

Report Title:	Annual Equality Workforce Profile 2025/26		
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny	Date:	14 th September 2026
Report of:	Head of People and Policy	Cabinet Portfolio:	Environment and Corporate Services
Cabinet Lead Member:	Councillor Lythgoe	Wards Affected:	All
Key Decision:	☐ Forward Plan ☒	☐ General Exception ☐ Special Urgency ☐	
Integrated Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached: No
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Valley Plan Priorities	Thriving Local Economy: This involves securing new inward investment, creating a sustainable economy, matching local skills with future job opportunities, and supporting town centres as unique destinations.	☐
	High Quality Environment: This includes having a "clean and green" local environment, reducing the borough's carbon footprint, improving waste and recycling rates, and delivering new homes with a good mix of housing tenures.	☐
	Healthy & Proud Communities: This priority focuses on improving the health and physical/mental wellbeing of residents, reducing health inequalities, ensuring access to better leisure facilities and health services, and fostering a sense of pride in the community.	☒
	Effective & Efficient Council: The aim is to provide good quality and responsive services, embrace new technology, be a financially sustainable council with a commercial outlook, and ensure sound governance.	☒

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To demonstrate the Council's progress in delivering its equality, diversity and inclusion objectives for 2025/26.
- 1.2 In December 2025, the Council replaced its Equality Policy with an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-29, in line with statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).
- 1.3 This report, and details within Appendix 1, demonstrate the Council's commitment to advancing equality of opportunity, eliminating discrimination and fostering good relations across the organisation and wider community.
- 1.4 This report highlights key workforce trends, achievements and actions and objectives for 2026/27.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

Overview and Scrutiny recommend Cabinet:

- 2.1 To note the Council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion throughout 2025/26 as detailed within this report and Appendix 1
- 2.2 To agree the Council's actions and objectives to progress the delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-29 for 2026/27.

3. BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR THE DECISION

- 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 In December 2025, the Council replaced its existing Equality Policy with an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-29.
- 3.3 The strategy aligns with the Equality Act 2010 and Human Rights Act 1998 to support inclusive service delivery, community engagement and employment practices.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 To support the delivery of this strategy, an annual equalities action plan is developed. Performance of this action plan is monitored by this annual Equality Report.
- 3.6 The Annual Equality Workforce Profile 2025/26, set out in Appendix 1, presents the Council's key workforce and Rossendale labour market (as per Census 2021) equality data.
- 3.7 Elected Member monitoring information is not included in this report, however it is available from Member Services on request.
- 3.8 As a small district authority, much of the Council's workforce equality data reflects small sample sizes. Where possible, workforce figures are compared with the Rossendale population profile to identify underrepresentation or areas for improvement.
- 3.9 While the Council's workforce does not meet the threshold for statutory Gender Pay Gap reporting (250+ employees), internal monitoring confirms that no gender pay gap exists within the organisation.
- 3.10 The Council remains committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of its work — as an employer, service provider, and community leader. Work continues with
- 3.11 partners, residents, and voluntary sector organisations to promote fair access, tackle discrimination, and foster inclusive working environments.

4. RISK

- 4.1 Failure to comply with the Equality Act 2010 or to demonstrate progress against the Public Sector Equality Duty could expose the Council to legal, reputational or operational risk.

- 4.2 Risks are mitigated through officer training, robust equality impact assessment procedures and oversight by the Corporate Management Team and Equalities Working Group.
- 5. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS (FINANCE)**
- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report. Equality actions are delivered within existing service budgets. Any future initiatives requiring additional funding will be considered through the normal budget-setting process.
- 6. MONITORING OFFICER COMMENTS (LEGAL)**
- 6.1 The Council must demonstrate due regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Publication of the Annual Equality Report is part of fulfilling this legal obligation and provides evidence of compliance through transparent reporting and documented actions.
- 7. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS**
- 7.1 No Integrated Impact Assessment is required. This report underpins the Council's ongoing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and the actions outlines within this report contribute directly to meeting the Council's equality objectives, promoting fairness across services and reducing barriers for staff and residents with protected characteristics.
- 8. POLICY/STRATEGY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS**
- 8.1 This report supports the delivery of the Council's Valley Plan priorities by promoting inclusive growth, strong communities and equitable access to services. It aligns with the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-29, ensuring that equality and inclusion are integral to decision-making and service delivery.
- 9. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion principles will be embedded within any future Local Government Reorganisation arrangements to ensure the Council operates in line with legislative requirements and best practice across employment and service delivery.
- 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 10.1 Appendix 1 – Equality Report 2025/26.



