

Annual Equality Report

Equal People, Different Needs

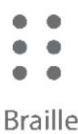
2011-12

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Responsible Section/Team	People & Policy	Version/Status	1.2 Final
Responsible Author	Head of People & Policy; Principal Policy Officer	Date Agreed / Agreed At	MT – 17.12.13 O&S - TBC
Date last Amended	20.12.12	Due for Review	2013-14

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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 information¹ 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 replaced this number with an asterisk (*).

¹ Based on information that has been disclosed and or that is publically available.

Equality Framework for Local Government

Like many Councils, we use the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) to keep track of our progress and to compare ourselves with others. It is a useful tool which helps us to demonstrate that we are meeting our legal duties and demonstrating best practice in promoting equality.

- Level 1: Developing - Understanding the importance of Equality
- Level 2: Achieving - Developing better outcomes
- Level 3: Excellent - Making a difference

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 meet the needs of all of our communities.

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

After consultation, in April 2012 we set and published our equality objectives. Progress in relation to these will be reported in subsequent iterations of the Annual Equality Report accordingly.




Further information on 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

As part of the Council's equality duties it has set clear equality objectives in relation to its work on Equality. There are also a series of business plan level actions 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

See below.

PI Code	Short Name	Responsible Service Area	Q4 2011/12			Gauge Aim	Latest Note	Outcome
			Value	Target	Status			
LI 156	Buildings Accessible to People with a Disability ²	Property Services	96.00%	99.00%		Aim to Maximise	All the recommended category 1 and 2 works have now been completed from the 2006 DDA accesses audits, with the exception of Marl Pitts Pavilion , monies will not be committed until the future of the pavilion is certain. See footnote.	On Target
STAN 1	Number of people accessing STAN	Service Assurance Team	296	360		Aim to Maximise	While this quarters target was not achieved the collective annual target for 2011/12 has been exceeded - 1440. Winter months and bad weather in general affect footfall so this is a fantastic outcome. With continued publicity/leaflet drops/posters and as residents become more aware and utilise the service it is anticipated that footfall will increase.	On Target
STAN 2	% of customers satisfied with the service received from STAN	Service Assurance Manager	95.83%	70%		Aim to Maximise	<p>Customer satisfaction with the service we provide via STAN continues to remain high. 143 customer satisfaction surveys were issued during the 4th quarter, 48 were returned. This represents a 33.57% response rate. Of those returned only two customers were dissatisfied with the service. Feedback from STAN customers during quarter 4 include:</p> <p>"Very helpful and caring staff. Easy to understand help given straight away. Talking to someone face to face makes a big difference. The ladies on STAN went out of their way to help me. Couldn't have been better looked after. I was very impressed. We would not have known how to go about getting this help so a Big Thank you."</p> <p>"Staff were very helpful and informative. STAN is one of Rossendale Council's better ideas. Really pleased with this service."</p> <p>"Staff were friendly, most helpful, professional and readily gave advice. Very impressed. Service brilliant very impressed with the staff."</p> <p>"Both young ladies were helpful and reassuring. Could not have been more helpful. First Class. I do not feel that the service could be improved anywhere. It was the complete information service".</p>	On Target

² Update: The Council does not intend to deal with all the outstanding issues on an individual basis but is working with the Rossendale Leisure Trust (RLT) and the user groups to identify a total solution. Sport England have recently awarded £50,000 towards the changing room renovation at the Pavilion. RLT and other groups are now seeking other funding streams in an attempt, amongst other things, to resolve the DDA and other remaining refurbishment issues.

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.

Once the 2011 Census data is released / published we will be updating our ward profiles accordingly.

Workforce Profile³

Rossendale Borough Council at the time of writing employs 212 employees (197 full time equivalent people).

Equality monitoring is undertaken at the selection and periodically thereafter. In 2011 we refreshed our employee and customer 'About You' forms (equality monitoring) to cover new protected characteristics.

