGB, as identified in the National Office of Statistics data set published on **6 March 2020**.

- 2.9 It is acknowledged that the gap between the percentage of individuals declaring a disability (4.5%) and the census figure (17.6%) does appear wide. This gap is influenced by the fact that the census data covers the total of Kent's population, some of whom are not economically active or in employment and includes a larger proportion of older people than the Council employs, who are more susceptible to developing a health condition that would be classified as a disability. This figure is broadly similar to other comparable employers. Overall, a greater percentage of disabled people in Kent find work compared to the national figure and KCC continues to support this as an employer and provider of services to the residents of Kent.
- 2.10 Since March 2021, there has been an increase in the percentage of staff who have declared a disability (by 1.2%), those staff who are Black and Minority Ethnic (by 0.5%), and staff who are Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual (by 0.5%). The percentage of staff who are female across the workforce decreased slightly (by 0.3%) but women in the leadership group increased (by 1.5%).

- 2.11 The average age of staff increased slightly although there has been a slight decrease in the percentage of staff over the age of 50 (1.1%) and 65 (0.1%). In contrast, the percentage increase of staff who are under the age of 25 has increased (by 1.2%).

3. Equality Objectives 2016-2020(21)

- 3.1 Each directorate within KCC was asked to provide equality information to demonstrate how they contributed to KCC's equality objectives, as set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity policy, between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. Their progress towards the objectives and other relevant activities are provided under the Equality and Human Rights Commission's six domains of Work, Education, Living Standards, Health, Justice & Personal Security, and Participation.

4. WORK

KCC's Workforce Equality Objectives

- 4.1 2021-22 continued to be challenging for workforce wellbeing as we recovered from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. While our workforce profile saw some indicators that were less positive than the previous year, there have been some improvements to the way in which our staff experience the organisation. A lot of activity has taken place over the past year to deliver against our workforce equality objectives, with greater emphasis on what inclusion means at KCC. Further work is required to continue to build on the good work to date.

4.2 Recruit, retain and develop a workforce that reflects the communities we serve and ensure our people feel valued and respected

- 4.3 KCC aims to increase diversity through an inclusive approach to recruitment and development and to ensure a working environment which is based on mutual respect, consistency, and equity at all levels of the organisation. The following initiatives have contributed to this aim:

Recruitment

- 4.4 Options for positive action in recruitment have been explored this year; this has included research on the effectiveness of job boards targeting under-represented groups. To attract a more diverse candidate pool, new standard wording for job adverts was introduced to promote KCC's approach to diversity and flexible working. Work is continuing to develop and launch a new recruitment website with content demonstrating that KCC is an inclusive employer. Also, the use of values-based interviewing has been advanced and promoted. This is to help managers recruit people with the right values and behaviours which we wish to see demonstrated throughout the organisation.

- 4.5 KCC continues to sustain Level 2 of the Government's Disability Confident standard, which recognises businesses that are actively inclusive in their recruitment and retention practices.
- 4.6 Our recruitment profile improved in terms of those who declared themselves to have a disability. In 2021-22, of those applicants to posts, there were 6.77% who were disabled. 7.71% of those people shortlisted were disabled, and 6.64% of those recruited were disabled. The turnover rate of staff who are disabled in the last 12 months increased to 14.1% in 2021-22 after a decrease in 2020-21 due to COVID-19. This was consistent with the overall organisation turnover rate at 14%, which saw a return to pre-pandemic levels.
- 4.7 Similarly, the recruitment profile for those who are Black and Minority Ethnic improved in 2021-22, with an increase in the proportion of applicants who are Black and Minority Ethnic (24.55%), those people shortlisted (18.73%) and appointed (12.85%). The turnover rate for 2021-22 for Black and Minority Ethnic staff increased to 20.1% after a reduction to 12.6% during 2020-21 and is slightly higher than pre-pandemic levels (19.3% in 2019-20). The recruitment data suggests that we are attracting Black and Minority Ethnic staff to join us, which is over and above the profile of existing staff (8.4%) but the turnover figure is higher than we would expect to see. Work is underway through the Race Action Plan to drive this figure down to be comparable with white staff (14%), with a particular focus on creating an inclusive culture and to become an anti-racist organisation, as the increased turnover figure is one indicator that points to this being an issue we need to address.
- 4.8 Both the percentage of women and hires aged under 25 increased over the last year. The percentage of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual hires increased, and the number of transgender hires increased from 1 to 8 in 2021-22 with a lower percentage choosing not to declare.

Apprenticeship levy

- 4.9 The apprenticeship levy was introduced in April 2017 and since that time KCC has been able to spend these funds (over £2m per year) on Apprenticeship training for both new and existing staff of all ages in KCC. Since the introduction of the levy, 936 KCC employees have accessed apprenticeship training, with 370 employees currently on programmes supporting professional development, talent management, or enabling young people to begin their careers with KCC. 25% of those currently on apprenticeship programmes are aged 25 or under, and 32% of those employees who have accessed apprenticeship training since the introduction of the levy were aged 25 or under. 22% of the total number of training starts are male and 78% female.

4.10 KCC is currently enabling access to over 47 apprenticeship training programmes across a wide variety of disciplines and professional areas. In 2021-22 there were 177 apprenticeship training starts. This demonstrates both an increase in the number of programmes available, as well as the number of apprenticeship training starts on the previous year. Their profile was as follows:

- Age: 6% were aged 16-18, 16% aged 19-24, and 78% aged 25+
- Gender distribution: 25% male, 75% female,
- Ethnicity: 13% were Black or Minority Ethnic, 83% white, and 4% undeclared
- Disability: 6% had a disability, 89% had none, 5% were undeclared
- Sexual orientation: 3% identified as bisexual, 1% gay, 2% lesbian, 85% heterosexual and 9% undeclared.

Kent Graduate Programme

4.11 Since the launch of the redesigned Kent Graduate Programme in 2019, 19 graduates were recruited in professional areas such as Project Management, Business Improvement, Finance, Regulatory Compliance and Procurement, four of these during 2020-21.

Work Experience

4.12 The ongoing impact of the pandemic on the way staff work has had a further impact on the ability of The Education People's (TEP) Skills and Employability Service to offer and manage KCC's work experience opportunities. Research has continued in partnership between Workforce Development in HR and TEP's team to develop a virtual work experience programme and restore a face-to-face work experience offer.

Training

4.13 Equality, diversity and inclusion continue to be embedded in the development, delivery and monitoring of corporate training programmes to ensure learning resources are suitable for and accessible to all. In 2021-22, analysis of the diversity profile of those undertaking learning and development showed that both the offer and access to training is inclusive to all staff groups within KCC.

4.14 From 1 April 2021, 1130 Equality and Diversity e-learning courses had been completed (which covered Equality and Diversity in Recruitment and Selection, Introduction to Equality and Diversity, Care Certificate – Standard 4: Equality and Diversity and Introduction to Equality Impact Assessment). This training supports the embedding of diversity and inclusion into management practice and raising awareness on the responsibilities of both managers and staff in the workplace.

4.15 The Kent Academy decided to review its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training offer; this will be taken forward in the next financial year by a task and finish group to consider if the current offer is sufficient or if there are any additional requirements. An event was held during Black History month 2021 aimed at Social Care staff in Adult's and Children's services and looked at

developing an understanding of how different cultural environments impact the experience of people in care as well as social care staff.

Workforce planning

- 4.16 The new workforce planning tool, which was developed to help managers and the organisation understand current and predicted future workforce requirements has been further refined and the revised version is being tested across the Authority. Work is continuing on looking at a more technical solution to the analysis of the data. One of the many benefits of this approach will be a more diverse talent pipeline at all levels of the organisation.

Gender Pay Gap

- 4.17 KCC has now posted the fifth Gender Pay Gap report which covers the period up to March 2021. The gender pay gap for KCC is significantly below the national average. This is positive for KCC, the figures being 12.2% and 15.5% respectively. KCC's gender pay gap is explained by the higher proportion of men in the upper middle and upper pay quartiles, although there is a higher proportion of women in all quartiles. The proportion of women to men across KCC is currently 79% and 21% respectively. Within the lower half of the organisation the balance is further in favour of women, however the proportion changes by around 10% within the upper quartile. There is therefore still a significantly greater proportion of women in each of the pay quartiles.
- 4.18 KCC is very clear that gender should not limit or define choices in or outside of the workplace, as such, we seek to identify and address barriers as a way of making practical and positive changes in the context of a supportive management culture. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided a lasting impact on the way we work. Whilst direct services such as personal care provision - predominantly undertaken by women - cannot be delivered remotely, most other roles have some degree of flexibility which can be capitalised on. How we use buildings, equipment and technology continues to evolve. This has implications for the way people work and gives us the opportunity to help people reach a healthy balance between their personal and work commitments including career development and progression in a way which assists both men and women while narrowing the pay gap in the process.

Workforce Race Equality Standards

- 4.19 KCC is one of 18 Local Authorities piloting the 'Workforce Race Equality Standards (WRES) in Social Care Programme', which is led by the Department of Health and Social Care with the objective of developing an evidence-based framework to take action to improve race equality across the social care workforce. Since the launch in April 2021, the Adult Social Care & Health directorate (ASCH) has been collecting and analysing data to identify key areas to develop, including recruitment and retention, progression, and learning & development opportunities. An [action plan](#) was also produced, which will be delivered over 2022-23, and will inform if and how a WRES can be implemented in social care across Children's and Adults' services.

4.20 We will continue to be an inclusive employer

4.21 Our new five-year People Strategy 2022-27 was developed during 2021-22, which is underpinned by a set of organisation design principles that includes a recognition that our staff have different needs, expectations and aspirations for work, and values and cultural ambitions. It outlines our vision to support people to deliver to the best of their ability, celebrating the skills and talents of a diverse workforce. It also outlines our aspiration to continue to be an inclusive employer where difference is valued and our people have a sense of belonging and trust in the organisation, enabling our staff to be their true selves and bring everything they offer to the work they do. The delivery of the new strategy will build on the good work achieved to date to become more inclusive as follows:

Policy framework

4.22 Our employment policies and practices continue to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are fit for purpose and diversity and inclusion is embedded. Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are completed for our employment policies to ensure they do not discriminate against the Council's current and future employees and promote inclusion. Menopause guidance for managers was introduced this year, and an initial review undertaken of our approach to fertility and obesity at work.

Reasonable Adjustments

4.23 The Council continues to collect and analyse data on the adjustments made to ways of working and the equipment employees use in order to understand the number of staff receiving support, the types of support required across our workforce, and any emerging trends. The process of how data is collated is being reviewed as part of our approach to continuous improvement. During 2021, the number of reasonable adjustments in place decreased by 8.6%, mainly due to fewer adjustments for Leave/Absence, which may be explained by the change in working arrangements following the pandemic. The number of disability passports in use rose by 22%, and the proportion of disabled staff requiring adjustments increased by 1% from the previous year.

Digital Accessibility for Staff

4.24 Having fully accessible ICT systems is essential for staff being able to fulfil their roles and undertake learning. The Digital Accessibility Team has continued to support the accessibility of ICT systems for staff, completing 53 manual accessibility audits in the period, widening its accessibility training offer, and updating ICT tools and services with new accessibility features.

Total Contribution Pay

4.25 For the previous reporting period of 2020-21, the same percentage increase for all staff was given as part of a general pay award to recognise the impact caused by COVID-19. We reverted to the established Total Contribution Pay process for 2021-22. Headline figures show progress, as there are higher numbers of part time staff receiving higher ratings. However, there is a similar increase in full time staff. A greater percentage of female than male staff

received higher ratings. Staff declaring a disability have continued to see higher ratings over the past 4 years, now at its highest level of 38%.

