

A horizontal brushstroke of rainbow colors (green, blue, purple, pink, red, orange, yellow) with a textured, watercolor-like appearance.

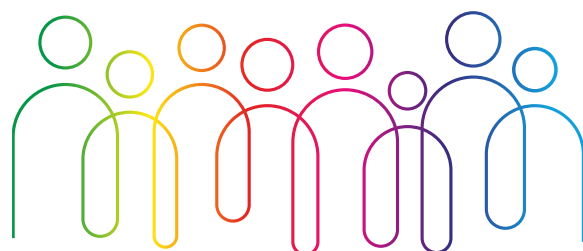
# **Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Equality Policy**

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### Supporting documents

- Equality Objectives 2023-2027
- Council Plan 2024-2028



## 1. STATEMENT FROM STEPHEN EVANS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

We are proud to serve the diverse communities of the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and take our responsibilities to all residents seriously.

We know that the council plays a big part in people's lives – not just in providing services to all members of our community but in seeking to address sources of inequality and disadvantage and creating a borough where all residents feel included and respected.

It's also important to recognise the key role that equality and inclusion play in driving a positive employee culture which demonstrates the council's organisational values and is capable of delivering for the people of the borough.



**Stephen Evans**  
**Chief Executive**

## 2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead is an increasingly diverse place to live and work, with a vibrant cultural mix. While this brings many benefits including different experiences, skills, cultures and approaches to life, it is important to acknowledge that it can also result in a greater diversity of needs and inequalities. In addition, the relative overall affluence of the Royal Borough can mask areas of inequality and disadvantage and presents certain challenges in understanding and addressing that inequality.
- 2.2 By valuing diversity and ensuring equality, residents and visitors alike will benefit from strengthened local communities where all people have the opportunity and capacity to participate and to reach their full potential.
- 2.3 The Council Plan 2024-2028 contains a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion for all residents, through celebrating diversity and enabling inclusive participation and access to services.
- 2.4 As a major employer and service-provider, the Royal Borough plays an essential role in improving life opportunities for all residents, with a particular focus on those who are disadvantaged or vulnerable. Where such disadvantage stems from a group's or individual's protected characteristic, the Royal Borough has specific equalities duties under the law (see 2.2). The Royal Borough is committed to promoting equality by knowing its community and understanding it's changing needs. It will:
- Investigate and strengthen our understanding of the nature of inequality, disadvantage and discrimination in the borough
  - Acknowledge and respond to the equality impacts of our emerging proposals and seek to mitigate any adverse impacts where possible, while maximising positive impacts



- Integrate equality considerations into planning and procurement processes, in order to deliver services effectively for all communities
- Reduce inequalities within the Royal Borough, focusing particularly upon key priorities as outlined within the **RBWM Equality Objectives**

2.5 The Royal Borough believes that residents have responsibilities as well as rights, and as such residents are expected to:

- Treat each other with dignity and respect.
- Challenge discrimination and harassment.
- Report illegal or anti-social behaviour.
- Support the council and other organisations to address inequalities.



### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE LAW

3.1 The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society and sets out the different ways in which it is unlawful to treat someone. The act brings together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. The characteristics protected under the act are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

3.2 In April 2011, the Public Sector Equality Duty, created under the act, came into force. The Equality Duty requires public authorities to demonstrate that they are considering the needs of all individuals, including employees, in the course of decision-making and the delivery of services. The three aims of the Equality Duty are to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

3.3 To ensure transparency and assist in the performance of the Equality Duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities to:

- Publish equality objectives, at least every four years, from 6 April 2012.
- Publish information to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty on an annual basis, from 31 January 2012, and relating to the authority's role both as service-provider and employer if it has more than 150 employees.

### 3.4 The Royal Borough meets its duties by:

- **Publishing equality objectives, at least every four years:** delivery of the council's ambitions and strategic priorities are supported by a suite of policies, strategies and service plans containing objectives aligned to achievement of those priorities. Consideration of how equality may be promoted is a key consideration when formulating objectives, and achievement against these objectives is published every four years.
- **Publishing information to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty on an annual basis and relating to the authority's role as both service-provider and employer:** the council publishes an Annual Report at the end of each municipal year and this includes a statement outlining the council's progress against its existing equality objectives, supported by relevant performance and workforce diversity data.

