

Bristol City Council



Equity and Inclusion

Annual Progress Report 2025-26

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Executive Summary

Bristol City Council has an Equity and Inclusion Strategic Framework (2023–2027), built around five core equality objectives:

Equality Objective	Our ambition	What we cover in this report
E01: Leadership	"a respected reputation for innovative best practice."	Our governance processes, activities of our Directors and senior leaders and our staff-led groups. Also includes activity of our 'One City Approach'.
E02: Diverse workforce	"a diverse and inclusive workforce which reflects our communities."	Progress towards diversifying our workforce, the annual staff survey, workforce diversity initiatives and review frameworks.
E03: Council Services	"Equitable, inclusive and quality services that promote wellbeing."	Equality action plans, equality impact assessments and data and evidence. We also cover a selection of policies and strategies.
E04: Partnerships	"To lead and strengthen partnerships so everyone shares in the city's success."	Our partnership work such as tackling race inequality, the Bristol Equality Network and the equality commissions.
E05: Communities	"Tackle prejudice and promote understanding amongst communities".	Community work including community cohesion, support for refugees and asylum seekers, and our Health Equity project.

Overview and Strategic Direction

This 2025–26 annual report details our progress against the strategic framework, demonstrating the breadth of equity and inclusion activity across the council. The report includes several inspiring case-studies. Whilst these represent only a snapshot of ongoing work, they illustrate our cross-cutting approach and commitment to transparency, accountability, and the Public Sector Equality Duty. We want Bristol to be a city where everyone's hopes and aspirations can be realised, and where success is shared across all communities.

Key Trends and Achievements

Leadership

We have well-established equity and inclusion governance processes in place with regular senior leadership engagement. Equity and inclusion is embedded through established boards, directorate working groups and regular monitoring. Senior leaders demonstrate visible commitment through citywide partnerships, peer review and political engagement. External challenge, including the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge, has recognised we have a positive organisational culture, while

highlighting the need for us to focus on activities the where the impact on equity will be greatest.

Diverse Workforce

Workforce diversity has remained broadly stable, with gradual improvements in data quality and self-disclosure across most characteristics. Representation of racially minoritised colleagues in managerial and leadership roles has increased, supported by targeted development and visible leadership commitment, while learning and development activity continues to strengthen inclusive practice across the organisation. Our new Workforce Strategy and action plan will help us deliver the updated Corporate Strategy by aligning our people, culture, and capabilities with our vision and priorities.

Council Services

Equity and inclusion continue to be embedded into service planning and decision making. Equality Action Plans and Equality Impact Assessments are used effectively to inform policy, commissioning and budget decisions. Use of data, including census, quality of life and deprivation data, supports more informed and transparent decisions. A wide range of inclusive service developments and policy initiatives demonstrate the council's commitment to promoting wellbeing and reducing inequalities.

Partnerships

The council continues to play a strong convening role across the city, through long standing partnerships focused on e.g. race equality, Disability equity and health inequalities. Collaborative initiatives such as citywide workforce data products and employment events show the value of partnership in tackling systemic issues. Feedback from partners and participants is positive, with growing alignment around shared priorities and evidence led action.

Communities

Investment in communities has been sustained despite financial pressures. Work to improve community cohesion has highlighted where trust and visibility need to improve, and meaningful steps have been taken to listen to residents, involve communities and strengthen relationships across neighbourhoods. Community led activity continues to strengthen local resilience, wellbeing and social connection.

Challenges

Resource Constraints

Financial pressures continue to shape the pace and scale of activity. In some service areas, recruitment delays and competing priorities have slowed progress against Equality Action Plans. The council has sought to mitigate this through prioritisation, partnership working and more targeted use of data, but pressures are expected to continue.

Changing landscape

Some elements of our Equality and Inclusion Strategic Framework 2023-27 require updating to reflect current priorities and how the council now operates. A number of performance measures are no longer actively tracked or are outside the council's direct control, which limits how useful they are. Community cohesion has become a more pressing priority, and as the local stakeholder landscape continues to change, our approach to engagement and drawing on lived experience needs to keep

pace. As we develop a new strategy, there is an opportunity to provide clearer direction on co production and to be more explicit about how we will address structural inequality, with focused actions across all equality areas.

Perceptions and Outcomes

While overall confidence in leadership and organisational direction has improved, staff survey results show that perceptions of fairness have declined for some groups. At city level, persistent inequalities in health, deprivation and satisfaction with services remain evident. Bridging the gap between improved processes and lived experience continues to be a key challenge.

Next Steps

The council will focus on prioritising actions that deliver the greatest impact on equitable outcomes. Key areas include co-production of a new Equity and Inclusion Policy and Strategy for approval in 2027-28, strengthening inclusive leadership, addressing workforce representation gaps, improving experiences of fairness at work, and embedding Disability equity more consistently across services. Continued engagement with staff, communities and partners will be central to shaping priorities, alongside improved communication, clearer accountability and better use of evidence to track progress.

Conclusion

This report shows sustained and wide ranging progress on equity and inclusion across leadership, workforce, services, partnerships and communities. It also highlights the scale and complexity of the challenges that remain. Through continued commitment, openness to challenge and collaborative working, the council is well placed to build on this progress and deliver fairer outcomes for Bristol's diverse communities and workforce.



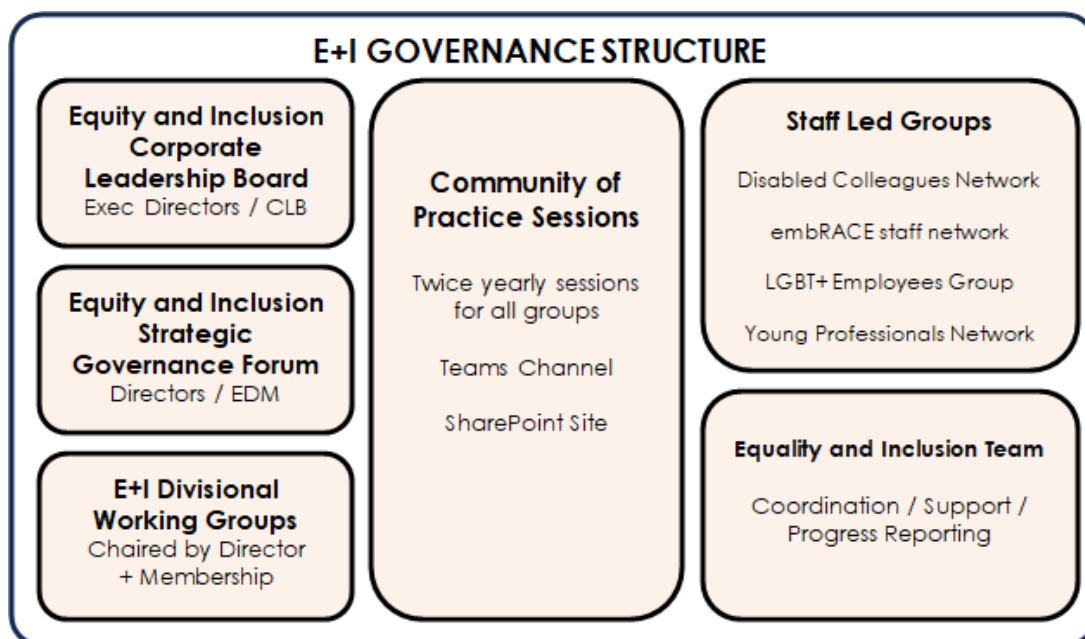
E01: Leadership

Equality Objective E01 "a respected reputation for innovative best practice"

This objective is about how the Council will make fair decisions and adapt to change.

Embedding our Equity + Inclusion governance structure

We have a well-established governance structure to strengthen oversight and accountability for equity and inclusion (E+I) across the organisation.



Equity + Inclusion Strategic Leadership Board

This board brings senior leaders together to direct and oversee our equity and inclusion priorities. Meetings follow the objectives set out in our Equity and Inclusion Strategic Framework, and maintain a balance between internal and external priorities.

Equity + Inclusion Strategic Governance Forum

Directors from each area meet four times a year to put the strategic direction from the leadership board into practice. These meetings focus on the particular challenges and opportunities within each Directorate.

Divisional Equity + Inclusion Working Groups

Each Division in the council has an equity and inclusion working group, ensuring full organisational coverage. These groups support progress by providing:

Leadership and Vision

Directors lead the groups and ensure that equity and inclusion is embedded in day to day operations.

Inclusive Representation

Groups include staff from across service areas and job levels, so a wide range of perspectives is heard.

Workstreams and Leads

Each group develops workstreams based on Equality Action Plan priorities, with named leads to support accountability.

Equality Action Plans

Groups help create and review practical, achievable service level action plans.

Regular Meetings and Progress Tracking

Groups usually meet quarterly, with Directors providing ongoing oversight and feedback.

Beyond direct improvements in equity and inclusion, the working groups also contribute to:

- Better outcomes in employee surveys, including increased wellbeing and confidence to raise concerns.
- Stronger allyship across the workforce.
- Greater leadership involvement in equity and inclusion.
- More collaboration across services, leading to initiatives that better meet staff needs.
- Development opportunities for staff who take part in the groups.

Community of Practice Sessions

To support learning and collaboration, we run twice yearly Community of Practice sessions for council colleagues. These sessions bring together:

- Senior leadership
- Members of the equity and inclusion working groups
- Staff led equality groups

Sessions in 2025 to 2026 covered:

- Priorities and tools for tackling racism
- An equality focused review of staff survey findings
- A case study on resident and community engagement
- Workshops to identify shared priorities across services

Monitoring Progress

The Equality and Inclusion team works with senior leaders to monitor progress against our strategic framework. This includes:

- Measuring our progress against original objectives
- Using data and lived experience to assess impact
- Using peer review and external challenge to strengthen our approach

Feedback from external reviews continues to shape and improve our equity and inclusion work, helping to drive meaningful change across the organisation.

Facilitating our staff-led groups

Our Staff Led Groups (SLGs) act as ambassadors within the council, ensuring that decision making is informed by diverse and representative voices. Each group is led by a committee of employees who share a common characteristic. Together they help shape inclusive policies, processes and training.

SLGs support their members, run awareness raising activities and lead initiatives to improve the organisation. Members elect co leads and form steering groups to plan and oversee their work. Each SLG manages its own budget. Co leads are given protected time to carry out their roles, and groups meet regularly with Equity and Inclusion, Human Resources and Learning and Development teams to align on priorities.

In 2025 to 2026 we refreshed the groups' terms of reference, the arrangements for corporate support and the process for creating new groups. This has provided greater clarity and strengthened their ability to influence change. There is a proposal to establish an older colleagues staff led group in 2026.

Disabled Colleagues Network

The purpose of our group is to:

- Ensure that Disabled colleagues have a voice and are fully involved in helping shape and improve how the council operates.
- Maintain a network for Disabled colleagues to provide a sense of belonging and self-empowerment, whilst creating a safe space to share lived experiences and expertise.
- Work in partnership with the council to improve the recruitment, retention, training, and career developmental opportunities for Disabled colleagues.
- Promote and champion diversity, equity, equality and inclusion, by raising awareness, reviewing and challenging existing policies and procedures, and promoting and advising on best practice.
- Provide signposting to advice and support if you are experiencing issues within the workplace
- Support the council in its aspirations to be an employer of choice for Disabled people.

EmBRACE Staff Network

- We're a platform for Black, Asian and minoritised staff to ensure all voices and lived experiences are heard and to help shape and develop a council leadership approach that's more inclusive.
- We work in collaboration with and on behalf of our embRACE members in partnership with senior leadership and other key stakeholders. We work to ensure that Black, Asian and minoritised staff are supported to be themselves at work, treated fairly and given the opportunity to progress within an inclusive and progressive organisational culture.
- EmbRACE practices a distributed leadership model, where committee members lead on each priority area. The role of the co-lead is to coordinate, align and support committee members to lead.
- EmbRACE coordinates training and development, cultural and wellbeing workshops, and social events.

