



CABINET

Subject Heading:

Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities

Cabinet Member:

Councillor Gillian Ford; Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Adults and Wellbeing

SLT Lead:

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Policy context:

The council has been enrolled in the Disability Confident Employer Scheme.

Increasing the employment of autistic people is a key priority under the national strategy for autistic children, young people and adults: 2021 to 2026 and the local All-Age Autism Strategy 2022-2025.

Financial summary:

Implementation of the charter will have an impact on resources but there are no financial implications associated with recommending the charter for approval. It is envisaged the charter will be implemented within existing budgets/grant funding available. Any resourcing concerns will be raised through the appropriate channels as needs arise.

Is this a Key Decision?

N/A – Internal Policy Change

When should this matter be reviewed? April 2026

Reviewing OSC: People Overview and Scrutiny

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

X People - Things that matter for residents

X Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

X Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place.

SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Havering Employment Charter for the Employment of People with Learning Disabilities and Autistic People aims at increasing the number of autistic people and people with a learning disability employed directly by Havering Council. The charter aligns with the Council's wider aims under the Disability Confident Employer Scheme and is the initial step of a multi-staged approach aimed at reducing employment inequalities for people with learning disabilities and autistic people within the borough.
- 1.2. The charter is underpinned by several key principles aimed at developing and sustaining meaningful employment opportunities, where appropriate and suitably assessed for employment, within the council. These are nurturing a disability confident and inclusive culture within Havering Council, empowering employing managers, providing competitive meaningful employment, providing a person-centred approach to work and workplace support, and a commitment to continuous evaluation and improvement of the workforce.
- 1.3. People with learning disabilities and autistic people are two groups, among several others with protected characteristics, of individuals who are heavily underrepresented in the workforce, being significantly more likely to be socio-economically inactive even when compared to people with other recognised disabilities.
- 1.4. The council undertakes various initiatives aimed at reducing economic activity within Havering, and whilst these initiatives may include activity for autistic people and people with learning disabilities, due to the specific adaptations and requirements, a more focused approach will provide greater refinement in addressing the inequality.
- 1.5. The implementation of the charter will be overseen by the Learning Disabilities and Autism Employment Steering Group and monitored within the annual reporting on Workforce data. The steering group will initially support the council to improve data collection and reporting employment of individuals with disabilities and develop an action plan across the council. The action plan will be reviewed and refreshed annually to adapt to emerging trends, initiatives and developments relating to the employment of autistic people and people with learning disabilities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.0 Cabinet is recommended to:
- 2.1 Agree to and support the addition of the of the employment charter into the Council's Human Resources recruitment and selection policy within the conditions of the Disability Confident scheme.

REPORT DETAIL

- 3.0 Nationally the paid employment rate for working age autistic people ([3 in 10 in employment, The Buckland Review 2024](#)) unemployment rate) and people with a learning disability ([26.7%, Mencap, The Big Learning Disability Survey 2022](#)) is significantly lower than other types of long-term disability ([5 in 10, The Buckland Review 2024](#)) and the general population ([7 in 10, The Buckland Review](#)). People with either of these long-term conditions are more likely to be in receipt of benefits and be in contact with multiple council services i.e. social care, housing, benefits, etc.
- 3.1 The Havering JSNA 2025 highlighted that these individuals are even more likely to be economically inactive with largest employment gaps in Havering for adults aged 18 to 64 years being those with learning disabilities, with a difference of 80.7% against the employment rate of the general population (2022/23). This compares to 70.5% across London and 70.9% across England ([LBH Havering JSNA 2025 - Living Well, Ageing Well & Dying Well](#)).
- 3.2 Traditional employment schemes offered under social care for autistic people and people with a learning disability can often be seen as providing limited access to meaningful competitive employment and limited long term career prospects for those individuals. These schemes are often subsidised by the local authority or other organisations and offer limited career development or prospects of moving into other forms of employment.
- 3.3 The Learning Disabilities and Autistic Employment Steering Group was established to provide a specific focus in developing a robust approach to increasing the employment of autistic people and people with learning disabilities within the borough of Havering. The group has developed a several phased approach to achieve this aim with the first phase aimed at optimising Havering Council's position as one of the largest employers in the borough with over 2,400 directly employed and 700 contingent workers.

- 3.4 The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities is aimed at embedding inclusive practices into the recruitment and retention processes within the council. Subject to Human Resource policies being updated and approved, the implementation of the charter identifies five key actions that must be undertaken by the Council to more appropriately recruit and support autistic people and people with a learning disability:
- 3.4.1 **Workforce Engagement:** Engage with the workforce to promote the benefits of hiring individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people and provide training on inclusive practices.
 - 3.4.2 **Selective Recruitment Focus:** Automatically enable people with learning disabilities and autistic people who meet the minimum criteria eligible for interviews when applying for job opportunities advertised across the local authority in line with the conditions of the Disability Confident guaranteed interview scheme.
 - 3.4.3 **Inclusive Recruitment Practices: The Talent Team** will support hiring managers with providing more flexible recruitment approaches and selection exercises to reduce disadvantages in the recruitment processes within the remit of reasonable adjustments as identified through the recruitment application process.
 - 3.4.4 **Individualized Employment Plans:** Adopt inclusivity focused personalised employment plans that outline the individual's goals, strengths, and support needs. This will include ensuring that the PDR process captures flexibility and reasonable adjustments agreed in work plans.
 - 3.4.5 **Job Matching and Placement:** Further support matching individuals with suitable job opportunities that align with their skills and interests.
 - 3.4.6 **On-the-Job Support:** Provide ongoing person-centred support and coaching via 121 and PDR processes to help individuals succeed in their employment.
 - 3.4.7 **Community Partnerships:** Collaborate with internal community organisations within Havering local authority to create a network of support for individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people in the workplace.
- 3.5 The charter and proposed actions are primarily reliant on Human Resources to implement, and they have been engaged via the Employment Steering Group. It has been noted that whilst there should

