

SUMMARY OF EQUALITIES POLICY 2012 - 2015

Commitment

“Equal People, Different Needs”

Rossendale Borough Council is committed to ensuring that everyone will have an equal chance to fulfill their potential and enjoy a good quality of life. It is acknowledged that people face barriers to social and economic inclusion, to good health and housing, to learning and access to services. The Council is committed to understanding and removing the barriers that lead to disadvantage and inequality.

The Council is dedicated to ensuring that equality influences the way we develop and deliver services and the way we employ and develop staff irrespective of their gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, age, religion, belief or socio-economic circumstances.

Equality within Rossendale means that we recognise that people are equal, but can and will often have different needs.

The purpose of the Equality Policy is to set out the Council’s commitment to equalities, its responsibilities and how it will meet its public duties and requirements according to equality legislation.

Equality is not about treating everyone the same but recognising and respecting differences, and treating each other with fairness and dignity.

Rossendale Borough Council is an achieving authority, developing better outcomes for its communities, and will continue to strive for excellence in the services it provides.

The Council's Equality Objectives are to:

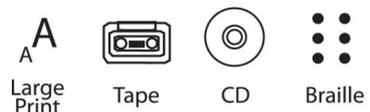
1. Ensure community engagement and consultation is effective

Our Council has made considerable progress with the establishment of our Neighbourhood Forums and our robust Community Impact Assessment process which is used to support and inform our decision making process. However, we recognise that there is a need to improve our understanding of hard to reach communities, and their perceptions of ourselves, partners and our services.

This will be achieved through effective and meaningful consultation and engagement activities. The aim is to foster strong relations allowing customers the opportunity to

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influence services by developing a clear vision in relation to community engagement. A toolkit will be implemented which will ensure:

- That consultation and engagement is targeted with our hard to reach groups where appropriate.
- The findings are shared across partners to ensure a multi-agency response in developing outcomes.
- The findings are considered as part of the decision making process.

2. Embed equalities throughout the Council

Equality and inclusion will be considered at all levels within the Council to ensure that there is a clear and concise link between strategic thinking and service delivery. We aim to ensure that we understand and address the needs of all our communities in all Council functions, we will:

- Ensure that Councillors are trained effectively in relation to Equality and Diversity so they can carry out their leadership role.
- Ensure the findings from our Community Impact Assessment process are fully considered, ensuring that equality and inclusion implications are given due regard in the development of any policies or decisions.

3. Improve data and analysis in relation to equality and customer information

We collect data in relation to our customers and communities ensuring that our services are meeting the needs of all our communities, we will refresh our equality monitoring policy to:

- Ensure a proportionate and well balanced approach to the collection of information in relation to our customers.
- Develop a robust Council wide set of relevant data to inform our decision making.

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Implementing the Equality Act

The Council is required to take a proactive approach to mainstreaming equalities into all Council decisions and activities. The Policy outlines how it will meet its duties and how it will monitor and report its progress.

The Equality Act confirms that everyone has the right to be treated fairly and equally, and brings together all existing equality legislation together in one Act to strengthen existing laws.

This Policy takes consideration of all protected equality characteristics as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

- Race
- Disability
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Age
- Sexual orientation
- Religion or Belief
- Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

The Council also recognises the impact of socio-economic circumstances and human rights, and we are committed to including these as part of our work and considerations on equality impacts.

Consideration of caring responsibilities and domestic violence statutory duties is also specifically given regard to within Policy.

Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

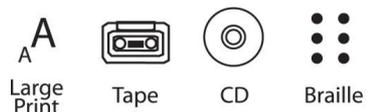
In the exercise of its functions (including any functions carried out by an external supplier/organisation), the Council must have due regard to the need to:

- **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.**

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- **Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

These are often called the three main aims of the ‘general duty’ and are detailed in the [Equality Act 2010 Section 149](#) .

Specific Duties

The Equality Duty is supported by two **specific duties** which require public bodies to:

- **Publish equality information** at least annually.
- **Set and publish equality objectives** at least every four years.

While formal ‘equality impact assessments’ are not a legal requirement; the Council has embedded a Community Impact Assessment process within its policy development and decision making processes. This will continue and enables the Council to ensure that equality is considered transparently as part of its decision making process.

We will also give due regard to the impact of our policies and decisions on:

- people with caring responsibilities¹
- human rights
- contribution to equality of opportunity and promoting a positive impact
- contribution to fostering good relations between different groups (people getting on well together – valuing one another, respect and understanding).

The Equality Impact Assessment process is also embedded within business planning. This ensures that our decision making process is robust and impacts on all communities within Rossendale and are fully considered in Council business.

Equality Framework for Local Government

As part of the Council’s ongoing commitment to meeting the needs of all our customers and delivering quality services the Council has been designated as ‘an achieving

¹ Caring responsibilities are where an adult or child relies upon you for care and attention, and that you assist with their daily routine. The Council is committed to achieving equality for people with caring responsibilities in service provision and employment.

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authority' under the Equality Framework for Local Government through an independent assessment. This means that the Borough Council has been independently assessed as making a real difference to the local community and providing positive outcomes for local people. This is based on the Council's understanding and knowledge of its communities by working with them and engaging – which has helped the council to provide responsive services that meet the needs of all of our communities.

Provision of Information

The Council will provide information in printed form and via the Council website. On request, we will provide translations into ethnic minority languages and other formats including, large print, Braille, CD or tape. Additionally, employees and staff in the Council's One Stop Shop can directly access interpretation and translation services for assistance in dealing effectively with customers whose first language is not English.

For Further Information

Website:

http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?categoryID=93&documentID=714

Contact: People & Policy Team 01706 252451

Date: January 2015

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