- 4.26 The revised reporting approach for 2021-22 has been implemented, where more equality data was available to the Corporate Management Team (CMT) as part of the moderation process and therefore before formal sign off. This is a positive change and demonstrates the continued effort to promote the equality agenda for part-time workers and treating people equally, independent of protected characteristics.

Leadership and Management in KCC

- 4.27 The COVID-19 pandemic and Black Lives Matter movement highlighted significant societal inequalities in 2020 which have galvanised KCC to accelerate its ambitions of being recognised as an inclusive organisation. CMT has held 'safe space' conversations with our staff group the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum, resulting in greater engagement and robust actions leading to improved traction in our equality and inclusive practice.

Race Equality Matters

- 4.28 KCC made an organisational commitment to become anti-racist by signing up to Race Equality Matters. This aims to raise awareness of race equality in the workplace and achieve lasting culture change through a number of initiatives. An action plan has been developed to deliver against these commitments and there have been visible leadership statements embracing anti-racist commitments. During Race Equality week, staff were encouraged to use 'My Name is' in their email signatures to spell names phonetically and avoid mispronunciation. Planning is also underway to launch a reverse mentoring scheme, introduce a mandatory inclusion question for use in recruitment, and promoting a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination in the workplace.
- 4.29 'Building Inclusive Management' workshops took place to build the confidence and capability across our management population in both having the conversations and understanding the accountability mechanisms in place to raise Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) issues. After a slow start in take up, these courses became fully booked, with further workshops planned to pick up additional demand. The evaluation shows increased confidence and understanding in holding and raising conversations around ED&I and that managers valued the opportunity to build their capability in this area.

Communications and engagement

- 4.30 Through both our leadership messaging and operational messages, we have clearly set out our organisational commitment to inclusion, our expectations, and what that looks like in the way we act and make decisions. This is being delivered through:

- Our ongoing '6Cs of Inclusion'² campaign
- Promotion of equality requirements in the way we plan and deliver services
- Promoting our manager expectations and available learning to support managing diversity
- Asking staff to input or update their Equality data via Self-Service to support our internal decision-making

4.31 Work continued this year to build awareness and understanding through shared staff experiences, different perspectives, and moments of celebration with a clear focus on why sharing those moments and milestones is relevant and important for all colleagues as members of KCC staff. As part of the activity, Staff Group Chairs were engaged in the communications planning of celebratory moments for 2021-22 as well as the forward planning of engagement communications for 2022-23. A month-long focus on Inclusion brought together Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing with communications that included a spotlight on mental health and Domestic Abuse, supported by leadership messaging. In this period, work to identify core KNet content for British Sign Language (BSL) translation began, with all future video content to have BSL translation as standard.

Disability Inclusion

4.32 Improving the experience of disabled staff has also been a priority for the organisation over the last year. Activity has focused on creating an environment where staff feel comfortable to declare a disability and ensuring they get the appropriate support from KCC and increasing workforce representation through attracting and retaining more disabled people. We continue to engage with our disability staff group, Level Playing Field, to inform areas for improvement.

Wellbeing

4.33 KCC continues to provide a holistic wellbeing offer to support the physical, mental and social wellbeing of staff and have seen good levels of engagement particularly with the mental wellbeing support and development available such as personal resilience and managing mental wellbeing. Given the workforce profile, menopause in the workplace has been a priority with new menopause guidance for managers and a series of awareness sessions held. Campaigns ran in May and October with a focus on wellbeing to coincide with celebration events such as World Mental Health day and Mental Health awareness week, as part of our organisational commitment to mental health.

Measuring Inclusion

4.34 We continue to measure how inclusive we are as an organisation through our new inclusivity indicator, developed in the previous year, which measures

² The 6 Cs of Inclusion model was adopted to embed inclusion into every aspect of delivering our work: Coherence, Commitment, Consciousness, Courage, Connectedness, and Co-Production.

three aspects of inclusion: psychological safety³, trust in leadership, and incidents, and is informed through a number of metrics collected by HR, including staff survey responses, turnover, sickness and recruitment data. This supports organisational understanding on what we mean by inclusion and how staff experience the organisation, providing a robust evidence base with which to drive further improvements. When we look at the themes from the 2021 staff survey, as detailed in [section 4.38](#), KCC is doing well on feelings of inclusion and fair treatment overall but the way in which some of our minority groups experience the organisation is not always as positive, and this is a consistent picture when we look at these alongside some of the other inclusivity indicator metrics. For example, fewer higher performance ratings were awarded to disabled (33.7%) and Black or Minority Ethnic staff (26.5%) than their colleagues (42.6%). However, the level of diversity at senior leadership level has seen an improvement and there has been an overall reduction in reported incidents of bullying and harassment at work.

4.35 We will continue to listen and engage with employees

Staff Groups

- 4.36 KCC's staff groups play a leading role in providing support and development opportunities for their members as well as advising on policy and practice. Our staff groups currently include: Level Playing Field (disabled staff and carers), Black and Minority Ethnic Forum, Rainbow (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender staff), Aspire (staff aged 30 and under) and Mental Health Support Network, which formed in the past year.
- 4.37 Staff groups have supported awareness raising activities by contributing to blogs and events during Black History month, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, and Pride Month. For Mental Health awareness week, staff groups hosted a joint event which was open to all KCC staff to attend. There has also been increasing interest in the formation of new staff groups, such as a Single Parent group and Menopause café.

Staff Survey

- 4.38 The Staff Survey returned to its full set of questions for Autumn 2021, with additional questions looking at staff awareness of the staff group offer.
- 4.39 Overall, Inclusion and Fair Treatment was a high scoring area (83% positive). However, analysis indicated that there are some differences between the way certain groups are experiencing the organisation, including:
- Staff identifying as female were less positive about learning and development opportunities but more positive about their plans for the future with KCC than staff identifying as male.
 - Disabled staff were significantly less positive than non-disabled staff on seven out of the fourteen themes of the survey.

³ Psychological safety refers to staff feeling a sense of belonging and acceptance, where they feel able to influence decision making at all levels where possible. This is being measured via staff survey questions.

- Black and Minority Ethnic staff were less positive about pay and benefits and their plans for the future with KCC.
- Staff who identified as Carers were less positive about pay and benefits and resources and workload but responded more positively than in previous iterations of the survey across many of the other themes.

4.40 In response to these findings, a number of actions are being progressed. A campaign to support development and career progression is being developed. Briefing sessions have been held with our Level Playing Field staff group to deep dive the findings for them as a group. There is a continuing focus through whole-council communications on the importance of regular, personalised 1:1 conversations to support staff as individuals, alongside promotion of our expectations around managing diversity and the support available, for example, reasonable adjustments.

Equality Quality Circles

4.41 Equality Quality Circles offer an opportunity for the ASCH workforce to get involved in making change, with staff who volunteered meeting to discuss what they feel the critical issues are and agree projects to take forward. Each project group is guided by a Project Officer to facilitate the project from start to finish. In 2021-22 there were project groups looking at internal facing issues such as making the language of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion a part of staff's every day, and raising awareness of staff with caring responsibilities.

4.42 The Equality Duty will inform all services' efforts to maximise businesses' potential

4.43 Equality analysis undertaken by **the Business Investment Team** has identified the collection of service users' protected characteristic information as an area for improvement. As a result, the team focused on improving this data collection in the past year, working to develop and test a voluntary equality and diversity survey for business owners and directors as part of the Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF) application process. The survey will be launched in July 2022, collecting data that will be utilised to identify underrepresentation among applicants and any potential unconscious bias in the marketing and application process. Alongside this, efforts have been made to improve marketing and engagement with underrepresented groups amongst existing service users. The service has conducted a review of their existing marketing materials ahead of the development of the new KMBF Small Business Boost website.

4.44 The **C-Care and South East Export Development (SEED)** projects provide business support through vouchers for Technology Resilience and Green Recovery and sector-focused virtual trade missions for exports to international markets. Over the past year, these projects have both enhanced their equality data collection with the introduction of voluntary diversity questions at the point of application. Looking ahead, this data will continue to be collected and analysed, with a report on the findings expected in the next period.

4.45 Making sure that organisations delivering services on our behalf, or from whom we buy goods and services do so in line with our Equality and Human Rights policy

- 4.46 In April 2021, the first three Community Based Wellbeing contracts commenced service delivery, providing activities and support in the community to keep people living well and as independently for as long as possible. These contracts have already delivered a number of social value outcomes, with 35% of the people employed with the organisations delivering the Specialist Sensory Wellbeing Support having a disability.
- 4.47 METRO, an equality and diversity charity, is commissioned by KCC to deliver the GET IT condom programme in Kent. Alongside service delivery, METRO completes outreach work with communities where there is local need, including underserved ethnic minority groups to promote a culture of equity of access to sexual health services. METRO also conducts sexual health training sessions with professionals to increase awareness around gender identity.
- 4.48 The provider of the Young Carers contract has also taken a focus on the delivery of social value outcomes. In fundraising and collecting donations, they have been able to enhance the support provided to young carers and their families with gifts and resources, as well as providing additional respite activities which have included a gym membership and horse-riding lessons for individuals.

4.49 Using equality analysis when procuring and commissioning

- 4.50 In order to ensure equalities considerations are embedded within procurement and commissioning, ASCH has introduced a number of innovations to involve service users and people with lived experience in these processes. This has included members of the **Adult Social Care People's Panel**⁴, people with learning disabilities and parents or carers of adults with disabilities joining KCC Commissioning panels to evaluate high profile contracts and re-procurements. Experts by experience have reviewed and scored tender documents ahead of the Community Based Wellbeing, People's Voice and Princess Christian Farm contracts being awarded.

Residential and Nursing Care Market Positioning Statement

- 4.51 Ahead of the development of the Market Positioning Statement⁵, a survey was co-designed by people with lived experience of residential or nursing care due to disability or age, road-tested by members of the **People's Panel** and then widely distributed. Feedback was received from 138 people and demonstrated that those with a social care need generally wanted to stay in their own homes

⁴ The People's Panel is made up of people with lived experience who are well-connected to their communities, including people who both receive and provide (unpaid) care due to disability or age.

⁵ Market Positioning Statements summarise the supply and demand for a particular service in an area and the plans of commissioners for the service going forward. They are thereby able to influence how providers shape and plan their provision and delivery.

as far as possible and build in care and support around them. This feedback was reflected in the Market Positioning Statement which sets out the future aspirations for how residential and nursing care homes could meet the future needs of people in Kent.

- 4.52 Ensure more young people are able to access progression pathways post 16 including an offer of an apprenticeship with regard to disability, race, or sex**
- 4.53 The **Specialist Employment Service** worked with **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) service** commissioners within KCC to look at the 'Preparing for Adulthood' Standards and shape local provision; this was then reflected on the KELSI web page, broadcasting the improved, bespoke KCC SEND career pathways offer. They also supported employers to look at apprenticeships suitable for SEND young people from entry level qualification to Level 7.
- 4.54 The Skills and Employability team and the Specialist Employment Service have commenced a post-16 review to inform the planning of the service and ensure that young people have access to relevant post-16 pathways. Early analysis of this work has identified SEND students as a key group who will need further support. Once complete, a strategic Board and Independent Chair will be recruited by KCC to develop and monitor an implementation plan with support from The Education People (TEP)'s Post-16 Lead. In addition, an internal review of how the Skills and Employability Service engage with the SEND team has commenced. Analysis is still in progress, with the intention of the findings being shared with SEND in the next academic year to identify better working practices that will improve service delivery to young people and their parents or carers.
- 4.55 The service has worked closely with the British Association of Supported Employment to develop papers looking at career pathways for SEND students. As a result of this work, the service has amended its apprenticeship requirements for SEND students who will no longer have to gain Level 2 English and Maths, needing only to evidence that they are working towards Level 2. The Service is also currently working with the Department for Education to look at quality standards for Supported Internships.

