Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2026-2030

THREE RIVERS DISTRICT COUNCIL

1 Introduction

1.1 Three Rivers District Council's vision is that the district be a great place to live, work and visit. That vision is one we hold for everyone.

1.2 The council is dedicated to the promotion of equality of opportunity and to removing any discrimination in service delivery, procurement and employment. This is an ambition that we cannot realise alone. To achieve the levels of equality, inclusion and community cohesion we aspire to for our district, we remain committed to working in partnership with organisations and local communities across and beyond our geography.

1.3 This Policy explains how Three Rivers District Council will promote equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in its services, employment, commissioning, procurement and community leadership. It applies to councillors, employees, contractors, commissioned providers and organisations acting on the council's behalf.

1.4 The annual EDI Action Plan, which sets out the activities, owners and timescales used to deliver the objectives within this policy.

2 Legislation

2.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out the council's legal duties to have due regard to the:

- Elimination of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct
- Advancement of equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Fostering of good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2.2 Having "due regard" involves:

- Putting the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty into practice.
- Removing or mitigating disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Taking steps to meet the needs of people with protected characteristics

2.3 The Act defines the protected characteristics as; age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; religion and belief; race; sex; and sexual orientation

2.4 The council recognises communities of identity and circumstance that are vulnerable to disadvantage and discrimination but are not separately protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. These include carers; people who have experienced domestic abuse or sexual violence; people who misuse substances; people experiencing homelessness or rough sleeping; looked after children and care leavers; current and former armed forces personnel; and neurodivergent people. The council will consider their needs through this policy, within service design, engagement and by using Equality Impact Assessments.

2.5 The council will also have regard to the Equality and Human Rights Commission's Equality Act 2010 Code of Practice for Services, Public Functions and Associations 2026, which came into force on 5 August 2026 and replaced the 2011 code.

- Mental Health Act 1983 and 2007
- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- NHS and Community Care Act 1990
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Asylum and Immigration Act 1999
- Care Standards Act 2000
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Care Act 2014
- Local Government Act 2000
- Employment Rights Act 2025, including provisions strengthening employer duties to prevent sexual harassment and addressing harassment by third parties.
- Housing Act 1985 and 1996
- Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
- Forced Marriage (civil protection) Act 2017
- Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 & Domestic Abuse Act 2025
- The National Prevent Strategy
- Modern Slavery Act 2015
- Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012

3 Our Commitment

3.1 The council recognises that it has responsibilities as:

- A public body to fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- A community leader to ensure our community vision is successfully delivered for all our residents.
- An employer to build and support a diverse, included and engaged workforce.

3.2 In addition to these responsibilities and legal duties the council commits to:

- Provide services in a manner which is sensitive to needs of individuals;

- Consciously consider the impacts (positive and negative) of our decisions and actions on all our communities using Equality Impact Assessments;
- Help those who face discrimination and harassment, taking action against perpetrators where possible;
- Build a workforce that reflects the diversity of our communities
- Promote equality of opportunity and fair treatment in employment
- Demonstrate visible community leadership to equality, equity, diversity and inclusion;
- Work in partnership to ensure effective consultation and engagement;
- Monitor and evaluate all relevant aspects of service delivery and employment and eliminate differences demonstrated by unfair outcomes;

4 Our Objectives 2026-30

4.1 Our objectives have been developed through engagement and consultation with council staff and Three Rivers communities. They take into consideration the work undertaken and present the council's ambition for the next four years.

4.2 The objectives are:

- Understanding and building trust with communities.
- To make council services accessible for everyone, encourage and support partner organisations to do the same.
- To promote a diverse workforce and inclusive organisational culture.
- To fund and deliver services that promote fairness and accessibility.

4.3 The Inclusion and Wellbeing Working Group produces an annual EDI Action Plan, with all service areas, to direct the delivery of our equality objectives. This is agreed by the council's Corporate Management Team. These actions are monitored and reported on annually within the Equality Duty Information Report, and published on the councils website.

