



**STROUD
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**
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Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging Policy 2025 - 2029

April 2025

Corporate Policy &
Governance

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FOREWORD



At Stroud District Council, we work to ensure that Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging (EDIEB) underpins everything that we do. We strive to embed a culture of inclusion and belonging within our workforce, and we aim to ensure our communities feel safe and represented. We seek to go above and beyond our Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) by collaborating with residents, councillors, partner organisations and community groups to develop initiatives that bring people from different groups and backgrounds together, to create a welcoming and safe environment for everyone to live in, work in, and visit.

In this ever-changing political, economic, social, and environmental climate, there are areas of EDIEB that need significant work to ensure that these important values are embedded across the district. We want to work together with our communities to foster good relations, promote equality of opportunity, and eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of those with protected characteristics.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kathy O'Leary". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kathy O'Leary

Chief Executive, Stroud District Council

INTRODUCTION

Our Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging (EDIEB) policy shows our dedication to addressing inequalities and promoting EDIEB in everything we do. The UK has significant economic and social inequalities, and in the past four years, local authorities have faced many challenges. These include dealing with the effects of the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and deep-rooted systematic inequalities made worse by these events. These challenges have highlighted the need for active steps to be made to ensure fair access to services, representation, and meaningful community involvement.

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 (EQIAs), community engagement principles, and data driven approaches to meet our EDIEB objectives.

Please note, you can find the full list of terms with definitions within the glossary at the end of this policy.

What Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Belonging mean to us:

Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equality is the right for different people to be treated fairly and have the same opportunities.• Creating a safe environment by tackling discrimination, reducing inequalities and valuing individuals' differences.
Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversity refers to the representation of different identities, backgrounds and perspectives within a population or workforce.• By embracing diversity, we can draw on a range of lived experience to make better decisions and serve communities more effectively.
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inclusion is about creating environments where everyone feels valued and respected.• Inclusive practices are needed to engage with all residents effectively. All our services should meet the needs of diverse communities.
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equity recognises that different people have different needs and may require tailored or individual support to achieve equal outcomes.• This means using resources and policies to fix deep-rooted problems, like health differences or unfair access to services.
Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Belonging ensures individuals feel secure, accepted, and connected to their community or workplace.• Belonging is fostered by building trust, addressing discrimination, and promoting strong communities.

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 (2010) 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 Public Sector Equality Duty helps public bodies make better decisions, it encourages them to understand how their actions affect different people, so they can create policies and services that are appropriate and accessible for everyone. By understanding how their

activities impact various groups and how inclusive services can create opportunities, public bodies can provide more efficient and effective policies and services.

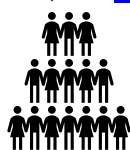
Section 1 of the Equality Act (2010), called the Socio-economic Duty, requires public bodies to take clear and effective steps to tackle inequalities caused by differences in jobs, education, where people live, or social class. Even though local authorities don't have to follow Section 1, the council thinks it's a helpful tool for public bodies to consider how their policies and decisions can address inequalities, as part of the broader Public Sector Equality Duty.

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.

ABOUT THE DISTRICT AND STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

1.1 Stroud District Demographics

Demographic data can be used to better understand the 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. This data has been provided from the [National Offender Management Information System \(NOMIS, 2021\)](#), Official Census and Labour Market Statistics, the [Office of National Statistics \(ONS, 2021\)](#) and [Inform Gloucestershire \(2021\)](#).



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



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

Age

- 21.4% aged 0-19
- 55.3% aged 20-64
- 23.3% aged 65 or above

Sex

- 51.1% Female
- 48.9% Male

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

Disability

- 6.3% Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a lot
- 10.7% Disabled under the Equality Act: Day-to-day activities limited a little
- 8.3% Not disabled under the Equality Act: Has long-term physical or mental health condition but day-to-day activities are not limited
- 74.7% Not disabled under the Equality Act: No long-term physical or mental health conditions

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

Gender Identity

- 94.5% Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth
- 0.1% Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given
- 0.1% Transgender woman
- 0.1% Transgender man
- 0.1% Non-binary
- 0% All other gender identities
- 5.2% Not answered

Religion

- 44.1% No religion
- 47.5% Christian
- 0.4% Buddhist
- 0.2% Hindu
- 0.1% Jewish
- 0.3% Muslim
- 0.1% Sikh
- 0.7% No religion
- 6.5% Not answered