Annual Equality Report 2025/26



Introduction

Rossendale Borough Council is committed to promoting equality, celebrating diversity, and fostering inclusion across all its services, workforce, and community engagement.

This Annual Equality Report sets out the Council's progress during 2025/26 in meeting its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 and our Equality Objectives.

1. Our Legal Duties

As required by the Public Sector Equality Duty, the Council must have due regard 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.

The approach to equality must account for all “protected characteristics”. These are attributes that can underlie a person's or community's marginalisation. There are nine such characteristics:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| • Age | • Race |
| • Disability | • Religion or belief |
| • Gender Reassignment | • Sex |
| • Marriage and civil partnership | • Sexual orientation |
| • Pregnancy and maternity | |

The Council recognises its duties under the Human Rights Act 1998 and continues to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism to reinforce our zero-tolerance approach to hate crime.

2. Equality Objective 2025-2029

The Council's objectives, agreed in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-29, bring together 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.

3. Key Achievements in 2025/26

The Council reviewed its Equality Policy 2021, replacing this with the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025-29. This was formally adopted by Cabinet on 1st December 2025, alongside a four-year action plan.

During 2025/26 the Council delivered a range of initiatives to strengthen equality, diversity and inclusion across the borough including maintaining Disability Confident accreditation, delivering the Disabled Facilities Grant programme, delivering the Crisis Resilience Fund, progressing Rossendale Works, renewing the Armed Forces Covenant, achieving White Ribbon accreditation activity, running the Over-55 Wellbeing event, planning Rossendale Pride 2025 and strengthening staff wellbeing through Employee Assistance Programme and Wellbeing Champions.

Disability Confident Accreditation

The Council renewed its Disability Confident Employer status in June 2025. This reaffirming the Council's commitment to inclusive recruitment and workplace practices.

The accreditation ensures that disabled people have fair access to employment opportunities, that reasonable adjustments are embedded, and that we continue to build an inclusive organisational culture.



Rossendale Works

The Rossendale Works partnership continued to play a vital role in supporting residents into training and employment. By working with local employers, training providers, and support agencies, the programme has helped 94 residents overcome barriers to work, gain new skills, or access sustainable job opportunities, particularly benefiting those from disadvantaged or underrepresented groups.



A number of free activities and events were delivered throughout 2025/26 including; women's only boxing, tennis, community volunteering, football, mid-life MOT sessions, breakfast clubs, Health and Wellbeing Event (May 2025) and Rossendale Jobs Fair (October 2025).



White Ribbon Accreditation

Through White Ribbon initiatives, the Council has taken a proactive stance in ending male violence against women and girls. Awareness campaigns, staff training, and partnership activities have helped foster safer communities, promote gender equality, and encourage men to take a stand as positive role models and allies.

Crisis Resilience Fund and Affordable Warmth Scheme

The Crisis Resilience Fund continued to provide essential financial assistance to residents in crisis. 2,364 households were supported with the costs of food, energy, and other essentials, the fund has helped to alleviate poverty, reduce hardship, and promote dignity and inclusion for those most affected by the cost-of-living challenges. The fund has supported food banks, Citizens Advice and top up the affordable warmth grants.

Through partnership working the Council has supported Lancashire County Council's Affordable Warmth Scheme supporting low-income, vulnerable and pensioner households to improve home energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty. The scheme has improved health and wellbeing outcomes while promoting sustainability and ensuring that everyone has access to a safe and warm home.

Disabled Facilities Grants

Through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programme and commissioned home improvement agency, the Council supported residents with disabilities to live independently and safely in their own homes.

Adaptations such as stairlifts, accessible bathrooms, emergency repairs and ramp installations have helped to improve quality of life, reduce health inequalities, and enable people to remain active members of their communities across the Borough. During 2025/26 the Council processed and issued 151 grants to support residents to remain within their own homes.

