

St Albans City and District Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-2029

Welcome Diversity

Challenge Inequality

Grow Together

FOREWORD

We are proud to introduce this updated Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy as a joint effort led by the EDI Partnership. The strategy embodies our commitment to making St Albans District a community where everyone feels they belong, and where every person, regardless of background, ability, or circumstance, can thrive and contribute. Through the collective efforts of local organisations, community groups, and stakeholders, we've helped to create a vision that reflects our diverse community and its values of inclusivity, respect, and shared growth.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership plays a pivotal role in shaping this vision. By bringing together partners across the community, from local services and advocacy groups, we are better equipped to understand emerging issues, share resources, and implement meaningful actions. This strategy is an important step in ensuring that equality, diversity, and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do, whether that's promoting accessible services, tackling inequality, or empowering underrepresented groups.

Together, we believe that everyone has a role in making our district a better place to live, work, and grow. We are committed to ensuring that voices from all parts of our community are heard, respected, and represented.

Liz Boulter, Chair, St Albans District Access Forum

Stephen Craker, Chief Executive, Communities 1st

Co-Chairs of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership

Tolerance, kindness, friendliness, and a sense of belonging are what turn a locality into a community.

Our vision is a place where everyone feels welcome and where people of all ages, all ethnicities, all backgrounds, and all abilities have the opportunity to live happy, confident and independent lives. We know we have a local population that wants these things too, and that many people are willing to play their part to make things better for everyone. Our action plan will help support everyone to do this.

The Council plays a key role in community leadership and place-shaping. We have developed this strategy because we believe equality, diversity and inclusion should be central to the delivery of our local services. We want to ensure our Council is a

welcoming and accessible place where people have a voice, are listened to and get the quality services they expect and deserve.

Strong local partnerships are a feature of the way agencies work together in St Albans District. We hope that this strategy, which has been developed with participation from many of our partners, will help us as we work to transform more of our services.

Amanda Foley.

Chief Executive, St Albans City and District Council

This strategy has been developed by St Albans City and District Council and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership to help understand the local challenges, what changes our community wants to see, and how we can make those changes.

The **Equality Act 2010** is a law that protects everyone from discrimination. It means that discrimination or unfair treatment based on certain personal characteristics is against the law.

The Equality Act applies to discrimination based on these protected characteristics:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex (men, women, boys, girls and transgender)
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership (in relation to the first aim to eliminate unlawful discrimination).

The Act also means that public bodies such as councils have to prevent discrimination. This is called the **Public Sector Equality Duty**.

Councils must consider the needs of people with protected characteristics, when planning or carrying out their public duties or services.

The Council must make sure we do the best we can to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - improve equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
 - support people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it to get along together.
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St Albans City and District Council's Equality Policy

The policy describes the Council's promise to act fairly and tackle discrimination and harassment, understanding the importance of the diversity of St Albans District and its people. It sets out how you can expect to be treated as a customer (including as a resident, stakeholder, business or organisation) using our services, as a business or organisation working with us, and as a Council employee.

The Equality Policy sits alongside this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

How this strategy has been developed

In 2022 we published the 2022-24 Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for St Albans City and District Council. Partners, community groups, residents, and staff were widely consulted on this strategy. This document updates the strategy for the period 2024-29.

We spoke to the groups that contributed to the original strategy and to others. We asked them how well they thought we had delivered on our previous commitments and what more they felt we could do to make the District a fairer and more inclusive place to live. The Daylight Club, a group for people with disabilities visited us at the Council and told us what they needed to be able to participate fully in the community.

We also carried out a survey – District residents were invited to respond to the consultation on our website or by telephone or paper.

The Faith and Culture Enterprise (FACE), St Albans District Access Forum (SADAF) and Communities 1st hosted sessions on the strategy to help us reach as many people as possible.

We went to community events including Herts Pride and St Albans Festival where we talked to visitors about the strategy and the work of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Partnership.

St Albans City and District Council employees also contributed their views and ideas to this strategy.

All the comments have been logged and we have shaped the points in this strategy in response to the comments. The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Partnership meetings will continue to look at the feedback to see how it can be incorporated into future plans.

