

Equality Policy 2021

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Responsible Service	People and Policy	Version/Status	Final
Responsible Author	Head of People and Policy	Date Agreed/ Agreed At	SOD: 07/09/2021 Cabinet: 04/07/2021
Date last Amended	01/07/2021	Due for Review	September 2024

Equality Policy

1. Aim and Purpose of the Policy

- 1.1 This Policy is a statement of how Rossendale Borough Council intends to promote equality, diversity and inclusion, and to tackle discrimination and harassment regarding our employees, residents and service users in all operations of the organisation and the services it provides.
- 1.2 The Council recognises its statutory equality duties under legislation in terms of employment and service provision and is committed to meet them by complying with this policy.
- 1.3 The Council aims to ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment for reasons relating to the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010: Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sex Orientation.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees, councillors or other person under the Council's control in connection with any council related activity.

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Chief Executive with the Directors are responsible for providing leadership in the implementation of this Policy and for ensuring that service planning and performance management systems incorporate the specific equality objectives in terms of employment and service provision.
- 3.2 The Leader of Council has Cabinet responsibility for equality and there is a dedicated Member Equality Champion. Each year, the Leader of the Council will identify which Portfolio Holder has responsibility for equality.
- 3.3 All councillors have responsibility to ensure that the principles of this Policy support the Council's decision making process.
- 3.4 All employees have responsibility to assist the Council to meet its commitment to promote equality, inclusion and diversity within their duties as a council officer.
- 3.5 The Council will work with our stakeholders, contractors and partners, to ensure their policies reflect the equality objectives set out in this Policy.

4. Legal and Regulatory Requirements

4.1 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, to harmonise discrimination law and strengthen the law to support the progress of equality.

4.2 **Public Sector Equality Duty**

The general and specific duties placed on public bodies are set out in the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#).

4.3 The general duty sets out three main aims. As a public body, 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.

4.4 The specific duties are:

- To publish equality information (relevant, proportionate information demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty) at least annually.
- To publish at least one quality objective, we think we should achieve in order to meet the general duty. This must be done at least every four years and be specific and measurable.

4.5 Compliance with the equality duty may involve treating some people more favourably than others in order to take into account of their differing needs.

4.6 **Equality Impact Assessments**

Although Equality Impact Assessments are not a legal requirement: the council has embedded an Equality Impact Assessment process to assess the impact of our policies, practices and decision making on equality. Using good equality information and analysis can help identify practical steps to mitigate or eliminate any negative impacts or discrimination, within the Council's policy development and decision making processes. Equality Impact Assessment template (Appendix 3).

4.7 The council will also give due regard to the impact of our policies and decisions on:

- People with caring responsibilities – caring responsibilities are where an adult or child relies upon you for care and attention, and that you assist with their daily routine.
- Human rights –to protecting and preserving the rights and freedoms that belongs to all individuals regardless of their nationality and citizenship. This includes protection against domestic violence and violence against women.

4.8 In addition to accepting a victim-centred definition of hate crime, the council commits to the adoption of the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism](#)

together with its contemporary examples under the Public Sector Duty as part of our ongoing work to promote equality and diversity and combat discrimination and hate crime.

4.9 All types of harassment, victimisation and bullying in the workplace and community are unacceptable.

5. Our Equality Objectives

5.1 The Council's equality objectives are:

- To enhance understanding of and promote equality and diversity at all levels within the Council.
- To have a diverse workforce that aims to be representative of the borough and to ensure that all staff are treated fairly.
- To assess, consult and evaluate the equality impact of our policies and decisions and to change where reasonably possible what we do to mitigate or eliminate any inequality.
- To ensure that our staff and councillors engage and communicate with members of the community in an accessible and inclusive way.
- To continue working with our partners, where appropriate, to reduce inequality in all of our communities.

6. Our Commitment to Equality

6.1 Employment practices

The Council considers equality, diversity and inclusion in all aspects of employment, from advertising vacancies, recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, training and personal development to reasons for terminating employment.

6.2 We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring the Council's commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded in all Council policies and practices.
- Committing to the government [Disability Confident employer scheme](#) to recruit and retain disabled people and those with health conditions.
- Ensuring that our recruitment and selection policies and procedures are equitable and fair so that the best people are appointed to deliver our services.
- Ensuring that all employees receive fair and equal treatment in relation to their employment, regardless of whether they are part-time, full-time or employed on a temporary basis.
- Making reasonable adjustment to working arrangements where they cause a disadvantage to an employee due to a protected characteristic.
- Ensuring that we give equal consideration to people's needs and development opportunities throughout their employment.
- Ensuring any protected characteristic is not used as a criterion for redundancy.
- Challenging and taking appropriate action of any discriminatory behaviour of employees

and offering support and advice to affected employees.

