
Equalities Forum MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Monday, 2 March 2026 from 7.00 pm - 8.56 pm.

Present: Councillors

Kevin Raeburn (Chair), Anne Winter

Also in Attendance: Councillors

Louise Price and Narinder Sian

Officers in Attendance:

Shivani Davé, Partnerships & Inclusion Manager
Anita Hibbs, Committee Officer
Alice Tomkins, Community Liaison Officer
Rebecca Young, Head of Strategy & Partnerships

External in Attendance:

Tyson Martin, Herts Pride Society, Herts LGBTQ Health & Wellbeing CIC
Andrew Waite, Impactful Governance CIC
Collette Garland, Watford & Three Rivers Intensive Family Support, HCC
Saffron Johnson, Watford & Three Rivers Trust
Nicky Chaperlin, SPACE
Patty Quiroz, SPACE
Mimi Konigsurg, The Ark Synagogue
Clive Duffey, Herts Pride Society
Misbah Jalil, Jummah in Chorleywood
Tomasz Glinski, Refugee Council
Sean O'Connell, Mission EmployAble
Esme O'Connell, Mission EmployAble
Vanessa O'Connell, Mission EmployAble
Erica Bendall, Mission EmployAble
Davinder Singh, Sri Guru Singh Sabha Watford
Tareq Ghalib, Watford & Three Rivers Refugee Partnership

20 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

Attendees were welcomed to the meeting and introduced themselves.

21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Louise Price declared a donation made to Mission EmployAble in her capacity as Hertfordshire County Councillor.

22 NOTICE OF OTHER BUSINESS

The Partnerships & Inclusion Manager advised of a last-minute addition concerning the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Chair agreed to include this item at the end of the agenda.

23 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chair introduced the Terms of Reference. Andrew Waite from Impactful Governance clarified the distinction between two organisations; Impactful Governance and Impactful Lives, suggesting the possibility of including participants from both organisations in the forum in future.

24 MISSION EMPLOYABLE

Erica Bendall delivered a presentation highlighting the focus of helping young adults with learning disabilities gain paid employment through their supported internship programme. Which offers skills training and real workplace experience, leading to 90 percentage of their graduates gaining paid employment after 10 months of employability training.

Sean O'Connell shared his daughter, Esme's, journey as a young woman diagnosed with epilepsy at a young age, which severely affected her childhood and learning abilities due to frequent seizures and neurological damage. Despite these challenges, Esme discovered her passion in cooking, sports, and her love of dogs. Encouraged by her family, she pursued athletics, even winning a gold medal representing Great Britain, which led to her receiving her pet dog. Her true passion remained cooking and baking, but Esme faced difficulties accessing appropriate training and employment opportunities due to fragmented and complex support systems for people with disabilities. Her family however, found hope and clear direction through Mission EmployAble. Esme gained valuable experience at the Café on the Common, Chorleywood, learning kitchen skills and customer interaction, which boosted her confidence. She now works as a Commis Chef trainee, at a 4-star hotel, with specialised support to accommodate her learning needs and help her manage a fast-paced kitchen environment. Mission EmployAble's programme, understanding and adaptive approach have been crucial in enabling Esme to pursue her dream career, demonstrating the importance of targeted support and inclusive employment pathways for individuals with disabilities.

Mission EmployAble's programme collaborates with educational institutions like the Bucks College Group, and attend numerous schools and Post 16 transition, including College and their own Open Days to connect with parents and young people. It offers comprehensive employability training, English, math, and practical skills in various settings such as via their local training centre, Cafe on the Common, including box packing, horticultural, site maintenance, regenerative farming and hospitality with 3 local curriculum partners. The aim is to equip the interns with transferable skills and work experience to secure permanent paid employment.

Esme's parents highlighted the past challenges of finding scattered and incomplete information across various sources. They emphasised the lack of coordinated guidance in mainstream education pathways, with no clear, staged instructions and support. There was also mention of financial barriers that may prevent institutions from fully supporting disabled young adults leaving parents to fight for resources and information. The conversation stressed the importance of making information more accessible and integrated, in a similar way to Mission EmployAble's that offer joined-up support and community connections. The parent highlighted some gaps in accessible information regarding career guidance and post college support, which led to uncertainty about future options for their daughter. Being a resident in Three Rivers meant that having the new charity Mission EmployAble on their doorstep, which ensured the right choice for Esme. However, they recognised that the provision was not entirely lacking, but the range of available options felt relatively narrow.

