

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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FOREWORD

Rotherham Council remains committed to promoting equality and fostering a cohesive society built on mutual respect, where no one is left behind. This principle shapes our policy priorities, with a strong focus on tackling inequalities embedded throughout our work.

Equality considerations continue to influence the Council's internal operations and decision making. As this report highlights, engagement with diverse communities has helped co-produce services. We've also worked closely with local voluntary, community, and faith sector organisations to support residents during the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

In 2024/25, over £5 million was allocated to crisis support, funded through a combination of the government's Household Support Fund grant and Council self-funding. Working with the voluntary sector, we ensured that this funding reached our most vulnerable households. We also provided food vouchers to help ensure that children had enough to eat during school holidays, an energy scheme to help with fuel bills, and specific financial support for our care leavers.

Our Employment Hub supported around 700 residents into sustainable employment or accredited training, reflecting our commitment to removing barriers and helping people reach their potential.

Over the past year, the Council and partners have promoted events celebrating diversity and marking awareness days, including Holocaust Memorial Day, International Women's Day, Carers Rights Day, Inter-Faith Week, Rotherham Show, Armed Forces Day, and Mental Health Awareness Week.

A standout moment was the 10th annual Reclaim the Night event, part of the Women of the World Festival (WOW) Rotherham. The evening featured creative workshops and a town centre walk, with banners created by local artists and groups calling for action against gender-based violence and advocating for safe, inclusive spaces.

In August 2024, our community was deeply affected by the violent attack on the Holiday Inn in Manvers, which was housing asylum seekers. This unacceptable act of hate targeted some of the most vulnerable people in our borough. In its aftermath, we worked closely with partners, the police, and community leaders to provide support and reassurance, while reaffirming our commitment to ensuring Rotherham remains a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place for all.

We continue to take a coordinated approach to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion, with leadership and staff working together to embed inclusive practices and shape a more representative and supportive workplace culture.

Equality and inclusivity are central to Forging Ahead, our new Council Plan for 2025-30. The plan sets out an ambitious programme, focused on expanding opportunities and harnessing the knowledge and skills of community groups and local residents.



Councillor Saghir Alam OBE
Cabinet Member for Finance

INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, Rotherham Council has continued to put equality, diversity and inclusion at the centre of its work. We've done this while facing ongoing economic and social challenges. The Council has stayed focused on supporting the borough's most vulnerable residents, providing targeted assistance where it is most needed.

As we continue to strive for the best possible outcomes for our residents, our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion remains central. In the past year, we've built stronger partnerships, worked closely with communities, and continued to tackle the inequalities that exist in the borough.

This report highlights some of our key achievements from 2024/25, using the four themes identified in the current EDI Strategy:



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

It also shares case studies and identifies priorities for the first year of the new Inclusion Strategy (2026-29). As we look ahead, we remain committed to building a fairer, more inclusive Rotherham where everyone can thrive, no matter their background or circumstances.



POLICY CONTEXT

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 and victimisation
- **Advance equality of opportunity** between people with and without protected characteristics.
- **Foster good relations** between different groups.

A fair society cannot exist if some communities remain disadvantaged because of protected characteristics, which include:

	Age
	Pregnancy and maternity
	Disability
	Race
	Gender reassignment
	Religion or belief
	Sex
	Marriage and civil partnership
	Sexual orientation

The Council must actively embed equality in all its work and ensure suppliers do the same. We are also expected to consider how our decisions affect different people and communities.

In addition, the Council aims to address socio-economic inequalities by focusing on reducing unequal outcomes when making strategic decisions.

Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG)

The EFLG helps councils to deliver accessible and inclusive services and to meet their legal requirements in relation to equality. It does this by:

- Identifying areas of activity that councils need to address to deliver good equality outcomes.
- Helping councils to understand how they can build equality into processes and practices.
- Supporting organisations to become inclusive employers.
- Enabling councils to informally self-assess their progress on the equality improvement journey and determine where and how they need to improve.

The Council has used this framework to assess its progress, including through peer assessments from other councils.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022-2025

In 2021, the Council committed to refreshing its equality objectives, taking into account the impact of Covid-19. This led to the development of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2022–2025, shaped by engagement with elected members, staff, partners, and local communities.

