

**EQUALITY, DIVERSITY
AND INCLUSION
ANNUAL REPORT
2023/24**

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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. The Council's approach to agreeing policy priorities is underpinned by this, with a focus on tackling inequalities running through everything that we do.

I am delighted, as Cabinet Member for Finance, Safe and Clean Communities, to present this year's annual report. I am proud that equality considerations have continued to influence the Council's internal operations and processes. As reflected in this report, engagement with diverse communities has directly influenced approaches, and the Council has worked in partnership with local voluntary, community, and faith sector organisations to continue to provide valuable support to residents to mitigate the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

The Council received £4.978m from the Department of Work and Pensions to help residents with essential household costs, including food, energy, and council tax bills. £55k was awarded to local voluntary community sector organisations to distribute food parcels to vulnerable households over the Christmas/New Year period. In addition, £90k was allocated to support care leavers, young people leaving foster care and living independently in their own accommodation with responsibility for paying their own utility bills. This demonstrates our pledge that no one will be left behind and that we will continue to help residents overcome barriers that prevent them from reaching their aspirations and living a happy, healthy life.

£3.4m in government funding enabled the delivery of Family Hubs and the Best Start in Life programme locally. Families can now access information, advice, and support across a range of areas, including pregnancy and birth, preparation for parenthood, health and wellbeing, education and childcare, family support and parenting, employment, and training in one place.

In the last year, several events celebrating and championing equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) or marking significant days, were promoted by the Council and its local partners, including Holocaust Memorial Day, International Women's Day, Carers' Rights Day, Inter-Faith Week, The Rotherham Show, Armed Forces Day, and Mental Health Awareness Week. Rotherham Town Centre's much-loved Christmas light's switch-on, which regularly sees attendances of 6,000 people returned with a free programme of street entertainment, live music, outdoor market, and artworks to inspire the whole family.

The Corporate Equality Steering Group continues to oversee and lead the delivery of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025. The strategy maps out how the Council aims to remove obstacles preventing some people from fully participating in the social, cultural, political, and economic life of our borough. The group also works in partnership with our internal staff representation networks to improve our working culture and create positive change.

The commitment to achieve "Excellent" under the equality framework for local government remains a high priority, as the Council wants 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 drive better outcomes for local people.

I invite everyone to join us in celebrating our successes to date and in our positive agenda for equalities. As we continue to support people through cost-of-living pressures, now is a critical moment for us all to come together to work for the benefit of all communities. **Councillor Saghir Alam OBE, Cabinet Member for Finance & Safe and Clean Communities**



INTRODUCTION

The Council wants to see a borough that is 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.

Publishing an annual equality report is part of the public sector equality duty. The purpose of this report is to highlight the progress made over the past twelve months on the equalities agenda, as well as outlining next steps. The report covers key achievements and case studies from across the Council, focusing on the four themes of the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, which are aligned to those of the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG):

- Theme 1: Understanding and working with our communities.
- Theme 2: Leadership, partnership, and organisational commitment.
- Theme 3: Responsive services and customer care.
- Theme 4: Diverse and engaged workforce.

The "looking ahead" section sets out priority work for the coming year under each of the new Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy objectives.

ROTHERHAM CONTEXT

Rotherham is one of four metropolitan boroughs in South Yorkshire. 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 has shaped the borough's character. Following the decline of traditional industries, regeneration has brought new opportunities to the area, including advanced manufacturing.

Rotherham's population has grown from 257,600 in 2011 to 265,800 in 2021 (Census 2021). Population growth has resulted from natural increase (more births than deaths), net inward migration and longer life expectancy.

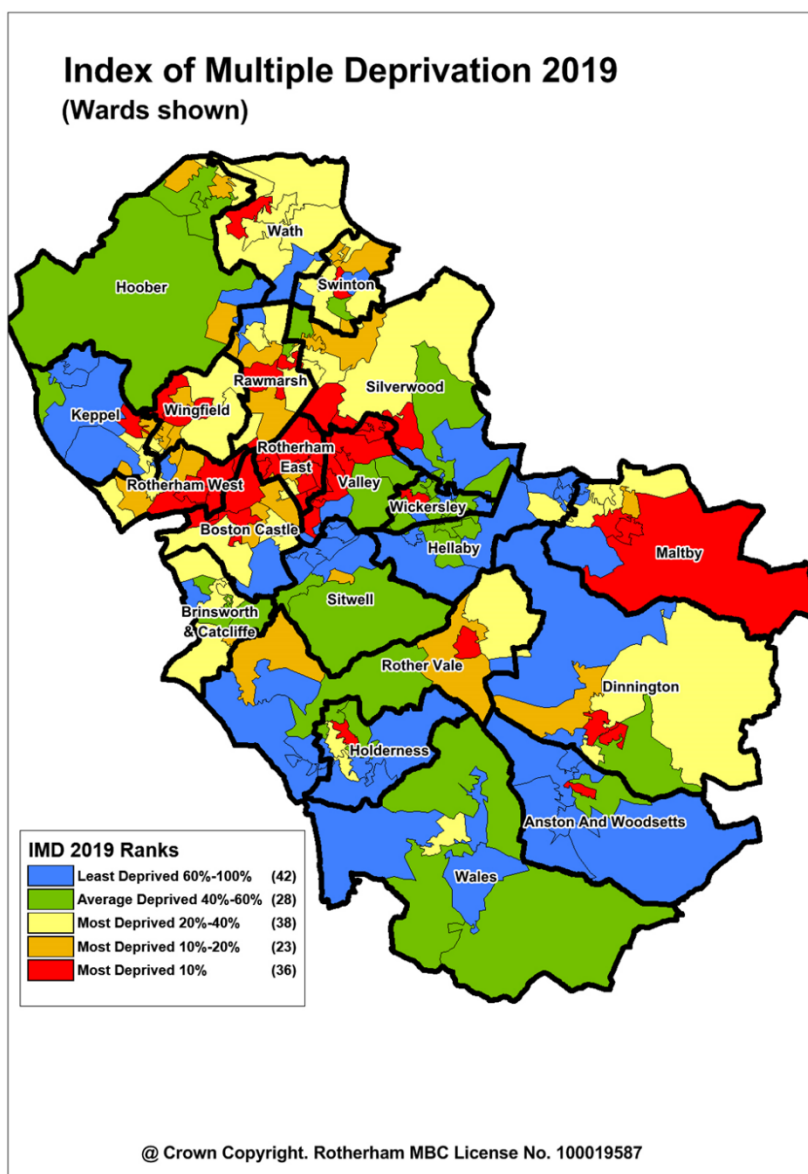
General demographic and socio-economic trends have included a growing and increasingly diverse population. The population is ageing, with a higher likelihood of more longer term health conditions and age-related disabilities. Inequalities persist for workless, disabled, and low paid people, who have been adversely affected by welfare reform since 2012. Health inequalities are also significant in Rotherham, where, in 2018-2020, the average healthy life expectancy at birth was 58.7 years for males, compared with a national average of 63.1 years and 56.5 years for females, compared with a national average of 63.9 (OHID Public Health Profiles). The Census 2021 data indicates the borough is becoming increasingly diverse and provides an up-to-date picture of the Rotherham population. This data has been included in the report where relevant and allows the Council to see how Rotherham has changed between the 2011 and 2021 censuses.

Ethnicity

The ethnic profile of the borough continues to change. Based on the 2021 census, the proportion of residents from ethnic minority communities increased from 8.1% in 2011 to 11.7% in 2021. Ethnic diversity is most evident amongst young people, as 20% of school age children were from a BME background (DfE 2021/22). The Pakistani community is the second largest ethnic group in Rotherham after white British. Rotherham's BME population is very concentrated in the inner areas of the town whilst the outer areas were 94% white British in 2021. 42% of ethnic minority 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%.

Age

Rotherham has 52,228 people aged 65 years or over or 19.6% of the population, above the national average of 18.4% (2021 Census). The population aged over 65 is projected to increase to 59,960 people by 2028, with the largest increase being in the number of people aged over 75 (Office for National Statistics (ONS)). Rotherham has a polarised geography of deprivation and affluence. The most deprived communities are concentrated in the central area whilst the most affluent areas are to the south, although the overall pattern is complex (source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019).



Please note that the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data was published in 2019 prior to the changes made to ward boundaries in the borough. New IMD data is due to be published in 2025.

Deprivation

Rotherham is in the top 20% most deprived areas in England and 11,128 children were living in “absolute poverty” in 2021/22, according to Department for Work and Pensions figures.

Sexual orientation

2.1% of residents in Rotherham identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (LGB) according to 2021 Census data.

Gender identity

The 2021 Census also reveals 0.6% of Rotherham residents aged over 16 identify as transgender, non-binary or have a gender identity different from their sex registered at birth, compared to 0.5% nationally.

Difference in average earnings between men and women

Reflecting the make-up of the economy and the types of roles that men and women are employed in within the borough, the difference in the average annual gross salary is £12,430 between men and women. Women's pay in Rotherham is only 63% of men's average annual pay compared to 71% nationally (UK). The pay gap for full-time workers is smaller at £8,881, but women earn 74.5% of male earnings, which is lower than the national average of 84.7%. This difference in earnings also likely to have a greater impact on pensions for women than men (source: House of Commons Library, The Gender Pensions Gap Research Briefing).

Skills and education

Rotherham has comparatively low skills, particularly at degree level, and struggles both to retain and attract graduates. Only 29.4% of working age people in Rotherham are educated to degree level or above, compared with 42% nationally (2022).

Health inequality

Rotherham had 56,177 people, or 21.1% of the population, with a limiting long term health problem or disability in 2021, compared to 17.5% nationally. 9.8% of Rotherham residents have said that this limits their activity a lot, compared with the average of 7.5% nationally. Although there have been health improvements, some health inequalities remain.

People in the most deprived parts of Rotherham experience poorer health and a higher mortality rate than residents living in the least deprived areas. Life expectancy at birth in the borough is 77.1 years for males, compared to 78.9 years nationally and 80.2 years for females, compared to 82.8 years nationally (2020-2022). 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
- Foster good relations between people

The Act highlights 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
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The equality duty requires the Council and other public bodies to take a proactive approach to embedding equality into everything it does. The Council has a responsibility to ensure that suppliers also take a positive approach to equality. Furthermore, the duty encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their decisions.

