

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Belonging 2025/26 Action Plan Progress Report

COMMUNITY

Listen and learn to become better informed in providing accessible services and use this learning to deliver services that work well for everyone.

No	ACTION TITLE	SERVICE AREA	DUE DATE	SUB ACTIONS/ MILESTONES	2025/26 PROGRESS	STATUS
C1	Develop a Consultation and Engagement Strategy which establishes clear standards and supporting practices for improving community engagement (Council Plan Action)	Policy and Performance	30-Sep-2025	Formulate a strategy to ensure meaningful consultation with diverse communities, focussing on accessibility, inclusivity and transparency.	The Consultation and Engagement Framework and Toolkit were approved at Strategy and Resources Committee on 2 October 2025, following a thorough public consultation that took place in the Spring 2025.	100% Complete
				Use this strategy to improve how we engage with individuals from underrepresented groups, the digitally excluded, and those with protected characteristic.	The Consultation and Engagement Framework include seven principles that will be consistently applied when undertaking consultation, two of those principles ensure that consultation will be inclusive and accessible, and that an appropriate mix of consultation and engagement methods will be used, this is to ensure we hear from a diverse range of audiences. The consultation and engagement hub also has resources and guidance published that will support officers in targeting these groups where appropriate.	100% Complete
				Actively involve underrepresented groups in consultation to sure their voices shape policies and services.	The public consultation on the way we consult and engage took pace from 10 May-30 June 2025. To ensure the consultation was accessible to all and reached those underrepresented groups, we provided the survey in a digital and paper format, we hosted workshops, and multiple drop-in sessions over the district. Drop-in sessions were held with the aim of reaching some of our harder to reach audiences, including those who may be digitally excluded or who don't	100% Complete

					ordinarily engage with the council. These were well received, and we gathered useful feedback to inform the strategy.	
				Implement a framework for our community engagement principles based on values of inclusion, transparency and collaboration.	The consultation and engagement framework supports the values of inclusion, transparency and collaboration and these will be fully embedded in the delivery of the framework.	Ongoing
C2	Deliver the Council Resident Engagement and Communication 12 Month Action Plan	Tenant Relationships	31-Mar-2026	Evaluate data from our council tenants to understand the diverse needs of tenants, including those with protected characteristics, language barriers and additional support needs.	<p>The tenant census collected demographic data and identified any language barriers or support needs for our tenants. This information was used to update and populate the housing system.</p> <p>Insights from this consultation also fed into the development of the Resident Engagement Strategy which was developed using a series of workshops in collaboration with council tenants.</p> <p>Further work has been identified on analysing census data and expanding engagement routes to ensure they are inclusive and accessible.</p>	100% Ongoing Next phase of work included in 2026/27 Action Plan
				Improve methods of engagement with tenants who are currently underrepresented, ensuring engagement options are accessible and cater to different needs, including ensuring all communications can be read through Reading Machines.	<p>We have co-designed a range of engagement opportunities which will appeal to all tenants, especially those groups previously unrepresented.</p> <p>We are confident that our communication is compatible with reading machines or via the recite me tool in operation on the SDC website.</p>	100% Ongoing Next phase of work included in 2026/27 Action Plan