The EDI Strategy provides a framework for embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion in everything the Council does. It sets out how the Council aims to remove barriers that prevent full participation in the borough's social, cultural, political, and economic life.

The strategy includes four key objectives:

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

These objectives align with the EFLG and inform an annual work plan.

As we near the end of the current strategy, work is underway to develop a new Inclusion Strategy.



THEME I: UNDERSTANDING, LISTENING TO AND WORKING WITH ROTHERHAM'S COMMUNITIES



As outlined in the EDI Strategy, reducing inequalities and tackling discrimination begins with a clear understanding of the needs and priorities of our communities.

This means collecting and analysing equalities data – such as information on age, ethnicity, disability, gender, and socio-economic background – to identify where disparities exist. It also involves engaging meaningfully with local people, fostering good community relations, and supporting residents to participate fully in public life.

Key achievements in 2024/25 include:

- **Children & Young People's Partnership** Board gives young people a real say in how services are planned and delivered. It's co-chaired by a councillor and a youth representative and focuses on issues young people care about. One key priority they've raised is tackling hate crime.
- **Rotherham's Learning Disability Strategy** was shaped by nearly 250 people with lived experience, including those with learning disabilities, carers, and professionals. Their feedback focused on feeling welcome, being included, and having clear communication. This approach ensured the strategy reflects real-life experiences and priorities.
- **RASCAL (Rotherham Adult Social Care Always Listening co-production group) Board** is a new board made up of people with experience of adult social care, helping shape future services in Rotherham. Members meet monthly to share feedback and influence decisions. Their work is supported by the Council and includes accessible communication like BSL interpretation.

- **Children's Capital of Culture engagement** – supported five festivals, engaging over 10,000 participants and embedding youth voice into local events.
- Funded by **Arts Council England**, each festival received **up to £2,000**
- Partnered with:
 - Eastwood Fun Festival (June, Rotherham East ward)
 - Harthill Carnival (July, Wales ward)
 - Aston Carnival (August, Aston and Todwick ward)
 - Ferham Festival (August, Rotherham West ward)
 - Reclaim The Night (November, Boston Castle ward)
- Engaged **499 school pupils and 130 children and young people** in youth provision
- Total reach: **10,000+ participants**
- Ferham Festival highlights:
 - **2,000+ attendees**
 - Creative projects with **154 children** from Kimberworth and Thornhill primary schools
 - Youth-led performances including the Thornhill Rap and a Roma-hip hop dance fusion
 - Family involvement from the Liberty Church youth group

CASE STUDY:

Ferham Mother, Baby & Toddler Group – Supporting Families, Building Trust

The Ferham Mother and Baby Group was created by the Infant Feeding Team and nursery nurse, Musaret Nazir, to support the Pakistani community in Ferham. Hosted at Jamia Masjid Noor-Ul-Huda mosque, which generously provides the space free of charge, the group was developed in response to a clear gap: while many families were breastfeeding, they weren't accessing local support.

Sessions run fortnightly, focusing on baby development and open conversations with health professionals. Families helped shape the programme, suggesting sensory-themed activities like lights, messy play, and texture exploration. Guest speakers from oral health, weaning, genetic counselling, and children's literacy have also joined, helping families connect with wider services.

One early challenge was keeping families informed about session dates. Initially, Musaret made individual calls, which was time-consuming. This was resolved when a mother

trained in Solihull Breastfeeding Peer Support created a WhatsApp group to share updates and invite others – including expectant mums – to join.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with families praising the friendly environment, engaging activities, and the chance to connect and share experiences. The group has helped reduce health inequalities by offering education in a familiar, informal setting, and has strengthened relationships between staff and families.

In 2025, the initiative was recognised with the **Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust Proud Award for Diversity & Inclusion**. The team celebrated alongside peer supporter Yasmin and Louise Willis from Grimm & Co, marking a milestone in inclusive community support.

Hear from Alice Edwards (Infant Feeding Team) and Yasmin (Peer Supporter and service user) as they share their experiences and insights about the group in this short video: [Watch on YouTube](#).