LGBT+ Staff-Led Group

- The LGBT+ Employee Group is a space where we support LGBTQIA+ BCC employees and raise awareness of the work that needs to be done to ensure LGBTQIA+ equality within the council.
- The group is open to all those who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ spectrum, at all levels of the organisation.

We aim to:

- Foster a community of LGBTQIA+ employees who can network with each other, raise concerns, and seek support.
- Improve corporate performance of the council's people, policies, and procedures when considering LGBTQIA+ people.

- Increase internal and external awareness of LGTQIA+ causes and the Staff Led Group's (SLG's) activity.

Young Professionals Network

The purpose of our group is to:

- support young staff working for the council with their development and wellbeing
- promote a more diverse and younger workforce
- provide training opportunities to staff: young people for their personal development, and to not-young people on how to support and encourage the young people they work with
- provide a space to network and socialise with colleagues your age
- work with senior leaders on policies and programmes that support and promote young staff in the council and get more young people working with us

Visible Commitment from Senior Leaders

As part of our city-wide efforts, senior leaders play an active role in key working groups, partnering with equality organisations to tackle systemic inequalities. These collaborations, detailed in the 'Partnerships' section below, enable us to share best practices, celebrate excellence, and draw on local expertise to strengthen our impact.

Examples include:

- Our Chief Executive chairing the Race Equality Strategic Leaders Group
- Our Director of Workforce and Change leading the Tackling Disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System workforce representation pillar group
- Our leadership of, and participation in the Bristol Race Equality Practitioners Group, chaired by the Director of Workforce and Change
- Our Director of Workforce and Change co-chairs the Disabled Colleagues Project Board.

Through initiatives such as these, we demonstrate our commitment to meaningful change and a more inclusive city.

Political engagement

During 2025-26 the Equity & Inclusion team has worked with political members and Policy Committee leads to deliver a series of presentation sessions, discussions and workshops on Equity & Inclusion through group and individual sessions.

The sessions have explored a range of key current and future matters arising for elected member awareness and to enhance future work on the city council's leadership on equity and inclusion.

Bristol's One City Approach

The Bristol One City approach brings partners from all sectors together to work towards a fairer, healthier and more sustainable city. The refreshed One City Plan, published in 2025, focuses on a smaller number of shared missions. These provide

clearer direction and support more flexible collaboration across the city.
[\[bristolnecity.com\]](http://bristolnecity.com)

The updated plan reflects Bristol's ongoing response to major challenges, including the cost of living crisis, climate change and structural inequalities. It maintains a strong emphasis on reducing disparities in education, health and economic opportunity. It also provides a framework for coordinated action on issues that particularly affect people with Protected Characteristics. Further information is available at bristolnecity.com.

A cross sector working group was formed to help lead the refresh process. This group included a broad and representative mix of partners from across the One City movement and its governance structures. Equalities groups were actively included, and the Chair of the Disability Equality Commission was appointed to chair the working group.

The Summer 2025 City Gathering was also a key part of the process for shaping the final missions. The event highlighted the work of more than a dozen VCSE organisations, and significant effort was made to engage a wide and diverse range of groups through targeted invitations. This resulted in increased diversity among attendees and positive feedback from delegates, particularly in relation to representation and inclusion.

The City Office plays a central role in convening partners and supporting the seven thematic boards that lead work on key priorities. These cover children and young people; culture; economy; health; environment; homes; and transport. This work is focused on reducing inequalities and strengthening inclusion across Bristol.

LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Our Equity and inclusion Strategic Framework includes a commitment to welcoming ongoing peer review and scrutiny from a range of external organisations who provide unique perspectives and expertise.

In 2025 the council took part in a Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge. The feedback recognised strong progress during a period of change and highlighted our clear strategic direction, growing confidence and positive culture. The review strongly supported our Corporate Strategy 2025 to 2030, particularly our focus on improving equity of outcomes, strengthening neighbourhoods and supporting health and wellbeing.

Peers praised the commitment of our workforce and the progress being made through the Workforce Strategy to build a more engaged and inclusive organisation. One of the key recommendations was to prioritise action where it will have the greatest impact on equitable outcomes, reinforcing our commitment to ensuring services and decisions work effectively for all Bristol communities.

You can read the full report on [the council website](#).

Case Study: Systemic Management and Supervision training course – Embedding anti-racist leadership

As part of our commitment to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion within Children's Services, during 2025–26 we developed and started delivering a 5 day 'Systemic Management and Supervision' course. The course was co-designed and I being delivered by our own Managers and Service Managers, in collaboration with colleagues from Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) and the Centre for Systemic Social Work in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.

The programme focuses on strengthening inclusive leadership through a systemic practice lens, with particular emphasis on the Social Graces to explore identity, power and difference. A key feature of the training is its focus on anti-racism within management practice, supporting managers to actively address inequity within supervisory relationships and create reflective, psychologically safe spaces for discussion.

Through a combination of teaching, reflective exercises and practice-based discussion, the programme aims to build confidence in recognising and challenging bias, supporting equitable decision-making, and embedding inclusive thinking into everyday supervision. By situating these conversations within management practice, the course reinforces the role of leaders in shaping an inclusive organisational culture. The programme has been very positively received, with 50 managers across Children's Services trained to date. It will now form part of the core training offer, supporting the ongoing development of inclusive, anti-racist leadership across the service.

Measures of success

E01: Leadership	Comment on progress 2025-26
We publish information at least once a year summarising progress against our equity and inclusion objectives and outlining any challenges we are facing in moving forward.	Our <u>annual reports</u> , available externally since 2019, summarise our progress against our objectives.
Progress against this strategic framework is a standing item on senior leadership meeting agendas and features regularly in internal communications to colleagues.	Our governance structure ensures that senior leaders are accountable for our agreed objectives. The Equality and Inclusion team supports the development of new elected members so they understand our equality commitments.
Self-assessment against external peer review frameworks and audit reports shows the organisational improvements we have made.	Peer-review frameworks are covered in this report and illustrate the progress we have made.
All Tier 3 and above managers have clear Equity and Inclusion objectives as part of their ongoing performance review.	This indicator was included in our strategic framework as a reminder for our managers to remain committed to developing Equity and Inclusion practice.



E02: Diverse Workforce

Equality Objective E02: “a diverse and inclusive workforce which reflects our communities

This objective is about the Council’s role as an employer.

Workforce diversity reporting

We have created an HR Single Strategic View of Employee Data dashboard, which all managers can access through the internal intranet. The dashboard provides tailored information for each team and service area, helping managers identify differences in representation and outcomes across protected characteristics. This supports evidence based decisions and helps shape positive action.

The dashboard is updated each month, so managers have access to near real time information. It includes anonymised data from our HR records on headcount, representation, sickness, and starters and leavers. The dataset does not include Locally Managed Schools and Nurseries, councillors, or casual, seasonal, or agency staff.

The information comes from the equality monitoring fields that staff are encouraged to complete in their HR Self Service profiles. This helps us maintain accurate, up to date, and complete diversity information. To protect privacy, more detailed reporting is not provided for small teams where individuals could be identified.

Managers can use the dashboard to identify gaps in representation and to develop Equality Action Plans. We recently ran a communications campaign to encourage staff to complete their equality monitoring information. Senior leaders continue to support this by encouraging staff to update their personal details where they feel comfortable doing so. This helps ensure our internal work is based on strong and reliable evidence. We have also expanded the data collected by introducing new categories for care experience and for armed forces veterans or reservists.

The Council also contributes to the city wide Bristol Race Equality Data Product, which brings together information on diversity and workforce performance across public sector employers in Bristol. We also provide information to the Workforce Representation pillar group as part of the Tackling Disproportionality in the Criminal Justice System programme.

A summary analysis of our workforce diversity information is provided in Appendix 1.

Analysis of our progress

- Overall workforce demographics remain broadly stable between March 2025 and March 2026, with gradual improvements in equalities data completeness.
- The workforce continues to be older on average, with strong representation among staff aged 40+, particularly those aged 50+. Representation of staff aged 16-29 has increased slightly but remains below the Bristol population, highlighting an ongoing challenge around attracting and retaining younger staff.
- Disabled staff make up around eight percent of the workforce, which is lower than the Bristol population figure. Disability reporting is largely stable, though

there has been a small increase in unknown Disability status, reinforcing the importance of supporting confident and voluntary disclosure.

- Ethnic diversity has remained broadly steady. Representation of Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups has seen small increases or remained stable. The proportion of staff recorded as White has reduced slightly, and unknown ethnicity responses have continued to fall, improving data quality.
- The gender profile remains consistent with local government patterns, with women making up around sixty one percent of the workforce. This is a slight increase on last year and remains higher than the Bristol population proportion.
- Religion or belief data has remained broadly similar with a small increase in the proportion of colleagues who say they have no Religion or Belief. Prefer not to state responses remain relatively high.
- Sexual orientation disclosure continues to improve. LGB+ representation has increased slightly and remains close to the Bristol population figure. Prefer not to state and unknown responses have reduced, suggesting growing confidence in sharing this information.
- Trans identity data continues to be affected by a high proportion of unknown responses, although this has reduced significantly over the year. Recorded trans representation remains below the Bristol population figure, indicating a continued need to build trust and inclusion.

Workforce Strategy

Our new [Workforce Strategy 2025-2030](#) sets out how we'll work together as One Council to create a workplace where everyone feels valued, supported, and empowered to do their best work. This strategy helps us to deliver the updated [Corporate Strategy](#) by aligning our people, culture, and capabilities with our vision and priorities.

One of the four strategic priorities within the strategy is 'Achieving equity and inclusion'.

The Workforce Strategy action plan

Our [Workforce Strategy Action Plan](#) (internal link only) sets out clearly how we'll deliver the commitments in the Workforce Strategy and the practical steps we'll take to make real, measurable progress. It breaks the strategy down into focused, achievable actions.

Summary of objectives and commitments for Priority 3: Achieving equity and inclusion:

Objective	Commitments
Improve our workforce diversity to reflect the city we serve and support the development of colleagues from under-	– We will use workforce data and exit survey findings to identify representation gaps and work with leaders to address them. – We will encourage more colleagues to confidentially declare their equality information. – We will improve equality monitoring data for job applicants

Objective	Commitments
represented groups	– We will develop more positive action initiatives to provide career progression opportunities for colleagues from under-represented groups. – We will enhance our Diverse Recruiter programme
Champion and lead workplace equity and inclusion to ensure that colleagues feel treated fairly	– We will refresh our equity and inclusion learning and development programme, and our leadership development programmes – We will benchmark our HR policies against best practice, changes in legislation and independent frameworks – We will be advocates and champions for equity and inclusion. – We will recognise and address any aspects of our culture and ways of working that are toxic, dysfunctional or discriminatory – We will ensure that Reasonable Adjustments are implemented promptly. – We are committed to make sure our workplaces are well equipped and accessible.
Work with our colleagues, Staff Led Groups and Trade Unions to improve the workplace experience for all	– We will continue to embed our governance structure to strengthen oversight and accountability – We will ensure colleagues are kept informed of and consulted on any changes – We will promote the work of staff-led groups and trade unions and continue to involve them in policy development. – We will support the learning and development of Staff Led Groups co-leads. – We will be allies of our staff-led groups and support them to achieve their priorities.

