

Inclusion strategy (refresh of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy) – proposed consultation process

Purpose

To better understand the views and experiences of individuals who may face barriers to inclusion or to accessing services, including advocacy groups or organisations representing such individuals. This includes engagement with internal staff networks to gain insight into their experience of working at the council and, more broadly, their perspective on issues related to equality, diversity and inclusion. Recent, relevant consultation responses such as to the Council Plan consultation will also be factored in.

Timeframe

On the basis that the refreshed strategy is due for approval by Cabinet in November 2025, it is proposed that the consultation runs from August to early September. This would allow sufficient time to analyse the results and use them to inform the refresh.

Budget

Where possible, the aim will be to use existing sessions or meetings, rather than arranging bespoke sessions. This will save on room hire and any other costs, as well as guaranteeing attendance. No additional equipment or promotional materials are proposed. However, a small budget will be required for some of the face-to-face sessions. This should be no more than £500.

Focus groups

- This is proposed as the primary means of consultation, in line with the approach taken when the current strategy was developed
- Hold two general focus group sessions: one on Teams and one in-person (subject to demand). Representatives from key external partners/organisations, as per the table below, would be invited.
- Arrange a number of sessions for specific groups, allowing us to tailor the consultation to focus on discrete issues

- Focus groups should aim to draw out people’s experiences and help us to understand what’s important to them. Facilitators would have a small number of prompts that would be broadly consistent across the sessions, but we should avoid being too prescriptive.
- Based on this approach, there would be eight external focus group sessions and at least six internal sessions.

External Focus Groups

Organisation / group
RMBC Community Reference Group
Ethnic minority communities
Complex needs (disabilities) SENSE
Young People
Visually Impaired Sight and Sound
Deaf Futures Group
Our Borough that Cares Strategic Group meeting
CYPF consortium
CCG Equality and Diversity Steering Group
Andy’s Man Club
Faith Leaders Group
LGBT – Rainbow Project & Pride
Older People’s Forum/Age UK
External women network
Neurodiverse

Ethnic minority Roma/Slovak
Pregnancy and Maternity/Paternity

Internal focus groups

Group
BME network
Carers support network
LGBTQ+ network
Neurodivergent staff representation network
Women's workforce network
Young employees network
Disability & long-term health conditions network

Prompts for focus groups

The prompt questions below set the tone for the discussion and are there for the facilitators to use if the discussion stalls or if certain areas have not been covered.

Prompt Question 1

Do you have any general comments about inclusion issues in Rotherham?

Prompt Question 2

In what ways do you think the Council can understand, listen to, and work with Rotherham communities?

Probe for:

- Listening to residents through consultation and feedback
- Engaging with communities including those with protected characteristics
- Sharing and presenting information
- Developing joint partnership approaches to tackle inequality

Prompt Question 3

What are the important things to consider when trying to deliver accessible and responsive services that meet diverse needs?

Probe for:

- Communicating and engaging with residents to ensure they know about Council services and how to access them
- Listening to service users through consultation and other mechanisms
- Strengthening digital infrastructure and skills
- Partnership working to tackle inequality
- The use of Equality Assessment in service design and delivery

Prompt Question 4

How can the Council provide leadership and actively promote equality?

Probe for:

- Working with partners to reduce tensions and improve cohesion
- Initiatives that promote understanding and bring different communities together
- Celebrating diversity by recognising national days and supporting local events

Online Survey

- Produce a short survey to ensure a wider reach. As with the survey for the previous EDI strategy consultation, this would give people an opportunity to comment on the current priorities/themes.
- The survey would be specifically promoted to the groups/contacts included in the tables above.

Proposed online consultation questions

Rotherham Council strives to secure equality of opportunity and better outcomes for everyone. We are updating our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy (2022-25), aiming to have a new Inclusion Strategy agreed by the end of 2025. To inform the strategy, we want to gather the views and experiences of, in particular, people who may face barriers to inclusion or accessing services. We want to ensure we listen and respond to all communities and provide the right services and support across our borough so that all our residents and communities can thrive.

As a Council, we want to lead the way across our borough in promoting equality and empowering our residents to engage positively across communities.

We would value your views and ideas on whether our existing priorities and key actions are still the right ones and have created the following questionnaire for you to have your say.

We will use your feedback to refresh our current priorities and develop an updated and newly named Inclusion Strategy by January 2026.

This online consultation will run for at least a month from early August until early September.

Questions

Our four existing priorities are:

1. Understanding, listening to, and working with Rotherham's communities

2. Delivering accessible and responsive services that meet diverse needs
3. Providing leadership and organisational commitment to actively promote equalities
4. Ensuring a diverse and engaged workforce.

Q1. Are these the right priorities for us all to collectively work towards?

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
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Do you have any other comments?

Q2. What action could be taken to ensure that the Council and other organisations understand, listen to, and work effectively with Rotherham's communities?

Q3. What are the important considerations in delivering accessible and responsive services that meet diverse needs?

Q4. How should the Council demonstrate leadership and organisational commitment to actively promote inclusion?

Q5. What action could be taken to ensure that the Council's workforce reflects its communities?

Q6. Do you have any other comments about equality, diversity and inclusion issues?

Thank you for your participation in this consultation.

Standard equalities questions to be added to the end of the survey