

Active Essex Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan 2024 - 2027

Statement from Chair of Active Essex



Active Essex is committed to ensuring that diversity and inclusion is at the heart of everything we do. We recognise that our strength lies in our diversity and is critical to success in achieving our Fit for the Future strategy. Our ambition, by 2027, is to have a board, senior leadership and wider workforce which reflects the Essex, Southend and Thurrock populations we serve.

Building an inclusive culture is central to our continuous improvement journey. We want to create a culture where everyone can bring their truly authentic self to work, feeling valued and supported to achieve their full potential.

We will build on the existing theme of continuous improvement to achieve our ambitions. Internal 'Stretch Groups', particularly those that focus on Inclusion and the Employee Journey, will be pivotal in realising these goals. Furthermore, we also recognise that we all have collective responsibility for this work, across the board, senior leadership team and wider workforce.

We understand our current representation ([see Appendix 1](#)) and recognise areas of under-representation within the workforce, including disabled people and people from ethnically diverse backgrounds and within the board, including LGBTQ+, female and disability (including neurodiversity). This plan outlines proactive measures to achieve greater diversity.

We acknowledge that this work cannot happen in isolation and needs to exist as a golden thread across all areas, embedded within and impacting on our People Plan, annual Implementation Plan and Fit for the Future Strategy.

This Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) will build upon our work as early adopters of the Race Equality Code and as Disability Confident committed employers. We will also work with our host organisation Essex County Council (ECC) to influence and collectively drive change to deliver against the ECC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Workforce Strategy

Dr William Bird

Introduction from Director of Active Essex



The creation of this Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) takes learnings from wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion related strategies, policies and initiatives which all feed into this DIAP.

Our long-term strategy, [Fit for the Future](#) outlines our vision of ‘an active Essex to improve everyone’s health and wellbeing. Supporting those who are already active and tackling head on the inequalities that currently prevent everyone from the life changing impact of an active lifestyle.’ One of our 6 Foundations for Success outlined in the strategy is People Development, which specifically highlights that ‘physical activity and sport in Essex needs to be managed and delivered by a diverse range of people who are inclusive, highly skilled, and able to make a full contribution to the health and social fabric of Essex.’

This DIAP outlines our internal objectives to achieving our ambitions of a diverse, inclusive and highly skilled Active Essex workforce and boardroom which is representative of the Essex, Southend and Thurrock populations we serve. It sits alongside our [Active Essex People Plan](#) which has Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at its heart.

Our work related to how we’ll achieve our vision of tackling inequalities in our communities and across the wider Essex sport and physical activity eco-system sits within our annual [Implementation Plan](#). We recognise our important role in influencing, advocating and driving change in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across our eco-system and have measures for success across our 5 Strategic Priorities within our Implementation Plan.

Active Essex is hosted by Essex County Council (ECC) and abides by the council’s regulations and guidance including the [ECC Equality and Diversity Policy](#). Through this DIAP, Active Essex will also work alongside leadership and EDI leads within the council to support objectives within the **ECC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Workforce Strategy**.

Active Essex is a proud early adopter of the [Race Equality Code](#) and has been accredited since 2021. We are committed to improving racial equality and changing the dial on representation in the boardroom and senior leadership. Our work through the Race Equality Code reinforces our [Race Equality Commitment](#), an important Active Partnership commitment to being an anti-racist organisation.

Since 2018, we have also been signatories of the [Essex Faith Covenant](#), the first county-wide Faith Covenant in the UK. As members of the Steering Group, we continue to support partnership working between faith communities and public services through a set of principles that guide engagement and aims to make a real difference through building more resilient and inclusive communities.

As a [Disability Confident Committed Employer](#), we'll continue to deliver against the scheme's 5 key commitments to ensure accessible and inclusive recruitment and people development practice to support disabled people joining and achieving their potential at Active Essex. In addition, we'll continue to share, learn and implement good practice as [Activity Alliance Members](#).

