



**STROUD
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**
www.stroud.gov.uk

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging Policy 2025 - 2029

April 2025

Corporate Policy &
Governance

Stroud District Council
Ebley Mill
Stroud
GL5 4UB

Email: customer.services@stroud.gov.uk
Website: <https://www.stroud.gov.uk/>
Telephone: 01453 766321

Document Responsibility		
Name	Document title	Service
Head of Corporate Policy & Governance	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging Policy 2025 - 2029	Corporate Policy & Governance

Document Version Control			
Date	Version	Issued by	Summary of changes
7 January 2025	1.0	Head of Corporate Policy & Governance	First draft

Policy Review			
Updating frequency	Review date	Person responsible	Service
4 years, unless required earlier	April 2029	Head of Corporate Policy & Governance	Corporate Policy & Governance

Document Review and Approvals		
Name	Action	Date
Name of staff member/committee that has reviewed and/or approved the policy	E.g. consulted, reviewed, approved	Date of review or approval

Contents

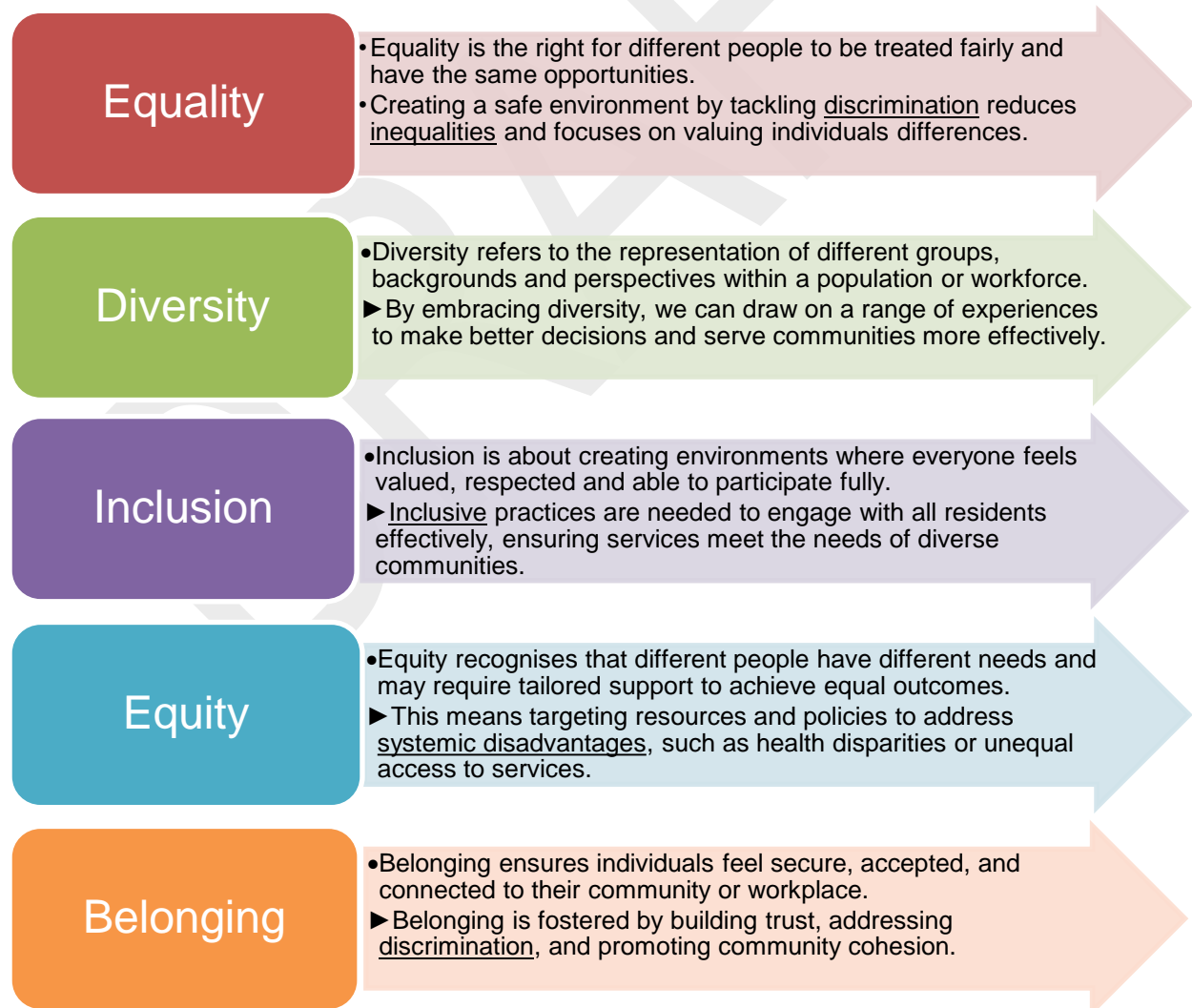
1	Introduction	3
2	The Legal Framework	4
3	About the district and Stroud District Council.....	4
3.1	Stroud District Demographics	4
3.2	Stroud District Council Workforce Demographics	5
3.3	Stroud District Council Member Demographics.....	5
4	The Council's Commitment	5
4.1	Specific Commitments in Procurement	6
4.2	Specific Commitments in Employment.....	6
5	Achievements.....	7
6	Challenges and Opportunities	8
6.1	Challenges	8
6.2	Opportunities	8
7	Objectives	9
8	Key Aims.....	10
8.1	Community	10
8.2	Leadership and Organisational Commitment	11
8.3	Workforce	11
9	Implementation.....	12
10	Roles and Responsibilities.....	12
11	Glossary	13