6.3 **Access to services**

The Council is committed to equality of opportunity in the provision of services and aims to create the best possible quality of life for people who live or work in Rossendale.

6.4 We will achieve this by:

- Seeking to better engage with people with in the planning and delivery of services.
- Considering reasonable adjustments to support the delivery of assessable services to all users.
- Providing clear information about our services and where necessary, in a variety of formats.
- Ensuring that our complaints and feedback procedures are accessible and effective.
- Assessing the impact of and monitoring our major projects to ensure that they do not discriminate and identify where improvements can be made.

6.5 **Working with partners**

The Council's Procurement Strategy commits us to making sure that contractors, suppliers and funded service providers promote equality and diversity.

6.6 We will achieve this by:

- Ensuring that contractors, suppliers and partners have an Equality Policy in place to support the Council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Challenging and taking appropriate action of any discriminatory behaviour of our contractors, suppliers and partners.

6.7 **Working with our communities**

We need to understand the views of our residents, customers and communities to ensure that the services we design and deliver are appropriate and meet the needs of all.

6.8 We will achieve this by:

- Engaging and consulting with our partners, customers, residents and communities regularly.
- Undertaking Equality Impact Assessments to ensure we take into consideration any discriminatory decision making which may have on our communities.

7. **Training**

7.1 The council will ensure that employees and councillors have awareness and appropriate equality training. The Council will achieve this by:

- Providing mandatory equality training for all employees as part of the induction programme and regular refresher training.
- Providing mandatory equality training as part of its councillor induction and development programme.

8. Breaches of this Policy

- 8.1 Any concerns regarding breaches to this policy should initially be raised with your line manager or the Council's Whistleblowing Policy.
- 8.2 Breaches of this Policy will be handled through the Council's Disciplinary Procedure or Complaints, Compliments and Feedback Policy depending on the nature of breach. Legal action may be taken where appropriate.

9. Monitoring Arrangements

- 9.1 Monitoring is an essential part of tackling inequality and discrimination and will help us check whether our policies, services and organisational culture are meeting the needs of our employees and community.
- 9.2 The Council will monitor the effectiveness of the Policy through the Council's performance management reporting process. Any data collected will be analysed and used within the Council for setting targets, reviewing our service delivery, developing services and assisting with making changes.
- 9.3 The Council will monitor its workforce profile on the basis of the protected characteristics in the following areas:
- Training and development.
 - Disciplinary procedures and grievances.
 - Those leaving the council's employment.
 - Workforce and job applicant profiles.
 - Employee pay profiles.
- 9.4 Equality monitoring data is subject to the [Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations \(GDPR\) 2018](#) which came into force on 25th May 2018.

10. Policy Review

- 10.1 This Policy will be subject to review every three years or following significant changes to equality legislation, local circumstances or national equality policy to ensure that it is current and compliant.

Appendix 1 – Glossary of Terms

Equality is about creating a fairer society where everyone has the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It is about ensuring that all people are treated with fairness and respect, recognising the needs of individuals and that some people may need to be treated differently to give them the same opportunities

Diversity is about recognising and valuing difference in its broadest sense and understanding how these differences can be developed for the good of the individual and society as a whole.

Inclusion is about an individual's experience within the workplace and in wider society and, the extent to which they feel valued and included. Successful and lasting inclusion involves a shared vision, values and a sense of belonging for all customers

Protected Characteristics

The duties and the act seek to outlaw discrimination against a person or group of people because of their:

Age – Relates to a person belonging to a particular age group (e.g. 32-year olds) or a range of ages (e.g. 65-75-year olds).

Disability – Relates to a person who has either a physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Gender Reassignment –When a person is transitioning or they intend to undergo, are undergoing or have undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning their gender.

Marriage and Civil Partnership – Marriage can either be between a man or a woman, or between partners of the same sex. Civil partnership is between partners of the same sex.

Pregnancy and Maternity – Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expect a baby. Maternity refers to the period after birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this included not treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Race – Refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origins.

