

# EQUALITIES

## ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21



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# FOREWORD

Rotherham Council is committed to achieving equality for all and a cohesive society built on tolerance and mutual respect, where no-one is left behind. Our approach to agreeing policy priorities is underpinned by this, with a focus on tackling inequalities running through everything that we do.

I am proud that equalities considerations have been integral to the partnership response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Rotherham. As reflected in this report, engagement with diverse communities has directly influenced our approach, and we have continued to work closely with the voluntary, community and faith sectors to mitigate the worst inequality impacts from the pandemic.

Of particular note has been the work of the Rotherham Community Hub, supporting our clinically vulnerable residents, along with securing crisis food provision for residents experiencing financial hardship. Additionally, the Bereavement and Registration Service has engaged extensively with faith communities. This work has been vital to support our communities at a time of great need.

I am pleased that our strategic approach and commitment to equalities has developed too. Our resolution about “Black Lives Matter” confirms our determination to tackle discrimination and make Rotherham an anti-racist town. Moreover, the commitment made by Cabinet in November 2020 to achieve “Excellent” under the Equality Framework for Local Government sets the ambition for Rotherham to be among the best in the country in our approach to equalities. This will be a major milestone for the Council and will help to drive better outcomes for local people.

The past year has been a challenging time for our public services, our communities and those involved in driving our economy. We also know that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on certain groups, especially those who are already impacted by inequalities or with protected characteristics. Whilst the long-term impacts of the pandemic are not yet known, continuing to put equality at the centre will be key to our approach to COVID recovery.

I invite everyone to join us in celebrating our successes to date and in our positive agenda for equalities. As we prepare our new Council Plan and work on the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, now is a critical moment for us all to come together to work for the benefit of all communities.



**Councillor Alam**

Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance

# INTRODUCTION

The Council wants to see a borough based on social justice where all residents have a good quality of life and can achieve their potential. This is underpinned by the recognition that individuals, families and communities do not all have the same starting point or access to the same opportunities.

It has been an exceptional year, with the Council's focus being on responding to and starting to recover from COVID-19. The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, with the most disadvantaged communities being hit the hardest, and has also uncovered latent vulnerability within our communities. Throughout the response to the pandemic, equalities has remained an important priority for the Council, and this will continue to be a priority as the borough moves into recovery.

Publishing an annual equality report is part of the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty. The purpose of this report is to highlight the progress made over the past 12 months towards the equalities agenda, as well as outlining some next steps. The report covers key achievements and case studies from every Directorate within the Council.

*The report focusses on four key themes:*

**Understanding and working with our communities.**

**Leadership and organisational commitment.**

**Responsive services and customer care.**

**Diverse and engaged workforce.**

# ROTHERHAM CONTEXT

Rotherham is one of four metropolitan boroughs in South Yorkshire and lies at the centre of the Sheffield City Region. The borough is divided into 25 wards covering a wide diversity of urban, suburban and rural areas. Rotherham developed as a major industrial centre of coal mining and steel making which have shaped the Borough's character. Following the decline of traditional industries, regeneration has brought new opportunities to the area including advanced manufacturing.

Rotherham is also proud of its environment where 70 % is open countryside; there are 3 country parks and other parks including the award-winning Clifton Park. The large stately home of Wentworth Woodhouse boasts the longest façade in Europe and is surrounded by a 15,000 acre estate.

**Rotherham's population** has grown from 247,000 in 2000 to 265,411 in mid-2019. Population growth has resulted from natural increase (more births than deaths), net inward migration and longer life expectancy.

General demographic and socio-economic trends have included a growing and increasingly diverse population, with significant international migration, mainly from other EU countries. The population is ageing which not only means more older people but also more disabled people. Inequalities persist for workless, disabled and low paid people, who have been adversely affected by welfare reform since 2012. Health inequalities are also significant in Rotherham, where healthy life expectancy is well below average.

The data available and population estimates indicate that the Borough is becoming increasingly diverse. However, much of the data is now becoming increasingly dated. The full data sets will be reviewed next year when information is available from the 2021 Census, providing a new reliable set of baselines.

**Rotherham is a diverse borough** and the ethnic profile continues to change. Based on the 2011 census, the proportion of residents from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities increased from 4.1 % in 2001 to 8.1 % in 2011. Ethnic diversity is most evident amongst young people. The Pakistani community is the second largest ethnic group in Rotherham after White British.

**Rotherham's BAME population** is very concentrated in the inner areas of the town whilst the outer areas were 96 % White British in 2011. 42 % of BAME residents live in areas that are amongst the 10 % most deprived in the country and for some groups the figure is higher. This compares with the Borough average of 19.5 %.

**Rotherham has 52,299 people aged 65 years or over or 21.2% of the population**, above the national average of 18.4 % (2019). The population aged over 65 is projected to increase to 58,074 people by 2026, with the largest increase being in the number of people aged over 75.