In addition, the EFLG requires the Council to consider socio-economic inequalities. This means ensuring that, when making strategic decisions about how functions are carried out and services delivered, there is a focus on reducing the inequalities of outcome, which result from socio-economic disadvantage. As set out in the previous section, given the scale of deprivation in the borough socio-economic inequalities are a significant issue that are being addressed through the Council Plan and EDI Strategy.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION STRATEGY 2022-25

The Council's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy (EDI) 2022– 2025 is a supporting document to the Council Plan 2022-2025, which has equalities, diversity and inclusion woven through it. The EDI strategy looks at what the Council has already committed to through an equalities lens and effectively maps out how the Council aims to remove and reduce obstacles preventing some people from fully participating in the social, cultural, political, and economic life of the borough.

The strategy sets out priority equality objectives with an alignment to the EFLG. The objectives inform an annual workplan set out in this annual report each year. As the strategy supports the Council Plan, many of the actions within the annual workplan are activities that the Council is already reporting on quarterly. The objectives are:

- Understanding, listening to, and working with Rotherham's communities.
- Delivering accessible and responsive services that meet diverse needs.
- Providing leadership and organisation commitment to actively promote equalities.
- Ensuring a diverse, supported and engaged workforce.

The strategy goes further than the protected characteristics to fully embrace inclusion and diversity in a proactive way.

THE AIM FOR "EXCELLENT"

In 2020, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement led the Local Government Association (LGA) to further consult local authorities and officers nationwide to update the equality framework, making it more inclusive and relevant.

During late 2021, this consultation resulted in a revised equality framework, with the LGA setting more challenging actions to reach "Excellent", which the Council entirely welcomed. Through consultation with other local authorities, the Council has moved its target to reach "Excellent" to 2025, allowing equality principles to not only be embedded but have measurable outcomes to reflect positive changes made. The Council's equality strategy aligns with the equality framework and supports the intent of reaching "Excellent" in 2025, preceded by reaching "Achieving" level in 2024.

EQUALITIES, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024

The previous Equalities Annual Report, published in July 2023, set out next steps for action over the coming year, aligned to the four modules of the EFLG and thus the four themes of the Council's EDI Strategy. This 2023/24 report gives an overview of achievements in the intervening period, with supporting case studies, structured around the requirements of the EFLG and the Council's ambition to reach 'achieving' level in 2024. A snapshot of supporting evidence of the Council's progress in this regard is also set out to demonstrate the progress being made on its equalities journey.

THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

Introduction

As set out in EDI Strategy, to reduce inequalities and challenge discrimination, it is essential that the Council understands the needs and priorities of communities across the borough. 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 2023/24 in relation to the EFLG themes for this module have included:

Effective community engagement

The Council has encouraged and enabled people from under-represented groups to participate in decision making, whilst ensuring that projects and services take account of community engagement and consultation exercises and where there is compelling evidence, that changes are made to what is being proposed. The Council and its partners also aim to ensure that groups are not being over consulted with, whilst increasing the involvement of underrepresented groups. Processes and plans are put in place to increase the involvement of stakeholders and the voluntary and community sector in informing priorities' and people in the community are able to challenge and have their views listened to.

The importance of co-production in developing Rotherham's All Age Autism Strategy 2024 – 2027.

The strategy outlines Rotherham's four cornerstones: preparing for adulthood, independence and choice, education and employment, health and care, and these are used to structure the priorities of the strategy.

To ensure the voice of autistic children, young people and adults was captured and used to shape this strategy, a public consultation was undertaken by Rotherham Parents Forum Ltd from 24th July to 10th October 2023. The following methods were used:

- A Microsoft forms document containing a range of open and closed questions was developed and published online. Text to talk videos reading the long pieces of text were provided as an option. Alternative methods could also be requested. This questionnaire was promoted by the Council as well as the co-production partner.
- Four in-person focus groups were held.
- A range of engagement events and contacts took place to make people aware of the consultation and how they could take part.

A total of 175 people provided their views and experiences (149 questionnaires and 26 people attended a focus group), of whom approximately 79% identified as autistic. No formal autism diagnosis was required, so this figure also includes people who self-identify or are questioning, and their families. All focus groups were with autistic people.

The level of involvement of people with lived experience in shaping the development of the strategy was extensive and ensured the future strategic direction is reflective of the needs and aspirations of autistic people in Rotherham. The following changes were made as a result :

- The restructuring of the Rotherham priorities to the



Rotherham four cornerstones – welcome and care, value and include, communicate, and work in partnership.

- Co-production of a detailed action plan to address the priorities in 2024 and 2025. This is to ensure that autistic children, young people, adults with families, and professionals work together on the strategic priorities important to them and can demonstrate delivery and impact.

A key focus of the Family Hubs and Start for Life initiative, is the expectation that services should be developed using co-production methods, ensuring the voices of services users are gathered at every stage to ensure services are “fit for purpose” and meeting the needs of those accessing them via a Parent and Carer Panel. The Council is achieving this through capturing the voices of Rotherham families and developing and improving Family Hub services using co-production methods.

Focus groups have also been introduced to engage with more people and are facilitated monthly within VCS Family Hubs, and there is an online survey published monthly. The achievements arising from these sessions include the co-production of the Rotherham’s Best Start in Life leaflet using the participation methods, weekly parent and toddler group running at Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA), and Holiday Activities and Food drop-in support sessions running in Family Hubs where attendees are supported to sign up to the programme.

Staff training sessions for consultation and engagement were delivered on 7th November 2023, 29th February 2024, and 29th April 2024, focusing on the Council processes, principles, standards, and guidance services should follow to plan, design, and deliver robust and inclusive public consultations, placing local communities at the forefront of decision making. An important aspect of the training focuses on ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion is incorporated into consultations and engagements, including looking at equalities considerations from the outset and undertaking a comprehensive equality analysis prior to any engagement activity taking place.

A total of 52 members of staff have attended the training to date, with positive feedback received from staff who felt it gave them a good grounding on the process and found it useful learning best practice from discussions with colleagues. Additional training sessions will be delivered bi-monthly, including more detailed training on engaging with protected characteristic groups to engender equality, diversity, and inclusion, co-production and co-design of services.

Participation in public life

The Council uses a range of methods to actively inform and involve local people, including under-represented groups, in public participation. Outreach work has been undertaken to increase levels of participation by protected groups.

Local residents encouraged to become a councillor. The Council encouraged local residents from a range of different backgrounds and experiences to consider standing to become a councillor. This included producing several informative videos featuring councillors from different protected characteristics groups, who shared their career journey, plans for transforming their local area, and the challenges they have faced. The videos were promoted on the Council website and on social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) to ensure residents were actively informed about available opportunities for participation. Furthermore, details of the information sessions were publicised in the thriving neighbourhoods e-bulletins and shared with political leaders to encourage potential candidates to attend.

Elected councillors represent the 25 wards that make up the borough. Full elections were held in all wards in May 2024. In the build-up to this, information events were held on 21st June 2023 and 28th June 2023 at Rotherham Town Hall and 29th June 2023 online. An additional session was held at Rotherham Town Hall on 5th February 2024.

In total, 34 people attended the sessions, which were open to local residents with the opportunity to attend either in person or virtually. The sessions provided attendees with the opportunity to find out more about the process of standing for election, understand the roles and responsibilities of a councillor, and learn about the support that is available to elected members.

An important aspect of promoting disability inclusion is making timely, appropriate, and effective workplace adjustments in order to ensure individuals can work efficiently and safely. As a supportive organisation, the Council's Member and Civic Support Unit works closely with individuals to identify options that could enable elected members to fulfil their role and minimise any impact of the role on their health. In some cases, the support may be implemented through making officers in the Council aware e.g., if large print documents are needed or via Council suppliers for equipment.

As part of the induction process for newly elected members, a training session was held regarding the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Council's EDI Strategy. A training session was also provided to Cabinet members on this matter, including the process for the completion of equality assessments.

In addition to running a campaign to become a councillor. The Council has also undertaken a campaign to encourage residents to participate in the local and national elections taking place in May and July 2024. This also included raising awareness of the changes regarding requirements for photo identification.

The Council has also participated in the 'Promote the Vote' campaign. This has sought to raise awareness with vulnerable adults of their rights to register to vote and to subsequently vote in elections should they choose to do so. This has included ensuring that this approach is embedded in the practice of adult social care staff. In addition, the Council is working with independent sector providers so that they fully understand a person's entitlements and human rights to vote, as well as being able to support them to access voting on polling days.

The **Rotherham Youth Cabinet** provides an opportunity for young people to come together, to participate in formal governance structures. The Youth Cabinet advocates on behalf of others and works in collaboration with organisations, services, strategic leaders and frontline workers to improve outcomes for children, young people and adults.

In 2024 the Youth Cabinet have chosen to focus their time and efforts on four priority areas:

- Anti Violence
- Better personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) / religious studies (RS) education in school
- Health and Wellbeing
- Climate Action

In 2024 Rotherham Youth Cabinet will again take over the Office of the Children's Commissioner as part of the Takeover Challenge where they will explore health and wellbeing. The special meeting provides an opportunity to question Council officers on children and young people's health and wellbeing and explore actions taken by the Council and its plans to support it.

New Youth Parliament members for Rotherham. The UK Youth Parliament (UKYP) enables young people aged 11-18 to use their energy and passion to change the world for the better.

Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) in Rotherham are elected bi-annually and serve a two-year term of office. Nine candidates were supported to create their own manifestos. Schools and youth groups were also involved in the election process. Candidates are elected via a borough wide vote to represent the voice of young people in Rotherham on a local, regional and national level. Over 4,000 people voted, which culminated in the results being announced at an event at Rotherham Town Hall.



Giancarlo Mempouo, aged 17, and Ashaz Abbass, aged 15, represent the borough. The pair were elected alongside deputy members Jack Bann and Mabrookah Agbabiaka.

Collecting, sharing and analysing data, information and intelligence

The Council gathers and uses relevant, proportionate and appropriate information about local communities and their protected characteristics. National and regional data is used to further analyse local data. Information is easily accessed and shared appropriately across the organisation and with partners, informing the planning of services and contributing to better outcomes. Information is captured regarding health and the social determinants of health including inequalities.