Some of the feedback and comments from 2022 and 2024 can be found at the end of this document.

What difference have we made so far?

We looked at the action plan from the 2022-24 strategy and asked residents, partners, community groups and staff what they felt had been successful in 2022-24.

- Equality Impact Assessments. We redesigned the way we carry out Equality Impact Assessments, which are checks to ensure that the decisions we make do not negatively affect different groups of people. We made the process clearer and ran training sessions for staff. The improvement resulted in 40 new Equality Impact Assessments being undertaken between April 2023 and September 2024 on a wide range of proposed service and policy changes and meant that some things were changed to make sure that we were not discriminating. We also shared our new practice with colleagues in our neighbouring districts to assist them with their processes.
- For the first time, a Windrush festival was held in the City Centre on 22 June 2024 alongside the Alban Day Festival. Black led churches also took part in the procession. This was a partnership between Active Lifestyles, The Faith and Culture Enterprise (FACE), St Albans Cathedral and St Albans City and District Council.
- The Council hosted training and awareness sessions staff and community partners on vision loss, mental health, dementia, neurodiversity, disability, hearing loss, introduction to BSL and understanding Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.
- Corporate Peer Challenge in 2023 identified that there is a positive approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion across the organisation with strong political engagement and that the creation of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Partnership was an innovative approach to cementing the importance of EDI across the whole organisation and holding the council to account for its actions.
- A staff survey in August 2024 showed that 80% of staff feel the Council is doing very well in supporting and promoting Equality Diversity and Inclusion, with 16% feeling that the Council is doing quite well.
- In 2023 the Council launched the Staff and Community Diversity Champions Scheme. 20 staff and 13 community members have completed a Level 2 course in Equality and Diversity. The Champions use their knowledge and experience to bring suggestions for change to the Council and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership. They are represented on Faith and Culture Enterprise and the Access Forum. They also support initiatives at Older Persons Day, Interfaith and Black History Month events and advised on the new Equality Impact Assessments.
- NeuroSpace, a group for neurodivergent Council staff was set up as a safe space to discuss issues, share tips, support each other and make suggestions for improvements to the workplace.

- The Council and Everyone Active worked together to install a new Changing Places facility in Westminster Lodge Leisure Centre for use by visitors to Verulamium Park. It opened in June 2024.
- The Council signed the Unison Anti-Racism Charter in October 2023 a commitment from our leaders to recognise the need and benefit in championing a racially diverse workforce and challenge racism internally and externally wherever it arises in relation to the organisation.
- The major street events (Alban Festival, the Feastival and Christmas Cracker) implemented British Sign Language interpreted performances, accessibility viewing areas and safe zones to increase inclusion.
- St Albans Faith and Culture Enterprise has continued to grow with a membership of over 75 individuals and organisations working together to raise awareness, increase tolerance and create opportunities to work in partnership to promote community cohesion. They have delivered an annual interfaith event, helped run the Windrush festival and facilitated events aimed at fostering good relations between the police and young people.
- St Albans District Access Forum, a group of residents with disabilities, carers and community organisations has met every two months and worked to improve access in the District. They have worked with the Parking service team to put in new disabled parking bays in the city centre, met with high street store owners to voice concerns about access and contributed to changes at the street events to make them more accessible.
- Local community and faith groups co-curated the following exhibitions with St Albans Museums: St Albans Masorti Synagogue on Arriving & Belonging: Stories from the St Albans Jewish Community; Trestle Theatre Company on All About Us, an exhibition celebrating the creativity and resilience of the learning disabled community, and with Active Lifestyles and Leeannas Wish on Becoming Us, the lives of African Caribbeans in St Albans.

What we know about St Albans District

- Population 148,200 (Census 2021).
- The health of people in St Albans District is generally better than the England average. St Albans is one of the 20% least deprived districts/unitary authorities in England.
- The District overall ranks 306 out of 317 lower tier local authorities in England with rank 1 being the most deprived.
- However, some areas in the District fall into the 2019 indices of multiple deprivation, including areas within the wards Batchwood (34), Sopwell (47), Cunningham (119), Colney Heath (134), Redbourn (138), and Harpenden East (170). Note: 1 is the most deprived and 690 is the least deprived.