CASE STUDY:

Rotherham Sight & Sound – Inclusive Design through Meaningful Engagement

The Upper Millgate and Corporation Street public space scheme is a key part of Rotherham's town centre regeneration, creating a vital link between the new Forge Island leisure development and the wider town centre. The project aims to deliver a more pedestrian-friendly environment, with improved access, green spaces, and safer crossing points to Riverside Gardens, the cinema, hotel, and restaurants.

Key proposals included:

- Widening footways and enhancing the public realm along Corporation Street.
- Reducing crossing distances to improve pedestrian access.
- Retaining traffic restrictions (except for buses) on the uphill section of Corporation Street, while allowing bicycles to travel in both directions.
- Replacing signalised crossings at Upper Millgate with a raised informal crossing.

- Permanently removing traffic lights at the High Street/Ship Hill junction, following a successful trial, and redesigning the junction to improve visibility and pedestrian safety.

To ensure the community had a clear understanding of the proposals and the opportunity to provide meaningful feedback, a comprehensive communications plan was developed. This identified specific audiences and tailored communication methods to encourage engagement.

A stakeholder database was created, including local businesses, community groups, educational institutions, and organisations representing protected characteristic groups.

Stakeholders were offered one-to-one meetings and alternative formats of the plans to ensure accessibility. This approach led to Rotherham Sight & Sound (RSS)—a key organisation supporting people with sensory impairments—requesting a dedicated meeting to discuss the impact of the proposals on their service users.

Two officers from Rotherham Investment and Development Office (RiDO) met with RSS at their Ship Hill offices, sharing printed and tactile versions of the plans. The group raised several concerns, particularly around the removal of signalised crossings and the challenges this would pose for visually impaired pedestrians.



Key points raised included:

- The need for a safe, even if longer, route between Ship Hill and Riverside House.
- The current route involves five separate crossings, which is particularly difficult for those with visual impairments.
- A preference for signal-controlled crossings over zebra crossings, which can be difficult to navigate safely without clear driver cues.
- The importance of a crossing on Westgate near Ship Hill, as many RSS clients walk up Corporation Street and would struggle to cross safely at that junction.
- While RSS acknowledged that not all crossings could be signalised, they felt a strong case existed for a controlled crossing between Ship Hill and Main Street, due to its importance as a key route for visually impaired people accessing Council services.

The feedback was formally included in the consultation and flagged as a priority for further design consideration.

A follow-up meeting and site visit were arranged with RSS to review updated proposals. Printed plans were shared again, and the group walked the route to assess the impact of the proposed changes.

During the visit, RSS reiterated the need for a signal-controlled crossing on Westgate, and discussions were held about how to ensure visually impaired people were made aware of the changes. It was suggested that project funding could support route training for RSS clients, helping them adapt to the new layout and identify safer routes—particularly between the bus station and Riverside House via Riverside Gardens.

As a result of the meeting, the following actions were agreed:

- RMBC would instruct the design team to explore the feasibility of a standalone signal-controlled crossing on Westgate between Main Street and Ship Hill, recognising the specific needs of visually impaired pedestrians.
- RMBC would provide RSS with a recommended accessible route from Rotherham Interchange to Riverside House, using existing and proposed signalised crossings and the new Riverside Gardens path.

A further meeting took place in September 2024, where representatives from RSS, the Council's Project Manager, and the design team walked the full route to identify any

remaining issues and ensure the proposed solution was practical and safe.

Outcomes

The engagement with RSS led to tangible changes in the scheme's design and delivery. RSS were satisfied with the revised proposals and the commitment to implementing a safer crossing point. They also requested a pre-opening visit to Forge Island for their service users, which was arranged for August 2024 to help familiarise them with the new environment.

In addition, RSS offered to deliver free visual impairment awareness training to the RiDO team, which took place in June 2024. The training was extremely well received and provided valuable insight into the challenges faced by people with sensory impairments—insight that will inform future public realm projects.

This case study highlights the importance of early, inclusive engagement and the value of listening to lived experience. By working closely with RSS, the Council was able to adapt its plans to better meet the needs of all residents.

