

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

2025

Foreword

Welcome to South Gloucestershire Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

The council is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – this means fair **access** to opportunities and parity of **experiences** and **outcomes for all** across all areas of life (such as housing, health, education, employment etc.).

Equality requires proactively identifying and understanding inequalities, and most importantly, **taking action** to eliminate them. This is not only a legal requirement, nor is it only morally right - it also brings **widespread social, economic and environmental benefits for everyone** across the district.

In contrast, inequalities are unequal access to opportunities, unequal outcomes, and unequal experiences in any area of life, and they are inherently unfair. They occur when people are treated differently (or the same) in a way that has negative impacts for individuals and/or communities. It can be, for example, because of their sex, ethnicity, where they live, their background or even because of something that happened before they were born. Inequalities can have a lifetime of impact. Some communities and individuals face systemic inequalities that are felt throughout their life and can impact through generations.

Inequalities have a cost. As well as the impact on people and communities, organisations such as the Council, NHS, Police, voluntary and community sector partners and others often face the cost of the symptoms and impacts of inequality and business and economic growth do not experience the clear benefits which equality brings. If the causes of inequality are not addressed then inequalities will continue into the future, negatively impacting people, communities, economies and whole societies, as well as our climate and environment.

This is why we place great importance in in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. It is a Policy which is about **taking proactive action** to understand and eliminate inequalities in order that **everyone** across our district realises the myriad moral, social, environmental and economic benefits which it aims to deliver. This work is vital in improving social and economic prosperity for all residents, businesses and the district as a whole.

If you would like to find out more about our work you can visit our [Tackling Inequalities Plan 2024-28](#) and our [Annual Tackling Inequalities Reports](#), or please do contact me at any time.



Councillor Alison Evans

Cabinet Member for Cost of Living, Equalities and Public Health

Contents

Foreword	2
Contents.....	3
Policy Aim.....	4
Policy Principles	5
What are Inequalities?	8
Our Strategic Approach	9
Our Priorities	10
Ensuring Specific Needs are Identified and Met.....	11
Working in Partnership	12
Appendix 1 – Equality Framework	13
Equality Responsibilities	13
Equality	13
Management and Employee Duties	14
Document Control.....	16

Policy Aim

South Gloucestershire will be a place where everyone feels that they belong, have a voice, and have an equal opportunity to achieve their aspirations and to thrive.

We will create a fairer, safer, accessible, and inclusive South Gloucestershire where disparities in life chances and outcomes are proactively eliminated.

This aim is at the heart of our organisational values and is a fundamental part of our Council Plan, which includes a commitment to reduce inequalities.

In delivering this aim, South Gloucestershire Council will mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion into all aspects of our policy development and service delivery so that we meet the needs of all communities and individuals across the district.

The ultimate responsibility for implementing this Policy and achieving change lies with Executive Councillors and Senior Leaders. Successful progress will involve the participation of all Councillors and all Staff who are expected to ensure that the following principles are applied through everything that the council does. Effective governance will support them in this work.

Policy Principles

Taking Action

South Gloucestershire will be a place where everyone feels that they belong, have a voice, and can achieve their aspirations and thrive.

We will take a proactive, action-based approach to tackling inequalities. Tackling inequalities may not be easy and it can take a long time to completely eliminate them. But we will work together to understand where inequalities exist and our actions will enable us to work in the most meaningful and impactful way – and be a ‘positive disruption’ where needed. We will do something about it.

We will work across South Gloucestershire to understand and respond to the issues, in order to reduce and eliminate inequalities that exist and prevent future inequalities. This will help us to do the best for our communities and support people to lead their best, healthiest lives.

Our actions will be supported by a [Tackling Inequalities Plan](#) which, developed in partnership with our communities, will set out priority areas and objectives. We will regularly monitor and publicly report progress against all of these objectives on at least an annual basis.

This means that we will be focussing relentlessly on actions that make a positive difference to our communities and our workforce.

Eliminating inequalities is and will remain everyone’s business.

In support of this, we will operate a suite of robust Policies which support and empower our staff to deliver action which makes a difference to our communities and our workforce, and in so doing, reduce and eliminate inequalities. We will also operate a robust Equality Framework so that all council staff are aware of their clear duties, responsibilities and obligations.

Fairness

We will champion and fight for fairness and will not accept inequality in any form.