Rotherham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is a partnership initiative overseen by Rotherham's Health and Wellbeing Board that brings together data and intelligence to inform the local understanding of the current and future health needs of Rotherham people.

These 'wider determinants of health' have a significant impact across the life course and drive health inequalities between the most and least advantaged in society. The JSNA has been based on this model and is broken into five sections (socio-economic, environment, community and neighbourhoods, health behaviours, people), reflecting the wide range of influences on health.

The JSNA is published on the Rotherham Data Hub and a full refresh is undertaken annually, with regular interim updates. The Data Hub has evolved to include a number of more specific categories including small geographies, community assets and ward profiles.

The ward profiles have been updated in the past year to reflect the updated Census data and new ward boundaries. The profiles include demographic information, ethnicity, general health and disability information and lifestyle and health issues for each area. They are published on the Data Hub and available to members of the public and in 2024 for the first time these were made available in an interactive format, as well as a downloadable document.

The Council continually gathers, analyses and uses data in service planning, commissioning and decision making. Information is disaggregated in a meaningful way, by relevant protected characteristic and other factors, such as deprivation as appropriate. Information is used to identify and prioritise on the basis of need and improve service delivery for residents.

For example, the **Adult Social Care Service** has been working over the last year to increase the number of people accessing support, to be reflective of the borough's communities. In Rotherham, there is an ethnic minority population rate of 10% and the Service committed in its Local Account to

increase support to these communities. In the last 12 months this has increased from 4% to 5%, an increase of approximately 40 additional people. The Service has made a further commitment during 2024 to continue to focus on this area of support

Performance data is monitored against equality objectives with these embedded in the Council Plan Key Performance Indicators, and equality outcomes for commissioned and procured services are reported on, as appropriate, through contract management processes.

Fostering good community relations

The Council and its partners collectively monitor relations and tensions with the involvement of stakeholders and communities. Harassment and hate crimes are monitored and analysed regularly, with. The Council and its partners are actively engaged in planning and delivering activities that foster good relations and address the issues that have been identified.

The Council's community tension monitoring process enables the Council to track and monitor local issues, alongside any national or international events, which may threaten cohesion. This allows the Council to agree and implement actions to manage tensions, on the basis that early intervention can make a real difference in preventing incidents of public disorder and in keeping communities safe.

South Yorkshire Police produce a weekly assessment of community tensions which is shared with the Council's Community Safety Team. The assessment is then shared with an internal network of key managers of front-line services to facilitate and encourage information gathering at a community level.

Information is available via a range of sources, including front-line staff in partner organisations, Councillors, schools, and voluntary, community and faith sector contacts. Information is used to assess the following measures:

- Experienced problems – based on what people in communities 'feel'.
- Evidenced problems – actual evidence of what is happening such as reported crimes or incidents.
- Potential problems – where it is anticipated that there might be problems as a result of local, national or international events.

Where potential tensions are identified, appropriate routes are identified to address the issues. This may range from community engagement activities to listen to community concerns and/or provide reassurance, liaison with Neighbourhood Policing Teams to monitor for escalation of issues, right through to more formal emergency planning structures where Gold, Silver and Bronze command structures are convened.

Case study: Schools and educational settings from Rotherham and further afield took centre stage at Gulliver's Valley Resort to celebrate their work championing inclusivity.

The charter gold awards, presented by the Mayor of Rotherham, Councillor Robert Taylor, were awarded to schools that have developed strong relationships, trust and partnership with pupils and their parents.



The awards recognised schools and settings who have improved the ways in which they support children with special educational needs and disabilities. These awards are of particular interest in that they promote equality, diversity and inclusion, and therefore important to the achievement of the council's objectives in this area. This is in recognition of the fostering of good community relations between the schools and their communities.

This work has been delivered by Rotherham Genuine Partnerships – a pioneering partnership between Rotherham Council and the Rotherham Parent Carer Forum.

Rotherham's charter is about schools and settings implementing the nationally recognised four cornerstones approach. The four cornerstones are welcome and care, value, communicate and work in partnership.

Accreditation with charter gold comes after schools and other educational settings have worked hard to truly embed the approach within their culture and ethos. It is a way of giving all children, young people, and families a voice in decisions that affect them and benefits the wellbeing of the whole school community.

The event showcased success stories, including Coleridge Primary School and the Seashell Trust based in Cheadle, who achieved charter gold status for the first time.

Schools that were reaccredited this year included Redscope Primary School, Sitwell Junior School, Thurcroft Infant School, and Wath Victoria Primary School.

Councillor Victoria Cusworth, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People promoted the charter saying “The Rotherham charter is an important piece of work, which is making a big difference in our communities. The charter highlights the importance of giving a voice to children, young people and their families. The work of Rotherham Genuine Partnerships has been recognised as an example of best practice. I would like to congratulate all of the schools and settings who worked hard to become accredited or reaccredited with charter gold status.”

Case study: Wath Library Town Centre Scheme

The Council has secured £8.9 million in government funding to create a new community and commercial development in Wath Upon Dearne, increasing footfall in the town centre, boosting the local economy and restoring a sense of pride among the community.

The supported scheme, which is due to be completed in spring 2026 will include the demolition of the existing library, to make way for the creation of a brand-new library, providing spaces for different groups to meet, fostering a sense of community. There will be opportunities to host a range of cultural events in the new facility. This will positively benefit the town, in particular groups who previously had not used the library spaces. The project will address key connectivity issues across the town, including from the supermarket, to enable inclusive access.

Communication

To ensure stakeholders had a clear understanding of the proposed plans and the opportunity to provide feedback accordingly, a communications plan was produced. This helped to identify the target audience and suitable methods of communication that would encourage the community to engage. An extensive key stakeholder database was then established which included community groups, educational institutes, businesses and protected characteristic groups.

The team worked closely with the Wath Neighbourhoods Team to spread the message as they actively engaged with the community. Ward Councillors were also kept informed throughout the consultation so they could share key information with local residents and community groups.

- Emails to stakeholder database
- Online webpage with survey
- Press release sent to local media
- Adverts in local newspapers
- Regular social media posts
- Newsletters – Ward, Rotherham Round-Up and RMBC staff
- Posters put up in local business windows and the surrounding area
- Leaflets distributed to local businesses and town centre residents
- Updates provided to Ward Councillors, Cabinet Members and the MP

Stakeholders were also offered one to one meetings or other formats of the plans and questions could be provided if they could not attend in person.

Consultation events

The consultation included:

- Engagement event with Wath town centre traders - 30 June 2023
- Public consultation and engagement event – 11 October 2023
- Online public consultation – 9 to 23 October 2023

Feedback

Over 130 people attended the public event on 11 October and 70 surveys were completed with 21 completed online. It was encouraging to see so many people engaging and providing feedback as it shows the library is well loved and an important part of the community.

Of the comments received there were a number of common themes including:

- Strongly opposed relocating the library to the first floor
- Concerns about accessibility

- The new building should be in keeping with the surrounding properties and area

The following are representative of a high proportion of the responses:

“The library should remain on the ground floor so it is accessible to all. Putting it on the top floor is relegating it and would mean that young mums with children & buggies, the elderly & disabled would have to negotiate stairs or wait for a lift to access the library. This would probably reduce the number visiting the library, which at present is a flourishing & well used library.”

“The library should be on the ground floor - it is well used by families and stairs are a barrier.”

“Interior layout seems upside down - surely the main focus of the building is the library so this should be on the ground floor enabling better access for all including parents with young children and disabled people. Also, it makes the library itself more visible and inviting from the outside encouraging people in.”

You said, we did

In response to the feedback received, it was agreed there was a need to revisit the original proposal of moving the library to the first floor amid concerns about accessibility. Amendments to the designs were then made where it was agreed that the core library services would remain on the ground floor. More traditional materials are also being incorporated to be in keeping with the heritage and look of the buildings in Wath town centre.

To ensure the public were aware of the revisions to the plans, communications were carried out to promote the following engagement events:

- Stakeholder and business meeting – 14 March 2024
- Public engagement events – 21 March 2024, Wath Library (morning and evening sessions)
- Online engagement – 15 to 29 March 2024

The revised plans were made available for comment and a ‘You said, we did’ style information sheet was also provided.

The overall response from the public was supportive of the changes and an example of comments included:

“The plan is an excellent move for the future of Wath and our children.”

“I am very impressed with the plans and redevelopment, and I am excited to see the finished products.”

“I have a positive feeling about the new plans and the beautiful look of the building.”

The plans for the Wath Library redevelopment will be going to full Cabinet in July 2024 for approval to implement and deliver the scheme.

Photo of proposed Wath Library design



THEME 2: LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

The Council has a vital role to play as a local leader in promoting equality, diversity and inclusion across the borough. This means considering equality and diversity in decision making, communications, partnership working, priority setting, employment, policy development, and the implementation of projects and programmes.

Key achievements in 2023/24 in relation to the EFLG themes for this module have included:

Political and officer leadership

The political and executive leaders in the Council can demonstrate their commitment to equality and there is evidence of equality considerations informing decision making. The Council promotes a positive narrative around equality and good community relations with a range of cultural events held throughout the year. This is also backed up by the organisation's influence in communities and cohesion partnerships. The Council can evidence how the community is involved in making decisions and how it considers the key aspects of the socio-economic duty. The Council and its partners can evidence how the community was involved when making unpopular decisions. The Council uses up to date language and concepts and has the cultural competence to have difficult conversations around equality, diversity and inclusion issues.

Championing events supporting equality and inclusion. Throughout 2023, the Council and its local partner organisations have championed equalities by involving local residents, including underrepresented groups, in opportunities for participation.

The annual Rotherham Show took place on 2nd- 3rd September, with approximately 88,000 spectators. Throughout the weekend the show celebrated the spirit of the borough and gave people the chance to enjoy an amazing free festival of culture, entertainment, and family fun.

The event included familiar favourites such as the Made in Rotherham horticultural Show, the Chuckle Tent programmed by Rotherham Civic Theatre, the big top circus, a children and families' offer curated by the Children's Capital of Culture team and young producers spotlighting young talent and the popular vintage vehicle rally.