THEME 2: LEADERSHIP, PARTNERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT



The Council plays a pivotal role as a local leader in championing equality, diversity, and inclusion across Rotherham. This leadership extends to embedding these values in all aspects of its work—from decision-making and communications to partnership working, priority setting, employment practices, policy development, and the delivery of projects and programmes.

In 2024/25, the Council's key achievements included:

- **Rotherham Council supported a range of events in 2024 that celebrated diversity and brought communities together.** These included the WOW Festival for women and non-binary people, Rotherham Show and Reclaim the Night. Each event helped raise awareness of inclusion and gave residents a chance to connect and take part.
- **Rotherham held its Holocaust Memorial Day event** in January 2025 to honour victims of genocide and promote reflection on inclusion and justice. The event brought together faith leaders, councillors, schools, and residents to share messages of remembrance and hope.



- **Launched the WalkSafe app** to help people feel safer when out and about, especially women and vulnerable groups. The app lets users share their location with trusted contacts and shows which venues have safety measures in place. It's free to download and part of a wider effort to make public spaces more inclusive.
- **Rotherham's services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)** received the top rating from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. Inspectors praised how well local organisations work together to support children and families. The result means no reinspection is needed for five years, showing

CASE STUDY:

Standing Together – Community Response to August 2024 Disorder

Following the incident on 4 August 2024, when violent disorder broke out outside a local hotel housing asylum seekers in Manvers, the Council, voluntary and community sector organisations, other partners and the local community came together in a show of unity to support residents and restore the area.

The violence caused damage to nearby family homes, and many residents witnessed the events first-hand. Some families felt unable to leave or return to their homes, and concerns were raised about the safety of local faith buildings. This created a climate of fear and disrupted daily life for many.

In the immediate aftermath, Council teams worked closely with partner agencies and the community to understand what was needed to rebuild trust and restore a sense of safety and cohesion. The Community Safety and Street Scene teams supported clean-up efforts

alongside local residents, while the Early Help team provided a visible and compassionate presence, listening to families and offering reassurance. The Communities Team also worked with faith leaders to ensure mosques remained safe spaces and to help counter misinformation.

To support longer-term recovery and strengthen community cohesion, Rotherham was allocated £600,000 through the Community Recovery Fund. This funding has been used to deliver a range of initiatives in partnership with local organisations and residents. These include:

- **Grant programmes** to support grassroots community cohesion efforts
- **Innovative approaches** to building relationships and trust across communities
- **Additional resources** for education providers to engage and support young people

Despite the short funding window, partners across the borough have worked at pace to develop and begin delivering these plans, ensuring that the response is shaped by and for the community.



CASE STUDY:

Raising the Bar: Embedding Equality and Safety in Rotherham's Night-time Economy

In 2025, the Council undertook its statutory five-year review of the Licensing Act policy. Historically, such reviews have focused on meeting minimum legal requirements, with limited emphasis on innovation or progressive practice.

This time, however, the Licensing Team at RMBC took a bold step forward – choosing to lead by example and embed the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion at the heart of the borough's licensing framework.

Inspiration and Approach

Motivated by a desire to go beyond compliance and reflect the Council's broader priorities around community safety and social inclusion, the team drew inspiration from Rotherham's nationally recognised taxi licensing policy. They explored best practice across the UK, engaged with stakeholders, and considered national concerns around safety in licensed venues.

Key themes emerged through engagement with South Yorkshire Police, the Community Safety Unit, the Violence Reduction Unit, and local licensees. These included:

- Women's safety in the night-time economy
- The visibility and effectiveness of schemes such as Ask for Angela
- The need to improve awareness and understanding of diversity and inclusion within licensed settings

The team also considered feedback from residents, complaints data, and insights from local forums such as Licence Watch, as well as national media coverage.

Policy Enhancements

The revised Licensing Act policy now includes clear guidance encouraging licensed venues to adopt good practice in the following areas:

- Women's safety – including regular staff training, promotion of recognised safety schemes, and routine testing of safety protocols
- Equality and diversity – including inclusive venue design, equitable service provision, and staff training on EDI principles

While these measures are not mandatory, they are strongly recommended. By setting a

clear example, the Council aims to encourage voluntary adoption of higher standards across the sector.