- According to Department for Work and Pensions data from 2022-23, 8% of children live in relative low-income families, 6% live in absolute low-income families.
- In 2021, 9.7% of households in St Albans District were estimated to be in fuel poverty ([Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2021](#)).
- At 2020-22, life expectancy at birth was 81.6 for males, 85.2 for females. The national figure is 78.9 years for males, 82.8 years for females ([Life expectancy for local areas in England between 2020 to 2022](#)).
- 26.5% of St Albans District residents are from an ethnic minority, that is, not White British.
- The population is comprised of: White (73.5%); Asian/Asian British (8.2%); Black/African/Caribbean/Black British (2.1%); Mixed/multiple ethnic groups (4.3%); Other ethnic group (1.8%) (source: Census 2021).
- In 2021, the religious make-up of the District was as follows: no religion 37.1%; Christian 47.4%; Buddhist 0.5%; Hindu 1.8%; Jewish 1.5%; Muslim 4.7%; Sikh 0.4%; Other religion 0.5% (6.1% did not answer).
- In 2021 13.4% of St Albans residents had a long-term illness or disability ([St Albans District Census Data 2021](#)). In the whole of England, 17.7% of the population had a disability according to the 2021 national census figures.
- 2021 Census shows that there has been an increase of 17.6% in people aged 65 years and over, an increase of 2.3% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and an increase of 6.0% in children aged under 15 years in the District.
- In 2021, 2.2% of residents aged 16 and over recorded their sexual orientation as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual at the Census. However, 6.61% of residents did not answer this question.
- 4,956 households in the District have council tenancies; 47 residents are in sheltered housing; 1,200 are housing association tenants; 190 people live in temporary accommodation (as of October 2024).
- 32 individuals (5 families) have been resettled in the district through formal government Afghan resettlement programmes (ARAP/ACRS).
- Since 2022, 213 St Albans residents have hosted 469 people from Ukraine.
- There are approximately 2,000 Hong Kong British Nationals (Overseas) in the District as of 2024 (source: Hong Kong Hub, The East of England Local Government Association's Strategic Migration Partnership).

Our Strategy

In 2022 we agreed our approach. In 2024 we have updated these commitments.

Having listened to what people told us:

We will:

- Make equality, diversity and inclusion central in our approach to everything we do;
- Work together with local groups and organisations to make sure we have a fair and collaborative approach to help local people;
- Treat all our customers (including residents, stakeholders, businesses and organisations) fairly and make sure those who need the most help get the support they need;
- Help people who are lonely and want help to get the support they need;
- Challenge racism and discrimination in whatever form it shows itself;
- Listen to residents, staff and partners and involve them in our plans so that everyone is part of making our District a good place to live, work, study and visit.

Housing, safety, community and wellbeing

We will:

- Continue to provide homes for social rent to eligible people and build more homes either ourselves, or with partners;
- Make sure that we treat tenants with fairness, courtesy and respect in all of our interactions;
- Listen to and respond to tenant's concerns and improve resident engagement
- Support people who are experiencing poverty to access help and advice;
- Ensure that the grants we provide to local groups target the people who need the most support;
- Work with the Police to help make the District a safe place for everyone;
- Listen to young people to understand what we can do to support them to continue to live, work and study in the District if they wish to.

Public Areas

We will:

- Make sure that the District's leisure and cultural centres are accessible and affordable and that our parks and green spaces are welcoming and safe places for everyone to enjoy;
- Remain committed to ensuring that disabled motorists have access to parking close to town centres and places of interest and have easy access to other parking services:
- Work with Hertfordshire County Council to make changes so that if you have a disability you can enjoy the District's public spaces;

- Work with partners and businesses to ensure provision for accessible toilet facilities in the district;
- Work with local groups to make sure events held on district council land are accessible and that people from all different backgrounds can feel welcome and take part.