Leadership

South Gloucestershire Council will be a leader in innovating to reduce inequality of all descriptions and advance equality for all our communities and our workforce. The whole of the council will take Leadership of this – we are **FOR** all communities, individuals and staff.

Intersectional Approaches

We will acknowledge that social categories such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, ability, sexual or religious orientation, etc. are all interconnected and that inequalities can be compounded based on this. We will ensure that these interconnections are recognised throughout all our work.

Understanding Data

We will continue to gather and interrogate data from a range of sources to help us to understand where inequalities currently exist, may emerge or widen across the district and across all Protected Characteristics. We will use both quantitative and qualitative data and information wisely to understand our 'direction of travel'.

We also understand that data sharing can be a barrier, and we will agree to share data in order to achieve our overall aims.

We will conduct an annual 'spotlight research' activity, with the aim of gaining a deeper, fuller and up-to-date understanding of peoples' experiences in respect of all Protected Characteristics. This research will focus on South Gloucestershire but will also include regional and national experiences, and each year a different Protected Characteristic will be spotlighted, with other Protected Characteristics included to ensure we have an intersectional approach.

Understanding Lived Experience

We recognise that some individuals and groups are disproportionately affected by trauma and adversity. We commit to take a trauma informed approach to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. This involves developing our knowledge and understanding through an intersectional lens and working to address the underlying systemic causes that contribute to inequality and disadvantage wherever possible.

We will work together with all our communities - to understand and empower communities to shape their own lives, working on what is important and what is needed to meet aspirations and priorities for individuals, families and communities. Through this approach, we will build strong relationships and trust with and between communities.

Asking Difficult Questions

We recognise that trying to understand inequalities can be challenging. We will not shy away from difficult questions and conversations and we will be brave in our decision making.

A Whole System Approach

We need a whole system approach rather than a range of interventions or isolated approaches. This means all organisations and parts of our local system work together in a joined-up way, rather than separately.

This approach is not about a new range of services, rather it is developing a shared corporate and partnership vision and culture to help enable us to build on what we do well.

A Focus on Prevention

We will focus on prevention and early intervention by understanding and responding to the causes of inequalities. At the same time, we will address the impacts of inequalities so that communities and individuals are supported robustly.

Legal Duties

As a public body we are bound by the **Public Sector Equality Duty** which is defined within the Equality Act as:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a. Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Many people in South Gloucestershire are held back because of inequality, discrimination and lack of opportunity connected to one or more of the following characteristics that are protected under the Equality Act 2010:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender Reassignment
4. Marriage or Civil Partnership
5. Pregnancy and Maternity
6. Race
7. Religion or Belief
8. Sex
9. Sexual Orientation

In addition to these nine 'Protected Characteristics', South Gloucestershire Council also clearly recognises that many people are held back because of inequality, discrimination and lack of opportunity connected to the following characteristics:

1. Socioeconomic status
2. Care Experience
3. Armed Forces Community

We commit to fulfilling both the letter and the spirit of our legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation (including the Human Rights Act 1998) relating to promoting equality.

This policy re-states our long-held commitment to tackling inequalities, not just because of legal duty, but also because doing so helps create a more successful South Gloucestershire.

What are Inequalities?

A simple definition is that inequalities are unequal opportunities and outcomes.

Inequalities, however, are complex and manifest in many ways that are often linked to each other, which increases their impact. Inequalities like income gap, educational opportunities and racial inequalities, are often linked to inequalities such as access to green spaces, employment and good housing.

Inequalities are fundamentally unfair. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and to have the same life chances. But that is not the case for many people. People experience inequalities for a range of reasons that involve reduced access to opportunities, and/or differential treatment and outcomes that have negative impacts. It can be because of prejudice or bias associated with e.g. their sex or ethnicity, where they live or even because of something that happened before they were born. Inequalities can have a lifetime impact. Some communities and individuals experience systemic inequalities that are felt throughout their life and the impacts can be passed down through generations.

Inequalities have a cost. As well as the impact on people and communities, organisations such as the Council, NHS, Police, voluntary and community sector partners and others often face the direct and indirect costs of the symptoms and impacts of inequality, and society at large does not experience the benefits of equality. If the causes of inequality are not addressed and symptoms alone are treated (such as reduced health and wellbeing amongst individuals experiencing inequalities), then future problems are not avoided or mitigated and the costs remain vast.

