

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Our Policy

Rushmoor Borough Council is committed to putting diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything it does. This policy reflects engagement with stakeholders, analysis of local insight and organisational learning, and has been informed by the Equality Framework for Local Government. It sets out how we will strengthen trust with our diverse communities, improve access to services, and create a culture where fairness and inclusion are central to how decisions are made.

The Council's policy goals are to:

- To be compliant with the Public Sector Equality Duty
- To be an inclusive employer of a diverse workforce that reflects the local community
- To deliver accessible, inclusive, and responsive services to all residents in the borough
- To foster a welcoming and inclusive community where all residents feel their voices are heard and can influence decision making

To achieve these goals, the Council will:

- Understand the experiences of residents across the borough so that services and policies respond to the needs of different communities.
- Design and deliver council services to be inclusive, accessible and fair.
- Work with partners, community organisations and residents to support inclusive communities where people feel connected, respected and able to participate in local life.
- Have a workplace culture where colleagues feel supported, respected and able to succeed.
- Have clear roles and responsibilities for equality across services, ensuring that accountability for equality is clearly understood and embedded within service delivery and decision making.

This policy supports the Council to meet its Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 to:

- eliminate discrimination and reduce inequality
- advance equality of opportunity
- foster good relations between communities

This Policy may be supplemented by a series of Codes of Practice which provide further support and guidance in specific areas.

EP1 – Understanding Inequality and Community Experience

The Council will strengthen its understanding of the experiences of residents across the borough, so that services and policies respond to the needs of different communities.

This will involve improving how insight from residents, partners and community organisations is gathered. By bringing together survey findings, engagement feedback and local data, the Council will build a clearer picture of how people experience life in Rushmoor and where inequalities exist.

Key areas of focus will include:

- use resident feedback and consultation insight to inform decision making
- use ward level data and demographic insight to identify inequalities affecting different areas
- engage with groups whose voices may be under-represented to ensure a broad range of perspectives are considered
- use feedback, complaints and service demand data to identify emerging issues and inequalities
- improve understanding of how different characteristics and circumstances can combine to affect people's experiences and outcomes

This will ensure that decisions are informed by a strong evidence base and a better understanding of lived experience

EP2 – Accessible, Inclusive and Fair Services

The Council will ensure that council services are designed and delivered in ways that are inclusive, accessible and fair.

This includes considering equality early stage in service design and ensuring that residents can access support through clear, flexible and appropriate routes

Key areas of focus will include:

- have accessible digital services and council communications
- provide clear, consistent, easy to understand and culturally appropriate information about services and decisions
- improve how residents interact with customer services
- use service data, complaints and customer insight to identify barriers to access
- improve the availability of translated and culturally appropriate communications to ensure information is accessible and relevant to different communities.

This will result in services that are easy to access, better understood by residents and responsive to the needs of different communities.

EP3 – Inclusive Communities and Community Cohesion

The Council will work with partners, community organisations, and residents to support inclusive communities where people feel connected, respected and able to take part in local life.

This work will focus on strengthening relationships between communities and supporting initiatives that promote integration and wellbeing.

Key areas of focus include:

- support community cohesion activity and partnerships across the borough
- strengthen relationships with voluntary, community and faith organisations
- support refugee resettlement and integration programmes
- address health inequalities and improving access to wellbeing opportunities
- support opportunities for young people to engage in community life
- strengthen long-term partnerships with voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations and moving from one-off consultation towards ongoing collaboration

This will support stronger, more connected communities where residents feel included, represented and able to take part.

EP4 – Inclusive Workforce and Organisational Culture

The Council will continue to develop a workplace culture where colleagues feel supported, respected and able to succeed.

An inclusive workforce enables the Council to better understand the communities it serves and to deliver services that reflect the needs of residents.

Key areas of focus include:

- strengthen equality awareness and inclusive leadership practices
- support staff wellbeing and resilience
- ensure staff have the skills and confidence to work effectively with diverse communities
- support staff through organisational change
- use workforce data and staff feedback to understand employee experience.

This will contribute to a more inclusive workplace where staff feel valued, supported and able to progress.

EP5 – Leadership, Governance and Accountability

The Council will improve clarity of roles and responsibilities for equality across services, ensuring that accountability for equality is clearly understood and embedded within service delivery and decision making.

This includes ensuring that equality considerations are integrated at an early stage in the development of policies, strategies and projects supported by clear oversight and monitoring arrangements.

Our approach will include:

- strengthen the consistency and quality of Equality Impact Assessments and ensuring they are considered at an early stage in policy and decision making
- improve the use of equality information and service data to inform decisions
- strengthen governance arrangements and accountability for equality across services
- ensure procurement and partnership work support inclusive outcomes
- publish equality information and monitoring progress.
- support elected members to consider equality in their roles and in representing the diverse communities of the borough

This will ensure that equality is consistently considered in decision making and that accountability is clear across the organisation.

Delivering change over time

This Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy sets the overall direction and principles that guide the Council's approach to equality. It is supported by an Equality Action Plan, which sets out the specific actions, measures and responsibilities for delivery.

The Council will take a phased approach to implementation:

- Early actions and quick wins will focus on strengthening foundations, improving clarity, and addressing known barriers. These will be progressed within the next six months and communicated separately to support pace and visibility.
- Medium- to longer-term actions will be delivered through the Equality Action Plan, with outcomes monitored regularly and activity continuing through to 2028, aligning with the transition to new unitary councils following Local Government Reorganisation.

This approach recognises that some improvements can be made quickly, while others require sustained effort to embed inclusive practice, strengthen governance, and support long-term culture change.

The Framework therefore provides continuity and direction, while the Action Plan enables flexible, accountable delivery as organisational structures evolve.