EDUCATION

5. Narrowing the achievement gaps with regards to disability, race, or sex

Primary School Improvement

- 5.1 The team has used additional intervention funding to compliment core delivery, focusing on the risks and vulnerability of pupil groups following extended periods of lockdown.⁶ Additional visits were held at schools that obtained a Green score from Ofsted in order to support the closing of the recovery curriculum, identify achievement gaps and advise on research-based strategies to address these. Bespoke support was provided to target schools by specialist Early Years literacy and maths advisers, utilising the NCTEM⁷ catch-up and closing the gap resources. Subject leaders also received coaching and support in monitoring equality of provision for pupils taught in class and those receiving additional interventions, identifying and assessing achievement gaps and leading the “keep up not catch up” agenda for their subjects.
- 5.2 Additionally, Primary School Improvement advisers have gathered and analysed achievement data linked to the protected characteristics, which will be used to inform advice and support provided by TEP’s Equality Diversity and Inclusion Team (EDIT). Analysis confirmed that the gap for disadvantaged pupils is widening and has resulted in the development of a targeted Pupil Premium support package to be offered by the team to schools with the widest achievement gaps. The EDIT team amended its training and support offer in response to this, with a full EDIT training plan to be developed.

Secondary School Improvement

- 5.3 The Secondary School Improvement team utilised the Education Endowment Foundation’s ‘Promising Projects’ programme to enable secondary schools to access project resources.⁸ In addition, visits were conducted by the School Improvement team and Specialist Advisors to support school leaders in evaluating and developing their curriculum and co-curricular activities with regards to equality and diversity.

5.4 Increase learning and employment opportunities for those aged 16-25 with regard to disability, race or sex

- 5.5 In order to improve the support offered to young people with SEND, KCC’s **Skills and Employability Team** has collaborated with TEP’s Specialist

⁶ These vulnerable pupil groups have been identified in Ofsted and government data to include children in receipt of free school meals and/or Pupil Premium (funding distributed to schools for children from low-income families), SEND children, and children with English as an Additional Language (EAL).

⁷ The National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics

⁸ The available resources are linked to evidence-based research, with an adviser allocation to each school to support staff in the implementation of projects and ensure all groups of children and young people are considered in the planning and approach.

Employment Service, allowing new employers that are recruited to the scheme the opportunity to work with both services and make referrals where appropriate. This collaboration has also contributed to the development of a new role in the Skills and Employability Team to improve engagement with employers with regard to disabled young people and to identify students with SEND or an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) to reduce levels of those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) amongst this cohort. This post has enabled the team to successfully engage over 75 new employers, including the delivery company DPD, and facilitate Disability Confident training with 20 new employers. In addition, the **Specialist Employment Service**⁹ has provided a supported employment service to over 700 eligible KCC clients, working with ASCH, the autism team, schools, colleges and training providers where required. Schools, colleges and training providers were offered training on Supported Internships and the Support Employment Model to support the transition of SEND students to employment. Additionally, the team worked with every mainstream school to offer the 'Embedding Supported Employment' programme through Headteachers, governors, careers leads, teachers and parents.

5.6 The service also ran an International Women's Week event with Longfield Academy called #Girlscando. This included a series of virtual talks from aspirational speakers and panel discussions raising awareness of the types of jobs available and challenging the gendered stereotypes associated with certain industries, which were available to all schools through Kent and Medway Careers Enterprise Network.

5.7 In the period, the service also identified Gypsy, Roma and Traveller young people as an overrepresented group amongst those who are NEET. In order to improve the support provided to this group of young people, the service has engaged with the community and the Traveller Movement¹⁰ to arrange meetings with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller site managers to establish an ongoing dialogue.

5.8 **Increasing access to early years services for 2-year-old offer of free provision regardless of disability, race or sex**

5.9 In Kent, the **Free for 2 scheme** delivers central government's provision of free childcare for eligible two-year olds. The bulk of families eligible for this service fall under the economic criteria, but there is also an entitlement for vulnerable children, SEND children and Zambrano carers¹¹. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a lasting impact on the take-up of this scheme, but it is starting to recover and reach pre-pandemic levels, as indicated in the table below.

⁹ The Specialist Employment Service supports vulnerable learner groups, adults with a disability or disadvantage, and SEND students to find paid employment opportunities.

¹⁰ The Traveller Movement is a charity, established to advocate for Romany Gypsy, Irish Traveller and Roma inequality, exclusion, discrimination and rights.

¹¹ Zambrano carers are migrant parents of British citizen children, whose residence in the UK is required in order to enable a child or dependant adult who is British to live in the UK.

Table 2: Free for 2 Take-up

Term & Year	Take-up	Comment vs. pre pandemic levels
Summer Term 2021	59%	Below pre-pandemic levels
Autumn Term 2021	69%	At pre-pandemic levels
Spring Term 2022	65%	At pre-pandemic levels

- 5.10 This was achieved through significant engagement activity. In addition to weekly posts on the KCC Free Childcare Facebook page, the service undertook a parent/carer survey to understand their knowledge and experience of accessing the Free for 2 scheme. 75% of the respondents were White British. This is significantly lower than the figure of 93.7% White British in our county profile, potentially indicating a good response rate to the survey from diverse communities in Kent. Some of the key findings that will inform future service delivery included that 4% of respondents reported difficulty in finding a childcare setting that met their family's cultural needs, which could include dietary or religious needs. Work also commenced with KCC Communications to produce a 'Talking Book' with subtitles in a range of languages¹² to promote the Free for 2 scheme to families. This is forecast to be delivered in the following financial year.
- 5.11 Data on the percentage take-up of all eligible children with SEND needs is not available. However, as an indication of the number of SEND children accessing and benefitting from this service, in the summer term of 2021, 82 children eligible via Disability Living Allowance took up a place and seven children confirmed to have SEND needs took up a place.
- 5.12 Driving down permanent exclusions to zero for primary age children with regard to sex and race**
- 5.13 Due to the relatively low number of exclusions of primary age children taking place, it is difficult to identify any trends of note with regard to sex or race. Analysis of the available data has highlighted that there is a more prominent link between permanent exclusions and SEND, as seven (44%) of the primary age children suspended or permanently excluded in the period had EHCPs when excluded. Initial investigation has suggested that in most cases this resulted from an inability for the child's needs to be met in a mainstream school environment and that exclusion occurred whilst the child was on the EHCP pathway.¹³ Approaches to address this trend will continue to be explored going forward.

¹² Whilst the audio will be in English, the written subtitles will be available in Nepali, Yoruba, Punjabi, Romanian and Polish in order to reflect the needs of potential service users in Dartford and Gravesham in particular, as well as the languages most frequently spoken across the county as per the last year's school census.

¹³ Where a child requires additional support that goes beyond what a school, college, or nursery can typically deliver from their own budgets or staffing then they may need an EHCP, which details their needs and the specific provision that will be provided by a specific school/placement to meet these.

- 5.14 Every effort is made to promote multi-agency working and ensure all interventions and resources have been utilised to avoid permanent exclusions being made. Additionally, as a preventative measure, Education Engagement Officers run inclusion projects in schools looking at the importance of school attendance, education and the links to friendships, ambitions and future careers, some of which have been focused toward Gypsy, Roma and Traveller or Minority Ethnic pupil groups. The East Kent team is also running a media project which will focus on self-esteem, emotional wellbeing, and perceptions of stereotypical images of adults or young people which may negatively influence school aged children.
- 5.15 Information from the Attendance and Exclusion team is channelled to EDIT and used to shape training and support offered to schools. This attendance information was utilised in the case of Parkside Community Primary School, where bespoke training was offered to engage Afghan refugee pupils and their families following admission of around 30 refugee pupils, and Broadwater Down Primary School where a full audit of the training provision was conducted in light of increased EAL (those who speak English as an Additional Language) and Ukrainian refugee admissions.

5.16 Improved life chances and outcomes for children and young people through service developments and transformation

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Team (EDIT)

- 5.17 TEP's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Team (EDIT) provides schools, advisers and the Educational Improvement Division (EID) with advice, consultations and support regarding issues or concerns related to equality, diversity and inclusion. This plays a role in improving the life and learning opportunities of pupils who sit in protected characteristic groups, providing mechanisms and advice on how schools can target and eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and advance equality of opportunity and good relations between pupil groups.
- 5.18 In line with national trends, the team has continued to receive higher than average referrals from schools relating to prejudicial language and behaviour, mostly centred on racism and homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic bullying. This is a not unexpected legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic, with children and young people having been isolated at home, unable to mix with others from different backgrounds and sometimes exposed to prejudicial views from home or through the media.
- 5.19 In this context, the service continued to provide two virtual hubs for teachers of pupils with English as an Additional Language and for schools with Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils. Individual support was provided to Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils who were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to training to school staff on culture and supporting individuals in class. Where referrals were received, individual school-based support was provided, particularly focusing on 'recognising, recording, reporting, addressing and preventing racist incidents' and 'Promoting the Inclusion of Gender Diverse and Transgender Pupils'. Training was also delivered to the

Fair Access Team on how to support gender diverse, trans and non-binary young people. EDIT has also provided advice and guidance to parents and carers, particularly to support Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils moving into Kent, and parent enquires regarding transgender pupils.

- 5.20 With the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Kent, the team produced guidance and resources for classes with Ukrainian refugees, and for KCC officers with advice on refugees in hotels and use of the Department for Education's Innovation funding. They also contributed their expertise through participation in the Canterbury Ukraine hub and sharing information with the Ukraine Strategic Steering Group.
- 5.21 The **Sport & Physical Activity Service**, delivered by the Growth, Environment & Transport directorate (GET) has conducted a survey of secondary school pupils across Kent, targeting those from the least active groups¹⁴, to understand any barriers to entry and assist in the co-creation of sports activities. Following the survey, a 5-point checklist has been implemented to deliver positive activity experiences for less active young people. Those most affected by inequalities and with the greatest sedentary behaviour have also been the focus of the Kent School Games over 2021-22. The **'Six MEs'** were developed to underpin delivery across local school game organisers and national Active Partnership networks, with the approach successfully increasing participation from underrepresented groups and the least active pupil groups in School Games opportunities.
- 5.22 The **Schools Accessibility Initiative (SAI)** undertook ten projects in the 2021-22 financial year. These projects involve making adaptations to existing school sites to improve their accessibility for disabled pupils and have included adaptations to classrooms, care rooms, disabled toilets and entrances; installation of ramps and railings; and levelling works.
- 5.23 The quality and range of services are improved through increasing engagement with service users and carers**
- 5.24 Parents were included in the procurement of the provider for the **Together with Parents**¹⁵ service, contributing to the design of the specification as well as the evaluation of tenders and the final provider selection. Similarly, young people have been directly involved in the evolution of the **Young Carers service**¹⁶, feeding into the specification redesign and participating in the evaluation of tenders, with plans in place for them to visit the provider later this year to look at 'live' provision as part of the annual deep dive undertaken

¹⁴ Over 2000 responses were received from young people attending secondary schools with high percentages of free school meals, young people from culturally diverse communities, and/or those with special educational needs. 52% responses were from female students, 20% from students from culturally diverse communities, 11% from students with a disability, and 25% from students in receipt of Free School Meals

¹⁵ 'Together with Parents' is a service co-designed with parents to support those families awaiting a diagnosis on the neurodevelopmental pathway.