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, 58.5% of the workforce is male and 41.5% female.
- 2.8% of our employees have disclosed that they have a disability.
- 3.6% of employees identified as BME⁴ (Black or Minority Ethnic)
- A third (33%) of our employees are aged 50-59 years.
- Those aged 20-29 years account for 12.7% 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 (93.2%). Identification with other beliefs or religions include; Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and no religion or belief.

³ 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. Going forward the period of equality information collection will be by calendar year, inline with business planning.

⁴ For the purposes of this report BME includes 'other white' and mixed/multiple heritage'.

Councillor Profile⁵

Equality monitoring is undertaken when new Councillors are elected / re-elected as part of their induction process. Therefore over time we will have a full picture of our Councillor profile. Appendix 1 sets out the latest data available. Of those that did disclose information, some highlights are:

- In terms of gender diversity, 54.3% of our elected Councillors are female and 45.7% are male.
- 95% of our Councillors identify as 'White British'. Black and other ethnic minorities are underrepresented within the profile of the Borough's elected Councillors.
- The majority of our Councillors are aged 60-69 years. The average Councillor age is 55 years.
- The majority of our Councillors are heterosexual. Based on the information disclosed, gay, lesbian and bisexual people are underrepresented amongst Councillors.

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 shortlisting during April 2011- March 2012, overall, the majority of applicants during this period were male, White British and not disabled. Only one applicant identified as disabled, who was also shortlisted. Successful selection data during this period shows that the majority of successful appointments were male, White British and not disabled.

In terms of take up of training and development opportunities during this period, the majority of employees were men (60%); 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 40-59 years.

⁵ 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.

The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish for some of this data.

In terms of short term sickness absence monitoring, the majority of employees were male, White British, heterosexual and aged 50-59 years. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish.

In terms of monitoring of return to work of disabled employees following sick leave due to a disability, during this period there is an even split between men and women, all were White British, between 40-59 years. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish.

In terms of return to work after maternity leave during this period, all were White British females, heterosexual, aged 30-39 years. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish.

In terms of disciplinary and related warning monitoring, of the incidents recorded employees, were majority, male, heterosexual, White British and half were aged 50-59 years. In terms of long term sickness, all were female, White British, heterosexual and were aged 50-59 years.

In terms of employee complaints about discrimination during this period, there was only one complaint of this nature during this period, which as investigated thoroughly via the Council's embedded procedures and was found that this claim was not substantiated. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish.

In terms of grievance and dismissal monitoring during this period, all were female, White British. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish.

In terms of termination of employment there has been a fairly even split between men and women and although there was a broad split across age bands, there was a slight aged 50-59 years. The majority was White British. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish.

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 which is currently being refreshed. All staff can request flexible working arrangements 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.

The Council's Flexible Working Policy has been refreshed to reflect requirements and best practice.

There has been formal request for flexible working in addition to working conditions already available during this period which have been accommodated. The levels of equality data that is available / disclosed is too small to publish.

Reasonable Adjustments Made for Employees

There has been formal and informal request for adjustments to employees working environment during this period. This has been dealt with on a case by case bases 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:

- 52.45% of staff live in the borough, 71 in BB4 postcode & 26 in OL13 postcode areas
- Average basic pay for females is £24020 pa
- Average basic pay for males is £23176.12 pa
- Overall average is £23507.29 pa

Note: Data as at 30 August 2012 - based on actual pay not FTE

Grade	Males (No.)	%	Females (No.)	%
1	2	1.61	4	5
2	17	13.71	9	11.25
3	18	14.51	12	15
4	27	21.77	14	17.5
5	7	5.64	5	6.25
6	17	13.71	10	12.5
7	10	8.06	12	15
8	6	4.83	8	10
9	3	2.42	3	3.75
10	2	1.61		
11	1	0.8		
12	1	0.8		
13			1	1.25
14	1	0.8	1	1.25
15				
16	1	0.8		
CEX -above grd16			1	1.25
NMW-below Grade1	11	8.87		
Total	124	99.94	80	100

