



“All of Us” in Bracknell Forest

Equalities Monitoring Annual Summary Report 2023-24

January 2025



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Appendices: Service Level Reports

- A. Adult Social Care Equalities Monitoring Report
- B. Children's Social Care Equalities Monitoring Report
- C. Community Safety Equalities Monitoring Report
- D. Customer Services Equalities Monitoring Report
- E. Early Help Equalities Monitoring Report
- F. Education Equalities Monitoring Report
- G. Housing Equalities Monitoring Report
- H. Leisure Services Equality Monitoring Report
- I. Library Services Equalities Monitoring Report
- J. Place, Planning and Regeneration
- K. Welfare Services Equalities Monitoring Report

The reports on each of these services are also available using the following link:

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality-and-diversity/monitoring-equality>

1. Introduction

Equality is a priority for the council and is a cross cutting principle underpinning the delivery of our Council Plan. Across the plan, and through the design of our services and work with partners, we are committed to supporting those most in need of help and tackling inequalities.

Our vision for the borough is where we put residents first, working together to grow sustainable, resilient, and inclusive communities. The Bracknell Forest Council Plan 2023-27 sets out our ambitions, goals and priorities to achieve this working with residents, businesses, and partners. These are:

1. Engaged and healthy communities

To help create opportunities where people can succeed, be happy and feel safe.

2. Thriving and connected economy

The local economy includes many different aspects, such as businesses, jobs, skills, accommodation, and services.

3. Green and sustainable environment

Our environment includes everything around us, our parks, our cycleways and our road networks.

In delivering these priorities, we want to ensure that our services are inclusive and accessible for all, and we are committed to working with our residents to achieve this. We strive to creating an inclusive borough for all and tackling inequalities where they exist which cuts across everything we do and goes beyond just our legal responsibilities.

1.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) is a key lever for ensuring that public sector organisations, like Bracknell Forest Council embed equality across all its policies and services. Under this Duty, the council must, in exercising our functions, have due regard to the need to:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited in the Act,
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

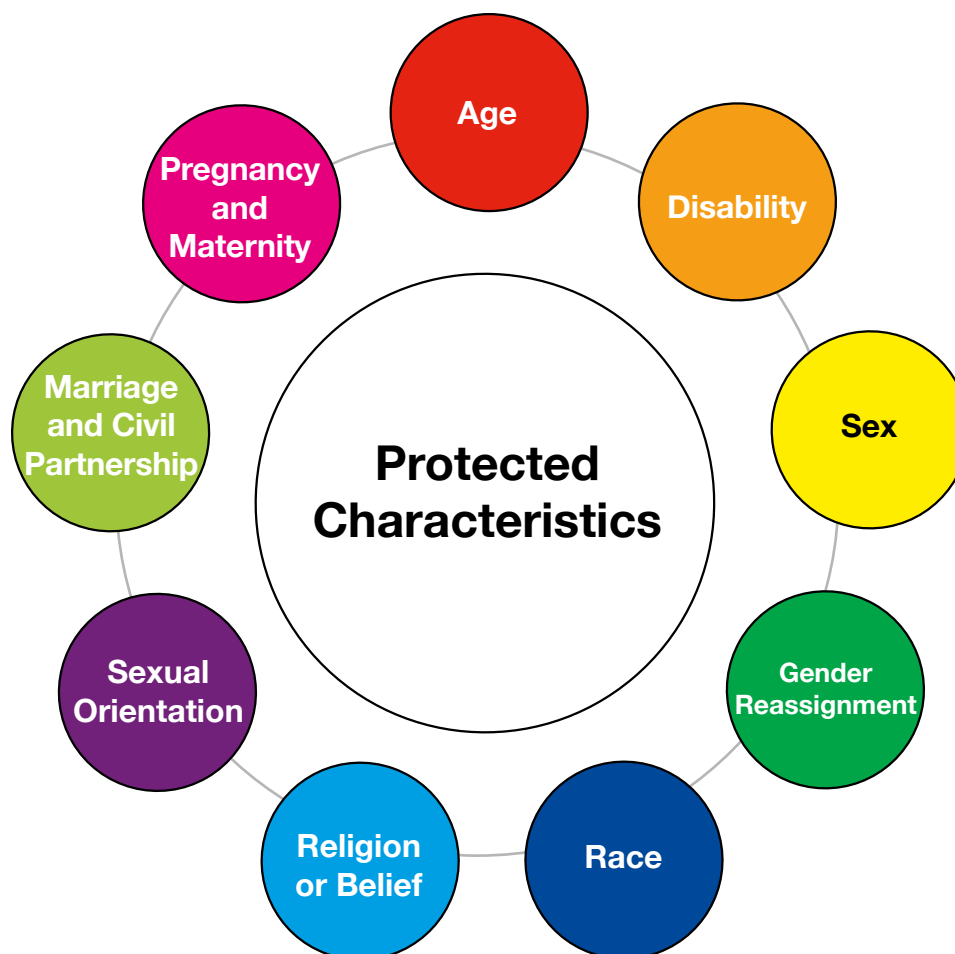
The PSED also requires the council to:

