



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2025/26

Contents:

Introduction	3
Hartlepool Population Equality Fact File	5
Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce Equality	9
- Our workforce profile compared to the community we serve	10
- Our workforce profile in 2025/26 compared to our workforce profile in 2024/25	13
- Recruitment	16
- Leavers	18
- Gender Pay Gap	19
- Consultation and Employee Engagement	21
Update on the Council's Equality Objectives	23
- Progress made in 2025/26	23
- Activity planned for 2026/27	33
Data Sources	37



Introduction

As a Council, we are committed to challenging discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity in all aspects of our work. Our approach to Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) outlines our commitment as an employer, as a service provider, and as a community leader. We aim to focus on people who access our services by looking at their whole identity and recognising and valuing that each individual resident, visitor, partner, service provider, service user and employee is unique. The Council is committed to promoting a community and organisational culture that fully respects and values everyone's differences and needs.

We are clear that EDI should influence how we act as an employer; how we develop, evaluate and review our policies; how we design, deliver and evaluate services, and how we commission and procure from others. Single Impact Assessments form an integral part of our decision-making process. Reports to Council and all Council Committees must include a Single Impact Assessment to demonstrate how EDI has been considered in the proposals being brought forward so that Elected Members can make informed decisions. Procurement and commissioning activities also require consideration of EDI as a matter of routine.

As a Council we take all complaints seriously and they are responded to following the Council's agreed Corporate Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure. The outcome of complaint investigations and lessons learned from complaints are actioned and monitored. Any complaints relating to equality characteristics are considered by senior managers.

We are also keen to understand the views of our local community and to involve them in shaping our services through our consultation and engagement activities. We recognise that some people may have difficulties accessing consultations and we endeavour to be as open and inclusive as possible. Our online first approach using the Your Say online consultation platform allows users to adjust their own settings (e.g. contrast and font size) to suit their needs or to use assistive technology to help them take part. Translation services are built into the platform via Google Translate. For those unable to share their views online, assistance is available through the Community Hubs and paper copies of surveys can be provided when needed. Where individuals face barriers to taking part we can provide additional support to enable them to share their views e.g. through sign language interpreters or easy read formats of documents. The data and views collected through consultation help inform service delivery and development. It also helps us decide on the Council's priorities for the future.

Within our EDI Policy, agreed in March 2023, we have extended our approach to EDI beyond the 9 legally protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010 to also give consideration to those who are care leavers and the Armed Forces Community (as established in our Armed Forces Covenant). We also consider inequality related



to poverty and disadvantage recognising that this relates to individuals as well as children and families.

Through the publication of this Equality Report we aim to demonstrate our compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty with regard to people affected by our policies and practices and our employees. We are also using this report to publish our gender pay gap data.



Hartlepool Population Equality Fact File

Data from the 2025 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2026 unless stated otherwise.

Total Population = 99,656

Population aged 16+ = 81,099

Households = 40,930 (Source: Census 2021, ONS)

Sex:

Percentage of the total population who are male = 48.9%

Percentage of the total population who are female = 51.1%

Percentage of population aged 16+ who are male = 48.3%

Percentage of population aged 16+ who are female = 51.7%

Age:

Total population broken down by age bracket (percentage)	Male only population broken down by age bracket (percentage)	Female only population broken down by age bracket (percentage)
15 and under = 18.6%	15 and under = 19.7%	15 and under = 17.6%
16 – 25 = 11.5%	16 – 25 = 12.3%	16 – 25 = 10.8%
26 – 35 = 12.8%	26 – 35 = 12.6%	26 – 35 = 12.9%
36 – 45 = 12.6%	36 – 45 = 12.2%	36 – 45 = 12.9%
46 – 55 = 11.5%	46 – 55 = 11.4%	46 – 55 = 11.5%
56 – 65 = 14.0%	56 – 65 = 13.8%	56 – 65 = 14.2%
66 – 75 = 10.6%	66 – 75 = 10.7%	66 – 75 = 10.5%
76 – 85 = 6.3%	76 – 85 = 5.7%	76 – 85 = 6.9%
86 and over = 2.1%	86 and over = 1.6%	86 and over = 2.7%



Data from the Census 2021, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Ethnicity:

Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh = 1.7%

Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African = 0.5%

Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups = 0.7%

White = 96.5%

Other ethnic group = 0.6%

Religion:

Christian = 52.5%

Buddhist = 0.2%

Hindu = 0.2%

Jewish = 0.0%

Muslim = 1.3%

Sikh = 0.2%

Other religion = 0.3%

No religion = 40.1%

Not answered = 5.1%

Disability:

Long-term health problem of disability where day-to-day activities are limited a lot = 11.4%

Long-term health problem of disability where day-to-day activities are limited a little = 11.5%

Day-to-day activities not limited = 77.1%



Gender:

Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth = 94.5%

Gender identity different from sex registered at birth = 0.4%

Not answered = 5.1%

Sexual Orientation:

Straight or Heterosexual = 91.1%

Gay or Lesbian = 1.5%

Bisexual = 1.1%

Other Sexual Orientation = 0.2%

Not answered = 6.1%

Other areas of priority from the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy:**Armed Forces:**

Proportion of usual residents who previously served in UK regular armed forces = 4.1%

Data from the Census 2021, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Care Leavers:

Total number of care leavers aged 17 to 18 = 34

Total number of care leavers aged 19 to 21 = 92

Total number of care leavers aged 22 to 25 = 102

Data from the annual SSDA903 Children Looked After Return as at 31st March 2026 (reporting year 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026)



Poverty and Disadvantage:

Percentage of children (aged 0-19) living in relative low income families after housing costs = 31.7%*

2024/25 data from DWP Households Below Average Income Survey estimates

* This is the proportion of children aged 0 to 19 living in families (not households) in Relative low income during the year, After Housing Costs (AHC). The figures are based the count of children aged under 19 and under living in the area derived from ONS mid-year population estimates. The count of children refers to the age of the child at 30 June of each year.

