

CHP

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Report

2024



Celebrating Essex Pride

Our equity, diversity, and inclusion journey

We're committed to delivering fair and inclusive services accessible to people of any background. We want all our employees and customers to feel listened to, that their views are heard and acted upon, and that they're treated as individuals. This remains central to our new Corporate Strategy for 2025-2030, which focuses on making sure our services prioritise customer needs. It also emphasises a culture where employees can reach their full potential.

Everything we do is guided by our values. We care about our customers and communities and are determined to make a difference. We're bold and open-minded in our pursuit of solutions.

In 2022, we developed our Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Policy, supported by an action

plan, which we put together in partnership with Housing Diversity Network. We listened to employees and customers to develop the action plan, making sure it reflected their priorities.

This report outlines our progress over the past year on the five themes of the action plan. It covers the period January 2024 to December 2024. We highlight key work we've been doing and our priorities for the future.

We still have progress to make, but we have initiatives in place to develop our approach further by listening to customers, communities, and employees.

What is equity, diversity, and inclusion and why does it matter?

While the terms equity, diversity, and inclusion are often used together, they're not the same, and each has a different meaning.

Equity means making sure that everybody has an equal chance to achieve the same outcomes.

Diversity is about recognising, celebrating, and valuing our differences as well as our similarities.

Inclusion means that all people, regardless of their diversity, have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

It's important to recognise that while equity, diversity, and inclusion are different, they need to be progressed together as one can't exist without the other.

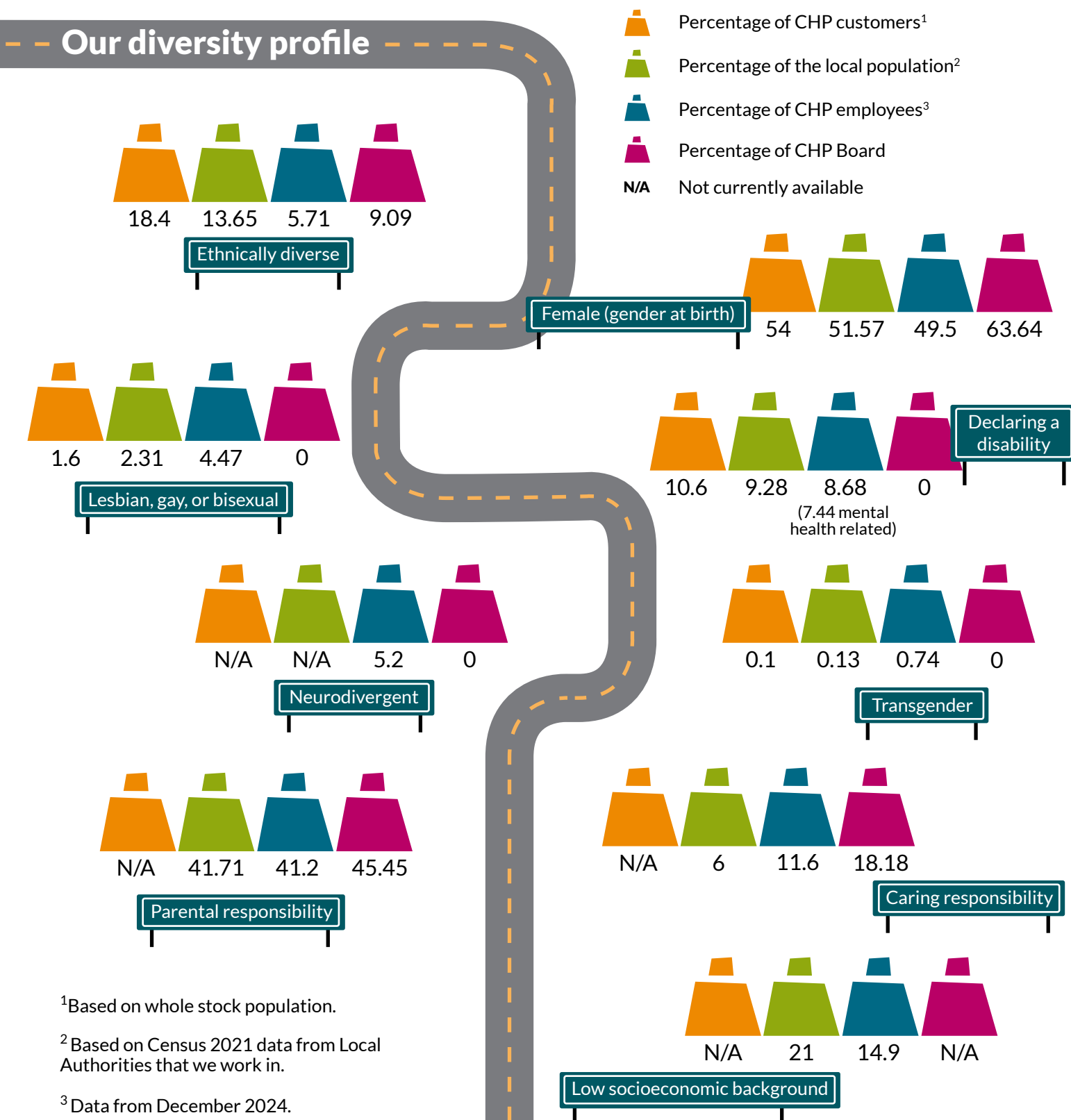
Our EDI action plan is a commitment to meet the obligations and duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to promote equal opportunities when delivering services to customers and in our employment practices.

