

Subject:	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-29	Status:	For Publication
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	10 th November 2025
Report of:	Head of People and Policy	Portfolio Holder:	Environment and Corporate Services
Key Decision:	☐ Forward Plan ☐	General Exception	☐ Special Urgency ☐
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
Biodiversity Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
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1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 1.1 Members of Overview and Scrutiny to review and comment on the refreshed Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Strategy and action plan 2024-2029, attached at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Members of Overview and Scrutiny to endorse the strategy for Cabinet approval.
- 1.3 Members of Overview and Scrutiny to support the implementation of the strategy through ongoing annual equality reports.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The refreshed strategy outlines the Council's commitment to promoting fairness, tackling inequality, and embedding inclusive practices across all services, employment, and community engagement.
- 2.2 The strategy aligns with current equality legislation, the Valley Plan 2025-2029 and Local Government Association Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG).
- 2.3 The key updates to the strategy includes:
 - Refreshed strategic objectives and four-year action plan;
 - Clear roles and responsibilities across the organisation;
 - Adoption of the socio-economic duty set out in Section 1 Equality Action 2010.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council is committed to promoting equality, celebrating diversity and fostering inclusion across all areas of work, in both employment practices and service delivery
- 3.2 The strategy aligns with the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998 supporting inclusive service delivery, community engagement and employment practices.

The Council has specific duties under the Public Sector Duty (PSD), which requires public bodies to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people from different backgrounds.

Public Sector Equality Duty also requires the Council is to publish equality information annually

3.4 The refreshed strategy builds on the Equality Policy 2021 (Appendix 2), now renamed as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, with an accompanying four-year action plan.

4. DETAILS

4.1 The Equality Policy 2021 has been last reviewed as part of the policy review cycle and renamed to reflect a broader inclusive scope.

4.2 The strategy and action plan has been refreshed to align with the EFLG and incorporate self - assessment findings which currently place the Council at the 'Developing' level. self-assessment. The framework will be used to monitor and drive improvement.

4.3 The strategy sets out the Council's new proposed equality objectives:

- **Inclusive Community Engagement** – strengthen involvement of diverse communities using 'lived' experience to shape services.
- **Leadership and Organisational Commitment** – ensure members and managers are accountable, supported by Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs)
- **Accessible and Responsive Services** – remove barriers to access, provide inclusive design and monitor access.
- **Diverse and Inclusive Workforce** - build a workforce that reflects the communities we serve, promote fair recruitment and support wellbeing.

4.4 The strategy proposes to adopt the principle of the Socio-Economic Duty set out in Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010 as part of our commitment to reducing inequality. This means that when making strategic decisions, the Council will actively consider how its policies and practices can help support the reduction of inequalities outcomes which result from socio-economic disadvantages.

4.5 To ensure this duty is embedded in decision-making, the Council will explicitly include socio-economic disadvantage within its impact assessment framework and will add to the Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs).

4.6 It is proposed the Council will adopt an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) framework to ensure inclusive evidence-based decisions to reduce inequalities linked to protected characteristics and socio-economic disadvantages.

5. RISK

5.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

Failure to implement the strategy effectively may result in:

- Non-compliance with statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010;
- Reputational damage and loss of public trust;

- Missed opportunities to improve service delivery and workforce diversity;
- Increased risk of discrimination claims or complaints.

Mitigation includes robust governance, mandatory training, and regular performance monitoring

6. FINANCE

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of the strategy. Implementation will be supported through existing service budgets and resources. Any additional costs related to training or data systems will be considered through standard budget planning processes

7. LEGAL

- 7.1 No additional comments to be made in relation to this report.

8. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The strategy underpins all Council policies and decision-making processes. It ensures that equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded across:

- Service planning and delivery;
- Workforce practices;
- Community engagement;
- Procurement and partnership working.

The strategy strengthens the Council's commitment to inclusive governance and continuous improvement.

- 8.3 Consultation has been undertaken with the Council's Corporate Management Team, Portfolio Holder and Lead Member Equalities Champion.
- 8.4 While no direct impact is identified at this strategic level, the strategy is designed to positively influence outcomes for all protected characteristics. Specific impacts will be assessed through Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) as part of implementation.

9.0 REASON FOR DECISION

- 9.1 The refreshed strategy provides a clear and accountable framework for promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across Rossendale. It reflects best practice, legal compliance, and the Council's ambition to be a fair and inclusive organisation. Endorsement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will support its successful implementation and ensure ongoing scrutiny of progress.