				<p>Ensure regular feedback mechanism are in place to evaluate and improve the inclusivity of housing services and produce Tenant Feedback reports.</p>	<p>Three council tenants have joined the Housing Oversight Board where they are able to review performance data and be involved in decision-making processes.</p> <p>The quarterly tenant newsletter has also been re-established as one of the methods to improve engagement.</p>	
C3	Improve accessibility of information on the council's website.	Customer Contact Centre	31-Mar-2026	<p>Ensure online services and platforms are compliant with web content accessibility guidelines to improve useability for all residents, including reviewing the use of PDF documents on website and ensure they are compatible with 'Recite Me'.</p>	<p>The council's website accessibility was reviewed and updated with a wider refresh underway, supported by new digital design and content guidelines.</p> <p>PDFs (not including scanned documents) on the Council's website are compatible with the introduction of the Recite Me accessibility tool, with the toolbar required to be opened before viewing documents.</p>	<p>100% Ongoing Next phase of work included in 2026/27 Action Plan</p>
				<p>Implement feedback mechanisms to allow customers to highlight issues or suggest improvements.</p>	<p>A website feedback rating and comment box has been published on each webpage, and a website survey was undertaken which received 131 responses.</p> <p>Website feedback, website analytics and survey results were utilised to produce requirements for a refresh of the main SDC website. This will focus on improved navigation, accessibility and up to date, relevant content that complies with new corporate digital design guide and content writing standards.</p>	<p>100% Ongoing Next phase of work included in 2026/27 Action Plan</p>
				<p>Provide guidance for front line staff to ensure we effectively communicate with individuals for whom English is not their first language.</p>	<p>Customer Contact Officers completed Customer Excellence Training, and guidance on translation, interpretation and accessibility support has been</p>	<p>100% Complete</p>

					published to the internal hub for staff consideration.	
C4	Refresh and update the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy to ensure we manage unacceptable behaviour consistently and fairly.	Customer Contact Centre	31-Dec-2025	Review the personal security register process to ensure information can be accessed by those who need it.	The personal security register process has been mapped alongside the Unacceptable Behaviour and Incident/Accident Reporting procedures. Final tweaks are being made for build to commence, and accessibility is part of the requirements for the build.	100% Ongoing
				Review and refresh existing policy alongside similar policies such as 'Our Service Standards'.	A draft policy has been developed and will be reviewed in consultation with internal stakeholders. A new corporate reporting system is undergoing development, and the final policy is scheduled for consideration by Audit and Standards Committee, followed by full Council this year.	100% Ongoing as awaiting approval at Committee and Council
C5	Use Census Data to help inform us on the diverse and changing nature of communities within the district	Policy and Performance	30-Sep-2025	Develop a draft template of the ward data double page infographics for members.	Ward Data Profiles have been developed that provide clear, up-to-date breakdowns of district-level and ward-specific data, including population, households, age, sex, ethnicity, religion, English proficiency, disability, occupation, unpaid care, and population size. These have been published on the Members Hub and are due to be distributed more widely via the Parish and Town Council Hub and internal Hub for officer usage. The profiles will be published in conjunction with Inform Gloucestershire resources for officers to use when crafting policies, strategies, projects and initiatives.	100% Complete
				Complete infographics for all 27 wards and distribute to our members.		100% Complete
				Explore how Census and GCC Inform data can be used to support the delivery of council projects including the work around financial inclusion		100% Complete

C6	Ensure accessible and consistent communication of all information relating to council policies, strategies, decisions, events and services through a variety of communications channels.	Corporate Communications	31-Mar-2026	<p>Review and redesign communication materials to ensure they are accessible to people with disabilities, those with limited English proficiency and other marginalised groups (Recite Me and Simply Readable).</p>	<p>Colour contrast is considered more thoroughly when designing publicity materials, all website and social media images are given ALT TEXT descriptions, and plain English is used as a standard style of communication.</p> <p>The introduction of the ReciteMe tool also enables press releases to be customised, e.g. larger lettering, larger cursor, and changes to font, and text to speech, to become more accessible to those with visual impairments.</p>	<p>100% Ongoing Next phase of work included in 2026/27 Action Plan</p>
				<p>Use diverse communication channels, including digital platforms, translated materials and accessible formats (e.g. braille, large print, audio).</p>	<p>Digital platforms are used by the Council as well as specialist public authority newsletter software.</p> <p>The accessibility software used on the SDC website can read aloud news releases which are embedded into it. The other features including audio and font size adjustment are also compatible with the accessibility software.</p> <p>Stroud's Talking Newspaper is included in the media releases distribution list.</p>	<p>100% Ongoing Next phase of work included in 2026/27 Action Plan</p>
C7	Ensure veterans, serving personnel and their families have the same equality of access to public services.	Policy, Governance and Engagement	31-Oct-2025	<p>Add Armed Forces Personnel (veterans and families) to Council Equality Impact Assessments to ensure they can be given due regard in the same way as those with any other protected characteristic.</p>	<p>Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans have now been included as a protected group for consideration in Equality Impact Assessments.</p>	<p>100% Complete</p>