4.4 Understanding and building trust with communities

4.4.1 Three Rivers is an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural district. As a district we build and promote a reputation as a place, and as a council, that welcomes diversity, promotes and enables inclusion and where difference is valued, which only contributes positively to our future prosperity.

4.4.2 Having an in-depth, current, understanding of our communities, their diversity, identities, strengths and needs, helps the council to consider how best to design and deliver our services.

4.4.3 Our commitment to inclusion acknowledges that some under-represented communities need extra action to build trust in the council and in local decision-making, so their voices are heard in policy and planning.

How will we do this?

- Deliver and develop the attendance at Equality Forums

- Engage with our communities through pop ups and community events
- Work with the Community Safety Partnership to address issues relating to Hate Crime
- Maintain an internal Inclusion and Wellbeing Working Group to promote understanding of diverse groups throughout the council workforce.

How will we measure success?

- Number of organisations involved in Equality Forum.
- Arrange or attend 36 partnership initiatives a year
- Number of subscribers to the council's e-newsletter service
- Increased visibility of Third Party Reporting Centres

4.5 **To make council services reachable for everyone, encouraging and supporting partner organisations to do the same**

4.5.1 We recognise that some residents and communities face inequalities that make it harder to access council services.

4.5.2 We will identify and tackle these barriers by engaging with communities, working closely with partners, helping residents navigate systems. This will be supported by delivering outreach through Healthy Hubs.

4.5.3 Three Rivers District Council will provide services that adapt to changing local needs and accommodate individuals, remove barriers, treat disability and difference through equitable practices, and remain focused on continually improving the customer experience.

4.5.4 The council maintains strong partnerships with local organisations, we will use our influence to encourage our partners to identify and address the inequalities experienced by their service users.

How will we do this?

- Deliver outreach of services in our communities through the Healthy Hubs
- Develop internal guidance on reasonable adjustments, to ensure consistency across the authority
- Work with community groups and organisations to share information on support and services available.
- Deliver the Customer Experience Strategy

How will we measure success?

- Increase incidents of support through the Healthy Hubs
- Satisfaction feedback from residents relating to management of

reasonable adjustment requests.

- Quarterly reporting and review by Corporate Management Team of Customer Experience Strategy delivery.

4.6 To create a diverse workforce and inclusive organisational culture

4.6.1 Our commitment to diversity and equality applies to both our staff and the communities we serve. It is rooted in our role as a local authority and in our need to attract and retain talented people.

4.6.2 The council performs best when it brings together people with different skills, knowledge, backgrounds and networks. An inclusive workplace that values every individual's contribution encourages fresh ideas and perspectives and drives improvements in our services.

4.6.3 Three Rivers District Council aims to have a workforce that is:

Representative of the communities we serve, with an equality profile that broadly reflects the district.
Skilled, capable and motivated to deliver the best services for everyone in the district,
Showing high levels of engagement and satisfaction with the council as an employer.
Proud, respectful and passionate.
Delivering high performance and results
Leading ourselves and others.

How will we do this?

- Arrange wellbeing initiatives for council staff
- Identify and deliver internal training programme to support staff progression
- Raise awareness with staff on the principles of reasonable adjustments
- Consistently including inclusion commitments in recruitment adverts

How will we measure success?

- Increase in staff feeling connected and part of the council
- Increase in staff feeling the council has an inclusive culture
- Higher number of job applications from diverse groups

4.7 To deliver and fund services that promote fairness and accessibility

4.7.1 Our commitment and ambition to promote equality are fully integrated into how we plan, procure and deliver services.

4.7.2 The council operates a robust programme of Equality Impact Assessments that ensures we consciously consider how decisions and actions affect people with protected characteristics in service delivery, commissioning and employment.

4.7.3 We will gather insight and feedback from communities and partner organisations on developing workstreams, and use local research and context to guide our decisions.

4.7.4 The council's social value commitment means our contracts will, where appropriate, secure extra benefits for vulnerable groups such as training and employment opportunities.

How will we do this?