1. Publish annual 'equality information' to demonstrate our compliance.
2. Set one or more 'equality objective' at least every four years.
3. Publish annually Gender Pay Gap information.

It's important that the council considers how its decisions advance equity, inclusion and diversity by removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people because of their protected characteristics.

1.2 Protected Characteristics

There are nine 'protected characteristics' (detailed below) covered by the Equalities Act – for marriage and civil partnerships, the council is only required to ensure it eliminates discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on these grounds.



In addition the council also considers how our services, policies and practices could impact other groups who may face additional barriers for example people with caring responsibilities, people facing financial hardship and the military and veteran community.

This report summarises how the council has advanced equalities and inclusivity and demonstrated how we have met our commitments set out in equality legislation over the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

2. Bracknell Forest Council Equality Scheme 2022-25

Bracknell Forest Council's Equality Scheme (2022-2025) sets out our commitment to advancing equity and inclusion within Bracknell Forest. The scheme describes how equity, diversity and inclusion are essential to the way we operate as a community leader, a service provider and an employer and is integral to everything we do.

The Equality Scheme provides a framework for our equality objectives, it sets out clearly the priorities whether it is in how we work with residents, in the services we provide or through the retention and recruitment of our workforce.

The Equality Scheme is linked to our service planning process to ensure that the implementation of the equality objectives is integrated wherever possible into the mainstream delivery and monitoring of services across the council.

Bracknell Forest Council has four Equality Objectives, three of which are outward looking focussed on residents and service users, and one of which is inward-looking, focussed on our workforce. These are:

**Diverse and
inclusive
workforce**

**Inclusive in
all we do**

**Accountable
and fair**

**Accessible
for all**

2.1 Monitor our progress

We recognize that equality and diversity is not a parallel process or something to think about once a year. It is an absolutely fundamental part of improving services for everyone.

Each equality objective is underpinned by annual priority actions that take the council towards the achievement of the 3-year strategy. Equality actions identified within the Equalities Scheme are incorporated within directorate service delivery plans and monitored quarterly (detailed at Annex A).

The progress made in delivering our equality objectives is monitored quarterly by the council's Equalities Group, reported to our corporate management team and published yearly on the council's website.

3. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Highlights 2023-24

This report does not seek to capture everything undertaken in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion. Instead, it highlights some of the key achievements across customer facing teams over 2023-2024 in meeting our equalities responsibilities.

Individual service reports (detailed above) and the Workforce Annual Report 2023-24 should be read alongside this report and are available at <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/equality-and-diversity/monitoring-equality>

3.1. Inclusive in all we do

We will continue to make our services more inclusive and culturally competent in a borough where everyone is made to feel included and valued.