They also acknowledge the situation seems to have improved since Esme was exploring these pathways which had led to uncertainty about next steps.

Members inquired about the extent to which the charity is promoted and whether there is a direct connection or link to Mission EmployAble on the Council's website. Officers committed to verifying the current status and ensuring the charity is featured, along with plans for broader communications.

Mission EmployAble's representative also highlighted the exceptional work of Carly Knowler. She is the Supported Internship Project Officer for Herts CC through SyFP. Carly brings a wealth of knowledge about supported internships across the county and is a strong advocate for their effectiveness in supporting young people with learning disabilities into meaningful employment.

25 SPACE

Nicky Chaperlin provided a comprehensive overview of SPACE, a Hertfordshire-wide organisation dedicated to supporting families raising neurodivergent young people, including those with autism, ADHD, dyspraxia and dyscalculia.

Key points raised during the discussion include the availability of lending services for equipment at various locations without strict membership requirements, emphasising easy access for families. The conversation also highlighted the importance of building strong relationships with local CVS and other organisations to enhance visibility and resource sharing. Collaboration was seen as essential to overcome funding challenges and increase outreach. The discussion also addressed training that is provided to partner organisations to better support neurodivergent families and the value of networking at local information fairs.



Introduction to
SPACE - newest versic

26 WHO'S IN CHARGE

Collette Garland delivered a presentation highlighting the focus of the Intensive Family Support Team at HCC. The team is composed of family support workers, not social workers, and focuses on early help for families in crisis, many of whom have children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). The speaker also provided detailed information on the Who's in Charge course addressing child on parent violence; a growing issue where parents face abuse from their children, including those with disabilities or SEND.

Andrew Waite from Impactful Governance CIC highlighted the importance of collaboration between educational and community services to facilitate cross-referrals and better support networks. In response, Collette Garland described ongoing initiatives such as an intensive family support team and a recurring coffee morning event held every eight weeks, which serves as a networking opportunity for families and local organisations. These aim to provide families with information about local resources and foster community connections.



Who's In Charge
Facilitators Presentatic

27 COMMUNITY INSIGHTS

Item covered under previous items.

28 THREE RIVERS EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION POLICY AND EQUALITY OBJECTIVES

The Partnerships & Inclusion Manager reported that the Council has recently refreshed its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy, updating the legislation, commitments, and clarifying roles and responsibilities across various areas, including councillors, management, HR and staff. An inclusion and well-being working group has been established, comprising representatives from each service area, to oversee staff well-being surveys and develop annual plans aligned with council objectives. The updated EDI objectives focus on building trust with communities, ensuring fair and accessible services and promoting a diverse workforce and inclusive culture. The Council seeks feedback from communities to refine these objectives. **Action for partners** – please share the EDI policy with your communities.

Questions raised about proactive management of EDI in procurement revealed plans to incorporate disability confidence and EDI policies in procurement and grant agreements, supported by quality impact assessments, despite limited staffing resources.

29 EQUALITY DUTY INFORMATION REPORT 2026

The Partnerships & Inclusion Manager advised that the report, which is available on the Council's website, includes an action plan derived from their objectives and highlighted the progress made. The officer expressed pride in the comprehensive document and mentioned that a link to the report will be shared.



EDI Policy.pptx

30 WORKPLAN

The Head of Strategy & Partnerships explained the purpose of the work plan for future meetings, emphasising the importance of bringing together different organisations to share presentations and insights, thereby fostering learning and collaboration. Key topics include domestic abuse risk and resilience, online safety and council policies, such as the cemeteries policy which aligns with equality policies. The forum aims to keep members informed about council activities that impact various communities and encourages members to contribute ideas or volunteer to present at future meetings. There was also a request for data on workforce diversity, which is available through published information and reports.

31 OTHER BUSINESS - IF APPROVED UNDER ITEM 3 ABOVE

The Head of Strategy & Partnerships provided a brief overview of LGR highlighting the government's consultation regarding the joining of local authorities, with three main options for restructuring councils into unitary authorities. Prior consultations have taken place, and the government will make the final decision based on the feedback received. Attendees were encouraged to participate by sharing the consultation with their communities and completing the survey. Link to the survey: [Local Government Reorganisation | Shaping Hertfordshire's Future](#)

The Chair encouraged participants to come along to the next meeting in October.



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