

Bromsgrove District Council

Equality Strategy

2022-2026



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

Title	Bromsgrove District Council Equality Strategy 2022-2026
Description	This Strategy sets out our commitment for progressing equality over the next four years.
Created by	Engagement and Equalities Advisor
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1. Introduction

As an employer and deliverer of services, Bromsgrove District Council is committed to eliminate unlawful discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and fostering good relations between people from all communities. This Strategy sets out our commitment for progressing equality over the next four years.

The Strategy and Action Plan outlines our equality objectives, describes how we will fulfil our moral, social and legal obligations and what we will do to make Bromsgrove a place where people get along with each other and treat each other with dignity and respect.

The Strategy covers inequality in terms of age, disability, gender reassignment (transgender/trans), marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and is aimed at those who live, work in and visit the district, as well as elected Councillors and employees of the Council.

2. The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 came into force in October 2010 and legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. The Act covers nine protected characteristics, and these are the grounds upon which discrimination is unlawful. The characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment (1)
- marriage or civil partnership (in employment only)
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

(1) *before, during and after transition. This wording is the terminology used in the Equality Act; transgender (or Trans) is now the accepted terminology. The Council understands there are many different identities which fall under the Trans umbrella, including identities outside of the gender binary.*

Although it is not stated in legislation as a protected characteristic, we also commit to treating everyone equally regardless of their socio-economic status and will work to eliminate discrimination and disadvantage caused by a person's socio-economic status.

Public Sector Equality Duty

As part of the Equality Act 2010, public authorities must comply with the public sector equality duty (the equality duty). The equality duty replaced the previous race, disability and gender equality duties and was developed to extend across all the protected characteristics. It consists of a general equality duty, supported by specific duties and requires public authorities to consider or think about how their policies or decisions affect people who are protected under the Equality Act. Private organisations and individuals don't have to comply with the duty.

The general duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

In addition, public authorities also have specific duties and must do the following:

- publish equality information at least once a year to show how they've complied with the equality duty
- prepare and publish equality objectives at least every four years

The publication of our Equality Strategy will support us in meeting the general and specific duties placed on us as part of the Equality Act.



3. Why is equality important to the Council?

As a public service provider, it is important we recognise that our residents and customers come from different backgrounds; this will enable the Council to design and deliver services that meet the needs of the communities we serve. By understanding these differences and encouraging others to do the same, we can improve the quality of life for everyone by ensuring people who live, work, or visit our district are treated fairly, with respect and are given the same chances and opportunities by taking into consideration their different needs.

As an employer, we believe that it is in the Council's interests and in the interests of all who work for the Council that we ensure that every possible step should be taken to ensure that individuals are treated equally and fairly and that decisions in recruitment and selection, training, promotion, and career management are based solely on objective and job-related criteria and that reasonable adjustments are made where feasible.

4. The impact of Covid-19

Covid-19 has had an unprecedented impact on the lives of the people across the district of Bromsgrove. At the forefront of the council's coronavirus response has been the continued delivery of essential services, supporting vulnerable people and looking at the short, medium, and long-term impacts of COVID. The consequences from this pandemic have already and will continue to reshape the district, impacting those who were already experiencing deprivation across all protected characteristics, and it is important that the council not only focuses on how, as an organisation, we recover and respond to challenges faced because of the pandemic but also the leading role we play in the wider recovery across the whole district.

5. Equality in the delivery of our services

Equality Impacts

Although there is not a specific legal requirement for the Council to undertake an equality impact assessment, we *are* legally required to demonstrate that we have given 'due regard' to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. In practice this means that equality considerations still need to be evidenced in our decision-making processes and policies.

Any potential impact on equality should be considered before any key decisions are made and should be integrated into day-to-day policymaking, business planning and other decision-making arrangements. This is particularly relevant when making difficult financial decisions; if we are proposing to stop, reduce or change a service then we must have relevant equalities evidence to justify this. The effect Covid has had on many people means considering the impact of equality is ever more important and we will ensure our Equality Assessment Guidance is updated.

The Equality Assessment Guidance is available for officers on the Orb and the Policy Team can provide direct support for service areas and projects to help them to gather and interpret equalities evidence.