We are Inclusive is one of Active Essex's four key Values, it is imperative that every Active Essex staff and board member demonstrates inclusive behaviours and understands their responsibility in driving this DIAP.

This DIAP outlines actions for 2024 (short- and medium-term actions), plus longer-term actions up to 2027 under the key headings of Strategy & Leadership, Governance, Representation, Stakeholder Engagement and Data. To ensure our latest diversity and inclusion priorities are reviewed and measured, this plan will be updated on an annual basis up to 2027. The review schedule is outlined [in Appendix 2](#)

This DIAP has been co-produced by the Active Essex Inclusion Stretch Group, Active Essex Senior Leadership Team and Active Essex Board, with external advice and support received from the AGS consortium.

Jason Fergus

1. Strategy & Leadership				
Short Term Actions (up to 6 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies if relevant
1.1. Board champions for EDI to join Inclusion Stretch Groups and report developments to board	Improve cross-communication of EDI between board and executive team	Anne Wafula-Strike, Board Champion for EDI Fiona Bool, Board Champion for EDI	January 2024 and quarterly thereafter	
1.2. Creation of staff and board training log including EDI related courses	To gain understanding of staff and board upskilling and capture gaps in training needs	Share and Learn Stretch Group	February 2024	Active Essex People Plan
Medium Term actions (up to 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies
1.3. Review all current EDI courses for effectiveness and identify new courses if required to create a training plan for 24-25 financial year	Ensure training provided is effective and is addressing full training needs in relation to EDI	Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager & EDI Lead Hollie Wood, Relationship Manager & Strategic Lead for Sport & Physical Activity Sector	June 2024	Active Essex People Plan

1.4. Creation of a Career Progression Plan for staff to understand how they can progress to senior leadership roles.	Diverse talent within junior roles are supported to understand and gain the skills and experience to progress to senior leadership roles	Hollie Wood, Relationship Manager Neil Coggins, Lead Project Administrator	September 2024	Active Essex People Plan
1.5. Work with RSM to build on Race Equality Code, complete actions within the RECA Action Plan and work towards becoming a 'Pacesetter'	To continue to provide leadership for race equality and ensure this work continues as a priority.	Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager & EDI Lead	September 2024	Active Essex Race Equality Code Action Plan
Longer Term actions (over 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies
1.6. Include key EDI objectives within the next board appraisal process plan.	To understand effectiveness of board leadership in relation to EDI and identify any areas for learning and improvement	William Bird, Chair of Active Essex Jason Fergus, Director of Active Essex	May 2025	
1.7. Ensure financial year Implementation Plans embed EDI objectives and includes measures for success throughout	Prioritisation of EDI objectives and accountability against these	Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager & EDI Lead Hollie Wood, Relationship Manager & Strategic Lead for Sport & Physical Activity Sector	May 2024 May 2025 May 2026	Active Essex Fit for the Future Strategy

1.8. Work collaboratively with Essex County Council new EDI lead to support objectives within the ECC EDI Workforce Strategy	Improve sharing of good practice and delivery of EDI objectives across ECC	Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager & EDI Lead	December 2025	EDI Workforce Strategy
1.9. Provide leadership to the Active Partnership Network for racial equality commitment work	Ensure momentum continues national for the racial equality commitment across Active Partnerships	Jason Fergus, Director of Active Essex	Annually	Active Partnerships Race Equality Commitment

2. Governance

Short Term Actions (up to 6 months)

Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/policies if relevant
2.1. Create and sign off a Terms of Reference for the Active Essex Inclusion Stretch Group	To formalise the purpose, aims and reporting of the staff group leading on internal EDI development	Ian Duggan, Chair of Inclusion Stretch Group	January 2024	
2.2. Update our Active Essex Equalities Impact Assessment	Ensure policies, practices, and decision-making processes are fair and do not disadvantage any protected groups.	Rob Hayne, Strategic Lead for Business Operations	January 2024	

