

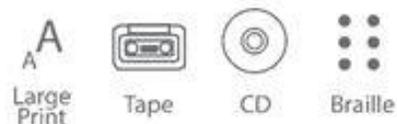
# Annual Equality Report

## Equal People, Different Needs

### 2013-14

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<b>Responsible Section/Team</b>	People & Policy	<b>Version/Status</b>	V1.4 FINAL
<b>Responsible Author</b>	Principal Policy Officer	<b>Date Agreed / Agreed At</b>	MT – 08.09.14 O&S – 22/9/14
<b>Date last Amended</b>	11.09.14	<b>Due for Review</b>	2015

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## **Introduction**

We can only provide an effective service to our community if we recognise the diversity within our communities and enable our workforce to meet the needs and concerns of that diversity.

Equality and fairness underpin the work and ethos of the Council at all levels. We have and continue to strive to achieve fairness in all of our services.

The Council's Annual Report on Equality and Diversity is one of the ways in which the Council makes visible the extent to which it is meeting its obligations to recognise diversity and promote equality. It reflects our work with and within our diverse internal and external communities as well as reporting key equality data/information.

The Council has made significant progress in embracing and progressing equality but recognise there is also more work to be done and we will continue to strive towards excellence.

As an employer our aim is to develop a diverse workforce and ensure that our workforce can work with dignity and respect, free from any type of discrimination or prejudice.

As a service provider our aim is to provide the best possible services to meet the needs of our different customers and ensure that our customers are treated with dignity and respect, free from any type of discrimination or prejudice, in the delivery of our services and decision making.

## **Summary**

As a public body we are required to publish equality information which demonstrates compliance with the Equality Duty. This report contains information<sup>1</sup> about:

- The protected characteristics of our workforce (where disclose/available)
- The protected characteristics of our communities / customers (where disclosed/available)
- An overview of our equality-related activities

We recognise that a proportion of the data we actively collect relates to small numbers of people, particularly when disaggregated by protected characteristic. Where the number people with a particular protected characteristics is fewer than 10, in line with best practice and guidance sought, we have either replaced this number with an asterisk (\*), have obtained permission or have determined that no individuals can be easily identified.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on information that has been disclosed and or that is publically available.

## Equality Framework for Local Government

The Council continues to undertake a robust and proportionate approach to equality and diversity, adopting the ethos and principles of the Equality Framework for Local Government.

As part of the Council's on-going commitment to meeting the needs of our different customers and delivering quality services we have been designated as '**an achieving authority**' under the Equality Framework for Local Government through an independent assessment.

This means that we are seen by the community and partners as making a real difference and providing positive outcomes for local people. This is based on our understanding and knowledge of our communities by working with them and engaging – which has helped the Council to provide responsive services that tries to acknowledge and meet the different needs our communities, and ensure that our decision making is informed.

## The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 states that everyone has the right to be treated fairly and equally. The Act has two main purposes. It brings together and simplifies all of the existing discrimination law, and strengthens the law to further support progress on equality.

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.**
- **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](#) .

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.

## Equality Objectives

In 2012 the Council set three underpinning equality objectives, this annual equality report reflects the commitment to these.

- Ensure community engagement and consultation is effective
- Embed equalities throughout the Council
- Improve data and analysis in relation to equality and customer information.

Further information on the context behind our equality objectives can be found on the Council's website:

[http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents\\_info.php?documentID=714&pageNumber=5](http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=714&pageNumber=5)

There are also a series of business plan level actions and performance indicators that are equality related. These are set out in our Business Plan and will be reported on via our Quarterly Performance Reports which are published on our website.

### Equality related performance indicators (from 2013-14 Q4)

It should be noted that with a shrinking workforce and low turnover, increasing these performance indicator figures will continue to be challenging, therefore targets may need to be reviewed.

PI Code	Short Name	Responsible Officers	Quarter 4 2012-13			Quarter 4 2013-14			Gauge Aim	Trend	Latest Note	Expected Outcome
			Q4 2012/13			Q4 2013/14						
			Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status				
LI 16a	Percentage of Employees with a Disability	HR	Annual PI. Not measured for Quarters			Annual PI. Not measured for Quarters Year End Figure = 2.39% Target = 5%			Aim to Maximise		As at 31 March 2014 there were 167 employees and the percentage of employees with a disability was 2.39%. Please note this is based on equality data employees have chosen to disclose, therefore may not be a true reflection.	Below Target
LI 17a	Ethnic Minority representation in the workforce - employees	HR	Annual PI. Not measured for Quarters			Annual PI. Not measured for Quarters Year End Figure = 0.01% Target = 3%			Aim to Maximise		As at 31 March 2014 there were 167 employees and the percentage of ethnic minority representation was 0.01%. Please note this is based on equality data employees have chosen	Below Target

PI Code	Short Name	Responsible Officers	Quarter 4 2012-13			Quarter 4 2013-14			Gauge Aim	Trend	Latest Note	Expected Outcome
			Q4 2012/13			Q4 2013/14						
			Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status				
										to disclose, therefore may not be a true reflection.		