VE Day Community Grants Armed Forces Covenant

The Council awarded VE Day Community Grants to local groups and veterans' organisations to support inclusive celebrations that honoured the service and sacrifice of the wartime generation. These events brought together residents of all ages and backgrounds, strengthening community pride and cohesion across Rossendale.

The Council continued to honour its pledge under the Armed Forces Covenant, ensuring that those who serve or have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly and supported in our community. Practical actions have included promoting employment pathways, signposting to welfare services, and supporting remembrance events, including Armed Forces Day, across Rossendale.

Pride Event – Whitaker Park, July 2025

Planning, funding and partnership work took place throughout 2025/26 to deliver the Rossendale Pride 2025 event at Whitaker Park. This celebration of the borough's LGBTQ+ community promoted visibility, inclusion, and equality—fostering understanding, belonging, and respect across all communities in Rossendale.



Wellbeing Champions and Stress Awareness Month

The Council’s Wellbeing Champions initiative continued to empower staff to act as advocates for health and wellbeing across services. Champions provide peer support, share resources, and promote a positive workplace culture that prioritises mental and physical health.

Complementing this, a series of activities were held during April to highlight stress awareness month. Activities included lunchtime learn session, wellbeing walks and chair yoga to promote stress reduction, healthy lifestyles, and resilience-building. Together, these initiatives have strengthened organisational wellbeing, increased awareness of support available, and fostered a culture of care and inclusion across the Council.



Employee Wellbeing Initiatives

The Council procured a new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in September 2025 to support staff wellbeing, provide confidential support and guidance, and counselling for personal or work-related issues. In addition, the Council actively marks awareness days relating to protected characteristics, including events for mental health, LGBTQ+, gender equality, and cultural diversity. These initiatives foster an inclusive workplace, raise understanding of equality issues, and ensure employees feel valued, supported, and empowered to contribute fully.

4. Workforce Equality Data (as at March 2026)

The workforce profile data is based on the employee headcount as at 31st March 2026. Census comparators are taken from the 2021 Census Rossendale Labour market figures. The Council annually monitors the diversity of its workforce.

Establishment and contracts as at 31st March 2026

Establishment	190 FTE (22.9 vacant)
Employed	176
Full-time	159
Part-time	17
Permanent	170
Temporary	11



Comparison of protected characteristics between the Council's workforce and Rossendale Labour Market (2021 Census)

Characteristic		Workforce 2025/26	Rossendale Labour Market (2021 Census)
Gender	54% female 46% male	40% female 60% male	51.1% female 48.9% male
Race	6.89% minority ethnic	5.68% minority ethnic	7.6% minority ethnic
Disability	7% declared	10.8% declared	20% report limiting illness/disability
Age	18% under 30 52% between 30-49 30% over 50	13% under 30 40% between 30-49 47% over 50	23% under 30 48% between 30-49 29% over 50
Religion/Belief	58% Christian 28% no religion 14% other/undeclared	60% Christian 29% no religion 11% other/undeclared	62% Christian 27% no religion 11 other/undeclared
Sexual Orientation	3% LGB+ 66% heterosexual 32% undeclared	3% LGB+ 66% heterosexual 31% undeclared	No local data (national estimate 3.2% LGB+)
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No data	No data	No data
Pregnancy and Maternity	1 taking maternity leave	No maternity leave	No data

As of March 2026, the Council's workforce continues to demonstrate diversity across a range of protected characteristics. Comparison with the Rossendale labour market indicates that the Council has a higher proportion of women, younger employees and employees from minority ethnic backgrounds than the local working-age population.

Women account for 54% of the Council's workforce, compared with 51.1% of the Rossendale labour market. Men account for 46%, compared with 48.9% locally. This indicates a balanced gender representation across the workforce.

6.89% of Council employees identify as being from a minority ethnic background, compared with 5.68% in the local labour market. This demonstrates that the Council's workforce slightly exceeds the ethnic diversity of the local population.



7% of employees have declared a disability, compared with 10.8% of the Council’s workforce comparator data and 20% of the local population reporting a limiting illness or disability in the 2021 Census. The Council continues to encourage voluntary disclosure and ensure that reasonable adjustments are available to support employees in carrying out their roles.

