

30 October 2018

Report of	Assistant Director of Communities	Author	Andrew Harley ☎ 03300 538086
Title	Equality and Safeguarding - Annual Update Report		
Wards affected	All		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report sets out the Council's duties and updates for Equality & Safeguarding and illustrates the steps the Council has taken to meet these mandatory requirements and specific duties.

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 Committee is asked to review the progress made in meeting the Council's legal duties and objectives in regard to both Equality and Diversity, and Safeguarding, and to endorse the approach set out at paragraph 7 below. By reviewing the approach in these key areas, the Committee will assist the Council in meeting its legal duties.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

By reviewing the approach in these key areas, the Committee will assist the Council in meeting its legal duties.

- 3.1 The following appendices have been included at the end of this report to assist the Committee in its task:
- Appendix A - Key improvements and initiatives
 - Appendix B – An example of a specific project in more detail.

4. Continuation of a Combined Approach

- 4.1 This annual report continues a combined approach to scrutiny in the areas of Equality and Diversity, and Safeguarding which brings the following advantages:
- The two areas of work are mutually supportive and reinforcing.
 - They both involve the principle of proportionality and having "due regard".
 - Each area helps to support, and prevent harm occurring to, vulnerable groups.
 - An approach that reviews these two areas together can help to deliver maximum benefit for customers, the most effective management of risk and the most efficient use of resources.

5. National and Local Developments

Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 New [Equality Act regulations](#) came into effect in 2018, requiring public organisations with more than 250 employees to publish a range of gender pay gap figures by 30 March 2018. The required information was published [here](#) on our website. On average for all employees, women's hourly rate was 80p more than men. You can access an explanatory narrative [here](#) and compare the Council's data with other organisations on the Government's Portal [here](#).
- 5.2 In May 2018, the Equality Commission called for a [national strategy](#) to ensure disabled people have access to suitable housing as a survey reveals only 7% of England's housing stock meets minimum standards.
- 5.3 In July, 2018, the Government announced an [overhaul of the Blue Badge parking scheme](#) to ensure that people with 'hidden disabilities' such as autism will be able to get parking permits as well as those with physical conditions.

Safeguarding

- 5.4 In September 2017, the Department for Education published a report on [Safeguarding and Radicalisation](#).
- 5.5 In April 2018, the [Homelessness Reduction Act](#) came into effect, requiring councils to provide services to all those at risk of becoming homeless in addition to those with a priority need. In August 2018, the Government announced a [rough sleeping strategy](#) to be developed across Government, in conjunction with charities and experts.
- 5.6 Revised [statutory guidance](#) on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children was published on 1 August 2018. This reflects the new status of local child safeguarding boards as being non-statutory.
- 5.7 There have also been changes over the relevant period in terms of national Governance. On 30 April 2018, Penny Morduant was appointed Minister for Women and Equalities, replacing Amber Rudd. Other relevant appointments include: Baroness Williams of Trafford as Minister for Equalities; Sarah Newton as Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work; and Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth as Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Minister for Faith. Damian Hinds is responsible for the work of the Department for Education which includes Child Protection.
- 5.8 At [Essex County Council](#), David Finch as Leader of the Council has responsibility for Equality and Diversity. Dick Madden continues to be Cabinet Member for Children and Families and Sue Lissimore is Cabinet Member for Culture and Communities (which includes responsibility for 'Gypsy and Traveller' and for 'Faith Covenant'). John Spence is Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care (which includes Disabilities).
- 5.9 Phil Picton continues to be the independent Chair of both the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB).

6. Meeting the Duties

Overall Arrangements at Colchester Borough Council

- 6.1 Equality and Safeguarding are each integrated into the day-to-day operations of the Council. However, arrangements are also in place to ensure strategic focus and

operational co-ordination. The Assistant Director for Communities provides the strategic lead whereas the Equality and Safeguarding Co-ordinator has provided the operational lead for the majority of the relevant period. From 24 September 2018, however, the Community Enabling Team Leader has acted as operational lead for Equality and Diversity whilst the Community Safety Co-ordinator has acted as operational lead for Safeguarding.