1 INTRODUCTION

Our Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging (EDIEB) Policy outlines our commitment to addressing inequalities and promoting EDIEB across all areas of our work. The UK is one of the most economically and socially unequal countries in the developed world¹, and over the past four years, local authorities have faced a range of unique challenges. These include responding to the aftermath of the pandemic, addressing the cost-of-living crisis, and tackling systemic inequalities exacerbated by these events. These challenges have highlighted the need for proactive measures to ensure equitable access to services, representation, and meaningful community engagement.

This policy outlines our approach to advancing equality in three priority areas: **Community, Leadership and Organisational Commitment, and a Diverse and Engaged Workforce**. It incorporates initiatives that reflect our commitment to using robust equality impact assessments (EIAs), community engagement principles, and data driven approaches to meet our EDIEB objectives.

Please note, the underlined text in this policy indicates words or phrases that have been defined or explained in a glossary. Please see the end of this policy for the full list of terms within the glossary. What Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging mean to us



2 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Under the Equality Act 2010, public bodies have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), requiring us to:

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

Protection from unlawful discrimination is provided by the Equality Act in relation to the following nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage & Civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity (which includes breastfeeding)
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

The Equality Duty supports good decision-making, it encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs. By understanding the effect of their activities on different people and how inclusive public services can support and open opportunities, public bodies are better placed to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective.

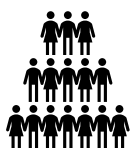
Section 1 of the Equality Act, the Socio-economic duty, requires public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence or social class. Although local authorities are not bound to Section 1, the council believes the socio-economic duty offers a useful tool for public authorities to actively consider the way in which policies and strategic decisions can address inequalities, within the wider PSED requirements.

We are also committed to meeting the requirements of other relevant legislation, including the Human Rights Act 1998 which sets out the fundamental rights and freedoms that individuals in the UK have access to and the Procurement Act 2023 in ensuring equality considerations in procurement.

3 ABOUT THE DISTRICT AND STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

3.1 Stroud District Demographics

Demographic data can be used to better understand the community and make up of our district, and in turn this can be used to inform policy development, new projects and initiatives, and further develop our service offering.



The Stroud district has a population of **121,100**



There are **52,400** households in the district



51.1% Female

48.9% Male



45.7% Christian

44.1% No religion

1.8% Other

Age

- 20.9% aged 0 – 19
- 55.3% aged 20 – 64
- 23.3% aged 65 or above

Race and Ethnicity

- 96.4% White
- 1% Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh
- 0.4% Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African
- 1.8% Mixed or identify with multiple ethnic groups
- 0.4% Other ethnic group

Disability

- Under the Equality Act (2010), **16.9%** of residents are considered disabled.
- However, there are some conditions that aren't covered by the official disability definition that could still be considered a disability.