Rotherham Show continues to be a hugely popular event, receiving a 97% satisfaction rating from survey responders. A commissioned survey from QA also showed that families continue to be our biggest audience, and visitors were made up of 69% Rotherham residents and 31% outside visitors. The ethnic group split of visitors was 79% White British, 8% Asian or Asian British, 7% Black British and 3% Mixed heritage, which is a large shift from the audience who attended the 2022 show, being 91% White British. This reflects the Council's efforts to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion in the borough.

The Council proudly partnered with Flux Rotherham and Children's Capital of Culture to host the second **Women of the World (WOW) Festival Rotherham**. The festival created a safe space where women, girls and non-binary people come together to discuss a range of topics, challenging societal norms and ideas that create barriers for women to succeed, thereby promoting equality and inclusiveness.



The Council worked in collaboration with partners to spotlight the unwavering commitment and tireless efforts of unpaid carers. To ensure carers are aware of their rights and feel supported, a series of impactful events ranging from open days to informative stalls and an afternoon tea, were held to commemorate **Carers Rights Day** in November 2023. The events not only recognised the invaluable contributions that carers make to society, but also empowered residents with essential knowledge about their rights and the support available to them.

Rotherham marked **Holocaust Memorial Day** by holding an event on 25th January 2024. The event brought together faith leaders, dignitaries, Councillors, schools, and local residents to remember all those who lost their lives to genocides around the world. The theme of this year's event was 'fragility of freedom' – reflecting on how freedom is fragile and vulnerable to abuse.



Other events supported:

- Rotherham's Reclaim the Night returned for its ninth year on 23rd November 2023. Residents were invited to attend an annual walk-through Rotherham Town Centre to celebrate the past, present, and future of women's empowerment.
- Armed Forces Day Parade
- International Women's Day (delivered in partnership with the internal Women's Workforce Network)
- Mental Health Awareness Week (supported by members of the internal Young Employees Network)
- Signals Festival - a free music event, with family activities and live performances from emerging young talent in Rotherham. The festival is a collaboration between Children's Capital of Culture, Rotherham Music Hub and Rotherham Council.

In May 2023, the Council helped to establish the **Independent Rotherham Faith Leaders' Group**.

The group brings together faith leaders to identify and address key issues in Rotherham, work together to find solutions with communities and further develop understanding and harmony across the many faiths and cultures represented in Rotherham.

In November 2023, the group were invited to have tea with the Mayor of Rotherham. This provided an opportunity for the group to talk about the different religious communities they represent, to discuss ways of celebrating Rotherham's religious diversity, and to strengthen ties between communities of different faiths and religious beliefs. Following the meeting a "peace statement" was released, and signed by the faith leaders, in response to global events.



In February 2024, the Faith Leaders' Group worked with the Council to deliver a "Tree Planting for Peace" event in Clifton Park. Students and staff from Clifton School joined the Mayor of Rotherham and representatives from the group.

The oak tree, surrounded by snowdrops planted by the students, is a living symbol of the dedication to peace-building and the commitment to safeguard the good relationships and shared values that have been built in Rotherham over many years.

The Council's Corporate Equalities Steering Group was put in place to drive the delivery of its EDI Strategy, including the ambition to reach 'Excellent' on the EFLG. The group is chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive with the membership inclusive of Assistant Directors and Head of Services representing all directorates of the Council. The group ensures that the Council meets the general and specific duties under the Equality Act 2010 and that equality, diversity and inclusion is actively promoted, communicated and managed for both wider local communities and internal workforce. Steering group members are responsible for bringing progress updates based on equalities actions within their directorate, to promote a One Council approach to the EDI journey.

Over the last year a reverse mentoring scheme has been introduced with the objective of creating a space to exchange and share knowledge, skills and experience between the between the Council's Staff Network Chairs and members of the Corporate Equalities Steering Group. The purpose of the scheme is to encourage working together across Council's EDI groups and create a meaningful link to the Steering Group. The scheme helps Staff Networks to continue to develop and evolve their forums, gain confidence/skills and empowering them to share their ideas and expertise with the steering group members.

Priorities and partnership working

The Council looks beyond traditional partners and includes the voices of smaller influencing organisations, in developing the shared vision of equality for the area. The shared equality vision is understood and acted on across the organisation and by partners. The Council and its partners evaluate performance against equality priorities, including inequality and an intersectional understanding of health inequality, which contributes to the organisation's objectives.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Infrastructure Service Level Agreement (SLA). To support the work of the VCS in the borough, for a number of years the Council has funded a multi-year SLA to provide support to voluntary and community groups across the borough. A number of these

organisations provide support to those with protected characteristics and to promote equality and inclusion.

With the existing SLA due to come to an end in March 2024, and following an open call for partners to undertake the work in accordance with the Rotherham Compact, Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) were appointed to undertake an 8-week co-design process for the new three year SLA. As part of the co-design a consultation exercise was undertaken, with VAR consulting 53 VCS organisations and gaining 118 responses to an online survey. Feedback received through the co-design engagement process, has formed the basis of the delivery plan for the new three-year SLA, which commenced on 1st April 2024.

In terms of equalities, many of VAR's smaller VCS organisations currently deliver support to groups with protected characteristics and VAR will continue to support and build on this work. The topic of loneliness has been identified as a theme that cuts across protected characteristics and is one the VCS has potential to address, but more groups and resources are needed to enable borough-wide support. VAR's work in strengthening and making smaller community groups visible brings value to stakeholders and will continue through the new SLA.

The Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) is the borough's community safety partnership, bringing together organisations such as the Council, South Yorkshire Police, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the Probation Service.

SRP's plan for 2022-25 includes a commitment to prevent hate crime, focusing on the use of education and engagement to tackle the drivers of hate and improving victims' experiences of reporting incidents.

As part of this commitment, a Harms of Hate event was held in February 2024 at New York Stadium, attended by over 150 year 6 pupils from three targeted primaries in the north, central and south areas of the borough. The young people worked alongside each other in workshops on hate and bullying; knives and violence; and radicalisation, including online risks/threats.

Rotherham's leaders pledge support to the Armed Forces community. Leaders from across a wide range of local partner organisations, including the Council, South Yorkshire Police, Barnsley and Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, local NHS, Voluntary Action Rotherham and Rotherham College came together to pledge their support to the Armed Forces community at the bi-annual Rotherham Together Partnership event, held in March 2024, at Grimm & Co's new premises.

They made a commitment to:

- Advocate for and promote the Armed Forces community with our communities, staff, customers, and suppliers, and encourage other local organisations to sign up to the Covenant.
- Work together across the partnership and with Rotherham's Armed Forces Community Covenant Group to help veterans and make them aware of available support.
- Recognise and remember the sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces community by supporting and promoting events, such as Armed Forces Day/Week, Reserves Day, the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance Day
- Support the employment of veterans.



The support to be provided for the employment of veterans reflects the Council's aim to create opportunities for those who might face barriers or disadvantage.

Using equality analysis

Equality analysis is undertaken at an appropriate stage and across the whole organisation. The majority of the assessments are accessible, robust and meaningful and there is evidence of members' and senior leaders' commitment to using equality analysis to inform decision making. Poor quality equality analyses are reviewed, challenged and developed accordingly before being presented to members. Decisions around budget cuts and savings account for cumulative impact.

Reports requiring a decision are required to be subject to equality considerations. Documents produced to support equality analysis are appended to the reports and are published alongside them.

A two-stage process is used to determine if a proposed policy, service development or other action has equality implications and any beneficial or mitigating actions that may be required as a consequence. The first stage of this process involves the completion of a screening of what information is known and any specific areas that could have equality implications. If equality implications are identified though the screening that cannot be addressed at that stage, a full equality analysis is required. The production of equality analysis will test options and involve consultation and engagement of communities and service users along with partner organisations. To achieve this, the approach to equalities must be an integrated part of the full process of policy and service development, not just be a check list exercise at the end. An equality analysis will conclude with an action plan highlighting issues to be addressed or mitigations that can be put in place and the protected characteristics involved.

Elected members are provided with the information required to test and challenge proposals and recommendations made to them, using the equality screenings and analysis that are appended to reports.

Through the Scrutiny function that is an integral part of the Council's decision-making process, members routinely interrogate data underpinning service assumptions. Examples include the scrutiny undertaken of the draft Early Help strategy, where a recommendation was made to accurately reflect the number of households with children, to ensure that resources were targeted effectively. This also ensured that statistical data referenced in equality analysis were the most up-to-date, including working age population and long-term sickness.

There are also examples of scrutiny wishing to understand the impact of initiatives, which have a direct effect on people with protected characteristics such as the Mental Health Review and Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy. In terms of individual work programmes, the Improving Lives Select Commission has looked extensively at Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND), with a focus on preparation for adulthood and inclusion. The Health Select Commission has scrutinised maternity services and sexual and reproductive health and the Improving Places Select Commission has reviewed homelessness strategies and the performance of bereavement services.

Performance monitoring and scrutiny

As set out in the previous section, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function is required to support and challenge progress on equality including scrutinising and challenging equality impact assessments, reviewing objectives and monitoring progress. The public and partners are enabled to monitor progress and there is regular reporting to senior leaders on progress and responses,

including through the monitoring of the delivery of the Council Plan and the annual EDI report and accompanying action plan for the forthcoming year. Corrective action is taken if outcomes are not being achieved.

The Council has a **Council Plan covering the period 2022-2025**, which sets out its priorities and includes a range of key performance measures and associated targets. The Plan is underpinned by a Year Ahead Delivery Plan that identifies the delivery milestones for the financial year. The Year Ahead Delivery Plan is reviewed and refreshed each year and each milestone included in it is assessed for its impact on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Of the five guiding principles in the Council Plan, two specifically aim to meet residents' and communities' differentiated needs:

- Expanding opportunities for all
- Working with our communities

'Expanding opportunities for all' encompasses the Council's essential priority to tackle inequality, striving to ensure that the health and life chances of the most disadvantaged communities are improving the fastest. To complement this approach, 'working with our communities' ensures that to achieve the best outcomes for local people, residents are involved in the things that matter to them and services are designed based on input from those who use them.