- The Council worked with partners and community groups to co-produce and deliver Bracknell Forest's Annual Pride Event and Community Day events held at the Lexicon Centre Bracknell. These celebrated the borough's cultural diversity, building awareness, understanding and respect.
- The Public Health team partnered with other Bracknell Forest services such as Adults and Children's Social Care, Migration team and Community engagement team to work with marginalised communities such as residents from Hong Kong, Nepali and Romanian communities to get insights in relation to health and wellbeing to inform service delivery
- The Early Help Service supported young people's local participation and engagement with the Councillors, the UK Youth Parliament, and the British Youth Council.
- Young Carers and young people with SEND are supported through youth groups where they can access information, advice, and guidance.
- The Carers Strategy Steering Group collaboratively worked with partners and the people we support to ensure the strategy incorporates the diverse needs of carers within Bracknell Forest.
- New Hope has a diverse workforce and recognises that certain cultural or religious practices may influence individuals' preferences for treatment offering treatment approaches that are culturally sensitive and accessible to individuals from various backgrounds.
- Four volunteers with special needs have been appointed across the service: two at Bracknell Library, one at Great Hollands Library and one at Whitegrove Library in partnership with Activate Learning.
- Education and Learning had a focus on how pupils see themselves reflected in the curriculum, and in the literature used in schools, drawing on the CLPE annual 'Reflecting Realities' reports.
- The Community Learning service provided substantial ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) training and increasing engagement with members of the Hong Kong community offering opportunities for improving English and employability skills to integrate in into the local community.

- The Targeted Youth Support Service operated a weekly LGBTQIA+ youth group for young people from across the borough providing a safe space for to be themselves, share experiences, support one another, and gain information and support needed.
- Early help services support young people and families who are transitioning through one-to-one support and to access resources and information. Staff are also trained on safeguarding, anti-bullying strategies, and how to help young people challenge discrimination, offer mental health first aid training to support young people with health and other specialist organisations.
- The Migration Team offered comprehensive, culturally responsive support to refugees and migrants, beginning with an initial assessment. Specialist migration workers are trained to recognise the diverse experiences of those they support, while respecting the cultural, religious, and personal backgrounds of every individual.
- Delivery of a truly inclusive 'walk, push, stroll' event to support the Lexicon half marathon took place on 13th May 2023 and saw circa 50 children and adults participating.
- Leisure Services built on the work undertaken in 2022-2023 increasing the local offer and the participation by seldom heard groups. Many of the programmes have been delivered free of charge.
- The Bracknell Forest Domestic Abuse calendar of awareness-raising opportunities is in now place.
- The ManKind Initiative held 'Supporting Male Victims of Domestic Abuse Day' on 7th November 2023 which was promoted locally through Bracknell Forest Council social media and the local Domestic Abuse network.
- Welfare services undertook a programme of work supporting residents including a campaign promoting Attendance Allowance, pension credit, proving support to residents experiencing challenges with their wellbeing such as mental health pressures, due to the pressure of debt and financial hardship.
- The Welfare team provided financial support services, such as the Household Support Fund and crisis payments ensuring they were promoted to diverse and marginalized communities facing additional barriers, such as ethnic minorities, older residents, and low-income families.
- The Library Service run a socially inclusive programme of events and activities for people of all protected characteristics. These included reminiscence sessions for older people, chess clubs to improve memory, knitting and craft activities, sensory story times for children with special needs, story times in languages other than English, and a range of activities to promote general health and well-being, such as yoga, mindfulness and Tai Chi.
- Equality impact assessments are undertaken on changes to policies, services and budgets that could have an impact on people who share a protected characteristic.

3.2. Accessible for all

We ensure that we provide information, engage and communicate in ways that are easy to understand for all.