Inequalities have a significant impact across all areas of life and affect everyone. Our approach is therefore inclusive, taking into account geographical and socio-economic inequalities as well as the Protected Characteristics set out in law and other groups known to be particularly vulnerable to inequalities and their impacts. The diagram below shows the inequalities that we acknowledge and aim to address through this inclusive approach.

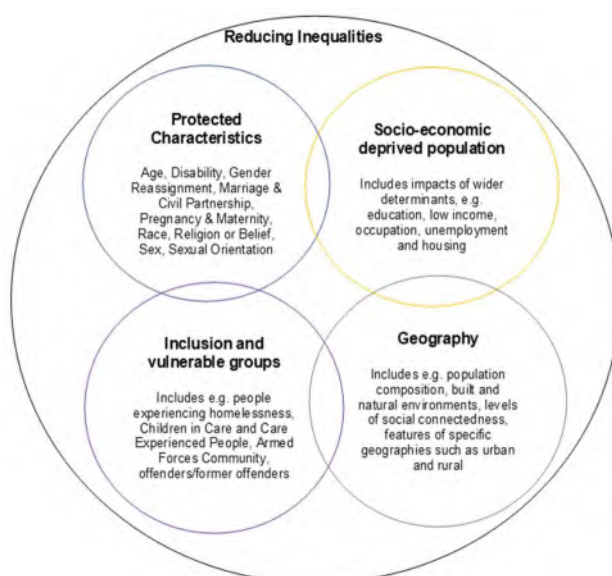


Figure 1: Diagram showing the broad range of inequalities that South Gloucestershire Council acknowledges and aims to address.

Our Strategic Approach

As stated, we will take a proactive, **action-based approach** to tackling inequalities. This means that a core aspect of all that we do is proactive and involves continuous work to identify inequalities - an understanding of what inequalities exist is essential for effective action to be taken, and progress delivered in tackling and eliminating them.

All areas of council activity, as core to our daily work, will take a proactive approach to monitoring and identifying inequalities across all aspects of their activity.

We will regularly check our progress so that continuous improvement is delivered for all. The diagram below demonstrates this process of continuous improvement in relation to reducing inequalities.

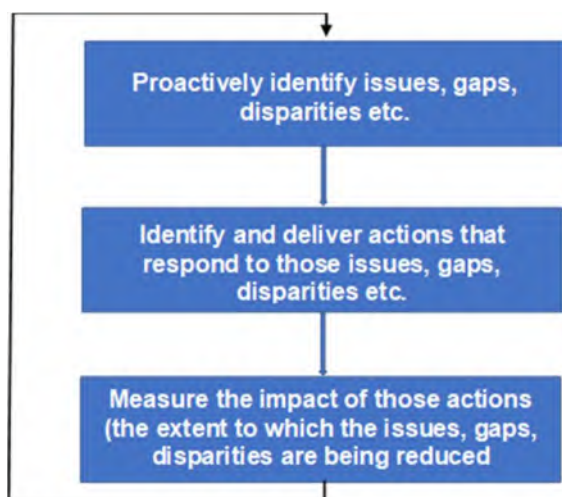


Figure 2: Diagram demonstrating a continuous loop of improvement in relation to reducing inequalities.

Our Priorities

There are many types of inequalities, some of which are more visible than others. People may experience a combination of inequalities that impact their lives. It is a challenge to understand the true picture of inequalities in South Gloucestershire, but we have a large amount of data and information that can help.

The Council has conducted an 11-year analysis which triangulates national data, local data and community feedback. As a result of this work, 10 **‘Priority areas’** have been identified where inequalities exist which have a significant impact on life outcomes; in no particular order these are:

- **Health and Wellbeing**
- **Educational attainment and experience**
- **Poverty & financial hardship**
- **Housing**
- **Adult Social Care**
- **Children’s Social Care**
- **Employment**
- **Accessibility, especially in terms of:**
 - Digital inclusion,
 - Transport,
 - The built and natural environment, and
 - Access to the wider economy
- **Tackling inequalities as part of work to address the Climate and Nature Emergency**
- **Hate Crime**

The evidence shows that inequalities across these areas are persistent and, in some cases, growing at an alarming rate. It is also noted that across the system, there is much more we can do in taking focussed action to address them.