¹⁶ The Young Carers service assesses the needs of young people with a caring responsibility, providing them with appropriate respite.

for this provision. Procurement is underway for the provision of therapeutic support for children and young people living in Sanctuary housing. This procurement exercise has been shaped by a commissioned study from Rising Sun (a provider of domestic abuse support services), looking at the kind of support young people who are victims of domestic abuse want, and will continue to embrace participation from young people and their families.

- 5.25 In February 2022, significant problems caused by changes to the school transport system for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) required immediate and intense action to resolve the problems for the children who were left without transport after February half-term. This resulted in oversight by the Scrutiny Committee while the Council worked to resolve the problems and provide the children affected with appropriate transport offers, and also the commissioning of an Internal Audit review to identify lessons learned. This review took place during the first quarter of 2022-23. One of the most pertinent issues identified was a failure in communication with parents and carers regarding changes to the service and delays to the tender process. Commitments were made to ensure this engagement was improved going forward, with parent and carer views to be incorporated into future SEND service recommissioning activities.

LIVING STANDARDS

6. Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults from harm with regard to sex, disability, race and age

Safeguarding Children

- 6.1 The Education Safeguarding Team have delivered training courses to over 1,700 school and early years staff and provided e-learning to a further 800, with an additional 4,500 school and early years staff provided with bespoke training. The team delivered 18 National Minimum Standards visits to Kent's three residential special schools and picked up over 3,500 education safeguarding enquiries from schools and early years providers. The training offer follows the government guidance, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education', which identifies key vulnerable groups such as those at risk of 'honour'-based abuse, FGM, radicalisation, or mental health issues. The team also offers safeguarding reviews to schools, which provide a deeper dive into the safeguarding of these vulnerable groups, engaging with students in one-day visits about their experiences in school in relation to diversity.
- 6.2 The Education Safeguarding Team has also developed the peer-on-peer abuse toolkit for the Kent Safeguarding Children Multi-Agency Partnership (KSCMP) to support schools in identifying and responding to issues of child-on-child sexual abuse and assaults. In recognition of the fact that domestic abuse happens across families, the KSCMP has developed a further training

offer across a number of specific abuse vulnerabilities related to the protected characteristics.¹⁷

Safeguarding Adults

- 6.3 KCC safeguards adults with vulnerabilities arising from their protected characteristics in day-to-day service delivery of Section 42 enquiries¹⁸. In the past year, the service has focused on better awareness of protected characteristics through training and events, and promoted understanding of individuals' communication needs which are now included in the redesigned KCC Safeguarding Concern form.
- 6.4 KCC Practice Development Officers provided a range of training and support sessions for ASCH staff, colleagues from KCC and partners. These included the following:
- 'Communication – More than talking' - Along with looking at broader communication approaches and legal requirements of providing accessible information, the session explored concepts such as cultural competence, intersectionality and unconscious bias.
 - An event was held to consider how to discuss and record spirituality with people as part of adult social care assessments and support planning¹⁹.
 - 'Working With Marginalised Communities - Asylum Seekers and People From Gypsy Roma Traveller Community'. This was a well-received multi-agency event which focused on the needs of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller people and individuals seeking asylum. Subsequently, partners contacted the Gypsy and Traveller Site Liaison Manager to support the community more closely. The event also provided valuable legal and other knowledge which enabled the team to successfully advocate for the social care needs of one of their residents.
 - 'Domestic Abuse – A Kent Perspective'. Held during Safeguarding Awareness week, speakers across Kent shared information on the impact of domestic abuse on older people and people identifying as men, as well as providing an update on the Domestic Abuse Act and Kent Domestic Abuse Strategy.
- 6.5 In addition to this, the Learners' Forum ran three sessions on discussing racial trauma, with colleagues sharing their own experiences. This resulted in amendments to the Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQS) programme to ensure inclusion and diversity are embraced through all sessions.

¹⁷ This includes training on Equality & Diversity, Gypsy and Traveller Cultural Awareness, and also regarding Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Honour Based Violence and forced marriage, Hate Crime, and beliefs in Witchcraft.

¹⁸ Section 42 enquiries are undertaken by the local authority, under Section 42 of the Care Act 2014 where there are indications of abuse or neglect in relation to an adult with care and support needs that render them unable to protect themselves.

¹⁹ This was based on a research piece entitled, 'A comparison of mental health professionals' attitudes towards spirituality' by Catriona Brodie.

6.6 Gather and analyse knowledge and information to get a clear understanding of the protected characteristics of our service users

- 6.7 Teams across ASCH have a good understanding of the make-up of the communities they serve, including the protected characteristics and other factors that generate additional vulnerabilities and needs, for example, mental health, disability, rural isolation, autism or minority ethnic background. The ASCH Performance Team produced and published the ASCH Demographics & Protected Characteristics PowerBI report in May 21²⁰. This has been used to make equalities assessments and develop the terminology used to collect protected characteristic data and will continue to evolve going forward, incorporating the 2021 Census information once available. The implementation of the Community Based Wellbeing contracts has enabled further protected characteristic data to be collected through the providers, and is providing an understanding of the contracts' impact, identifying that over 9,453 individuals were supported across these contracts in the first year of service delivery.
- 6.8 The Adult Social Care and Health Domestic Abuse Group²¹ has contributed to the improvement in domestic abuse data collection to the extent that it will now be possible to produce a report of domestic abuse related data in relation to Safeguarding Enquiries, including protected characteristic information and form of abuse. This development will enable the identification of trends and areas for investigation so that more targeted support and services can be provided.

The Helping Hands Scheme and Financial Hardship Programme

- 6.9 The Financial Hardship Programme targets support to residents and communities who are experiencing, or at risk of, financial hardship. EqIAs are completed at the planning stage of projects in order to identify any risks or opportunities associated with equalities and in some instances targeted projects are completed to mitigate impact on specific protected characteristic groups. As part of the Healthy Start Scheme, a decision was made to pilot provision of vitamins at an earlier stage of pregnancy in areas of Dartford and Gravesham. This location was identified due to the higher proportion of BME residents in these areas who have historically been underrepresented in means-tested welfare benefit schemes. This decision was also supported by NHS evidence which found that whilst all women are typically vitamin deficient during pregnancy, this deficiency is more prevalent amongst BME mothers due to the level of melanin in their skin. The data gathered from this project will support and inform Public Health strategy in Kent going forward. The Digital Inclusion and Capabilities Workstream has officers nominated for each of the protected characteristics to look at how people with the protected characteristic will be impacted by projects, and where targeted work may be required.

²⁰ This report shows information on those previously or currently receiving support with Adult Social Care.

²¹ The Group brings together professionals from across the Council to strengthen data and information sharing, to feed into the development of service provision and to strengthen links across safeguarding provision.

6.10 Ensure that when we use ICT it is fully accessible for learning, working and getting into services

- 6.11 Whilst face-to-face engagement has now resumed (which is important for people who are not able to engage digitally), the digital approaches developed during the COVID-19 pandemic have also continued. This has enabled people to continue to engage and shape what Adult Social Care and partners do, particularly those who might struggle with face-to-face participation due to caring responsibilities, disabilities or due to post-Covid concerns.
- 6.12 ASCH has involved people with lived experience (including older people, people with disabilities that impact on the way they use technology, people with learning disabilities and autistic people) in the co-production and testing of technology such as [‘Kent Connect to Support’](#) and the [AskSARA online advice tool](#) ahead of launch. This has in part been facilitated by Digital Innovation Challenge workshops, attended by 45 people with lived experience or from advocate organisations and charities.

HEALTH

7. The number of Black and Minority Ethnic people and women in the mental health system is reduced

- 7.1 KCC and Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB) jointly commission a Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Service known as Live Well Kent and Medway. The service has continued to tailor provision to the needs of specific groups, providing support on a range of issues targeted to the needs of Asian communities in Dartford, Gravesham, Swanley and Swale, as well as providing an Asian mental health helpline where callers are able to speak with support staff in Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu.
- 7.2 In 2021-22, the service utilised an innovation grant to fund four projects aimed at supporting young people aged 17-25. One of these projects was run by the Kent Equality Cohesion Council (KECC) and focused on young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, developing activities young people could get involved in. This included roundtable discussions about health and wellbeing and the current challenges for young people from diverse communities; development of a film to generate awareness of mental health, the importance of reaching out for support, and the support services available locally; a social event to present the film, with talks and music from relevant partners and young artists, and a survey collecting feedback from the roundtables and film. The findings will be published in the final project report.
- 7.3 Between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, 57% of service users who disclosed, stated that they were Female and 12% stated they were from an ethnic group other than White British. Compared to the previous year, the proportion of female service users has remained stable, whilst the percentage of service users who were not White British increased from 8%. Women and BME

people also make up slightly greater proportions of mental health service users than their representation in the population according to the 2011 Census.²² The slight increase in BME representation amongst service users highlights the success of work to reduce barriers to their access. However, it also demonstrates that there is further work to be done to target mental ill health amongst BME communities.

7.4 Ensure equity of access to Sexual Health services to improve health outcomes with regard to age, sexual orientation, gender identity and race

- 7.5 The Integrated Sexual Health Services commissioned by KCC are delivered by Kent Community Health Care Foundation Trust (KCHFT) and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust (MTW). The service undertook a number of actions to improve access to those that may experience barriers to access or be at higher risk due to their age, sexuality, gender identity or race.
- 7.6 Online clinics are offered to reduce barriers to access that may be experienced by young people due to school hours or living situations. As Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) rates are highest amongst those in Kent aged 20-24 and 15-19, free condoms are provided to all 16-24 year-olds. Higher rates of pregnancy termination are experienced in those under 30, as such, people identifying as women in this age group are able to receive emergency oral contraception (EOC) free of charge from KCC community pharmacies.
- 7.7 Following a successful pilot in 2020, the PrEP scheme has been retained for those who identify as men who have sex with men (MSM), and includes services such as offering Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis depending on their risk factors, additional testing for viruses, and the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. The online STI outreach team has supported under 20 year-olds who identify as MSM to access information regarding personal safety, supporting referrals to the service as required. The service also provides support to transgender males, and runs a group for the LGBTQ+ community at Canterbury College, which includes follow-ups on a 1:1 basis, tailoring care based on individual need.
- 7.8 The Kent Sexual Health Needs Assessment (2018) shows that those in Black and Minority Ethnic groups are one of several groups at greater risk regarding sexual health; this is borne out by national research. The Integrated Service has conducted outreach to address the proportionally greater needs of some groups and reach communities that might not otherwise access the service. This has included support for young people in college who have English as an additional language, and sessions for refugees and asylum seekers regarding contraceptive choices and sexual health, along with the provision of appropriate contraception and STI screening.

²² The 2011 Census recorded that 6.3% of Kent's residents were BME people and 51% identified as women.

7.9 Ensuring that the Children's Public Health service reduces health inequalities in early years and maternal health

- 7.10 Research by the service delivering the Perinatal Mental Health (PATH) programme, which aims to target low to moderate perinatal mental health has identified differing needs amongst people with different protected characteristics, including between new parents of both sexes, and between different ethnic groups. The programme introduced a pilot of training sessions for non-health professionals on perinatal mental health, picking up some of these trends. The success of this pilot is still being evaluated, with the hope that it can be extended.
- 7.11 The service also conducted an equality and equity audit for the Kent and Medway local maternity neonatal system (LMNS). This highlighted differing maternal and infant outcomes by maternal ethnicity, parent age and deprivation. As a result, the LMNS is now undertaking a broad programme of engagement targeting these groups.
- 7.12 Following service adjustments made as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, where support frequently had to be moved online, plans are now being made by the service to re-introduce physical services. Children Centre activities have already restarted, with in-person breastfeeding support sessions to follow suit. Online services that were introduced during the pandemic²³ have all been maintained to ensure access to early years and maternal health services, particularly for those that prefer to access support digitally.