- Access to Adult Social Care is available through the council's website via phone, email or through a professional/relative/friend with some services offering face to face individual support at their local library or Time Square.
- Adult Social Care used translation apps and have staff who can speak several languages to support residents who have English as an additional language.
- Service literature is compliant with recommended guidelines for size and font and a braille service to hand should the resident need it.
- Adult Social Care staff have been trained on accessible communication, for example using tools such as Hemingway Editor or the inbuilt Word editor to ensure documents are accessible.
- Customer Services staff have access to interpreters or translators and staff volunteers who are fluent in other languages. The service can access specialist companies to provide translation or interpretation services.
- Arrangements for people who are deaf to aid communication, for example, induction loops are also available.
- The school admissions process is accessible to everyone with applicants able to access written procedures in their own language and/or have access to the School Admissions Team staff on a one to one basis if necessary.
- Early Help provided financial support as needed to enable parents/carers to attend programmes identified as a benefit to them and the family including transport and childcare costs, barriers faced by low-income families.
- Leisure services online bookings are encouraged, however walk-in sessions are available to those without access to digital technology and support provided to the digitally excluded, particularly the older generation.
- Everyone Active supported people who maybe excluded through 'Tea & Teach' sessions offered to encourage customers to participate with online bookings. Customers are also able to pay by cash at all sites.
- The Library Service Open+ is live in all library branches apart from Bracknell town centre and Crowthorne. The facilities at all seven Libraries are more accessible to everyone, especially for people who work, as they can use the branches at times that are convenient to them.
- Library opening hours have increased by 355 hours per week through the Open+ technology also to remain open and accessible during bank holidays and over holiday periods such as Christmas and Easter.
- The Library Service is a member of the Good Things Foundation's National Digital Inclusion Network, with Bracknell Library becoming a designated National Databank in partnership with Vodafone and Three, providing free mobile SIM cards to vulnerable people unable to access the Internet.
- The Library Service subscribes to Press Reader, enabling library members to access thousands of newspapers and magazines in every language.
- The Housing service used a number of channels to communicate including in person visits to residents' homes, rough sleeper outreach services and a dedicated phone line. Customers also have the opportunity to communicate via digital channels such as email.
- The Welfare Service offered appointments and home visits as well as arranging translation and interpretation services

- assisting customers with difficulties in completing their claim or accessing services online.
- Advancements in technology allowed emails and letters to be translated at the point of dispatch where required using tools such as Microsoft's inbuilt Word translation function, which has reduced delays in responses.
- The Social Prescribing team completed 'writing for accessibility and usability training', 'MERMAIDS' (support for trans, non-binary and gender diverse children)' and 'Inclusive conversations' training.
- Transport services ensured vehicles used by the Supported Bus Contract specifications are fully accessible for all residents and that the Highway works and local Bus provider contractors have EDI policies in place.
- AccessAble guides have been developed by Natural Estates to provide accessibility information to enable residents to make informed plans for their visits.
- Natural estates updated their online information to include greenspace accessibility information. Detailed information for three greenspaces, Pope's Meadow, Savernake Park and Westmorland Park, have been made available through detailed AccessAble guides.
- Public Health's Community Map service offers residents information on local groups, activities, and societies, including many inclusive activities such as activities for individuals with SEND.
- The Community Map was upgraded, responding to requests from the Learning Disabilities Board and People Power Advocacy Group, and now includes Children and Young People and 16+ years. The Community Map is also available and distributed as a hard copy booklet across the borough.
- Digital screens known as Community Kiosks are in place around the borough for people to gain access to information provided in the Community Maps. information is provided in a simplified format increasing access to information for people with poor digital literacy and increased accessibility for people with SEND.
- Local accessibility groups, including BADHOGS and Berkshire Vision, participated in the Stay Connected program and are exploring options to make their leaflets more accessible.
- The council proactively promotes reasonable adjustments to all our service users.

3.3. Accountable and fair

We will treat all people fairly without favouritism or discrimination while recognising some people will need additional support.