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 2011-12 includes:

- Development of a corporate online Equality & Diversity module for office based staff
- Tailored face to face equality and diversity awareness sessions for operations staff
- Equality Impact Assessment training/awareness for officers and members
- Introduction to equality in local government sessions for new councillors or those that require refreshers.
- Update briefings on legislative changes and best practice as required to all appropriate.
- Recruitment and Selection training as required.
- Individual training as identified through personal development review form staff and Members as relevant to carrying out their roles.
- Awareness raising about the use of appropriate and acceptable language.

In addition, there has been on-going awareness raising amongst staff and Councillors, this includes events and celebrations as part of our diversity calendar promotion and general briefings and information sheets, hints and tips for promoting and encouraging equality and diversity which have been received positively. 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.

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 proportionate⁶ 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 are, what it is seeking to find out and from whom, in order that the engagement activity is focused and relevant.

During 2011/12 the Council's Engagement Strategy was refreshed which introduced the 'ladder of engagement'. The Council's principle of engagement is that it should engage its communities at the most appropriate level; this might be informing, consulting, involving, collaborating or empowering.

Rossendale Citizens 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.

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.

No equality information was disclosed or collected in relation to these figures during 2011-12.

Providing Accessible Information

Online - www.rossendale.gov.uk

Work is continuing on the development of our new website which will be launched soon. This will make it easier for communities to access timely and useful information that is relevant to them and will be able to undertake many council services online. Other benefits include an improved corporate image, enhanced marketing tools, a future proofed technical design, improved compatibility with new web browsers and

⁶ Ensuring compliance with the Council's Best Value Duty and Duty to Inform, Consult and Involve.

compliance with the latest web standards and accessibility guidelines. As well as general consultation, users with specific accessibility requirements are being consulted to inform the final website design/function.

The Council's current website has been designed to comply with W3C web content accessibility guidelines as well as government standards. All pages of the site reach level 'A' conformance and around 98% of pages reach 'AA' conformance. The Accessibility pages allow the user to adapt the website to meet their needs; settings can be saved for their next visit. The new website will expand on this by utilising a responsive design that automatically shapes itself to fit to the screen of the device it is being viewed on. This is important as the range screen resolutions currently in use is increasing due to the prevalence of mobile devices. Accessibility testing is being carried out by ability.net who performs a wide range of tests with users that rely on a number of different assistive technologies.

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

Social Media – Facebook and Twitter

We continue to use social media as a means of informing and engaging with our communities in a proportionate and appropriate manner.

Face-to-face

Our One Stop Shop walk in centre in Rawtenstall is accessible on a main public transport route with nearby parking and is the 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 harassment 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 2011-12 there was one report of discrimination internally which was investigated and found unfounded, the matter was then resolved.

Externally, within the community, according to the Safer Lancashire database MADE between March 2011 to March 2012 there were 53 hate incidents formally reported via the Police in Rossendale. The majority of these were in relation to race. Within the same period, there were 23 hate crimes formally reported, again, the majority was in relation to race.

In addition, between January 2011 and January 2012 the Council's locality based working has recorded/reported 17 incidents, all of which were dealt with in a timely manner:

- 1 incident of racist graffiti in Haslingden
- 2 incidents of racist graffiti in Whitworth
- 3 incidents of offensive graffiti Haslingden
- 1 incident of offensive graffiti in Whitworth
- 5 incidents of offensive graffiti in Stacksteads
- 5 incidents of offensive graffiti in Bacup.

Service Delivery Monitoring

Customer satisfaction and equality monitoring is also undertaken within service areas.

This varies across services and during 2012-13 further work will be undertaken to strengthen this as and where appropriate to do so.

The Report Appendices set out customer satisfaction and associated equality data where it is available.