PI Code	Short Name	Responsible Officers	Quarter 4 2012-13			Quarter 4 2013-14			Gauge Aim	Trend	Latest Note	Expected Outcome
			Q4 2012/13			Q4 2013/14						
			Value	Target	Status	Value	Target	Status				
STAN 1	Number of people accessing STAN	Service Assurance Team	188	360		330	120		Aim to Maximise		Footfall for Rossendale for quarter 4 was 330. STAN saw a total of 455 people for both boroughs. The footfall in Rossendale represent 72.73% of the total footfall for both boroughs still involved in the project.	Exceeding Target
STAN 2	% of customers satisfied with the service received from STAN	Service Assurance Team	100%	80%		100%	85%		Aim to Maximise		Overall Customer satisfaction with the STAN service remains high at 100% for quarter 4. This equates to 94.12% of customers who returned feedback forms being 'very satisfied', with the remaining 5.88% 'satisfied'. These results were drawn from the returned surveys over the quarter.	Exceeding Target

## Community Population Profile

The Council actively use existing data and intelligence sources such as, Census, Office of National Statistics, Neighbourhood Statistics, Lancashire Profile, JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment), the Index of Multiple Deprivation and so forth to understand the local profile/make up of our neighbourhoods/communities where available.

Utilising the 2011 Census data and other key publically available data sources the Council has produced a [Borough Profile and a set of Ward Profiles](#), which has been published on our website and circulated to key community groups. These have been received very positively in terms of assisting community group with evidence for funding bids etc.

## **Workforce Profile<sup>2</sup>**

Rossendale Borough Council as per the period of reporting employs 165 full time equivalent employees (155 full time, 9 part time and 1 casual). Equality monitoring is undertaken at the selection and periodically thereafter.

Appendix 1 of the Report Appendices sets out the data that has been disclosed.

Of those that did disclose information, some highlights are:

- In terms of gender diversity, the majority of the workforce is male; 61.2% male and 38.8% female.
- 2.4% of our employees have disclosed that they have a disability.
- 1.2% of employees identified as BME<sup>3</sup> (Black or Minority Ethnic).
- Over a third (35.7%) of our employees are aged 50-59 years.
- Those aged 19-24 years account for only 4.2% of our workforce.
- The majority of the Council's workforce is heterosexual. Based on the information disclosed, gay, lesbian and bisexual people are underrepresented in our workforce.
- The majority of our workforce is Christian (47.8%). Identification of 'no religion or belief' accounted for 21.8% of people choosing to disclose this information.
- 71.5% of staff who chose to disclose their gender identity information, identified as 'living in the gender that they were given at birth.'
- No data in relation to Marriage or Civil Partnership was disclosed/collected in 2013-14.

## **Councillor Profile<sup>4</sup>**

Equality monitoring is undertaken when new Councillors are elected / re-elected as part of their induction process. Appendix 1 sets out the latest data available. It should be noted that a number of Councillors have chosen not to disclose equality information. Of those that did disclose information, some highlights are:

- In terms of gender diversity, 55.5% of our elected Councillors are female and 44.5% are male. A majority of female Councillors remains.

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that data is based on those that have chosen to respond and disclose information. Not all respondents have chosen to disclose information in relation to all equality monitoring questions.

<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this report BME includes 'other white' and mixed/multiple heritage'.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that data is based on those that have chosen to disclose information. Not all respondents have chosen to disclose information in relation to all equality monitoring questions.

- 88.9% of our Councillors identify as 'White British'. Black and other ethnic minorities remain underrepresented within the profile of the Borough's elected Councillors.
- The majority of our Councillors are aged 60-69 years (44.4%).
- Only one of Councillors is aged 20-29 years (2.77%).
- The majority of our Councillors are heterosexual. Based on the information disclosed, gay, lesbian and bisexual people are underrepresented amongst Councillors. Nonetheless it is positive that two Councillors feel comfortable and confident to identify as gay/ lesbian.
- As at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014, 30 of 36 of our Councillors had undertaken relevant equality and diversity awareness training.

NB: Please note that since writing this report there has been a local election. Any equality profile changes arising from that will not be reflected in this report, but will be reported in 2014-15.

## **Employment Monitoring Information**

We embed monitoring at the various stages of employment as appropriate including:

- Application
- Selection and Recruitment
- Sickness absence
- Grievance
- Disciplinary
- Training and Development
- Exit

In terms of recruitment and selection during April 2013- March 2014, while a minority of applications shortlist were from ethnic minority backgrounds, overall the majority of applicants were White British. This is broadly representative of the local population profile. This trend is also the case for successful applicants.

Shortlisted application data shows that more males were shortlisted than females during this period. Successful selection data during this period shows that the majority of successful appointments were male, White British. No successful appointed applicants identified themselves as being disabled during the 2013-14 recruitment period.

In terms of take up of training and development opportunities during this period, the majority of employees were males (32.1%); this should take into account that the majority of training delivered was mandatory health and safety training for our operations employees who have a higher proportion of men. Also the majority of

employees accessing training and development were White British, and aged between 50-59 years – which is reflected of the overall workforce profile.

All employees recorded as disabled were able to access training and development opportunities during 2013-14. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish for some of this data.

In terms of sickness related absence warning monitoring, all were White British and aged 30-49 years. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish.

During this period there were no instances of:

- return to work of disabled employees following sick leave due to a disability
- return to work after maternity leave during this period

There was only once instance of disciplinary and related warning monitoring. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish.