We're passionate about tackling inequality in its widest sense and challenging discrimination based on a variety of social and cultural characteristics. Our goal is to make CHP an equitable, diverse, and inclusive place where employees and customers feel happy, comfortable, and safe to be themselves.

Objective one

Knowing our people

We're committed to finding out more about the diverse needs of customers and shaping our services and communications to meet their needs. We also want to understand more about our employees and their needs. To do this, we track diversity characteristics of employees and customers, where we can. The graphic below shows a selection of characteristics and highlights how we align with the local community.



Customers

This year we:

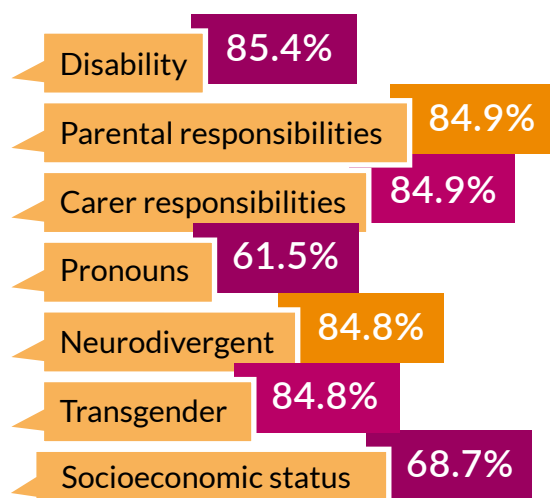
- Focused on increasing the information we hold about customers and the amount of data we hold about different protected characteristics. We've seen an improvement⁴ in the capture of missing data for ethnicity (3 percent increase), and sexuality and religion (6 percent increase). We've also seen a 3 percent increase in data collection around disabilities. Customers can now update the information we hold about them by checking preferences in their online services account or calling us, or we may ask customers at different times, like during sign-up. Sharing this with us is optional, but it helps us better understand and support customers and offer fair, equal, and accessible services.

Employees

This year we:

- Ran another 'Be counted' campaign to get to know employees better, and as a result, the average completion of our diversity data increased by 7 percent.
- We also started to collect socioeconomic status data from employees. We ran a communications campaign to help employees understand why this information is important and to explain the questions that determine socioeconomic status. By the end of 2024, 68 percent of employees had provided this data.