Equality Monitoring

The Council has a requirement to publish equality information at least once a year to show how we have complied with the equality duty. The Council recognises this also makes good business sense as it can help local people assess the Council's performance on equality, the impact our policies and practices have had, tell us who is and isn't using our services; understand why our services may not meet their needs and help us to improve the delivery of our services by identify any data gaps and address any issues. Any monitoring undertaken must be proportionate and relevant and of a benefit to our communities.

Procurement & Commissioning

The Council provides a wide range of services to residents and businesses in the district. In some cases these are provided directly by the Council, in other by our partners and contractors. When a supplier provides goods, services or works on our behalf, we will ensure the equality obligations are part of the terms of a contract so that we know they will monitor the impact on service users and those they employ. The ultimate legal responsibility for meeting the requirements of the Equality Act remain with the Council for any services delivered on our behalf.

Specifically, we will:

- Communicate this strategy to all potential contractors and service providers;
- Ensure contractors and service providers have policies, procedures and practices that do not discriminate and deliver goods, facilities and services that are appropriate and accessible.
- Provide opportunities for all to be able to bid and be awarded council contracts from an equal basis; and
- Monitor the contracts and service arrangements to ensure they are meeting their equality commitments.



6. Equality in employment

The Council is continuing to work towards achieving a diverse workforce and offering equality of opportunity in employment, recruitment selection, training, and development. We aim to ensure that the workplace is free from discrimination, victimisation, or harassment of any kind where staff are treated with respect.

Employment policies

The Council has a wide range of policies in place for our staff and prospective employees. These policies support our staff and provide clear guidance to all employees about what is expected of them and what they can expect from us as an employer. We will continue review the range of policies and be pro-active in promoting and supporting equality in the workforce. This includes eliminating bullying and harassment, addressing discrimination, ensuring equality in pay and creating a flexible work-life balance. The Equal Opportunities Policy pulls together the Council's commitment to equality within the workplace.

As part of supporting the delivery of this strategy there are additional guidance documents, focusing on specific elements of equality. These can be added to, as required, through the life of this strategy.

Equality Training

Equality training is provided for staff to ensure they are made aware of their rights and responsibilities. In particular all managers will be trained on a regular basis in equalities matters concerning employment. Similarly, there is an expectation that all Members will attend Equality training. Equality issues are an integral part of our training and development programmes, regardless of whether the council uses internal or external trainers. In addition to the generic equality training, tailored equality training to reflect the needs of specific services will be encouraged, particularly for services engaging with external customers and / or where there is a significant engagement with protected group(s).

The council makes a strong commitment to training and development for all staff. All staff will have equal access to training and development, and we will take positive action where appropriate for those who are underrepresented in our workforce.

7. Consultation & engagement

The Council wants to ensure that anyone who accesses council services either as a resident, visitor, customer, or employee feels well informed about local issues; can get involved, influence local decision making and gets the opportunity to tell the Council what they think about its policies, procedures, service delivery and work with partner organisations.

To ensure consistency, the council has a separate Community Engagement Strategy 2022-2026. The following objectives set out how we are going to make certain that our engagement activity is flexible, focused, and appropriate for the diverse needs of the communities. Together the council will:

Plan and co-ordinate activities, the use of resources and, where possible, work collaboratively.

Actively encourage involvement from all communities, including those from traditionally under-represented groups/areas.

Be open and creative to the most appropriate methods to consult and engage making the experience interesting, relevant, and worthwhile for participants.

Be transparent and build trust by communicating results and ensure that the outcomes are used to inform the Council's policies and decision-making processes.

Use the information from our engagement activities, alongside other evidence, to inform the design and delivery of effective and efficient services, within our current financial constraints.

Build relationships with communities so sustained engagement can be established.

If you would like to get involved taking part is easy and you can do as little or as much as you like e.g., from completing surveys on local issues to being part of a focus group. Your views can make a difference.