Armed Forces Veterans

- 43,725 People previously served in regular UK armed forces
- 866 People previously served in reserve UK armed forces
- 203 People previously served in both regular and reserve UK armed forces

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

Employment

- 60.4% Economically active (excluding full-time students), 58.6% are in employment, 1.6% are unemployed
- 1.5% Economically active and a full-time student, 1.2% in employment, 0.3% unemployed
- 38.1% Economically inactive, 26.6% retired, 3.3% student, 3.2% looking after home or family, 2.9% long-term sick or disabled, 2.1% other

1.2 Stroud District Council Workforce Demographics

The demographic of the Stroud District Council workforce allows us to understand how representative we are of the district. This data has been provided in-house by the Human Resources team.

Age

- 12.4% aged 0 - 21
- 17.6% aged 21 - 30
- 19% aged 31 - 40
- 19.1% aged 41 - 50
- 22% aged 51 - 60
- 9.9% aged 60+

Gender Identity

- 24.4% Female
- 10.6% Male
- 61.9% Not applicable
- 3% Prefer not to disclose

Religion

- 23.88% No religion
- 8.26% Christian
- 8.26% Christian - Church of England
- 6.28% Atheist
- 3.95% Agnostic
- 2.15% Christian - Roman Catholic
- 0.9% Christian -Protestant
- 0.72% Islam - Sunni
- 0.36% Hinduism
- 0.18% Buddhist - Hinayana
- 0.18% Sikhism
- 31.78% Not recorded
- 10.23% Prefer not to disclose

Sex

- 61.4% Female
- 38.42% Male
- 0.54% Unspecified

Disability

- 4.67% Disabled
- 59.43% Not disabled
- 31.6% Not recorded
- 4.31% Not known

Sexual Orientation

- 52.24% Heterosexual
- 1.26% Gay
- 0.72% Bisexual
- 0.72% Lesbian
- 0.18% Asexual
- 0.72% Other
- 31.78% Not recorded

Race and Ethnicity

- 84.38% White British
- 2.69% White - Any Other
- 0.72% Asian/Asian British - Indian
- 0.72% Black/Black British Caribbean
- 0.54% Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups - White-Asian
- 0.54% Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups White-Black Caribbean
- 0.36% Asian/Asian British - Pakistani
- 0.36% Black/Black British - African
- 0.36% Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups - Any Other
- 0.18% Asian/Asian British - Any Other
- 0.18% Other Ethnic Group/Any Other
- 0.18% White Irish
- 1.8% Prefer not to disclose

1.3 Stroud District Council Councillor Demographics

These demographics indicate whether our councillors represent the majority of the ward that they appear for, and if they do not, which minority groups they need to engage with in order to ensure their thoughts and opinions are spoken for in local authority. This data has been provided in-house by the Human Resources team.

Religion

- 3.9% Christian
- 3.9% Christian - Church of England
- 2% Christian - Roman Catholic
- 2% Hinduism
- 2% Atheist
- 29.4% Prefer not to disclose
- 23.5% No religion
- 31.4% Not answered
- 2% Other

Age

- 0% aged 0 - 21
- 3.9% aged 21 - 30
- 7.8% aged 31 - 40
- 21.6% aged 41 - 50
- 19.6% aged 51 - 60
- 47.1% aged 61+

Disability

- 3.9% Disabled
- 64.7% Not disabled
- 31.4% Not answered or disclosed

Race and Ethnicity

- 41.2% White British
- 2% Asian/Asian British - Indian
- 2% White English
- 2% White Irish
- 2% White Welsh
- 23.5% Prefer not to disclose
- 27.5% Not answered

Sex

- 61.4% Female
- 38.42% Male
- 0.54% Unspecified

Gender Identity

- 5.9% Male
- 94.1% Not answered

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.”**

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 always.
 - b. Provide the best possible standards of service and value for money to our 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.

1.4 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.

1.5 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) Support employees by making provisions for prayer breaks and religious observances in the workplace.
- (k) Monitor and publish the make-up of our workforce as required by the specific public sector equality duty.