- The Disability Advisory & Access Forum was relaunched as an advisory and consultative body on issues relating to disability and access within the Borough.
- The Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement reflects the council's proactive approach in reaching seldom heard groups and communities.
- Any proposed policy of service developments must have an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) carried out before it can be approved. Any decision to be made by our Corporate Management Team needs an EIA.
- Children's Social Care (CSC) invested in new technology called Mind of My Own, designed to engage with children and young people in a focussed web application, where they can provide their views.
- CSC have been facilitating a BOOM (Because Our Opinions Matter) event to enable children and young people, including those with SEND, to share their views on the support they have received.
- The Holiday Activity and Food programme (HAF) supported over 700 children, offering opportunities to access a range of activities that they may not have been able to access otherwise. This included 3 groups specific for children with SEND.
- The Information, Advice and Support Service provided free, impartial and confidential information, advice and support to children and young people with special educational needs/disability and their parents/carers in confidential settings so they can make informed decisions.
- Services delivered at the Child Development Centre offered opportunities for parents and children to meet and develop relationships in safe and secure environments, enabling confidence to access a range of universal services.
- The Education and Learning service delivered all school effectiveness activities through the lens of those pupils who may experience barriers to their progress and outcomes, ensuring all pupils have equal access to opportunity and are free from discrimination.
- Outcomes in reading remain above national average for the second year of delivery of an OU/UKLA Teacher Reading Group to improve reading for pleasure, particularly for disadvantaged pupils.
- Headteacher briefings focused on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, including through effective transition.
- Termly Pupil Premium networks were well attended and positively received, focusing on best practice on improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and creating a sense of belonging in schools.
- Twenty four schools participated in the SEND peer review programme - through self-evaluation and peer review with a partner school, schools were able to identify strengths and areas for development in relation to provision for pupils with SEND
- Seven out of 10 schools inspected since January 2023 received very positive comments re provision or ambition for pupils with SEND, and one noted improvement. 84 per cent of schools reported value in terms of improving provision for pupils with SEND.
- NEET (not in education, employment or training) projects offered 150 places to

support young people who are NEET or at risk of NEET. The NEET data for Bracknell Forest has shown significant improvement since 2019

- Early help commissioned Homestart to provide support from pregnancy through to age 5 and collaborate closely with the LIFE charity to offer additional assistance to young parents up to the age of 25.
- The Education Welfare Service worked closely with schools implementing a supportive, proactive approach to improving school attendance and ensuring Electively Home Educated children received a suitable education and access to important resources.
- A neurodiverse children's group takes place weekly In Great Hollands Library to provide activities and support.
- The Library Service continued to work in partnership with the Social Prescribing Team, referring clients with depression to the Library Service to take part in the activity programme.
- The Library Service provided support for those who are seeking employment, with assistance given to those who require help completing application forms at all branches.
- BEEP (Berkshire Education Partnership) provided one to one appointments and workshops for young people aged between 15-24 with special needs and disabilities, who are unemployed and not in education.
- Bracknell Forest's Prevent Strategy 2024-2027 has an action plan setting out local ambitions to address our Prevent priorities to ensure that those who are susceptible to radicalisation have equality of support.
- The new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) considered equalities throughout its vision and proposed actions identifying barriers and incorporated public opinion. A walking and cycling consultation was undertaken.
- Bracknell Forest's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026 highlighted reducing health inequalities as one of its cross-cutting themes, ensuring all actions identified within the strategy review and/or focus on the impact being had on inequality.
- Health equity audits are performed to identify inequalities in the delivery of services commissioned by the public health team e.g. stop smoking health equity audit.
- Social prescribers have collected clients using wheelchair accessible transport and taken them to their summer programmes, thus enabling some of the most vulnerable in the community to participate in activities and be included in these events.