Low income is a family whose equivalised income is below 60 per cent of median household incomes. Gross Income is defined as Gross Personal Income from benefits or tax credits, from employment and self-employment, and from occupational pensions. Equivalisation adjusts incomes for household size and composition, taking an adult couple with no children as the reference point. For example, the process of equivalisation would adjust the income of a single person upwards, so their income can be compared directly to the standard of living for a couple.

This is income After Housing Costs (AHC) over the entire tax year. A family must have claimed one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the year to be classed as low income in these statistics.

Children are dependent individuals aged under 16; or aged 16 to 19 in full-time non-advanced education. The count of children refers to the age of the child at 31 March of each year.

Figures are calibrated to the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) survey estimates but provide more granular local area information not available from the HBAI. Further information and methodology on the construction of these statistics is available on the [Government's website](#).



Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce Equality

This section of the report provides a summary and analysis of Hartlepool Borough Council's workforce, excluding Local Authority Maintained Schools. The workforce profile is shown as at 31st March 2026, while the data is for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. The data included in this section of the report is based on individuals and their main posts in the Council, excluding Local Authority Maintained Schools, and not workers e.g. casuals. Therefore, where an individual holds more than one post with the Council (e.g. multiple part-time positions) they will only be included once. However, an analysis has been undertaken on employees who hold more than one post with the Council and the findings from this are included in the Workforce Summary at the end of this section of the report.

Hartlepool Borough Council's aim is to have a workforce that reflects our residents, customers and stakeholders and we recognise that promoting equality benefits public services for all.

The Council has a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and promote good relations between people. As part of this Act, the public sector equality duty requires the Council to show how it is meeting its responsibilities as an employer, including a requirement to publish information regarding our workforce. This report forms part of the Council's response to that duty, providing a summary and analysis of Hartlepool Borough Council's workforce against protected characteristics.



Our workforce profile compared to the community we serve

Hartlepool Population		Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce
Population = 99,656 * *of which 81,099 are aged 16+ (Source: 2025 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2026)	Headcount	Employees working for HBC = 2,145 Total Full Time Equivalents = 1,756.4
Male = 48.3%* Female = 51.7%* * Percentage of population aged 16+ (Source: 2025 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2026)	Sex	Male = 28.2% Female = 71.8%
66+ = 23.4%* 56-65 = 17.2%* 46-55 = 14.1%* 36-45 = 15.5%* 26-35 = 15.7%* 16-25 = 14.1%* * as a percentage of the population aged 16+ (Source: 2025 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2026)	Age	66+ = 3.8% 56-65 = 26.3% 46-55 = 23.2% 36-45 = 20.3% 26-35 = 19.6% 16-25 = 6.9%



Hartlepool Population		Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh = 1.7% Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African = 0.5% Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups = 0.7% White = 96.5% Other ethnic group = 0.6% (Source: ONS Census 2021)	Ethnicity	BME = 1.1% White / Other = 72.7% Undeclared = 26.2%
Christian = 52.5% Buddhist = 0.2% Hindu = 0.2% Jewish = 0.0% Muslim = 1.3% Sikh = 0.2% Other religion = 0.3% No religion = 40.1% Not answered = 5.1% (Source: ONS Census 2021)	Religion / Beliefs	Christian = 24.9% Buddhist = Suppressed, less than 5 Hindu = 0% Jewish = 0% Muslim = 0.2% Sikh = 0% Other religion = 1.0% Not stated = 45.9% Prefer not to say = 1.6% None = 26.3%
Long-term health problem of disability where day-to-day activities are limited a lot = 11.4% Long-term health problem of disability where day-to-day activities are limited a little = 11.5% Day-to-day activities not limited = 77.1% (Source: ONS Census 2021)	Disability	Disabled = 3.4% Not disabled = 65.3% Undeclared = 31.2% Prefer not to say = Suppressed, less than 5
Proportion of usual residents who previously served in UK regular armed forces = 4.1%	Armed Forces	Undeclared = 99.6% Previously served in Reserve Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5



Hartlepool Population		Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce
Data from the Census 2021, produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS)		Previously served in Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Spouse of someone currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Spouse of someone previously served in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5



