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PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY UPDATE: OCTOBER 2025

Introduction

This report provides an update on the Council's progress in fulfilling its Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as of October 2025. It outlines the steps taken since the refresh of the Council's equality objectives in [October 2024](#), highlights key achievements, and sets out the next steps to strengthen compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

Over the past year, the Council has taken steps to better integrate equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) principles more consistently into its policies, processes and service delivery. This includes making Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) a central part of decision-making, strengthening training and awareness, improving transparency of equality data, and adopting a collaborative approach to service design.

The report will demonstrate how the Council:

- is performing in the area of equality.
- makes decisions with due regard to the Equality Act
- has complied with the general duty.
- can be held to account for equality actions.

Background

In October 2024, the Council refreshed its equality objectives and created an action plan to improve its approach to equalities and ensure full compliance with the Equality Act 2010.

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to:

- Eliminate unlawful behaviour – such as discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- Advance equal opportunities – by reducing disadvantage and encouraging participation from underrepresented groups.
- Foster good relations – by reducing prejudice and increasing understanding between communities.

The Council must also publish annually:

- Equality information
- At least one equality objective
- Gender pay gap data.

The Council's current equality objectives are:

- Promote the use of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) in decision-making, policymaking, procurement, and service design.
- Tackle poverty and deprivation through delivery of [Supporting Communities Strategy](#) projects.

Inequalities and Protected Characteristics

Recent evidence continues to show a strong link between inequality and protected characteristics. [The Office for Health Improvement and Disparities](#) 2025 report highlights that people with protected characteristics such as disability, ethnicity and age are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes and reduced access to services.

Locally, the [Rushmoor Together Plan \(2025/26\)](#) identifies priority themes around economic hardship, mental and physical health, and community belonging. It acknowledges that while many residents live comfortably, others face daily challenges and inequalities that affect their quality of life and opportunities.

Additionally, the [2024 Living in Rushmoor Survey](#) also highlighted disparities in residents experiences. The survey found that sense of belonging varied significantly across communities, with underrepresented groups less likely to feel connected to their local area. There was also an underrepresentation of ethnic minority respondents in the 2024 survey.

Progress to Date

Building on the October 2024 report, the Council has made steady progress toward meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The progress includes:

Equality Impact Assessment Themes

Between August 2024 and October 2025, The Policy and People teams conducted a full review and redesign of its EIA process. This included stakeholder engagement, piloting new templates, selecting and delivering training, rolling out new tools, templates and guidance, and embedding EIA practices across services.

- **Commitment to equalities** - The Council Delivery Plan set out a commitment to put diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything we do. This has led to a prioritisation of equalities across all levels of the organisation, reinforced by recommendations from the equality Peer Challenge in [2021](#) and the Corporate Peer Challenge in [2024](#) and the need to demonstrate legal compliance with our PSED.
- **Stakeholder insights** - Stakeholder conversations highlighted both strengths and areas for improvement. While many colleagues understood the purpose of EIAs and their importance, there was a lack of consistent organisational messaging and clear procedures. This led to staff perceiving EIAs as 'tick box exercises.' Skill gaps and varying levels of engagement across services also contributed to inconsistent application.
- **Learning from others** - Desktop research into best practices from organisations such as the NHS, Islington, Oxford City Council, Mind, and Unison revealed valuable insights. It showed the importance of user-friendly templates, mental health considerations, public consultation, and accessible guidance. These findings informed the redesign of the Council's EIA tools and processes.
- **Improved tools and guidance** - The Council introduced a new screening tool to quickly assess potential impacts and decide whether a full EIA is needed. The full assessment provides a deeper analysis of impacts on protected groups, especially for large-scale projects. The guidance offers step-by-step instructions, definitions, examples, and data sources to support staff in completing assessments thoroughly and consistently.
- **Testing and iteration** - Feedback from testing sessions found opportunities to improve usability, streamline approvals, and clarify the scope of EIAs. Suggestions included adding a

‘don’t know’ option, better illustrating subgroup impacts, and embedding guidance directly into templates. The Policy team are using those insights to refine the templates further.