Delivering an excellent service

We will:

- Give our staff and councillors equality, diversity and inclusion training and invite key contractors and suppliers to train alongside us so they can also deliver inclusive informed services
- Check our job advertisements, application forms and the way we treat our staff to see if we are doing the best to encourage people from all different backgrounds to work for us and thrive in the workplace;
- Share what we know about equality and diversity with local businesses. This will help them to be more inclusive too.
- Make sure that when we are deciding which suppliers to use, we prioritise high standards in equality, diversity and inclusion.

Communication and Accessibility

We will:

- Make sure the way we present our services on the Council website, in our printed documents and in our communications with our customers (residents, stakeholders, businesses or organisations) is accessible and inclusive;
- Offer help to people to learn to use computers or mobile phones for Council services if they do not already know how or need some more help;
- Write to, telephone or meet face to face with people who cannot use a computer or mobile phone.
- Improve ways that our customers can feedback to us on our services to suggest improvements or changes.
- Ensure our council strategies have Equality, Diversity and Inclusion as an important part, including:

Council Plan

Customer Engagement Strategy

Procurement Strategy

Homelessness Strategy

Housing Strategy

Sustainability Strategy

Communications Strategy
Digital Transformation Strategy
Resident Engagement Strategy
Domestic Abuse Strategy
Climate and Sustainability Strategy

How do we make sure we are doing what we say?

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership Group. This group oversees the delivery of the strategy. The group includes:

- Community Partners including Communities 1st and Citizen Advice St Albans.
- Representatives from St Albans District Access Forum (SADAF) and Faith and Culture Enterprise (FACE).
- Staff and Community Diversity Champions – these are residents and those working or studying in the District who help make St Albans City and District a fairer, more diverse and inclusive place.
- District and Parish Councillors.
- School and college representatives.
- Local businesses representative.

Equality Impact Assessments

For Council services, we carry out a check called an Equality Impact Assessment whenever we plan a new service or project or if we write a new policy. If these checks show what we are planning might make the service worse for people with protected characteristics we will look at what we need to change.

Training

We provide training for our staff and councillors in equality, diversity and inclusion-related matters. We invite community groups that work with us, and the contractors that work with us, to join the training. We also have regular awareness sessions on different topics throughout the year.

Staff and Community Diversity Champions

We invite staff and members of the community to join our scheme and involve them in delivering our action plan and supporting colleagues.

Monitoring and Performance – evidencing change and progress

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Partnership Group oversees the delivery of the strategy and reports back to the Housing and Inclusion Committee.

The Strategy, Policy and Transformation Directorate leads on the strategy implementation overall and specific targets are added to the team's action plans so that everyone knows what they are expected to do.

We publish information on our website to update everyone on progress made.

We will also use the LGA's Diverse by Design guide to help us check whether we are making a difference (<https://www.local.gov.uk/diverse-design-15-key-elements>)

Putting words into actions

The Equality Diversity and Inclusion Partnership looks at the overall commitments made in the strategy and identifies priorities for each year. The Partnership will then hold focus groups with residents, partners and staff to find out more about how they can collectively approach the priorities and make changes. An annual Action Plan will be produced. The Partnership will continue to analyse the extensive feedback received from St Albans City and District Council residents, community members and staff to make sure that voices are heard and wherever possible changes can be made to improve equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging for all.

Making this strategy accessible.

This document is about what St Albans City and District Council will do to make sure that the services we offer are accessible and everyone living, working and studying in the District is treated fairly. If you would like this document in a different language or style please let us know.

[In addition, this statement above will be included in the following languages in the final edition: Bengali, Urdu, Arabic, Hindi, Polish, Farsi, Italian, French, Cantonese].

This document is available in Easy Read, please contact us if you would like a copy.

To find out more about the strategy and how to get involved, please contact: equality@stalbans.gov.uk, call 01727 819340 or write to us at St Albans City and District Council, Civic Centre, St Peter's Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3JE.

Stakeholder feedback.

Who are our Stakeholders?