In terms of termination<sup>5</sup> of employment there were 42 employees during 2013-14, more males (25) than females (17). Although there was a broad split across age bands, there was a slight majority of those aged 40-59 years. The majority were White British. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish for some data.

There have been no employee grievances or complaints in relation to discrimination during this period.

See Appendix B for further details where available/disclosed.

## **Flexible Working**

The Council's commitment to enabling and supporting flexible working is set out in its Flexible Working Policy for all staff which is currently being refreshed in light of recently legislative changes. The Council already considers requests for flexible working from all staff and we recognise that the ability to achieve a work-life balance is an important factor in helping us retain staff while continuing to meet the business need.

The Council also has a flexible working system for the majority of staff which enable them to manage their family life and external commitments within core business hours (7.30am-7pm) in addition to formal requests for flexible working arrangements.

During 2013-14 there have been no requests for flexible working in addition to working conditions already available.

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<sup>5</sup> Termination here covers all aspects on an employee leaving the council's employment, resignation, compulsory redundancy, voluntary redundancy, dismissal etc.

## **Reasonable Adjustments Made for Employees**

There have been two requests (formal or informal) for adjustments to employees working environment in relation to disability during this period. This has been dealt with on a case by case base; and adjustments have been undertaken successfully however the level of equality data that is available /disclosed is too small to publish.

## **Employment and Equal Pay**

Key messages:

- Of the staff that live within the borough, 62 (37.8%) in BB4 postcode and 27 (16.46%) in OL13 postcode areas.
- Average basic pay for females is £25,548 pa
- Average basic pay for males is £23,608 pa
- Overall average is £24,217pa

See Appendix B for breakdown of pay related data.

## **Awareness Raising /Training & Development**

As an employer, the Council has a proactive approach to training and development in order to meet the needs of different learners, and we recognise that it is critical for our staff to have the skills and knowledge to help eliminate unlawful discrimination, promote equal opportunities and value diversity. The Council's Organisational Development Plan is one element of the organisation's delivery mechanisms to fulfil its equality commitments. Training and development that has been undertaken during 2013-14 includes:

- Common Assessment Framework (CAF) training
- Safeguarding training
- Consultation training
- Equality and Diversity training for elected members
- Participation with children and young people training for staff and partners

## **Equality and Diversity – promoting understanding and respect**

On an ongoing basis the Council continues to promote and raise awareness internally and externally of key equality and diversity and health and wellbeing related events, celebrations and campaigns. general briefings and information sheets, hints and tips for promoting and encouraging equality and diversity which have been received positively. These include, but are not limited to:-

- Bowel Cancer Awareness Month
- Men's Health Week drop in session – stress and mental health
- Active Spaces Walks
- Credit Union Awareness / Promotion
- World AIDS Day

- International Women’s Day
- International Day of Disabled People
- Human Rights Day
- Safer Sleeping Campaign
- Childhood Cancer Awareness Month
- Love Your Liver’ Month
- Cancer Talk Week
- National Bug Busting Day
- Promoting cycling
- Tinnitus Awareness Week
- World Cancer Day
- Bobble Day – part of Age UK’s ‘Spread the Warmth’ campaign, to ensure older people are warm this winter
- Rare Disease Day
- Safeguarding awareness
- Downs Syndrome Awareness
- Awareness of religious / cultural festivals/celebrations

Also, the equality pages of our website provide signposting for the public.

## **Equality Impact Assessments**

[Equality Impact Assessments](#) (EIAs) are a structured and transparent way for the Council to fully understand the implications of our decisions and whether they are detrimental or discriminatory by considering the impact on protected equality groups within our community, fostering good relations and protection of human rights. This process is integrated into the Council’s policy development and decision making framework.

During 2013-14 there have been no equality challenges or judicial review action related to the EIA processes that have informed the Council’s decision making.

EIAs are published with the relevant reports which are published on our website on the [meetings pages](#).

## **Engagement and Consultation**

The Equality Duty requires the Council to have an adequate evidence base for its decision-making. A key reason for the Council to engage is to help us understand how our policies affect (or will affect) people who use our services, which can be used to inform and improve decision making.

The Council takes a proportionate<sup>6</sup> and relevant approach to engagement and consultation activity. The Council’s approach is to identify what information it already has available and will seek to determine where the gaps in evidence and understanding

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<sup>6</sup> Ensuring compliance with the Council’s Best Value Duty and Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve.

are, what it is seeking to find out and from whom, in order that the engagement activity is focused and relevant.

Rossendale Citizen's Panel is an active database of people within the community that the Council can consult with via surveys on key issues throughout the year giving people in the community that are interested in being consulted on specific issues the opportunity to submit their views via the internet or by post. This is open for anyone to join at any time. We also publish consultations on our website (digital by default with alternative formats available on request) and where appropriate in some cases undertake consultation events/drop in sessions in the borough.

We also have four active Neighbourhood Forums through which people can get involved in their local areas.

## **Rossendale Borough Council Compliments and Complaints**

We aim to learn from both complaints and compliments that are made about issues related to equality or discrimination, or from particular groups within the community. However, we recognise that there are certain difficulties in collection of equality data in situations of complaint for robust analysis. The Council's complaints and compliments, including reports of discrimination complaints by staff or customers are recoded formally via the Council's feedback and complaints system. This data is reported quarterly as part of the Council's Performance Report, published on the Council's website.