- **Policy integration and alignment** - EIAs are increasingly being integrated into broader policy and proposal development processes. However, challenges remain around forward planning, decision-making clarity, and coordination with other implications work (e.g., finance, legal, climate and data protection).
- **Focus on inclusion and accessibility** - Across all EIAs, there is a consistent emphasis on promoting fairness, accessibility, and resilience. Whether addressing community recovery, housing, employment, or public spaces, the assessments aim to ensure that residents especially those from underrepresented or vulnerable groups are considered at every stage of policy and service design.

Equality Impact Assessments

EIAs are reviewed by the Policy Team and shared with the Corporate Policy Working Group for awareness and feedback.

Completed EIAs:

2024:

- 1 EIA Screener: Tree Management

2025:

- 12 EIA Screeners: Town Centre Code of Conduct, Gambling Policy Review, Supporting Communities Plan, Pathways to Work Consultation, Community Recovery Plan, Community Governance Reviews, 16 to 18 Meads, Film Studio Relief, Aldershot Crematorium Refurbishment, Playing Pitch Strategy, Affordable Housing SPD – Update 2025 and Options for Accommodating Grosvenor Road residents.
- 2 Full EIAs: Delivery Plan 25–26, Public Space Protection Order

2024 and 2025 Total: 15

Internal and External Progress

The Council has done a lot to strengthen the internal and external work we are doing around equalities.

Internal Progress

The Council has taken significant steps internally to strengthen its approach to EDI. These include:

Annual People report

- Strengthened pay gap transparency – Gender and ethnicity pay gap report was published on [11th February](#). This data enables the Council to monitor trends, find areas for improvement, and address disparities in pay and representation across the organisation. Additionally, an EDI action tracker is reviewed quarterly by the Policy and People teams.
- Promoted gender diversity in leadership – A ‘Women in Leadership’ event was held on Wednesday 11th September 2024 to encourage career progression and visibility of women in senior roles. Led by senior officers, the session provided a platform for discussion and peer support for female leaders.
- Engaged in sector-wide EDI learning – Members of the People and Policy teams attended the Frimley EDI Virtual Conference: [‘Breaking Boundaries: How Inclusive are we Really?’](#) The event provided valuable insights into inclusive practices and helped inform future internal initiatives.

Training and Awareness

- Expanded disability awareness and support – The Council delivered training workshops for front line and staff and elected members, the sessions were also attended by the Chair of the Rushmoor Accessibility Action Group (RAAG). The training was co-developed and co-delivered by the Chair of RAAG and senior members of the People team. These sessions aimed to improve understanding of disability inclusion and promote reasonable adjustments to support staff with disabilities in the workplace.
- Designed and delivered Prevention of Sexual Harassment awareness training for staff and members as one of the preventive measures in line with the Worker Protection Act 2024.
- Mandatory EDI training embedded – Mandatory EDI eLearning is now part of all staff's annual training package.
- Delivered inclusive leadership training – Most senior leaders, service managers, and report authors have completed EDI and EIA training delivered by 'Inclusive Employers' between May and June 2025. This training supports inclusive decision-making and strengthens the Council's approach to policy development.

Inclusive recruitment and workforce development

- Expanded inclusive employment pathways – The Council continues to support [apprenticeships, T Level placements, and inclusive work experience opportunities](#). This includes tailored support for neurodiverse students, delivered in partnership with local schools and colleges.

National schemes and commitments

- Disability Confident Employer – The Council maintains its recognition under the [Disability Confident Scheme](#), committing to inclusive recruitment and retention practices. This includes offering guaranteed interviews to disabled applicants and providing workplace adjustments to support staff with disabilities.
- Armed Forces Covenant – The Council holds a Silver award under [the Employer Recognition Scheme](#), demonstrating its commitment to fair treatment and supportive employment practices for veterans, reservists, and their families. This includes flexible working arrangements and recognition of military service.

Improving the content on our council website for accessibility

- As part of ongoing efforts to improve digital accessibility, the council has been working to enhance the inclusivity of its website. The council in collaboration with RAAG have found improvements, including updates to the 'how to find us' section. These will include information about accessibility to council offices, which include parking (including Blue Badge parking spaces), meeting room details, hearing loop provision in reception, and accessible toilet facilities.
- The Aldershot Crematorium web pages are also being updated to reflect inclusive design and accessibility standards. Additionally, the council is exploring the use of easy read formats, via the housing allocations project. It is being piloted for clearer communication with customers. If successful, this approach may be extended to other documents.
- Furthermore, improvements are being planned for online information about parks and playgrounds, starting with Southwood Country Park, and improving information about accessible toilet facilities across the borough.