- 6.2 The relevant [Cabinet Portfolios](#) are Cllr Mike Lilley (Planning, Public Safety and Licensing) and Cllr Tina Bourne (Housing and Communities).
- 6.3 In the area of Equality and Diversity, the Diversity Steering Group (DSG) provides an active forum for 'advancing equality' for both customers and staff. Its members are service 'representatives' who play a key role in reviewing progress and disseminating best practice. In a similar way, Designated Safeguarding Officers attend quarterly 'workshops' to review safeguarding referrals and improve processes. Each service area has between two and four officers who have an enhanced level of training to provide expertise and assistance to officers.
- 6.4 Partnership working is key to meeting the Council's safeguarding duties. The [Safer Colchester Partnership](#) (SCP) is led by a Responsible Authorities Strategic Group (RASG) which consists of Chief Officers representing local statutory partners and organisations. It aims to achieve sustainable solutions following the identification of local needs and priorities. It does this by delivering initiatives and engaging with local communities on issues including domestic violence and hate crime.
- 6.5 Colchester Borough Council also engages positively with the relevant 'Stay Safe' group which comes under the ESCB's governance. This group helps to put into practice effective partnership working to keep children safe from harm including abuse. The Council attends local 'MACE' (Missing and Child Exploitation) meetings which facilitate joint approaches and key information sharing to help protect children from exploitation.
- 6.6 The Council works closely with both the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board and the Essex Safeguarding Children Board. Support from, and representation on, both the ESCB and ESAB for District Councils is by way of Board Membership. Colchester Borough Council Executive Director Pam Donnelly sits on the ESAB and feeds back to the Chief Executives Group.

Equality and Diversity

- 6.7 The Equality Act 2010 imposed a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) upon local authorities including district councils. Under its 'general duty', the Council must "integrate consideration of the advancement of equality" into its "day-to-day business, and across all functions". Councillors and staff must have "due regard" to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not
 - foster good relations between people who share a 'protected characteristic' and those who do not.
- 6.8 The 'protected characteristics' are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and

maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The duty also covers marriage and civil partnership, but not for all aspects of the duty.

- 6.9 Equality and Diversity training forms part of the induction for new CBC staff and Councillors.
Training has been delivered to 42 CBC staff since April 2018 to date, with further sessions planned for October, November, January and March. Training for Councillors is currently delivered face to face, every 12 months. The Equality and Diversity lead Officer is working to develop and implement an online training package for staff and Councillors from April 2019.
- 6.10 The Equality and Human Rights Commission's [Technical Guidance](#) to the PSED remains the best guide to the practical operation of the PSED. In addition, the Council takes due account of the Government's [Review](#) of the PSED which endorsed the so-called "Brown Principles". These confirmed that the 'due regard' duty must be fulfilled before and at the time that a particular policy is being considered; it must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind; and that it is non-delegable.
- 6.11 The PSED 'specific duties' require us to publish information to demonstrate that we are meeting both the 'general duty', and one or more published [equality objectives](#). During the period 2017-18 we have continued to meet both of these requirements. Information published on the Council website includes:
- [Equality Impact Assessments](#)
 - The Council's [Strategic Plan 2018-21](#) and its Year End Performance Report (including its Strategic Plan Action Plan).
 - The Council's website pages on [Equality and Diversity](#)
 - The Council's [Equality Information](#) section contains all required information
 - Workforce statistics: [Equality monitoring information](#)
 - Work undertaken by the Council's Research and Engagement team about service users, customers and the borough's population.
- 6.12 On 31 March 2018, the Council published its new 'equality objective' which is:
- 'Making Colchester an even better place to live and supporting those who need most help'.*
- It is an integral part of the Council's Strategic Plan under its *Wellbeing* theme. Those priorities which particularly help support the Council's Equality Objective are:
- Work with Essex Police and partners in the Safer Colchester Partnership to make Colchester an even safer place
 - Target support to the most disadvantaged residents and communities
- 6.13 The Council remains committed to the use of the Equality Impact Assessment process. Despite not being a legal requirement, these remain a vital framework through which the Council can continue to identify, evaluate, and mitigate against, disproportionate negative impacts upon the 'protected characteristics'. It allows us to make the right judgements on the basis of sound information and data, in an open and transparent way.
- 6.14 The Council works with a host of agencies and organisations in order to meet its duties and advance equality more generally. Many of these are included in Appendix A.