be minimal financial, the resources impact on the boarder Human Resources services will be significant. It is expected that the majority of the impacted caused by implementation of the charter should fall in line with the requirements under the Disability Confident Employer Scheme which the council is mandated to meet to retain the accreditation. It is expected that the impact will be managed within the current budget and resources with the LDA Employment Steering Group providing supporting in obtaining the specialist knowledge and training required to implement the changes required. In addition, the LDA Employment Steering Group will support with applications for external funding to increase resources available locally.

3.6 Support from the extended leadership team to implement the charter within the council will help to support the next phases proposed by the Learning Disabilities and Autism Employment Steering Group. These phases are:

- 3.6.1 **Implementation of the employment charter within the council;** to increase direct employment of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic individuals
- 3.6.2 **Mandating inclusion of social value requirements for employment of people with learning disabilities and autistic people in all external contracts procured by the council;** to increase indirect employment of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic individuals.
- 3.6.3 **Working with local employers within Havering;** to increase employment of individuals with learning disabilities and autistic individuals and create wider employment pathways within Havering.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

4.0 Reasons for the decision:

- 4.1 Adoption of the Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities will enable the council to meet the aims and requirements of the Disability Confident Employer Scheme. Furthermore, it would enable the council to support the reduction in outcomes inequalities for a group of people that are significantly disadvantaged nationally and locally, but not to the detriment of other underrepresented groups who have declared a disability. This is expected to be accomplish with limited financial and legal impact within the council as it is a modification of process and policies. The implementation is expected to have a large impact on Human Resources but will be supported by the LDA Employment Steering Group with appropriate

expertise to manage this within the current budgets. The benefits associated in making this change within the council are significant enough to warrant the change with acknowledgement to the resource implications.

4.2 Other options considered:

4.3 A consideration was made to the council not adopting any kind of charter. As the council has made a commitment towards becoming a disability confident employer, there are already modification of the recruitment processes and policies taking place. By not adopting the charter the council will neither be negatively or positively impacting local Havering communities. whilst adopting the charter now will provide a net positive to the borough and limit impact due to the wider changes already being undertaken.

4.4 Additionally, a consideration was made to adoption of a wider policy to impact other disadvantaged groups. Whilst it was acknowledged that this approach would also provide have a net positive impact on local Havering communities, it was agreed that a specific focus on autistic people and people with learning disabilities was required to address the specific inequalities within those communities whilst wider council processes are updated. The employment rate for people with learning disabilities and autistic people are significantly lower than for other kinds of disabilities and both groups of individuals are likely to suffer other forms of discrimination which further negatively impacts them.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

5.0 Financial implications and risks:

5.1 There are no financial costs associated with the direct adoption of the charter, but there is the potential for costs for implementation of the charter beyond those associated with general recruitment and retention practices. There are several government schemes which provide additional funding to support individuals with disabilities into employment which would mitigate any potential costs required for reasonable adjustments to the workplace to support the recruitment on individuals with learning disabilities and autistic people.

5.2 Legal implications and risks:

5.3 All local authority employed staff are to be appointed on merit pursuant to section 7 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

5.4 The positive action provisions in the Equality Act 2010 allow employers to take action that may involve treating one group that

shares a protected characteristic more favourably than others, where this is a proportionate way to enable or encourage members of that group to: (i) overcome or minimise a disadvantage; or (ii) have their different needs met; or (iii) participate in a particular activity. This is called taking 'positive action'. "Positive action" is lawful provided that it is done so in compliance with sections 158 and 159 of the Equality Act 2010. Disability is one of the nine protected characteristics that are covered in the Equality Act 2010.

- 5.5 Workers with disabilities or physical or mental health conditions are legally entitled for reasonable adjustments to be made when carrying out their jobs pursuant to section 20 and 21 of the Equality Act 2010.

6.0 Human Resources implications and risks:

- 6.1 The implementation of the Charter may have a significant impact on the Council's HR&OD support service as well as an impact on Leaders/Managers across the Council who will need to be trained and supported. To fully and successfully implement the Charter and embed the necessary practices and organisational culture change the following will need to be planned and considered.

6.2 HR Considerations for Implementation.

6.3.1 Training and Upskilling Needs

The charter outlines several inclusive recruitment practices, such as:

- Guaranteed interviews for eligible candidates.
- Flexible recruitment approaches.
- Personalised employment plans
- On-the-job support and coaching.