7.13 The rate of male suicide declines

- 7.14 During 2021-22 the Suicide Prevention programme undertook a wide number of actions designed to reduce the risk of suicide amongst men. These included:
- Continued promotion of the Release the Pressure campaign ensuring that free, 24-hour support was available to everyone in Kent via phone and text. This was promoted through social media, paid for advertising and a partnership with Margate Football Club. As a result of the campaign, 46,000 conversations were had with people who reached out for support.
 - Funding 'Dads Unlimited'²⁴ to provide Kent's first Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) dedicated to supporting male victims of domestic abuse.
 - Providing free to access suicide prevention training to over 500 Kent and Medway Residents, increasing both their knowledge and confidence in how to have potentially life-saving conversations.
 - Funding Citizens Advice to provide dedicated support to individuals suffering from both financial and mental health conditions.

²³ Including the Solihull approach online parenting support courses, the Kent Born to Move app, We Beside You website, online counselling and Dad Pad

²⁴ Through the Saving Lives Innovation Fund

7.15 Work began in 2020-21 in partnership with Kent Police to develop the Real Time Suicide Surveillance (RTSS) system²⁵ to provide insight into emerging trends. The key trends in the past year include relationships ending, loss of contact with children due to family breakup, financial difficulties, or being a victim of domestic abuse. Analysis has highlighted a particular link between domestic abuse and suicide for men, both as perpetrators and victims, and continues to inform work around suicide prevention going forward. Indeed, this research was recently quoted by the previous Secretary of State for Health as the reason why Domestic Abuse would be included as a priority within the forthcoming National Suicide Prevention Plan.

7.16 Ensuring equality of access to NHS Health Checks (age / sex / disability / race)

7.17 The NHS Health Check programme is targeted at 40 to 74-year-olds without a pre-defined existing health condition. Throughout 2021-22, the programme continued to recover towards pre-pandemic activity levels after delivery resumed in Quarter 2.

7.18 The pilot of a targeted offer of health checks to men and women based on cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk, which was developed in the previous year, has been rolled out in 2021-22. This pilot has involved contacting eligible individuals over the phone, rather than via a traditional letter, to increase uptake particularly from men due to their inherent greater risk of CVD, and because they are less likely to take up a health check invitation. Alongside this, the service encouraged uptake from men through engagement work with Men's Sheds, Dads Unlimited and the Man V Fat event.

7.19 The outreach workstream aims to increase uptake in ethnic and minority groups, who are less likely to engage with the programme. This workstream reaches individuals directly in their communities at faith groups, clubs, businesses, and charities, offering health checks or health MOTs, and where required, referring to the relevant service for behaviour change or lifestyle improvement.

7.20 Improved life chances and outcomes for vulnerable adults through service developments and transformation

7.21 In the co-production of ASCH strategies that underpin how services are delivered, the directorate has conducted significant engagement work throughout the planning, consultation and development phases, with a focus on those with lived experience to ensure service developments work for the people we serve. The **Learning Disability and Autism Strategy** has been

²⁵ Official suicide statistics are published annually and only after coroner's inquests have been completed. Therefore, there tends to be a lag to any analysis conducted of suicide statistics. However, the RTSS system provides better insight into emerging trends and the factors in people's lives which may contribute to their decision to take their own lives.

developed in this way²⁶ to include a proposal for all support information to be made realistic and accessible to those with learning disabilities and/or autism, and their families or carers. Similarly, the content of the [Adult Social Care Strategy](#) and subsequent delivery plan was shaped by extensive engagement and co-production workshops.²⁷

7.22 Pre-engagement and consultation²⁸ were held with unpaid carers to inform the content of the [Adult Carers Strategy](#). Through the formal consultation, it was also possible to collect valuable feedback from people who may experience intersectional impact, with 24% of those unpaid carers that responded considering themselves as disabled, 87% were aged over 50, and 2% were Black or Asian.²⁹

7.23 Following the completion of the 2020 LGA Peer Review, the **ASCH Equality Forum** was launched in September 2021 to take forward some of the improvements identified and to facilitate conversations that would make equality, diversity and inclusion the responsibility of all ASCH staff. The group met twice in 2021-22, with external speakers sharing their experiences. The first forum was also attended by a graphic illustrator who summarised the discussion in graphics that have been circulated with ASCH teams. Equality Champions have been identified to drive forward this agenda and ensure actions are taken forward, and this will be strengthened further by the Equality Steering Group planned for 2022-23.

7.24 The quality and range of services are improved through increasing engagement with service users and carers

7.25 People with lived experience have joined **Stakeholder Interview Panels** to contribute to selection decisions for ASCH vacancies including Director and Assistant Director posts. This has enabled senior posts to be recruited that reflect the communities we serve and ensure the people we support feel valued and respected. **Letter reviews** have been conducted with a range of user groups³⁰, with feedback shaping the information that is sent out to people currently using services, including the Client Financial Services non-residential charging letter and the Complaints and Enquiries response. The feedback of vulnerable adults and their families or carers is also collected via **group and individual feedback sessions** with senior officers. This has

²⁶ Through collaboration with Health, autistic people, people with learning disabilities, their families, community, advocacy groups, professionals and leaders.

²⁷ These were attended by people with lived experience of adult social care, carers, family members, voluntary, community and provider organisation representatives. For more information on this engagement, see the following [link](#).

²⁸ This included attendance at the East Kent Mencap carers coffee morning and a commissioned carers behavioural study. For more information on this engagement, see the following [link](#).

²⁹ When completing EqlAs, KCC considers a tenth characteristic of carer responsibility, which may make individuals more vulnerable. Therefore, this engagement was able to capture the intersectional impact of carer responsibility with age and race, amongst other factors.

³⁰ Including people with lived experience, the Kent Learning Disability Partnership Board, the People's Panel and Learning Disability experts by experience

covered themes such as the role of informal carers, what is important to carers and their interaction with ASCH, and the importance of people's voices being actively heard. This feedback has informed the Adult Carers Strategy and the involvement of experts by experience in the commissioning processes. The **Kent Learning Disability Partnership Board**³¹ provided feedback on the annual Learning Disability Mortality Review (LeDeR) report, which led to the publication of an Easy Read version. The Board also supported the decision taken by the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) that people on the learning disability register would be eligible for COVID-19 boosters. The Board has also influenced partner delivery in providing feedback on the barriers adults and children with learning disabilities may face when accessing Audiology services and weight loss services.

Kent Equality & Cohesion Council outreach for COVID-19

- 7.26 Following the publication of their [report around vaccine uptake](#), in 2021-22 the Kent Equality & Cohesion Council (KECC) continued to deliver on this work to reach diverse communities in Kent with messaging regarding the pandemic and how to stay safe.³² This included a series of online videos, distribution of messaging at targeted online events, outreach work with BME communities, and maintenance of the Phone a Community Friend scheme.
- 7.27 Public Health conducted a **COVID-19 Impact Assessment on Health Inequalities**, which looks at a broad range of health inequality indicators over time. This report's findings provide us with valuable insight into the nature of inequalities in Kent, including where they intersect with protected characteristics and will inform service developments and delivery going forward.

JUSTICE AND PERSONAL SECURITY

8. Where appropriate, fewer young people become young offenders with regard to disability, sex or race

- 8.1 Analysis by the **Youth Justice Service** found that whilst children with a disability do not disproportionately feature in the youth offender cohort, there is a link to ethnic minority status, sex and, as their most overrepresented cohort, children in care.
- 8.2 The Youth Justice Service has undertaken a deep dive of data, processes and practices relating to cases of children in a minority ethnic group in order to identify any disproportionality in the service. This did not identify any

³¹ The Board is co-chaired by a person with a learning disability and a senior KCC officer and is made up of people with lived experience, KCC officers, parents or carers of adults with learning disabilities, learning disability advocacy reps and health or other partners.

³² The KECC were originally commissioned in 2020-21 utilising Containing the Outbreak Management Funding (COMF), with this work continuing into 2021-22 as the effects of the pandemic continued to be felt.

discriminatory or disproportionate practice once children were in the youth justice system but has initiated a further enquiry into the early childhood experiences of these children. This piece of work is now in progress and will explore whether children in these groups had accessed any early help or preventative services, and if not, whether there were any barriers that prevented this.

- 8.3 The service utilises national research to ensure that effective diversion and early intervention is offered to minority ethnic children and children in care. The team has taken a focus on representation and diversity, promoting challenge to discrimination or stereotyping as well as a quality assurance and audit process for assessments and reports. The service also mandated unconscious bias and cultural competence training for their workforce. The language and imagery of formal communications was also reviewed in order to ensure these materials are inclusive. The service utilised the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller specialists within the 'PRU (Pupil Referral Unit), Inclusion and Attendance Service' (PIAS) teams to better understand and build relationships with this community group.
- 8.4 The service has also drawn attention to the relevance of sex, working on an analysis of the offending cohort that will be completed in September 2022 and presented to the County Youth Justice Board for discussion and action. Whilst a recent bid to the Home Office for resources to provide a bespoke service to girls experiencing violence was not successful, the team still plan to develop a bespoke strategy in 2023 for working with girls within the Youth Justice system.

Domestic Abuse

- 8.5 The majority of domestic abuse services in Kent are delivered by the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS). Through needs assessments in 2020 and 2021, KIDAS has completed significant analysis of the trends around domestic abuse service use and need in Kent. For example, reports of abuse are more prevalent among women, people in the LGBTQ+ community and people with a disability, while men and older people are much less likely to self-report abuse, and the percentage of people from BME backgrounds accessing refuge or community based support is significantly higher than the Kent demographic profile. These assessments highlight any potential barriers to access to be targeted, and where data collection can be improved.
- 8.6 Currently men are only able to access dispersed domestic abuse accommodation. A communal refuge for men is now being commissioned as an 18-month pilot to be made available next year, with usage of and satisfaction with this provision to be monitored. To improve access to support within safe accommodation for those with additional support requirements, Specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) were funded across the county for 2021-2022, helping 139 individuals to access mental health services, substance misuse treatment and justice agency support. Work began to establish additional provision for those impacted by domestic abuse with mental health and addiction vulnerabilities, with £200,000 allocated to support this work. The KIDAS developed a "Champions

Programme” to upskill professionals and individuals within communities to become domestic abuse ‘leads’ in their organisation, and commissioned training to bring cultural awareness and knowledge up to date.

- 8.7 Additionally, the #KnowSeeSpeakOut against domestic abuse campaign was launched to coordinate messaging across partners to increase awareness that commissioned domestic abuse services are for everyone. The material works to reduce imagery which portrays abuse as specifically male against female and supports a discourse of inclusivity across the protected characteristics. To ensure that content addressed any barriers to access experienced by people because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, the campaign liaised with and shared messaging via Kent and Medway’s Pride networks. On 14 July (the national day of remembrance for victims of honour-based abuse), the campaign worked with specialist providers who support people impacted by Honour Based Violence.

White Ribbon

- 8.8 In February 2022, KCC became a [White Ribbon](#) accredited organisation.³³ KCC staff of all genders are able to get involved in making the White Ribbon Promise or registering as a White Ribbon Ambassador or Champion. As an organisation, KCC’s commitment will include: strategic leadership within the Council; engagement with those who identify as men as part of White Ribbon Day; acting as Ambassadors to promote positive cultures throughout our teams and services, and raising awareness of violence and abuse and the services available to help.