Safeguarding

- 6.15 Under Section 11 of the [Children Act 2004](#), local authorities “must make arrangements for ensuring (that)...their functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.” The Act required district councils to supply information to enable the Local Safeguarding Children Board to perform its function to co-ordinate activity. There are revised and updated [SET Procedures](#) (covering Southend Essex and Thurrock) for child safeguarding which district councils are required to follow, and which are integrated into the Council’s Safeguarding Policy.
- 6.16 Under Section 42 of the [Care Act 2014](#), the local authority must make enquiries to co-ordinate action to support an adult who: (a) has needs for care and support (whether or not the authority is meeting any of those needs), (b) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, and (c) as a result of those needs is unable to protect himself or herself against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it. Although Essex County Council is the *investigating authority*, the Act requires district councils to supply information to enable the local Safeguarding Adults Board to perform its function to co-ordinate activity. There are also agreed [SET Procedures](#) for adult safeguarding, integrated into the Council’s Safeguarding Policy.
- 6.17 The Council raises safeguarding concerns with Essex County Council via its [Request for Support Portal](#) (in regard to a child) and the [SETSAF1](#) form (in regard to an adult). Records of referrals made, and any feedback received, are retained in a secure area of the Council network, and are reviewed at quarterly Designated Officer Workshop meetings.

In 2017, the number of referrals made to the Children and Families Hub was 21. 16 referrals were made to Adults Safeguarding Board.

Completing Safeguarding Level 1 training is a statutory requirement for all CBC staff; between the period July 2017 to date, 1019 CBC staff have completed this training. Safeguarding Level 2 training is also available for frontline staff who work directly with children or vulnerable adults – in 2017, this was delivered to approximately 25 staff in the Helpline Service.

CBH did not provide Safeguarding Level 2 training in 2017, however it will be delivered to approximately 60 frontline staff by the end of March 2019.

- 6.18 The Council, as chair of the local Community Safety Partnership, has responsibilities under [Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004](#). During the period, the Safer Colchester Partnership has continued work on two Domestic Homicide Reviews and has provided relevant information following ‘scoping enquiries’ on Partnership Learning Reviews, Serious Case Reviews and Domestic Homicide Reviews.
- 6.19 The local Safeguarding Boards audit the approach and performance of partners including Colchester Borough Council in regard to: (a) senior management leadership; (b) lines of accountability; (c) embedding policy; (d) ‘early help’ and agency work; (e) info sharing; (f) learning and improvement; (g) service development; and (h) recruitment, vetting and allegations. In May 2018, the Council completed a remote audit on its child safeguarding responsibilities. Although 75% of criteria were met, specific areas where improvement can be made were identified which forms the basis of an internal action plan which is subject to regular monitoring.
- 6.20 Modern slavery encompasses sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced criminal exploitation and domestic servitude. To meet its legal duties under Section 43 of the [Modern Slavery Act 2015](#) the Council published on its website its third Modern Slavery

Transparency Statement in September 2018. In July 2018, the Council agreed unanimously to adopt and apply, as far as is legally possible, the Co-operative Party's [Charter Against Modern Slavery](#).

- 6.21 [Sec 26 of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015](#) placed a new duty upon local authorities to have “due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.” Over the relevant period, the Council has worked closely with Essex Police PREVENT officers in order to raise awareness and complete referrals to the Channel Panel (where people have been identified as being in need of support).

In 2016/17, approximately 150 CBC staff received PREVENT training via a face to face training session. Content of these sessions and delivery procedures were provided by Home Office and Essex Police Counter Terrorism.

Development of an elearning package is currently underway to facilitate maximum participation in 2017/18 for all frontline staff.

7. Going Forward

- 7.1 Continued further financial challenges are anticipated over the next 12 months and vulnerable residents are likely to face increasing pressures as a result of the continued impact of welfare reform. The Council will need to continue to exploit the benefits offered by digital platforms whilst concentrating assistance on the most vulnerable.
- 7.2 The Council will continue to raise awareness for staff (and highlight its procedures) on key issues including PREVENT, Modern Slavery and CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation). To do this effectively, the Council will increase its commitment to online training.
- 7.3 As Community Safety takes on the operational lead on safeguarding, the Council is in a good position to continue to deepen partnership working with agencies and voluntary organisations, including through the [Safer Colchester Partnership](#), in order to deliver for residents.
- 7.4 The Council will continue to be innovative in applying for, and securing, funding in related areas such as Arts Council Funding (Museums), DCLG funding (Homelessness) and Sport England funding (Leisure World). This can significantly assist the Council in achieving its objectives and meeting its obligations.

8. Strategic Plan References

- 8.1 The Council's [Strategic Plan 2018-21](#) is a key mechanism through which the Council monitors how it is meeting its equality and safeguarding responsibilities. In particular, it contains the Council's current 'equality objective'.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 The Council's strategic approach in these areas is underpinned by its Strategic Plan for which extensive consultation took place.