Employment

- 59.8% of residents are Economically active, In employment
- 38.1% are Economically inactive
- 17.2% are students
- 2.1% are Economically inactive, or Unemployed

Household Deprivation

- There are four dimensions of household deprivation according to the Office of National Statistics. These are: Education, Employment, Health, and Housing.
- 55.2% of households are not deprived in any dimension
- 32.3% are deprived in one dimension
- 10.4% are deprived in two dimensions
- 2.1% are deprived in three dimensions
- 0.1% are deprived in four dimensions

Sexual Orientation

- 90.32% Straight or Heterosexual
- 1.24% Gay or Lesbian
- 1.15% Bisexual
- 0.20% Pansexual
- 0.07% Asexual
- 0.03% Queer
- 0.02% All Other Sexual Orientations

3.2 Stroud District Council Workforce Demographics

3.3 Stroud District Council Member Demographics

4 THE COUNCIL'S COMMITMENT

Stroud District Council is committed to ensuring equality, fairness, inclusion, and good relations are at the heart of everything we do. This is key to delivering our vision of **“Leading a community that is making Stroud district a better place to live, work and visit for everyone.”**

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging Policy 2025 - 2029
Stroud District Council

Type approval month and year here

To support our commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging, the Council will:

- (a) Comply with and embrace equality law and good practice, which includes carrying out our public sector duties to promote equality.
- (b) Regularly monitor and assess the impact of our policies, services, and functions to ensure they are fair and reflect people's different needs and opinions.
- (c) Take a zero-tolerance approach to hate crime, investigate and work in partnership with the Police and Victim Support when hate incidents are reported to SDC.
- (d) Celebrate diversity and support campaigns for greater equality and awareness.
- (e) Make equality and consideration of diversity a part of our everyday business. To do this, we will expect all our Councillors, employees and contractors to:
 - a. Treat everyone with courtesy, dignity, and respect at all times.
 - b. Provide the best possible standards of service and value for money to residents and communities.
 - c. Consider the needs and opinions of every community.

Promoting diversity, preventing inequality, and tackling discrimination is not solely the responsibility of the council. We will also work with wider partnerships to promote an equal and inclusive approach across the whole of the district.

4.1 Specific Commitments in Procurement

When we procure or commission services, we will aim to:

- (a) Ensure equality and sustainability are considered at each stage of the procurement process.
- (b) Ensure contractors, suppliers and partners are aware of what the authority expects in relation to equality and diversity and understand that they must provide services that are free from harassment, discrimination, or victimisation.
- (c) Ensure that the tendering processes include EDIEB as part of the selection criteria
- (d) Provide guidance to employees about how to include EDIEB in procurement and commissioning processes.

4.2 Specific Commitments in Employment

Stroud District Council is committed to being a fair and supportive employer, developing the skills and talent within our workforce so that employees can deliver high quality services to everyone. To achieve this, we will:

- (e) Tackle unacceptable behaviour in the workplace.
- (f) Provide employees with opportunities to influence the development of our policies and practice.
- (g) Promote a good work-life balance and opportunities to work flexibly.

- (h) Reward all employees fairly and provide employment conditions which support them to do a good job.
- (i) Support employees with a disability by making reasonable adjustments.
- (j) Monitor and publish the make-up of our workforce as required by the specific public sector equality duty.

5 ACHIEVEMENTS

Since the last policy review in 2021, we have made significant progress including:



Community Engagement

- Established a community taskforce to consult and co-produce solutions with diverse local groups.
- Worked closely with Gloucestershire Sight Loss Council to train staff and lead simulation walks across high streets, resulting in accessibility improvements to public spaces.
- Developed our community engagement principles to guide inclusive consultation and participation efforts.



Leadership and Organisational Initiatives

- Published 'Our Service Standards' to ensure consistent and inclusive customer care, demonstrating our commitment to treat everyone fairly and respectfully.
- The council now provides EDIE training for all new staff via an induction programme covering equality and diversity. Mandatory equality training is also provided to councillors with further training opportunities available through the member development programme.
- The results of our 2024 staff survey highlight the council's ongoing commitment to fostering a diverse, inclusive and supportive workplace. With 93.62% of employees recognising the council as an inclusive employer and 94.47% agreeing that our leaders and managers understand that importance of diversity to our success, it is clear that inclusion has been embedded within our culture.
- Additionally, 94.04% of staff feel the council provides equal opportunities for career advancement and 87.66% of employees report a strong sense of belonging, underscoring the positive and supportive environment we have cultivated.
- These results provide a foundation for continuous improvement as we strive to remain an employer of choice for people from all backgrounds.



Workforce

- We have set up and supported several well-organised staff networks that promote inclusion, hold events and provide a platform for diverse voices.
- Hosted successful EDIE events to raise awareness and celebrate diversity across the organisations.
- Launched a new online recruitment portal to make job applications more accessible and user-friendly.
- The council was shortlisted in 2023 for the 'Best equality, diversity and inclusion employer', showcasing our commitment to being an inclusive employer.