Domestic Homicide Reviews

- 8.9 Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) are coordinated and managed by Kent Community Safety Team.³⁴ Consideration of equality issues and protected characteristics is an intrinsic part of DHRs. Those worked on and/or published in 2021-22 included the following themes: barriers to access associated with race and faith; abuse in ‘traditional’ relationships between older couples; the vulnerability of people who identify as men; mental ill health; children not being considered as domestic abuse victims in their own right.
- 8.10 Lessons learnt from DHRs result in the relevant agencies reviewing and updating their policies and procedures to change how they respond in the future. Findings are shared widely across the partnership to support training and development and impact the way practitioners see, understand and respond to domestic abuse occurring across protected characteristic groups.

Community Wardens

- 8.11 The Kent Community Warden Service is in place to support communities to be safer and stronger, with one of its four main objectives being to support the elderly and vulnerable, whether this be a result of their gender, race, religion,

³³ White Ribbon is a charity that encourages people, especially men and boys, to take action and change behaviour individually and / or collectively to end male violence against women and girls.

³⁴ Further information about DHRs can be found at this link: [Domestic Homicide Reviews - Kent County Council](#).

belief or sexual orientation. In order to assist with the emerging issues in their communities, Wardens have sought out training and support that has included sign-language training, engagement with [Mermaids UK](#)³⁵ and translation of warden leaflets by a Ukrainian volunteer.

- 8.12 Of 17,764 activities that the Wardens undertook in 2021-22, 8,608 of these were provided to individual residents. This support included welfare visits, assistance in purchasing food, assisting in arrangements to meet transport needs, and making referrals to appropriate services where required. To reflect the contribution this has had in supporting residents with protected characteristics, 80% of these were with persons aged over 55, 28% with a disabled person, 23% with an individual with poor mental health and 11% with a person with dementia.

Trading Standards

- 8.13 Trading Standards works to protect vulnerable people, particularly the elderly, from scammers and doorstep crime, preventing fraud from taking place, and where this has not been possible, offering support to victims. In 2021-22, Trading Standards coordinated scam visits to 1,247 victims, preventing a total of £1,291,797 being lost to scammers. In addition, the Trading Standards Victim Safeguarding Officer undertook 150 engagements with victims of fraud, who had lost £1,239,524 to doorstep criminals, their interventions preventing the loss of a further £154,000.
- 8.14 An elderly repeat victim of a finance scam, who had invested £53,000 in bitcoins and was left without any money other than his pension was helped and advised by his local KCC Community Warden who referred him to a local charity that helped him with benefit claims. Whilst many of those supported by Trading Standards work were elderly, this vulnerability also extends to victims who do not have English as a first language. Due to fear and the language barrier, one individual became victim to a telephone scam at a loss of £4,650, with the scam caller claiming to be from the Inland Revenue and insisting a payment must be made. Again, the service provided support and advice on speaking to her bank to help her try to recover the lost money.

Prevent

- 8.15 The Prevent team deals with hate crime referrals and work to prevent radicalisation and online extremism, providing support to parents, carers and individuals who have been identified as being vulnerable to radicalisation. In February 2022 a hybrid conference on tackling Hateful Extremism across Kent and Medway was held; over 250 in-person or online delegates³⁶ attended. Presentations included new threats such as those associated with

³⁵ Mermaids UK is a charity that supports transgender, nonbinary and gender-diverse children and young people up to the age of 20.

³⁶ These included delegates from KCC, Medway Unitary, Kent Police, Counter Terrorism Police South East, Homeland Security (Home Office), Health, National Probation Service, Kent Districts and Boroughs, and the voluntary sector.

Incel³⁷ ideology, following the tragic event in Plymouth in August 2021. A further conference will be held in February 2023.

Resettlement Schemes

- 8.16 KCC operates three established resettlement schemes: the **UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)**, which offers a safe and legal route to vulnerable refugees in need of protection; the **Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP)**, which launched in April 2021 to relocate or assist formally Locally Employed Staff in Afghanistan, and the **Afghan Citizens Relocation Scheme (ACRS)**, which began in January 2022 and prioritises the resettlement of people that assisted the UK's efforts in Afghanistan and promoted values such as democracy or women's rights, and those who are vulnerable due to their sex, race, religion, sexual orientation or other reason. People resettled under the **Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS)**, which was the predecessor of the UKRS also continue to be supported. The number of people who have been successfully resettled or continue to be supported by KCC under these schemes in the 2021-22 financial year is summarised below.

Table 3: Number of people supported by KCC Resettlement Schemes³⁸

Number supported in their own rented accommodation under the VPRS or the UKRS:	69 families (approx. 318 individuals)
Number supported in their own rented accommodation under the ARAP or the ACRS:	14 families (approx. 59 individuals)
Number supported in bridging hotels under the ARAP or the ACRS:	169 individuals

- 8.17 Equalities implications are considered in the day-to-day delivery of these schemes, with relevant support offered according to the needs and protected characteristics of people who are resettled. All resettled families and individuals are provided with support to access organisations that can help them get to know and engage with their new local community and relevant public services. Alongside arranging access to education for children and young people, adults are supported to access English language lessons, which are provided at home for those not able to travel to an Adult Education Centre due to disability, reduced mobility, pregnancy or having young children. Where individuals practice a faith, this is considered in the selection of their accommodation as far as possible, to ensure they are able to access relevant facilities. The majority of refugees supported to date have been Muslims and have been provided with information on the proximity of local mosques, halal food shops and Muslim community facilities in their new area.

³⁷ Incel stands for 'involuntary celibate', meaning people who are unable to get a romantic or sexual partner despite wanting one. People who subscribe to this ideology are usually part of online subcultures that are characterised by misogyny, misanthropy and hostility to women (and men) who are sexually active.

³⁸ This only includes people supported by the KCC Resettlement Team in 10 of its districts; there are additional individuals who have been resettled in Kent by Ashford District Council and Canterbury District Council. These individuals do receive support from relevant teams across KCC, including Education, Children's services, Public Health, Adult Social Care and Adult Education.

Specific support is also provided where there are issues arising from cultural differences, with cultural or religious reasonable adjustments made to services as required.

- 8.18 Where individuals are known to have a disability or chronic illness, appropriate referrals are made to public health services, with immediate specialist healthcare provided on arrival as required. Additional needs arising from disability are considered within the selection of appropriate accommodation, in terms of accessibility, the requirement for reasonable adjustments and proximity to local medical facilities. In the example of one individual who struggled to complete everyday tasks for themselves as a result of their disability, an Occupational Therapy assessment referral was made, with an interpreter in attendance to ensure they were able to successfully communicate their needs and preferences.
- 8.19 Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the UK Homes for Ukraine Scheme and Extended Family Scheme were launched. In the early part of 2022, KCC mobilised an extensive team to deliver these schemes, working with guests and hosts to find appropriate resettlement solutions for up to the next three years.³⁹ As the schemes were launched by central government on 14 March 2022, with much of the delivery taking place during the 2022-23 financial year, the equalities outcomes will be considered in more detail in the following year's equality report.

PARTICIPATION

9. POLITICAL AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

9.1 **We will listen to and engage with communities and partners to inform the way we plan, design, commission and deliver services. Communities can have their say through consultations and engagement activity**

Engagement and Consultation

- 9.2 In June, KCC launched its new engagement and consultation website, [Let's talk Kent](#), in order to create an easier and more inclusive online environment to engage with Kent communities and attract new participants from a wider range of backgrounds. The website encourages people to register and choose to receive alerts for activity on the website that they are interested in.⁴⁰ Going forward, this innovation could be used to target promotional activity towards under-represented demographics to boost their participation in engagement activity. Improved use of online tools has not replaced the need to consider all stakeholders and what engagement methods are most appropriate. Where services' EqlAs identify non-digital or additional needs, such as Large Print, Easy Read, BSL content or paper and audio versions, these are provided.

³⁹ At the time of writing, 1698 host families in Kent are sponsoring 2811 people across the County.

⁴⁰ In its first 10 months (up until 31 March 2022) 21,152 people have registered, with 10,776 of those asking to be kept informed.

Household Waste Recycling Centre Booking System

- 9.3 As part of the COVID-19 pandemic response, a temporary booking system was introduced at KCC's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs); following a positive public consultation during August and September 2021 this service has been retained permanently. Equality analysis undertaken during the consultation and implementation revealed potential impacts to users from protected characteristic groups, which are now being mitigated in day-to-day service delivery. This includes a telephone booking system for those who may struggle to use the online booking form due to lack of digital access or skills, or disabilities, and the promotion of this option via Parish Council newsletters and HWRC information, to ensure these users are not missed. Additionally, 'on the day' bookings were introduced acknowledging those who may not know if they will be well enough to attend in advance due to bouts of ill health, including elderly users, disabled or mentally ill users, and pregnant women. To further support these vulnerable groups, the service is planning to trial the option to request onsite assistance with lifting or moving waste at the point of booking.

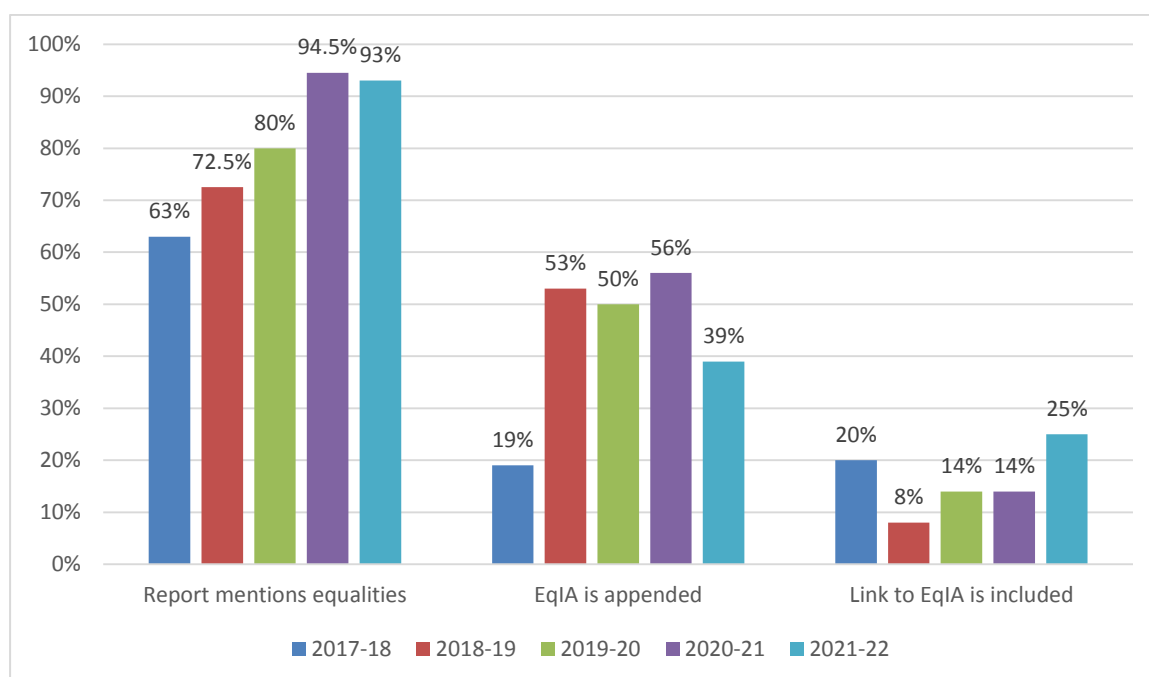
Complaints

- 9.4 Of 5,210 complaints received in the 2021-22 financial year, 239 were categorised Equality and Regulatory, of which 63 were about equalities issues. Of these, two were upheld and received a formal apology; one of these had an outcome where further guidance was provided to staff to prevent the situation occurring again. In the previous reporting period, only 28 complaints relevant to equalities issues were received. This increase can be explained by an improvement in the way staff are categorising and recording complaints received, rather than an increase in activity resulting in equalities issues, as demonstrated by the total number of these complaints that were upheld, falling from four in 2020-21, to two in 2021-22.