- Residents
- Community Organisations
- Faith and Cultural Groups
- School and Colleges in the district

- Partners who support us to deliver services including Citizen Advice St Albans District and Communities 1st
- St Albans Faith and Culture Enterprise
- St Albans District Access Forum
- Contractors who deliver services on behalf of the council including Everyone Active and Veolia
- Town and Parish Councils
- Hertfordshire County Council
- St Albans City and District staff and councillors

In 2022 we asked our stakeholders for views on how it would **feel** and what they would **do** and **see** in an inclusive, diverse district. We asked this question again in 2024.

They told us:

What residents and visitors told us they would see:

- *“Happy, engaged members of the community supporting each other - being nice to one another, sharing the beautiful town we are fortunate enough to live in.”*
- *“Council staff and councillors from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities.”*
- *“People being more excited about things that matter to other communities as well as their own.”*
- *“Better cultural awareness, better sense of community, increase in respect to others, better tolerance and appreciation of one another.”*
- *“A safer, fairer, more decent and kinder place for all communities and those seeking sanctuary as refugees.”*
- *“The Equality Act upheld, and all groups given opportunities to shape policy.”*
- *“Change and growth of the community.”*
- *“More people moving back to St Albans.”*
- *“More diversity of age, background and culture.”*
- *“A community that reflects and celebrates diversity in all aspects of life.”*
- *“A more inclusive and welcoming environment.”*
- *“Older people not neglected.”*
- *“More interfaith events”*
- *“People of all ethnicities being seen, recognised and heard equally.”*

How residents and visitors told us they would feel:

- *“Safe and that I belong, confident that those who are different from me feel the same and are equally respected.”*
- *“Healthier. I would care more about my local community and feel more respected.”*

- *“Proud to live in such a community.”*
- *“More connected to our neighbours.”*
- *“Equally valued and welcomed wherever I go.”*
- *“Happy to be part of a community where inclusion is actively developed.”*
- *“Like I belong here.”*
- *“Proud.”*
- *“I would feel welcomed and valued.”*
- *“Safer in our neighbourhoods.”*
- *“I would feel a greater sense of belonging and pride in my community. Inclusivity fosters an environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and heard, regardless of their background or identity.”*
- *“My mental health would be better.”*
- *“Part of the Community.”*
- *“More connected, grounded, happier.”*

What residents and visitors told us they would do:

- *“Play a more active role in my community. Help to get others involved.”*
- *“Be more encouraged to join in with local activities, groups and communities.”*
- *“I would be more inclined to want to buy my home and get on the ladder.”*
- *“Go out more. Enjoy swimming and physical activity as well as theatre and events.”*
- *“Take up the opportunity to meet and make friends with others.”*
- *“I would engage more with the council and take a more active role in the community.”*
- *“I would enjoy meeting and socialising with a more diverse group of people. This would enrich my life.”*
- *“Continue living here.”*
- *“I would get involved with the local area and try to have input on what decisions are made.”*
- *“Feeling truly welcome and represented would encourage me to engage more actively with the community and contribute to making it an even better place to live.”*
- *“Be more social with people my age in and around the city.”*
- *“Enjoy the city’s amenities more, eat and shop more in town.”*
- *“Interact with my neighbours more.”*
- *“Enjoy living here.”*

Community Organisations

In 2022 and again in 2024, we asked community groups what the **issues and barriers** there are for the people they help, and what they need in order to develop best practice in Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

They told us:

Issues and Barriers:

- *“Methods of communication - everything online is not suitable for all.”*
- *“Understanding the system, different cultural background.”*
- *“Poverty is having a profound impact. This is leading to huge issues.”*
- *“Lack of knowledge in the move to digital services”.*
- *“Inconsistent communications between different organisations”*
- *“Tailor language to people with special needs or to different age groups”*
- *“Services supporting people are becoming overwhelmed.”*
- *“Websites are difficult to navigate and can contain out-of-date information.”*

What they need:

- *“Access to training, free of charge.”*
- *“Useful statistics and data to inform services.”*
- *“Signposting and information sharing”*

Our Staff.

We asked our staff what they would see, do and feel if we had an improved culture of inclusion, and what we can do to make St Albans City and District Council an **inclusive, welcoming place to work**. We asked our senior managers what changes are needed to improve Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and what support they need as leaders to make the changes necessary.