6 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

While progress has been made in fostering inclusivity, the council and many local authorities face several ongoing challenges:

6.1 Challenges

Disparity in Outcomes: Health and wellbeing is an area for which there are evidenced differences in outcomes for people with certain characteristics. For instance, disabled people, unpaid carers, people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

Community Cohesion: Rising incidents of hate crime and divisions in diverse communities nationally highlight the needs for stronger inter-community relations.

Barriers to Access: Public services may still be inaccessible or underutilised by certain groups due to language barriers, physical inaccessibility, or lack of trust in institutions.

Digital Divide: Increased reliance on digital services excludes those without access to technology, often affecting older individuals or those in poverty.

Access to Housing: The pressure for more social housing and affordable rent schemes, coinciding with a rise in homelessness.

Post-pandemic difficulties: Widening inequalities making it difficult to support those experiencing or at risk of deprivation.

Supporting refugees and asylum seekers: Developing sustainable programmes or initiatives that support resettled members of the district.

The trans community: Heightened concerns over the safety and victimisation of transgender people.

6.2 Opportunities

Effective engagement: Engaging with our partners and working collaboratively to meet the needs of the residents.

Consultations: Collaborating with community organisations in Stroud and Gloucestershire to address specific diversity challenges. This can include internal groups, including staff groups and youth council.

Enhanced economic inclusion: Consider how the Council Plan influences employment opportunities and infrastructure development, to learn how we can support the local needs of the population.

Recruitment: Work towards diversifying our workforce to reflect the district.

Training: Ensuring leadership and officers understand the importance of diversity and how to tackle discrimination and raises awareness when communicating with customers.

Strategy Development: Fostering diversity in service delivery can provide a well-rounded perspective and reduce inequalities.

Data-driven decision-making: Understanding the demographic of our district and using that to make informed decisions for our strategies, action plans, initiatives, proposals and projects.

Progress monitoring: Assess the impact of council policies and initiatives to identify any trends or patterns related to EDIE.

7 OBJECTIVES

As part of the public-sector equality duty, the council is required to identify equality objectives.

Our objectives remain focused on three themes which reflect the Local Government Association (LGA) Equality Framework for Local Government 2020 designed to help councils plan and deliver equality outcome. When considering the opportunities and challenges presented, the specific aims underneath each of the three themes have been developed in consideration of the challenges and opportunities the council faces.

1. Community

- Listen and learn from our communities and use this to deliver services that work well for everyone

2. Leadership & Organisational Commitment

- We will foster a culture of inclusion at every level of leadership and embed EDIEB into decision-making processes

3. Diverse and Engaged Workforce

- Foster a diverse and inclusive workforce where everyone is respected

8 KEY AIMS

Underpinning the three objectives will be an Annual Action Plan which is reported on, reviewed, and updated each year. The key aims that will be included to achieve the above objectives include:

8.1 Community

Develop a consultation and engagement strategy

- Formulate a strategy to ensure meaningful consultation with diverse communities, focussing on accessibility, inclusivity and transparency.
- Use this strategy to improve how we engage with individuals from protected characteristic groups.
- Actively involve underrepresented groups in consultation to sure their voices shape policies and services.

Strengthen community engagement

- Collaborate with community organisations to amplify underrepresented voices in decision-making processes.
- Implement a framework for our community engagement principles based on values of inclusion, transparency and collaboration.
- Evaluate data from our council tenants to identify engagement gaps and design targeted outreach initiatives.
- Ensure regular feedback mechanism are in place to evaluate and improve the inclusivity of housing services.

Improve accessibility of communication

- Review and redesign communication materials to ensure they are accessible to people with disabilities, those with limited English proficiency and other marginalised groups.
- Use diverse communication channels, including digital platforms, translated materials and accessible formats (e.g. braille, large print, audio).
- Ensure online services and platforms are compliant with web content accessibility guidelines to improve useability for all residents.
- Implement feedback mechanisms to allow customers to highlight issues or suggest improvements.

8.2 Leadership and Organisational Commitment

Embed EDIEB objectives into service plans

- Mandate that all service plans include clear EDIEB objectives to ensure alignment with organisational priorities.

Enhance procurement practices

- In line with the Procurement Act 2023, strengthen our procurement practices and guidance to ensure suppliers demonstrate a commitment to EDIEB principles.

Develop and embed Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

- Train leadership and project teams on using EIAs effectively to ensure they are applied consistently and effectively and decisions are informed by robust equality assessments.
- Integrate EIAs processes into project management stages to identify and mitigate potential disparities in service delivery.