In-line with our policy principle of **Taking Action**, our Tackling Inequalities Plan is about South Gloucestershire Council’s objectives for tackling inequalities in our district in a way that should ultimately remove them. Each priority area has a set of objectives with measures of success which will be used to report our progress openly and transparently on an annual basis.

Ensuring Specific Needs are Identified and Met

Every single person possesses numerous Protected Characteristics at all times and the council works for every individual and community, therefore all Protected Characteristics must be considered in every council decision. As well as tackling discrimination, harassment and abuse through policies, procedures and education, we also recognise that to properly address inequality and advance equality we need to focus on the needs of people in specific ways. For example, we will:

- i. Work **FOR** and **WITH** our ageing population, factoring issues such as accessible places and services into long term service design and ensuring an Age Friendly South Gloucestershire.
- ii. Work **FOR** and **WITH** young people, proactively seeking their voice and input and designing age-appropriate services; this specifically includes services for our Looked After young people and Care Leavers.
- iii. Work **FOR** and **WITH** disabled people, proactively adopting, implementing and promoting the Social Model of Disability through all of our work; this includes recognising and removing barriers faced by disabled people, providing flexible services, accessible places and communicating in a range of accessible formats.
- iv. Work **FOR** and **WITH** our local culturally and ethnically diverse communities to meet their needs, fostering an inclusive environment and addressing racism in all its forms.
- v. Work **FOR** and **WITH** women and girls, improving safety, challenging sexism and misogyny, tackling Violence Against Women and Girls and ensuring our services, community spaces and workplace consider women's needs and circumstances.
- vi. Work **FOR** and **WITH** men and boys, ensuring they can access spaces and information which tackle gender stereotypes, challenge sexism and misogyny, tackle Violence Against Women and Girls, improve mental health and wellbeing and educational outcomes.
- vii. Work **FOR** and **WITH** LGBTQ+ people, developing distinct procedures and pathways to support access to services, delivering campaigns, initiatives, events and visible, action-based allyship including for trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people.
- viii. Work **FOR** and **WITH** our faith groups building fruitful and constructive relationships, challenging prejudice and promoting understanding of different religions and beliefs, and meet the needs of people of faith in our services, community spaces and workplace.
- ix. Work **FOR** and **WITH** our Armed Forces Community, ensuring that we meet the needs of veterans, regular personnel, reservists and their families including bereaved families, in our services and workplace.

Working in Partnership

We will work in partnership with our valued, expert partners – **South Gloucestershire Equalities Voice**, welcoming and inviting challenge and scrutiny to our work and, critically, as a key component of ensuring we deliver against our aims and objectives.

We will take a '**whole system approach**' rather than a range of interventions or isolated approaches. This means all organisations and parts of our local system working together in a joined-up way, rather than separately. This approach is not about a new range of services, rather it is developing a shared corporate and partnership vision and culture to help enable us to build on what we do well.

Member organisations of South Gloucestershire Equality Voice include:



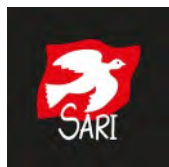
The council works with [Age UK South Gloucestershire](#) to hear the voices of older people in the district and take action to meet identified needs.



The council supports an area wide [LGBTQ+ Network](#) which is managed by the [Diversity Trust](#) and which acts as a voice LGBTQ+ communities and to bring issues to the attention of statutory organisations.



The South Gloucestershire Multi-Faith Forum continued to grow during the year and is spearheaded by [Southern Brooks Community Partnerships](#).



Stand Against Racism and Inequality (SARI) provides free and confidential support for anyone who is a victim of hate crime whether that's based on race, faith, disability, sexual orientation, transgender identity, age, or sex. SARI also works to build greater understanding and respect for diversity and difference within our community.



South Gloucestershire Council supports [South Gloucestershire Disability Equality Network \(SGDEN\)](#), which is a group of disabled people and organisations representing disabled people in the district. SG DEN is a valuable source of advice to the Council on how best to serve disabled residents and an influential voice for the disabled community.



The [South Gloucestershire Race Equality Network \(SGREN\)](#) meets regularly to discuss topics affecting culturally diverse communities in the district and advise statutory bodies of their findings, issues arising and recommendations for actions to address them.

Appendix 1 – Equality Framework

Equality Responsibilities

Complying with The Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty, Council Policy and the council's Equality Responsibilities (see below) requires the collection, monitoring, analysis and utilisation of customer data, active engagement with all diverse communities and the proactive implementation of action to tackle the inequalities faced by our communities.