Council staff told us what they would see:

- *“Staff who know exactly what to do when dealing with someone who may need additional help or support to access our services.”*
- *“A better customer service to all our customers, a happier workforce.”*
- *“A more diverse group of people represented across all roles, as well as in more senior and leadership positions. In particular, it would be great to see more women, more people from minority ethnic backgrounds, those who identify as LGBTQI+, disabled, people from all religious beliefs.”*
- *“More cultural events targeted towards members of the different communities, LGBTQ+ populations and people with disabilities.”*

They told us how they would feel:

- *“More included, as it would be clear that the Council's staff includes employees from all backgrounds and walks of life.”*
- *“Proud to work somewhere that was explicit and proactive in its approach to equity.”*
- *“Happy and confident that we were providing a service that was equally accessible to all without barriers.”*
- *“Comfortable to start more conversations, question situations and ideas more.”*

And they told us what they would do:

- *“Act with confidence in our roles as we have embedded the values of inclusion and diversity, we are proud of our workforce and who we are, and we reflect the society that we serve.”*
- *“I would implement the learning from the policy and training into all aspects of my work, and regularly check my practice to ensure I do not become complacent.”*
- *“Be a better and more proactive ally.”*
- *“Embrace the new culture.”*

Managers told us that these additional resources and support would be beneficial to improve equality, diversity, and inclusion:

- *“Changing behaviours and assumptions.”*
- *“Clearer signage in offices and in the district”*
- *“Training provided equipping staff with the right tools.”*
- *“Communications to support a better, more inclusive work environment.”*
- *“Information on support services is shared between departments.”*

Town and Parish Councils

We asked local Town and Parish Councils to identify what they feel the **barriers to inclusion** for residents are and what they need to support parish councillors and champion equality, diversity and inclusion.

They told us the barriers are:

- *“Limited inclusive signage in and around the village – i.e., suitable for those with dementia, those with more limited skills reading English (young, illiterate, people whose first language is not English).”*
- *“Poor transport links to the outlying areas of the villages. This is a particular issue for older residents and those without private transport.”*

They told us what they would like to change:

- *“To actively seek to recruit Parish Councillors from different communities.”*

- *“To recognise issues that prevent ‘hidden’ inclusion issues e.g., residents with dementia; people with hearing/sight problems.”*
- *“To ensure that every working group that is formed to undertake a council project addresses ways to achieve equality and diversity and a culture of inclusion. Our aim is for this become a ‘golden thread’ running through all our projects.”*

Town and Parish Councils told us what they would like support with:

- *“The opportunity to receive training on this subject as we recognise a gap in our knowledge/education.”*

Councillors

We asked District Councillors what they consider to be the barriers to inclusion for residents, what changes are needed to the District Council’s corporate culture, and what they need as leaders to support them to achieve the changes.

They told us:

- *“Formal procedures, jargon and language can be a potential barrier to becoming a Councillor.”*
- *“It is important to support the marginalised groups and celebrate diverse communities.”*
- *“We need to make equalities part of the Council structure.”*
- *“Our contractors need to share our values on inclusion.”*
- *“We welcome training in equality policies and strategy.”*

We spoke to Hertfordshire County Council Equalities Team to share ideas and good practice as they developed their new Equality Strategy. Along with Hertfordshire County Council we set up the **Local Districts Equalities Practitioners Group** to share good practice and support.

We also sought the views of a range of different groups of people.

We met people at:

- **Active Lifestyles** - a luncheon club for older people from a wide range of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

They told us:

- *“We would like more events to bring people of different ages and ethnicities together.”*
- *“I would feel very proud of St Albans if it was more inclusive.”*
- *“I would like the bureaucracy to be removed; tell us whether it is county, district or parish council’s responsibility for different services.”*

- **The Daylight Club** - a social group for people with learning and physical disabilities and mental health needs.

They told us:

- *“We would like to be able to pay by cash not just card in the places we visit.”*
- *“If something changes, like the day our bins are collected, we would like to have lots of notice so we can plan.”*
- *“We would like to see signs that welcome everyone and pictures instead of writing.”*
- *“If St Albans was more inclusive, we would be more independent, go out more and help other people.”*

- **20th St Albans Ansar Scouts** - a uniformed group of 8-18 years old boys and girls.