Our workforce profile in 2025/26 compared to our workforce profile in 2024/25

Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce 2024/25 Headcount		Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce 2025/26 Headcount	Hartlepool Borough Council Workforce 2025/26 All Posts
Employees working for HBC = 2,107 Total Full Time Equivalents = 1705.3	Headcount	Employees working for HBC = 2,145 Total Full Time Equivalents = 1,756.4	Active contracts for HBC = 2,304 Total Full Time Equivalents = 1,797.0
Male = 27.5% Female = 72.5%	Sex	Male = 28.2% Female = 71.8%	Male = 27.1% Female = 72.9%
66+ = 3.6% 56-65 = 27.3% 46-55 = 24.2% 36-45 = 20.1% 26-35 = 18.5% 16-25 = 6.3%	Age	66+ = 3.8% 56-65 = 26.3% 46-55 = 23.2% 36-45 = 20.3% 26-35 = 19.6% 16-25 = 6.9%	66+ = 3.9% 56-65 = 27.5% 46-55 = 23.1% 36-45 = 20.0% 26-35 = 18.9% 16-25 = 6.6%
BME = 1.1% White / Other = 71.6% Undeclared = 27.2%	Ethnicity	BME = 1.1% White / Other = 72.7% Undeclared = 26.2%	BME = 1.1% White / Other = 72.1% Undeclared = 26.8%
Christian = 24.9% Buddhist = Suppressed, less than 5 Hindu = 0.0% Jewish = 0.0% Muslim = 0.2% Sikh = 0.0% Other religion = 1.2% No religion = 23.3% Not stated = 48.6% Prefer not to say = 1.7%	Religion / Beliefs	Christian = 24.9% Buddhist = Suppressed, less than 5 Hindu = 0% Jewish = 0% Muslim = 0.2% Sikh = 0% Other religion = 1.0% None = 26.3% Not stated = 45.9% Prefer not to say = 1.6%	Christian = 25.0% Buddhist = Suppressed, less than 5 Hindu = 0% Jewish = 0% Muslim = 0.2% Sikh = 0% Other religion = 1.1% None = 26.0% Not stated = 46.1% Prefer not to say = 1.6%



Disabled = 2.9% Not disabled = 64.0% Undeclared = 32.9% Prefer not to say = 0.1%	Disability	Disabled = 3.4% Not disabled = 65.3% Undeclared = 31.2% Prefer not to say = Suppressed, less than 5	Disabled = 3.3% Not disabled = 65.0% Undeclared = 31.5% Prefer not to say = 0.2%
Undeclared = 99.5% Previously served in Reserve Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Previously served in Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Spouse of someone currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Spouse of someone previously served in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5	Armed Forces	Undeclared = 99.6% Previously served in Reserve Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Previously served in Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Spouse of someone currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Spouse of someone previously served in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5	Undeclared = 99.6% Previously served in Reserve Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Previously served in Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Spouse of someone currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5 Spouse of someone previously served in the Regular Armed Forces = Suppressed, less than 5

Workforce Summary

The data highlights that:

- Over 53% of the workforce are over 45 years old and over a quarter of the workforce (30.1%) are over 55 years old. The aging profile of our workforce is recognised, and we are making plans to support succession planning and the development of future leaders and managers in the organisation. This profile has not changed significantly from the previous year;



- We have a predominantly female workforce which can in part be attributed to a greater number of female part-time workers across the Council and the flexible/family friendly working policies available to Council workers;
- Limited information has been provided by our employees in relation to their ethnicity, religion/beliefs and disability status. Employees have the ability to update their own personal details online through the Council's HR/Payroll system. This can be updated using a paper form for those employees without access to the internet at work. This has resulted in a small reduction in the percentage of employees undeclared/not stated for ethnicity and religion/beliefs. A prefer not to say option has been expanded to some categories this is to enable employees to provide a more accurate response.
- Comparing headcount to the 'all posts' information, the data shows that 126 employees have more than one post. Of those, 98 employees hold two posts, 23 employees hold three posts and 5 employees hold four posts.
- The information also shows that predominantly more females hold multiple contracts.



Recruitment

Unfortunately, only partial data is available for 2025/26 covering the period 1st April to 30th June 2025. This is due to the implementation of a new applicant tracking system on 1st July 2025. Issues have been identified with the reports from the new tracking system and these are currently being resolved ready for the 2026/27 report.

The following table sets out the profile of the 819 internal/external applicants, applying for job vacancies with the Council, from 1st April to 30th June 2025 and how this compares with the previous year.

	Applications Received 2024/25	Applications Received 1st April to 30th June 2025
Sex	Male = 30.8% Female = 53.2% Undeclared = 16.0%	Male = 32.7% Female = 51.9% Undeclared = 15.4%
Age	65+ over = 0.5% 56-65 = 6.3% 46-55 = 13.4% 36-45 = 17.6% 26-35 = 28.5% 16-25 = 33.7%	65+ over = 0.5% 56-65 = 6.3% 46-55 = 13.4% 36-45 = 17.6% 26-35 = 28.5% 16-25 = 33.7%
Ethnicity	BME = 10.0% White / Other = 68.2% Undeclared = 21.8%	BME = 10.6% White / Other = 67.9% Undeclared = 21.5%
Disability	Disabled = 3.6% Not disabled = 72.0% Undeclared = 24.2% Prefer not to say = suppressed less than 5	Disabled = 5.1% Not disabled = 71.4% Undeclared = 23.4%

Recruitment Summary

Compared to last year, the partial data available for 2025/2026 is very similar. There has been a slight increase in declarations of ethnicity and disability. Whilst the introduction of a new applicant tracking system, has initially resulted in a reduction of the data available for 2025/2026, in future years the system has the ability to provide more robust reporting, particularly as it includes a mandatory requirement for applicants to complete equality monitoring information.



The data highlights that:

- The majority of applicants were female (51.9%).
- Most applicants are 35 years old and under.
- The percentage of BME applicants has increased compared to the previous year.
- The percentage of disabled applicants had increased compared to the previous year to 5.1%.