Learning and development

All employees have access to our eLearning platform, which offers a range of both mandatory and non-mandatory Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) courses. In addition to these standalone courses, we are committed to embedding EDI principles across all our in-house learning and development provision. This ensures that inclusive practices are consistently reinforced throughout our leadership and professional development pathways.

In 2025–26, we expanded access to EDI-focused learning across our wider workforce. This included launching the *Challenging Ageism* module and extending access to the *LGA: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion* course. We also continued to promote our *Reasonable Adjustments* learning offer, aligning it with recent updates to our Reasonable Adjustments Policy. To date, 1,399 colleagues have started or completed this training (with 2025–26 completions shown in the table below). This learning is now mandatory for all employees in leadership roles.

Our proactive approach—including internal campaigns and targeted manager engagement—has significantly increased awareness of, and participation in, EDI learning.

Below is a detailed breakdown of completions by course:

Course title	# Completed
A Guide to the Menopause	253
Deafblind Awareness	16
Disability Hate Crime: Hate Crime	17
Equality Impact Assessments (EqlAs)	91
Equality Inclusion and Diversity: Your rights and responsibilities	849
Managing Diversity	283
Managing Mental Health by Mind	218
Modern Slavery	830
Neurodiversity and Neurodivergency	94
Reasonable Adjustments eLearning	285
Reasonable Adjustments Live Session	195
Recruitment and Selection Refresher	177
Step Up: Isolation and Loneliness by ZSA	9
Suicide: Let's Talk by ZSA	53
Trans Inclusive Guidance	11
Why weight? Changing the Narrative about Living with Obesity	23

These initiatives support our continued commitment to fostering an inclusive culture where all colleagues feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute.

Understanding Cultural Values and Behaviours

During 2025–26, 87 colleagues completed the behavioural preference self-assessment and participated in the *Understanding Cultural Values and Behaviours* workshop. This updated course replaces the previous *Leading with Cultural Intelligence* training and provides colleagues with strengthened insight into how cultural values shape behaviours and interactions in the workplace.

Feedback remains overwhelmingly positive, with participants consistently reporting a marked increase in confidence when discussing cultural dynamics and their influence on team relationships. Many described moving from feeling “not confident” to feeling “confident” as a direct result of attending the workshop.

Leadership and management development

There are a number of courses which are aimed at managers across the organisation. These include:

- A Guide to the Menopause
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Managing Diversity
- Managing Mental Health
- Key Information for Managers
- Team leader development programme

We will be launching a leadership development programme for middle leaders in May 2026 and Heads of Service later in the year. We are also reviewing our diversity leadership programmes, with focus groups planned to help co-design the

specifications. These programmes will signpost to the Equity and Inclusion training offer.

Case Study: Promoting Neuroinclusion in the LRC Team

In litigation logical reasoning, imagination, and tenacity are key components of our work and neurodivergent (ND) professionals can offer exceptional strengths. Our work can be intricate, fast-paced, and meticulous in nature so will attract neurodiverse thinkers.

People with neurodiversity often think outside the box, they have unconventional reasoning, and creativity. This enables ND colleagues to identify areas that others may overlook, such as patterns, errors, or opportunities, thus ideal for litigation work.

A significant number of ND individuals, including those in the Litigation, Regulatory and Community Team, excel at concentrating and retaining details, ideal for legal research and document reviews.

We are constantly improving our neuroinclusive practices and seek to develop a culture of adaptation and increased awareness of ND.

We offer flexible working environments and support colleagues with different sensory needs.

Where possible we adapt our communication style to support different needs as ND people thrive on clear communication.

Case Study: WRES (Workforce Race Equality Standard) – Supporting safe and inclusive practice, and tackling hate incidents through No Space for Hate guidance and workforce development

As part of our ongoing commitment to the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) in Children's Social Care, we have continued to implement a comprehensive WRES Action Plan across Children's Services during 2025–26. This has focused on creating a more inclusive working environment and strengthening practitioners' confidence to address discrimination in their work.

A key area of this work has been the development of *No Space for Hate* guidance for Children's Services, adapted from existing guidance in Adult Social Care. This resource supports practitioners to recognise, respond to and report incidents of harassment or discrimination encountered in the course of their work. It provides clear guidance on escalation pathways and reinforces the organisation's position that discriminatory behaviour towards staff will not be tolerated. By making expectations explicit and offering practical support, the guidance aims to ensure that staff and their Managers feel safe, supported and confident to take action when incidents occur.

Alongside this, we have also delivered a comprehensive training programme in partnership with SARI as part of the work of the WRES. This training supports practitioners to work effectively with a diverse range of communities and across a range of protected characteristics. Through interactive sessions, reflective exercises and real-life scenarios, the programme encourages practitioners to explore issues of identity, bias and inequality, and to build confidence in engaging with individuals and families in inclusive and culturally responsive ways.

Together, these actions have formed a key part of our WRES Action Plan, supporting both the wellbeing of our workforce and the development of inclusive practice. By combining clear organisational expectations with practical learning opportunities, this work aims to embed a culture where discrimination is actively challenged and diversity is recognised as a strength.

Workforce diversity initiatives

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships remain a core lever in our equity and inclusion ambitions, enabling access to skilled roles, supporting social mobility, and strengthening internal progression. In 2025–26, we delivered 188 apprenticeship enrolments, contributing to 1,197 enrolments since May 2017. A strong proportion of these starts were from existing employees, demonstrating the tangible impact of apprenticeships in unlocking career advancement, upskilling our workforce, and retaining talent across the organisation.

We continue to invest in creating an inclusive apprentice experience that goes beyond enrolment. The Apprenticeship Network has grown as a supportive and accessible community, providing apprentices with peer connection, shared learning, and development opportunities. This network plays a key role in fostering belonging, confidence, and resilience particularly for individuals navigating non-traditional routes into professional careers.

Apprenticeships are increasingly embedded within our Workforce Strategy, ensuring that equitable development pathways are available across services and grades. This work is underpinned by our commitment to quality and fairness, including payment of the Real Living Wage and the use of inclusive recruitment practices designed to reduce barriers and attract talent from under-represented and diverse backgrounds.

Together, these actions demonstrate how apprenticeships continue to deliver meaningful impact supporting equality of opportunity, strengthening workforce capability, and building a more inclusive organisation.

Project Bristol internship

Project Bristol has been running since 2012 and is an internship for young adults aged 18-24 with an Educational Health Care Plan. This includes young Disabled adults. It is a programme which aims to develop the skills required to match job opportunities within the council and help to obtain permanent roles or apprenticeships. Seven interns have completed the programme this year.

Strive internship

We worked alongside Sanderson Recruitment to establish the Strive Internship scheme which aims to offer at least 50 paid internships annually to Global Majority ethnic university students and graduates living or studying in the West of England. Internships last for a minimum of four and up to twelve weeks and are available across a range of organisations and sectors in the West of England. The internships will be continuing again with three placements this summer in Finance, Parks and Repairs & Maintenance.

Young professionals mentoring scheme

In 2025 the Young Professionals Network (YPN) relaunched its mentoring scheme. The YPN mentoring scheme matches members with senior colleagues from across the council for a six-month mentoring relationship consisting of six hour-long meetings.

The scheme is currently supporting those already enrolled. New enrolments have been temporarily paused due to capacity, with the intention to reopen applications when resources allow. Matching with mentors is based on the needs of mentees, to ensure that all mentoring relationships have the strongest chance of being successful.

Benefits for mentees include:

- Increased awareness of own strengths and weaknesses
- Identifying options for own development and career progression
- Planning and acting on own personal and career development
- Benefits for mentors include:
 - Improved people skills
 - Time to reflect on own practice
 - New perspectives and approaches to organisational culture and processes

Bristol Leadership Academy

A leadership development programme for middle leaders is being launched in May 2026, followed by a roll-out for Heads of Service later in the year.

We are reviewing our diversity leadership programmes and exploring tailored development options for each under-represented group. Focus groups, which will include participation from Staff-Led Group members, are planned for June 2026, which will help shape the diversity leadership development offer.

Review frameworks

Disability Confident Employer

In 2025-6, we continued to hold Level 2 status potentially in the Disability Confident employer scheme. We hope to achieve 'Leader' (level 3) status when we re-new our accreditation in 2026. To support progress, our Disabled Colleagues Project Board, focused on improving the workplace for Disabled colleagues, has set up a working group to review our current approach and develop a more robust self-assessment and action planning framework.

Women in Business charter

The [Bristol Women in Business charter](#) was launched in 2019, with Bristol City Council as a founder signatory. The charter aims to drive progress for women in Bristol's workforce. As part of our commitment, we focus on two of the seven Charter goals every 12 months. For 2025-26 these are:

- ✓ Work towards closing the gender pay gap
- ✓ A focus on implementing recruitment, appraisal, personal development and promotion processes that are non-discriminatory towards women and are free from unconscious bias

We maintain regular engagement with the charter's organisers, sharing both challenges and best practices. The Bristol Women in Business Charter publishes an annual impact report reflecting the progress of all signatory organisations.

CASE STUDY: Disability Equity Training – Shifting Mindsets at Leadership Level

As part of our continued commitment to building an inclusive and equitable workplace, the Disabled Colleagues Network and the Learning and Development team worked together during 2025-26 to commission Disability Equity in person training workshops through an external partner. In total, 10 workshops were delivered for officers, attended by 120 officers, and two workshops were delivered for councillors, attended by 24 councillors, with a further two councillor workshops planned for 2026-27.

From a Learning and Development perspective, the key gap we identified was not awareness, but confidence in applying the social model of disability in practice—particularly in how policies, services and workplace environments are shaped. We therefore prioritised reaching colleagues with influence, rather than focusing on volume. For this reason the workshops were aimed primarily at colleagues in leadership and decision-makers, and those whose work directly shapes how we support Disabled colleagues, including senior leaders, HR Committee members, Corporate Landlord teams, HR teams, Trade Unions and staff led groups.

The sessions focused on building confidence and capability by strengthening understanding and use of the Social Model of Disability, clarifying the difference between equality and equity for Disabled people, embedding inclusive practice into policies and procedures, recognising inclusion as an ongoing commitment, identifying practical improvements at individual and organisational level, and supporting visible inclusive leadership across our workforce.

The sessions were deliberately reflective, encouraging participants to examine their assumptions and explore the difference between equality and equity. This proved to be a pivotal moment in the learning—shifting thinking away from treating everyone the same, towards actively removing barriers.

A key reflection is that the real impact of this programme sits in mindset change rather than immediate action. Participants left not just with knowledge, but with a different perspective on their role in creating inclusive systems. The future challenge is sustainability. Insight alone is not enough, so our focus moving forward is on embedding this learning through ongoing leadership development, alignment with strategic priorities, and stronger accountability for change.

Reasonable Adjustments Training

During 2025 to 2026 we have continued to build on the work introduced in the previous year to improve understanding and confidence around reasonable adjustments. The reasonable adjustments e learning module remains in place, alongside an accompanying live webinar that allows for discussion and questions. These sessions continue to include contributions from Disabled colleagues who share lived experience, helping to ground learning in real workplace situations.

Staff survey

Our annual staff survey is divided into eight sections covering various aspects of our colleagues' work experience. The survey is completely anonymous and confidential and is available in accessible formats such as EasyRead.

We want to hear from as many colleagues as possible to get the clearest understanding about what's going well and where we need to improve.

Summary of 2025 survey results

The staff survey helps us understand colleagues' experiences at work so we can identify what needs to improve. It is anonymous, and we include diversity questions so we can understand how experiences may differ for different groups. In 2025, 56% of colleagues completed the survey, an increase from 51% in 2024.