Percentage of employees that responded about themselves on the following topics:



- Produced our third Ethnicity Pay Gap (EPG) Report in March 2025. The results show that our ethnically diverse employees' median hourly rate is 4 percent higher than our white employees' hourly rate. This is a -4 pay gap, but it has reduced from -9.7 last year. Our mean EPG is 6, which has increased from 3 last year. Having one average that shows a gap and one that doesn't, reflects the calculation method. 8.8 percent of employees have told us they're ethnically diverse, which means the breadth of earnings will be different due to the small size of the group. Read more about our ethnicity pay gap and what we're doing about it by visiting chp.org.uk/reports.
- Produced our annual Gender Pay Gap (GPG) Report in March 2025. The results show that we have an 8.2 percent median gender pay gap, which is an increase from the previous year when the gap was 0. This is because more men are in the upper earning quartiles than the previous year, and more women are in the lower earning quartiles. Our mean GPG has increased by 2.5 percent to 5.9 percent. Find out what we're doing to close the gap by visiting chp.org.uk/reports.

⁴ As of 17 January 2025

What's next?

Fair and inclusive services

We also want to consistently collect more information about other characteristics that are important to customers and that affect the accessibility of our services.

We know collecting data isn't a tick box exercise – it's about how we use it that counts.

We're committed to using the information customers provide to make sure that our services are fair and to identify any barriers that may prevent people from accessing our services.

Objective two

Customer service and engagement

We recognise that customers and the people who use our services come from diverse backgrounds, and each have different lived experiences and needs. We'll remove barriers that disadvantage individuals.

This year we:

- Consulted with customers to develop our new Support Needs and Accessible Services Policy. We know that people face different challenges that can make it hard to access our services. As a social housing provider, we have a responsibility to make our services accessible to everyone. This policy explains how we'll meet that responsibility by recognising and recording support needs, training our employees, improving our services, and being honest about what we can and can't do.
- Added a new toolbar to our website to make it easier for users to access and understand information. It supports different languages, neurodiversity, and accessibility needs. Visitors can now translate content into over

We'll also work to understand even more about how satisfaction and complaints vary between people with different characteristics. This insight will help us improve how we work. We've already started to do this but want to fully integrate the practice of using insights to guide our work.

Intersectionality

We aim to look at the range of diversity that shapes our employees' lived experience. For example, we currently look at gender, ethnicity, and age as three separate categories. In the future, we would like to analyse more than one diverse characteristic at a time. So, rather than looking at engagement just by gender, we may want to look at it by gender, age, and ethnicity.

100 languages, have text read aloud in over 50 languages, use screen masks, and much more.

- Introduced a new editorial style guide and writing tips to help employees communicate more clearly using plain, inclusive language that's easier to understand. We also refreshed the letters sent to customers to reflect this improved approach.
- Shared more information about how different protected characteristics can affect employees and customers to improve awareness and understanding. For example, we introduced a prayer space in the office and talked with employees about Ramadan and how fasting can impact colleagues and customers.
- Launched a new diversity and inclusion group as part of our customer volunteer engagement programme, Community Voices. The group works together to make sure the needs and preferences of customers are understood and that our services are accessible to all.

- Consulted with customers to update our Repairs Policy, to make improvements to our services, such as offering flexibility in timescales and appointments.
- Updated our Planned Maintenance Policy to include discussing customers' individual needs and taking them into consideration when communicating and planning work.



Neighbourhood Team Leader, Rebecca with customers at a policy consultation

What's next?

Later Living Strategy

We'll continue our work to invest in homes to make sure they're ready to meet future needs. As part of this, we're working closely with our Community Voices diversity and inclusion group to review our Later Living Strategy, ensuring it reflects the needs of all communities. We'll engage with customers in the work we do in their homes, designing homes and services around the needs of individuals.

Community Voices

We'll build on our customer engagement approach to ensure that customers from minority communities have the opportunity to influence how we design and deliver our services, both through informal opportunities and our Community Voices. The diversity and inclusion group will support service reviews

and procurement activities to ensure that the customer voice is embedded in all our activities, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. We'll also provide EDI training for newly engaged Community Voices, who actively inform our services and policies.

Policies

We'll roll out our Support Needs and Accessible Services Policy to ensure that we consistently improve the accessibility of our services.

Accessible communications

We'll continue to explore opportunities to improve the accessibility of our communications, using new technology and learning from partners.



Objective three

An inclusive employee culture

We recognise the importance of having an employee culture that fosters inclusivity. It's essential that EDI is a central rather than peripheral concern for employees, regardless of their role, which will enhance our inclusive culture from top to bottom.