Summary of our work during 2011-12

We couldn't 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 latest figures⁷ show that Rossendale had 138 19-24 year old NEETs, those not in employment, education or training.

The Council believes that it should lead by example and is supporting the "Get Britain Working" initiative. 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

⁷ Lancashire Children and Young Persons Service, July 2012.

people the opportunity to gain some work experience. This has been a real success, to date the Council has supported/provide successful placements for 42 local young people and we are aware that 14 have successfully secured jobs or graduate/apprenticeship placements since the end of their placement at the Council. We are working with the Job Centre Plus to continue to monitor progress.

Supporting young people out of homelessness

In 2011, the Council successfully secured £350,000 funding from the Housing and Communities Agency (HCA), with the Council investing a further £70,000 to carry out much needed improvement and refurbishment works to No.1 Queen Street in Rawtenstall which provides accommodation for young people aged 16 to 25 who have been made homeless. The improvements included:

- Re-configuring the layout of the main building to provide six rooms and five emergency accommodation units - one with disabled facilities
- Installing special insulation to increase the energy efficiency of the property and noise insulation between units
- Improvement to the staff central office space and CCTV monitoring.

Deborah McLaughlin, executive director North West at the HCA said "...It's projects like 1 Queen Street that can play a significant role in transforming young lives by offering welcoming accommodation that creates opportunities for people to build confidence and develop new skills...It's testament to the dedication of all partners involved that this much needed facility has been completed and tenants can look forward to enjoying their improved surroundings and new facilities."

Promoting Democracy with Young People

The Council successfully ran local democracy week events during 2011, this time taking democracy into school, which has been recognised by the schools Ofsted inspector who observed events at Rossendale School in October 2011. As a specialist residential school for children and young people aged 8 to 16 with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. This new approach enabled us to engage Rossendale School in these activities for the first time.

Inspectors reported how the session had challenged students understanding of their rights and responsibilities in the local community, and how such activities made a significant contribution to the development of the students' skills in preparation for adulthood. Other local schools have approached the Council to see if we would run the same session with them – so now we will work with the schools to develop lessons/sessions around democracy that can be utilised by the schools themselves, integrated into their curriculum.

Meeting the needs of the community to participate in civic meetings

We have responded to the needs of residents by taking a flexible and adaptable approach to Council meetings in order to enable as many people to engage and be involved as possible on issues affecting them. For example we have held meeting in two halves so that people could attend at different times to have say on issues of concern to them, we have also made changes to public speaking time procedure so that more people are enabled to have their say on key issues.

Further, as a result of feedback we have also put in place additional seating and sound system in the breakout area next to the main Council Chamber so that more people can be involved in civic meetings of interest.



STAN (Services To A Neighbourhood)

STAN is Rossendale Council's travelling customer services van. STAN provides communities throughout Rossendale with better access to local services. STAN aims to bring public services closer to local people and can help residents to find out what they are entitled to and what help is available from public services and voluntary & community organisations in Rossendale. A strong local partnership with Help Direct has enabled us to ensure that a Help Direct representative is also on board to assist and refer residents to access the services and support that they need. STAN continues to meet and exceed its targets and receives extremely positive feedback and customer satisfaction.

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

"Staff were friendly, most helpful, professional and readily gave advice. Very impressed. Service brilliant very impressed with the staff."

The Council ran a campaign in partnership NHS East Lancashire reduce the number of falls in the borough using Stan. We provided advice and FREE replacement ferrules (rubber tips on walking sticks, zimmer frames, crutches and other mobility aids. There often wear down due to wear and tear and need to be replaced regularly to ensure that the aid continues to provide good grip).