Leavers

The following table sets out the profile of the 266 employees who left the Council during 2025/26 and how this compares with the previous year:

	Leavers 2024/25	Leavers 2025/26
Sex	Male = 30.1% Female = 69.9%	Male = 32.0% Female = 68.0%
Age	66+ = 6.6% 56-65 = 24.7% 46-55 = 15.5% 36-45 = 16.8% 26-35 = 18.4% 16-25 = 18.0%	66+ = 12.4% 56-65 = 29.3% 46-55 = 15.0% 36-45 = 13.2% 26-35 = 16.5% 16-25 = 13.5%
Ethnicity	BME = 1.6% White / Other = 69.0 % Undeclared = 29.4%	BME = 2.3% White / Other = 72.9% Undeclared = 24.8%
Religion / Beliefs	Christian = 23.4% Other religion = 2.2% No religion = 28.5% Undeclared = 44.0% Prefer not to say = Suppressed, less than 5 Muslim = Suppressed, less than 5 Sikh = Suppressed, less than 5	Christian = 29.3% Other religion = 2.6% No religion = 22.2% Undeclared = 43.2% Prefer not to say = 2.3% Muslim = Suppressed, less than 5
Disability	Disabled = 1.6% Not disabled = 63.6% Undeclared = 34.8%	Disabled = 4.1% Not disabled = 66.2% Undeclared = 29.7%

Leavers Summary

The data highlights that:

The turnover rate of the Council for 2025/26 was 12.5%.

Of those who left the organisation:

- 47.0% left by voluntary resignation
- 20.3% left to retire
- 32.7% left for other reasons



Gender Pay Gap

The Council's mean gender pay gap:

2025/26	2024/25
-6.24%	-3.16%

The mean is the average of the figures and is calculated by adding up all the figures and divided by the total number of figures.

The Council's median gender pay gap:

2025/26	2024/25
-5.04%	0.73%

The median is the salary figure that sits in the middle when all figures are ordered lowest to highest.

The overall mean gender pay gap for the Council is –6.24%, which means that female employees, overall, receive, on average, 6.24% more total pay than male employees.

The Council's gender pay gap falls well below the national public sector mean and median of 2.1% and 0.8% respectively*.

* Data Source: LGA The gender pay gap in English local authorities 2025/26

Understanding our gender pay gap

The introduction of the gender pay gap was to address the imbalance in remuneration between male and female employees. Historically, across organisations the gap was in favour of males in the workplace. The gender pay gap for the Council shows 6.24% of female employees receive more total pay than male employees. This can be attributed to the higher number of female employees across the workforce (72%), combined with a greater proportion of the lower paid employees being female.



What are we doing to ensure our female employees receive fair remuneration

- Making the workplace more accessible, by enabling greater flexibility via a range of policies that allow for flexible working, flexitime, emergency dependants leave, shared parental leave, hybrid, 9 day fortnights, compressed hours and home working.
- The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy recognises the value of ‘helping all those who work for the Council to develop to their full potential so that the talents and resources of the workforce are utilised fully to create a borough of opportunity for all.’
- Continue to provide learning and development opportunities to all employees, including developing/enhancing our digital offer to enable access for the whole workforce
- Continue to develop and where possible expand apprenticeship opportunities, including degree level apprenticeships for both new and existing employees. This will assist employees to fulfil their aspirations and support them to progress within their chosen career path.

<u>Gender Pay Gap – Quartile Analysis by Employee</u>					
	Total	Female	Male	Female (%)	Male (%)
Lower Quartile	536	383	153	71.5%	28.5%
Lower Middle Quartile	536	363	173	67.7%	32.3%
Upper Middle Quartile	536	399	137	74.4%	25.6%
Upper Quartile	536	395	141	73.7%	26.3%
Total	2144	1540	604	71.8%	28.2%



Consultation and Employee Engagement

Consultation with Trade Unions

The Council works in partnership with Trade Unions and meets regularly to discuss issues affecting the Council and its workforce, including matters in relation to equality. The Trade Unions can also provide a range of support to their members on individual workplace or personal issues.

Employee Engagement

We are committed to employee engagement and seek to ensure that the right conditions are in place for all members of our workforce to give of their best each day. We want our employees to be committed to our organisational goals and values and be motivated to contribute to the overall success of the organisation whilst being supported to enhance their own sense of well-being.

There are various ways in which we undertake employee engagement and some approaches vary between departments. Whole Council engagement activities that are delivered corporately include:

Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Roadshows

ELT Roadshows are held twice a year and are an open to all employees. Multiple sessions are held across 2 weeks and all are led by a member of ELT covering the same content. The sessions are delivered at different times and days and at a range of venues across Hartlepool to enable as many employees as possible to attend. There is also an online session included which is recorded and made available for any employees unable to attend.

ELT Roadshows provide an opportunity to hear first-hand about emerging areas of Council work such as the budget setting process or development of the Council Plan. They are also an opportunity for employees to ask questions of senior managers and get involved in activities to inform the development of Council policy such as Hybrid Working.

Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) Managers Forum

The HBC Manager Forums provides bi-monthly online briefing / discussion sessions with all employees who have managerial responsibility. It is chaired by the Chief Executive. Recent sessions have covered the Council's values, budget updates, the Council's transformation programme, procurement updates and the new Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy.