**Rotherham has a polarised geography of deprivation** and affluence with the most deprived communities concentrated in the central area whilst the most affluent areas are to the south, although the overall pattern is complex.

**Rotherham is one of the 20% most deprived areas** in England and about 12,667 children were living in "absolute poverty" in 2018/19.

**Local data is not currently available for LGBT+** but should become available in the future. At the national level, estimates from 2017 based on survey work show 2 % of the 16 and over population identifying as LGB with 4.2 % in the 16 to 24 age group. In the absence of local data, the use of national data is appropriate.

**A continuing inequality is the pay gap between men and women**, whereby male workers in Rotherham earn £13,409 more than female workers, on average (median gross annual pay). Women's pay in Rotherham is only 54.6 % of men's pay compared with 64.5 % nationally. The pay gap for full-time workers is smaller at £9,705



but women still only earn 69.9% of male earnings, again lower than the national average of 81.8%. Such differences in earnings also mean that pensions tend to be lower for women than men

**Rotherham has comparatively low skills, particularly at degree level, and struggles both to retain and attract graduates.** Only 34.2% of working age people in Rotherham are educated to degree level or above, compared with 43.1% nationally.

**Rotherham had 56,588 people with a limiting long term health problem or disability in 2011, 22% of the population,** with 11.3% saying this limits their activity a lot, compared with the

average of 8.3% nationally. Although there have been health improvements, health inequalities remain and in some cases are widening.

**People in the most deprived parts of Rotherham experience poorer health and die earlier than people living in the least deprived areas.** Life expectancy in the Borough is 77.9 years for males and 81.7 years for females, which is below the national averages. The gap between the most deprived 10% and least deprived 10% of Rotherham is 9.9 years for males and 9.5 years for females.



# THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

The Equality Act 2010 places a general duty on the Council and others carrying out public functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant characteristic and those who do not; and
- Foster good relations between people

The Equality Act reminds us that there can be no fair society if some groups and communities remain disadvantaged because of their legally protected characteristic. The stated protected characteristics are:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Disability
- Race – (this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality)
- Religion and belief – (this includes lack of belief)
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Duty requires us to take a pro-active approach to embedding equality into everything we do. The Council has a responsibility to ensure that suppliers also take a positive approach to equality. Furthermore, the Equality Duty encourages us to understand how different people will be affected by our decisions.





# THE EQUALITY FOR ALL STRATEGY

The Equality for All Strategy sets out the Council's equality objectives and priorities, which are:

1. To provide strong leadership and build organisational knowledge and commitment
2. Evidence-based decision making to provide efficient, responsive services that meet the needs of local people, improving outcomes and customer satisfaction
3. To know Rotherham's local communities and understand their needs
4. To bring residents closer to the decision making process so that they help to shape and improve service delivery
5. To encourage a diverse workforce and an inclusive and supportive workplace

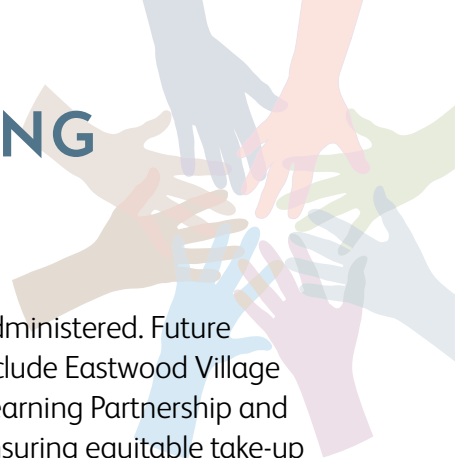
As it has been an exceptional year since the country went into lockdown in March, a review of these objectives did not take place as it would have in a typical year. Equalities has however, remained high on the agenda, and has formed an integral part of the Year Ahead Plan. The Council has also made a commitment to reach 'Excellent' within the LGA's Equality Framework by 2022.

In 2021, it will be a priority for the Council to refresh its equality objectives. The new objectives will take into account the impact of COVID-19 on local people, and will be developed through engagement with elected members, Council officers, partners, and local communities.





# UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES



To reduce inequalities and challenge discrimination, it is essential that the Council understands the needs and priorities of our communities. This includes collecting and analysing equalities data, as well as engaging with local people, fostering good relations within communities, and supporting local people to participate in public life.

Key achievements in 2020/21 have included:

## **Launching the Rotherham Community Hub and mobilising the Rotherham Heroes volunteer programme in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

The Hub was established rapidly towards the end of March 2020 to provide support to any Rotherham resident affected by COVID-19 who was self-isolating or experiencing hardship. Through the Hub, vulnerable residents can request various kinds of support, including help with food shopping, prescription collections, loneliness, and emergency food parcels. A large portion of the residents supported through the Hub have been older residents or those with long-term conditions.