1.6 Specific Commitments in Member Champions

Member champions are elected council members who, besides their regular duties, make sure that the issues or groups they support are considered when making council policies and decisions. They give a voice to underrepresented groups or important issues. Member champions represent the entire district for the interests they support. Member champions include:

- Mental health champion
- Armed forces champion
- Migrant champion
- Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity champion
- Litter and clean environment champion

ACHIEVEMENTS

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

Community

- 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 Commitment

- Published 'Our Service Standards' to ensure consistent and inclusive customer care, demonstrating our commitment to treat everyone fairly and respectfully.
- The council now provides EDIEB 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.

Diverse and Engaged 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.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

1.7 Challenges

Differences in health and wellbeing: There are proven differences in health and wellbeing outcomes for people with certain protected characteristics.

Community cohesion: Increasing hate crimes and divisions in diverse communities across the country show the need for better relationships between different groups.

Violence against women and girls: Increasing levels of violence causing at least 1 in every 12 women will be a victim every year¹.

Barriers to access: Some groups may still find public services hard to use because of language barriers, physical, emotional, and psychological difficulties, lack of trust in the organisation's cultural awareness, or socio-economic issues, especially for those in poverty.

Supporting neurodivergent people in the workplace: Growing importance for neuroinclusion² at work as neurodivergent people are finding themselves disadvantaged because of the lack of adaptations made to address their needs.

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, especially 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 safety of the LGBTQIA+ community: Heightened concerns over the safety and victimisation of LGBTQIA+ community.

Declining rate of reading: Reading enjoyment levels have decreased by 8.8% in the UK for children aged 8 - 18. Reading frequency for children aged 8 – 18 is the lowest since 2005. The national reading age is 9 – 11 years old³.

Ex-service community and veterans: Difficulties readjusting to civilian life with mental health issues, homelessness, and re-establishing employment. Across the UK, 34.7% of veterans unprepared for life after service in the UK armed forces.⁴

1.8 Opportunities

Effective engagement: Engaging with our partners, seeking out opportunities, working collaboratively to meet the needs of the residents.

¹ [Call to action as VAWG epidemic deepens](#)

² [Neuroinclusion at work report 2024](#)

³ [Reading For Pleasure Research | National Literacy Trust](#)

⁴ [Preparedness to leave the UK armed forces: Veterans' Survey 2022, UK - GOV.UK](#)

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 and leadership development: Ensuring leadership and officers understand and raise awareness of the importance of diversity and how to tackle discrimination.

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 EDIEB.

It is important to note that Local Government Reorganisation is likely to present as both a challenge and an opportunity for EDEIB work. Challenges include disruption to established working practices, changes to resource allocation, changes in leadership and organisational culture, effective stakeholder engagement and disruptions in data management. Opportunities include, new perspectives and ideas, potential to improve representation and strengthen community relationships. At the time this policy was refreshed, the timescales for reorganisation for the Stroud district are still unclear and this policy will be updated as necessary through consultation with the EDEIB Working Group and reported to Full Council for approval.

AIMS

As part of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), the council is required to identify equality aims and objectives. Our broad aims remain focused on three themes which reflect the local government association (LGA) equality framework for local government 2020⁵ designed to help councils plan and deliver equality outcomes. 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 to become better informed in providing accessible services and use this learning 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.

⁵ [Equality Framework for Local Government | Local Government Association](#)

IMPLEMENTATION

We will keep improving our approach to equality, diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging by finding good practices in employment and service delivery. Measuring our performance helps us see if we are providing a safe and inclusive work environment, equal opportunities for our staff and residents, and tailoring our services to meet the needs of the Stroud district. To measure our performance effectively and show our commitment to EDIEB, we have an annual action plan monitored monthly by the EDEIB Working Group, with a yearly report on progress presented to Full Council. The annual action plans can be viewed on Stroud District Council's [website](#).

The annual action plan sets out specific actions with expected outcomes that we hope to deliver over this period, this allows us to self-assess our progress and provide an in-depth report of the range of work that has been undertaken to achieve these actions. The action plan includes a range of key objectives that underpin the three main aims of this policy.

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

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:** Should ensure EDEIB 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, report on progress made against the annual action plan and ensure equality initiatives, such as EQIAs, 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.

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.
Veteran	Veterans are defined as anyone who has served for at least one day in Her Majesty's Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or Merchant Mariners who have seen duty on legally defined military operations ⁶ .
Victimisation	The act of treating someone unfairly.

⁶ [Veterans: Key Facts](#)