Annual Employee Survey

An employee survey was undertaken in early 2026 and the findings and corresponding action plan to address areas identified for improvement have been shared. Employee surveys are undertaken once a year to enable us to consider progress and change over time.

Staff Equality Network

The aim of the Staff Equality Network is to facilitate direct engagement with employees representing the full range of protected characteristics. The network also welcomes employees who actively support the promotion of equality and diversity or who have a specific personal interest in the subject area. The network has a dedicated Teams Channel to enable regular and timely communication with one another. The network also feed ideas into the annual campaign calendar to help facilitate engagement across the wider workforce.



Update on the Council's Equality Objectives

In April 2025, the Council's Finance and Policy Committee agreed the following Equality Objectives.

- We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.
- We will ensure that our services and information are easily accessible by everyone, including those with additional needs.
- We will develop our knowledge and understanding of our communities.
- We will act as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambassador.
- We will be an equitable employer.

These equality objectives were developed using the findings from the Big Conversation and scrutiny investigations into accessibility and poverty.

Progress made in 2025/26

We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.

Adult Social Care

The Council raised awareness of the designated "Safe Spaces" across the town through the July publication of Hartbeat, the Council's magazine that is delivered to every household. "Safe Spaces" are community venues where people who need extra support can go for help. Help can include a phone call home or help with directions.

The Council and partners through the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board took part in National Safeguarding Adults week in November with a week of publicity and events focussing on the theme of "Prevention".

Exploring Inclusion and Belonging training for Adult Social Care staff has been developed and launched in March 2026.



We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.

Public Health

The Hartlepool Food Partnership has completed Good Food Local Benchmarking for 2025/26 and they are publishing a children's magazine aimed at primary school children called "Kid's Corner" which covers healthy food / eating.

The Hartlepool Anti-Poverty Strategy was developed by a range of partners including the Council and adopted in September 2025.

Health Protection Planning has been completed to ensure diverse community support in the event of incidents.

The Sexual Health Service has been relocated to a building that is easier for the general public to access.

Community Hubs and Wellbeing

Weekly Employability Hub sessions deliver consistent, practical support to residents seeking improved confidence, digital access, and employability skills. Participants receive one-to-one support with CV writing, navigating digital resources, completing online training, and preparing for volunteer or work opportunities. A structured progression pathway was established within The Big League CIC, enabling participants to gain practical experience in administration, retail, community facilities, and cleansing roles. Feedback highlights growing confidence, increased digital literacy, and strengthened community connection.

Book displays in Community Hubs change regularly throughout the year to coincide with national awareness days / months including:

- o April - Autism awareness exhibition in Community Hub Central
- o May – Elmer Day with under 5's sessions supporting the theme that everyone is different with stories and activities that week based around the colourful elephant, including making patchwork elephants and ears, as well as a character hunt around the junior library and in the parent and toddler session. Encouraging children and grownups alike to celebrate diversity, kindness, and creativity.
- o June – Men's Health event at Hartlepool Rovers RFC and Pride exhibition and events.



We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.

- o July - Black British Ballet national tour 'Into The Light' exhibition at Community Hub Central, with a ballet workshop, dance workshop, creative writing workshop and three 'Onisere and the Ballet Queen' story workshops to school groups (including a free copy to each child).
- o August – Fab Lab supported HPL Transformers to prepare decorations for their float in the Headland Carnival Parade.
- o November – “Our Freedom: Then & Now”. National project reflecting on what freedom means now 80 years after the end of WW2. Included a family celebration event at Heugh Gun Battery, workshops with local artists and photography and film exhibitions which were displayed as part of the “Our Freedom: Then & Now” exhibition in Community Hub Central.
- o January - Quilt Exhibition for suicide awareness at Community Hub Central. Fab Lab worked with Hartlepool Art Gallery making models for the Lines of Legitimacy. Mini-exhibition at Community Hub Central celebrating LGBTQ+ history month.
- o February - Mother Tongue Week- Displaying dual language books and gifting a free dual language book to ESOL families who attended under 5's sessions. In the parent and toddler session animal templates were used incorporating different languages to make print paintings. Chinese New Year under 5's sessions about Chinese New Year making lanterns and dragon crafts. Youth Justice exhibition at Community Hub Central. Workshops with Catcote Futures in the Fab Lab. Fab Lab also supported work with My Harbour for individuals affected by domestic abuse.

Hartlepool Jobs and Skills service have delivered a range of learning opportunities for speakers of other languages and had 270 ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) enrolments for the 2025/26 year.

The Diversity Celebration Event was coordinated and delivered by ESOL tutors and learners in December 2025 with over 60 attendees enjoying a full programme of cultural exchange including crafts, presentations, traditional costumes, dance and food.



We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.

A “Welcome to Hartlepool” resource is being developed with partners from the Voluntary and Community Sector to provide information on support services available in the town.

The Council has supported the formation of a Hartlepool Diversity Network through the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Recovery Funds.

Youth Service

A young person from Youth Voice Hartlepool currently sits on Barnardo's national board for anti-misogyny work linked to national policy leading to a piece of focused work in Hartlepool in 2026.

Three Level 2 Youth Work courses are fully subscribed and underway as part of the aim to increase the number of youth workers in the town.

“Lads, lads, lads” project completed. This involved the Youth Service working in partnership with Sidequest CIC with young males in Hartlepool about identity, pride and challenges. The project looked at modern masculinity, belonging and the pressures young men face.