10. Publicity Considerations

- 10.1 The Council's approach to Equality and Safeguarding has the potential to affect everyone who lives, works or visits the borough. It can play a key role in the daily lives of individuals and communities by helping to safeguard vulnerable groups from harm as well as tackling prejudice and advancing equality of opportunity.

- 10.2 The [Equality Information](#) section on the Council's website continues to provide updated information as required by legislation and guidance, along with related content of use or interest to customers, staff and councillors. This helps with openness and transparency, with everything 'in one place'. The Council's website also includes a section dedicated to [Safeguarding children and 'adults with needs for care and support'](#) which contains key information for residents along with links for further information.

11. Financial Implications

- 11.1 The Council continues to face significant financial pressures. As part of its strategic response, the Council has sought to mainstream a "business culture" focused on commercialisation and income generation. In this context, special attention will continue to be paid to 'advancing equality' and safeguarding children and 'adults at risk'.
- 11.2 It is important to understand that our obligation to have "due regard" to the three aims of the 'general duty' does not mean that decisions which have a disproportionate impact upon one or more 'protected characteristics' cannot be taken. The Council must nevertheless always seek to remove or reduce negative impacts.
- 11.3 The Council's approach must continue to be proportionate, with key decisions being given due priority. Equality Impact Assessments must remain an integral part of the decision-making process when addressing changes to policies and practices.

12. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

- 12.1 This report is an annual update about Equality and Diversity, and Safeguarding. The importance that the Council attaches to these areas helps to protect vulnerable groups from harm and exploitation and promotes the human rights of all.

13. Community Safety and Health and Safety Implications

- 13.1 The Council's approach to Equality and Safeguarding involves working closely with partners and communities. The [Safer Colchester Partnership](#) plays a vital role in helping the Council to meet its legal duties around safeguarding.
- 13.2 By meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council will help to ensure that employees do not suffer discrimination, harassment or victimisation. This will in turn create a safer working environment, and one which is consistent with the Council's Health and Safety policies.

14. Risk Management Implications

- 14.1 As an employer and provider of public services, the Council could face legal challenges from individuals or groups who have been unlawfully discriminated against, however unintended. Legal cases brought on grounds of discrimination do not have upper financial limits like those brought through employment tribunals. The Council must meet its responsibilities to ensure it does not discriminate, and this will also help to avoid the potential for significant financial claims.
- 14.2 The Council could suffer significant reputational damage should its staff or councillors fail to comply with their Safeguarding responsibilities. This paper details the Council's strategic and operational approach in this area.

Key improvements and initiatives 2017-18






- The Council distributed over £200,000 of Voluntary Welfare Funding to 'not for profit' organisations to help the Council meet its equality and safeguarding objectives. In 2017-18, the following organisations received funding: Age Concern; Colchester Citizen's Advice Bureau; Community 360; Colchester and Tendring Women's Refuge; Emergency Night Shelter; Grassroots; Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE); and SHAKE Colchester Furniture Project.
- The Community Safety Team has led on a number of projects including a *Virtual Crew* pilot in order to deliver key community safety messages to all year 6 pupils across Colchester. Involving online games and quizzes, the initiative helped to educate and safeguard children around internet safety, gangs and knife crime, antisocial behaviour, drugs and alcohol and hate crime. Working with Essex County Council Youth Service and the University of Essex, the *Detached Youth Work* Project aimed to identify and implement the necessary interventions to tackle and reduce levels of youth anti-social behaviour within two 'hotspot' areas of Colchester. The project also helps to raise awareness of vulnerabilities, and can therefore help to safeguard against grooming and other forms of CSE.
- The Community Initiatives Team has worked in partnership with Dementia Friends and the Alzheimer Society in order to awareness and understanding across the Council and in the community. Working with TSP Legal Services and Community 360, the team attended public awareness events to provide information, signposting and advice.
- Having earned the status of a National Portfolio Organisation, the Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service has gained access to an annual £200,000 boost to funding up to 2022. This has helped it to deliver its aims around increasing equality of access and promoting inclusion. Its Visitor Services Team were winners at the first ever [National Visitor Experience Awards](#), facing competition from the Houses of Parliament and National Museums Liverpool.
- Colchester Museums has engaged closely with Colchester's LGBTQ+ community which has played a key role in the Council's consultation on an exhibition at Hollytrees Museum: *We are Colchester*. Several objects included at this exhibition relate specifically to gender identity. Colchester Museums had a stall at the *Colchester Has Pride* event on 18 August 2018, which was also marked by the Rainbow Flag flying at the Town Hall. Ipswich Museums Service (also managed by Colchester Borough Council) offered 'early bird' sessions for people with autism and 'handling objects' sessions, which were focused on increasing access for Blind and Partially Sighted customers.
- 2017-18 was a busy year for training and development for the Customer Support Team. The whole team was trained to be Dementia Friendly Champions and the team completed the innovative *Dementia Experience* to truly understand the impacts of this condition. LGBTQ+ training was also cascaded to the team.
- 2018 saw the introduction of a Council-wide Suicide Protocol (on responding to threats or ideas of suicide or self-harm) which included detailed guidance and procedures as well as contact details of dedicated organisations and relevant agencies. The protocol reflects special arrangements agreed between the Council and EPUT's Access and Assessment Team.