In addition, the Council's commitment to place all customers at the heart of service delivery includes a strengthened approach to equalities and being inclusive. The commitment to an engaged, diverse and skilled workforce is expected to improve the council's response to diverse customer needs, by bringing a more differentiated understanding of equality and diversity considerations and barriers.

The Council Plan includes a collection of high-level measures that directly relate to equalities, diversity, and Inclusion. These incorporate areas such as workforce composition including disability, age, and ethnicity as well as measures relating to hate crime. The milestones included in the Year Ahead Delivery Plan and the measures in the Council Plan are monitored quarterly and publicly reported to Cabinet twice a year, in January and July, including an equality analysis.

The Corporate Equalities Steering Group has strategic responsibility to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion requirements are suitably addressed by raising awareness and reinforcing the message that equality, diversity and inclusion is everyone's business. The group's bi-monthly meeting includes monitoring the Council's performance against the objectives in the EDI Strategy. The Group also supports the development of the EDI annual report and action plan, before its consideration by Cabinet, with pre decision scrutiny typically undertaken of this report by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Internal monitoring of performance enables the Steering Group to facilitate communication, effective dialogues and use their expertise to find practical strategic solutions to any barriers that may challenge the delivery of the Council's Strategy. The group ensures that equality is adequately embedded into organisational activities, such as service planning and delivery, procurement, workforce recruitment, development and retention.

Case study: Safeguarding Awareness Week (SAW) 2023

The Council and local partner organisations came together and developed a programme of learning events to support Safeguarding Awareness Week, which took place from 20th-24th November 2023.

SAW is nationally recognised and has been marked in Rotherham for the past five years. The theme of last year's event was 'online safety'- demonstrating the importance of ensuring everyone understands the risks of online scams, grooming and abuse, including learning ways to keep themselves safe.

Safeguarding is about protecting children and adults from abuse or neglect and educating those around them to recognise the signs and how they can report their concerns.

This is about equality of treatment despite the population sub groups these people belong to, the equality of treatment in turn will promote inclusivity of the population groups.

Rotherham hosted the South Yorkshire launch of SAW and brought together safeguarding partners from across the region to begin a week of events, training and awareness in all aspects of safeguarding.

Both Rotherham Adults' and Children's Safeguarding Partnerships organised an array of online and in person sessions for professionals and members of the public to attend. The sessions covered a range of topics including suicide prevention, domestic abuse services and safeguarding a person's rights.

Sessions were planned for frontline workers and volunteers from adult and children's services. They were facilitated by motivational speakers who are experts in their field and have been designed to stimulate discussion and share best practice.

The Leader of Rotherham Council, Councillor Chris Read said: "giving every child the best start in life and ensuring every adult is safe and healthy are key priorities for the Council. During SAW everyone has the opportunity to take stock of where we are, the challenges being faced by some of our residents, and how we can all ensure we are all playing our part."

Case study: Family Hub Breastfeeding Peer Supporter

Rotherham is now officially a breastfeeding friendly borough after the launch of a new campaign to support mums and families to make the right choice for themselves and their babies. A shared partnership priority, this work is being driven forward by Rotherham's Health and Wellbeing Board, including Rotherham Council, The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, and other health partners.

Lined to this campaign, Voluntary Action Rotherham has been commissioned by the Council to deliver several Family Hub outcomes including a Volunteer Pathway. This has been developed to support the recruitment of a variety of volunteering opportunities across the Family Hub networks. One of the opportunities was a Breastfeeding Peer Supporter. A bespoke pathway for this was co-produced between Voluntary Action Rotherham, Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust and the Council.

The pathway is a robust recruitment process which includes completion of Solihull Breastfeeding Training (7-week programme). In addition to their lived experiences, this provides volunteers with the skills and knowledge to effectively support breastfeeding mum's.

Alisha completed the training in 2022 after attending breastfeeding drop ins for herself and her daughter. She became a Family Hubs Breastfeeding Peer Support Volunteer in 2023. Alisha also began volunteering with Rotherham Maternity and Neonatal Voices Partnership and the Family Hubs Parent and Carer Panel. Within both of those she has played a key part in ensuring parents voices are heard to shape and support the development and improvement of services.

"Volunteering felt like the right fit for me. After training I was now armed with the right knowledge to empower and assist other women in more meaningful ways. I truly believe that encouragement and community can save a struggling woman, and the breastfeeding groups provided a safe haven for women and supportive others to find support, a listening ear, and others that truly understand. I wanted to be a part of that journey.

After having so many experiences where I was brushed aside, it is amazing to volunteer on the Parent and Carer Panel and have my opinions and experiences be deemed as important and my voice heard.

Since starting volunteering, I have also completed antenatal educator training and worked as an antenatal educator, focusing on breastfeeding classes."

Impact

Alisha has attended and supported breastfeeding drop ins at local libraries and Family Hubs on a weekly basis, supporting a significant number of mums.

"I met Alisha at a breastfeeding group when I was struggling with breastfeeding/pumping. I was also struggling badly with my mental health, to which I was later diagnosed with PND. Alisha was a huge support to me, a lifeline, in what was a very difficult time for me adjusting to being a mum.

She has a very calming, caring and supportive personality and no question is ever too silly to ask. She listens to my worries and more importantly, my mum rants, and one thing I appreciate about Alisha is that she always gives a balanced, unjudgemental approach to our conversation. She really is a super star!"

Next steps

Alisha has secured a job as an Infant Feeding Support Worker in Sheffield. She will continue to volunteer within Family Hubs on an ad hoc basis. She will support at key events such as The Big Latch and baby fayres.

"Now, I'm stepping into my new role as an Infant Feeding Support Worker and beginning my studies with the NCT. It's been an incredible journey, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to support and empower other mothers on their breastfeeding journeys."

Case study: Fostering

There is an urgent need for new foster carers, from all protected characteristic groups, to care for children in Rotherham. As set out in the EDI Strategy, as well as protected characteristic groups,

the Council's approach to EDI specifically considers people in care, as well as people with caring responsibilities and refugees and migrants.

The Council and its partners recognise the importance of supporting vulnerable young people and giving them the best possible start in life. A key part of this is having sufficient Rotherham-based foster carers, so that children in care can have stable placements that are local to their family, friends, schools and communities.

In 2023/24, key partner organisations - working through Rotherham Together Partnership - agreed to provide funding to support the recruitment of new foster carers. The fostering service has used this funding to carry out a marketing campaign aimed at attracting new, local foster carers. Activity has included:

- Establishing a partnership with Rotherham United FC, which has provided press coverage, concourse advertising at New York Stadium, player appearances at Fostering Rotherham events, and pre-recorded video messages from players in support of the Fostering Rotherham campaign for use on social media channels.
- Advertising on billboards at main routes into Rotherham, with advertising to follow on buses in summer 2024.
- Production of a fostering film - 'Any of us' - and advertising in the Around Town magazine.
- Direct work with partner organisations to help them promote fostering amongst their staff and identify specific pledges and commitments.

To help attract carers from diverse communities, marketing materials have been produced in different community languages. The fostering team has attended the Asian Bazaar market in the town centre and will be attending the forthcoming Eid in the Park event. Having attended Rotherham Pride, they will be engaging further with the local LGBTQIA+ community through the existing weekly drop-in sessions. Finally, a dedicated landing page on the fostering website will reflect a more diverse cohort of foster carers.

During Foster Care Fortnight in May 2024, the fostering team were part of a national campaign to raise the profile of fostering and show how it transforms lives. The theme was 'fostering moments' – those moments that define fostering journeys, both big and small; moments that have built confidence, made young people feel safe and created long-lasting memories.

Residents were able to meet the fostering team and ask any questions at an online event, at a Tesco store in Maltby and at Rotherham leisure centre.

The Fostering Service also host monthly online information sessions where residents from all walks of life can learn about fostering from the comfort of their own home.

During Foster Care Fortnight, the Council spoke to a number of foster carers who shared some of their favourite moments, including **Nicki and Gary Ellis (pictured) who recently celebrated their 10-year anniversary**. On their favourite moments, they said: "As Mockingbird Hub carers we have so many fond memories with all of our families but one day that really stands out for us is the seaside trip we organised. One of our families transported a rigid inflatable boat to Bridlington so all the children and some adults (if they were brave enough) could enjoy this new experience together.

"It was amazing to see the children help each other to get life jackets on and holding hands to support each other on the boat. Some children were asking for it to go faster. A really fantastic

day out together finished with fun on the beach and a train ride into the seaside town to enjoy ice cream together.”

THEME 3: 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 are a key part of the planning and delivery of Council services, including commissioning and procurement processes.

Key achievements in 2023/24 in relation to the EFLG themes for this module have included:

Commissioning and procuring services

The Council considers the impact of how the public pound is spent through procurement, in accordance with its Social Value Policy, which includes equality outcomes. The social value of contracts, and the performance of sub-contracting arrangements is measured. Specifications account for different user needs and monitoring requirements are built into contracts to ensure equality issues are addressed, and these are then monitored and reported on.

The Council has adopted a **Social Value Policy** that drives a range of outcomes through the commissioning and procurement of services. These realise additional benefits from the Rotherham pound to benefit the borough, its businesses and communities. Tackling economic inequalities is an element of the Community Wealth building principles, which are embedded within the Social Value policy, following the agreement of this refreshed document in March 2024.

The annual report on the Social Value Policy was presented to Cabinet in March, alongside the updated policy. This found that in the intervening period since the previous annual report social value commitments had more than doubled to £27.8m, with commitments delivered also doubling from £4m to £8m. The economic and social benefits of Social Value, as highlighted in the annual report, are helping to create more opportunities in the borough, including more than 1,500 weeks of training opportunities offered on contracts.

In June 2023 the Council won the prestigious Social Value Award for Public Sector Leadership, where the judging panel highlighted how the Council had developed processes that address economic inequality and reflecting the journey the Council has been on since the agreement of its policy.

A social value toolkit has been produced to assist in the development and achievement of the social value offer. By assisting with the achievement of social value offers through contracts, more of the social value Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs) – as set out in Council contracts with suppliers – will be achieved, bringing improved economic and social outcomes for local people. Selected TOMs are committed to by suppliers and may include, but are not limited to:

- Hiring staff who are classified as Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) (NT4)
- Hiring 18-24 year olds who are rehabilitating or ex-offenders (NT5a)
- Hiring disabled employees (NT6)
- Promotion of ethical procurement (NT22)
- Paying staff the Real Living Wage (NT41)
- Improving staff mental health (NT56)

Increasing the achievement of these TOMs will bring benefits to groups with protected characteristics such as age or disability within the borough of Rotherham.