As of 11th April 2021, the Hub has responded to over 6,000 requests for support and delivered 6,033 emergency food parcels. The response has been a truly collaborative effort between the Council, local voluntary and community organisations, businesses and hundreds of 'Rotherham Heroes' volunteers. This has helped to foster good relations within communities, as well as with the Council. Example case studies from Rotherham Hero volunteers are included on page 11.

## **Holding vaccination 'pop-ups' in key communities.**

Vaccination pop-ups have been held in communities where residents may face barriers to vaccination up-take, including language barriers and vaccination hesitancy. Across two vaccination pop-up sites in Ferham and Eastwood,

120 vaccinations were administered. Future sites being considered include Eastwood Village Primary School, Clifton Learning Partnership and Russell Street Mosque. Ensuring equitable take-up across communities is important to address health inequalities in the transmission of COVID-19.

## **Updating the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) or 'Rotherham Data Hub'.**

The Rotherham Data Hub is an openly accessible website which brings together information and data relevant to Rotherham. To reflect the significant challenges over the last year, this has now been updated, with a greater focus on health inequalities and data around the impact of COVID-19. The type of data incorporated in this website has also been expanded, to give a broader view of the issues facing local people.

This data will be used to inform commissioning decisions and strategy development. In particular, the findings of the updated JSNA will inform the refresh of Health and Wellbeing Board priorities and the strategic approach to tackling health inequalities.

## **Bringing communities together and celebrating diversity in a COVID-secure way through the Rotherham Together programme.**

Over 200,000 people have engaged in online activities and targeted events as part of the Rotherham Together creative programme, which was developed to respond to and support recovery from COVID-19. This programme focusses on three themes: Joy, Gratitude and Hope and provides innovative and COVID-secure ways to foster connectedness.

A key part of the programme has been celebrating the diversity of Rotherham's communities. This has included working in partnership with Women of the World to run an online discussion with inspiring women as part of Black History Month and holding virtual events to mark International Women's Day.

## **Involving communities in the development of the Town Investment Plan to ensure that regeneration activities meet the needs of local people.**

Targeted engagement activities, including virtual exhibitions and work with local community groups took place with diverse communities in Templeborough and Eastwood on the Town Investment Plan. The findings of this engagement work have directly informed the development of the plan; for instance, the Council has revised and refocussed interventions in Eastwood with more funding now directed towards housing provision, based on the feedback from local communities. The consultation to date has been invaluable to ensure the projects proposed for the Town Deal meet the needs of local people and help to renew their sense of pride in Rotherham.

## **Building community intelligence around the impact of the pandemic on protected characteristic groups.**

For example, Children and Young People's services have worked with schools to run several surveys relating to the mental health impacts of the pandemic amongst young people. Based on these findings, action has been taken to support schools with the mental health needs of their students, including a full recovery curriculum delivered through PSHCE, targeted work with specific year groups and producing both student and parental wellbeing newsletters.

## **Encouraging BAME communities and those on low incomes to get physically active.**

Grants of almost £40,000 from Sports England were awarded to organisations supporting access to physical activity and sport for BME and people on low incomes, in partnership with Yorkshire Sport Foundation. These projects were focussed on addressing health inequalities and improving health outcomes for disadvantaged communities.

## **Gearing up for the Women's Euro Football Tournament.**

Rotherham is to host 4 matches as part of the Women's Euro Football Tournament throughout July 2022. An important part of the success of the tournament is the legacy it leaves.

It is widely recognised that female participation in sport, physical activity and positions of leadership and management is lower than in the male population. Rotherham's aim is not only to deliver a high-quality tournament, but to utilise the platform of such a high-profile event to:

- Deliver a range of programmes to welcome women and girls into football, focusing on under-represented groups.
- Use football to encourage more women and girls to adopt and maintain a healthier lifestyle.
- Develop leadership opportunities to help women and girls grow the game.

To that end, a number of working groups have been established to deliver a wide range of projects and initiatives relating to female involvement in sport and physical activity. A range of community organisations sit as part of the Euro'22 partnership, including VAR, REMA and Rotherham United Community Sports Trust.

## **Next Steps:**

- Establishing a consistent approach to data collection is an integral part of understanding our communities, so developing clear guidance on this and ensuring that equalities monitoring is embedded as part of Council systems will be an important next step.
- The coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, as well as uncovering latent vulnerability within our communities. It is likely that the impacts of the pandemic will be felt within our communities for some time, so considering equality will be a key part of recovery planning.
- During the pandemic there have been numerous examples of communities coming together to support each other. As identified in the evaluation of the Rotherham Heroes programme, there is now an opportunity to build on the successful engagement of volunteers and the approach of the Rotherham Community Hub.

## CASE STUDIES:

### SUPPORTING LOCAL PEOPLE THROUGH THE ROTHERHAM HEROES PROGRAMME.

Rotherham's residents have made an unprecedented offer of support to vulnerable residents in their communities through the community hub and Rotherham Heroes programme. Some examples of the work of the Rotherham Heroes is included below.