Religion or Belief – Religion refers to any religion or reference to religion, including a reference to a lack of religion. Belief includes any religious or philosophical belief or reference to belief, including a reference to a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

Sex– Refers to an individual being male or female.

Sexual Orientation – A person's sexual attraction towards people of the gender they are attracted to (i.e. towards people of the same sex, the opposite sex, or to both sexes).

Appendix 2 – About the People of Rossendale

Rossendale is an authority within East Lancashire that covers 138 kilometres and has 14 wards. This is approximately 4.8% of Lancashire.

The overall population has seen some growth since 2001, but has not kept pace with increases at the national level. The ethnic mix (2011 census) is less diverse than other authorities within East Lancashire. The largest minority ethnic group is Pakistani, with the population predominantly white. The 2020 mid-year population estimate total for the authority was 71,432, a mere 50 lower than 2019.

The population can be broken down by equality to provide us with a better understanding of the within our communities.

Age - the age of our population is important when planning services so we can meet the needs of our community. According to the 2020 Office for National Statistics, there is an estimate of 43,900 residents aged 16-64. The average age in Rossendale is 39.6 years which is compared to 40.5 years in Lancashire (2011 census). The Rossendale age group breakdown is similar to all comparator areas. But Rossendale appears to be witnessing a larger shift in its age group with a relatively larger decrease in those ages 0-15 and 25-44. There is also a relatively larger increase in those aged 45+, hence an ageing population.

Disability - In Rossendale, it is estimated that 1 in 5 people have a limiting long-term illness or disability. 6,818 (2011 census) are very limited with the tasks they can carry out day-to-day. With the increase in life expectancy within the Borough there is no guarantee that the extra year's life is a healthy life expectancy, with an increase in ill health and disability.

Gender Reassignment – there are no accurate statistics available regarding the profile of those who identify as trans or transgender within Rossendale or the UK as a whole. Gender identity is not incorporated into the census or other official statistics.

Marriage and Civil Partnership – within Rossendale approximately 54,811, 46.7672%, people are either married or are in a registered civil partnership. Only 0.2025% are registered as a civil partnership. These statistics are detailed in the 2011 census.

Race – there is a total of 63,778 residents within the Rossendale Borough that identify themselves as 'White', 94%. This compares to 92% in Lancashire and 85% nationally (2011 census). There are a total of 602 people, 0.8855%, who identify as Mixed/Multi Ethnic group. 3396 residents, 4.9954% as Asian/Asian British and 123 people, 0.181% who identify as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British. Finally, 83 residents. 0.1221% identify as another Ethnic Group. Rossendale has an almost identical record with Lancashire when looking at the change over time of ethnic groups, but the scale of ethnic change in Rossendale is less than both the North West and nationally. 97% of those ages 16+ in Rossendale speak English as their first language, this compares to 95% in Lancashire and 91% nationally.

Religion and Belief – all details providing religion and beliefs have been collated from the 2011 census. Within Rossendale there are a number of religions and beliefs followed by local people. These include Christian (63.828%), Buddhist (0.2398%), Hindu (0.1412%), Jewish (0.0986%), Muslim (3.8437%), Sikh (0.0132%), Other (0.3398%), No Religion (25.1464%) and Religion not stated (6.3487%).

Sex – there is almost an equal gender split within the Rossendale Borough with 33,367 males and 34,615 females.

Sexual Orientation – there are no accurate statistics available regarding the profile of the lesbian, gay and bisexual, etc. (LBGTQ+) population within Rossendale or the UK as a whole. Sexual orientation is not incorporated into the census or other official statistics.

Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

The council carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to analyse the effects of our decisions, policies or practices.

Throughout this document, policy refers to any policy, strategy, project, procedure, function, decision or delivery or service.

The EIA should be undertaken/started at the beginning of the policy development process before any decisions are made.

Policies are developed and reviewed using a consultative approach involving relevant internal and external stakeholders. Officers must consider what action needs to be taken to help overcome or minimise any disadvantages that people who share a protected characteristic will experience in compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Name of policy:	
Lead officer name	
Job title	
Service area	
Telephone contact	
Email contact	
Date Assessment commenced	
Date assessment completed	

The main aims/objectives of this policy are:

--

Indicate the status of the policy or decision

New/proposed Modified/adapted Existing

Indicate protected characteristics have been assessed

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Age | <input type="checkbox"/> | Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> | Gender reassignment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Religion/belief | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sexual orientation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sex | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pregnancy/maternity | <input type="checkbox"/> | Race | <input type="checkbox"/> | Marriage or civil partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> |

1. State any positive or negative impact on the protected characteristic(s) (added additional rows if needed)

Protected characteristic	Positive/Negative	How does it impact?

