

Equality Objectives

Equality is fundamental to Reading's success as a diverse, multicultural and cohesive town. We see Equality as a golden thread of running through everything we do: from the Reading in 2030 vision of celebration of the rich diversity of communities across the town, greater equality and inclusion across the town's communities and a broad, diverse and inclusive cultural life; through our Corporate, Directorate and Service plans. It is a testament to everyone's commitment that our 2011 residents survey showed that 81% of respondents believe people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area and 76% of respondents felt they had been treated with respect and consideration by local public services.

Our key objectives are:

Celebrate Diversity and Ensure Strong Communities

- To ensure that there is strong infrastructure of voluntary sector groups representing the diversity of the community in Reading and contributes to the cohesion we must maintain.
- To ensure that our Cultural Partnership is inclusive and provides a platform for residents, sustaining and promoting minority sport and local arts groups, artists, writers and musicians.
- To use the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games as a catalyst for Reading people to be involved in this once in a life-time event and that it leaves a legacy for Reading which particularly inspires people to remain engaged in sporting activities at their level, whatever their age or background.

Challenging Discrimination and Hate Crime

- To continue an effective challenge to hate crime through multi-agency working; review our own hate incident reporting process and monitor and report complaints by equality groups. We will support schools in targeting interventions for children and young people who are being bullied or experiencing harassment of any kind.
- To prevent and tackle domestic violence by educating children: delivering the Women's Aid 'Expect Respect' toolkit to schools; supporting children who have witnessed domestic violence; making homes safer through the Sanctuary Scheme and training frontline staff.

Enhancing Life chances

- To support schools to address inequalities in attainment outcomes working with them to target interventions for children on free school meals, special educational needs and black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, particularly Pakistani, Black Caribbean and Mixed Black Caribbean/White and Gypsy Roma and Traveller heritage pupils, bilingual children and those with English as an Additional language.
- To provide support to ensure that BME pupils are not disproportionately excluded and that exclusions of pupils with SEN and Statements of SEN continues to decrease; identifying schools with high rates of BME or SEN exclusion and agree an action plan.
- To meet the need for specialist appropriate Housing and ensure that resources are targeted to best effect through the development of extra care, affordable and supported housing.
- To ensure that services for people who are assessed as "greater moderate" are not changed or removed until the individual can be kept safe and healthy by alternative support or preventative services.
- To bring forward plans for a comprehensive policy which provides a continuum of care so that people do not 'fall through the net'.

- To promote employment opportunities for people with mental health issues, learning disabilities and other support needs, working with community and voluntary sector partners to develop and promote employment opportunities e.g. through job carving, recruitment by work trial.
- To provide free unrestricted bus travel for disabled residents and their carers. Concessionary pass holders who cannot use, or have great difficulty in using ordinary public transport, are also able to use Readibus free of charge at any time.

Equality in Employment

- To continue to work towards a representative workforce, particularly in terms of ethnic minority staff in senior positions and of disabled staff across the board. We will review our targets when the data from the 2011 Census is released.
- To continue our low pay policy, by which no employee is employed on a spinal column point lower than scp11, monitoring and reviewing our pay rates, allowances, and working practices, to ensure that we maintain fairness and consistency for the future. We will encourage local employers to adopt a living wage policy and we will work with local community partners to promote the concept of the living wage.

Making Equality and Inclusion Part of Everything We Do

- To improve the consistency and parity of the information we collect across equality groups for both workforce and services, consulting with staff on how we can collect workforce information on sexuality and religion and including questions on age and religion/belief in our next staff survey.
- To ensure a consistent approach to evaluating how a decision or policy will impact on residents, service users and employees who are protected under the Equality Act.