2.3. Ensure our anti-racism statement is referenced within relevant policies and strategies including Code of Conduct, Implementation Plan and Employee Handbook	To ensure our commitment to being an anti-racist organisation is clear	Ian Duggan, Chair of Inclusion Stretch Group	March 2024	Active Partnerships Race Equality Commitment
2.4. Review current EDI items on Risk Register	Ensure EDI items remain relevant and reflect current risks and mitigations to support our EDI objectives	Rob Hayne, Strategic Lead for Business Operations Caroline Russell, Active Essex Board Member	April 2024	
Medium Term actions (up to 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/policies
2.5. Review Code of Conduct Policy and ensure it is explicit about EDI aims.	Ensure expectations are set and maintained for required behaviour in relation to our EDI aims and values	Rob Hayne, Strategic Lead for Business Operations	July 2024	
2.6. EDI added as a standing agenda item to board meetings, with Board Champions for EDI reporting from the Inclusion Stretch group	Ensure priority is given to EDI issues and work within this plan is held accountable	Anne Wafula-Strike, Board Champion for EDI Fiona Bool, Board Champion for EDI	Quarterly board meetings	

Longer Term actions (over 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/policies
2.7. Creation of a new Active Essex Recruitment Policy, with Inclusive Recruitment practice embedded within	To provide a consistent approach to our recruitment, including inclusive practices to support our diversity aims of being reflective of the Essex population	Employee Journey Stretch Group Inclusion Stretch Group	January 2025	Active Essex People Plan

3. Representation

Short Term Actions (up to 6 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/policies
3.1. Include tie-break provision for equal merit candidates, supporting protected characteristics that are disproportionately under-represented in Active Essex. Where this doesn't apply use tie-break provision be based on strength of answer to EDI interview question	Supporting people with protected characteristic to overcome or minimise disadvantage and to ensure candidates recruited are strongly aligned to Active Essex's Values of 'We are Inclusive' and our commitments to EDI	Rob Hayne, Strategic Lead for Business Operations Interview panel leads (Relationship Managers)	January 2024	Essex County Council EDI Workforce Strategy

3.2. To be more explicit about Active Essex's expectation of Board members commitment to EDI within the Board Role Description	To attract board members with values and behaviours which match our EDI commitments	Rob Hayne, Strategic Lead for Business Operations	March 2024	
3.3. Creation of Inclusion Passports so staff needs can be understood and all reasonable adjustments made.	Normalise positive conversations between line managers and direct reports, so that individual's needs can be understood and met in the workplace.	Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager & EDI Lead	March 2024	Active Essex People Plan
3.4. Use positive action in job advertising, including statements to encourage applications from under-represented groups at Active Essex, including disabled candidates and ethnically diverse candidates (workforce) and female, LGBTQ+ and disabled candidates (board)	Increase applications from diverse backgrounds who may not otherwise apply	Rob Hayne, Strategic Lead for Business Operations	May 2024	Essex County Council EDI Workforce Strategy
3.5. Promotion of newly created Essex Talent Pool within our networks of diverse partners	To capture potential pipeline talent for future job vacancies	Holly Adams, Marketing and Communications Officer	May 2024	Essex County Council EDI Workforce Strategy

Medium Term actions (up to 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies
3.6. Creation of targeted recruitment directory of organisations with reach to under-represented demographics at Active Essex to send job adverts to.	Increase reach of potential candidates to more diverse groups	Inclusion Stretch Group	July 2024	Essex County Council EDI Workforce Strategy
3.7. All staff to be supported by line managers to complete their Inclusion Passport and set 6 monthly reviews.	To allow our employees to capture what helps them work best, feel included and be supported, so that individual's needs can be understood and met in the workplace	Employee Journey Stretch Group	September 2024	Active Essex People Plan
3.8. Provide internships from the 10k Black Interns national programme	Provide opportunities for talented black students and graduates to gain valuable experience to help start their careers.	Rob Hayne, Strategic Lead for Business Operations Neil Coggins, Lead Project Administrator	May 2024 – July 2024	Essex County Council EDI Workforce Strategy Active Essex People Plan
3.9. Co-ordinate Coach Core apprenticeship scheme for Essex and increase diverse representation (targets against female, ethnically diverse, learning support needs and lower	Creating pathways for young people who struggle to gain employment through traditional routes, to ensure more young people from diverse	Chloe Hinds, Assistant Relationship Manager	May 2024 – May 2025	Active Essex Implementation Plan, Sport and Physical Activity Sector