Tenders for contracts with the Council include a section to address equalities, both in terms of the service provision and in management and training of the contractor's staff. This results in a score for

equalities forming part of the overall evaluation of tenders alongside service delivery and financial considerations.

The Council recently awarded **Connect Healthcare Rotherham Community Interest Company (CIC)** a contract to deliver the **Local Stop Smoking Service and Support Grant**.

In this contract, the focus is on reducing the variation in smoking rates by tackling inequalities. This includes delivering targeted and tailored smoking cessation services and communications to reach groups with the highest prevalence of smoking.

The support being provided through the contract provides dedicated provision for those with protected characteristics, including:

- Exploring opportunities to enhance reach to certain groups with a high smoking prevalence
- Exploring opportunities to enhance reach to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual (LGBTQI+) people
- Delivering specialist stop-smoking services for people with mental health conditions

Furthermore, the Council has commissioned a **restorative hate crime service** with the aim of preventing hate crime. Hate crime is defined by the Police and Crown Prosecution Service as any incident that the victim thinks was motivated by hostility or prejudice, based on one of the following personal characteristics:

- Disability
- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation
- Transgender identity

The contract specification includes the following overview of the requirements which is to deliver “hate crime awareness workshops for groups of young people across Rotherham in schools; and delivering one-to-one hate crime sessions for young people and adults who are involved in or at risk of becoming involved in perpetrating hate crime.”

Objectives of the sessions as set out in the specification are:

- To understand and raise awareness of hate crime.
- To understand the impact hate crime has on victims, families and communities.
- To understand what influences our own attitudes and behaviours and develop strategies to build resilience to hateful narratives.
- To empower people to have the confidence to identify signs and challenge and/or report hate when encountered in a safe and responsible way.

A Changing Places facility has been installed in the gardens of Wentworth Woodhouse. The specialised toilet provides a purpose-built environment, designed specifically to help disabled visitors and individuals with complex care needs. This is the fourth facility to be installed in the borough after the Council was awarded £490,000 in government funding. This facility will work towards achieving the objective of inclusion for the disabled in terms of access to toilet facilities in the borough.



The newly installed facilities are part of a huge regeneration project to transform Wentworth Woodhouse with plans for the site to provide a world-class visitor destination, event spaces, overnight accommodation, restaurants, and commercial office spaces once renovated.

Changing Places facilities have previously been installed at Rotherham United's New York Stadium, Magna Science and Adventure Centre, and Grimm & Co. Additional spaces are also planned for Clifton Park Museum, Rother Valley Country Park, Gulliver's Valley Theme Park and Resort, and Thrybergh Country Park.

Service design and delivery

The Council can demonstrate how monitoring data and citizen feedback are systematically used to redesign or adapt services to ensure equity of access. Senior leaders demonstrate that they continuously review and evaluate access to services. Data about access to services and user satisfaction is used in equality impact assessments and a scrutiny process is in place.. Equalities are accounted for within safeguarding policies.

Learning Disability Strategy 2024 – 2027

The Council adopted a new Learning and Disability Strategy in February 2024. This is a major strategy where addressing disability and equalities and the needs of carers are at its core. An extensive engagement process from July to October 2023 was undertaken to fully understand needs and outcomes.. This was led by a consortium of organisations who worked with the Council. The consortium included Genuine partnerships, Guiding Voices, Rotherham Parent Carers Forum and Speak Up. A stakeholder workshop agreed the scope of the engagement and areas important to people with learning disabilities, their family and unpaid carers.

Open questions were asked for each focus area, with supporting prompts to think about what was working, not working and what needs to change. The qualitative nature of the open questions was designed to avoid limitations and provide as much agency and scope as possible for people to have a meaningful voice and include things that are important to them personally. There was also an opportunity in the final section for people to add things that are important to them beyond the focus areas.

In total 249 people participated in the engagement activities, either as part of a group or individually including:

- 17 groups.
- 77 people with a learning disability.
- 123 people with a learning disability and autism.

- 17 family members or unpaid carers & 24 people in paid roles (across Education, Health, Social Care, children’s and adult services, voluntary and community sector).
- 8 other categories.

Feedback was gathered in a variety of ways to maximise reach and enable people with living experience to engage with the focus areas, supported by people with whom they were most likely to feel comfortable.

A significant amount of information was gathered in the engagement exercise to inform allow the Council to develop a robust Learning Disability Strategy. Recognising that the Council can always do more, engagement will continue to capture opinions and voices which were not fully represented. This has been included as a priority within the proposed Learning Disability Strategy.

500 new homes in the borough. There is a need for affordable homes across the borough and as the cost-of-living continues to affect communities, more people than ever will turn to the Council for financial support, advice, and housing. Without creating more affordable housing options, household finances will continue to be pressured and more people will fall into hardship, creating much wider implications for the health and wellbeing of local people and communities.



This need is clearly reflected in the fact that there were over 7,000 individuals on the Council’s Housing Register. The Council’s ability to meet this housing demand is also diminishing annually because of the Right to Buy which has seen 956 Council homes sold between January 2018 and November 2023.

In response to this continuing affordable housing need, the Council committed to creating 1,000 new homes between January 2018 and March 2026, with the milestone of being half-way to this total being reached in November 2023.

As part of this programme, Caddam Construction have delivered 24 new homes as part of Eldertree Court development in Thorpe Hesley, with two bungalows purchased by the Council under its Affordable Housing Policy. The new Council-owned bungalows are for older people, with the first tenants receiving the keys to their new homes earlier this year.

A new post-14 specialist campus, Forest View, opened in September 2023, providing 50 school places. This means more children and young people can access high-quality specialist educational provision in the local area.

Forest View has been developed in partnership by the Council and Nexus Multi Academy Trust (MAT) to create a purpose-built provision. The campus – shared between Hilltop and Kelford schools - will support the need for additional special school places, extend educational opportunities for local pupils, and creates a nurturing learning environment that equips children and young people with the essential skills they need to thrive beyond school.



An independent travel training (ITT) offer has been created to support children with special educational needs or disabilities. The travel training scheme aims to improve the Council's ability to deliver positive fulfilment of statutory duties under Section 508A of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, by promoting and implementing more sustainable travel and transport solutions.

To date, nine students have successfully completed their travel training and an additional two students are undergoing their final stages of training. The Council are looking to promote the service further, for example by attending coffee mornings with parent forums, producing promotion videos with successfully travel trained students and by offering work placements.



Customer experience standards. The Council provides high quality services that are customer focused, efficient and accessible to everyone. Customer experience standards and guidelines have been developed for employees to ensure every customer, be it a resident, visitor, colleague, elected member, or business partner receives an outstanding service, and is also part of the Council's Values which are: Caring, Honest, Proud. This means ensuring services are accessible to all, helping customers access the services that are relevant to them, asking for customer views and listening to what they say, providing customers with clear, up to date and understandable information.

To ensure employees adhere to these standards, the Organisational Development and Change Team has launched the mystery shopper programme, inviting employees from across the organisation to take on the role of the customer to explore and provide feedback on our key services.

Integration of equality objectives into planned service outcomes

Equality objectives are incorporated into Council strategies, plans, and service plans, with a clear connection to business planning and performance management. Progress is managed by key decision-makers, and actions are taken if issues arise. Members are kept up to date on progress. Objectives target equality gaps, have set timelines, and consider the needs of protected groups. Service users can provide feedback on service planning. Resources are adequately assessed, and key decision-makers consistently monitor, review, and evaluate the performance of equality objectives.

The Council Plan includes a range of key performance measures and associated targets. These include high-level measures that directly relate to equality, diversity, and inclusion such as workforce composition including disability, age, and ethnicity as well as measures relating to hate crime.

The Plan is underpinned by a Year Ahead Delivery Plan which sets out the delivery milestones for the financial year. When the Year Ahead Delivery Plan undergoes its annual refresh, services are expected to set out the actions to be taken to ensure consideration of equality, diversity, and inclusion, including timescales for delivery for each individual milestone. These actions are reviewed as part of the milestone setting process and progress captured as part of the reporting process.

Each service within the Council is also required to produce a Service Plan for the financial year. These Service Plans underpin the Council Plan and Year Ahead Delivery Plan and are expected to include the measures and milestones from those Plans that the Service are responsible for. Additionally, EDI is embedded throughout Service Plans and the action plan explicitly asks the service to set out how all proposed activities will positively contribute to EDI in the borough. As part of this assessment, services are asked to state:

- The corporate equality objectives that the service is contributing to.

- When an equality analysis will be undertaken (this should be at the outset of any initiative, project, or service change).
- The consultation to be undertaken to ensure service users and customers are involved, considering the target audience, as well as protected characteristic groups set out in the Equality Act 2010 to mitigate potential barriers. This is expected to include reference to how much the service knows about its audience to be consulted already and how they will be reached as well as consideration of opportunities for co-production and design.
- The equality data that will be used to inform the service's activity and any gaps.

Case study: Rothacs Counselling work placements

Rothacs are part of the Post CSE Support Services Contract and offer student work placements to student counsellors working towards their Counselling Diploma. Overall Rothacs delivered 104 weeks of training opportunities to students residing in Rotherham and South Yorkshire. As part of working towards their qualification, this requires placements to have a full and comprehensive induction that covers all aspects of the service including mandatory training such as safeguarding, health and safety and all of our policies and procedures. Placements are expected to see three clients per week and receive line management, individual and group supervision. Rothacs accept clients in their final year of training and many stay with us as volunteers while they gain experience to become accredited. Often placements eventually go on to become employed with Rothacs.

One student commented on how supportive their manager at Rothacs was throughout their placement and how this benefited them: "my manager was amazing and really supported me, offering the things I needed such as being heard, being understood, not being judged and a nurturing and comfortable environment in which I could share my challenges and fears around the impacts of my experiences on my relationships and work. The team made me feel supported and accepted, not only in supporting my work with my client, but also in accepting myself and seeing my value as a therapist. I am just starting in private practice; I would not have been able to do this without the gentle support of the team at ROTHACS"

Case Study: Rotherham Digital - supporting digital inclusion

Rotherham Digital is a partnership programme by Rotherham Council, the NHS, RotherFed, Voluntary Action Rotherham, RNN Colleges, Age UK Rotherham and Barnardo's to help residents across the borough enjoy the benefits of being online.