Twice weekly LGBTQ+ youth sessions are delivered as part of the standard youth service offer.

Team Up for Change was created alongside community partners which saw young people being trained as volunteers. Training included the importance of inclusion and diversity from Belong.



We will ensure that our services and information are easily accessible by everyone, including those with additional needs.

Council Website

A new Council website was launched in Autumn 2025 with improved accessibility features including SignLive access for British Sign Language (BSL) users.

Adult Social Care

The “Ask Rachel”, digital assistant, was launched on Hartlepool Now providing access to a range of information, advice and guidance available in a range of languages. Focus groups were held with a range of individuals to inform the development of the AI Chat Bot and test its responses.

Focus groups have also been held with members of Hartlepool Vision Support, the BAME community and citizenship group. The themes emerging from the focus groups have been shared with senior management at the Continuous Improvement Group (CIG) and have informed the design of the Exploring Inclusion and Belonging training course for staff. A focus group is planned with members of the deaf community in April 2026.

A focus group was also held with the BAME community to test the Online Financial Assessment (OFA) that has been developed.

A cross departmental meeting with Children’s and Adult Services was held in March 2026 with an action plan developed to support the transition of young people from child into adult services. A key focus of the work will be adult representation on the SEND panel which will help explore more community led opportunities for young people and highlight some of the opportunities that are available.

The second year of the Council Supported Internship Programme started in September 2025 providing a structured, work-based learning programme to help young people aged 16-24 with additional needs and/or autism gain the skills, experience and confidence they need to move into paid employment. An Asda programme was launched in November 2025 supporting 10 young people into placements.

Community Hubs and Wellbeing

Community Hubs are accessible services and the lift in Central Hub has been replaced to be accessible for more types of wheelchairs and mobility scooters.

A collection of graded Penguin Readers books are now stocked with over 8 levels (starting 400-600 words). A number of duplicate copies are available for reading groups including the Reading Ahead reading groups (Reading Agency



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initiative) that are being delivered to promote confidence in reading through a reading and review challenge.

Literacy

Many Council Departments now utilise Readability Tools when developing written communication for the Hartlepool residents. A number have reviewed and revised their documents to lower the reading age including Family Hubs, Community Hubs, Hartlepool Jobs and Skills, Public Health, Council Tax, Childminding, Housing and Welfare and Food Waste.

The internal literacy task force has focused on the recruitment and training of Literacy Champion volunteers to champion awareness of literacy issues, to share resources, best practice, and function as an advocate in their network. So far there are 48 Council Literacy Champion volunteers, 9 elected members have been trained and there are 2 Voluntary and Community Sector representatives.

Jobs and Skills

Flexible learning options are embedded across the curriculum offer, with a range of formats available. From face-to-face taught sessions, evening sessions, multiple teaching venues across Hartlepool, virtual classrooms and flexible online learning. These options ensure that Hartlepool residents can access training in a way that best suits their needs and lifestyle, helping to remove barriers and widen engagement in learning across the town.

Hartlepool Art Gallery

Arts projects working with a professional artist have been delivered for Children in Care, children who are home educated and children accessing the Youth Service. These resulted in a mini pop-up exhibition, some young people gaining a nationally recognised Arts Awards qualification and outdoor sculptures for the nature garden at Rossmere Youth Centre.



We will develop our knowledge and understanding of our communities.

Single Impact Assessments

A new Single Impact Assessment (SIAs) process was launched within the Council to help officers understand how our actions affect different communities and to inform the Council's decision-making process. Mandatory training has been rolled out for all managers and SIAs are included with all decision reports to Committee. The SIA replaces the previous Equality Impact and Child and Family Poverty Impact assessments and cover the 9 legally protected characteristics and the 3 locally adopted ones of care leavers, armed forces and socio-economic disadvantage.

Public Health

Stop Smoking Services continue to look for opportunities in new venues and continue to do 'pop up stalls' within areas such as Middleton Grange to develop a knowledge and understanding of the communities within Hartlepool. The Hartlepool and Stockton Health bus offered some out of hours clinics such as weekends and evenings in areas across Hartlepool which required additional support (such as areas with higher smoking prevalence). The services also complete holistic assessments and refer and signpost to other services as needed, to help reduce health inequalities across Hartlepool.

Community Cohesion Strategy

Belong have worked in Hartlepool since the unrest in 2024 conducting extensive consultation with Hartlepool residents and holding discussions between people working with agencies across the borough. The deep listening process informed the development of the Hartlepool Cohesion Strategy "Here for You" which was agreed by the Hartlepool Board in February 2026 and the Housing, Growth and Communities Committee in March 2026.

The commitments and actions set out in the strategy result from a simple and clear view by the agencies and groups which have shaped it: Hartlepool is a place where everyone should and can feel they belong and feel safe.

Community Hubs and Wellbeing

Regular engagement and consultation with focus groups takes place to ensure that Community Hub services reflect the current and emerging needs of their communities. Engaging with the Community Hubs Youth Board resulted in the creation of a social group on Monday evenings at Community Hub Seaton for young adults. Working with the Community Panel 'Easy Read' guides for the library are being created and the panel have provided feedback on drafts.



We will act as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambassador.