2. Explain and give examples of any evidence/data used (add additional rows if needed)

Evidence	How does this have an impact on the protected characteristic?

3. Outcome of EIA

What course of action does this EIA suggest you take?	Please indicate
Outcome 1- The EIA has not identified any potential for negative impact on the protected characteristics. Progress to EIA approval – section 5	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outcome 2- The EIA has identified a possibility for negative impact on the protected characteristics. An EIA Action Plan must be completed to mitigate the negative impact – section 4 before approval section 5	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. EIA action plan

Based on the above impact assessment, findings/evidence and outcomes identified, please complete the Action Plan below. The action plan should address:

- Any gaps in findings/evidence research including any consultation or engagement regarding the policy and its actual/potential impacts
- How you will address any gaps
- What practical changes/action that will help reduce any negative impacts identified
- What practical changes/action that will help enhance any positive contributions to equality

Negative impact identified	Action required	Lead officer	To be completed

Monitoring and reviewing the effect of the policy Please state how you will monitor the impact and effect of this policy

5. EIA approval (to be completed by the relevant Head of Service/Director)

• Outcome of EIA agreed/approved by Management Team: (date)

• Published on council website: (date)

Signed: (Head of Service/Director) (date)

Appendix 4 – Action Plan 2021/22

Action	Completion Date	Success Measure	Lead Officer	
To enhance understanding of and promote equality and diversity at all levels within the Council.				
1	To develop e-learning equality training course for all staff	Quarter 3	All new starters and staff complete training as per the Policy	HR Manager
2	Develop e-learning equality training course for all Councillors	Annually	All Councillors complete the training	Member Services Manager
3	Develop regular internal communications to promote equality, diversity and inclusion.	Ongoing	Minimum 2 articles per quarter	VivaPR
4	Report annually on Workforce Profile	Quarter 2	Equalities championed at CMT and Cabinet	Head of People and Policy
To have a diverse workforce that aims to be representative of the borough and to ensure that all staff are treated fairly.				
1	Create a culture where more staff feel confident to self-declare a disability	Annually	% increase of number of self-declaration forms returned	Payroll Manager
2	Increase number of staff aged 18-24 entering the workforce through a structured apprenticeship scheme or trainees	Quarter 4	Increase number of staff aged 18-24 years	HR Manager
3	Develop and implement an action plan to encourage BAME applicants	Quarter 4	Improve the % representation of BAME employees	HR Manager
4	Renew Disability Confident accreditation	Quarter 2	Accreditation renewed	HR Manager
To assess, consult and evaluate the equality impact of our policies and decisions and to change where reasonably possible what we do to mitigate or eliminate any inequality.				
1	Review the Council's Equality Impact Assessment guidance	Quarter 3	Improved equality data to support decision making process	Head of People and Policy
2	Provide Equality Impact Assessment Training for staff and Councillors	Quarter 3	Improved equality data to support decision making process	Head of People and Policy
3	Develop a staff group to act as a critical friend to review Equality Impact Assessments	Quarter 3	Minimum 2 per quarter	Head of People and Policy

4	Develop and maintain an Equality Impact Assessment completion record	Quarter 3	Published on the Council website	Corporate Officer
To ensure that our staff and Councillors engage and communicate with members of the community in an accessible and inclusive way.				
1	Monitor Council website is up to date with Council service information and accessible to service users	Ongoing	Feedback acted upon	Corporate Officer
2	Monitor the equality impact of moving to more digital services, and remove or mitigate barriers or potential adverse impact	Ongoing	Adjustments made	Managers/ICT
3	Develop the Council's approach to consultation and engagement to increased representation of all sections of the community	Ongoing	Increase representation of all sections of the community in engagement and consultation	Communities Team/ Councillors
To continue working with our partners, where appropriate, to reduce inequality in all of our communities.				
1	Review Procurement Strategy to include procurement equality requirements and raise awareness with contract managers	Ongoing	Contract monitoring indicates that commissioned service providers are compliant with equalities requirements.	Monitoring Officer
2	Support Prevent group to highlight concerns or risks in our communities related to radicalisation	Ongoing	Reduction in Prevent cases	Communities