These will require additional staff training, particularly for HR and hiring managers, to ensure they can confidently apply inclusive practices and understand the support needs of autistic and learning-disabled candidates

6.3 Embedding Across Directorates

- 6.4 There is a noted concern about how the charter will be embedded across all council directorates, including those not traditionally associated with social care or SEND. This suggests that HR will need to support the coordination with directorate leads to ensure consistent application. Directorates will require change management support and directorate-specific guidance.

6.5 Ongoing Support and Monitoring

The charter includes commitments to:

- Annual review and refresh of the action plan.

- Monitoring via workforce data reporting.

Oversight will be provided by the Learning Disabilities and Autism Employment Steering Group

This implies a need to evolve workforce data to include:

- Data collection and analysis, beyond our current workforce data set.
- Coordination with the steering group.
- Continuous review and improvement cycles.

6.6 Community and Partnership Engagement

HR may also need to support collaboration with local community organisations to build a wraparound support model. This adds a layer of external engagement that may require:

- Liaison roles or partnership leads.
- Capacity to manage relationships and integrate community input into recruitment and retention strategies.

6.7 Policy Integration and Compliance

The charter is to be embedded into the Council's recruitment and retention policy, aligning with the Disability Confident Employer Scheme. While the report notes minimal financial impact, HR will need to:

- Review and update all existing policies.
- Ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).
- Possibly conduct or support Equality and Health Impact Assessments (EHIA) as part of policy changes.

6.8 Summary Recommendations

To effectively deliver and embed the charter, there will be considerable impacts for HR that will need to be planned as part of the Corporate Workforce Strategy Refresh 2020-2027 action plan, especially within the EDI specialism, these include, but are not limited to:

- A planned approach to effectively resource for training, monitoring, and partnership engagement.
- A planned approach to establishing cross-directorate implementation leads.
- A planned approach to building capacity for inclusive recruitment and personalised employment planning.
- A planned approach to ensuring policy alignment and compliance tracking.

7.0 Equalities implications and risks:

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not. Note: 'Protected characteristics' are age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

7.1 People with learning disabilities and autistic people are often discriminated against and marginalised within the workforce. Adoption of the employment charter is expected to have a net positive outcome in enabling the council to better support the recruitment and employment of individuals with those disabilities and empowering those who are employed with their career development.

7.2 Individuals with these protected characteristics are less likely to be employed and are more likely to be considered to have poor social-economic status. Implementation of the charter should directly support social mobility within Havering and reduce inequalities within these marginalised groups. It is expected to have an overall net positive for the borough.

7.3 A full EQIA has been completed and is attached as an appendix to the cabinet paper.

7.4 Summary of Charter on Inclusive Employment for Autistic and Learning-Disabled People.

- **Focus:** The Charter targets two of the most underemployed and marginalised groups—autistic people and those with learning disabilities—who often face multiple, compounding disadvantages.
- **Evidence-Based Approach:** Supported by research and reviews (e.g., Havering JSNA, Mencap, Buckland Review), making a strong legal and moral case for action under the Equality Act 2010.
- **Concrete Actions Proposed:** Includes guaranteed interviews, personalised job matching, and on-the-job support—aiming for systemic, not symbolic, change.
- **Inclusive Language:** Consider refining phrasing to reflect a supportive, inclusive workplace culture.
- **Community Engagement:** Partnering with local organisations is key to building a wraparound support model for recruitment and retention.
- **Strategic Alignment:** Ties in with the Disability Confident Employer Scheme, reinforcing accountability with minimal extra cost or duplication.

- **Implementation Concerns:** Lack of clarity on how the Charter will be embedded across all council directorates, including non-social care services.
- **Intersectionality Considerations:** Suggest including how race, gender, and age may intersect with disability, and whether minorities groups are proportionately represented—aligning with the Council’s Anti-Racism Charter.
- **Co-Production:** It should be clear whether autistic and learning-disabled individuals were involved in shaping the Charter, as lived experience is essential.
- **Overall Assessment:** The Charter reflects strong, progressive intent and, if adopted, could establish Havering Council as a leader in inclusive employment practice.

8.0 Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

- 8.1 The health and wellbeing impact is fully explored in the EqHIA. There are no negative health and wellbeing risks associated with the adoption of the charter, and it is expected that the charter will have a net positive impact on the autistic people and people with a learning disability that are supported via the proposal by improving employment outcomes.
- 8.2 Improvements in employment outcomes are directly linked to improvements in socio-economic status, and mental health and wellbeing. Additionally, autistic people and people with learning disabilities are at greater risk of social isolation than the general population so it is expected that the social isolation risk should reduce for the individuals benefiting from the implementation of the charter.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The adoption of and implementation of the charter is not expected to have any negative environmental or climate impact. Under the proposals, the council will support local Havering residents into local jobs. This should support the councils environmental and climate agenda.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. The Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities.
2. EqHIA for the Havering Employment Charter for Autistic People and People with Learning Disabilities.

Cabinet, 12 November