The Council received **164 Compliments** during the financial year 2013/14.

The Council received **80 Complaints** during the financial year 2013/14, with only 3 remaining open.

The Council received **2** Ombudsman complaints during the financial year 2013/14; all were closed at the end of the period.

None of the complaints received related to equality/access or discrimination.

No equality information was disclosed or collected in relation to these figures during 2013-14.

## **Providing Accessible Information**

Online - [www.rossendale.gov.uk](http://www.rossendale.gov.uk)

The Council's website makes it easier for communities to access timely and useful information that is relevant to them and are able to undertaken many council services online it also has improved compatibility with new web browsers and compliance with the latest web standards and accessibility guidelines.

The Council's website has been designed to comply with W3C [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#) (WCAG) as well as [government standards](#). All pages on this

site reach level 'A' conformance from the WCAG, with most pages reaching level 'AA' conformance

The accessibility function pages allow the user to adapt the website to meet their needs; settings can be saved for their next visit. The website also utilises a responsive design that automatically shapes itself to fit to the screen of the device it is being viewed on.

The Council is committed to increasing the number of its services that are available online for those that are able to access them.

All public Council meeting documents are published on our website and can be requested in hard copy and alternative formats as required in line with our Equality Policy.

### Social Media – Facebook and Twitter

The Council has increased its use of social media as a means of informing and engaging with our communities in a proportionate and appropriate manner, as well as a tool for promoting and awareness raising of local events and activities. The number of people our posts and tweets reach is increasing. Residents also use social media as a means of asking questions and positive feedback has been received in relation to dealing with these in the format.

### Face-to-face

Our One Stop Shop (OSS) walk in centre for the public is located at Futures Park, Bacup, which is also where the Council's main office and the Council Chamber are based.

It is accessible on a main public transport route with onsite parking. The OSS is Council's main face to face contact centre for the community. Face to face meetings with a council officer from specific team/departments are also available by appointment / request if needed.

Translation / interpretation for face to face meetings (or via telephone) are available on request as needed.

## **Hate crime / incidents and domestic abuse reporting**

Rossendale Council knows that hate crimes and incidents can have a serious impact on victims and their quality of life. It also has a negative impact on the community which is why we are committed to working in partnership to tackle incidents and crimes motivated by prejudice and hate.

There are various systems in place to record this information:-

Internally during 2013-14 there were no reported cases of discrimination.

Externally, within the community:-

According to the Safer Lancashire database MADE between April 2013 to March 2014 in Rossendale the total *hate crimes* reported to the Police was 26. The majority of these reports were from Greenfield (6) and Greensclough (4) Wards. Of the 26 reported hate crimes, the majority were racial (19), others were homophobic, disability and religious in nature.

In addition, during 2013-14 the Council's locality based working has recorded/reported three graffiti incidents, all of which were dealt with in a timely manner:

- 3 offensive incidents – Stacksteads Ward x 2; Hareholme Ward x 1

In relation to domestic abuse, the Council has invested in domestic abuse service provision via a pan Lancashire commissioned service, delivered locally, and will continue to look at ways it can best support domestic abuse support services in future.

According to the Safer Lancashire database MADE between April 2013 to March 2014 in Rossendale, the total number *incidents* in relation to domestic violence reported to the Police was 1228, of these, there were 306 categorised as domestic abuse *crimes*. The highest numbers of recorded domestic abuse crimes were from Worsley Ward (62), Irwell Ward (33), Greenfield (33), and Hareholme (31).

Annual comparison figures from The STAR Centre (Rossendale's main support service for domestic abuse) show that total calls to them have increased by over 1000 since 2012-13. This is explained by the launch of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in April 2013. The Police/Public Protection Union are the main MASH referrers and local domestic abuse support services now receive all 'stepped down' referrals of domestic abuse from the MASH in the Rossendale area.

The STAR Centre also received 495 first time callers in that period, an increase of over 260. Star has also seen an increase in the number of ethnic minority callers to 325 in 2013-14. Therefore it is evident that domestic abuse remains an underlining issue within the borough.

## **Service Delivery Monitoring**

Customer satisfaction and equality monitoring is also undertaken within service areas. This varies across services as and where considered appropriate or necessary to do so.

Appendix B (3) set out customer satisfaction and associated equality data where it is available.

## **Summary of our work during 2013-14**

We could not possibly fit everything we do with our communities here in this report, but the following pages provide a good example of the breadth of work we have been involved in.

### **Supporting young people to get into work**

The 2013-14 figure [June 13/14 LCC Young People's Service data] show that Rossendale had 149 NEET young people, those not in employment, education or training. The NEET figure for Rossendale has reduced over the past few years from 6.6% to 6.4%. The majority of NEET young people are 128(White), with 11 identified as BME. Wards with the highest NEETS include Greensclough, Longholme, Irwell, Worsley and Stackstead.

Local activity and support has also been delivered throughout the year by our partners at Lancashire's Young People's Service (YPS). Further information on the wider work and services of the YPS can be found on the YPS website: [www.lancashire.gov.uk/yps](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/yps).