Survey results show that experiences vary across protected characteristic groups, though several common themes emerged. Most groups reported improved experiences in areas such as feeling supported in their roles, confidence in senior leadership and clarity about the organisation. This reflects stronger communication, clearer priorities and improved leadership visibility.

An area where experiences were less positive was 'Working Environment and Fairness'. With the exception of racially minoritised colleagues, other groups saw some reductions in positive responses on this theme, compared to 2024. This suggests that, while wider organisational sentiment is improving, some colleagues continue to face barriers or uncertainty about fair treatment.

Overall, the results highlight improving confidence in the organisation alongside declining perceptions of fairness and inclusion for several groups. This signals the need for focused action to strengthen equity and ensure colleagues with protected characteristics feel valued and supported.

- Team relationships remain strong, and 89% of colleagues find their manager approachable.
- Positive feeling towards senior leadership has increased, especially on communication, integrity and listening.
- There were clear improvements in colleagues' understanding of the council's priorities and values.
- 80% of colleagues understand the council's purpose, and seventy four percent would recommend it as a good place to work.
- More colleagues feel informed about change and confident that action will follow the survey.
- 80% of staff believe the council is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive environment.
- Inclusivity, flexible working, work life balance, team support and development opportunities remain areas of strength.
- Declines in perceptions of fairness for trans colleagues, those who are pregnant or have recently given birth and Disabled colleagues will be explored further.
- We remain committed to listening, learning and improving so that all colleagues feel supported.
- Leadership teams will review their results with colleagues and identify local actions. These will be considered by the Corporate Leadership Board, alongside organisation wide actions, which will be communicated to all staff.

Responding to the Staff Survey findings

Following feedback from colleagues, each directorate has set out clear actions focused on improving leadership visibility, communication, development, wellbeing and recognition. Across services, senior leaders will be more visible through regular team visits, meetings, Q and A sessions and published engagement calendars, helping to build trust and understanding.

There will be stronger learning and development offer, including role based training, leadership programmes for current and aspiring managers, and better quality appraisals that support career goals.

Wellbeing will be embedded into everyday management, with regular check ins and encouragement to engage in staff led groups.

Success will be recognised more consistently through newsletters, events and recognition initiatives, alongside clearer communication on how colleague feedback has led to change.

Organisation wide, there is a commitment to a One Council approach through greater collaboration, shadowing opportunities, shared learning and transparency around decision making.

Case study: Recognising Neurodiversity Celebration Week

In March 2026, Bristol City Council marked Neurodiversity Celebration Week by creating opportunities for colleagues to hear directly from neurodivergent staff across the organisation.

The theme for Neurodiversity Celebration Week was *From Awareness to Action: Making Organisational Change Happen*. In response, colleagues were invited to share their experiences of neurodiversity throughout their careers and working lives. These reflections were shared internally to help raise awareness, encourage understanding and inform future organisational change.

To ensure the activity was inclusive and accessible, colleagues were able to take part in different ways. An informal in person lunchtime session was held in the Cash Hall, providing a safe space for neurodivergent colleagues to meet, talk and connect. The event also offered colleagues the opportunity to speak directly with the Chief Executive, helping to strengthen visible senior leadership engagement on neurodiversity and inclusion.

Alongside this, an online virtual coffee break was hosted on through the Neurodivergent Colleagues community. This session was fully text based, with no cameras or speaking. Prompt questions were shared by the hosts, and colleagues were invited to contribute in writing at their own pace.

Together, these activities supported open conversation, increased visibility of neurodivergent experiences and helped move the organisation from awareness towards practical action on neurodiversity.

Measures of success

E02: Diverse workforce	Comment on progress 2026 26
Annual pay gap reporting.	See Appendix
Annual employee survey and other staff feedback.	The staff survey will continue to be published on an annual basis, and

	the outcomes are covered in this report.
Targets for representation, progression and pay and other outcomes by characteristic.	See Appendix



E03: Council Services

Equality Objective E03 “equitable, inclusive and quality services that promote wellbeing”

This objective is about the Council's role as a deliverer and commissioner of services.

A cross organisational approach

As a large organisation, everyone has a role to play in developing services in ways that promote equality of opportunity. This also includes making sure that organisations delivering services on behalf of the council have strong policies and a clear commitment to equity and inclusion.

Equality Action Plans

As part of the annual business planning cycle all Council service areas conduct a review of their functions to produce an updated Equality Action Plan. Each service is required to identify priority issues and relevant actions to address these issues. Service areas outline the outcomes that they would like to achieve, provide success measures and the timeframes in which they hope to deliver. Services are required to report twice a year on how their actions are progressing against their timescales. Equality Action Plans are linked to the five objectives, outlined in the Equity and Inclusion strategic framework to ensure a coordinated approach to delivery.

The Council has a key performance indicator (KPI) to “increase % of all Equality Action Plan actions reporting expected progress (or better),” which acts as an aggregate to help us understand overall progress, with reporting requirements from services twice a year.

In 2025-26 we met our ambitious target of 90%. Progress in some actions was slower than anticipated due to recruitment not taking place, resulting in continued under-representation in certain service areas. However, there were improvements in other service areas, with representation becoming more aligned with the Bristol average. Additionally, we have seen improvements in areas such as improved equality impact assessments, and better use of equality data to inform decision making. For 2026–27, services have been advised to align actions with Disability Equality Action Plan as well as focusing on key equality issues relevant to the service and setting out practical, achievable actions.

Equality Impact Assessments

The council uses Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) to evaluate how proposed decisions may affect people with different protected and other relevant characteristics, ensuring compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.

In 2025–26, we completed 496 EqIAs to support a wide range of activities, including decision-making, the development and review of policies and strategies, commissioning and procurement processes, operational works, and budget setting.

As well as providing as hoc guidance and feedback to support this work, the Equality and Inclusion Team offered face-to-face training for 65 officers in 2025-26. Feedback from this training has been positive with participants reporting a significant increase in their confidence in carrying out EqIAs; understanding of equalities groups in Bristol; knowledge of where to find equalities evidence and data; and insight into how proposals can affect different groups.

Since EqIAs were introduced, council officers have become increasingly confident in completing them and using them to inform their decision-making. The quality and consistency of EqIAs have continued to improve, making them a valuable tool in effective decision-making. They are regularly referenced in high-level council meetings as evidence that decisions are being made with fairness and equity in mind. The public is also becoming more aware of EqIAs and their availability as a resource to better understand the council's decisions.

We also offer an e-learning module on Equality Impact Assessments, including a step-by-step video guide. In 2025–26, 97 employees completed this training, bringing the total number of completions to 1,758.

Understanding the cumulative impacts of decisions

We carry out cumulative equality impact assessments to understand how multiple decisions might collectively affect equality. This is especially important when several actions together could have a disproportionate effect on particular communities. For example, in recent years we have assessed the combined impact of our budget savings proposals. This approach helps decision makers consider whether the overall effects may negatively or unfairly affect citizens, service users, or employees, particularly in relation to protected and other relevant characteristics. By examining these cumulative impacts, we can identify patterns that may worsen existing inequalities and develop actions to reduce or prevent them.

[Cumulative Equality Impact Assessment of proposed budget savings 2026-27 to 2030--31](#)

Using data and evidence to inform decisions

We use a wide range of data sources to make sure our work is informed by good evidence about the communities we serve. Finding the right sources of information is an important way for us to understand how decisions might affect the groups most likely to be impacted across the city. This evidence helps us develop policies and design initiatives that support greater equity.

We also promote intersectional data analysis to better understand the lived experiences of people who have more than one protected or relevant characteristic. This helps us recognise where combined factors may influence outcomes and ensures our approach is more responsive to real experiences.

A guide on [Equalities Statistics: What is available and where to get it?](#) outlines the main sources of equalities statistics for Bristol.

Census Data 2021

Our Strategic Intelligence and Performance Team have developed analytic tools using Census 2021 data. This wide range of data and information about the city and its population helps us understand the changing profile of Bristol's diverse population. Headline results are in the Census 2021 Dashboard and data for areas within Bristol are in the Census Data Profiles Dashboard - both available at the page [Census 2021](#)

Detailed analysis by equalities group is available in a series of population profiles on the [Population of Bristol](#) web page (see "Population by Equalities Group" section). These are published for religion, trans population, sexual orientation, Somali population, ethnic groups and Disabled population. These population profiles provide significant insights into the lived experiences of different groups with a range of indicators including age, economic activity, health and wellbeing, housing and qualification data plus map population groups across the city.

Quality of Life data

The [Quality of life in Bristol](#) survey provides a snapshot of Bristol resident's lived experience using a wide range of indicators including crime and safety, health and wellbeing, community and education and skills.

The survey is carried out every two years and we did not conduct a survey in 2025-26. Findings from the 2024 survey are available in the document [Quality of Life 2024-25 Priority Indicators Report \(pdf, 501 KB\)](#) including:

- how 50 headline measures of lived experiences for people in Bristol have changed over the last few years, and how these experiences differ in the most deprived areas
- a summary of 'actions to improve quality of life' that people want to see in Bristol

Full results for all indicators, including ward and demographic group data, see the [Quality of Life dashboard](#).

This data can be disaggregated by over 30 equality and demographic groups and also by geographical locations. The data is regularly used within equality impact assessments to help decision makers understand the impact of decisions on different groups by outlining the current state for different demographics of people within the city. This data is published externally and shared widely with different equality stakeholders we work with.

Deprivation and ward profile data

We use [deprivation data](#) and [ward profiles](#) to help inform our decision making. Based on the most recent data from 2025, Bristol's levels of multiple deprivation have improved (in relative terms) when compared with the rest of England. A smaller share of Bristol's population now lives in neighbourhoods that fall within the most deprived areas nationally. In 2025, 11 per cent of residents, or about 53,100 people, live in neighbourhoods that rank within the most deprived 10 per cent in England. This includes approximately 13,500 children, which is 16 per cent of all children in the city, and around 7,740 older people, which is 9 per cent of all older people. This

relative position is better than in 2019, when 15 per cent of residents lived in the most deprived areas, and it is also an improvement compared with 2015.

Although Bristol's relative position has improved, the 2025 Indices of Deprivation continue to highlight long standing patterns of inequality across the city. Bristol still has areas with very high levels of deprivation that are among the most disadvantaged in the country, situated close to some of the least deprived neighbourhoods in England.

These levels of deprivation can have a major impact on life expectancy, overall health and wellbeing, and educational outcomes.

There is increasing recognition that localised solutions are essential to addressing inequality of opportunity. We will continue to encourage our services to consider how geographical location shapes people's life experiences.

Case Study: Improving the Accessibility of our Conference Hall

A key commitment in our Workforce Strategy is to 'work with our colleagues, Staff Led Groups and Trade Unions to improve the workplace experience for all' and to address previous access barriers. The Queen Elizabeth II Conference Hall in City Hall has long been overdue an upgrade to make it more accessible and usable for all colleagues. The stage was not fit for purpose, the sound quality from the microphones was echoey and made it difficult to hear presenters, and people were not always fully able to engage in events, especially those with physical and sensory impairments. Following various complaints and feedback from attendees and event organisers, budget was found and allocated to upgrading the accessibility of the Conference Hall.

There was a careful balance to strike between completing the work with urgency to ensure the Conference Hall was an accessible space for all users as soon as possible, and also taking the time needed to fully engage with the right people to ensure the end solution would be truly fit for purpose.

We put accessibility at the forefront of our work and set up a Workstream Group with colleagues from the Disabled Colleagues Network (DCN), HR, Trade Unions and Facilities Management to ensure we had the right range of views. We ensured all the designs and proposals were discussed with the Workstream Group at each iteration, so we covered all possible requirements.