socio-economic groups) through targeted promotion	backgrounds have these opportunities.			
Longer Term actions (over 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies
3.10. Re-introduce youth board members, targeting representation from LGBTQ+, female, disabled young people, ethnically diverse.	To provide leadership opportunities to young people from under-represented leadership roles and to gain diversity of thought within the Active Essex board	Rachel Lewis, Relationship Manager Lee Bailey, Board Member	October 2024 for a 2-year term	Active Essex People Plan
3.11. Attend a minimum of 10 Careers Fairs per year, highlighting different routes and opportunities into the Sport and Physical Activity Sector. Ensure inclusive communications.	To develop a diverse range of potential pipeline talent into sport and physical activity sector in Essex	Hollie Wood, Relationship Manager Active Essex Hub teams	April 2024 April 2025 April 2026	Active Essex, Implementation Plan, Sport and Physical Activity Sector
3.12. Review impact of Essex Talent Pool on Active Essex recruitment.	To understand if there has been an increase in diversity of Active Essex applicants and successful candidates through the Talent Pool	Employee Journey Stretch Group	March 2025	Essex County Council EDI Workforce Strategy

4. Stakeholder Engagement

Short Term Actions (up to 6 months)

Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/policies
4.1. Add more detail about our ECC employee networks including: Disabled Employees Network, Ethnically Diverse Employee Network (EDEN), Inter Faith Forum, LGBTQ+ Network, Women's Network to employee handbook	Ensure employees are aware and able to join forums to highlight issues that affect them within a safe environment, as well as influence change within the council.	Employee Journey Stretch Group	February 2024	Active Essex People Plan
4.2. Produce a plan of follow up actions against the latest staff Inclusion survey	Action staff concerns and recommendations to help create a help a more inclusive environment.	Inclusion Stretch Group	March 2024	Active Essex People Plan
4.3. Review exit interview process and ensure questions are asked concerning culture and any experience of discrimination. Leavers should have a choice of person to conduct exit interview not necessarily Line Manager	Identify and address any areas for improvement in order to retain diverse workforce	Employee Journey Stretch Group	March 2024	Active Essex People Plan

Medium Term actions (up to 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies
4.4. All Active Essex funded projects will continue to be asked about their Inclusion plan for delivery, which will be assessed and advice provided where necessary	All funded organisations will deliver accessible projects which consider different protected characteristics and intersectionality	Neil Coggins, Lead Project Administrator All Relationship Managers	Quarterly	Active Essex Implementation Plan
4.5. Creation of a new Active Essex staff network focusing on neurodiversity	Create a safe space where staff can share experiences, discuss any challenges and inform the wider organisation's ways of working to support different needs	Ways of Working Stretch Group	July 2024	Active Essex People Plan
4.6. Creation of a diverse Active Essex <i>Move With Us</i> Youth Board and youth ambassador programme.	Ensure a diverse range of young people have a voice to support the ongoing development of <i>Move With Us</i> to increase Children and Young People's activity levels across Essex	Lee Monk, Relationship Manager	July 2024	Active Essex Implementation Plan, Children and Young People