Impact and Aspirations

The inclusion of EDI and safety guidance represents a meaningful shift in approach. The policy provides licensees with practical tools and a clear framework for improvement – supporting them to become better employers, responsible neighbours, and valued community partners.

The Licensing Team recognised that many licensees are willing to make positive changes but often lack clarity on how to do so. The revised policy helps bridge that gap, offering direction and support without imposing unrealistic demands.

The Council hopes that, like its taxi licensing framework, this policy will be seen as a model of best practice and inspire similar approaches across other local authorities.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates how RMBC is using its regulatory powers not just to enforce standards, but to empower change—promoting safer, more inclusive public spaces and embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion into everyday practice.

THEME 3: RESPONSIVE SERVICES AND CUSTOMER CARE



The Council works hard to make sure its services are accessible to everyone in Rotherham. One way we do this is by using the way we buy goods and services—known as commissioning and procurement—to create more jobs and training opportunities for local people. We're especially focused on helping young people and those who are currently unemployed to access these opportunities

In 2024/25, the Council's key achievements included:

- **In 2024/25, the Council delivered £12.3 million in validated social value**, with a strong focus on employment, education, and community support.

Highlights include:

- 695 apprenticeship weeks delivered – a 43% increase on the previous year.
- £6480,000 invested in support for unemployed individuals, nearly doubling the previous year's figure, with around 130 hours of tailored support.
- Over 20 jobs created for long-term unemployed residents.

- 61,850 training weeks committed to support skills development across the borough.
- £682,000 worth of equipment and resources and 234 hours of business advice donated to VCS organisations.
- **The Council provided free baby packs to expectant mothers**, containing essentials like clothes, toys, and books to support early parenting. Over 600 families signed up in the first few months, with feedback showing the packs are a lifeline for many. The scheme also shares health advice and connects families to wider support services
- **A major job fair in March 2025 connected nearly 400 residents with employers**, training providers, and support services. Attendees explored opportunities in sectors like childcare, construction, and care work, with many submitting applications on the day. The event also offered tailored support for women and neurodiverse individuals to help overcome barriers to employment.

These initiatives are helping to reduce barriers to employment, improve health and wellbeing, and ensure that every resident can benefit from the borough's growth.

CASE STUDY:

Rothercare – Empowering Independent Living Through Assistive Technology

Rothercare is Rotherham's in-house assistive technology service, designed to support residents with care and support needs to live independently, safely, and with dignity in their own homes.

Aligned with the Council's Adult Social Care vision, Rothercare plays a vital role in supporting people to live their best lives, with people they value, close to home with access to the right support at the right time.

The Challenge

With increasing demand for care services and the need to optimise resources, the Council recognised the importance of expanding its use of assistive technology. A service review highlighted operational challenges, including the upcoming analogue switch-off and limitations in the current delivery model. There was also a need to improve customer choice and modernise the service offer, particularly around digital connectivity.

Rothercare provides a comprehensive, end-to-end service that includes:

- Referral and triage
- Equipment installation
- 24/7 monitoring and emergency response
- Procurement of hardware and software

The service supports around 5,600 households, with approximately 1,200 new customers joining each year. Importantly, it is accessible without a formal Care Act assessment, making it a preventative tool for maintaining independence and reducing reliance on formal care.

The Solution

Following the review, the Council implemented a revised delivery model:

- Rothercare work collaboratively with a technology partner to manage technical elements including assessments and access to a wide range of technology
- Rothercare continue to deliver core service functions including the referral element and response service



Technology in Use

Rothercare's assistive technology includes:

- Environmental sensors (smoke, carbon monoxide, temperature, door sensors)
- Personal sensors (fall detectors, location trackers, medication prompts)
- Enhanced safety and monitoring (bed/ chairs sensors, epilepsy sensors, property exit sensors)
- Voice-activated technology and digital connectivity options

These tools interface with a 24/7 monitoring centre to mobilise appropriate responses, including emergency services when needed.