No one person can speak for everyone, so we were aware we needed to speak to a wide range of people with lived experience of Disability. We worked closely with the Bristol Disability Equality Forum (BDEF) to fill in any gaps in experience and views we couldn't get from our internal engagement. They were able to link us up with various groups across Bristol which specialise in supporting people with different access needs.

When the final specification was agreed, and the installations had been completed, we arranged for people with lived experience of Disability to come in to test the equipment to make sure it was truly fit for purpose. As well as installing a new stage with a strong sturdy ramp, we have concentrated on upgrading the technology, including upgrading the speakers, microphones and screen, and installing live captioning and a state of the art Bluetooth assistive listening system.

Including people with a wide range of viewpoints was essential to ensure the final solutions work for everybody. One example of this was when making the decision about what edging to use around the stage to ensure it was safe for everybody using it. We were going to use a yellow edging strip as this seemed to create a good contrast to avoid anyone falling off the edge, but when we checked this decision with people with a visual impairment, they pointed out that the yellow blended in with the colour of the wooden floor and created a false edge, introducing a different risk. They suggested white would create a better contrast, so we have gone with this choice. Despite having had engagement with a variety of people

with lived experience of Disability, without engaging with people with a visual impairment, we would have unknowingly made the stage more dangerous.

We collaborated with BDEF to support their annual Disability Pride event which showcased the upgraded facilities. We will be using the feedback from the day to make further improvements to the setup and inform our best practice guide to hosting events to make all events held in the Conference Hall accessible to all.

Case Study: Gender Stories Exhibition at Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Bristol Museum and Art Gallery developed and hosted the Gender Stories exhibition from 31 May to 12 October 2025. The exhibition presented newly commissioned work alongside pieces by artists including Grayson Perry, David Hockney and Catherine Opie.

Gender Stories invited visitors to explore the complexity of gender and how it relates to sex, identity and sexuality across cultures and history. It aimed to encourage respectful conversation and deeper understanding of diverse lived experiences.

The project was delivered through the MAGNET exhibition touring partnership. Horniman Museum and Gardens acted as MAGNET lead, with Bristol Museum and Art Gallery leading on curatorial content and interpretation. National Museums Liverpool led on logistics, with development support from Brighton and Hove Museums. Later stage guidance was provided by Dr Sarah L Jones from the University of Bristol.

Community consultation and co production were central to the exhibition. Facilitation was led by Sid Boyer, working with partners including OutStories Bristol, Off the Record Freedom Youth, The Plus Importance Project, Rising Arts Agency, Trans Pride Bristol and the Bristol Museums Young Collective. Seventeen co production workshops involved 111 community consultants, ensuring a wide range of voices and experiences were represented.

The exhibition attracted 8,762 visitors, with 29 percent visiting the museum for the first time. Over 85 percent said they came specifically to see Gender Stories. Visitor satisfaction was 96 percent positive, including strong engagement from LGBTQIA+ visitors. Evaluation showed clear impact, with 74 percent of visitors reporting a better understanding of gender and 80 percent feeling confident discussing gender after their visit. Linked Mister Samo murals reached over 114,000 people across the city.

Key legacies include new oral histories, expanded interpretation, public artworks by Mister Samo, and progress towards addressing under representation in the collection. The exhibition included Inter*me BACK by Del LaGrace Volcano, with Bristol Museums now exploring acquisition of the work.

Gender Stories was supported by the Museums and Galleries Network for Exhibition Touring and Art Fund, with funding from the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

Gender Stories - Bristol Museums Exhibitions

Case Study - Hospital Discharge Team (South)

This case involved an adult with mild learning difficulties and a hearing impairment who received domiciliary care. Their behaviour, alongside that of a family member, created serious difficulties in maintaining a safe, inclusive, and sustainable care package. The work was guided throughout by the Care Act, the Equality Act, the Mental Capacity Act, No Space for Hate Guidance, and local safeguarding and workforce safety policies.

Applying policy in practice

A Care Act assessment confirmed that the service user had capacity to make decisions about their care. This meant their rights and autonomy had to be respected, while also ensuring the safety and wellbeing of others. A new assessment and support plan ensured

that their needs were clearly identified and that any commissioned care was lawful, proportionate, and defensible.

Challenging discrimination and promoting inclusion

Both the service user and their family member repeatedly expressed racist views and directed abuse at care staff. In line with No Space for Hate Guidance and anti-discriminatory practice, their behaviour was challenged consistently and clearly. It was explained that publicly funded care cannot be provided on the basis of discriminatory preferences. Racist incidents were recorded and addressed transparently, expectations around respectful behaviour were reinforced in writing, and safeguarding and risk processes were followed. This approach demonstrated that equality, dignity, and respect are core values that apply to everyone accessing services.

Protecting care workers

Care staff experienced racist abuse, threats, and physical aggression. The Council took decisive action to protect workers, including supporting police involvement where appropriate, strengthening oversight of the care provider, and agreeing risk reduction measures. When the situation became unsafe, the provider was supported in their decision to withdraw, reinforcing the principle that abuse of staff is never acceptable.

Managing third party influence

The family member had no formal role in care planning but repeatedly undermined the package. Clear boundaries were set about their involvement, concerns were redirected through appropriate channels, and all interactions were documented. Despite these efforts, their behaviour continued to destabilise the care arrangements.

Impact and learning

This case strengthened confidence in applying equality and safeguarding policies in complex situations. Providers and carers were reassured that racist and abusive behaviour would be challenged and that workforce safety is a priority. The case highlighted the importance of balancing individual autonomy with collective safety, and of taking a firm, values based approach to discrimination. All actions taken were grounded in legal and policy frameworks, ensuring fair, ethical, and accountable practice.

Case Study: Inclusive design engagement for new recycling sacks

In December 2025, the Environment and Sustainability Committee approved a recycling container refresh and education campaign. The current system uses a blue sack for cardboard, a green box for plastics and cans, and a black box for glass and other materials, as well as a food caddy. The new system will include a blue sack for cardboard and paper, a red sack for plastics and cans, a black box for glass, and a food caddy.

We engaged blind and visually impaired residents to inform the design and rollout of Bristol's new recycling containers, to ensure the service is accessible, practical and compliant with equality duties. Engagement was delivered with Sight Support West of England through two workshops in Henleaze and Cotham. Sessions included demonstrations and facilitated feedback discussions.

Our objectives were to ensure accessibility and inclusion, inform practical design solutions, improve accessible communications, increase correct recycling participation, and meet our equality duties.

A key issue was how visually impaired residents would distinguish between the two sacks. We learned that tactile design is preferred to Braille, which has low uptake. Residents favour simple physical identifiers such as textured features like a rolled handle, a plastic cover over the handle, or cable ties placed on the handle. These could be added by delivery crews or by residents themselves.

Many participants already use smartphone and computer accessibility features, such as camera recognition and screen readers, to identify items and read text. They said they would use these tools to differentiate between sacks and access printed or online communications. Some people found QR codes difficult to use and said they should not be the primary communication method. QR codes could still provide additional information, such as linking to a short audio explanation of what can be placed in each container. Participants also highlighted the need for clear guidance on cleaning, storage and recycling rules.

Our design principles are to prioritise touch, using tactile cues as the main method of identification. Where possible, each container will be physically distinct, with simple and uncluttered lid designs. We will avoid relying on Braille or QR codes and instead combine tactile and colour cues to support a range of needs and enable independent use.

In conclusion, residents supported the changes and recommended a simple, low-cost tactile solution, such as a cable tie or ribbon, to distinguish between sacks and support independent, consistent use. These insights will inform final design decisions, communications and trials. Findings will be shared with council teams and Bristol Waste Company, with feedback provided to participants via Sight Support South West.

Policy and strategy development

Equity and inclusion are central to all policy and strategy development across the council. We aim to design services inclusively and to base our decisions on evidence and a genuine understanding of our communities' diverse needs. Our key policies and strategies are reviewed regularly and demonstrate our commitment to embedding equality and inclusion across all areas of the council's work. Below are examples of new or refreshed major policies and strategies that particularly support our equity and inclusion objectives.

Corporate Strategy 2025-2030

We have adopted a new [Corporate Strategy 2025 to 2030](#), setting a clear and focused direction for the council over the next five years. The strategy is built around a strong commitment to equity and inclusion, with a vision for Bristol that puts fairness, social justice and tackling inequality at its heart, so that everyone can be safe, well and able to thrive.

The Corporate Strategy defines five priorities, each with clear objectives that explain how progress will be made, and takes a more focused approach than in previous years to be clear with residents about what matters most. Delivery is underpinned by four ways of working, One Council, One City, Many Communities and a prevention focused approach, all of which emphasise inclusive decision making, partnership working and empowering communities to shape solutions.

Workforce Strategy 2025-2030

Our updated [Workforce Strategy](#) sets out how we'll work together as One Council to create a workplace where everyone feels valued, supported, and empowered to do their best work. See the detailed summary in section E02 Workforce above.

Communications Strategy 2026-2030

Our [Communications Strategy](#) sets out a clearer, more modern and people focused approach to how we communicate with residents, partners and colleagues. It aims

to build trust, strengthen engagement and create a shared understanding of the council's role in shaping a fair, sustainable and thriving city.

The strategy emphasises the importance of honest, transparent and accessible communication that reflects rising public expectations. It commits to using clear, jargon free language and supporting meaningful two way dialogue to strengthen trust and accountability. It also recognises the vital role of communication in responding to major challenges, including the cost of living crisis, climate change, housing need, transport pressures and the spread of mis and disinformation.

Bristol Sanctuary Strategy and Action Plan 2025-2030

Our updated [Bristol Sanctuary Strategy and Sanctuary Action Plan](#) sets out how we will support people seeking sanctuary in the city. See the detailed summary in section E05 Communities below.

Resident engagement strategy for building safety in high-rise council homes 2025- 2026

in August 2025 the council published a new [Resident Engagement Strategy for Building Safety](#). The strategy explains how the council will communicate and work with residents living in high rise council blocks on building safety matters. It sets out the council's key commitments, alongside the responsibilities residents have in helping to keep their homes and buildings safe.

The strategy, which will be regularly updated, focuses on several main areas of work. These include keeping homes safe, and improving communication and information so that safety messages are shared in a clear and accessible way. It also covers listening to and involving residents by offering opportunities to have their say and provide feedback on safety issues. The strategy explains how the council will support residents with additional needs by offering extra advice and help where required. It sets out resident responsibilities, showing how residents can play their part in keeping buildings safe. Finally, it explains the different ways residents can report building safety concerns.

Responding to People Living in Vehicles 2026-2031

In January 2026, the council approved a new [Vehicle Dweller Policy](#), setting out a clearer and more consistent approach to balance offering help and advice to vehicle dwellers, as well as considering the needs of the local community. The policy reflects the council's commitment to equity, inclusion and community wellbeing, with a support first approach that prioritises help and advice before enforcement. Dedicated outreach will offer practical support, including access to healthcare, housing advice, benefits support and opportunities to move to Meanwhile Site pitches, with enforcement used only where support is refused or where there are significant impacts on local areas.

School Organisation Strategy 2025-2028

In November 2025, the Children and Young People Committee approved the [School Organisation Strategy](#). The strategy sets out how Bristol will ensure there are enough high quality and inclusive school places across the city. It responds to key challenges including falling birth rates, increasing demand for SEND provision and growing need for Early Years places following expanded childcare entitlements. The

strategy supports fair access to education, strengthens local provision and helps ensure children and families can access suitable school places within their communities. It will guide future place planning and admissions, with any changes to individual schools subject to public consultation.