Adult Social Care

The Council continues to develop support for people with Autism and has been engaging with all those known to Adult Social Care with an autism diagnosis on the key themes that have been identified for a new Autism Plan. Oliver McGown training has been rolled out to all appropriate staff and the service are currently reviewing what training should be offered to the wider workforce.

Jobs and Skills

The Council is the lead contracted provider of Health & Growth Accelerator (Integrated Care Board) Work Well Programme for Tees Valley. Managing the programme across all five Tees Valley Local Authorities and delivering in Hartlepool. The service supports those absent from work with health conditions to improve their health and wellbeing, manage their condition, identify in-work support and return to work.

The Council is also the lead contracted provider of the Connect to Work Programme for Tees Valley (DWP/TVCA). Managing the programme across all 5 Tees Valley Local Authorities and delivering in Hartlepool. Supporting people with disabilities, long term health conditions and barriers to work into sustainable employment through two different supported employment frameworks.

The service is also a contracted provider within the Tees Valley to deliver the Youth Guarantee Trail Blazer (DWP/TVCA) supporting young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) into paid work placements and onto career pathways.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training is offered to the wider council through the Workforce Development Programme, ranging from short CPD to full Level 2 EDI qualifications. In addition, EDI principles are embedded across the entire curriculum offer to ensure Hartlepool residents develop a strong understand of equality, diversity and inclusion and are equipped to apply these values in their daily lives and work.

Strong partnerships exist with the Hartlepool Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations who have been sub-contracted as delivery partners on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme supporting economically inactive residents to move closer and into employment. This includes the Salaam Centre who deliver employment support to those from diverse backgrounds.



We will act as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambassador.

Strong partnership with the Job Centre Plus (JCP) in Hartlepool regarding client referrals, support and they fund a member of staff to deliver Youth Hub employment support, alongside a JCP member of staff who is based in Central Hub.

Delivery of Youth Trailblazer, Connect to Work, UKSPF Tees Valley Move Forward, Work Well and Youth Hub programmes all supporting residents on client led approach to progressing closer and into sustainable employment.

Community Hubs and Wellbeing

Community Hubs continue to lead on Volunteer Hartlepool offering any resident opportunities to volunteer within Community Hubs, Tees Archaeology, Cems and Crems, Hartlepool Art Gallery and Waverley Allotment.

Hartlepool Art Gallery

For the second year running the service supported a project with professional artists for those in drug and alcohol recovery to develop a community exhibition. Since participating in this programme, service users have signed up to volunteer programmes and now meet independently every Wednesday for an art group at the gallery.

A Pop-Up Pride event was held in July 2025 at Hartlepool Art Gallery and this was a well received event, with visitor figures reaching record highs and extremely positive feedback.

A 'sensory corner' has been developed with feedback showing that this is a welcome addition to the gallery space. A number of visitors have enquired if they could buy the equipment therefore officers are investigating the opportunity to make these items available via the gallery shop.

Museum of Hartlepool

The Museum of Hartlepool worked with Men's Suicide Prevention Charity Andy's Man Club on a project to explore and tell the story of PSS Wingfield Castle through research. This work resulted in a handling box to use with community groups and schools and it is hoped this will be extended to be used with care homes in the near future.



We will be an equitable employer.

Human Resources and Organisational Development

A new Applicant Tracking System through North East Jobs enables applicants to declare their EDI information and provides a reporting tool. This has enabled more detailed reporting which was used for Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard return.

The annual workforce survey asked questions around equality which will be analysed and responded to.

Regular information on Employee Benefits included with the Vivup platform is communicated via emails, through wellbeing campaigns, road shows and the intranet.

Organisational Development liaise with the Through Care Team as part of the annual apprenticeship intake encouraging care leavers to consider Council apprenticeships.

An annual EDI campaign programme and EDI training have been delivered to encourage awareness and understanding.

Veterans and reservists are guaranteed an interview for a Council post if they meet the required criteria and we have a Reservist Policy in place.

Adult Social Care

The service submitted a return for the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard and developed an improvement plan for 2026/27.



Activity planned for 2026/27

We will make Hartlepool a safe and welcoming place for people from diverse communities.

Activity planned for 2026/27 includes:

- Engagement and involvement of local communities, including, harder to reach groups and the seldom heard, with the work of the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board, considering equity and equality of access across all aspects of work.
- Delivering accessibility requirements at Polling Stations as outlined in the Elections Act 2022;
- Exploring and where possible implement AI case recording tools with the ability to translate documents into other languages in order to improve and enhance the provision of translated documents within Children's Services;
- Supporting children (10+) who display discriminatory views and beliefs through the Youth Justice Service;
- Commissioning Harbour to deliver domestic abuse support services available to all residents of Hartlepool in safe, community-based locations, including outreach support when this is the most appropriate or accessible option.

We will ensure that our services and information are easily accessible by everyone, including those with additional needs.