Customer Insights

Consultation with service users revealed:

- 88% want the Council to continue providing Rothercare
- 84% believe the service offers good value for money
- 40% cited reassurance in emergencies as the main benefit
- Many want greater choice, including opting out of mandatory charges and access to Wi-Fi-enabled devices
- Suggestions included video support, daily welfare calls, and carer-specific services

Impact

Rothercare contributes to:

- Delaying or avoiding admission to care homes
- Reducing the need for home care
- Supporting strengths-based approaches
- Enhancing wellbeing and safety
- Providing peace of mind for carers and families

Next Steps

The Council aims to:

- Increase awareness of assistive technology
- Expand provision across the borough
- Ensure the service remains responsive, modern, strengths-based and person-centred

CASE STUDY:

East Herringthorpe – Inclusive and Energy-Efficient Housing

At the Northern Housing Awards 2025, Rotherham Council's housing development in East Herringthorpe was named Best Affordable Housing Development (up to £5m).

The scheme delivered ten affordable homes, including the Council's first one-bedroom houses and a four-bedroom dormer-style bungalow designed to meet the needs of a household with complex health challenges. The homes were built with energy-efficient features such as Air Source Heat Pumps, solar panels, underfloor heating, and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery, aimed at reducing running costs and improving indoor comfort.

This development forms part of the Council's wider ambition to deliver 1,000 additional homes by 2027. As part of this programme, the 650th property was acquired in February

2025, and the 700th in July 2025, marking continued progress in expanding the borough's housing stock.

The homes delivered through the Housing Growth Programme are designed to meet the needs of Rotherham's diverse population, including residents with protected characteristics, those facing health or mobility challenges, and people struggling due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Tenants across the programme have shared how their new homes have made a difference:

"We haven't had a shower before and this met the medical needs of our son. Outside it's very private and a double drive allows easy access in and out of our vehicle. All block paved in the area on the estate, so all looks smart."



“We love the house. The best thing is the downstairs toilet, as I have children with additional needs, so this is easy to get to. The garden is a nice size too.”

Tenants at East Herringthorpe also reported significant improvements to their wellbeing:

“This move has improved my mental health, decreased my anxiety, and reduced my bills – it’s life changing.”

“I can now move around freely and no longer feel embarrassed having visitors. It’s given my children their childhood back.”

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, said:

“In 2018 we made a commitment to support our residents with their housing needs by

providing an additional 1,000 affordable council homes for local people to rent by 2027 and we will deliver on this.

These homes are well-built and designed to be affordable to run, which is vital as households face rising energy costs.

This award is testament to the hard work and commitment of all those involved in the development, but the biggest achievement is the impact that the homes are having on the tenants.”

The scheme was delivered by local contractors R H Fullwood & Co Ltd., with delivery led by the Council’s Strategic Housing and Development team.



Alex Young and Uzma Sattar from Rotherham Council’s Strategic Housing and Development team collecting their award at the Northern Housing Awards.

THEME 4: DIVERSE AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE



In 2024/2025, we focused on strengthening our workforce by promoting diversity, engagement, and wellbeing. This work has been central to building a culture where staff feel valued, empowered, and supported to deliver high-quality services. It has also enhanced collaboration across teams and with the communities we serve.

In 2024/25, the Council's key achievements included:

- **A wellbeing event for frontline staff at the Hellaby Depot** offered support on mental health, finances, and general wellbeing, with help from local organisations. Around 200 employees attended and found the event valuable and informative. Many said they would follow up with the services they learned about.
- **A self-defence class was held for female staff at Rotherham Council**, teaching practical techniques to boost safety and confidence. The session was well received, with participants finding it both useful and empowering. Due to strong interest, more workshops are being planned.
- **Staff attended a session about Ramadan** to better understand how religious festivals affect people's lives and engagement with services. It encouraged empathy, cultural awareness, and inclusive customer service. Feedback was positive, with staff appreciating the respectful and informative approach.
- Between November and December 2024, Rotherham Council carried out engagement activities with over 200 individuals from a wide range of organisations, including Wales High School, St Bernard's School, Sheffield Hallam University, and members of Black and Minority Ethnic communities. The Council also held focus groups and workshops with internal staff networks to gather insights from its own workforce. The purpose of this engagement was to understand how different communities perceive RMBC as an employer and to explore innovative, inclusive ways to attract, recruit, develop, and retain a more diverse workforce.