Measures of success

E03: Inclusive Services	Trend	Comment on progress 2025 26
All service areas have an annual Equality Action plan which is approved by a director as part of the annual service planning cycle.	Not applicable	In 2025-26, services across the council have an equality action plan, which some shared plans across some larger areas of the council. Newly established Divisional E+I working groups helped to coordinate efforts to review, update, and monitor action plans more effectively.
Decrease % of all Equality Action Plan actions reporting expected progress or better.	Higher	In 2025-26 services reported 82% of actions were progressing as expected or better, compared to 82% in 2024-25. See above for detailed commentary.
Reporting shows our progress in implementing recommendations and actions from Safeguarding Adults reviews and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.	Not applicable	During 2025/26 the Keeping Bristol Safe Partnership received 10 Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) referrals, 3 Domestic Homicide Review (DHRs) referrals and 0 Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) referrals. This compares to the same period last year where we saw 8 SARs, 5 DHRs and 1 CSPR so a reduction across the board. For SARs and DHRs this may reflect improvements to the way the review processes are run, particularly with regard to ensuring we are correctly interpreting the guidance. Despite this, we can also see how we are seeking to take learning where the guidance allows when comparing to other core cities such as Sheffield who have lower numbers of reviews. It is also positive to note that our throughput of reviews remains constant with 6 SARs, 5 DHRs and 1 CSPR being published in 2025/26 compared with 5 SARs, 6 DHRs and 1 CSPR in 2024/25. As we know, any learning review is only as good as the changes to practice that come as a result. This can be seen in the positive picture surrounding Statutory Review Action plans where we have seen progress with 6 full SAR action plans completed (comprising 35 actions) with the remaining plans all being in excess of 50% completion. This compares to 3 full action plans (45 actions) in the same period the previous year. There is a similar picture for CSPRs. Over the coming period (26/27) the partnership anticipates similar numbers and will continue to try and improve process and progress

E03: Inclusive Services	Trend	Comment on progress 2025 26
		reporting to governance structures. We also anticipate utilising statutory review approaches in respect of approaches to regional learning, even where a statutory threshold is not met.
Reduction in the gap in life expectancy between the most deprived and the least deprived areas in Bristol.	Higher	Analysis of the <u>OHID Health Inequalities Dashboard for Bristol</u> shows that the life expectancy gap between the most and least deprived areas has widened over time. The most recent pooled period indicates a gap of around 6.9 years for women and around 10.6 years for men, compared with approximately 5.6 years for women and 9.9 years for men in earlier periods.
Reduction in the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training.	Higher	At the end of 2025-26, 6.6% of the total cohort were not in education employment or training (6.3% in 2024-25). Our teams make regular contact with these young people and capture their interests to create or sign post to opportunities that are tailored to the young person's needs. We continue to operate from locality spaces and family hubs, working closely with colleagues who also support vulnerable NEET learners to that they can put plans in place to support or encourage young people to engage.
Increase in % of citizens satisfied with the way Bristol City Council runs things.	Lower	We did not hold a Quality of Life Survey in 2025. In 2024 the average was 32.5% and in 2023 it was 38.7%. Disparities exist within this indicator with some groups higher than the average e.g. Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic – 38.9%, and some significantly lower (10% most deprived = 26%, and Disabled people = 24%).
Increase in % of citizens who are comfortable using digital services.	Higher	We did not hold a Quality of Life Survey in 2025. The latest data (2024) shows the percentage of citizens who are comfortable using digital services was slightly higher (81.1) in comparison with the previous year (78.8%).
Increase in % of council tenants satisfied with their overall current accommodation.	Lower	We did not hold a Quality of Life Survey in 2025. The latest quality of life survey data (2024) shows the percentage of council tenants satisfied with their accommodation was 62.2% which was significantly lower than previous year (72.3%) and lower than the Bristol average (80.1%)



E04: Partnerships

Equality Objective E04: “to lead and strengthen partnerships so everyone shares in the city’s success

This objective is about the Council’s role as a leading agency in the city.

Bristol City Council is playing a lead role in embedding, delivering and strengthening partnerships right across the city to tackle inequalities. There are many varied specialist groups operating to ensure everyone in Bristol can share in the city’s success, with all groups working together to tackle the most prevalent issues. The below captures some of the key workstreams and partnership groups being led directly by Bristol City Council and the Equality and Inclusion team, alongside a vast array of city stakeholders.

Bristol’s Race Equality Strategic Leaders’ Group

[Bristol’s Race Equality Strategic Leaders’ Group \(RESLG\)](#) was established in 2015 in response to the Bristol Manifesto for Race Equality. Currently Chaired and coordinated by Bristol City Council, the group brings together senior representation from sixteen major Public Sector agencies in the city, supported by strategic partners such as SARI, VOSCUR, and Black South West Network.

In 2025, RESLG marked its tenth year of operation. Over the course of the year, the group resourced and supported a range of citywide race equality initiatives including ‘Our City, Your Jobs’, a recruitment and employment fair for racially minoritised communities and the development and delivery of Bristol’s Race Equality H.R. Data product (*more information below*). The group met bi-monthly throughout 2025-26, with deep-dive sessions covering:

- Community cohesion, led by Bristol City Council’s Head of Communities
- Information session with the Government’s Windrush stakeholder engagement team & Input from Bristol’s Muslim Strategic Leadership Group on their annual conference
- Engagement with the South West Research Equity Network on awarded funding to counteract power imbalances in traditional research ecosystems
- Development of the Race data product and associated action plan

RESLG convened an in-person meeting in December 2025 to reflect on the group’s journey since inception and to identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration. The meeting was well attended with all partners reaffirming their strategic commitment to tackling race inequalities across the city. The main output from the meeting was the development and publication of ‘plan on a page’ for 2026, setting out collective priorities for the coming year.

Looking ahead, RESLG has selected four priority areas to focus on; community engagement, partnerships and collaboration, leadership and governance and workforce development with data led approaches. RESLG will reconvene in person again during 2026 to continue driving coordinated and accountable approaches to race equality across Bristol’s public sector.

Race Equality Practitioners' Group

The [Race Equality Practitioners' Group](#) is the delivery arm of the Race Equality Strategic Leaders' Group. Its overarching objective is to improve the representation of racially minoritised colleagues within the Bristol workforce by sharing learnings, challenges and good practice to bring about improved outcomes. Part of the collaboration across the city has been to understand how H.R. is embedding best practice in equity and inclusion across each organisation, from staff led groups, anti-racism workstreams and training to data collection and reporting.

The group continues to meet consistently. This year a core workstream of the group has been the development of Bristol's Race Equality H.R. Data Product (see below for further information) and sharing best practice around ethnicity categorisation and reporting.

The newly published [action plan](#) includes a comprehensive workplan for the practitioners' group which will be discussed and actioned during future meetings and associated workstreams. Other topics of discussion throughout the year have been how to support staff led groups, developing corporate equity frameworks and collaborative working to deliver 'Our City, Your Jobs.' The group continues to expand, welcoming new members from equality and H.R. backgrounds from across the city's employers and is open to all sectors and stakeholders.

Our City, Your Jobs

In June 2025 the Our City, Your Jobs recruitment event returned to City Hall following strong demand from communities and partner organisations. Delivered collaboratively by 30 of the city's major employers and welcoming over 420 attendees, the event formed a central part of a programme of events delivered by the Race Equality Strategic Leaders' Group to broaden equitable access to employment and opportunities for Bristol's citizens. The initiative is designed to support people seeking work, exploring new career pathways, or aiming to progress in their careers, with a particular focus on engaging racially minoritised communities.

Throughout the event, employers from across Bristol hosted stalls at the event providing information on live vacancies, entry routes and opportunities for training, apprenticeships, and volunteering. Colleagues were also available to offer practical advice on application processes, interview preparation and career development, ensuring attendees could access guidance in a welcoming and informal setting.

Feedback from attendees continues to demonstrate the positive impact of the event. The 2025 event achieved:

- 91% of attendees rating their experience 4 or 5 (out of 5)
- 94% rating the stalls 4 or 5 (out of 5)
- 94% reporting they were likely or very likely to apply for a role
- 85% of attendees identifying as from a racially minoritised background
- 100% of attendees stating they would like to see future events

The strong level of attendance and engagement reflects the continued value of the event as a space for networking, employment opportunity and advice. The event reaffirmed the collective commitment of partner organisations in ensuring Bristol's workforce increasingly reflects the communities it serves.

Looking ahead, partners have committed to again hosting the event in 2026, strengthening collaboration, widening participation and developing further opportunities to support citizens into meaningful employment across the city.

Bristol's Race Equality H.R. Data Product 4th iteration launch

[Bristol's Race Equality H.R. data product](#) is an award-winning tool that transparently presents workforce ethnicity data across a wide range of themes such as workforce, leadership and pay from Bristol's major employers. First published in 2017, the data product is designed to deliver more effective, thorough and transparent approaches to recording and monitoring of race data across key partners and drives multi agency action plans to address systemic inequalities.

In 2025, the [fourth iteration was published](#). This version of the product:

- Displays data in digital dashboard format for the first time
- Presents data from twelve of Bristol's largest employers
- Includes information on the ethnicity categories used by organisations
- Offers insights into reporting processes and thresholds
- Embeds sector-level and organisational-level filtering
- Includes new themes of recruitment, retention and intersectional data

Collectively, the data set represents a workforce sample size of 56,000 employees, a 12% increase since the last iteration (2021) and a 49% increase since the first iteration (2017). This equates to 22% of Bristol's economically active population. For the first time, data was presented in two formats to provide a granular view of ethnicity representation across the workforce.

This latest data product is also being presented across a range of platforms for users. A high level [highlight report](#) accompanies the dashboard, offering analysis across all twelve agencies. The report highlights areas of growth, but also areas of challenge that require scrutiny to ensure continued progression. In February 2026, RESLG published a [Strategic Priorities Action Plan](#), outlining commitments to delivering improvements, based on the data presented in the product. This will be developed into a formal programme for monitoring and reporting and is embedded into the main workplan for RESLG moving forward. Whilst the group maintains collective responsibility, each participating organisation is accountable for implementing the relevant actions within their own structures. The data product continues to be promoted across local and regional networks, as an example of effective practice in collaborative race equality reporting.

Bristol Equality Network

In November 2018 we launched the Bristol Equality Charter - a city-wide initiative co-produced by private, public, and voluntary sector organisations in conjunction with Bristol City Council. The charter sets out commitments to help with the aim of making Bristol a fairer, safer, accessible, and inclusive city where everyone feels they belong, has a voice and an equal opportunity to succeed and thrive. The Bristol Equality Charter continues to have a growing number of signatories, and we provide ongoing support to the Bristol Equality Network, which is open to representatives of organisations who have signed the Bristol Equality Charter.

The purpose of the Bristol Equality Network is to support network members to achieve the aims and commitments of the Bristol Equality Charter, develop excellent equality practice through cross-sector partnership working and knowledge sharing, and encourage more organisations to sign the Bristol Equality Charter and participate in the network. The network is chaired on a rotating basis and has four main meetings a year where members come together to promote partnership working and to share information and good practice.

The Bristol Equality Network continued to meet digitally throughout 2025-26. This comprised a wide range of topics including:-

- Race and religion in discrimination Law
- Supporting young, disadvantaged people through mental health and exercise
- Supporting African and Caribbean communities through a HIV diagnosis
- Developing capacity for Easy Read documents
- Anti racism practices in the workplace

Looking ahead, the network will be meeting in person in May 2026, to review the charter principles, give space for conversation, connection and networking and share perspectives across sector and communities to ensure the charter principles continue to be relevant and purposeful for those working to improve equity across the city.

Disability Equity Action Plan

The Disability Equality Commission [announced it would cease to function](#) after four years in operation, and their final annual report was delivered to Full Council in December 2025. In early 2026 a Lord Mayor's reception was held to thank and celebrate the achievements of the Commissioners during the four-year period.