The Borough Council believes that it should lead by example and has continued to supporting the "Get Britain Working" initiative (GBW). The initiative is aimed at young people aged between 18-24 years old who are not in employment, education or training ('NEETS') and looks to give young people the opportunity to gain some work experience. This has been a real success; during 2013-14 the Council has supported/provide successful placements for 22 local young people. Four of these young people successfully secured full time jobs, apprenticeships, or additional voluntary work placements with the Borough Council. The Job Centre Plus continues to monitor progress of all GBW participants.

In addition, 7 other work placements were provided by the council during 2013-14. One of which was for a local young disabled person.

### **Supporting people out of homelessness / financial inclusion**

Queen Street: The Council continues to support No.1 Queen Street in Rawtenstall. It provides supported accommodation for young people aged 16 to 25 who have been made homeless, which was fully refurbished at the end of 2011/12. Over the last 12 months the scheme has provided 4,621 hours of support for young people aged between 16 – 25 years; 63 people have moved on from the service during the year. The scheme provides 5 units of emergency accommodation available for up to 28 days, 6 units of supported accommodation and 3 move-on flats. One unit is fully disability compliant.

It is services such as this that play a significant role in transforming young people's lives by offering welcoming accommodation that creates opportunities for people to build confidence and develop new skills.

Empty properties: In summer 2012 the M3 Project who provide Supported Lodging placements for young people in the Borough, secured funding with support from RBC, from the Homes and Communities Agency to bring three empty properties back into use to provide shared move on accommodation for 16 – 25 year olds. These properties have now been purchased and refurbished and are occupied by young people through shared tenancies supported by M3. The scheme led to Proffitts becoming a Registered Provider (Housing Association) with the Homes and Communities Agency this year which means that as well as being a reputable housing provider the income generated from the rent of these properties supports the longevity and sustainability of Proffitts.

Mount Pleasant: Inter-agency work has been undertaken to improve facilities and standards at this House in Multiple Occupation, where many of the residents have vulnerabilities. Following the service of an Interim Management Order (IMO) on the premises in July 2013, which was subsequently appealed by the then owners, the Council and partners including CAB, Police and Lancashire County Council's Social Service Team attended a Residential Property Tribunal to defend the service of the IMO. The IMO was granted on the 28th April 2014, the IMO allows the Council to in effect become the Landlord of the property for a 12 month period and Petrus Community from Rochdale were appointed to provide a Housing Management service on behalf of the Council.

Glen Valley Recovery House, Waterfoot: The scheme has been in operation since October 2012. It provides intensive support and volunteering opportunities for recovery. Since opening its doors in October 2012, thirty two vulnerable adults have been given the opportunity to re-build their lives and re-integrate into the community. Of the thirty two, six are current residents and twenty two have successfully completed their time in the project and moved back into the community where they continue to shape their lives, access support and attend mutual aid groups. Four vulnerable adults left the scheme to realise different support options.

Single Homeless Funding: Rossendale Borough Council has been leading for Pennine Lancashire in the development and tendering of a scheme which will deliver an accommodation finding service for single people who are not covered by the statutory provisions of the Homelessness Act, together with house sharing and tenancy training, landlord and tenant support.

Domestic Violence Safe Houses (DASH): With funding secured from the Community Safety Partnership and LCC, the Council has led a multi-agency group to organise the provision, and support, of up to three safe houses across the Borough which will temporarily accommodate families fleeing DV either in an emergency, or as part of a longer term planned move. The major advantages are the ability for families to stay local and for those who may not be able to access refuge provision.

Probation Properties: Funding from the Community Safety Partnership enabled a scheme to provide several houses for people on probation who would otherwise struggle to find accommodation, to be initiated. The Council is working with a private sector partner with multi-agency support.

Under the Council led Rossendale Action Partnership, a multi-agency group of agencies with a common aim of enabling financial inclusion, work to support and extend credit union membership as an alternative to loan sharks and payday loans has been set up, together with a pilot project to develop volunteering opportunities in two schools and two youth groups around good money management and financial awareness, linking to preparation for independent living and avoiding homelessness.

Homeless 16/17 year olds: Work continues to develop better working practices to help homeless 16/17 year olds, and to commission local preventative services from Government funding.

RAFT Close working between Green Vale Homes and the Housing Options Team has started in order to ensure effective support to vulnerable people affected by welfare benefit reform. Targeted support to assist known vulnerable people has been established, including help with benefits and referrals to RAFT, Rossendale's food bank.

### **Promoting Democracy with Young People**

The Council successfully ran local democracy events during 2013/2014. Activities on Council premises were offered to schools, which incorporated visits to the Council Chamber. One school took part in a mock planning committee and a mock grant funding committee, and received information on democracy and decision making within the Council. A youth group from our twin town Bocholt in Germany also visited the Council Chamber and learnt about local government in Rossendale, as well as the history of the Mayoralty and the Civic regalia. The Mayor for 2013-14, Councillor Amanda Robertson also incorporated Christmas school visits into her schedule to promote democracy and civic participation.



### **Free School Meals Project**

Providing pupils with the opportunity to have a free meal within school helps to remove some of the financial obstacles faced by parents on low incomes and delivers direct support directly to the child. For children from poorer families, the free school meal makes a significant contribution to their overall nutritional intake each day and their overall health. In addition to the child receiving a free school meal, the Department of Education will also award a pupil premium to the school for each child eligible for a free school meal.