Background Papers			
Document	Place of Inspection		
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025 and action plan	Attached as Appendix 2		
Equality Policy 2021	Attached as Appendix 1		
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Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2025



Effective and Efficient Council

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1. Introduction

Rossendale Borough Council (the Council) is committed to promoting equality, celebrating diversity, and fostering inclusion across all areas of our work.

The strategy sets out our approach to embedding equality in service delivery, community engagement, and employment practices to support the Council's commitment to build a fair and inclusive borough to identify and address inequality and bias.

The strategy aligns with the Local Government Association's Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) and underpins our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

The strategy aligns with the Council's Code of Conduct for staff and members, which sets expectations around respect, fairness, and integrity. All staff and members have a shared responsibility to champion equality, challenge discrimination, and model inclusive behaviors in line with the Equality Act.

2. Scope

The strategy applies to:

- All council services, strategies, decisions and functions, including planning, commissioning, procurement, consultation, and service delivery;
- All council staff, members, agency workers, contractors, and volunteers;
- External partners and organisations working with or on behalf of the Council;
- All interactions with residents, service users and communities.

Ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion principles are embedded across all our work and relationships.

3. Our Vision for Equality

The Council want Rossendale to be a borough where:

- Everyone has equal access to opportunities and services;
- Diversity is recognised, valued, and respected;
- Inequalities are challenged and addressed;
- Council services and employment practices are inclusive, equitable and accessible to all.

4. Legal and Policy Context

The Council is committed to meeting our duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires public bodies to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people from different backgrounds.

Under the Equality Act 2010, protected characteristics include:

- Age,
- Disability,
- Gender Reassignment,
- Marriage and Civil Partnership,
- Pregnancy and Maternity,
- Race,
- Religion or Belief,
- Sex,
- Sexual Orientation.

The strategy supports our responsibility under the **Human Rights Act 1998** ensuring that we act in ways that respect and uphold people's rights in everything we do.

The Council recognises that fairness does not always mean treating everyone the same and embrace the principle of equality, providing tailored support to meet individual needs.

The Council adopts the principle of the Socio-Economic Duty (Section 1 of the Equality Act 2010) as part of its commitment to reducing inequality and addressing disadvantage.

To ensure inclusive and evidence-based decision-making, the Council uses an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) framework. This helps us understand how our policies and decisions affect different groups, particularly those with protected characteristics and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

The Council's approach to Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs):

- Conduct IIAs for all new or significantly revised policies, strategies, procedures, functions, and decisions.
- Identify potential impacts on people with protected characteristics and those facing socio-economic disadvantage.
- Ensure IIAs are proportionate, transparent, and embedded early in the decision-making process.
- Publish completed IIAs alongside key decisions to promote accountability.
- Factor the needs of disadvantaged and protected groups into strategic planning and resource allocation.

- Identify and mitigate any disproportionate negative impacts on vulnerable or low-income groups.
 - Strengthen our evidence base to tackle inequality and improve transparency.
 - Demonstrate leadership by going beyond minimum legal standards to promote inclusion.
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5. Our Equality Objectives (2025–2029)

Our Equality Objectives bring together our ambitions and commitments across services, leadership, workforce, and community engagement. These objectives support the Council's Valley Plan:

- **Inclusive Community Engagement** – strengthen involvement of diverse communities using 'lived' experience to shape services.
 - **Leadership and Organisational Commitment** – ensure members and managers are accountable, supported by Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs)
 - **Accessible and Responsive Services** – remove barriers to access, provide inclusive design and monitor access.
 - **Diverse and Inclusive Workforce** - build a workforce that reflects the communities we serve, promote fair recruitment and support wellbeing.
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6. Roles and Responsibilities

Members

- Ensure equality through decision-making and promote equality through community leadership;
- Scrutinise progress on equality objectives;
- The Leader of the Council holds Cabinet-level responsibility for equality and will nominate a Member Equality Champion.

Chief Executive and Corporate Management Team

- Provide strategic leadership on equality and inclusion;
- Ensure equality is integrated into service planning and policy development;
- Oversee completion and use of Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs).

Heads of Service and Managers

- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion within their teams and service areas;
- Ensure all staff are trained and supported on equality matters;
- Lead on the completion of IIAs for relevant projects and decisions.

Staff

- Treat colleagues and customers with fairness, dignity and respect;

- Participate in equality training and apply learning in their roles;
- Contribute to an inclusive workplace and challenge inappropriate behaviour.