9.5 All Members and Officers will be responsible for ensuring that the PSED is met in their day-to-day work and when making decisions, and publish Equality Analysis with all key and significant decisions

- 9.6 Compared to previous years, 2021-22 indicates fluctuations in the extent to which equalities is acknowledged and considered in KCC's decision-making and business as usual processes. Chart 1 shows that in 2021-22, 93% of committee reports (including those with Key Decisions) mentioned equalities, compared to 94.5% in 2020-21 and 80% in 2019-20 – slightly lower than last year, but still significantly higher than the preceding years. 39% of reports had appended an EqIA compared to 56% in 2020-21 – this is a fall compared to previous years, although the number of reports that included a link to an EqIA increased to 25%. For context, the volume of reports going to committee also significantly fell from 146 in 2020-21 to 72 in 2021-22, as the Council moved out of the initial intense response phase of the Pandemic and back to more business-as-usual activities.

Chart 1: EqlA Analysis



9.7 Not all items that are taken to KCC’s committees require an EqlA or equalities considerations, for example, service updates, passporting of funding or signing of grant agreements. However, Key Decisions do require equalities consideration through an EqlA, and the percentage of Key Decisions with either an EqlA attached or a link provided stands at 50% for 2021-22. This is lower than the 63% for 2020-21. The percentage of Key Decisions with EqlAs, a link, or a reference to equalities stands at 95%, just slightly lower than the 96% of the previous year. As noted in the previous Annual Report, 2020-21 was unprecedented in the number of Key Decisions processed, many of which were urgent decisions in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic – the number of Key Decisions dropped from 141 during 2020-21 down to 64 for 2021-22, and the proportion of total reports that were Key Decisions fell from 97% to 89%.

9.8 The figures above show that while overall equalities references and inclusion of EqlAs is largely stable at 93%, the number of reports or Key Decisions that specifically include an EqlA or link to one has fallen from 63% to 46% in the last two years, which is disappointing given the previous years’ upward trajectory. Potential reasons could include both the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as pandemic recovery with services returning to business-as-usual activity and more decisions and activities coming forward again that were less people-focused, and in some cases therefore not requiring an EqlA. Indeed, a number of those Key Decision reports that did not have an EqlA linked or attached made reference to equality analysis having taken place that identified that there was not a need for a full EqlA to be completed.

9.9 As a proportion of the Key Decision reports where an EqlA had not been linked or attached but had been mentioned, there was a small increase in the

number of reports where EqlAs had been completed, but not shared with Key Decision information. This has constituted the majority of the reports across both years. Whilst it is reassuring to confirm that the analysis is taking place, this indicates a governance issue that will require investigation and focus in order to improve performance by services.

- 9.10 Fewer Key Decision reports are making a generic reference to equality implications rather than making reference to the completion of an EqlA. This is positive, suggesting that there may be a greater prevalence of supporting analysis taking place and potentially highlighting the positive impact of EqlA App messaging. The return to business-as-usual working and greater capacity of officers may also contribute to this. Unlike in 2020-21, there were no Key Decisions pushed through due to the Pandemic without time for an EqlA to be completed.

The EqlA App

- 9.11 Following extensive development in 2020-21, KCC's new EqlA App was launched in June 2021. This new method for undertaking, approving and publishing EqlAs replaced the old two-stage paper process. Using Microsoft's software, it streamlines and simplifies the process for those undertaking and approving EqlAs. It was also created so that all of KCC's EqlAs could be published in one library on KNet, and to provide data on the equalities assessments to enable analysis of the EqlAs help inform KCC's Corporate Management Team and the Corporate Equality Group (CEG) about the trends and insight gained to support the Council to meet its equality duties.
- 9.12 Work began in 2021-22 to create an automated Dashboard that collates key information about the EqlAs generated through the App. This Dashboard tells us that during the first year of operation (June 2021 to March 2022), 84 EqlAs were published via the App; 14 from ASCH, 18 from Children, Young People & Education (CYPE), 37 from Growth, Environment & Transport (GET), and 15 from Strategic & Corporate Services (ST). The Dashboard also provides data about key aspects of the EqlAs. For example, the majority of them related to projects or commissioning and procurement, with others also undertaken for strategy/policy, service change or service redesign. The Protected Characteristics most typically identified as having either negative or positive impacts were age, disability and race, while 94% (76) of the EqlAs identified positive impacts through their analysis. Work is being undertaken to create an analysis pack drawn from the Dashboard's data to inform the Corporate Equality Group's work and this will be developed and become a regular feature of CEG's considerations from 2022-23. As more EqlAs are undertaken through the App and the longer it is used, this will provide an increasingly rich source of data to compare year on year as to how the organisation is undertaking equalities considerations.

9.13 ACCESS TO SERVICES AND THE LOCAL AREA

9.14 Protected characteristics will be considered within all highways and transport schemes identified within Local Transport Plan 4, as well as the schemes' potential to advance equality of opportunity

Public Transport

- 9.15 In the past year, the transport service has suspended the membership fee required to use **Kent Karrier**⁴¹ and automatically renewed all existing memberships in order to ensure that vulnerable users are more easily able to make use of the service. Members' carers can also travel with them for no additional charge. A number of free **Reconnect bus passes** were also delivered. For travel during Summer 2021, all 11–18-year-olds were able to receive a free bus pass, with family bus passes distributed by children's centres and early help or social workers to families in need of support. Free family bus passes were also distributed for use during the Christmas holidays to families eligible for Free for 2 nursery funding or with children in receipt of benefits-related free school meals. KCC has funded the provision of the **Disabled Person+Companion bus pass**⁴² since 2011, whilst this is not a statutory duty, this year a decision was made to retain the service to ensure that disabled residents are not disadvantaged by travel costs due to their inability to travel alone.
- 9.16 In addition to the statutory requirement for all new bus stops to be accessible, KCC has retained a policy of bringing existing bus stops up to current accessibility services when other physical changes are being made, in order to ensure that disabled residents of Kent are not disadvantaged when travelling around the county.
- 9.17 In the past year, GET has developed the **Fastrack Electrification** proposal, which would see buses on all Fastrack routes in Dartford, Gravesend and the new Dover route, replaced with electric alternatives. Whilst this will result in cleaner air and less noise pollution for all residents living along the Fastrack routes, it is intended that this change will have the greatest impact on children, older people and disabled people who have been identified in central government research as at greater risk of poor health as a result of pollution.
- 9.18 In addition, protected characteristics have been considered in the development of **Vision Zero, the Road Safety Strategy for Kent 2021 – 2026**⁴³. There has been a strong focus on age in the strategy, both in providing education and protection to younger drivers who are shown to be involved in more crashes and supporting older people to maintain mobility as they age. Age UK participated in the consultation workshops and was supportive of proposals being made. Men are also involved in more car

⁴¹ Kent Karrier is a dial-a-ride service provided for people who find it difficult travel on public transport, whether this be due to a medical condition, being over the age of 85, or because they live in a rural location.

⁴² Which allows disabled residents of Kent who are unable to travel alone to access off-peak travel on local bus services with a companion free of charge.

⁴³ This strategy sets a trajectory for the target of achieving zero traffic related deaths by 2050.

accidents and fatal motorcycle collisions, and are therefore also a target of the strategy, to make Kent safer for them as well as other road users and pedestrians. The strategy also embraces actions that recognise that maintaining real and perceived road safety has the greatest impact on vulnerable residents and communities, including those with reduced mobility, elderly people, pregnant people, carers, and children.

9.19 The protected characteristics of all members of a community will be considered when investing in roads, facilities and utilities that are identified through the Growth and Infrastructure Framework, and delivered to meet the needs of Kent's population changes

KCC Highways

9.20 KCC Highways has delivered a number of highway improvement schemes with the intention of equal benefit for all, but particularly those vulnerable residents of Kent that make use of public transportation services and may have struggled to access these previously. Throughout the planning, design, and implementation phases, protected characteristics, accessibility and inclusivity have been and will continue to be considered by the officers delivering these schemes. The **A229 Blue Bell Hill Improvement Scheme**⁴⁴ will deliver improved pedestrian and cycling facilities, alongside improved access to public transport via increased journey time reliability. This will have particular benefit to those with mobility issues using footpaths or those who have no alternative to bus travel. This connection will also improve access to the nearby Crematorium and local places of worship, enhancing the ability of residents with religious beliefs to exercise these. It is hoped that, in facilitating a robust and safe public transport offer, the **proposal for a contraflow bus lane on Bath Street, Gravesend**⁴⁵ will bolster the confidence of existing users as well as those too nervous to currently use the service, to use public transport. This improvement will also reduce the distance that those with decreased mobility have to travel to access public transport, thereby potentially providing greater independence to people with mild to moderate disabilities to use the bus network to travel in Kent. The **Paddock Wood Junction Improvement Schemes**⁴⁶ include provision of signal-controlled pedestrian crossings, which will safeguard pedestrians with vulnerabilities, whether this be due to age, disability, pregnancy, maternity or carer responsibilities.

Planned Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) Improvements

9.21 The Waste Management service is working with Corporate Health and Safety to obtain guidance on the best colours for kerbing, parking and pedestrian walkway lines to improve the experience of visually impaired HWRC users.

⁴⁴ Which provides the shortest route between the M2 and M20, connecting Maidstone with Medway.

⁴⁵ In extending the Fastrack Network, this aims to reduce congestion and improve accessibility of public transport, making it a real alternative to use of a private car.

⁴⁶ Which look to mitigate increased traffic in the area emerging from new developments and enhance the existing pedestrian facilities.

9.22 Irrespective of age, disability, race or religion and belief, Kent residents should be able to access our county's high-quality landscapes and environment

Public Rights of Way

- 9.23 KCC has a policy of least restrictive access for the Public Rights of Way (PROW) network. In the 2020-21 financial year, 241 stiles were removed or replaced with more accessible structures. The result is that more than 70% of the network is now stile free and more accessible to the disabled and elderly. COMF funding⁴⁷ enabled accessibility improvements to be delivered to a further 60km of the PROW network.
- 9.24 Following public feedback regarding the installation of barriers on the Public Footpath AU42 at South Willesborough, Ashford, monitoring is now taking place of the impact on use. Whilst these barriers are of a nationally accepted and used design to prevent inappropriate motorcycle use of the footpath, reports have been received that they have restricted access for users with large mobility vehicles. Practice around the installation of these barriers is now being reviewed in order to ensure the protection and access of Kent's environments for all residents.

Country Parks

- 9.25 Utilising funding from the EU Experience Project, Shorne Woods Changing Places Toilet facility⁴⁸ was opened, with work progressing to provide these facilities at Lullingstone and Brockhill Country Parks. These facilities enable residents and families who are unable to use standard accessible toilets to safely visit and enjoy our Country Parks. Work also began to install new and upgraded play equipment across eight Country Parks utilising COMF funding. These projects include inclusive play equipment, such as the wheelchair swing and roundabout which will be completed in 2022-23 at Shorne Woods. Access paths have also been improved to the benefit of pushchairs and visitors with impaired mobility at many of Kent's Country Parks, including Teston, Shorne Woods, Trosley, Brockhill, Grove, Manor, Pegwell and Lullingstone.