“I would like to thank the STAN Team for facilitating our falls prevention work in rural areas in Rossendale...In addition to checking over 60 walking aids and changing 23 worn ferrules in the last four months, we have gained a number of falls referrals for home visits as a direct result of being on STAN, some of which are for people with no previous input from any Community Health or prevention Services; most of the referrals were for people who had had multiple falls and had not mentioned them to anyone previously.” *Falls Team Partnership Lead*

Case Study examples of people helped on STAN

Mrs J visited STAN enquiring about activities for children during the school holidays, karate/martial arts classes for term time, mum’s groups during school hours and art classes for herself. The STAN advisor obtained information for the customer including Ju Jitzu classes, holiday activities and mums groups. Details of part time art classes at the local college were also obtained for the customer. The customer later confirmed that she was delighted with all the information we had sent her and had already enrolled her children in a couple of the classes and was going to the next college open evening.

Mrs K visited STAN enquiring about the availability of courses in English as a second language and a home fire safety check. The STAN advisor obtained information on free English as a second language courses and referred her for a home fire safety check. The customer later confirmed that she had enrolled herself for the language course and the fire brigade had completed a home fire safety check.

Mr B enquired re financial help for himself and his partner as at present their only income was their State pensions. The STAN advisor referred the case to the Pensions Service for an assessment and explained about Council Tax Benefit and gave the customer a claim form as he did not want to complete one on the day. The Pension Service visited the customer and undertook an assessment and informed him that he should be entitled to Pension Credit Guaranteed. The customer stated that his award letter was on its way. He was advised that as he had been awarded this he would be entitled to full Council Tax benefit and arrangements were made for him to visit STAN again to complete the claim form.



Pride in Rossendale Community Awards 2011

The Council supported another successful year of the Pride in Rossendale Community Awards. The Awards recognise the outstanding performance and dedication shown by individuals and groups living and working in the local community. Residents were asked to nominate individuals and groups who they thought deserved particular thanks for the work in the community. 110 guests attended to celebrate the work of the winners and finalists of the Pride Awards. More than 130 community members, groups and businesses were nominated (double the amount of last year) for 6 categories
Award Categories were:

- Young Volunteer of the Year
- The Volunteer of the Year
- The Environment Pride Award
- The Community Event of the Year
- The Pride in Rossendale Business Award
- The Community Group of the Year Award
- Mayors Special Award for services to the community

See website for 2011 Winners:

http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/site/scripts/documents_info.php?documentID=715&pageNumber=15

Pledging Support to Armed Forces



Rossendale Borough Council has agreed to sign (signed in July 2012.) Rossendale's first Armed Forces Community Covenant. It is a statement of mutual support between the civilian community and its local Armed Forces Community. We also have a designated Armed Forces Member Champion.

The aims of the Community Covenant are to:-

- Encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces Community in their areas.
- Encourage the Armed Forces Community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement.
- Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces Community into local life.

- Nurture public understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community.
- Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces Community.

Leader of the Council, Councillor Alyson Barnes said: "By working together in partnership with other organisations we will further our understanding of the needs of the Armed Forces personnel in our communities, and how best to support them to make sure that they do not face any disadvantage compared to other people.

We understand there are approximately 29,000 veterans living in East Lancashire; research indicates a higher incidence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and homelessness for those leaving military services. The Covenant represents an opportunity to support military personnel, past and present and their families."



Community Grants Scheme – Making a difference

From debt advice to basketball coaching, and from family theatre to planting vegetables, Rossendale Borough Council supports a variety of activities in the Valley through the Council's 3 year Community Grants Scheme. 11 Rossendale based community groups have received community grants – in total £125,000 was available under this scheme.

An event was held for those who received a grant through this particular scheme to celebrate their success and share their learning. In addition to be able to provide funding for activities, many groups also use the funds to attract more funding into the borough from external sources, such as The National Lottery and private donations. The Council works with community groups in a number of ways to offer support and these grants are just one way.