- The Macmillan Team had its best year in terms of performance, helping to achieve almost £5m in *benefit gains* for people affected by cancer. (This is the amount of welfare benefit raised for a client we have advocated for.) In addition, an online referral form has been developed for the use of Macmillan clients and health care professionals in order to increase equality of access to the service.
- The criteria for tender in relation to enforcement agents used by the Council's Payments and Debt Recovery service has included support for vulnerable debtors. These contracts stipulate specialist help and advice to ensure that the right support is offered.
- 2017-18 has been a successful year for the Council in terms of winning funding for a variety of services. There have been successful joint bids with Essex County Council, CBC and two neighbouring district councils, to access funding (£130 million, nationally) from Sport England to explore ways for communities to become more active. Programmes developed within the Colchester pilot, of which there are twelve in all, will promote increased levels of activity among vulnerable young families and older people living in circumstances of deprivation.
- The Council's Licensing Food and Safety Team has organised four Food Hygiene Training courses in 2018 delivered in Chinese on behalf of the Colchester Chinese Community Association (CCA).
- The Council has a zero tolerance approach to any refusal to a licensed driver's refusal to carry Assistance Dogs. The new Taxi and Private Hire Policy includes arrangements for spot checks to be carried out along with mandatory disability awareness training.
- The Council has taken a robust approach to enforcing the [Public Space Protection Order](#) for the Town Centre introduced by the Council in October, 2017. This included the prohibition of "the stationing of advertising boards, or other structures being used as such." The restriction has enhanced equality of access into the Town Centre by all those with limited mobility, and can be enforced by the Council's Zone Wardens.
- The Environmental Protection Team provides an air quality forecast service by text which is especially helpful to the elderly, pregnant women, children and babies and those with respiratory issues. The team continues to work with the Essex Countywide Travellers Unit to help ensure equal and fair treatment for people within Roma Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities.
- The Council recognises that there are strong links between improving Public Health and meeting its objectives around Equality and Diversity, and Safeguarding. In an attempt to promote the Making Every Contact Count (MECC) approach, new staff are required to complete a new online module as part of their induction process, in order to promote supportive conversations with residents and customers about behaviour change, thereby increasing opportunities to promote health and reduce health inequalities. The *Beat the Street* project, which ran in autumn 2017, increased physical activity levels. As a disproportionate number of participants were from Colchester's BAME community, the project is one example of an initiative that has helped to reduce health inequality.
- In February 2018, Leisure World introduced a free programme of fun, relaxed activities and sports aimed at people living with dementia and their carers. It has worked in partnership with a number of organisations including Community 360 to ensure that transport is provided for participants to access these activities.

- The Council has adopted the *Dying to Work Charter* which confirms its commitment to providing additional and clear reassurance to staff who are diagnosed with a terminal illness. The Charter confirms that such staff will be given employment protection and be supported sensitively during a traumatic period of their life. The Council has also signed up to further commitments within the *Disability Confident Scheme* including providing work experience and guiding staff to information and advice on mental health conditions. In addition, the Council introduced a new online payroll system called 'MySelf' which includes a secure facility for each member of staff to update their details, many of which reflect the Equality Act's so-called 'protected characteristics' This helps the Council to build a fuller profile of its staff which is necessary in order to help ensure that it treats its employees fairly.
- During the period 2017-18, 647 Council owned properties were let by Colchester Borough Homes which is the Council's ALMO. A majority of these were let on the basis of serious or critical medical or welfare awards via the Gateway to Homechoice scheme. Colchester Borough Homes has worked closely with the Council over the period to help ensure compliance with the revised duties introduced through the Homelessness Reduction Act. In response to this legislation, between April and June 2018, 4094 customers have accessed the Enhanced Housing Options (EHO) Wizard and 212 full assessments have taken place. Colchester Borough Homes has continued to strengthen its commitment to being a *Mindful Employer*. Colchester Borough Homes has committed to a charter of voluntary principles that helps employers support staff with mental health issues.
- The Generic Call Centre has worked closely with *Essex Sight* over the period in order to reduce the barriers to accessing services experienced by people with a visual impairment. It has developed a new *VIP (Visual Impairment Priority) Line* which was launched on 3 April 2018. This dedicated line removes the need for users to press a series of numbered options on a keypad. Offices either resolve the enquiry with the customer, or arrange a call back. A range of information can be provided to the customer on service-specific adjustments which has been detailed in Appendix B (below).