CASE STUDY:

Embedding Community Strengths-Based Approaches in Rotherham

Between October 2024 and July 2025, the Council undertook a programme to embed Community Strengths-Based Approaches across its workforce. This initiative was part of a commitment to working in partnership with communities, recognising their assets, and fostering a culture of empowerment and collaboration.

To deliver the training, the council commissioned experts from Leeds City Council and the “We Are Seacroft” Asset-Based Community Development team, whose work has been nationally recognised for its innovative, community-led approach.

Eight sessions were delivered between October and December 2024, with a further four sessions in July 2025. Around 200 people took part in the training, including external partners.

This work complemented the council’s online module on strengths-based approaches, which

has now been completed by over 1,800 staff members.

Why It Matters

The motivation behind the training was clear: to embed strengths-based thinking across the organisation and support a shift in how services engage with communities. This approach aligns with Rotherham’s commitment to:

- Locality working
- Staff development

- Community empowerment
- Cross-directorate collaboration

By focusing on what communities already have – rather than what they lack – the council aims to build more resilient, connected, and self-sustaining neighbourhoods.

Importantly, this training helps staff work more effectively with and empower some of the most vulnerable and diverse communities in the borough, ensuring that services are inclusive, responsive, and shaped by lived experience.



Outcomes and Impact

The training has already led to several positive developments:

- Community of Practice: a quarterly forum has been established where colleagues share learning, reflect on practice, and build a shared understanding of strengths-based work.
- Strategic Integration: the principles are being embedded in key documents, including the Council Plan, service plans, and individual year ahead plans.

What People Said

Feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. One attendee said:

“Really engaging speakers. I learnt a lot and it changed my way of thinking. I feel more empowered to do the difficult thing – engaging early on with communities.”

This reflects a broader shift in mindset across the organisation – from delivering services to building relationships.

Looking Ahead

The Council remains committed to embedding strengths-based approaches as a core part of its work. With continued leadership support, a growing network of champions, and strong community partnerships, the council is building a culture where staff are empowered, communities are valued, and services are shaped by the people they serve.

CASE STUDY:

Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Adult Social Care

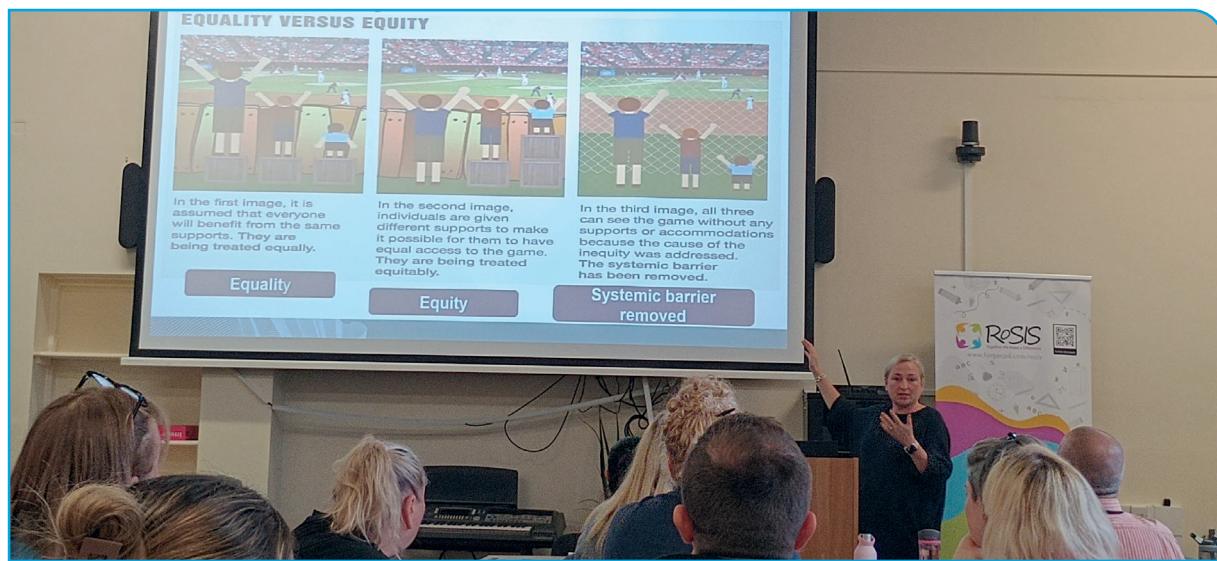
Equality and diversity training is a mandatory requirement for all social care practitioners. In April 2024, the service began rolling out a programme of fifteen one-day diversity, equality and inclusion courses, scheduled for completion by June 2025.