## 4. EQUALITY IN SERVICE DELIVERY

- 4.1 Equality in service delivery does not merely mean ensuring that everyone receives the same service on the same basis. It means having processes in place to make sure that all sections of the community receive a fair and appropriate service, taking account of different needs and barriers to access.
- 4.2 Consultation and engagement with residents supports a stronger understanding of their needs, experiences and expectations of council services and enables them, where possible, to be involved in the decision-making process.
- 4.3 Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) are a systematic assessment of the impact that a decision or action will have upon different sections of our community. EQIAs should be carried out whenever there is a new strategy, service, project etc. being developed, or where a significant change (including cancellation/discontinuation) is planned to an existing strategy, service or project. They are public documents and are included as an appendix within published reports. EQIAs should consider the impact on both the customers/public (service delivery) and the borough's workforce (employment). The council's EQIAs cover the impact to the 9 protected characteristics, as required under the Equality Act, and also three other categories which reflect vulnerable groups or those to whom we owe a particular duty: care experienced individuals (including children in care and care leavers); the Armed Forces community; and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. A good EQIA helps to:
- Assess any potential impacts, positive and negative, in a proportionate way and with relevance.
  - Ensure that decision-making includes a consideration of the actions that would help to avoid or mitigate any negative impacts on particular vulnerable groups.
  - Make decisions that are justified, evidenced and relevant, and identify any mitigating proposals.
  - Prioritise expenditure in an efficient and fair way.
  - Have a record showing that the potential impacts have been considered and that decisions are based on evidence.



- 4.4 The planning and design of service delivery is essential in being able to provide equality of opportunity and outcomes for people who use those services. Equality considerations should be an integral part of the development of service specifications, KPIs and the pre-procurement process.
- 4.5 The council will take action to ensure the inclusion of any groups that experience barriers in accessing council services, such as digital exclusion or accessibility issues.
- 4.6 The council will ensure that partners, contractors, suppliers and volunteers are aware of the council's commitment to equality in service delivery and agree to provide services in accordance with this commitment.
- 4.7 Staff training will take account of the need to understand the importance of equality in service delivery.
- 4.8 Any customer complaints or comments will be dealt with in a fair, consistent and sensitive manner, which allows individuals to raise issues around unfairness, discrimination or exclusion without fear of victimisation or recrimination.
- 4.9 Any grant-making activity undertaken by the council will be subject to compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the obligations outlined in this policy. Organisations in receipt of funding will also be expected to comply with these principles.
- 4.10 Elected councillors have a key role to play in ensuring the council meets its equality responsibilities:
- Training on equality and diversity, including guidance on Equality Impact Assessments, is included within the new members induction pack.
  - Councillors have a responsibility to read the Equality Impact Assessments attached to reports presented at cabinet and council meetings.
  - As representatives of their wards and communities, elected councillors have an opportunity to listen to and share insights around the diversity of their local communities and their experiences around equality and inclusion.
  - Using scrutiny roles to ensure that equality considerations are integrated into decision-making and governance.
- 4.11 A cabinet member has been nominated as a champion for equality to work with the equalities officer on supporting the council's equality agenda. The responsibilities of this role include promoting the importance of the Equalities Policy across council and councillors; offering support and challenge to senior officers in the council's compliance with the policy; and monitoring the EDI function within the new Council Plan and working across cabinet members to ensure the aims are met.





## 5. EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT

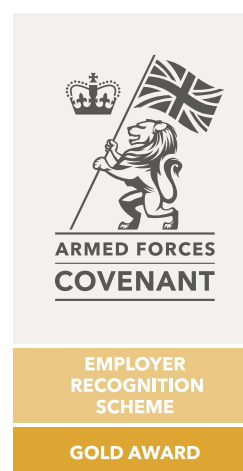
5.1 The council is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity to all in employment so that there is no unfair discrimination against any job applicant or employee for any reason.

5.2 As a recruiting employer, the Royal Borough will:

- Ensure vacancies are advertised in line with legislation.
- Ensure the council's recruitment and selection guidelines are adhered to.
- Only consider applicants for jobs on the basis of their relevant experience, qualifications, skills and abilities unless there is an exception under relevant legislation.
- Aim to create a workforce which is representative of the local population.
- Ensure that, where possible, recruitment managers use diverse interview panels.

5.3 The council is a Disability Confident employer and guarantees to interview applicants with disabilities who meet the minimum person specification criteria and we will make reasonable adjustments to support applicants.