- Officers to complete Equality Impact Assessments for policies and projects
- Councillors to review Equality Impact Assessments to inform decisions
- Work with Community Infrastructure Levy applicants to completed Equality Impact Assessments for all applications.
- Work with organisations we fund to improve accessibility

How will we measure success?

- Increased completion of Equality Impact Assessments
- Improved accessibility to local support services through outreach
- Increased engagement through partnership networks

5 Monitoring

5.1 Work undertaken to achieve the annual Action Plan will be published on the council's website, within the Equality Duty Information Report.

5.2 This report will be reviewed and scrutinised by the council's Corporate Management Team and Leadership prior to publication.

5.3 As part of service delivery and wider community engagement, council services undertake equalities monitoring. This information is collected so that individual teams can:

- Make sure our council services are accessible to everyone
- Take steps to mitigate any barriers that are identified
- Treat everyone fairly and appropriately when they use our services
- Make sure we are listening to views from all sections of our community

5.4 Equality monitoring information if provided voluntarily and handled confidentially. Results will be aggregated or otherwise protected so that published information does not identify individual respondents. Personal data

will be processed in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the data Protection Act 2018 and the council's data protection policies.

5.5 The insight that this monitoring provides allows the council to identify, plan and deliver service improvements and where necessary to target and/or adapt services to and for those who need them.

6 Reasonable Adjustments

6.1 The Equality Act 2010 states there is a duty to make reasonable adjustments if someone is placed at a substantial disadvantage because of their disability compared with non-disabled people or people who do not share that disability. Substantial disadvantage is defined as "more than minor or trivial".

6.2 Reasonable adjustments apply to the council both in its role as an employer and a service provider.

6.3 For the council's service planning and processes, this duty is anticipatory, meaning the council should consider needs in advance rather than waiting for difficulties to emerge. This will be evidenced through the use of Equality Impact Assessments.

6.4 In addition to its legal duty stated in the Equality Act, the council, and its individual service areas will consider requests made for reasonable adjustments relating to access to services for residents. These will be considered for all groups covered by this policy on a case by case basis.

6.5 The council will not make assumptions about whether a resident requires any adjustments or what those should be. The customer, their carer or advocate is required to inform the council about adjustments that would support them. The service area working with the customer will discuss the requirements with the person concerned and seek to reach an agreement on what would be reasonable in their circumstances.

6.6 Reasonable adjustments can be requested in person, in writing (including email) or by telephone.

6.7 Reasonable adjustments required by employees of the council are included in the Disability in Employment Policy.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Everybody has a role to play in achieving the council's equalities objectives. At Three Rivers, our approach and commitment to equalities is steered from the top and driven by our front-line services. To meet our objectives the council will provide leadership that is:

- focused on tackling inequality and promoting inclusion
- able to balance competing interests and priorities in the district
- confident in its role in improving relations between communities

7.2 Councillors

- Full Council is responsible for setting and approving this policy and any subsequent changes to it.
- Councillors are expected to be champions of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) acting as role models and demonstrating their commitment to tackling inequality.
- The Policy and Resources Committee (P&R) is responsible for the performance management of this Policy and will make recommendations to Council on its future development.
- The Equalities Forum convenes bi-annually and is chaired by an elected council Member. It aims to address and improve issues relating to equality, diversity, inclusion and equity for the people of Three Rivers by working in partnership to create a better place to live, work and visit. All district councillors are invited to attend this Forum.
- Lead, support and advocate for the diverse people and communities they serve
- Use equality impact assessments to inform and scrutinise decision making to avoid discrimination, promote inclusion and wherever possible increase fairness in the district.
- Have an understanding of the legal equality duties, our organisational commitments and how this can impact on decision making.

7.3 Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

7.3.1 CMT and SLT provide corporate leadership on equality, diversity and inclusion. They champion these principles, lead by example promote the integration of these principles in all council functions.