Human Resources

- Ensure fair, transparent and inclusive recruitment and employment practices;
- Monitor and report workforce equality data;
- Support initiatives to improve workforce diversity and inclusion.

Partners, Contractors, and Suppliers

- Demonstrate compliance with equality legislation and Council expectations;
- Deliver inclusive services and employment practices when working with or on behalf of the Council.

7. Tackling Hate Crime and Promoting Respect

The Council takes a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime and all forms of discrimination. Everyone in our borough should feel safe, respected, and free from prejudice.

The Council adopts a victim-centred definition of hate crime, where the perception of the victim or any other person is central. All reports are taken seriously, and support is offered to those affected.

To reinforce this commitment, the Council has formally adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, supporting efforts to identify and address antisemitic behaviour and better protect Jewish residents and communities.

8. Governance, Monitoring and Accountability

The Council is committed to robust governance and transparent monitoring of its equality commitments.

- The Corporate Management Team will oversee the implementation of this strategy and monitor progress against equality objectives through annual performance reporting.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review and challenge annual equality reports to support continuous improvement.
- Any failure to follow this strategy will be treated seriously and may lead to disciplinary action in line with Council procedures.
- All equality-related data will be collected, stored and used in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

9. Training and Development

The Council is committed to ensuring all staff and members have the knowledge and skills to promote equality, challenge discrimination, and support inclusive practice, this will be achieved by.

- Delivering mandatory equality training to all new employees as part of the corporate induction process, with refresher training at appropriate intervals;
 - Including mandatory equality and inclusion training as part of the councillor induction and ongoing development programme;
 - Providing specific training on Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs), unconscious bias, inclusive leadership and other relevant topics to staff and members as required.
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10. Addressing Breaches of the Strategy

- Any concerns about potential breaches of the strategy should be raised with your line manager in the first instance, or through the Council's Whistleblowing Policy if appropriate.
 - Breaches will be dealt with in accordance with the Council's Disciplinary Procedure, Formal Complaints Process or Standards Complaints Process, depending on the nature of the incident.
 - In serious cases, the Council may consider legal or contractual action where breaches involve suppliers, partners or external providers.
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11. Equality Monitoring

Monitoring is key to identifying inequality, informing service improvement, and ensuring that we are meeting the needs of the Council's workforce and community, this will be achieved by:

- Use monitoring data to assess whether our policies, services, and employment practices are effective and inclusive;
- Incorporate equality analysis into performance reviews and service planning;
- Monitor the workforce by protected characteristic in relation to:
 - Recruitment and retention;
 - Training and development;
 - Disciplinary and grievance procedures;
 - Pay and progression;
 - Staff turnover and leavers.

All equality monitoring information will be handled in line with data protection law, and anonymised where required.

12. Implementation and Review

- The strategy will be delivered through the Council's Equality Strategy and Action Plan;
 - An Annual Equality Report will track and share progress;
 - The strategy will be formally reviewed every four years, or earlier if required due to changes in legislation, local context, or organisational priorities
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13. Contact and Accessibility

To request this policy in an alternative format or language, or to raise a concern, please contact:

Policy and Performance Team

Email: peopleandpolicy@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Telephone: 01706 252499

Website: [Rossendale Borough Council Main Homepage – Rossendale Borough Council](#)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy – Action Plan 2025-2029

Objective 1 – Inclusive community engagement			
Action	Responsible Officer	Actions/Outcomes	Completion
Develop a Community Engagement Framework, including a Statement of Community Involvement	Communities and Partnership Manager	Draft framework, consult stakeholders, publish statement	TBC
Make digital communications content, particularly social media more accessible, including the use of alternative text on images and captions for video	Web champions/ Policy and Performance Officer	Audit current content, train staff, implement accessibility tools	TBC
Make non digital communications more accessible	Policy and Performance Officer	Audit current tools, develop and implement plan and tool kit	TBC
Develop the Council's approach to consultation, promoting engagement from all sectors of the community	Policy and Performance Officer	Develop inclusive consultation toolkit promote via community networks	TBC
Ensure the Council's website remains accessible in accordance with the Public Sector Bodies (websites and Mobile Applications and Accessibility Regulations 2018)	Head of ICT and Customer Services/web champions	Conduct accessibility audit, implement WCAG 2.1 standards	Ongoing
Develop a Digital Inclusion Framework, including establishing a network of partner organisations who support digitally excluded residents, webpages detailing support available.	Communities and Partnership Manager	Partner network, support webpages, staff/member survey	TBC
Celebrate cultural diversity and heritage in partnership with community groups	Communities and Partnership Manager/Officers	Partner with groups, host events, promote via social media	Ongoing