The Partnership's work is focused on digital inclusion. In November 2023 a Digital Inclusion Action Plan was developed, which sets out a range of targeted activities and initiatives for the next 18 months.

In December 2023, two Digital Support Officers were appointed. Their role is to work every day in the community. Since being appointed they have worked with many groups across Rotherham to help them overcome any barriers that stop them from accessing technology.

This has included working in Care Homes, Assisted Living Facilities, Hospitals, Youth Groups, older persons groups, groups where English is not their first language, and hearing and visually impaired groups. There is also an appointment-based system within the Employment Solutions

Service helping people looking for work who have been identified as needing support with their digital skills.

As part of the action plan, a volunteer programme has been jointly developed with the Rotherham and North Nottinghamshire College group. Students attending Rotherham College who are undertaking a digital qualification are encouraged to volunteer as 'digital champions' to gain experience of working with local people and help them make better use of technology.

The team is also delivering structured training courses for beginners, including a group of overseas NHS nurses who are working in Rotherham and safety talks in the community to help people be more confident when online.

Rotherham Digital are also part of the National Databank which provides eligible residents with sim cards that are pre-loaded with data. Over 100 residents have benefitted from being given a free sim card this year.

The Rotherham Digital partnership has also awarded its first Connectivity Grant to Treeton Community Centre. The Centre had been without internet access after its contract with its previous supplier ended. However, as a voluntary run space, it was struggling to find suitable funding to get back online.

After receiving the connectivity grant, the centre was able to install high speed internet for residents to use on site. Once the internet had been restored, centre managers and Rotherham Digital agreed that Treeton Community Centre would be the perfect place for a community-based training course on digital skills, with the first ten-week rolling course starting at the Centre in April.



A new website has been created that includes practical support and guidance. Residents can visit the [Rotherham Digital website](#) to find out more about being safe online and find out when and where activities and support sessions are taking place across Rotherham.

Case study: Thurcroft’s library and neighbourhood hub has reopened in style following an extensive refresh of facilities.

The brand-new library hosted a variety of exciting events for young and older readers with a ribbon cutting ceremony which took place on 28 November 2023.

Thurcroft is the latest library to receive investment as part of the Council’s commitment to improve every library across the borough.



The library was formerly located on the grounds of Thurcroft Junior Academy but has now been moved to a new building adjoining the Gordon Bennett Memorial Hall, just a short distance from its original location, that will help to increase access and footfall.

Extensive public consultations and engagements were undertaken over two phases. The service received 1507 responses overall from public, partners and stakeholders. During the consultation and engagement process, people with protected characteristics were particularly targeted, including those that are unrepresented within Rotherham libraries. This was achieved by working with voluntary organisations, community groups, charities, and public health.

The equalities analysis was used to inform the assessment of local need and helped to embed equalities in the service provision. For example, the delivery of Fun Palaces and other events in libraries will enhance interactions among different groups. The library also offers a safe space for the most vulnerable residents, ensuring they feel welcome and part of the community. The new building has also improved accessibility, providing more opportunities for people to benefit from the library and its services whilst also providing a new flexible space for activities and events.

The Council’s Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, Councillor David Sheppard, said: “libraries are vital for our communities and offer so much more than lending books. They offer a place to meet, a place to get involved with new activities and a place to access services, so they need to change and adapt to meet the needs of the residents. Being here today as we open this new library showcases just how important it is for us to invest in our public services and spaces, as well as the Council’s commitment to investing in our neighbourhoods.”

THEME 4: DIVERSE AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE

The Council is striving 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 2023/24 in relation to the EFLG themes for this module have included:

Workforce diversity and inclusion

Disproportionality barriers are identified and addressed to reverse trends. Initiatives are in place to increase workforce diversity in underrepresented areas, with evidence of narrowing gaps. Career development and retention strategies target underrepresented groups for management roles. There is a growing understanding of the local labour market including the barriers that different groups face. Succession plans and recruitment processes aim to address under-representation, with specific, measurable employment targets set to improve diversity. Selection panels, including senior recruitment panels, are trained in good practices to avoid bias.

In 2023 employees were invited to share their thoughts and opinions about their experience of working at the Council in the **2023 employee opinion survey**. Completion of the survey is important as it allows the organisation to understand how employees feel about their job, team, and Council overall, as well as informing what is working well and where improvements can be made in several areas of the service, including equality, diversity and inclusion.

Key headlines include:

- **11% increase in survey participation (50%, 2275)**
- **2% increase in our engagement score (73%)**
- **Nine in ten employees feel:**
 - I look for ways to do my job more effectively
 - My line manager trusts me to do my job properly
 - I have a clear understanding of the standard of performance expected of me
 - In my job I make good use of my skills and abilities

The Council is in the process of developing a high-level action plan with a number of commitments to ensure the organisation continues to be an employer of choice. A series of focus groups arranged by the Organisational Development (OD) and Change Team were held throughout June 2024, where employees from across the organisation helped to shape the future vision of Council. The sessions also enabled the team to ensure the right steps are being taken to make positive changes.

A project has been undertaken to **refresh the Council's values**, resulting in Rotherham's new values: Caring, Honest and Proud. This included engagement with a diverse range of employees across directorates, including those working in frontline roles as well as those undertaking support service work, between September 2023 and January 2024. Staff were offered a variety of engagement opportunities including both offline and online engagement which enabled the engagement to be inclusive of all interested staff.

Rotherham's new values, Caring, Honest and Proud were launched in April 2024. The communications produced are representative of staff with different protected characteristics, and the colours used as part of the branding have been selected to ensure that they are accessible for people who are visually impaired.

Rotherham Council's values incorporate inclusivity, knowing our communities, and focusing on the strengths of people and communities rather than what they lack, to encourage positive relationships. The values reflect what staff believe in, and demonstrate how staff act positively with one another, and all our communities. For example, being caring means championing inclusivity by striving to make sure that those with protected characteristics are represented and heard. Being honest, means acknowledging where equity is needed, and take action to implement this. Being proud means taking pride in the diversity of the Borough.

The Council celebrated **International Women's Day** with a campaign focused on 2024's theme: Inspire inclusion. The Women's Workforce Network steered the planning of 2024's event, which took place on the 5th March bringing together over 70 employees from different directorates and grades. The event featured two panels. The first panel were asked 'How are we inspiring inclusion in Rotherham?' whilst the second panel addressed the question, 'How can we create more inclusion in the workplace?'. The panels featured both women and men which emphasised the importance of male allyship in tackling issues affecting women, as well as officers and senior leaders who offered a range of perspectives.

2024's International Women's Day was a whole Council event, demonstrating strong awareness and engagement on issues affecting women and strengthening inclusivity across the organisation. The event gave attendees the chance find out more about our Staff Networks, Discover Wellbeing, Employee Rewards and Benefits, Apprenticeship opportunities and much more.

The campaign was broadened with videos from employees discussing how they have faced and overcome barriers in their careers, which other employees may relate to, fostering an open and inclusive environment.

Learning, development and progression

Equality and diversity is integral to all training, including the training and development of key decision makers. Equality and diversity are rooted in clear organisational values. Employees feel confident in serving diverse customers and are informed about equality objectives and changes.

During September 2023, a **new strengths-based e-learning module** was launched for all Council staff. The strengths-based approach focuses on what people and communities have, instead of what they lack. Working in this way encourages positive relationships, supports people in a way that allows them to lead and be in control of an ordinary and independent day-to-day life as much as possible and improves community wellbeing. One of the outcomes of the use of this e-learning will be the promotion of equality, diversity, and inclusion among community members. So far, over 850 staff have completed the module.

The training provided members of staff with a basic understanding of strengths-based approaches when working with residents and communities. It included real life case studies that will help members of staff understand how this approach helps the organisation to deliver the Council Plan.



Apprenticeship Week. National Apprenticeship Week was celebrated in February 2024, with a five-day campaign where employees' experiences of apprenticeships were shared. Eight members of staff presented their experience of apprenticeship via videos which were shared online. The videos featured staff from a range of roles and grades, whilst the campaign focused on how apprenticeships give you 'Skills for life' and can be done at any point in one's career. The employee stories and these messages aim to diversify the pool of apprentices at the Council by growing people's awareness of apprenticeships, therefore helping more employees to access opportunities for development.

Collecting, analysing and publishing workforce data

The Council systematically collects and disaggregates data on applicants, shortlisted candidates, and workforce composition by protected characteristics. There has been success in encouraging staff disclosure of equality information, and there are no significant gaps. Methods are found to address low representation of any protected group. The Council publishes its gender pay, with a decreasing gap. Workforce data, including pay/job evaluation outcomes, is regularly analysed, reported to senior leaders, and published. Actions are taken based on monitoring trends to establish objectives.

Staff attraction, recruitment, and induction survey. In 2024, a survey was conducted asking staff about what attracted them to Rotherham, and about their recruitment and induction experience. A series of optional questions regarding protected characteristics were included on this survey and the results of the survey have been analysed through the lens of protected characteristics.

The data sources above have highlighted important themes and patterns which have shaped the formulation of questions to use as part of a further qualitative data gathering approach.

Interviews and focus groups. Using the questions formulated from quantitative data sources, a series of interviews and focus groups with representatives of three of the staff networks. These conversations were crucial to gathering lived experience from people with different protected characteristics, to triangulate with the quantitative data. The aim was to reveal contrasts, agreements, and contradictions across the qualitative data to answer questions emerging from the quantitative data.

Health and wellbeing

The Council has a cohesive approach to health and wellbeing and the working environment has been improved. Staff from protected groups say that the working environment is safe, and supports their wellbeing and resilience where they are impacted by discrimination. Harassment, including racism, is treated as a safeguarding issue which can cause trauma. Staff are engaged in employment and service transformation. Reasonable adjustments are provided promptly. Occupational health collaborates with HR on absence trends, and managers are trained in mental health awareness.