				Increase awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and the Armed Forces community and the issues that impact them.	The Armed Forces Veterans film has been showcased internally, and ongoing work has been identified to publish more widely to Members and Parish and Town Councils to be used as an internal educational tool. Additionally, the Veterans screensaver has been implemented across all officers' laptops increasing awareness and visibility of Veterans in work happening at the council.	100% Complete
C8	Improve accessibility of our leisure services to attract hard-to-reach groups, including those from different cultures.	Community Services	31-Mar-2026	Consult and engage with hard-to-reach groups in relation to leisure programme development by engaging through customer and non-customer forums and focus groups to understand the barriers to participation.	Consultation took place to understand how leisure facilities are used and to identify any barriers to participation for underrepresented groups. This has informed capital development into leisure facilities and identified further work on a three-year consultation and engagement plan designed to ensure continual engagement in customer experience and programme development. This includes a six-week programme engaging with the Stroud Community Youth Network to bring young people to the leisure centres for a day of activity for their enjoyment.	75% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group
				Work to understand the barriers to access for underrepresented groups to encourage the use of our leisure services.		40% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group
				Growing Together Project: Create an EDI action plan for the Museum in the Park and as part of this, deliver a project funded action.	The Growing Together Project is complete, and the Museum have developed an EDI Action Plan which will now be delivered and reported on as part of the 2026/27 Action Plan.	90% Awaiting approval from external body Next phase of work included

LEADERSHIP AND ORGANISATIONAL COMMITMENT

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

L1	Promote continuous learning and development in EDEIB by empowering leaders to champion EDEIB initiatives	Policy, Governance and Engagement	31-Mar-2026	Implement a new initiative requiring each service to develop and report on their specific EDEIB objectives within their service plans.	The Service Plan EDIEB objectives register was developed, and services have been reporting on progress on a quarterly basis.	100% Complete
				Organise and promote a series of EDEIB focused events and workshops accessible to all staff and councillors, ensuring wide participation across the organisation.	Several EDIEB focused events have been organised over the year, including Active Bystander and Coercive and Controlling Behaviour Awareness Training by the Hollie Gazzard Trust, and an LGBTQ+ Innovators Talk delivered by local speaker Sacha Coward. Other events delivered by Staff groups include Black History Month presentation, New Year, More Confidence Workshop delivered by the Women's Network, and a Wellbeing Maintenance Webinar delivered by the Men's Health Group.	100% Complete
				Regularly report on attendance and engagement metrics to assess reach and impact of these events and use feedback to continuously improve future initiatives.	Attendance and engagement have been reported and discussed at the EDIEB working group for continuous improvement.	100% Complete
L2	In line with the Procurement Act 2023, strengthen our procurement practices and guidance to ensure suppliers demonstrate a commitment to EDIEB principles.	Procurement	31-Oct-2025	Ensure key suppliers are compliant with their EDIEB policy and plans through ongoing contract management.	Resource allocation due to the implementation of the Procurement Act (2023) and the development of the new Social Value measures and measuring tool delayed the implementation of this objective and actions.	35% Action has been rolled over into 2026/27 Action Plan
				Provide guidance to officers on how to promote EDIEB when procuring goods, works and services.	The process of identifying key suppliers is nearly complete, and the	35% Action has been rolled