8. Our success & achievements 2017 to 2021

The Council has achieved some key successes since the adoption of our previous Equality Strategy 2017-2021. Over the last four years some of these include:

- The Equality Small Grants Scheme, which awarded grants to local voluntary and community groups so a variety of projects could be delivered.
- Supporting the quarterly Bromsgrove Engagement & Equalities Forum
- Carrying out over 30 surveys covering a range of topics with the results helping to inform key decisions
- Adopting a corporate Engagement Strategy that promotes successful engagement across all service areas
- Delivering equality training to all employees
- Continuing to build strong relationships with other public and voluntary and community organisations across the district
- Supporting the delivery of interpreting, translation, and alternative format requests.
- Providing assisted bin collections for people who struggle to get their bins to the roadside for collection, such as older residents and people with disabilities
- Continue working with partners on the North Worcestershire Hate Incident Partnership to tackle all forms of hate crime and targeted harassment across North Worcestershire

9. Measuring our progress

We will continue to inform the public and our staff about our progress through:

- An annual equality report
- Our information and advice services
- Council website
- Media (including social media) for advertising and press releases
- Through our community networks

10. How to contact us

To give us your views, get involved or for further information please contact the Equalities Team at equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or 01527 548284

To find out about the council's engagement activities please contact us or just go to www.bromsgrove.gov.uk/consultations

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact us to discuss how we can best meet your needs. Email: equalities@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or Phone: 01527 548284



Bromsgrove District Council Equality Objectives 2022-2026

We are required to adopt and publish equality objectives every four years. These are our revised equality objectives covering the period 2022-2026.

Objective 1: Ensure we deliver inclusive and responsive services

The Council will continue to work to understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing its services.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective:

- Improve the quality of information we collect and how we use it to monitor who is and isn't using our services and facilities and to understand their satisfaction.
- Work with partners to identify and share issues facing specific groups of people in the district to inform future service delivery.
- Use the information from our engagement activities, alongside other evidence, to inform the design and delivery of effective and efficient services, within our current financial constraints
- Continue reviewing our policies, activities, and decisions to monitor the impact on different groups

Objective 2: Engage and communicate with the community in appropriate and accessible ways

Community engagement is about giving people the confidence, skills, and power so they can get involved. The Council wants to ensure that people feel well informed about local issues; have the opportunity to get involved, influence local decision making and get the opportunity to tell the Council what they think about its policies, procedures, service delivery and work with partner organisations.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective:

- Provide advice and information in a way that is accessible
- Ensure engagement and consultation are accessible to enable people to participate in the decision-making process.
- Engage with residents using appropriate methods making the experience interesting, relevant, and worthwhile for participants.
- Promote membership to the 'Bromsgrove Community Panel'
- Review the information provided to the public so that it meets the Public Sector Accessibility Regulations 2018

Objective 3: Understand our communities and celebrate and respect diversity

As a Council, we want to lead the district in celebrating and promoting our diversity and the benefits and opportunities it brings. We will continue to promote inclusion, fairness, and accessibility and celebrate the district of Bromsgrove as a great place to live, work and visit.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective:

- The Council in its role as a local leader will continue to mark and promote awareness of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Events e.g., Holocaust Memorial Day, LGBT History Month, Black History Month.
- Mark Suicide Prevention Awareness Day each September and using this as an opportunity to promote the work of local groups that support suicide prevention.
- Continue to support district and countywide work to raise awareness of hate crime and how it can be reported. We will ensure these are monitored and analysed regularly, and appropriate action is taken to address the issues that have been identified.
- Continue to work with stakeholders to promote social cohesion
- Continue to support, though advice, working together and where appropriate financially, local voluntary and community groups to be sustainable and to meet the needs of the community they support
- Support to local voluntary sector organisations around improving promotion of their organisations.

Objective 4: Develop and support a diverse workforce

We will continue to promote inclusion, fairness, and accessibility in our workplace. A representative workforce will help us deliver services that are accessible, appropriate and that help reduce inequalities.

Actions we will take to deliver this objective:

- Regularly monitor, analyse, and publish employment data in accordance with our statutory duties.
- Promote an environment where everyone is treated fairly and with dignity and we recognise and value the differences skills, abilities and experience people bring to the workplace
- Encourage employees to declare their protected characteristics.
- When appropriate, work with teams to ensure equalities information is available for managers and Elected Members to use in decision making

- Using a range of methods make relevant resources available and provide equalities advice to employees and Elected Members to enable us to achieve our equality objectives
- Continue to publicise messages around positive mental health, including suicide prevention, to staff and promote opportunities to participate in training and events
- Following the impact of Covid, continue to support employees with their current and future working arrangements
- Develop signposting information on the Orb, to the relevant support services about mental health and wellbeing, including suicide prevention, to support employees to signpost customers and/or colleagues
- Recognising that not all staff may have undertaken the Mental Health First Aid training and arrange for some alternative web-based training resources to be provided for staff and additional resources for those working in front line positions