Mental Health Awareness Week. Mental Health Awareness Week 2024 took place on the 13th to the 19th of May. The theme for 2024 was: Movement: Moving more for our mental health.

In 2024, the Council organised seven webinar sessions to take place during the week:

Event	Organisation
Moving More for Better Mental Health (Yorkshire Sport)	Yorkshire Sport
Benefits of active travel for mental health	RMBC
Introduction to Kooth / Qwell	Kooth
Introduction to NHS Rotherham Talking Therapies	NHS Rotherham Talking Therapies
Find out more about Journey Matters cycle hub	Journey Matters
Introduction to ieso	ieso
Introduction to the Employee Assistance Programme	Vita

Five of the sessions were open to staff from partner organisations, including Age UK, Department of Work and Pensions, NHS, RNN Group. This ensured that the sessions were opened to people from a range of ages and experiences.

As well as focusing on the theme of movement, some of this year's sessions raised awareness of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), as a way of treating mental health conditions whilst including services who offer different CBT delivery methods, from face-to-face sessions to online sessions to text based services. This made sure that the offer was inclusive of people with different needs, work patterns, and protected characteristics.

In total 84 places were booked.

A post-event feedback questionnaire showed high levels of satisfaction from attendees:

- 100% of respondents found the session helpful, and that it met their expectations.
- 95% of respondents scored 5 out of 5 for session delivery and length.
- 100% of respondents would attend a future session.

Case study: Young Employees Network creating positive change

The network was launched in December 2022 to positively help the Council's commitment to seeing a borough based on equality and social justice.

The network meets on a monthly basis and aims to represent young people of all protected characteristics working at the Council. The network also provides a friendly, supportive, safe space for young employees to share their experiences, ask questions and discuss topics that affect young employees in the workplace.

Other aims include:

- Raise awareness of the network and expand membership across the organisation.
- Motivate, empower, mentor, and inspire young people.
- Provide peer support within the 'Young Employees Network'.
- Establish links with other staff representative networks.
- Be a key network for drawing on the views and experiences of young people to inform Council decisions.

Key achievements comprise:

- Establishing a Microsoft Teams Group for members with regular updates and communications.
- Development of a logo, intranet page and leaflet to promote the network further.
- Development of terms of reference, steering group and forward plan.
- Delivery of interactive hybrid workshops covering topics such as communications, engagement, training, development, recruitment, retention and progression.
- Encouraging colleagues from across the organisation to participate in Mental Health Awareness Week, 13th-19th May 2024. The theme, as set out by the Mental Health Foundation was 'movement – moving for our mental health'. The network organised a lunchtime 'wellbeing walk and talk' event, to support physical and mental wellbeing.
- Supporting community-based activities, such as 'love where you live' campaign. This provided a fantastic opportunity for young employees to contribute to the Council's vision of achieving a cleaner, greener environment, which not only improves the environment for all of our residents, it also creates greater ownership and pride within our neighbourhoods.

Case study: Women's Workforce Network inspiring leaders of the future

The Women's Workforce Network (WWN) was launched in 2022 to positively help the Council's commitment to seeing a borough based on equality and social justice.

The network meets on a monthly basis and aims to represent women of all protected characteristics working in the Council. The network also provides a friendly, supportive, safe space for women to share their experiences, ask questions and discuss topics that affect women in the workplace.

Other aims include:

- Creating a safe environment where people from across the Council can come together and discuss issues of importance to them.
- Connecting other people who share the same passion for raising the voice of women across the workforce.
- Supporting women to challenge practices and policies that affect them in the workplace.

The network continues to drive forward women's issues, including raising awareness of local women's safety initiatives during the winter months of 2023. For example, promoting domestic abuse training sessions (delivered by Safer Rotherham Partnership) to employees. Employees were also alerted to the risks from drinks being spiked through the 'spike aware' campaign, the 'ask for Angela' scheme, which operates in hospitality settings to assist people who may find themselves in vulnerable or dangerous situations. Furthermore, the network is also passionate about supporting the wellbeing of colleagues, with a menopause awareness webinar arranged on 12th July 2023.

The Women's Workforce Network contributed towards the successful delivery of an International Women's Day event, which was held at the Town Hall on 5th March 2024. The theme was 'inspire inclusion', where women are included by promoting a sense of belonging, relevance, and empowerment.

During the event, employees heard from Sharon Kemp, Chief Executive of Rotherham Council, as well as a panel of Rotherham role models. There was also an opportunity for employees to find out more about apprenticeship opportunities, the Council's wellbeing offer and staff representation networks, including The Black and Minority Ethnic Workers, Carers Support, Disability and Long Terms Health Conditions, United Faith, LGBTQ+, Neurodivergent, Older Workers and Young Employees.

LOOKING AHEAD

This section provides an overview of the actions linked to the annual EDI plan for 2024/2025, working towards the priorities set out in the EDI Strategy. The action plan draws primarily from the Council's Year Ahead Delivery Plan to identify where equality outcomes are embedded in Council Plan priorities. Other actions are drawn from themes across the EFLG.

The actions for 2024/25 include:

THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING AND WORKING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

The Council will listen to residents and service users through consultations and feedback to improve service delivery. Involving communities in Council decision-making processes is key to ensuring residents' interests are represented. In 2024/25, a key area of work will be to support organisations that work with communities with protected characteristics, to continue to get involved in the identification of local priorities and the delivery of any agreed actions in the production of new ward plans.

Other major commitments for the year include:

- Ensuring people's lived experiences are better understood by capturing case studies and people's voices and ensuring that these are shared and used to inform service design and initiatives.
- Developing a new Community Safety Strategy for 2025 – 2028.
- Achieving a deeper understanding of the differences between the equality profiles of the local area and how that translates to inequalities for different groups, to enable Council services to consider and tackle when designing and delivering services and initiatives.
- Building and harnessing the knowledge and skills of community groups and local residents on EDI to drive positive changes within the communities.
- Hosting an annual EDI event, providing an opportunity to reflect on the borough's EDI achievements and on the lived experience of those with protected characteristics.
- Fostering and sustaining good community relations through organising annual community events, facilitating discussions on individual protected characteristics, promoting community dialogue and reviewing the community reference group

THEME 2: LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP, AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

The Council will continue championing and celebrating diversity by proactively promoting recognised dates through the Council's website and social media channels, including:

- Black History Month.
- International Women's Day.
- Ramadan.
- LGBTQ+ Pride.
- Holocaust Memorial Day.
- Rotherham Show.
- National Day for Disabled People.
- South Asian Heritage Month.



The Council will work with children and young people across the borough to co-design the Children's Capital of Culture programme and deliver a series of events including UPLIFT and the Rotherham WOW festival.

Other major commitments for the year include:

- Reviewing of the equality objectives and production of an EDI strategy for 2025/28.
- Embedding equalities into the new Council Plan for 2025.

- Continuing to strengthen partnership working across the borough, including sharing intelligence to tackle inequalities, supporting cultural awareness, and promoting good community relations across the range of protected characteristics.
- Delivering cultural events promoting inclusion and diversity in varied locations throughout the borough, including such events as:
 - Rotherham Show
 - Signals Festival
 - Rotherham 10k



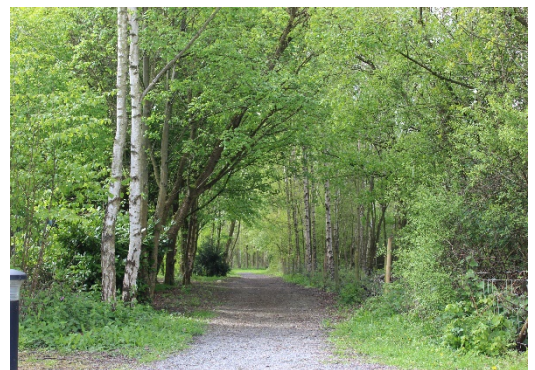
THEME 3: RESPONSIVE SERVICES AND CUSTOMER CARE

The Council is committed to continuing the promotion of equalities and tackling inequalities through the provision of its services and local support.

Over the coming year, new strategic provision will be rolled out supporting people with learning disabilities and autism. Work will continue with partners to address the variability of Education, Health and Care Plans and the quality of provision, including to develop a consistent format for the production of Health and Social Care information and advice for EHCP's.



Children and families will benefit from the Family Hubs Programme to deliver services through a range of buildings including children's centres, increasing co-delivery of services with partners and the number of family's registered with a Family Hub.



The Council will also continue to support households most in need through additional Council Tax support and provision of holiday time vouchers to those who receive free school meal to tackle holiday hunger.

Other actions in 2024/25 include:

- Building on the Council's strengths through making the best use of local assets, including buildings, parks, and public spaces in ways that promote and achieve EDI outcomes.
- Enhance understanding and empathy by addressing the specific needs and experiences of individuals based on their protected characteristics.
- Make services more available to those living in hard to reach and most deprived areas of the borough to promote equality in access to services.



THEME 4: DIVERSE AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE

The Council will continue to improve workplace equality and diversity through the delivery of the Workforce Plan 2022-2025.

The Council will continue to embed the new values to underpin employee working practices and review and implement a new model of employee engagement, including Staff Networks to embed values in an inclusive and accessible way.

Specific actions to better understand workforce data, tackle barriers and promote EDI include:

- Building on the analysis of workforce data undertaken to date, ensuring that the Council continues to incorporate an EDI lens, to ensure disparities and areas for improvement are identified and understood.
- Utilising qualitative and quantitative data from different sources, including RMBC Census, Equality Opportunity Standards (EOS), and recruitment data, we will detect potential patterns, barriers and trends within our workforce.
- Creating innovative strategies to tackle barriers aimed at overcoming barriers to workforce diversity, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring equal opportunities for all employees.
- Addressing challenges related to training, volunteering, and employment through collective partnership working, we will tackle challenges related to access to training, volunteering, and employment opportunities for underrepresented groups, creating a more inclusive workforce environment.
- Working to ensure the workforce profile, including major providers of commissioned services, broadly reflects the community it serves and the local labour market.
- Ensuring that EDI principles are integrated into all consultation and engagement training sessions, promoting inclusive and equitable practices across the Council.
- Continuing to share best practice in terms of improving accessibility, promoting diversity and ensuring inclusion across Council services.