					<p>Corporate Contract Management Framework is being updated to reflect legislative changes.</p> <p>Actions have been slightly re-worded to reflect the scope and ongoing work towards this objective, this will be reported in the 2026/27 Action Plan.</p>	<p>over into 2026/27 Action Plan</p>
L3	Proactively use data and insight to inform decision-making and ensure equality and social value is embedded in the way we work (Council Plan Action).	Policy, Governance and Engagement	31-Oct-2025	Introduce a toolkit to measure social value across procurement and projects that works with a climate and nature decision-making tool.	<p>The Social Value Policy was refreshed and approved by Council in July 2025; the Social Value Measuring Tool allows an assessment of the amount of Social Value added in the council's awarded contracts.</p> <p>Reporting of Social Value from contracts over £90,000 has been included in the 2026/27 Action Plan.</p>	<p>100% Complete Reporting of Social Value will be included in 2026/27 Action Plan</p>
L4	Enhance the approach to the completion of the Equality Impact Assessments to ensure engagement and consultation takes place at an early stage to inform decision making (Council Plan Action)	Policy, Governance and Engagement	31-Oct-2025	Train leadership and project teams on how to complete EIAs to ensure they are applied consistently and effectively, and decisions are informed by robust equality assessments.	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment tool has been developed to enhance our approach to understanding the impact our services have on people with protected characteristics and other protected groups.</p> <p>The tool is now a two-stage approach where officers are encouraged to complete a stage one assessment to get an early understanding of the</p>	<p>100% Complete Reporting of Social Value will be included in 2026/27 Action Plan</p>

				Integrate EIA processes into project management stages.	<p>impact the policy, strategy, project or service has on communities and residents within the Stroud district. There is a review process built into the two-stage process, and mitigations register to have oversight of the actions in place to reduce negative impacts.</p> <p>The tool will roll out alongside the new committee report template in April/May 2026. Further work on embedding this tool will be reported on as part of the 2026/27 Action Plan.</p>	100% Complete Reporting of Social Value will be included in 2026/27 Action Plan
L5	Identify data bias when using data to inform decisions and mitigate where possible.	Policy, Governance and Engagement	31-Mar-2026	Ensure the implications of data bias in AI are understood and communicated across the council.	The council has developed an AI policy which was approved at Audit and Standards Committee, work is ongoing to ensure the use of AI and implications of data bias are embedded and understood across the council.	100% Complete
				Include guidance on data bias in the emerging Data Strategy and AI Policy.	Data bias has been highlighted as a part of the data quality challenge in the Data Intelligence Strategy. We reference as examples bias in engagement and consultation and highlight the need for appropriate oversight of AI usage ensuring there is always a 'human in the loop' to oversee decision making and mitigate biases in the model data.	100% Complete
DIVERSE AND ENGAGED WORKFORCE						
Foster a diverse and inclusive workforce where everyone is respected						
W1	Improve equality monitoring in relation to the composition of our workforce, recruitment, development and retention of employees and	Human Resources	31-Oct-2025	Use workforce data to monitor representation across all levels, identifying and addressing disparities.	Workforce data has informed the development of the Gender Pay Gap Action Plan and will continue to be incorporated into the 2026/27 Action Plan, alongside analysis of the Disability and Ethnicity Pay Gaps.	100% Ongoing Carried over into 2026/27 action plan as we are required to report on

<p>identify areas for improvement (Council Plan Action).</p>					<p>Gender and Ethnicity and Disability pay gaps in April 2027</p>
			<p>Review recruitment practices, including developing inclusive recruitment guidance.</p>	<p>Recruitment practices have been reviewed and will contribute to a revised recruitment policy and updated training for officers within the 2026/27 Action Plan.</p>	<p>100% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group</p>
			<p>Monitor recruitment data through the EDEIB Working Group to eliminate barriers faced by underrepresented groups.</p>	<p>Recruitment data will continue to be monitored to identify any barriers and representation across all levels.</p>	<p>100% Complete This has been completed for 2025/26, but we will continue with this action in 2026/27</p>
			<p>Review workforce policies to ensure policies such as flexible working, reasonable adjustments, and anti-discrimination measures are inclusive and effectively implemented.</p>	<p>Workforce policies are reviewed in line with current employment legislation and, where relevant, are presented to the EDIEB Working Group for consideration.</p>	<p>100% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group</p>