4.7. Work with Sporting People to deliver the Find Your Active Capacity Building programme to locally trusted organisations.	Influence practice and governance relating to EDI	Hollie Wood, Relationship Manager	September 2024	Active Essex Implementation Plan, Sport and Physical Activity Sector
4.8. As part of Essex County Council White Ribbon Accreditation Steering Group, support development of Action Plan including ambassador engagement	To enable the culture change needed in workplaces and communities to prevent violence, harassment and abuse against women before it starts	Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager	September 2024	Essex County Council EDI Workforce Strategy
4.9. Active Essex staff member to become a Workforce Ambassador within Essex County Council and join Workforce Ambassador Forum	To represent Active Essex staff within wider host organisation in relation to culture, inclusion, wellbeing to inform workforce initiatives and gather good practice for Active Essex to implement.	Danielle Warnes, Assistant Relationship Manager	Quarterly with a review at December 2024	Essex County Council EDI Workforce Strategy
4.10. Creation and delivery of Essex Activate SEND Steering Group	Bring together providers who support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to actively shape the future of the Essex	Nina Head, Assistant Relationship Manager	Quarterly with a review at December 2024	Active Essex Implementation Plan, Strengthening Communities

	Activate Holiday Activity and Food programme.			
Longer Term actions (over 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies
4.11. Create and deliver annual staff Inclusion survey	To understand how inclusive the Active Essex culture is, measure progress against pro-active actions to build an inclusive culture and identified areas for continued improvement	Inclusion Stretch Group	June 2024 June 2025 June 2026	Active Essex People Plan
4.12. Creation of a Stakeholder Strategy, with approaches to engage a diverse set of people.	To support inclusive decision making	Holly Adams, Marketing and Communications Officer	October 2024 and reviewed annually	Active Essex Fit for the Future Strategy
4.13. Engagement with external stakeholders to learn good practice in relation to EDI	Improve policies on EDI including recruitment and development opportunities	Active Essex Board Inclusion Stretch Group	Annually	

5. Data				
Short Term Actions (up to 6 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies
5.1. Review EDI staff and board survey questions and include question on socio-economic background ahead of next annual survey	To ensure we can baseline if we have a diverse workforce in relation to the socio-economic protected characteristic	Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager and Lead for EDI	March 2024	
Medium Term actions (up to 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies
5.2. Deliver 2024 staff and board survey to capture demographic data, with an aim of 100% board member response and to improve on staff response rate compared to 2023 (89%)	To understand how representative Active Essex is of Essex population and measure progress against diversity aims.	Leanne Little, Analyst Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager and Lead for EDI	May 2024	
5.3. Publish staff and board survey data in annual Impact Report	Importance of our data being publicly accessible and accountability of steps to improve diversity	Holly Adams, Marketing and Communications Officer	June 2024 and annually	

Longer Term actions (over 12 months)				
Action	Intended Outcome	Person(s) Responsible	Completion Date	Link to other strategies/ policies
5.4. Work with ECC to analyse data for diversity of Active Essex job applicants and shortlisted candidates.	To understand if there are any stages in the recruitment process which are limiting the progression of diverse candidates	Hibah Iqbal, Evaluation Researcher	January 2025	
5.5. Deliver and publish annual staff and board survey beyond 2024 and improve response rate each year	By 2027 Active Essex aims to be representative of the Essex population and commits to measuring progress against this annually	Leanne Little, Analyst Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager and Lead for EDI	May 2025 May 2026	

Appendix 1: Active Essex Workforce and Board Data (as of May 2023) *note new graphs with board data to be added



Appendix 2: Review schedule

Process	Responsibility	Date
Quarterly updates against the Active Essex DIAP actions will be produced by the Inclusion Stretch Group and reported to the board by the EDI Board Champions through a newly created standing EDI agenda item.	Inclusion Stretch Group EDI Board Champions	Quarterly board meetings
An annual progress report against the Active Essex DIAP actions will be produced by the Inclusion Stretch Group and published on our annual Impact Report	Inclusion Stretch Group	April 2025 April 2026 April 2027
A full annual review of the Active Essex DIAP will be completed by the board by December each year, with an updated DIAP captured through version control.	Active Essex Board Hayley Chapman, Relationship Manager and Lead for EDI Inclusion Stretch Group EDI Board Champions	December 2024 December 2025 December 2026

Appendix 3: Active Essex Accreditations/ Memberships



Essex Faith Covenant