VIP (Visual Impairment Priority) Line - Service Adjustments for Customers

Information compiled for the CBC Generic Call Centre VIP Line – launched 2018

	<p>WEBSITE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colchester Borough Council's website is BrowseAloud enabled which means that you can have information on the site read aloud to you for free on a Smartphone, Tablet, PC or Mac. BrowseAloud is a suite of products that provides website reading support, highlighting each word as it is spoken in a high quality, human-sounding voice. Other features include: Dual-Colour Highlighting Talking Translator; Secure Site Reading; Text Magnification; MP3 Maker; PDF Reading; Talking Dictionary; Screen Masking; and International Languages
	<p>BRAILLE</p> <p>The Council will always consider requests for letters or documents to be produced in Braille.</p>
	<p>ELECTIONS</p> <p>The Council's Elections Team provides the following adjustments at all elections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tactile Template Devices ○ Large versions of the printed ballot paper ○ A magnifying glass
	<p>RUBBISH AND RECYCLING</p> <p>The recycling calendar is available as a PDF and audio version, both of which are downloadable from the website from 1 March (for new 2018-19 calendar)</p>
	<p><u>LEISURE WORLD</u></p> <p>Guide Dogs are welcome at Leisure world on Cowdray Avenue. Officers will be happy to walk sight impaired customers to where they need to go for their activity. Leisure World offers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phoenix Disability Swimming Club - Various sports hall based activities for people with a range of disabilities including sensory. Whiz Kids sessions offer <i>children</i> with disabilities and their families a safe and supportive environment to participate in a variety of sports. Endeavour is an activity session on Friday afternoons that offers <i>adults</i> with disabilities access to a range of sports.

COLCHESTER & IPSWICH MUSEUMS

The museum website has information on accessing facilities in the [Visit](#) Section. (Select 'Making a Visit' and scroll down to the section on 'Facilities and Accessibility'.)

- Colchester's Natural History Museum has a number of tactile displays. The redevelopment of the Castle included a variety of adjustments for Blind or visually impaired visitors.
- Colchester Castle offers tactile mapping and audio description options. Audio descriptive guides are free to borrow from reception. There are 30 'audio wands' available to aid touring the museum. 'RNIB' style maps are provided for visitor orientation. All hands-on interactives have 'raised text' and level 1 Braille instructions.
- Hollytrees Museum in Ipswich offers items for handling and there are a number of audio interpretation points around the museum.
- Castle Park includes a sensory garden which includes features specifically designed for the visually impaired. It can be found next to the Wetzlar 'formal' Garden which is near Hollytrees. Customers can ask a Park Warden to help locate it. The Sensory Garden "...has been designed so that the flowers and plants provide colour and smell stimulation. This has been complimented by adding mosaics to the floor and sides of the raised beds to stimulate touch."



PARKING PARTNERSHIP

NEPP offices will be happy to complete a permit application or type a challenge (to a parking notice) on a customer's behalf.



MACMILLAN WELFARE RIGHTS

The team will be happy to order Macmillan information leaflets in a larger font as required.



COLCHESTER GOOD GYM

The Council supports the local Good Gym launched in 2016 which helps promote a healthier lifestyle - whilst reducing isolation and assisting vulnerable people at the same time. The initiative was shortlisted as a finalist in the Voluntary Community Service Award in the 'Who Will Care?' awards.



DISABLED FACILITY GRANTS

Colchester Borough Council provides *Disabled Facilities Grants* in order to help sustain independent living. In addition, we administer *Disabled Facilities Assistance Loans* to assist households with works that do not fall within the scope of the mandatory Grant.