The key purpose of all council work is to ensure parity of take-up, satisfaction and outcomes in respect of all services (whether commissioned or delivered in-house) and of employment opportunities and experience for all customer groups.

Equality

1. The Equality Act 2010 places a legal duty on the council to improve equality as a service provider, a commissioner of services and as an employer by:
 - a) Eliminating discrimination, harassment, and victimisation of individuals and groups based on 'protected characteristics' (Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or Belief; Gender; Sexual Orientation; or Marriage / Civil Partnership);
 - b) Improving equality of opportunity between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not;
 - c) Fostering good relations between those who share protected characteristics and those who do not;
2. It is important to note that South Gloucestershire Council Policy also recognises the Armed Forces Community, Care Leavers and Socioeconomic groups as if they were 'protected characteristics'.
3. "Equality Focussed" is clearly set out as one of the council's core values. This value ultimately means having a clear focus on ensuring parity of take-up, satisfaction and outcomes in respect of all services (whether commissioned or delivered in-house) and of employment opportunities and experience for all customer groups
4. The Council has a Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy which details our commitments and aims. We are committed to valuing and treating all people with dignity and respect. Our approach is threefold:
 - a) To recognise that people, whether as communities or individuals, will have specific needs that need to be recognised and addressed for them to develop to their full potential;
 - b) To acknowledge that the majority view is not always right and the rights of minorities need to be protected;

- c) To mainstream equalities into all aspects of our policy development and service delivery.

Management and Employee Duties

5. All employees, supervisors and managers are responsible for ensuring equality in their treatment of colleagues, service users and the public in their work and decision making. This Framework describes the obligations depending on your role.
6. Overall, the Equality Framework is based on the principle that the people responsible for controlling an aspect of work are responsible for ensuring that equality obligations are met as it is carried out.

Strategic Leadership Team (SLT)

1. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for the overall leadership and effective operation of the management of equality within the council.
2. In doing so they are supported by the Tackling Inequalities Governance Group which provides guidance and advice.
3. The Director of Place is the corporate champion for Equality and Diversity. This post holder provides internal and external leadership and raises equality issues at SLT.
4. The Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) are responsible for the ensuring that the council is building strong relationships and trust across all communities.

Tackling Inequalities Governance Group (TIGG)

5. The Tackling Inequalities Governance Group (TIGG) provides guidance and advice to SLT on the implementation of the council's equality management framework, and on developments in the management of equality.
6. TIGG includes SLT and representatives from all departments of the Council and provides a network of good practice advice which can be called on by services and departments.
7. TIGG is also responsible for co-ordination of the council's Tackling Inequalities Plan and its Annual Tackling Inequalities Report.

Directors and Departmental Management Teams

8. Directors are responsible for ensuring the council's EDI Policy and Equality Framework is effectively implemented across their department, and that Eq|AA's are included as part of all Cabinet / officer reports and that all 'Business as Usual' Eq|AAs are completed and progress reported via the Eq|AA Digital Dashboard.

Service Directors

9. Service Directors are responsible for the equality performance of activities and premises under their control. This requires them to
 - Ensure that all managers and staff under their control are aware of the objectives set out in the Council Plan and Tackling Inequalities Plan and the work required to deliver those objectives.
 - Ensure that managers under their control are aware of their responsibilities and support them in meeting those responsibilities.
 - Ensure that people who manage and carry out work within their area are provided with suitable training, information, supervision and systems of work.
 - Ensure Eq|AA's are included from the outset as part of policy

development and review; and that EqIAAs are included as part of all decisions on changes to service.

- Ensure EqIAA's are included from the outset as part of all commissioning and procurement activity
- Carry out EqIAAs on a regular basis ('Business as Usual EqIAAs') using performance measures and consultation results to identify imbalances in outcomes related to protected characteristics, and to implement changes to address these imbalances where appropriate.
- Provide robust and accurate information and input to the council's Annual Tackling Inequalities Report.

Line Managers

10. Line Managers are responsible and accountable for ensuring equality both in the delivery of their service and in the management of their staff. Line managers will often be called upon by Service Directors to work on EqIAAs.

All Staff

11. All staff are responsible for championing equality within their work and delivery of services.
12. Achieving this will involve taking reasonable care to ensure there is no discrimination based on protected characteristics in their delivery of services, or in their interaction with colleagues, partners, and the public.

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