#### JIM AND SARAH\* – SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

Jim and Sarah have been married for 30 years and are both school bus drivers for special needs children and young people. They were furloughed following lockdown. As they were both DBS checked, they knew the volunteering process would be easy and desired to help locally. They both signed up to be Rotherham Heroes.

The Rotherham Community Hub identified their unique skills in helping special needs people and assigned them to food shop for a couple with learning difficulties and two elderly residents. The couple built a strong relationship with one elderly lady who lost her husband to a brain tumour during the pandemic, who wasn't able to see her family often. Jim provided assurance that the couple was here for her and she could call them anytime. This assurance allowed her to build trust, leading to a friendship being formed which the couple hope will continue. The couple found supporting the same people regularly beneficial, as it allowed trust and genuine friendships to form.

#### CAROL – HOTEL MANAGER

Hotel manager, Carol, was recently furloughed and wanted to give back to her local community by volunteering. Carol gradually built confidence to take on more cases from one food shop a week to now supporting four residents including one weekly prescription collection. Volunteering had a positive impact on Carol's life as she's now reassessing her work life balance seeking ways to volunteer on a part-time basis. Having moved to Rotherham 14 years ago, Carol credits volunteering for building relationships with neighbours and the wider community who she'd had little interaction with since her initial move. Volunteering was a positive experience for Carol, making her feel valued and appreciated, with the weekly volunteer newsletter keeping her in the loop and feeling like an active member of the wider RCH family.

## CASE STUDY:

# CELEBRATING THE WORK OF OUR TENANTS TO SUPPORT VULNERABLE PEOPLE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



In March, the Council held the first virtual Tenant's Open Day. The event focussed on the response to COVID-19, looking back at some of the key achievements from 2020 and recognising the community groups who have gone the extra mile during this particularly tough year. Whilst it was not possible to bring tenants together in person, it was still important to hold this event, to celebrate the role that local people have played in supporting vulnerable people in their communities.

The impact of the pandemic has not been equal, and older people and those with long-term conditions and disabilities have been at a particular risk for loneliness and social isolation, due to rules and guidelines around shielding. Luckily, there are many examples where local tenants have reached out to the most vulnerable within their communities.

One example is Peter – a local 'Fish n Chip' champion. Peter knew that the majority of residents living in his community were older people who lived on their own and who may not have much social contact. He therefore decided to deliver fish and chips to people in his community on Fridays, to connect with local people and lift their spirits. Peter says that this has helped bring the community together and that now "everyone is talking more."

RotherFed have been undertaking weekly befriending calls and have made calls to over 300 individuals to date who are feeling lonely and isolated. 45 active volunteers are currently making calls to 160 residents involved at present. The calls are resulting in many positive outcomes for residents including improved mental wellbeing, reduced loneliness and confidence for employment and training.

An example is Christine, who became a befriending champion. Every week, Christine calls vulnerable people who are at risk of loneliness and social isolation, to have a chat and connect. Christine says "Volunteering has just given me something to reward myself. It's nice to know that I'm helping others what may not have close family or friends like myself."

Another main focus of the event was the Social Housing White Paper, which was released in November 2020, to help listen to tenants' voices, and hold landlords accountable after the Grenfell fire tragedy.

The event was well-attended, and all material is now available to view under the tenant involvement section of the Council website.



## CASE STUDY:

### YOUNG PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER TO TACKLE HATE CRIME.



Rotherham Youth Cabinet are a group of young people aged 11 to 18 from across Rotherham, who work to represent the young people in Rotherham to create positive change on issues which are important to them.

Every year, they take part in 'Make Your Mark' which is a national consultation to find out what the main issues are for children and young people. Make your Mark 2019 highlighted hate crime as being the top issue for Rotherham's young people.

In light of this, Youth Cabinet included hate crime as one of the four key aims in their 2020 Manifesto. The aim was:

***"We want to ensure people understand what Hate Crime is, know how to report it and encourage reporting of hate crime incidents. We also want people to understand the impact hate crime has on victims and the potential consequences."***

As part of their work, the group took over a Council Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting and held a review of hate crime within Rotherham. They worked with elected members to question relevant professionals so they could find out what was already happening and what further action could be taken.

From that meeting, young people made ten recommendations which were approved at a full Rotherham Council meeting.

Youth Cabinet members have continued to work on their own projects to try to reduce hate. This has included:

- Making films focussing on racism and disability
- Using social media to share awareness of hate and how to report it
- Working with other young people across the Yorkshire and Humber region to develop learning workshops and delivering these to young people's groups
- Working with Public Transport operators and gaining agreement from them to share links to resources, films and publicity messages through their social media and within transport interchanges.