In November 2024, assistant directors in Adult Social Care planned and led two whole service events focused on equality, diversity and inclusion. These events were attended by over 100 staff, including middle and senior managers, and provided a valuable opportunity to reflect on practice, share learning, and reinforce the Council's commitment to inclusive service delivery.

Building on this momentum, from May 2025 through to June 2026, Adult Social Care will deliver fifteen one-day cultural competence training courses for the workforce, alongside four sessions tailored for 59 elected members. These courses are designed to equip both practitioners and councillors with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours needed

to work effectively and respectfully with individuals from diverse cultural, religious, ethnic, and social backgrounds.

The programme is currently being reviewed at a corporate level to explore how elements of the training could be incorporated into the Council's wider workforce development offer.



LOOKING AHEAD

Some of the key actions for 2025/26 are set out below.

THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING, LISTENING TO AND WORKING WITH ROTHERHAM'S COMMUNITIES



- Delivery of ward plans shaped by meaningful engagement with local communities.
- Refreshing the Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy to reaffirm the Council's commitment to working collaboratively with communities and integrating locality-based services.
- Deliver the Community Cohesion Grant Fund to support and strengthen communities across Rotherham.
- Co-design a new Tenant Engagement Framework to empower tenants to shape housing services and influence neighbourhood improvements.

THEME 2: DELIVERING ACCESSIBLE AND RESPONSIVE SERVICES THAT MEET DIVERSE NEEDS



- Tackle hate crime and its drivers by delivering educational sessions to 600 young people and 55 individuals, promoting understanding and inclusion.
- Deliver the SEND Centre at Eric Manns Building, enabling Rotherham Parents Carers Forum to provide dedicated support for children with SEND.
- Open the new Castle View Day Service to provide meaningful day opportunities for people with high support needs.
- Support 25 young people aged 16–25 into paid employment through traineeships and internships as part of the Children's Capital of Culture Programme.
- Improve service accessibility and convenience through the expansion of digital booking and payment options.

THEME 3: PROVIDING LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT TO PROMOTE EQUALITIES



- Deliver the Learning Disability Strategy priorities for 2025, which will include a new transition pathway for young people preparing for adulthood, increasing the number of young people accessing employment opportunities and embedding the voice of the young person in their care and support journey.
- Further embed inclusive and strength-based working across the Council and its partners through a targeted learning and development programme for staff and Elected Members.
- We will demonstrate leadership in inclusive and ethical practice by delivering Phase 2 of the Social Value Action Plan across commissioning and partnerships.
- Embed the Rotherham Adult Social Care Always Listening Co-Production Board (RASCAL) within the approach to change across adult social care.

THEME 4: ENSURING A DIVERSE AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE



- Aim for over 50 % staff participation in the Employee Opinion Survey to better understand engagement and satisfaction levels.
- Support workforce diversity and development by delivering the Apprenticeship Action Plan and expanding borough-wide apprenticeship opportunities through strategic partnerships.
- Strengthen workforce inclusion and succession planning by delivering the Career Pathways Programme, offering diverse entry routes through internships, apprenticeships, and graduate schemes.
- Refresh the Council's recruitment approach through community engagement, jobs fairs, and strategic partnerships to attract applicants who reflect the diversity of Rotherham's communities.