One participant said: "It was terrific to meet the officers from the Council as well as some of the councillors. It was clear that they knew the community projects well and were keen for them to succeed. They all had a genuine interest in our groups and organisations which was very encouraging. The best part of the night, was to hear of the other great projects going on across the Valley and the terrific way local organisations are changing the lives of Rossendale people. Overall it was a great event, one which I learnt a lot from, and it demonstrated that the Council grants are making a huge difference to local Rossendale people."

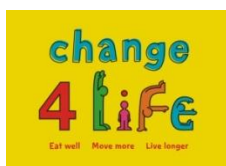
Neighbourhood Forum Grants

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 provides £70,000 over a three year period to each neighbourhood forum. The following was given in grants in 2011/12:

- Bacup - £7353.46
- Whitworth – £2317.30
- Haslingden - £16383.76
- Rawtenstall - £303,933.96

Projects include £489.50 grant to toddler group at Bacup Family Centre, £500 for equipment for toddler group at Acre Mill Baptist Church in Stacksteads, £500 for speakeasy course – helping parents and teenagers communicate – at Maden centre in Bacup, £500 for Rubicon who support people with mental health problem, £7886.50 for project to support women / improve health and wellbeing at Haslingden Community Link, £4000 for Patter and Natter group at Edgeside - group for carers and pre school children, £5500 for STOMP at White Horse Project – emotional wellbeing course for young people.

Park Life 4



After previous success, the Council worked in partnership again with the local health and children and family centres to host another Park Life event Stubblee Park, Bacup, in partnership with the Council, 18 parents attended with 20 children, who took part in a family orienteering challenge and Walk 4 Life mile.

RBC has a number of park and green spaces spread around the valley that are great community resources used throughout the year. The underlining purpose of this event was to encourage families with children to undertake some physical activity together that was fun, increasing their health and well being and social interaction.

Other park life initiative events were held throughout the seasons. Twelve families responded to the feedback questionnaire and the total number of attendees over the four events was 203 people, some of those attending more than one event.

Overall the four Park Life events were well attended, with a number of families coming from areas of deprivation. Moreover, the Park Life events had a positive impact on the behaviours of parents and children as families were being more physically active, and also doing more activities as a family unit. There were also some really encouraging comments made by parents regarding Park Life offering families a new approach to becoming physically active and/or spending time together, both of which impact positively on health and psychological well-being. The majority of parents who fed back also felt that they would like to see similar Park Life events on across the Borough and that the pilot events were either good or excellent.

When asked were you using parks more or were more active as a family one respondent said: “Yes, to become healthier and enjoying yourself as a family. And keeping fit doesn't need to be boring you can enjoy it if you're all together”.

Health Improvement Services Promotion

The Council works in partnership with the NHS Health Improvement Services to promote and raise awareness of health related matters and services accessible locally. Campaigns include:

- Communities against cancer
- Change 4Life
- Promoting healthy lifestyles
- Home Start Family Fun day



Summer Fun

The Council successful coordinated and produced another Summer Fun brochure to promote and raise awareness of local activities and scheme for children and young people during the summer holidays. These were distributed to schools, Libraries and children's centres as well as advertised via the Council's website.

This publication was positively received and has been supported by the Rossendale Children's Trust again in 2012 which is bigger and better still and was widely distributed before the School Summer holidays start.

Communal Garden – pick your own

Incredible Edible Rossendale is a fantastic community initiative working with the Council at Whittaker Park and has now set up a communal garden looked after by volunteers which actively encourages anyone passing by to pick and eat what is growing. There is a herb garden, planters and hanging baskets of a range of fruit and vegetables that have been planted which the whole community is welcome to come and pick their own – encouraging health eating and education about growing your own fresh food.

The Mortgage Rescue Scheme (MRS)

The Council recognises that everyone is facing difficult financial times and through its Housing Options Team continues to provide advice and support to residents experiencing mortgage repayment difficulties through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme. The Team has assisted 5⁸ families to remain in their homes through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

In addition we also provide comprehensive advice to many more applicants who are having difficulties with their mortgage repayments, but who are not eligible for the narrow criteria of the official MRS. We have been able to assist with 249 specific cases in this way since 2009.