5.4 The council recognises the skills that Armed Forces veterans can offer as employees and we also support employees who are reservists. The Royal Borough has signed the Armed Forces Covenant and has achieved a Gold Award for employment services. Interviews are offered to any forces related applicant who meets the minimum criteria for vacant posts, as well as providing employment-ready support such as CV writing, interview practice and work experience opportunities. Additional leave arrangements are provided for employees who are reservists or cadet trainers.



5.5 Under its responsibilities as a 'corporate parent' the council ensures that young people in care or those who are care experienced and who meet the minimum essential criteria for the job, will be guaranteed an interview alongside other short-listed candidates.

5.6 The council facilitates an employee-led Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Network which supports the organisation and its staff by championing equality and valuing and promoting diversity. The network aims to contribute to a respectful and inclusive organisational culture where all employees feel able to participate and thrive. The key purposes of the ED&I network are to:

- Provide a safe space for support to colleagues and signpost to further support.
- Raise awareness of equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) issues, festivals and observed dates.
- Proactively identify areas for improvement related to ED&I and recommend solutions to senior colleagues, as and when necessary.



- Ensure that all employees receive fair and equal treatment in relation to their employment, regardless of whether they are part time, full time, permanent or temporary and what level or occupation they are within the authority.
- Promote a working environment where every employee is treated with respect regardless of occupation or level within the organisation.
- Ensure that promotion and training is accessible on the basis of aptitude and ability.
- Encourage and help all employees to reach their full potential, within the resources available.
- Treat all employees fairly in relation to transfers, redundancy and the operation of the grievance and disciplinary procedures.
- Ensure that the workplace is free from discrimination and harassment and will act promptly on any complaints of discrimination or harassment in an appropriate manner.
- Operate an equal pay policy and publish details of the gender pay gap in line with relevant legislation and identify actions to address any gaps.
- From 2024, in line with the gender pay gap reporting timescale, the council will calculate its ethnicity pay gap.
- Wherever possible, make reasonable adjustments and retain, in suitable employment, employees who become disabled or unable to undertake their duties due to illness.
- Ensure that all employees are aware of their personal responsibility to follow and support.



- 5.8 Any employee who has a concern regarding the application of this policy should use the council's grievance procedure. Any prospective employee wishing to raise a complaint should do so using the council's complaints procedure.
- 5.9 The council has established a set of organisational values for its workforce (Humility, Empower, Respect, One Team). The importance of equality and diversity comes through in several of these values, particularly in the point to 'Embrace the diversity of colleagues, partners and the people of the borough'.

### Humility



### Empower



### Respect



### One Team

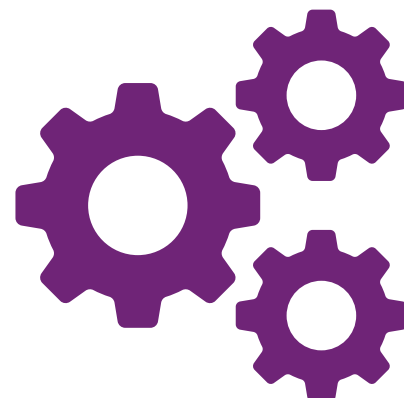




## 6. MONITORING

### Service Delivery

- 6.1 The council has a statutory obligation to provide information about provision and use of services. The use and impact of services will be monitored to:
- Assess how well the service meets the needs of its users and identify gaps.
  - Improve the opportunity for service take up.
  - Better target resources to meet needs.
  - Feed equality data analysis into the directorate service planning process.
  - Demonstrate continuous improvement.
- 6.2 A set of standardised demographic questions has been developed for use in data collection and monitoring across the council in order to encourage consistency and comparability in information gathering and equalities monitoring.



### Employment

- 6.3 The council collects equalities data as part of its recruitment procedures and encourages employees to review and maintain their personal data during their employment. The nature of the personal data which can be recorded is regularly reviewed to ensure it is inclusive and reflects the diversity of the workforce.
- 6.4 The Staff Survey from 2022 onwards will include questions in relation to protected characteristics and inclusion which will be monitored over time and used to identify any actions required.
- 6.5 As part of its annual workforce profile, the council publishes a range of data about its workforce that helps to shape policy development.
- 6.6 The ED&I Network may undertake staff surveys focused on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion to better understand the experience and needs of the diversity of colleagues within the council workforce.