Most recently, the group have been collaborating with the Community Safety Team on a Hate Incident Charter and Pledge for primary and secondary schools and colleges. The aim is that all schools sign up to this Charter to show that they are committed to tackling hate incidents and to help achieve a consistent approach to hate across Rotherham. The Charter includes eleven statements which schools will pledge towards achieving. All schools who sign up can then display the pledge to show their commitment to tackling hate. Building on this, Youth Cabinet are also currently working on a Charter for younger children.

# LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT



The Council has a vital role to play as a local leader in promoting equality across the borough. This means consider equality and diversity in decision-making, communications, partnership working, priority setting and policy development.

Key achievements in 2020/21 have included:

## **Ensuring that reducing inequality features as an integral part of strategic plans and policies.**

This has included incorporating an explicit focus on equalities within the Year Ahead Plan and the Local Outbreak Control Plan. Additionally, in November Cabinet publicly endorsed the ambition to work towards the 'Excellent' accreditation within the Local Government Association Equalities Framework.

## **Working in partnership to stand against violence and sexual harassment.**

The Safer Rotherham Partnership has promoted several campaigns and events with the aim of protecting local people against violence and sexual harassment. This has included the 'Know the Line' campaign, which aims to raise public awareness in Sheffield and South Yorkshire around sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in public places.

The partnership also organised a virtual version of the 'Reclaim the Night' event, which is an annual women's march against rape and male violence. This year, the event focussed on the achievements of successful women in Rotherham, including Councillor Jenny Andrews, BBC newsreader Becky Lancashire and BBC Radio Leeds on air psychotherapist Catherine Asta Labatt.

Additionally, in June 2020, the 'Ask for Angela' campaign, which encourages people to 'Ask for Angela' if they are under threat, was expanded to small local shops. This aimed to reach vulnerable people who have been particularly isolated during lockdown.

## **Embedding equalities into the member induction and development programme.**

Member development is a priority, as Councillors, in their role as decision-makers and community champions, are well-placed to advocate for the equality of all protected characteristic groups within their wards and the borough as a whole.

In preparation for all-out elections taking place in May 2021, the Council has designed the induction programme for elected members. This programme includes a focus on equality and diversity, including the Council's statutory equality duties and the integral role of elected members in supporting the equalities agenda.

## **Establishing a network of equality champions to build leadership capacity across the Council.**

Advantage has been taken of new "virtual" working methods to provide an overarching resource for equalities using Microsoft Teams. This enables the Council to bring everything "equalities" together in one place as a corporate resource and engage services and staff to network, access documents and other resources, share learning and provide peer support.

Using "Teams" means that network members can be alerted when there are new developments posted, including new documents or issues for staff to engage in. This equalities network is an important mechanism to build leadership on equalities across directorates and support the embedding of equalities into all services.

## **Committing to making Rotherham an anti-racist town.**

At its meeting in July, the Council passed a motion committing to making Rotherham an anti-racist town and to stand in solidarity with black and minority ethnic communities. This also included a commitment to work with local communities to understand racism, strengthen the anti-racism

approach of the Council and ensure all staff participate in activity/training that supports them to address prejudice and bias.

### **Strengthening the role of equalities in decision-making.**

All reports for Cabinet and OSMB require an initial screening to be undertaken to determine whether a full equality analysis needs to be conducted. A guide for staff is in place to support this process and to provide key information regarding the equality analysis process. This has strengthened the role of equalities in decision-making and improved oversight for elected members.

### **Next Steps:**

- The Council will engage with elected members, senior officers, the workforce and communities to refresh its equality objectives. These refreshed objectives will take into account the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Building on improvements that have been made to embed equality impact assessments into decision-making, the workforce will be engaged to review the guidance available, to ensure that staff have the tools they need to produce robust equality analyses.
- It will also be a priority to work with OSMB to ensure effective scrutiny and oversight of the equalities agenda.



## CASE STUDY:

### ENGAGING WITH THOSE LIVING IN THE CENTRAL WARDS, PARTICULARLY BAME COMMUNITIES AROUND COVID-19.



Certain groups have faced higher risks of contracting coronavirus, including people working in certain occupations, those living in socioeconomically deprived areas and BAME communities. In February 2021, local data in Rotherham showed an overall stalling of the rate but increases for working age adults. It was considered that this was likely to be connected with factors relating to deprivation and the type of employment in Rotherham, particularly the large proportion of people who are not able to work from home.

Based on these factors, a lot of the people who live and work in the Central wards, particularly Eastwood face an increased risk of exposure. Informed by data around the rate of transmissions, it was agreed to take a focussed and targeted approach within the Central wards in Rotherham. There was a four-week campaign to reduce case rates, increase testing and vaccination uptake and ensure isolation compliance. Within this campaign, there was a focus on reaching Eastern European and South Asian communities. This was a truly collaborative effort, including the Council, voluntary and community partners and South Yorkshire Police.