Community Cinema

Following the positive response to a Council support community cinema initiative in previous years, a local community group in Bacup are now successfully running regular community cinema screenings at Bacup Hub. This provides local children, young people and families to get together and watch some of the latest film titles at an affordable price.

Free All Monsters

During Theatre Week 2011 we held creative workshops for local school children and their parents/carers to design their own friendly monster. Some were chosen to become part of a Borough wide 'Free All Monsters' initiative, an interactive monster hunt game linked to the Irwell Sculpture Trail via a free iphone app – anyone that successfully 'freed' all the monsters could receive a monster spotters badge. Monsters were spotted all over the Valley.



⁸ As at July 2011.

Rossendale Older People Event



A successful older people's event was held this year. Just under 100 people over the age of 50 attended and discussed issues from health care, transport, benefits to volunteering. The event was hosted by the Chair of the Rossendale Hospice and provided an opportunity for older people from Rossendale to get together to discuss what was important and relevant to them.

A smaller group – an older people's forum now met every other month at various venues around the valley, focussing on a particular issue each week. The issues have been identified by the topics that were the hottest topics on the day.

Home Start Family Fun Day

A great partnership event, attended by the Health Improvement Service with parents given advice and education on alcohol units, key messages and effects of parental alcohol behaviour on children and young people (and other healthy lifestyle advice). 74 adults, 115 children, 22 volunteers/staff attended a really successful day.

Community Animators 2

Following a successful pilot run in Bacup, the Council successfully secured £30,000 from Nesta (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) for a creative community initiative called 'community animators 2.' The project focuses on identifying and training people in the community – 'community animators' to act as mentors and support other people in getting back into work or training – helping them to work through barriers to employment. Nesta funding enabled the model to be developed and looked at enhancing the role of community animators by exploring ways in which community volunteers can share experiences to shape and improve public services. The project approach draws on and builds our social capital and tackles social exclusion.

In partnership with Rossendale Children's Centres the council has successfully delivered training to 12 volunteers, covering topics such as mentoring, confidence and team building; listening and documentation and reporting. A pilot saw the volunteers visited community venues around the valley and support local people to access services. The volunteers then met separately with the statutory services to share their experiences and the experiences of those they have supported, with the aim that services can use this information to make positive changes to make their services more suitable for the community.

The Council is now working in partnership with REAL Rossendale a social enterprise to take this project model forward to in a sustainable way through Reaching Communities.

Neighbourhood Working

The Communities Team have worked hard with our four Neighbourhood Forums and have had another successful year tackling issues and priorities locally. Through the Forum, solid partnership working and the availability of neighbourhood forum grants the council is 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 [here](#), and newsletters or contact the communities. Some highlights:

The Communities Team have supported local community groups to make improvements to their local area, including Friends of Victoria Park who secured £50,000 of Community Spaces funding, match funded by the Council, to redevelop the park's play area; Rising Bridge & Hud Hey Residents Association who have carried out improvements to Worsley Park including recently secured Neighbourhood Forum project funding to repair and restore the historical entrance gates; Whitworth Horticultural Society who have been awarded £50,000 Community Spaces funding to carry out improvements in Whitworth Memorial Gardens; Edgeside and District Residents Association who have also secured £50,000 from Community Spaces for improvements to Edgeside Park; Civic Pride in Rawtenstall who have been awarded over £30,000 from Neighbourhood Forum project funding to improve gateways to the area.

The Communities Team have also supported several new community groups who have formed during the year including Bacup Civic Pride group which was set up in September 2011 to improve the appearance of Bacup centre, Friends of Stubbylee Park and Rossendale Revival who organised the first Rawtenstall Annual Fair and have supported other events.

The Community Engagement Officer worked with community groups in the Bacup / Edgeside area to secure lottery funding to develop activities and support for children and families during school holidays over the next three years.