The Council has a relatively younger workforce compared with the local labour market. Employees under 30 account for 18% of the workforce, compared with 23% locally, while 52% are aged 30–49, compared with 48%. Employees aged over 50 account for 30% in line with the local figure of 29%. This provides a good mix of early-career, mid-career and experienced employees.

The workforce profile is consistent with the local labour market, with 58% of employees identifying as Christian and 28% reporting no religion, compared with 62% and 27% respectively across Rossendale.

3% of employees identify as LGB+, which is consistent with the local workforce comparator data. A relatively high proportion of employees have not disclosed their sexual orientation (32%), highlighting the importance of continuing to encourage voluntary and confidential equality monitoring.

The Council continues to encourage employees to voluntarily disclose protected characteristic information through equality monitoring. Monitoring across recruitment, progression and other HR processes helps the Council understand workforce trends, identify potential inequalities and inform actions to support equality, diversity and inclusion.

Overall, the the Council has a diverse workforce that reflects the local labour market. The Council will continue to monitor the data and use it to identify opportunities to improve representation, inclusion and equality of opportunity across the organisation.

5. Rossendale Workforce

Workforce disciplinary and grievance cases

All disciplinary and grievance cases are managed under the formal process of the Disciplinary Policy, Grievance Policy and Dignity at Work Incorporating Bullying and Harassment Policy. There were six cases disciplinary cases during 2025/26 as detailed below:

Gender	Male
Race	White
Disability	No
Age	1 case between 25-30, 4 cases between 40-50, 1 case over 60
Religion/Belief	Prefer not to disclose
Sexual Orientation	Prefer not to disclose



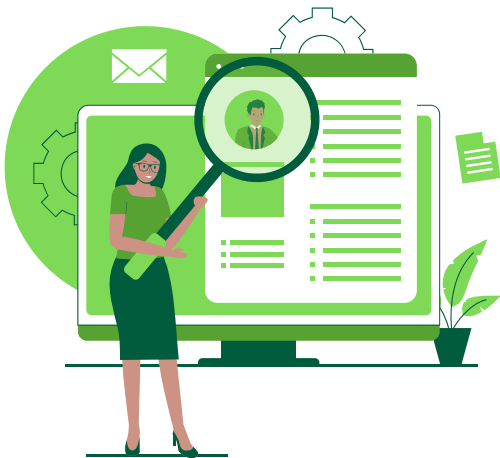
Leaving the Council

During 2025/26, the Council had 24 leavers (13.7% turnover). The protected characteristics of employee leavers is detailed below:

Gender	11 female 13 male
Race	21 White 2 Other Asian 1 Other
Disability	1 Long Term Health Condition 1 Mental Health 14 No 6 Undeclared 2 Yes
Age	4 between 20-29 7 between 30-39 4 between 40-49 3 between 50-59 6 over 60
Sexual Orientation	20 Hertrosexual 1 Undeclared 3 Prefer not to say

Job Applicants Profile

Equality monitoring is undertaken as part of the recruitment process, applicant can disclose their information however, this is not compulsory. The protected characteristics of applicants is detailed here:



Gender	37% female 63% male
Race	65% White British 35% Non-White Minorities
Disability	11% Declared Disability
Age	10% under 20 29% between 20-29 28% between 30-39 18% between 40-49 12% between 50-59 2% over 60
Sexual Orientation	87% Heterosexual 8% Gay/Bisexual 5% Prefer not to say



6. Equality Priorities for 2026/27

- Review Annual Action Plan to support the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and align with the Local Government Association's (LGA) Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG).
- Refresh equality training and roll out equalities training for all staff and councillors.
- Embed the Socio-Economic Duty into all council policies, services, and decision-making processes by completing Integrated Impact Assessments and reduce inequality to customers experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.
- Include equalities, diversity and inclusion as a standard agenda item at the quarterly Joint Consultations Committee.
- Embed social value (minimum 10%) into procurement, ensuring contracts deliver wider community benefit.
- Carrying out targeted outreach within the community through quarterly public meetings in Whitworth, Bacup, Rawtenstall, Haslingden.

7. Conclusion

The Council is committed to meeting its equality duties and promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across all services, the workforce and the community.

During 2025/26, the Council adopted a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which will embed equality principles, improve representation and support residents through a range of targeted initiatives.

The Council will continue to embed these principles through an annual action plan aligned with the Local Government Association's Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG).