To ensure Disability equity work continues, the council worked with the Chair of the Commission to develop a council-wide [Disability Equity Action plan](#). The plan outlines the collective commitments across BCC's services to embed accessibility and champion Disability Equity in the way we work and function. Actions are aligned to priority areas such as adult social care, children and education, transport, economy and more. The actions included in the action plan are not exhaustive but offer a centralised way of ensuring Disability Equity remains a priority across council services. Reporting leads are accountable for implementing actions within their respective areas of responsibility.

BCC will now work with the Bristol Disabled People Organisation Network to ensure Disabled people's perspectives are considered in strategic decision making.

Bristol Race and Health Equity Group

The Bristol Race and Health Equity Group (RHEG) originated during the COVID-19 pandemic as the Bristol Race Equality COVID-19 Steering Group, formed to respond to the 2020 rapid review into the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and other racially minoritised communities. As the city moved beyond the immediate pandemic response, the group broadened its remit and, in 2022, became the Bristol Race and Health Equity Group, adopting an annual priority-setting process to guide its focus on tackling structural race and health inequalities.

The RHEG continues to bring together diverse members, including community-based health organisations, Black, Asian and minoritised-led organisations, NHS and ICB representatives, public health specialists and wider system leaders. This ensures that community insight, lived experience and system intelligence continue to shape city-wide approaches to race and health equity.

In 2025, mental health equity was selected as the group's annual priority. Across the year, members explored system barriers and racial inequalities within mental health services through:

Learning sessions on the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF), led by Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, highlighting how the national framework can be adopted locally to reduce racial disparities in mental health access and outcomes.

Exploration of culturally informed approaches, including a presentation on *Voices of the Unheard* focusing on the mental and physical health-seeking behaviours of men of African and Caribbean heritage.

Community-led contributions, such as learnings on strengthening culturally appropriate mental health support for parents and families.

A major achievement was the development of a multi-stakeholder submission of evidence to the Mental Health Bill reforms, incorporating expertise from statutory services, VCSE organisations and lived-experience partners. The joint submission highlighted the need for legislative changes that actively address racial disparities in detention, treatment, accountability and service responsiveness.

In November 2025, the group delivered its first in-person Race and Health Equity event. Bringing together healthcare leaders, VCSE partners and local government representatives, the event aimed to strengthen understanding of system-wide approaches to health equity.

Event highlights included:

- Keynote addresses from senior system leaders including the CEO of Bristol NHS Group and the Director of Public Health.
- A panel discussion featuring representatives from the ICB, Bristol City Council and community partners.
- Strong attendee engagement, with breakout discussions exploring governance, partnerships and system change.
- High levels of positive feedback, with 100% of attendees expressing a desire for further such events.

The insights gathered directly informed planning for the group's direction for 2026.

Case Study: Race and Health Equity Group ITV Feature

At the end of 2025, the Race and Health Equity Group (RHEG) was approached by ITV to contribute to a national feature on Age UK's report, 'Ageing While Black: The experiences of older Black Caribbean people in England'. The report highlights the significant barriers older Black Caribbean people face in accessing essential services, including healthcare and welfare support, with these challenges rooted in accumulated lifelong disadvantage and compounded by ongoing institutional racism and ageism.

Recognising the RHEG's role in championing lived experience and system equity, ITV invited the group to share local perspectives. The Chair, alongside a longstanding group member and community representative participated in filming, offering critical insight into how these

issues manifest in Bristol. They were able to particularly highlight the impact of racism across the life course and its impact on health outcomes, service trust and accessibility.

Their contribution ensured that the voices and realities of older Black residents in Bristol were represented in a national conversation, reinforcing the importance of culturally informed approaches to ageing and equitable service design. The feature further demonstrated the group's role as a trusted bridge between communities and public institutions, amplifying local experience to influence wider awareness and policy dialogue.

Exploring Barriers to HPV Vaccination in Non-Mainstream Education

At the end of 2025, funding was awarded through the Areas of Research Interest grant to support a study exploring the experiences of Black young people in non-mainstream education and their engagement with the HPV vaccination programme. The purpose of the grant is to strengthen the connection between research and policy by enabling projects that generate evidence capable of shaping future practice and policy.

This study was developed in response to clear indications that young people with disrupted experiences of education may face multiple, intersecting, barriers that influence their ability to access routine preventive healthcare. Early scoping showed that factors such as school exclusion, inconsistent access to immunisation services and wider experiences of systemic inequity can create challenges that traditional school-based vaccination programmes are not designed to address. Through an intersectional, trauma-informed and arts-based approach, the project is now working directly with young people and their parents or carers to understand how they experience the HPV vaccination offer; including what obstacles they face and what forms of support or delivery would make access easier and more equitable. Workshops and creative methods are being used to ensure participants feel safe and respected in order to explore sensitive topics openly.

The grant will enable the development of evidence-informed recommendations grounded entirely in the learnings shared by participants. These recommendations will support policymakers and healthcare leaders to embed more inclusive, culturally sensitive and flexible approaches to HPV vaccination, particularly for young people outside of mainstream education. By centring lived experience, the project aims to contribute to long-term improvements in how preventive health programmes are designed, delivered and accessed and work will continue to develop this throughout 2026 - 2027.

Case Study: Bristol Living Wage City

Over the last six years the council has been on a journey towards achieving fair pay for local people, through the Bristol Living Wage City initiative. In March 2026, the council reaffirmed its commitment to lead the Bristol Living Wage City initiative for another three years to drive change and reduce in-work poverty.

The Economic Development team actively promotes the Bristol Living Wage City initiative through a variety of events, including the Better Bristol event held in December 2025. The Economic Development team is also keen to amplify the initiative through newsletters and blogs, and welcomes opportunities to feature relevant stories and case studies.

Businesses who pay the real Living Wage, are demonstrating their commitment to valuing and supporting their workforce, by paying a wage which is enough to live on – supporting

the cost of their everyday needs. That basic fairness is at the heart of what the Bristol Living Wage City campaign is trying to achieve.

The council plays an active leadership role by chairing a cross-sector Action Group comprising employers from a wide range of industries. Action Group members demonstrate their commitment by embedding Living Wage principles within their own programmes. For example, ACH requires employers to be Living Wage accredited before placing their clients into roles. In addition, Bristol Living Wage City has developed innovative engagement activities, such as a Living Wage employer walking trail launched last year, showcasing accredited businesses including cafés, restaurants, museums, pubs and nightclubs.

There are currently roughly 6,000 people in Bristol who have had their salary uplifted to the real Living Wage; 450 accredited Living Wage employers in Bristol, of which over 280 are headquartered in the city; and 45,000 people working for real Living Wage accredited employers

Paying the Living Wage also provides a range of business benefits:

- 94% of Living Wage businesses report having benefited from their accreditation.
- 87% say it improved their reputation
- 66% say it helped them differentiate from others in their industry
- 62% say it improved recruitment of employees into their business

The real Living Wage is currently £13.45 per hour (outside of London). It is the only UK wage rate that is based on the actual cost of living, and it increases every year.

Paying the Living Wage gives a full time worker an additional £1,443 per year more than someone on the National Minimum Wage, for workers aged 21 and over.

Measures of success

E04: Partnerships	Trend	Comment on progress 2025 26
Successful delivery of citywide action plans and work programmes to improve performance.	Not applicable	Positive progress during the year with setting of agreed city priorities and delivery as agreed.
Regular progress and data reporting provided to multi-agency partnerships e.g. strategic race equality leaders group.	Not applicable	Progress reporting on all priorities set has continued across all above partnership groups throughout the year.
Feedback and evaluation of large-scale city-wide equity focused initiatives and events.	Not applicable	Evaluation has taken place on all events delivered for both race stakeholders and our city's communities and the feedback received on events has been extremely positive.
Increase in % who are satisfied with the way BCC asks for their views before it makes changes that affect them.	Higher	We did not hold a Quality of Life survey in 2025. This indicator had slightly increased, with 30.3% as an average in 2024, compared to 28.7% in 2023. This is not statistically significant. However, it is important to note differences between groups. Disabled people, carers and older people are less likely than average to be satisfied with how BCC asks for their

		views. Some minoritised ethnic groups and people from non-Christian faith groups are more likely than average to report satisfaction.
Increase in the consultation response rate for the most deprived citizens.		1.89 in 2025-26 compared to 1.80 in 2024-25 (ratio of the consultation response rate per 10,000 citizens from people living in the 20% least deprived parts of the city (quintile 5) and the response rate from the 20% most deprived areas (quintile 1). Calculated as the mean of responses for all city-wide consultations with 500 or more respondents, which closed during the year ending in the reporting period)



E05: Communities

Equality Objective E05 “tackle prejudice and promote understanding amongst communities

This objective is about the Council's role in the community.

Fostering good relations

To meet our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, we need to actively promote positive relationships between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. This involves taking deliberate steps to increase mutual understanding across communities. Our work in this area is wide ranging and includes initiatives that support wellbeing and resilience by helping residents work together and create positive change for everyone. Our One City, Many Communities approach sets out our strategic priorities, drawing on Bristol's local expertise and aligning funding to strengthen and sustain community led action.

Protecting the Bristol Impact Fund

Since 2017, Bristol City Council has used grant funding to tackle inequality across the city through the Bristol Impact Fund.

The Bristol Impact Fund brings together eight council grant programmes under a single framework to support community-led change and address inequality. Its focus is on strengthening communities, particularly those facing disadvantage, to deliver local support and solutions.

The programme offers different types of funding. Medium and large grants provide four-year funding to voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations across the city. Small grants offer two-year funding and are designed to encourage new ideas and greater participation from more diverse communities.

The first two rounds of the Bristol Impact Fund (BIF1 and BIF2) supported projects that built the power of communities experiencing disadvantage and inequality. These

investments focused on increasing resilience, enabling social action, reducing inequality and improving wellbeing.

Since the fund began, more than 70 organisations have received grants, and over 7,000 volunteers have taken part in funded projects, delivering positive change in neighbourhoods across Bristol.

Despite significant financial constraints, the council secured the Bristol Impact Fund budget, protecting this vital investment in communities. The fund provides much-needed support for projects both large and small and delivers clear, direct benefits at neighbourhood level. Supporting change from the ground up remains central to empowering communities to deliver the interventions and support they need.

The third round of the Bristol Impact Fund (BIF3) has a budget of £8.8 million over four years. This was approved by the Public Health and Communities Committee in November 2025. BIF3 will build on the foundations of earlier rounds by prioritising investment in neighbourhood organisations and citywide equalities communities. The funding is supporting impactful work across the city, including projects delivered by Eastside Community Trust, Wellspring Settlement, Somali Kitchen Bristol CIC and many others.

[The Bristol Impact Fund](#)

Community Exchange meetings

Community Exchange is a meeting held every two weeks that brings together community hubs and Welcoming Spaces from across the city so people can connect, share learning, and plan for the future. It was first created during the COVID 19 response to strengthen communication between Bristol City Council and the voluntary and community sector. Since then, it has grown into a city wide platform.

The focus has moved from responding to emergencies to more proactive planning around key themes for the city. Bristol City Council hosts the meetings, which are attended by partners including the NHS, advice services, mental health organisations, universities, employment services, and many community and voluntary groups.

Equity and inclusion are central to the conversations. Community hubs work together to coordinate activity and share good practice on important issues including housing, employment, community cohesion, and access to advice. The Community Exchange is also developing new themed areas of work to support a more strategic, community led approach. This aims to build on local strengths, support resident led solutions, and bring people together to address shared challenges.