A Community Engagement Strategy has been developed focusing on the right engagement at the right level.

Community Safety

Five Stay Safe operations have been successfully carried out across Rossendale during 2011-12.

We supported the Bacup Community Alcohol Network, launched in November 2011. Developed by Trading Standards at LCC in conjunction with Lancashire Constabulary it is a partnership approach aimed at reducing young people's access to alcohol with the aim of reducing binge and risky drinking and alcohol fuelled anti social behaviour amongst young people, reducing the incidence of alcohol sales to minors and proxy

purchasing through enhanced enforcement activity in identified hotspots complemented with effective education interventions, developing the perception amongst enforcers & the wider community that retail staff are a key part of the solution rather than part of a problem and raising awareness of alcohol related health and social issues amongst young people, parents and the wider community.

We also supported the set up of Bacup Action Group to address issues of anti-social behaviour in Bacup town centre. The Action Plan includes priorities around alcohol and drug abuse, young people, town centre improvement and image and reputation of Bacup.

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 20 cases across the Borough being addressed through ASBRAC.

Community Engagement and Development

In conjunction with other council departments, Help Direct, Health Improvement Service, Lancashire Fire & Rescue Service, Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Police and Haslingden Community Link, delivered 'Switch on Haslingden' aimed at boosting and improving Haslingden Town Centre. Activities included the Christmas Lights Switch on, Christmas Community Fayre at Haslingden Market, advice stalls on Haslingden Market, a Treasure Trail around the town centre, enforcement against empty properties, STAN the van visits, Fire Service walkabouts, litter picking and environmental patrols.



In conjunction with Regeneration, Greenvale Homes and the Police, the Council has addressed environmental and anti-social behaviour issues around the Cutler area of Stacksteads including improvements to empty properties, litter picks, community events and activities for children.

We have also successfully secured Children's Trust funding to deliver projects around young people which meet Neighbourhood Forum Priorities. This included Fusion at Haslingden Sports Centre, every Friday from 6pm to 8pm, with varied activities such as Parkour; a climbing wall and boxing, alongside street dance, table tennis, and x-box. Attendance was excellent with on average 30 young people attending each session.

We also supported a project in Whitworth which was delivered by Proffitts where older people and younger people were brought together to address inter-generational issues by a series of activities including formulating a time line of events in Whitworth.

Parks and Open Spaces



Recognising the importance of our parks and open spaces to all groups within our communities, we are reviewing of our open spaces and play strategies to develop a more targeted and sustainable approach.

Specifically during the last year, we have supported six community groups (Edgeside and District residents Association, Friends of Victoria Park, Friends of Stubbylee Park, Civic Pride, Bacup Pride and Whitworth Horticultural Society) to assist with the management of open spaces, successfully attract funding to redevelop gardens and play areas and establish themselves as Friends of groups / active community groups.

Further we have improved / redeveloped four play areas (Victoria Park Hill Street, Sharneyford and Edgeside) and 2 Multi use games areas (Britannia and Victoria Park) using external funding. As well as undertaking a programme of footpath improvement works within main parks and cemeteries making them more accessible.

“The partnership between RBC and Edgeside & District Residents' Association is a good example of public sector and voluntary sector organisations coming together, pooling their resources and bringing different skills and expertise, and delivering projects which are 'best value for money' for local residents. We worked together on a bid to Community Spaces which was successful in gaining £50,000 to provide a new children's play area in Edgeside Park. This is very popular with local residents but the partnership is on-going, beyond the life of this project. It includes regular maintenance work in the park (two volunteers have been trained) and regular community events, e.g. Beach Party, Music Festival and a Christmas Market in the planning) which are serving to bring all ages within the community together. The partnership is built on personal relationships and trust, with regular meeting an important part in this.’

Jill Bevan

Other Equality Data

For other equality data/information please see separate document.