To ensure the messages reached vulnerable communities, including the digitally excluded, there was a big focus on physical communications materials. Thousands of leaflets were distributed in Central wards and were made available in six different languages for community groups to share. Banners and posters were also displayed in visible locations, and the Digi-van was stationed in key communities and areas of high footfall.

#### *Other aspects of the engagement included:*

- Targeted work with taxi drivers as a high-risk occupational group. This included sharing information on self-isolation support available, as well as information on testing.
- Regularly meeting with faith and community groups online to co-produce messages and method of delivery.
- Launching the Community Champions campaign to encourage local communities to work together and to keep each other safe.

Following this targeted engagement, testing rates increased in these areas and were generally comparable with the Rotherham average, despite higher levels of deprivation and higher proportion of individuals who are typically considered to be 'underserved.'

This engagement was also key in terms of building vital community intelligence around issues, including testing and vaccination hesitancy. This has informed decision-making, such as the establishment of a drop-in testing facility at the Unity Centre. This is both a practical and a trusted location to many residents living in the local area.



## CASE STUDY:

### SUPPORTING THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY IN FOSTERING.

*“I would say that there are children and young people that need loving homes, and that it just takes a human being to make a family. Love has no barriers, it transcends above any hurdles.”*

**Dave, Foster Carer**

The LGBTQ community still faces discrimination and stigma, including when it comes to parenting. The Council wanted to take a stand against this and spread the message that the Council welcomes LGBTQ foster carers.

In 2018, a new fostering information pack was produced with very clear messages around the inclusivity of the recruitment process:

*“Foster carers can be married, unmarried, be living together, single, straight, gay and if they have pink hair and wear odd socks, we don’t mind one bit as long as they are able to work with us to achieve the required standards to be an approved foster carer.”*

The Fostering Team has continued to promote this message over the past year. This has included:

- Launching the myth-busting campaign on social media, to challenge perceptions around fostering within the LGBTQ community.
- Holding a virtual drop-in during LGBTQ Fostering Week. This included one of our LGBTQ foster carers answering questions on their experiences.
- Recruiting more same-sex couples to become foster carers; out of 22 new fostering households recruited last year, two were same-sex couples.

As well as promoting the message that LGBTQ foster carers are welcome, the Council is also a member of New Family Social which is the only national LGBTQ charity in the UK with a focus on providing support, improving the treatment of LGBTQ people in the fostering process and encouraging inclusion. New Family Social provides social networks, events and forum, and helps to ensure that LGBTQ foster carers get the support that they need through the fostering process.

In the next financial year, the Council will aim to have a presence at Rotherham Pride again, and continue to hold online events, involving foster carers in promoting fostering for the LGBTQ community. The Council will continue to assess the impact of these campaigns and engage with the LGBTQ community around fostering.

To find out more about fostering in Rotherham, please visit: [www.fosteringrotherham.com](http://www.fosteringrotherham.com)

# RESPONSIVE SERVICES AND CUSTOMER CARE



Ensuring that services are accessible to customers and residents, including those with protected characteristics, is a core part of the Council's equality duty. Equalities and inclusivity is a key part of the planning and delivery of Council services, as well as commissioning and procurement.

Key achievements in 2020/21 have included:

## **Working to improve the accessibility of domestic abuse services for LGBTQ+ people.**

A new project has recently been funded through a joint bid to central government by the four South Yorkshire councils. This will be an innovative project led by SAYiT aimed at improving access to domestic abuse services for LGBTQ+ people (Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and other minority sexuality and/or genders) across South Yorkshire. A consultation is taking place to hear from those experiencing domestic abuse within LGBTQ+ relationships.

## **Delivering social value through commissioning and procurement.**

The Council agreed a Social Value policy in October 2019. This policy made it a requirement to incorporate a social value requirement in tender specifications, procurement processes and the letting of contracts. In total, since this policy was agreed, over £1.4m in social value has been committed against the measures set out in the policy. This means that Council contracts are supporting the promotion of local skills and employment, the protection and improvement of the local environment, the capacity of the voluntary and community sector, and local spend in Rotherham. Some examples include that:

- For contracts let by the Council in 2020, at least 82 % of staff employed will be paid the "real living wage".
- 4.04 tonnes of CO2e will be saved.
- £14k of charitable donations will be made to local community organisations.

The approach to social value directly inter-relates with equality objectives through addressing socio-economic inequalities, building local economic resilience to the benefit of the local community. The inclusion of "Living Wage Foundation" living wage accreditation will help to tackle economic inequalities.

## **Securing funding to support Rotherham people facing digital exclusion.**

Funding has been secured to support Rotherham people facing digital exclusion. The digital divide has been magnified during the pandemic, as services have moved online to minimise the spread of coronavirus. Certain protected characteristic groups, including older people, are more likely to be digitally excluded, so this has considerable equality implications.