Many children from low income families in Lancashire are not registered for free school meals or choose not to eat them. Many parents do not even realise that their child is entitled to a free school meal. Therefore it is a priority that those children who are entitled to a free school meal take up this right.

The Service Assurance Team performed a take up campaign in December 2013 to promote entitlement to Free School Meals. We were able to target potential claims by interrogating the Housing Benefit records and cross checking with data provided by Lancashire County Council.

As a result of this project; 16 children became eligible for a free school meal and Lancashire County Council received an additional £14,400 for grant funding in respect of the pupil premium. This is then allocated to the respective schools in Rossendale.

### **STAN (Services To A Neighbourhood)**

The STAN service continues to travel around Rossendale providing help and advice to its residents.

Although STAN is a shared service and is available to Rossendale residents 5 out of 15 working days staff have helped 1010 residents with a variety of issues, during the last 12 months.

The number of residents visiting STAN for advice in relation to various welfare benefits and help completing forms to claim these benefits is high. Many of the issues residents present with can be quite complex and are time consuming to deal with. No one is turned away and staff aim for a first point of contact resolution.

Rossendale Borough Council has supported a bid by Rossendale Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) which would enable them to provide a CAB member of staff to be on the STAN (Services to a Neighbourhood) Van when in Rossendale.

This bid was successful and for 12 months from April 2014 there will also be a member of Rossendale CAB on STAN to help and support residents.

It is anticipated that the CAB's presence on STAN will further enhance the existing service and provide access to the CAB in other locations across the valley.

STAN continues to meet and exceed its targets and receives extremely positive feedback and customer satisfaction, with many customers saying they would not know what they would have done without the service.

STAN supports a wide range of campaigns, initiatives and services including (but not limited to) the following:

- Council Tax enquiries
- Business Rate enquiries
- Energy efficiency advice and grants
- Benefit claims
- Homecare & repair service
- Handyman service
- Mortgage rescue advice and schemes
- Disabled Facilities Grants



*"I think it is a brilliant service. Kind and compassionate staff who were really helpful. It actually felt for the first time I was talking to a human being."*

- Debt advice/management
- Homelessness referrals
- Drug misuse services
- Housing applications (Pennine Lancashire Choice Based Lettings scheme)

See Appendix B for full details of STAN data including footfall, satisfaction, advice and referrals.

### **Just some examples of STAN making a positive difference in our communities....**

Residents visit STAN because they can be seen there and then, without having to make an appointment, so that their issue can be dealt with straight away preventing further worry/anxiety.

Staff on STAN aim to help residents with any issue/enquiry, they may have, and work on the premise of first point of contact resolution, where possible. If staff are unable to assist themselves they will refer on to an agency that can.

**Mrs A** was recently widowed and called on STAN as, although she was working, she was finding it hard to cope financially.

Her husband had until his death worked full time and so paid National insurance contributions.

Mrs A was advised that as she was 60, but not yet retirement age, she was entitled to Bereavement Allowance at a rate of £111.20 per week for 52 weeks, following her husband's death. She was advised that this benefit is not means tested, therefore her other income or savings would not affect her entitlement. She was also advised that she has an entitlement to a Bereavement Payment; which is a one off payment of £2000.

Mrs A stated that she had no idea she might be entitled to any benefit support as she works full time and this is why she hadn't claimed when her husband died, earlier in the year.

The forms were downloaded from the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) web site and completed with the Mrs A in order for her claim to be made immediately. Mrs A said she was very happy with the help she received on board STAN. She stated that she was very relieved that the answer to her financial issues was so easily resolved and was glad she had called in to enquire how staff on STAN might be able to assist her.

**Mrs B** was in her late 50's and was in receipt of low rate mobility and low rate care allowance, when she visited STAN, (both being £21 per week prior to April 2014, £42 per week in total). She was advised to ask for a reassessment of the level of Disability Living Allowance she had been awarded, as based on her circumstances it was felt that she would qualify for the higher rate. The STAN advisor assisted Mrs B with the completion of the form for reassessment and it was duly submitted.

Mrs B visited STAN a couple of weeks later to inform staff that the reassessment had been completed and had resulted in her Disability Living Allowance award being changed, as predicted, to High Rate Mobility and Middle Rate Care; substantially increasing her household income, £55.25 and £79.15 per week respectively, £134.40 per week in total. This has increased to £56.75 mobility and £81.30 care, per week, from April 2014, £138.05 per week in total.

This positive outcome has resulted in an increase in Mrs B's income by £96.06 a week (£92.40 prior to April 2014).

Mrs B was very happy with the outcome.

Our STAN advisor sees many residents in relation to the various welfare reforms and seeking help and assistance with the various claim forms has increased.

Mrs B's story is not unusual. Many of STAN's clients have gone to receive benefits they would not have known about or seen an increase in their entitlement, after receiving help and advice from our advisor on STAN. The increase in residents' income has a knock on effect as it is likely to be spent in the local economy.

**Mr C** visited STAN in February 2014 for support to resolve a consumer issue.

Mr C had purchased a new carpet in June 2013. He stated that within a few weeks of the carpet being fitted the pile of the carpet started to change and the colour was no longer consistent across the areas.