Working as One City, Many Communities

During 2025-26 we continued to work closely with local partners, including the police and community and faith leaders, to strengthen relationships and foster trust between communities across the city.

In 2025 we published the [Community Cohesion Report](#) on the council website. A key finding was that some communities feel distant from the council. People told us that they do not always feel visible to the council and that the council does not always feel visible or accessible to them.

Our Community Development team has played an important role in responding to this feedback. They organised a series of community conversations with the Leader of the Council, Deputy Leader and Chair of the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee. These conversations took place in Lockleaze, Lawrence Weston, Bedminster, Hartcliffe and Lawrence Hill.

These sessions created valuable opportunities to listen directly to residents and community organisations about what helps communities to thrive and where challenges remain. We heard clearly that the way we work and the decisions we make have a real impact on people's lives. Communities want to be actively involved in shaping their neighbourhoods and shared many practical ideas to improve how we work together, including ideas that could save time and money. There was strong and consistent feedback about the importance of local, accessible spaces where people can meet, and about the value of community led activities that bring together people from different backgrounds.

Residents and partners also highlighted the need for purposeful action to help communities connect across the city. Suggestions included linking neighbourhoods, connecting groups working on similar projects, and creating more opportunities to celebrate together across cultures. These insights are helping to shape a more joined up approach to building welcoming and connected neighbourhoods for everyone.

Alongside this, leaders from universities, sports organisations, businesses, schools and the arts and culture sector met with the Chair of the Public Health and Communities Policy Committee. These discussions explored how the priority themes from the Community Cohesion Report resonate across different sectors, what action is already taking place to support strong communities, and what further contributions can be made.

Working as One City, Many Communities sits at the heart of our new Corporate Strategy. It reflects a shift towards listening more deeply, enabling communities, and designing services around people's real lives and experiences.

The emerging priorities from this work include:

- Strengthening local action and community development
- Celebrating and connecting communities across the city
- Involving residents meaningfully in decision making
- Ensuring welcoming and accessible community spaces
- Supporting safer online environments
- Building shared stories about identity and belonging
- Developing a shared call to action for the whole city

Supporting Sanctuary Seekers in Bristol

In November 2025, the Children and Young People Policy Committee approved a new strategy and action plan setting out how the council will support people seeking sanctuary and meet its legal duties. The strategy explains how government funding will be used to meet basic needs and support people to settle and integrate into local communities.

Sanctuary seekers include refugees, asylum seekers and others who have experienced forced migration, including people arriving through schemes such as Homes for Ukraine and the Syrian and Afghan resettlement programmes. The action

plan focuses on practical support such as access to English language learning, help navigating health and education services and opportunities for employment, skills development and volunteering.

A strong emphasis is placed on building compassionate and resilient communities by helping new arrivals connect with local people and find common ground.

The strategy has three key pillars: meeting basic needs; promoting opportunity (including English language and employment) and building compassionate and resilient communities. The action plan is coordinated by Sanctuary services but delivered by teams all across the council, and through grants to voluntary sector partners.

Equity and inclusion is considered in various ways including through:

- i) understanding and promoting the needs and contributions of sanctuary seekers in Bristol
- ii) understanding the diversity of sanctuary seeking experience including women, children, LGBT+ and disabled people, and
- iii) championing diversity and challenging discrimination against people with lived experience as sanctuary seekers in our own team and within the council.

As the strategy runs until 2030 there is lots more to do and we will be working with many teams across the council including Communications, Communities, Housing, HR, Children and Education and many more to achieve positive outcomes.

The strategy and action plan can be found on the [council website](#).

Case Study: Public Art and Cultural Activation Toolkit

In October 2025, the council launched the Public Art and Cultural Activation Toolkit to place culture and creativity at the heart of regeneration in Bristol city centre and the Frome Gateway.

Developed with developers, local businesses and community and cultural organisations, the toolkit provides clear guidance on how to involve local people and use creative activity to support community wellbeing, environmental sustainability and the local economy.

The toolkit focuses on two areas of central Bristol undergoing significant change over the next decade. Its aim is to help create inclusive, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods by embedding cultural heritage, local voices and creativity into new spaces.

Aligned with the city's planning, public art and regeneration policies, the toolkit was developed in collaboration with We Made That and Field Art Projects and funded by Homes England. It acts as a practical call to action to fill the city centre and Frome Gateway with public life and creative activity that celebrates Bristol's culture, welcomes new communities and supports skills, nature and opportunity.

Alongside its long term vision, the toolkit includes practical actions that can be delivered quickly to support early progress, build partnerships and attract future investment. It is now being used to guide developers and the council's own infrastructure projects across these areas.

The Public Art and Cultural Activation Toolkit is available to download online.

Measures of success

E05: Communities	Trend	Comment on progress 2025 26
Reduction in % of those living in the most deprived areas who feel fear of crime affects their day-to-day life.	Lower	We did not carry out a Quality of Life survey in 2025. In 2024 the percentage of those living in the 10% most deprived areas whose fear of crime affects their day to day lives was 40.9%, lower than in 2023 (44.4%).
Increase in % of citizens who agree people from different backgrounds get on well together in their neighbourhoods.	Higher	We did not carry out a Quality of Life survey in 2025. In 2024 this was 72.9%, which is very slightly higher than 72.5% in 2023
Increase in % of citizens who feel they belong to their neighbourhood.	Higher	We did not carry out a Quality of Life survey in 2025. In 2024 the Bristol average was 64.8%, slightly higher compared to 2023 (63.8%). Disparities continue to exist with the 10% most deprived reporting 45.4% and the 10% least deprived reporting 77.4%.
Increase in % who feel police and public services successfully tackle crime and anti-social behaviour locally.	Lower	We did not carry out a Quality of Life survey in 2025. This figure has very slightly decreased from 20.6% in 2023 to 20.3% in 2024.
Reduction in residents who report experiencing discrimination or harassment in the past year.	Higher	A total of 3,066 hate crimes were recorded in 2025-26, an 11% increase on the previous year (2,758). Compared with 2024-25, race-related hate crime increased by 10%; sexual orientation related hate crime increased by 9%; and gender-based hate crime increased by 23%. Anti-Muslim hate crime remains at similar levels to last year but is significantly higher than in 2023-24, while anti-Jewish hate crime has doubled compared with earlier years, with spikes in November 2025 and March 2026. During March 2026, heightened community tensions were identified, linked to protest and counter protest activity, incidents affecting mosques, and increased divisive online content. The Community Safety Partnership continues to monitor hate crime closely, raise awareness of reporting and victim support, and respond proactively to emerging tensions through targeted communications and preventative activity.

Appendices

Workforce Diversity Data

The following workforce diversity data shows levels of representation for Bristol City Council employees by category, compared to the Bristol working age population (or equivalent group where more appropriate e.g. age band). The report excludes data for locally managed schools/nurseries, councillors, casual, seasonal and external agency employees. The report is based on the sensitive information that colleagues provide confidentially on our HR system. Some data for categories where there are fewer than 50 employees has been redacted.

Category	31/03/2026 Bristol City Council		Bristol population %	Difference to Bristol population	Trend since March 25
Age 16 - 29	908	12.9%	39%	-26.1%	0.7%
Age 30 - 39	1,711	24.4%	24%	0.4%	2.1%
Age 40 - 49	1,823	26.0%	16%	10.0%	1.7%
Age 50 - 64	2,656	37.8%	21%	16.8%	0.3%
Disabled	561	8%	12.4%	-4.4%	0.3%
Prefer not to state Disability	192	2.7%	Not applicable	Not applicable	-0.1%
Unknown Disability	2,520	35.9%	Not applicable	Not applicable	3.6%
Asian or Asian British	284	4.0%	6.6%	-2.6%	0.3%
Black or Black British	409	5.8%	5.9%	-0.1%	0.2%
Mixed ethnicity	296	4.2%	4.5%	-0.3%	0.6%
Other ethnic groups	165	2.3%	1.9%	0.4%	1.7%
White	5,392	76.8%	81.1%	-4.3%	-1.0%
Prefer not to state ethnicity	105	1.5%	Not applicable	Not applicable	-0.1%
Unknown Ethnicity	414	5.9%	Not applicable	Not applicable	-1.1%
Female	4,314	61%	49.1%	11.9%	0.6%
Male	2,745	39%	50.9%	-11.9%	0.4%
I use another term	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	-0.2%
Prefer not to say	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable	-0.8%

Category	31/03/2026 Bristol City Council		Bristol population %	Difference to Bristol population	Trend since March 25
Christian	1,703	25.3%	43.5%	-18.2%	0.1%
Other religion or belief	1,619	6.4%	7.3%	-0.9%	0.0%
No religion or belief	2,422	48.9%	41.5%	7.4%	2.8%
Prefer not to state Religion	891	13.6%	7.7%	5.9%	-0.8%
Unknown Religion	465	5.8%	-	-	-2.0%
LGB+	619	8.8%	9.1%	-0.3%	1.4%
Heterosexual	5,146	73.3%	90.9%	-17.6%	1.9%
Prefer not to state Sexual Orientation	865	12.3%	Not applicable	Not applicable	-1.6%
Unknown Sexual Orientation	438	6.2%	Not applicable	Not applicable	-1.0%
Trans person	Redacted	0.3%	0.8%	-0.5%	0.1%
Prefer not to state Trans	122	1.7%	Not applicable	Not applicable	0.2%
Unknown Trans	2,343	33.4%	Not applicable	Not applicable	-8.4%

Targets for representation, progression and pay and other outcomes by characteristic

Measure	2024 25	2025 26	Trend
Increase the percentage of senior leaders who are from minority ethnic communities.	10%	16.4%	Higher
Year in year increases in the proportion of colleagues who self-declare their diversity characteristics. (measured via reduction in % unknown)	Ethnicity: 7.0% Religion/Belief: 7.8% Sexual Orientation: 7.2% Disability: 32.3% Trans: 41.8%	Ethnicity: 5.9% Religion/Belief: 6.6% Sexual Orientation: 6.2% Disability: 35.9% Trans: 33.4%	Higher (less % unknown)

Annual Pay Gap reporting

Measure	2024 25	2025 26	Trend
Gender pay gap (mean)	3.71%	3.38%	Reduced
Gender pay gap (median)	7.12%	6.24%	Reduced
Ethnicity pay gap (mean)	6.02%	6.96%	Increased
Ethnicity pay gap (median)	9.09%	9.55%	Increased
Disability pay gap (mean)	4.51%	4.38 %	Reduced
Disability pay gap (median)	2.38%	0.00%	Reduced
Sexual Orientation (mean)	6.31%	7.54%	Increased
Sexual Orientation (median)	9.55%	9.55%	No change

Data from internal Pay Gap Power BI report, comparing end March 2025 with end March 2026

Summary of Equity and Inclusion Learning and Development Offer

Detail is provided below for equity and inclusion related training and development. Further information is contained in other sections of this report, e.g., under Workforce Diversity Initiatives and/or on the Source the council's intranet.

E-learning

- A Guide to the Menopause
- Accessible and Inclusive - Train the Trainer module
- Equality and Diversity – Your Rights and Responsibilities
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Hybrid Working
- Introduction to Reasonable Adjustments
- Managing Diversity
- Managing Mental Health at Work
- Managing Stress and Anxiety
- Navigating Change
- Older People Awareness and Challenging Ageism
- Recruitment and Selection refresher
- Trans Inclusive Guidance

Trainer Facilitated Courses

- Corporate Induction which includes an equality and inclusion session

- Cultural Intelligence
- Deaf Awareness
- Equality Impact Assessment
- Leading Inclusively
- Mental Health First Aid
- Recruitment and Selection
- Supporting Attendance with Effective Conversations