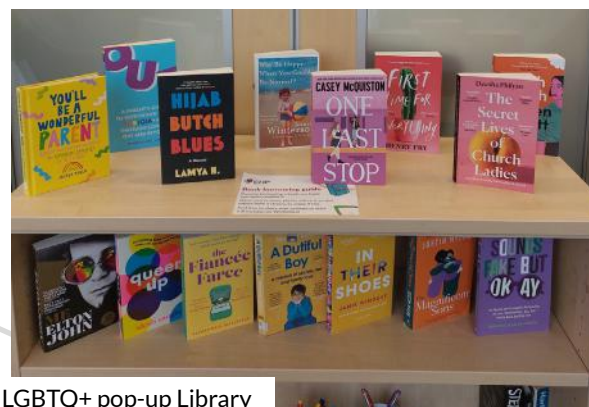
This year we:

- Enhanced our induction process by placing greater focus on EDI, including a new customer scenario exercise to highlight individual differences and the importance of empathy. We also improved our EDI eLearning for new starters.
- Focused on EDI in talent management by reviewing hiring practices and enhancing training for managers. This included working with Essex Cares. We gave a talk at their organisation, and they visited us to see how we can make our recruitment process more inclusive. One outcome was offering alternatives to phone interviews, like face-to-face or prerecorded video options, based on candidate preference.
- Improved accessibility at our head office by getting employee feedback on the layout and redesigning the quiet space to better support those who need a low-stimulation environment.
- Updated our family leave guide and related policies to be more inclusive of transgender and non-binary colleagues.
- Celebrated LGBT+ History Month by running a series of initiatives to highlight our support. This included creating and deploying a Microsoft Teams background onto everyone's device for use during meetings and calls. We also held coffee catch-ups for employees to join and collated a range of LGBTQ+ books that anyone could borrow.
- Introduced new initiatives to support neurodiverse colleagues, including a Neurodiversity Network for peer support, fidget toys in the workplace, a renovated quiet area, and a fun, informative office treasure hunt to raise awareness.
- Reviewed our EDI eLearning course and made the training mandatory for all employees. We also developed and released our first EDI microlearning course on LGBTQ+ Inclusion.
- Launched more employee guides about what's available to support colleagues and what reasonable adjustments will be made around disability, mental ill-health, and neurodiversity. We also created and launched guidance for employees and managers about gender identity and transitioning at work. This was designed with support and feedback from employees who have transitioned.
- Made books available for employees on a range of themes, including International Women's Day, Black History Month, and LGBT+ History Month.



EDI display board at Myriad House

- Sponsored Essex Pride alongside Eastlight Community Homes and BuildEast, to celebrate LGBTQ+ life in Essex. We led the march through Chelmsford and hosted an information stand, giving us the opportunity to meet hundreds of people.
- Promoted a culture centred on sharing experiences, offering support, and encouraging others through articles and videos about employees' experiences, such as living with Multiple Sclerosis.
- Continued running our Parents of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Children group, where employees can share thoughts and experiences with other parents or carers of children with SEND.



LGBTQ+ pop-up Library

What's next?

Workplace policies

The Equality (Race and Disability) Bill is currently under consultation about the proposed introduction of mandatory ethnicity and disability pay gap reporting for all organisations. We voluntarily report on the ethnicity pay gap, and we'll start to review the data to ensure we can report our disability pay gap too. We'll do this voluntarily regardless of whether it becomes a legal requirement.

EDI microlearning

We'll continue to release short eLearning courses on EDI topics, such as microaggressions and neurodiversity. These courses will aim to raise awareness and educate employees on their role in supporting customers and other employees.

Improving our workplace

Our fidget toys have proven successful in increasing concentration and reducing anxiety for employees. We'll consider introducing more of these, specifically in meeting rooms. We'll review the office to identify barriers for people with disabilities and then make

adaptations. For example, the items in the top cupboards aren't accessible for a wheelchair user.

We'll also work with our Facilities Team to put up signage to key areas (e.g. kitchens and toilets) to support new starters and neurodiverse employees.

We'll continue to develop our EDI noticeboard (see image on the left) to raise awareness on EDI topics and act as a centralised place for employees to view support available.