Collectively it is responsible for ensuring:

- the implementation of the policy
- that all staff are aware of and have the tools, skills and knowledge to meet their responsibilities under the policy
- that a member of staff from their service is represented in the Inclusion and Wellbeing Working Group
- Champion equality within the council, including undertaking a scrutiny role to ensure that equality considerations are integrated in the decision making and governance of the council.
- Ensuring Equality Impact Assessments are undertaken for policies and projects.

7.4 Strategy and Partnerships/Human Resources

- The Strategy and Partnerships service provides professional support to the CMT by guiding the implementation of the policy and developing monitoring, evaluation, Equality Impact Assessment procedures and guidance.
- Provides support to council officers and CIL applicants on the development and review of Equality Impact Assessments.
- The team co-ordinates the publication of the Equality Duty Information Report and development of equality objectives.
- The Strategy and Partnerships service Chair's and coordinates the Inclusion and Wellbeing Working Group.
- HR are committed to collecting and publishing annual workforce monitoring information.

- HR will collect and publish an annual gender pay gap report.
- HR will produce ethnicity and disability pay gap reports following the publication of the Equality (Race and Disability) Bill.
- HR will maintain the Disability Confident Leadership accreditation for the council.

7.5 Managers

7.5.1 All Managers are expected to:

- Ensure all staff are aware of their personal responsibilities in relation to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Ensure continued improvement and equality outcomes in relation to the accessibility and delivery of services to residents.
- Create an inclusive workplace culture in which all staff can thrive and reach their potential.
- Ensure all staff are supported and trained so that they can perform their jobs effectively.
- Manage all staff fairly and equitably through the consistent and fair application of HR policies and procedures.
- Set clear standards of behaviours in line with the council's values and promptly dealing with any instances of inappropriate behaviour, including discrimination, harassment and bullying.
- Champion equality within the council and ensuring equality considerations are integrated and considered in recommendations and decisions of the council.
- Complete Equality Impact Assessments, and encourage their teams to do so, to inform decision making to avoid discrimination, promote inclusion and wherever possible, increase fairness in the district.

7.6 Staff

7.6.1 All staff are responsible for complying with this Policy and its associated procedures and guidance. This means that all staff are expected to:

- Be fully aware and have a comprehensive understanding of the council's legal equality duties, our organisational commitments and what these mean practically for them in their roles.
- Treat service users, colleagues and residents with dignity and respect, responding positively and appropriately to meet diverse needs.
- Challenge and report to managers any incident where equality practice has not been followed, including discrimination, harassment and bullying. If necessary, staff are encouraged to use the appropriate grievance procedure, anti-harassment or whistle-blowing policies.
- Undertake mandatory e-learning in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Support and advocate for people with protected characteristics and the communities they serve.

7.7 Inclusion and Wellbeing Working Group

7.7.1 Members of the Inclusion and Wellbeing Working Group are expected to:

- Develop the annual Action Plan, through consultation with their individual teams.
- Improve the inclusivity and diversity of Three Rivers District Council to build upon the “Values and Behaviours” of the council.
- Play a significant role in fostering a thriving and supportive environment where it’s staff members can flourish both personally and professionally.
- Undertake work to explore the needs of the council, its staff and our residents, to implement change across individual teams for a coordinated and consistent approach, to implement changes within working practice.

8 Document Information

	Job Title	Group	Date
Prepared by:	Partnerships and Inclusion Manager	Strategy and Partnerships	10/26
Checked & Reviewed by:	Head of Strategy and Partnerships	Strategy and Partnerships	10/26
Approved by:		CMT	MM/YY
		JLT	
		Policy and Resources Committee	
		Full Council	
Next review date:	2030		
Version:	1.1		
Reason for document issue:	Revised policy as due for renewal		

Distribution List

Quantity	Format	Location	Date
1	Electronic	Intranet	12/2026
1	Electronic	Internet	12/2026

Amendment & Revision Record

Version Number	Purpose of issue	Date
1.0	Revised policy following update	02/2026
1.1	Revised policy following public consultation on v. 1	12/2026

THREE RIVERS
DISTRICT COUNCIL