Mr C advised that he had reported the issue to the company that he purchased the carpet from within 6 weeks of purchase and the company did arrange for the manufacturers of the carpet to come to the client's home to do an inspection; this was in October 2013.

Since this time Mr C stated that he had regularly been in contact with the company but had been unable to achieve a satisfactory outcome as the company has stated that whilst they acknowledge the fault, supplier was refusing to provide replacement.

The STAN advisor explained to Mr C that he was the customer of the carpet company that he purchased the carpet from, not the customer of their supplier of the carpet, therefore the carpet company that fitted his carpet was responsible for dealing with this complaint. The STAN advisor suggested to the client that before any issues can be escalated to Trading Standards, a complaint in writing needs to be sent to his suppliers, requesting that they put the issues right. Mr C was advised that he needs to state a time frame for a response, keep a copy of the letter and send it with proof of postage.

Mr C asked for assistance to write the letter. A letter was drafted on behalf of the Mr C that clearly outlined his expectation in line with consumer law. It was stated in the letter that if action was not taken by the carpet company by the given date, then the complaint would be escalated to Trading Standards. Mr C sent stated that he would post the letter registered post, and was advised that if no satisfactory outcome was achieved to return to STAN for support to contact Trading Standards for support to resolve this issue.

Mr C returned to STAN three weeks after his initial visit to report that he had received a response to the letter the STAN advisor had drafted on his behalf.

He reported that he has now been told that the company he purchased the carpet from is now happy to replace the carpets and he has now chosen a replacement carpet and arranged fitting for next week. Mr C stated that he was very happy with the outcome and said he would definitely recommend the STAN service.

**Mr D** visited STAN for assistance to resolve an ongoing issue he has with his Energy supplier. Mr D had had his boiler replaced on a government scheme to help reduce fuel costs. He stated that since the boiler has been fitted none of the radiators got hot enough and there was not enough hot water to supply the shower, when needed. Mr D explained that his wife had health issues and needed to shower regularly, and that this was causing problems.

Mr D stated that since the boiler has been fitted he has contacted his Energy supplier 6 times to try and find a resolution, however no action had been taken to date and he felt that they were not taking his complaint seriously.

The STAN advisor took details on both the new and old boilers and information on their specifications was obtained from the internet. The new boiler, according to the specification on the manufacturers website suggested that it was appropriate for a 1 bed apartment, his old boiler was appropriate for a 4 bedroom house. It was explained to Mr D that the government boiler replacement scheme states that replacement equipment should be like for like and fit for purpose; therefore the company should not have supplied the boiler that had been installed.

The STAN advisor offered to write a letter of complaint, on behalf of the customer,

to the company to outline the Mr D's rights and the government initiatives guidelines and ask for a replacement boiler and compensation for the cost of running the inappropriate boiler since installation. Mr D agreed and stated that he would appreciate this assistance.

A complaint letter was written, outlining the company's responsibility to Mr D under the government scheme rules with an outline of the attempts he had already made to resolve this issue since installation. It was sent via email to the appropriate department requesting an urgent response. The letter outlined the intention that this complaint would be escalated if no satisfactory resolution was given within a reasonable time frame. It was also requested that the STAN advisor was kept informed by the company of their intension.

An email was received within the 5 working days to say a replacement boiler has been fitted in the couple's home and compensation for their experience is now being processed. The couple were very happy with the outcome of their visit to STAN.

### **STAN making a difference – what people said:**

*"Very satisfied. STAN was the only organisation that actually took time to go through the issues (which were complicated) and for once staff on STAN understood them and explained them to us. If it wasn't for Caroline on STAN we wouldn't have been able to have survived the ordeal. We are so relieved that we came across STAN and we are going to spread the word!"*

*"I was very impressed with the staff and service given to myself and felt I could talk easily as the staff were very friendly and helped with my issues immediately. Again, thank you for a wonderful service."*

*"Learnt more from the lady than from the people we had spoken to or seen anywhere else. Staff on STAN don't judge. They take the time to listen. Very helpful indeed."*

*"I can't thank everyone on the van enough. Caroline is a GEM, she was patient and helpful. A very satisfactory outcome and I have recommended STAN to everyone."*

*"Very convenient, practically on my doorstep. I can't praise or thank them enough. They really helped to turn my life around. I have informed friends to visit so they can also get some order in their lives too. They have been really great and thank you very much for all their help."*

*"Thanks to the STAN team I am now in receipt of Housing and Council Tax Benefit. Excellent Service. I have no hesitation in recommending STAN to other people."*

## Grants Scheme – Making a difference

During 2013/14, year three of a three year grant cycle, the Council awarded Rossendale's Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) and three Credit Unions, £50,000 and £9,200 respectively.

For 2014-15 following a review of the Council's grant funding provision, it awarded £60,000 to support the VCFS to deliver local services in focusing on financial inclusion via Rossendale Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) and Rossendale Credit Unions

## Neighbourhood Forum Grants – Making a difference to local priorities

The Borough's four Neighbourhood Forums are also a key means for the Council to support local priorities we have a Neighbourhood Forum grants scheme to help address issues identified within their Action Plans. The Council provided £70,000 during 2013-14 to each neighbourhood forum.