## **Refreshing the Library Strategy with a focus on improving the accessibility of libraries.**

The strategy was agreed in October and sets out plans to redesign and relocate several libraries to make them more accessible and offer ease of access for those with disabilities. This is a positive example of how equalities and inclusivity for protected characteristic groups has directly shaped service planning.

## **Next Steps:**

- Refreshing the current service plan template and strengthening the link between equality analysis and service plan objectives are two key actions.
- There is an opportunity to add equality criteria into the social value portal system, enabling equality to be monitored and measured in contracts.

## CASE STUDY:

### OPENING A STATE-OF-THE-ART RESPITE FACILITY FOR ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITY AND AUTISM.



The adult social care reset and recovery plan aims to ensure that adult social care is able to adapt to the changing conditions of the pandemic, and an integral part of this plan is the offer of respite facilities to support carers and service-users. On 4th January, the Council opened a new state of the art respite facility for adults with learning disabilities and autism in Conway Crescent.

Conway Crescent replaces two out of date properties at Maltby and Wath. The older

properties were not fully accessible and could not provide the services needed to meet peoples' range of complex needs.

Being purpose-built, Conway Crescent has lifts in both houses meaning all eight en-suite bedrooms are fully accessible. One house is fitted with ceiling hoists and the other provides an autism-friendly environment.

The decision to develop this new offer is part of the Council's wider plan to transform services for adults with learning disabilities, providing increased choice and opportunities for greater independence through the My Front Door programme.

Rotherham Council Cabinet member for Adult Social Care Cllr David Roche said: "The new houses at Conway Crescent will bring the Council's respite service right up to date with brand new facilities equipped to serve a wider range of people's needs.

"Our carers are there for their loved ones 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This new respite service will give more opportunities for carers to have a much-needed short break, in order to carry on their very important caring roles."

Conway Crescent has already welcomed a number people through its doors, who have started to benefit from the facilities at the centre. Early feedback has been extremely positive, and staff will continue to work with carers and service-users to support their independence and wellbeing.

For more information about Conway Crescent, please visit Rotherham Council's YouTube page.

## CASE STUDY:

### DELIVERING ACCESSIBLE CUSTOMER SERVICES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

The Council's Customer Access Strategy, which was agreed in 2018 includes a commitment to 'make sure everyone continues to have equal access to the information and help they need, regardless of their individual circumstances.' This includes a 'digital first' rather than 'digital by default' approach, in acknowledgement that some customers and communities are more likely to find it difficult to access services digitally. For example, national data finds that digital exclusion is more prevalent amongst the elderly, disabled, and individuals from BAME and socially deprived communities.

However, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary to step down face to face provision, to keep communities safe and prevent the spread of the virus. In light of this, Customer Services adapted the approach to ensure that all residents, including those who face digital exclusion, could continue to access our services.

One way that Customer Services have responded to the needs of digitally excluded residents is through providing assisted access over the telephone. From the beginning of April 2020 to the end of March 2021, Customer Services answered over £465k telephone calls across a wide and diverse range of topics. Moreover, between April 2020 and March 2021, the team has conducted 886 telephone appointments with customers who wanted to apply for a Blue Badge, but who did not have online access. Additionally, video tutorials have also been made available for key online processes to assist customers who find visual content more accessible. Providing this kind of support is integral to ensuring the service is responsive to the needs of all communities.

Ensuring that services are informed by the views and opinions of 'real' customers wherever possible is also a key component of delivering inclusive customer services. This has continued to be a priority throughout the pandemic. In the case of the vehicle licence application process (launched July 2020), a YouTube video was created and shared with the taxi community for feedback. Their comments and suggestions were acted upon to shape the final process, as well as the design and the order of questions.

It remains a priority to ensure all customers, regardless of circumstance continue to have equal access to the help and support they need. Work is taking place with partners through the Rotherham Place Digital Inclusion programme to address digital divides within the community, with a particular focus on the ability of residents in protected groups to access services.



# DIVERSE AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE



The Council wants to have a diverse workforce at all levels, which is confident and competent in working together for equitable service delivery. This includes a commitment to supporting the workforce, in terms of inclusive working practices, health and wellbeing support and learning and development around equalities.

Key achievements in 2020/21 have included:

## **Supporting the health and wellbeing of our workforce.**

In acknowledgement that the past year has been a challenging and uncertain time, significant work has taken place to support the health and wellbeing of Council staff. The Council has produced wellbeing guides and have undertaken two wellbeing surveys over the last 12 months. The surveys covered a range of topics including working arrangements and the support provided by the Council. The results of the survey have helped to shape the development of a wellbeing programme and have also highlighted how some staff groups have experienced the last 12 months in a different way to others; therefore a more tailored approach to engaging and supporting specific staff groups is now being undertaken. Topics covered in the wellbeing programme have included an introduction to mindfulness, coping with uncertainty and working from home.