Explore Kent

- 9.26 In April 2021, Explore Kent secured £22.5k funding from COMF to invest in a targeted print and digital marketing campaign to increase engagement with green spaces and thereby benefit mental and physical health.⁴⁹ Population groups and geographic locations disproportionately impacted by the COVID-

⁴⁷ 'Contain Outbreak Management Fund' for Local Authorities to help tackle COVID-19 and support local public health during the Pandemic.

⁴⁸ Changing Places toilets provide changing benches and hoists that are not available at standard accessible toilets and enable people with profound learning disabilities or severely limited mobility to use toilet facilities.

⁴⁹ Research following the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery indicated that whilst engagement with green spaces improves mental and physical health, these benefits are not enjoyed equally across all sections of the community.

19 pandemic were targeted⁵⁰, and research was undertaken to understand these groups, which include people within the protected characteristic groups of disability, race and age. This revealed some of the challenges and barriers experienced by these groups when engaging with the outdoors, including ease of physical access, lack of targeted information, perceived safety and transport availability. This research was utilised to inform the development of representative imagery and promotion of appropriate activities for these targeted groups as part of the campaign.

Kent Downs

- 9.27 In order to improve the accessibility of Kent's areas of natural beauty, three new easy access routes and shelters have been introduced in the North Downs, along with training for 50 ambassadors to facilitate access to the North Downs Way National Trail. Kent Downs has also supported the introduction of an access for all path to the key viewpoint on the White Cliffs of Dover.
- 9.28 The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) Programme has delivered farm activities for children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties, access days for wheelchair and buggy users in partnership with Wild With Wheels, and wellbeing events for NHS professionals experiencing post-COVID-19 trauma. This programme also delivered a celebration of the Nepalese Udhauri Festival with the local Nepalese community on the cliffs of Dover. This was a particular area of success in encouraging engagement with Kent's landscapes amongst underrepresented communities, as whilst many Nepalese people live in Folkestone and Dover, the community does not generally visit country parks, with elders of the community in particular tending to stay within their residential area.
- 9.29 The Kent Downs website has also been revamped, with a new focus on accessibility and imagery that presents a more diverse range of people enjoying the countryside, and the promotion of accessible activities such as the Shorne Woods Easy Access photo walk / wheel with a professional landscape photographer.
- 9.30 The Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) service in Kent will continue to understand its local communities' needs, and tailor its services accordingly**
- 9.31 The 'Books Beyond Words' reading groups for people with learning disabilities have continued to meet both in person and virtually in the period, with the service conducting engagement activities with this group in order to better understand their preferences for the continued delivery of the service. This engagement has been able to inform service delivery following feedback from the group that they prefer to receive communications about the service via email. In the last financial year, the service had begun to plan the delivery of

⁵⁰ The areas targeted by the campaign were Maidstone, Thanet, Medway, Folkestone and Hythe, Dartford, Gravesham, Swale and the Isle of Sheppey.

virtual Dementia Awareness session for staff and volunteers, which were successfully delivered in 2021-22.

9.32 Following the COVID-19 pandemic, some library service users still prefer to access library services online, due to shielding requirements or disabilities that make it difficult to access services in person. In order to continue to support these service users, the library service extended the virtual offer of the Summer Reading Challenge, allowing virtual participation alongside in person participation, which included virtual join-up, virtually recorded activities and online storytimes and streaming events.

9.33 LRA also manages the Bookstart service in Kent, which gifts free books to babies and toddlers before joining school. This service offers both universal packs, plus targeted packs to support those children with a second language, or with a disability such as vision loss, hearing loss or conditions affecting fine motor skills.

9.34 Following a pilot in 2019, LRA has continued to deliver 'Playground' creative sensory play sessions for young children aged 0-24 months and their parent or carer with artists at a number of Kent libraries. EqlAs conducted for these sessions have enabled the service to identify and implement more proportionate representation of race across the artists and customers in the continued delivery of the sessions.

9.35 The quality and range of services are improved through increasing engagement with service users and carers

9.36 LRA frequently engages with its customers to ensure services are meeting their needs and delivered according to the preferences of often vulnerable people. The EqlA for plans for 2022 Engagement identified a preference within the 'Books Beyond Words' reading groups for audio versions of the engagement documents, rather than Easy Read versions. This feedback was then implemented.

9.37 The Public Transport service has also undertaken engagement activity throughout the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) and Enhance Partnership (EP) Schemes. This has resulted in a number of initiatives being proposed as part of the BSIP relating to accessibility standards, including bus stop accessibility improvements; audio announcements and Real Time Information screens at bus stops; audio and visual announcements on buses; new services to fill network gaps, and fare initiatives to support identified groups.

9.38 The Sport & Physical Activity service has identified that across all service provision, underrepresented groups to be targeted include people with disabilities or long-term health conditions, people from culturally diverse communities and people from lower socio-economic groups. Active Kent has secured and distributed funding, including £222,000 from Sport England, to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 and reduce the widening inequalities gap of physical activity and sport among underrepresented groups

across a number of projects, including the launch of the [Sheppey Matters Nordic Walking project](#) for those with reduced mobility, and [Inclusive Sport online activity sessions](#) for children and adults with a disability in Thanet which were both launched in 2021-22.⁵¹ The Everyday Active campaign has continued to evolve, with the recruitment of two further local Champions⁵² and the addition of a new home page video to the [Everyday Active website](#) to promote and reflect our work with underrepresented groups.

9.39 Ensure that when we use Information Communication Technology (ICT) it is fully accessible for learning, working and getting into services

9.40 A **Website Accessibility Audit** of kent.gov.uk, including its external systems and applications undertaken in June 2021⁵³ identified some minor points of improvement, which included the use of promotional banner images containing text. As a result, the digital team changed their approach to this promotional material.⁵⁴ The **Digital Accessibility team** has also continued to widen their training offer, which has included workshops on how to create inclusive and accessible content for the web and social media, and a new e-learning course⁵⁵. This training has been strongly attended and contributes to improving the accessibility of ICT systems used by both staff and service users. To support continuous improvement with this objective, the team continues to liaise with KCC's Staff Groups, the Sensory Services team and external disability bodies to share knowledge and are actively recruiting a dedicated Digital Accessibility Lead to continue evolving this work. The Council's **Video Accessibility Guidelines** were also updated to ensure staff creating video content understand the accessibility requirements⁵⁶, and that these standards are built into video projects from the beginning. Additionally, KCC has introduced **British Sign Language (BSL) translation** as a standard requirement for any film work. In support of this, on-page BSL video translations of key [Kent Together cost of living support content](#) have been produced, BSL videos or [SignHealth](#) content have been signposted to with COVID-19 pandemic updates on Kent.gov webpages, and a [dedicated playlist of original KCC BSL content](#) has been launched on KCC's YouTube channel in collaboration with Sensory Services.

⁵¹ For further information on these projects and others, see the following links: [case studies](#), [short films](#).

⁵² Who promote Everyday Active campaigns and activities in their areas.

⁵³ This audit was undertaken by the Website Accessibility Monitoring team at the Central Digital and Data Office.

⁵⁴ A subsequent audit by KCC's in-house digital accessibility team found that these changes rendered kent.gov.uk compliant.

⁵⁵ This is being developed by KCC with funding and collaboration from Kent Connects.

⁵⁶ Including transcripts, subtitles, captions or audio description.

10. Looking ahead

10.1 In 2021-22, through the recovery phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, many of the service innovations introduced in response have continued to be delivered, with an additional focus on reintroducing and enabling in-person services to prevent or mitigate digital exclusion. As we look ahead, taking into account the progress made in the past year, it will be important for the Council to continue to draw upon and develop the innovations around delivery of equality and diversity outcomes. The Council has been able to adapt and develop expertise according to emerging equalities issues occurring both nationwide and within the county, for example, in supporting Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, as well as further developing the offer for young people, LGBTQ+ people, Gypsy Roma and Traveller people and people from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds. The report has demonstrated that much of this has been possible as a result of improved and proactive engagement with communities across a number of services - particularly individuals with lived experience, and the sharing of expertise across directorates to ensure equality and diversity are understood in the development, commissioning and delivery of policy, services and projects.

10.2 Whilst the scope of this report focuses on the period of the 2021-22 financial year, subsequent action has taken place either in response to a number of the activities covered in this report, or is worth noting ahead of the 2023-22 reporting period:

- The Council acknowledged and apologised for the failings that took place regarding the changes to SEND Transport and their impact on families and has been committed to reviewing what took place and why in order to ensure a similar situation does not occur again. An extensive Lessons Learned review by KCC's Internal Audit department was taken to the Governance and Audit Committee and the Scrutiny Committee on the 29 September and 11 October respectively. This review identified specific areas for improvement including governance arrangements and communication with parents, which will be key areas of focus going forward.
- In light of feedback from KCC's Staff Groups, the Council has completed a review of its strategy for supporting Staff Groups. This has resulted in the introduction of allocated time for lead Staff Group roles to manage and run the groups, the development of guidance on Staff Groups at KCC and the agreement of criteria for decision making about the formation of new Staff Groups.
- Where the Inclusivity Indicator has shown we have more to do, KCC is delivering a number of activities as set out in the Council's race, disability and mental health action plans. These include a requirement to include at least one recruitment question around inclusion, a reverse mentoring programme, building race equality measures into performance management conversations, and creating an inclusive culture through a number of organisation-wide conversations about inclusion.
- An audit of the Equalities Act (Duties) 2010 took place over Summer 2022 and reported to the Governance and Audit Committee on 29 September. It

highlighted areas for improvement in KCC's delivery of the Equality duty, which will be supported by our ongoing development and interrogation of the EqIA App Dashboard and improved governance processes to ensure the inclusion of EqIAs within all Key Decision reports.

The Council will continue to take these activities forward to ensure our approach to these equalities issues is improved for the future.

- 10.3 Alongside embracing these learning opportunities, the Council will also take forward the areas of success. In particular, this year has indicated that a step-change has begun in the development of data collection and analysis, to enable better understanding of service users with equalities vulnerabilities and how we are responding to their needs. In addition, there has been an increasing awareness in the identification of how protected characteristics intersect with each other, with services recognising how people with multiple protected characteristics, and therefore increased challenges, may be affected. Going forward, this will continue to be a priority for the Council as part of our new corporate equality objectives.
- 10.4 The new corporate equality objectives for 2022-26 have been embedded within the Council's strategic statement [Framing Kent's Future](#) for the first time, demonstrating KCC's commitment that equality and diversity considerations are integral to everything we do. These new objectives are as follows:
- Continue to be an inclusive employer which provides fair, open and equitable access to career progression and a trusted environment in which staff feel confident to call out discriminatory behaviour.
 - Attract and retain a diverse workforce at all levels of the organisation which reflects the communities that KCC serves.
 - Strengthen our equality data collection and analysis across our services to better understand people's needs and the cumulative impact of the council's actions on people with protected characteristics.
 - Work with our strategic partnerships to understand and support the diverse needs of our communities.
 - Promote equality, diversity and inclusion through our supply chains, including our trading companies.
 - Ensure council information and services are accessible for everyone including those who are digitally excluded.
- 10.5 KCC has already begun to build on achieving equalities outcomes around these themes in the 2021-22 year, and with the strategic shift from service-specific to organisation-wide objectives, it will be important to embed these new objectives across the directorates. Our focus will be the development of a council-wide assessment framework to achieve and monitor these objectives over the next four years.

10.6 The release of the 2021 census information later in 2022 also marks a valuable opportunity to understand our residents and service users, and enhance the Council's ability to understand, assess and deliver on equality and diversity matters going forward. The learning and innovations of the last year present significant opportunities to improve our equalities work going forward, no less the launch of the EqlA App and opportunity to harness council-wide equality assessment data from this. The continued development and refinement of this as an important analytical tool will be a key piece of work in the coming year.