Activity planned for 2026/27 includes:

- Ensuring our Youth Justice Service information is accessible and reviewed by our Speech and Language Therapist to ensure it is both age appropriate and understandable for all, including parents;
- Youth Justice Service working with all children and victims, responding to individual needs to make sure there are no barriers to engagement;
- Delivery of Stop Smoking Services at 5 locations across Hartlepool which are accessible on bus routes, have ramp access and support staff to assist those with additional needs;
- Using the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire to develop a better understanding of the needs of our children and young people and ensure services and information is easily accessible to them;
- Delivering 12 monthly health promotion campaigns to targeted populations or communities within Hartlepool, using evidence-based health promotion messages, signposting to support for communities and



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using a range of delivery methods to ensure understanding and accessibility;

- Contracting Action Deafness to support adults with sensory loss and providing drop in support within Central Hub / Café 177 and other community venues for adults who are Deaf and hard of hearing;
- Delivery of three 'Spotlight on' campaigns by the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB);
- Promoting and developing Safeguarding Champions within the Safe Place Scheme participating venues;
- Enhancing the TSAB website and all hosted resources to ensure full compliance with accessibility standards, maintaining an up-to-date and accessible platform for effective signposting;
- Reviewing public information with Adult Social Care service users;
- Exploring the implementation of an Easy Read converter for Hartlepool Now;
- Exploring how AI videos can provide alternative ways of accessing information on Hartlepool Now;
- Training Community Navigators and Job Coaches in the Targeted Employment and Volunteering Team to ensure they understand the communication needs of people from different communities and how to access appropriate support;
- Implementing the extension of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty;
- Reviewing school appeal documentation to ensure it's accessible for parents;
- Supporting parents accessing services related to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) via the SEND Navigator;
- Gathering pupil voice through the Pupil Voice and Advocacy Officer to inform the Local Area Inclusion Plan as well as other ways in which services can be more accessible to children and young people;
- Launching a SEND Youth Forum to ensure that children and young people's voices inform the design and delivery of services, making them accessible for all;
- Monitoring the information and advice service for Black and Minority Ethnic communities to ensure adult social care and information, advice and guidance are accessible;
- Continuing to work with the Citizenship Group, Sensory Loss groups and other seldom heard communities to review accessibility of information and advice, including easy read;
- Implementing Magic Notes as an AI tool for social workers to support timely, clear and consistent case recording and to help produce



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information that is easier to understand and share with people, carers and families (including accessible formats where appropriate).

We will develop our knowledge and understanding of our communities.

Activity planned for 2026/27 includes:

- The Youth Justice Service working with children, parents/carers and victims in their communities to try to understand what the local issues are and what impact (if any) the children we work with may be having on the community;
- Working as part of Sport England's Place Partnership project group on the Test and Learn initiative. The findings of this will be used to understand how physical activity initiatives can be designed and delivered in ways that can reduce inequalities across Hartlepool's populations and diverse communities;
- The Stop Smoking Service (SSS) continuing to look for opportunities in new venues and have 'pop up stalls' within areas such as Middleton Grange and at other events to develop a knowledge and understanding of the communities within Hartlepool;
- Delivering an annual consultation programmes through TSAB to ensure feedback from people who have accessed safeguarding services, professionals and the general public;
- Coffee Mornings for Parents and Family carers of adults with a learning disability and Autism (Weekly) at the Centre for Independent Living – all welcome, themed events linked to Housing / Health /Care and Support;
- Holding targeted focus groups with commissioned services in Adult Social Care – including those supporting people from minority ethnic communities, people with sensory impairments, carers and young adults and adults with learning disabilities - to understand community needs and barriers;
- Pupil Voice and Advocacy Officer within the Inclusion Team working to gather pupil voice, both group and individually, to inform the Local Area Inclusion Plan helping us develop our understanding of communities;
- Commissioning sensory loss awareness training for adult social care staff;
- Supporting relevant staff to attend the Level 5 deaf/blind training.



We will act as an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ambassador.

Activity planned for 2026/27 includes:

- Delivering a Safeguarding Champions event at the Centre for Independent Living with a focus on the support provided by the Link Project;
- Applying to retain the National Autistic Society (NAS) Advanced accreditation award for the Centre for Independent Living (CIL);
- Working with Adult Social Care commissioned services to promote the Supported Internship programme to develop placement opportunities for young people with additional needs;
- Raising the profile of the Supported Internship programme to promote the programme as a talent pathway into paid employment, helping services to recognise the potential of supported interns as employees;
- Working with partners, education and commissioned services to run information sessions for young people with additional needs and their families to raise aspirations and awareness of routes into employment, training and independence (including Supported Internships).

We will be an equitable employer.

Activity planned for 2026/27 includes:

- Responding with policy changes as a result of changing legislation and guidance including the Equality Act 2010 and Employment Rights Act;
- Completing the re-assessment of our Leader status in the Disability Confident Scheme;
- Reviewing and promoting our training offer through Skillgate (our digital training platform) and the Workforce Development Programme and monitoring completion rates;
- Considering the adoption of the UNISON Anti Racism Charter, the Disability Employment Charter and the Violence at Work Charter;
- Exploring how AI case recording tools can support the work and wellbeing of children's services staff with neurodiversity;
- Taking part in the Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SC-WRES).



Data sources

The data used in this report includes:

2025 Mid-Year Population Estimates, England and Wales, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in July 2026.

Census 2021, published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Data from the annual SSDA903 Children Looked After Return as at 31st March 2026 (reporting year 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026).

Data from Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Children in low income families: local area statistics publication, March 2026.

Hartlepool Borough Council workforce and recruitment data from internal systems.

Local Government Association (LGA) The gender pay gap in English local authorities 2025/26 report, June 2026.

Data Check (office use only)

Officer responsible for inputting data:	CG / KA	MK
Date completed:	29.7.26	14.8.26
Officer responsible for checking data:	MK	CG
Date completed:	29.7.26	14.8.26