In addition to the wellbeing guides, the Council took a revised approach to PDR for 2020-21 to ensure that the focus of the meetings was around the individual's wellbeing and any required reasonable adjustments that needed to be made. This approach will continue in 2021-22 with the focus firmly on support and wellbeing of each individual member of the workforce.

Wellbeing champions have also been established across the Council, to support the wellbeing agenda and raise awareness across Directorates.

## **Promoting leadership and development opportunities for women through the bespoke Rotherham Leader programme.**

This programme supports current managers to grow their leadership skill set. Of the members of staff who have completed the programme, 82 % are women, with the aim that this will help to ensure that women continue to be represented in senior roles throughout the organisation.

## **Engaging the workforce with the equalities agenda.**

Work has taken place to engage the wider workforce with equalities, including through a staff presentation led by the Assistant Chief Executive, which was attended by 82 participants. The presentation gave an overview and direction for the equalities work and how staff can get engaged. Details were also given about how staff can join the Council's Equalities Network.

Presentations have also been given in directorate leadership team meetings, covering the scope of the review, engagement of directorates and role of "champions" to embed equalities work and develop in-house peer support across services.

## **Next steps:**

- Reviewing training and development opportunities across the Council, to ensure that staff needs around training on equality issues are met.
- Re-establishing staff groups representing protected characteristics will form an important part of staff engagement around the equalities agenda.

## CASE STUDY:

# CELEBRATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FEMALE LEADERS.



As part of International Women's Day, a virtual event was held in March, which brought together over 100 attendees from across the organisation to celebrate the achievements of women within the Council and the wider partnership. This year's theme, 'Choose to challenge' was focussed on what

we can all do to challenge and call out gender bias.

Inspiring speakers included Sharon Kemp, Deborah Thomson, Beverly Rennie and Lynne Knox (South Yorkshire Police Superintendent for Rotherham) who discussed their experiences of overcoming barriers and achieving success in their careers.

Workshops also took place to explore the experience of working from home, including work/life balance and looking at how to celebrate the achievements of female colleagues whilst working in different ways. Ideas included:

- Going for a walk at lunchtime.
- Sticking to a routine.
- Checking in with colleagues.
- Sending thank you cards out to team members.
- Celebrating achievements via an internal webpage.

The findings of these workshops were fed back to participants, to share ideas on how colleagues can support their wellbeing whilst working from home.

## CASE STUDY:

### PARTICIPATING IN SCHEMES TO SUPPORT DISADVANTAGED GROUPS INTO WORK.

#### Kickstart



Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic the number of people not in employment has risen sharply. Young people have been recognised to be more significantly impacted than people in other age groups. The Kickstart Scheme provides funding to employers who offer job placements for young people (age 16-24) who are on

Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment. The overall aim of the scheme is to support young people to develop new skills and help them to move into sustained employment after they have completed their Kickstart placement.

In October 2020, the Council made the decision to participate in the Kickstart Scheme, offering placements across all directorates. A decision was taken that all placements would be paid at Band A which is above the national minimum wage that is reimbursed through the scheme.

The first placements were advertised and recruited to in April 2021 and recruitment for other placements will be ongoing throughout the year. In total, the Council will have offered 89 placements to young people by December 2021. Examples of some of placements are being offered include:

- Business support and administration
- Museum, art and heritage
- Green spaces
- Community Safety
- Digital services
- Social care
- HR & OD

The Council has taken a collaborative approach to participation in the scheme working closely with service managers, DWP and Pathways Employment Solutions (ACH&PH) to proactively identify and address any potential barriers that young people may face which would prevent them from applying for the placements on offer. This includes the development of pre and post-employment support plans by Pathways Employment Solutions and three days of employability and personal development for each kickstart placement holder. In addition, regular peer support sessions are scheduled throughout the year to help build relationships, support network and a safe space to share experiences amongst the kickstart placement holders.

The Council's scheme is still in the early stages but will be subject to evaluation over the next 12 months to formally identify successes and any areas for improvement.

# CASE STUDY: CONTINUED

## Sheffield Hallam Funded Internships



The Sheffield Hallam Internship Scheme has been designed to support students who are most in need of graduate level work experience in order to support and enhance their employability and job prospects in these challenging times. In April 2021 the council took the decision to participate in this scheme.

The internships are prioritised to the most disadvantaged students including:

- Students from geographical areas of low participation in higher education
- Students from a black, Asian or minority ethnic (BAME) background
- Mature students
- Students that are estranged or care leavers (been in care)
- Students with caring responsibilities
- Students with disabilities
- Students with refugee status
- Transgender students inclusive of non-binary genders

The Council has offered three internships for 100 hours fully funded and the placements offered are:

- CYPS – CYPS Business Support
- R&E – Tourism Research Assistant
- ACH&PH – Computer and Information Systems Support Officer

Currently the internships are open for applications with selection processes due to be undertaken in June and placements commence in July.