They told us:

- *“We would like to see more diverse events.”*
- *“If St Albans was more inclusive, there would be less complaints, it would be fairer, and everyone would be happier.”*
- *“We would like a place where you can be yourself, without judgment.”*
- *“Equality, diversity and inclusiveness is what makes a good community.”*

- **Herts Pride**- a large public event where we met with residents and visitors to the District who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+). We went to Herts Pride in 2022 and again in 2024.

They told us:

- *“We would like a campaign in the local area to help tackle homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and a service for confidential reporting of intolerance.”*
- *“If St Albans was more inclusive, I would feel better about being me.”*
- *“I would like to see more inclusive buildings for wheelchair users.”*
- *“I would like there to be more clubs and events for young people.”*

We also spoke to:

Faith and Culture Enterprise (FACE) - a network of local faith and black, minority and ethnic groups and individuals providing support, advice and social opportunities for people of all cultures and faiths or none.

They told us:

- *“We need to find out if people from different cultural backgrounds are accessing services and if not, why not.”*
- *“There is a lack of community spaces for different groups to get together.”*
- *“Young people’s trust in services needs to be built.”*

St Albans and District Access Forum (SADAF) - A group of residents who have direct experience or family members with a disability and representatives from community organisations.

They told us:

- *“More accessible parking spaces are needed in the district.”*
- *“We want to be properly listened to and be able to make a difference.”*
- *“Accessible, clean toilets are vital to people with disabilities [so they are] able to go out and take part in everyday activities.”*
- *“We need clarity on which council to talk to about accessibility, particularly on streets and pavements.”*
- *“Clearer signage in public places will help people navigate their way around.”*

Communities 1st Stronger Together Networks - Networks bringing together local voluntary and community groups under the common themes of: older people; mental health; transport; culture and environment; disability and children; and young people.

They told us that some of the main barriers to inclusion are:

- *“Stigma especially with mental health.”*
- *“People are given labels, not support.”*
- *“Staff need more knowledge of local services for signposting.”*
- *“Lack of understanding of different cultures.”*
- *“Methods of communication - everything online is not suitable for all.”*
- *“Lack of trust of officials.”*
- *“Poverty is having a profound impact especially in particular areas.”*
- *“Assuming that people know what is available, not knowing what you are entitled to.”*
- *“No available translation services.”*
- *“Lack of ‘whole family’ engagement - trying to work with one individual who exists in a context of family/peers.”*

They told us what would help make the District and services provided more inclusive:

- *“Understanding cultures - what is behind people’s behaviours or engagement.”*
- *“Council alongside community organisations to provide leadership and ambassadorship in Equality and Diversity.”*
- *“Access to multi-lingual translators.”*
- *“Informing service providers of religious customs prior to engagement.”*
- *“Grants and funding to help address inequalities.”*

We asked a new question of all the stakeholders in 2024-

‘What is most important thing that would make you feel more welcome and included?’

They told us:

- *“Signs in pubs and restaurants saying, 'Gypsies and Travellers are welcome here' would make them feel more included” (Resident)*
- *“Improve reliability and availability of public transport to the villages.” (Resident)*
- *“Create more community spaces and events that encourage interaction among diverse groups. This could include cultural festivals, inclusive public areas, and programmes that bring people together. Ensuring that these spaces are accessible and accommodating to everyone, regardless of background or ability, would help foster a stronger sense of belonging and inclusion.” (Resident)*
- *“Offer information in different ways” (SADC Employee)*
- *“A culture of inclusion - welcoming and celebrating everyone's contributions and achievements” (SADC Employee)*
- *“Ensuring engagement reflects the diverse needs of our community” (SADC Employee)*
- *“Clear communications from the Council and Housing Associations - Make things clear.” (Community Group)*
- *“Information on Council responsibilities on the website” (Community Group)*
- *“I want you to understand I have a disability and not say big words.” (Community Group)*
- *“Information session in schools to help understanding” (Community Group)*