- Bacup - £15,120.00
- Whitworth – £ 7700.00
- Haslingden - £ 21770.00
- Rawtenstall - £ 25410.00

The Council has continued to work hard with our four Neighbourhood Forums and have had another successful year tackling issues and priorities locally. Through availability of small neighbourhood forum grants the Council has been able to continue to support community groups to deliver a range of projects that will improve the quality of life for people in the local area and make a difference locally.

You can find out more from each Neighbourhood Forum's action plans and newsletters – please contact [communitiesteam@rossendalebc.gov.uk](mailto:communitiesteam@rossendalebc.gov.uk) or 01706 217777.



## Summer Fun 2013

The Council successfully coordinated and produced another Summer Fun brochure in partnership with the Rossendale Children and Young People's Trust, to promote and raise awareness of local activities and schemes for children and young people during the summer holidays of 2013. These were distributed to schools, libraries and children's centres, GP surgeries, children's social care and health lead professionals, as well as advertised via the Council's website, the local press and posters displayed in community facilities.

The Children and Young People's Trust was also able to support the delivery of activities as part of the Fun4Families / Family Theatre Week scheme which is developed and delivered in local partnership with a range of groups, organisations and volunteers. Its' underpinning ethos and aim is to engage families from Rossendale with children, young people and adults ranging from 0 months to 65+ years in a variety of activities. This includes ensuring some key education/awareness raising on number of health messages at the same time. The key aim for 2013 was to raise awareness with families attending on a number of key health messages to include;

- Oral health
- Drinking plenty of water
- Chemical soup demonstration and the effects of second hand smoke
- Smoke free homes
- Change4Life
- Alcohol Awareness

Activities and workshops all have a strategic link to some Every Child Matters outcomes (e.g. stay safe and enjoy and achieve) and some specific Early Years Foundation Stages (e.g. self confidence and self-esteem, language for communication, exploring and investigating). During 2013 there were over 250 people attending during the action packed week, including families, staff and volunteers.

### **Feedback from young volunteers and families when took part:**

Young Volunteer:

During my time at Theatre Week I haven't stopped! It's been an action packed, fun filled week and amazingly organised. I have enjoyed the Drama Workshop and have found it interesting to interact and with different families and children. I have had time working in the Tuck Shop, which was taxing because I had to do maths. Ha! I would definitely recommend Theatre Week for most families as it has been a good way to stay entertained during the holidays. Thank you.  
*(A Young Volunteer, aged 14)*

When asked 'please tell us how you have benefited from attending this week' they said:

Real sense of community.  
Loved it Spent time with children – able to recognise talent and encourage them.

Being able to spend time 1:1 with my middle child and seeing my children in a show. Also gave them something constructive to do all week!

When asked 'please tell us how you feel your children have benefited from attending this week' they said:

Increased confidence  
Increased socialising

Confidence. New skills.  
Growing independence  
for my eldest.

### Valley Careers Advice Day Success 2013

This year's Careers Advice day vent was extremely well attended:

- The Jobcentre Invited 172 people, out of which 100 attended.
- A further 28 Jobcentre customers came of their own accord.
- 93 members of the public (non-Job centre customers attended)
- 140 Year 9 pupils attended from Alder Grange.
- 18 Private Business' attended
- 6 organisations from the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector
- 8 Statutory organisations (Training providers, Police, JCP, Children's Centres etc.)



#### Outcomes:

- 3 attendees were offered Jobs following the event
- 1 registered with a recruitment agency
- 7 registered with a local college
- 31 people referred to National Careers Service

The event was aimed at anyone who is of working age – whether they be aged 16 or 65, to promote different training opportunities available to Rossendale people, and how to find out about different careers, and business opportunities, regardless of age or experience. Someone may be on the start of their career journey; others are looking for a complete change in direction.

The Valley Careers Advice Day was organised by a consortium of private and public sector local organisations.

## **Affordable Warmth 2013 (formerly warmer homes healthy people)**

Although reduced funding for this, in partnership, the Council were still able to run this scheme during 2013-14 on a smaller scale. Most of the warm packs this year were delivered by Raft along with their emergency food packs to those that were most in need and or at risk of fuel poverty across the Borough.

Help included 'warm packs' – blankets, clothing, minor boiler repairs and advice on switching fuel tariffs to support Rossendale most vulnerable households, to minimise the effects of severe winter weather due to cold housing.

St Vincent's provided boiler repairs and replacements and the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) provided help with fuel poverty and emergency top up cards.

In total we were able to help approximately 150 people this year in receipt of housing benefits or pension credit guarantee. All these people received a warm pack as before and the option of help with draught proofing and/or electric blanket replacement. Other referrals came from one visits and referrals from elected members who came across problems in their constituency.

## **Community Safety**

Monthly ASBRAC (Anti Social Behaviour Risk Assessment Conference) meetings held to address instances of anti-social behaviour where the victim's quality of life is being adversely affected. There are currently 10 current cases across the Borough being addressed through ASBRAC. During 2013-14 there were 19 cases successfully dealt with.

## **MASH**

Rossendale Borough Council continues to support / be part of the MASH, a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub, one project within the overarching Lancashire Improving Futures programme. Further information can be found on the website:

<http://www.lancashirechildrenstrust.org.uk/resources/?siteid=6274&pageid=40175>

## **Other Equality Data**

For other equality data/information please see separate document – Appendix B (1-3).