DiversiTeas

We're considering reintroducing 'DiversiTeas', which are drop-in sessions for employees to attend and learn more about different protected characteristics.

Recruitment

We'll continue to review and enhance our recruitment process to better support neurodiverse applicants, including introducing pre-interview support and creating a more relaxed interview environment.

Objective four

Leadership and strategic focus

We're dedicated to fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion within our organisation and the communities we serve. We believe these values should be embedded at every level, including in senior leadership and strategic decision-making.

This year we:

- Introduced our Data Transformation Programme, which includes monitoring EDI data targets to ensure our Board and employees are representative of the communities we serve.
- Tried a different approach to advertising roles and reaching out to the market for our Non-Executive Board (NED) recruitment to broaden the diversity of our Leadership Team. As a direct result, appointees included a broader range of diversity characteristics.

What's next?

Embedding the customer voice in EDI

Our Community Voices diversity and inclusion group works together to make sure the needs and preferences of customers are understood and that our services are accessible to all. They do this by making recommendations on how we can improve our work.

This group, along with the two others that form the Community Voices, are directly connected to our Customer Experience Committee (CEC), which is part of our Board governance structure.

Objective five

Procurement, partnerships, and community investment

Incorporating assessments of EDI principles into the tendering process is essential to ensure that contractors share our commitment to EDI. We embed EDI throughout procurement by conducting equality impact assessments and including tailored EDI questions for bidders to address. These responses are then evaluated as part of the selection process.

This year we:

- Supported numerous T Level placements and work experience as a result of our school outreach.

- Continued to investigate opportunities to collaborate with local and national groups that focus on issues relevant to EDI, including the following partnerships.
 - Rainbow Roofs
 - BuildEast at Essex Pride
 - Essex Sensory Alliance
 - HouseProud
 - The OutHouse



- Worked towards becoming a dementia friendly organisation. Essex County Council officially recognised us as an Inclusive Dementia Community business for 2025-2027 in January 2025. Steps we've made include:
 - working closely with customers living with dementia – and their families or carers – as they move from Andrews Place to lessen the move's impact. With support from the Alzheimer's Society, we've tailored our approach to meet each individual's needs;
 - training more employees to improve awareness and understanding of dementia, in particular, customer-facing employees like Neighbourhood Advisors;
 - expanding our Dementia Friends Working Group to include people from more varied teams, such as operations and community engagement;
 - creating a dedicated page on our website to help customers and carers find local events and support;
 - promoting local support groups and events on social media and through other customer communications;
 - attending events such as dementia cafes.

What's next?

LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge

In February 2024, we signed up with LGBTQ+ Housing Pledge Project to enhance our commitment to LGBTQ+ equality and support primarily for customers. We'll continue to work towards our Pledge Pioneer Accreditation, with more actions around engaging LGBTQ+ customers, improving visibility, and carrying out employee training. Our EDI Working Group will also be exploring volunteering opportunities with LGBTQ+ charity, TheOutHouse, and other local charity groups.

Pride

We'll be attending Essex Pride again this year, where we'll aim to connect with LGBTQ+ customers and communities to discuss challenges in accessing safe and affordable homes.

Essex Cares

Our Parkside Community Hub will be working with Essex Cares, who provide care and support to help people live safely and independently in their own homes and communities. Together, we'll deliver a 'connect' meeting where Essex Cares' customers can get support with CV writing and job interviews. We'll also be inviting some of these customers to do work experience.

Essex Sensory Action Alliance

We'll be reaffirming our commitment to Essex Sensory Action Alliance, an organisation helping to improve the lives of those with sight and/or hearing loss, by renewing our pledge. We'll draw on insights from both customers and employees to make sure our pledge reflects an inclusive and accessible experience.

Local faith groups

We'll be building stronger links with local faith groups and community centres to better support and connect with customers. This includes working with Meadgate Church and the Iqra Learning Centre, getting out into communities, and meeting people to reach those who may not usually engage with our services.

ACL

We'll also be working with ACL (Adult Community Learning) to extend our reach and support people from all backgrounds with access to education and courses.



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Please contact us if you would like a copy of this document in large print, audio, or in another language.

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