External Progress

The Council has taken significant steps externally to strengthen its approach to EDI. These include:

- **Expanded membership of the Rushmoor Together partnership** – The Council extended the partnership group to include a representative from RAAG, ensuring that accessibility-related issues and challenges are appropriately represented and addressed.
- **Facilitated independent community workshops** -The Council commissioned 'The Belong Network' to deliver a series of [community workshops](#) focused on cohesion, cultural awareness, and diversity.. The sessions brought together a broad cross-section of participants with a range of lived experiences and equalities perspectives. They explored themes of belonging, communication, and getting along together, while also supporting partner organisations to deepen their understanding of inclusion and effectively identify and challenge inappropriate behaviour.
- **Inclusive work experience opportunities** - The Council is committed to promoting [inclusive employment](#) pathways by actively engaging with local schools to encourage the participation of neurodiverse students in the Council's corporate work experience programme. This aims to provide tailored support to ensure equitable access and meaningful experiences for students who may require flexibility.
- **Inclusive Taxi Driver Training** – All licensed Taxi and Private Hire Drivers in Rushmoor must attend regular Disability Awareness training. In addition to the option for external training, the Licensing team, in collaboration with the RAAG has developed disability awareness training for licensed drivers. The training is led by members of the Licensing team and was co-developed and is co-delivered by the Chair of RAAG, who incorporates lived experiences from RAAG members to strengthen the programme's focus on EDI particularly in relation to disability awareness.

Accountability

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee can monitor compliance with the Equality Act, providing critical challenge of goals and scrutinising performance. To further strengthen accountability, the Council recognises the value of establishing or engaging with an independent group to support ongoing monitoring and transparency in equality matters.

Anyone with concerns about the Council's compliance with the Equality Act can contact the regulator, the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Equalities Webpage

The Council now has an [equalities webpage](#), which includes the Council's equality objectives, an explanation as to why we need EIAs, our workforce data and our duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Service Co-Design

Service co-design is a key element of the Council's approach to EDI. By involving users, staff, and stakeholders in shaping services from the outset, we can ensure that policies and processes are more accessible, inclusive, and responsive. Below are two examples of where the Council has used the co-design concept to design a service or tool.

Design of the EIA Templates and Guidance

The EIA screener full assessment and guidance were developed through a collaborative process that drew on feedback from users (report writers) to understand their perspectives and needs before finalising the templates. This approach, led jointly by the Policy and People teams, addressed gaps

identified through stakeholder engagement, which highlighted insufficient organisational messaging and focus on the importance of EIAs. In response, the Policy and People teams created and circulated a screening tool, a full assessment and supporting guidance. These templates are now treated as an evolving, iterative process, with changes continually being made and tailored to a wide range of organisational needs.

User Research

Over the last 18 months, the Policy, Strategy and Transformation team has launched a user research group, building a growing network of users (customers) to take part in research activities. User research has been carried out to support transformation projects, including the 'tell us you're moving' project and sessions are planned to support the housing allocations project currently underway. This shows a focus on designing services with users not just for them, ensuring the services we deliver reflect the needs, experiences and priorities of the people who use them. There is still more we can do to ensure that the users involved in the research are representative of our wider population, particularly in reaching underrepresented or harder to reach groups.

Conclusion and Next Steps

The Council has made substantial progress in meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty, demonstrating a stronger, more proactive approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion across all services. The updated EIA process, the internal and external progress, enhanced training provision and greater transparency of workforce, pay gap data reflect a clear commitment to fairness and accountability and a commitment to service co-design.

Looking ahead, the Council will continue to:

- Expand EIA training to more staff and services.
- Improve feedback loops to ensure continuous improvement.
- Explore new ways to engage underrepresented communities.
- Centralise equality resources, tools, guidance, and governance on the intranet to improve staff access and consistency.

By maintaining momentum and embedding equality considerations into everything we do, the Council can further strengthen its compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and deliver fairer, more inclusive outcomes for all residents.