8.3 Workforce

Utilise statistics to navigate workforce representation

- Use workforce data to monitor representation across all levels, identifying and addressing disparities.
- Review recruitment practices and monitor recruitment data to eliminate barriers faced by underrepresented groups.
- Review workforce policies to ensure policies such as flexible working, reasonable adjustments, and anti-discrimination measures are inclusive and effectively implemented.

Enhance employee performance through training and development

- Provide EDIE training for all senior leaders to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to lead inclusively.
- Provide targeted development opportunities for staff from marginalised backgrounds to promote career progression.
- Provide equality and unconscious bias training to all employees, with specialised workshops for recruitment managers.

Increase employee engagement

- Conduct annual employee surveys to assess experiences related to inclusion and belonging, using the findings to inform workforce policies.
- Continue to support staff groups in organising events and initiatives that amplify their voices, promote inclusion and raise awareness.

9 IMPLEMENTATION

We will continually seek to develop our approach to equality, diversity inclusion, equity and belonging by identifying good practice in employment and service delivery. Measuring our performance gives us an indication of whether we are providing a safe and inclusive working environment, equal opportunities to our staff and residents, diversifying our workforce to reflect our community, and how we are tailoring our service delivery to suit the needs of the Stroud district. To ensure that we measure our performance effectively and demonstrate our commitment to EDIEB, we implement:

- Mandatory EDIEB objectives embedded into each service plan that are reported on regularly.
- Annual employee survey to understand workforce sense of belonging.
- Regular reminders to update employees' diversity data.
- Actively promote and deliver flexible and home working to support work/life balance.
- Embed social value metrics as part of the scoring and evaluation process for contracts over £90,000 in procurement.
- Report on our gender pay gap.
- Collect demographic data through self-reporting surveys to better understand the users of our services.
- Include specific objectives and actions in the Council Plan that focus on creating a more inclusive district.
- Provide alternative communication services to those with visual and/or hearing disabilities.
- Actively host and participate in EDIEB events.
- The EDIEB Working Group will monitor progress and publish an annual report on our progress with a summary of what we have achieved against each objective.
- Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) will be used to ensure that the council considers equalities issues and assesses the likely impact of its services, policies, and decisions.

The council will review this policy at least every four years to ensure it reflects the latest legislation, best practice and other Council policies.

10 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Equality is the responsibility of every Councillor, employee of Stroud District Council, and any other person or organisation employed by the Council to work or to deliver services on its behalf.

- **Elected Members:** Responsible for ensuring equality is considered in policy and decision-making processes.
- **Chief Executive and Senior Leadership Team (SLT):** Accountable for delivering equality objectives across all services.
- **EDIEB Working Group:** Comprising cross party councillors and officers, the working group will oversee this policy and monitor the extent to which we are achieving our commitments.
- **Policy and Governance Team:** Support the delivery of the EDIEB Policy and ensure equality initiatives, such as EIAs, are embedded in project management and council decision making.
- **HR:** Lead efforts to promote a diverse workforce, ensure inclusive recruitment practices, and monitor representation.
- **Procurement team:** Ensure suppliers meet EDIEB objectives and implement fair procurement practices.

11 GLOSSARY

In this Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging (EDIEB) Policy:

Keyword	Definition
Best practice	A working method, or set of working methods, that is officially accepted as being the best to use in a particular business or industry.
Commissioning Processes	A series of actions a person or organisation takes to formally choose who will provide goods or services to complete a special piece of work.
Consultation	The procedure of collecting or discussing people's perspectives on a particular topic.
Discrimination	The practice of treating a particular group of people or organisation differently from others, especially in an unfair way.
Equitable	Treating people or organisations fairly.
Framework	A system of rules, ideas, or beliefs that is used to plan or decide something.
Harassment	Behaviour that annoys or upsets someone.
Inclusive	Including many different types of people, who are all treated fairly and equally.
Inequalities	A situation in which money or opportunities are not shared equally between different groups in society.
Marginalised	To treat someone or something as if they are not important.
Procurement	The process of buying products or services.

Protected characteristic	An attribute of a person that is protected from discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.
Service delivery	The act of a particular department providing a service to its customers.
Socio-economic duty	A requirement by law for public bodies to consider the impact of their decisions on people that are at a disadvantage due to financial or economic matters.
Systemic disadvantages	Something that effects an organisation or group of people because of societal structures and systems
Tendering	The process of choosing the best or cheapest company to supply goods or services by requesting companies to make offers for supplying the goods or services.
Victimisation	The act of treating someone unfairly.

¹ <https://equalitytrust.org.uk/scale-economic-inequality-uk/>