				Consider the use of workplace passports within Stroud District Council to establish the need for them.	Workplace Passports will be implemented as part of the updated recruitment process, with progress reported through the 2026/27 Action Plan.	100% Complete
W2	Enhance employee performance through training and development.	Human Resources	31-Mar-2026	Provide EDIE training for all senior leaders to ensure they have the knowledge and skills to lead inclusively.	Cultural Competence and Conscious Inclusion Training, along with Neurodiversity Awareness Training, has been delivered to the Leadership and Management team. Training will continue to be provided as part of the corporate induction programme, alongside additional ad-hoc training identified through the EDIEB Working Group.	100% Complete
				Provide targeted development opportunities for staff from marginalised backgrounds to promote career progression.	Training opportunities continue to be promoted through the Pledge 24 groups and the Council's staff network groups.	100% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group
				Provide equality and unconscious bias training to all employees.	The Unconscious Bias e-learning module will now be mandatory for all employees to ensure they understand the concept of unconscious bias and the steps they can take to mitigate its impact.	100% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group

				Provide specialised workshops for recruitment managers.	This will continue to be provided as part of the new recruitment process when finalised.	100% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group
W3	Increase employee engagement.	Human Resources	31-Mar-2026	Conduct annual employee surveys to assess experiences related to inclusion and belonging, discuss findings with the EDEIB Working Group and use the findings to inform workforce policies.	The annual staff survey has been completed, and the findings have been shared with the EDIEB Working Group. The insights gathered are being used to inform the Council's learning and development provision. In addition, a targeted learning and development survey was circulated to understand how staff feel about developing their skills in the context of Local Government Reorganisation.	100% Complete Action will be rolled into 2026/27 Action Plan as surveys are conducted annually/quarterly
				Continue to support staff groups in organising events and initiatives that amplify their voices, promote inclusion and raise awareness.	An assessment of the staff groups has also been undertaken to explore staff views on the purpose of the groups, the support they require, and opportunities for improvement. The findings will inform an implementation plan to ensure the staff groups remain purposeful, effective, and aligned with the needs of council staff.	100% Complete Action will be rescoped and rolled into 2026/27 Action Plan
W4	Demonstrate inclusive recruitment practices and remove potential barriers to working at the council.	Human Resources	31-Oct-2025	Review the Job vacancies page on the SDC website to promote our commitment to a diverse and engaged workforce.	As part of the review of our Recruitment process we will be updating our job pages to offer support for neurodiverse applicants.	100% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB

						Working Group
				Promote our consideration to part-time and job-sharing roles where applicable.	Consideration of job-sharing and part-time opportunities is now embedded at the outset of the recruitment process for all managers.	100% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group
				Work with staff groups to understand the barriers to job-sharing and part-time opportunities.	Further engagement with the Parent and Carers Staff Group is planned to help identify any barriers to accessing job-sharing or part-time opportunities as part of the wider staff group review.	100% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group
				Encourage and promote for recruitment managers to use Gender Decoders when writing job descriptions and adverts to attract applicants of any gender.	The use of gender decoders will be incorporated into the guidance provided to managers to support the creation of inclusive and unbiased job descriptions.	100% Ongoing Work will form part of BAU, and updates will be provided to the EDIEB Working Group
W5	Encourage diversity and champion equality within our workplace and support the Staff	Human Resources	31-Oct-2025	Understand the barriers for neurodivergent people at Stroud District Council and how we can support them.	Managers have completed Neurodiversity Awareness training designed to strengthen their confidence in communicating with and supporting neurodivergent colleagues.	100% Complete

	<p>Network Groups (Council Plan Action).</p>			<p>Understand the barriers to recruitment for neurodivergent applicants at Stroud District Council and identify actions to remove barriers.</p>	<p>A new section offering support for neurodivergent applicants has been drafted for inclusion on the Council's vacancies webpages. This update will be implemented as part of the ongoing recruitment review.</p>	<p>100% Complete</p>
				<p>Work with staff groups to understand barriers for neurodivergent people</p>	<p>The training content was developed in partnership with the Disability and Neurodivergence Action (DNA) Staff Group to ensure it was relevant and meaningful.</p>	<p>100% Complete</p>