Objective 2 – Leadership and organisational commitment			
Action	Responsible Officer	Actions/ Outcomes	Completion
Introduce an annual Equality and Inclusion Leadership Statement from the Leader and Chief Executive	Chief Executive/ Leader	Draft and publish statement annually	Annually
Strengthen scrutiny role by adding EDI performance review to O&S work programme – Annual Equality Report	Director of Economic Development	Add EDI review to O&S terms of reference, train members	TBC
Delivery mandatory EDI training to all staff and members to feel confident to support the needs of customers (including Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) inclusive leadership, unconscious bias),	HR Manager/Member Services Manager	Induction training, refresher training, legislation updates	Ongoing
Embed Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) in all relevant Cabinet and committee reports	All officers/Member Services Manager/ HR Manager	Update report templates, train report authors	Ongoing
Nominate a Lead Officer Equalities Champion	Leader	Appoint champion	Annually
Monitor compliments, complaints, service requests and enquiries to support organisational development and customer service delivery.	Corporate Support Manager	Monitor data, develop and implement improvement	TBC
Develop an Equality Working Group to act as a critical friend to services in developing and reviewing Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA)	Head of People and Policy	Form group, schedule quarterly meetings	TBC
Review the Council’s Modern Slavery Statement to meet legislative requirements	Head of Legal Services	Update statement and policy, publish on Council website	TBC
Achieve LGA equality status	Head of People and Policy	Apply assessment criteria to current working practices, amend EDI strategy action plan accordingly	Annually
Review Complaints Policy and Procedure	Corporate Support Manager	Consult stakeholders and refresh the Policy and Procedures	TBC

Objective 3 – Design and deliver services that meet the needs of all residents and address barriers to access			
Action	Responsible Officer	Actions/ Outcomes	Completed
Complete annual Residents Survey with equality monitoring	Policy and Performance Officer	Design survey, analyse data, publish findings	Annually
Complete accessibility audits for all frontline services, buildings, open spaces including digital platforms	Head of Environmental Services/Head of ICT and Customer Services/ Facilities and Safety Manager	Conduct audits, implement improvements	TBC
Implement Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) into service delivery models, regularly reviewing and adapting the assessment based on community and service users feedback and assessment findings	Service Managers	Train officers, Equality Working Group to review and support officers	Ongoing
Expand translation, interpretation and alternative format provision, ensure access and fair service for those with communication barriers	Head of People and Policy/ Head of ICT and Customer Services	Conduct audits, implement improvements	TBC
Improve the Council's data collection to help understand barriers to accessing our services	Service Managers	Review forms and add demographic fields, and other non-written methods eg focus groups to improve accessibility	TBC
Include social value clauses in all contracts, with focus on equality outcomes.	Procurement Officer	Update procurement templates, train officers, monitor outcomes	TBC

Objective 4 – Build a workforce that reflects the community, with fair recruitment and a culture of inclusion			
Action	Responsible Officer	Actions/Outcomes	Completed
Develop a Health and Wellbeing Strategy promoting support for good health and wellbeing to our staff	HR Manager/ Facilities and Safety Manager	Draft Strategy and annual wellbeing activity plan	Qu 4 2026
Undertake gender and ethnicity pay gap reporting and develop an action plan to close any gaps	HR Manager	Analyse data, develop improvement plan and publish Annual Equality Report	Annually
Maintain Disability Confident accreditation	HR Manager	Submit renewal, promote inclusive practices	Ongoing
Promote targeted recruitment outreach	HR Manager	Working with schools, DWP, Rossendale Works, Community groups	Ongoing
Monitor Application Tracking System (ATS), evaluate efficiency and anonymous application process	HR Manager	Review process and implement improvements, embed equalities in interviews	Qu 4 2026
Promote self-declaration of protected characteristics amongst staff	HR Manager	Staff campaign, promoting staff reassurance in confidentiality	Annually
Publish an Annual Equality Report	Head of People and Policy	Include in O&S programme and forward plan	Annually
Develop a communications plan to celebrate EDI activities, religious festivals, awareness days, celebrations, personal stories etc.	Policy and Performance Officer	Calendar of events, stories and awareness days	Qu 4 2026