3.4. Diverse and Inclusive workforce

We are committed to developing an inclusive and people focussed culture where diversity is valued and celebrated. Our values of being inclusive, ambitious and always learning ensures that everyone is treated fairly and with dignity and respect. The progress made includes:

- An Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit providing practical steps to enable equity through council services to achieve equality within practice and influence outcomes for service users has been developed.
- A Bracknell Forest Council Manager Framework guide, based on our corporate values, outlining expectations for managers and leaders has also been developed.
- The council's Equalities Group leads on and champions the work of the council in advancing service and staff equity, diversity and inclusion.
- The council has taken a zero-tolerance approach to any instances of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation, from both staff and customers using our services.
- Workforce monitoring/EDI data dashboards are issued to services to address key equalities issues to all council directorates.
- The council's anonymised recruitment process eliminates any bias as we do not receive personal information prior to shortlisting.
- An Equalities reciprocal mentoring pilot scheme was developed.
- The council's Wellbeing Network is made up of various employee wellbeing support groups including Disability and Neurodiversity Staff Forum, The Unison Black Member's Group, Menopause group Pause for Menopause and the equality allies' group.
- Equality Allies continue to be embedded into the organisation to support individuals independently of their line manager.
- Mental Health first aiders continue to be embedded in the organisation and can be an immediate route for support by trained staff.
- Staff can share their preferred pronoun on emails and correspondence.
- All staff have access to e-learning on equality, diversity, and inclusion, including Oliver McGowan training which was introduced in early 2024.
- BFC has a flexible working policy, staff have equal opportunities for career progression and training. This policy considers reasonable adjustments, such as providing assistive technologies or alternative work arrangements, to eliminate barriers for individuals with disabilities and development of a wellbeing tool kit for managers.
- A diversity calendar is published annually with regular communications to promote awareness and understanding of key dates and events through our internal weekly communications and social media. Over 50 events being marked.
- Staff have access to a multi faith prayer room for staff, wellbeing calendar and wellbeing space for staff and team wellbeing activities

4. Conclusion

This report and the associated service area reports show that significant progress has been made against delivering the equality objectives and in our compliance to paying due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duties. We continue to ensure that these are embedded in all council functions and are part of the decision-making process.

However, we are not complacent and acknowledge that more remains to be done and recognise we have some big challenges ahead and that we need to continue to learn and embed equality into everything that we do for our residents, visitors, businesses and workforce.

Where gaps have been identified within individual service monitoring reports these will be taken forward with action taken to strengthen our performance against the general equality duty, through providing focus on achieving specific outcomes.

The progress made in achieving council performance measures relating to equalities is summarised below.

Annex A

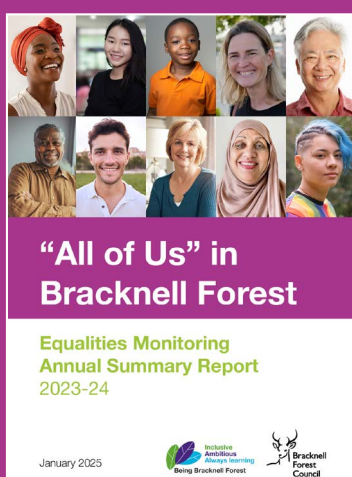
Council Performance measures relating to Equalities.

Indicators as of 31 March 2024	Actual	Target	Performance status
L422 Number of educational events held in libraries	305	100	Green
L406 Number of visits to libraries	345,615	55,000	Green
L436 Number of visits by customers with a disability to leisure facilities managed Everyone Active	5,054	875	Green
L405 Number of older people visits to leisure facilities managed by Everyone Active	20,844	20,750	Green
L404 Number of children and young people visits to leisure facilities managed by Everyone Active	136,643	92,500	Green
L402 % of care leavers aged 19-21 years who are NEET	42%	30%	Red
L393 Number of entry level apprentice's council wide	16	13	Green
L072 Gender pay gap	15.0%	14.0%	Green
L071 % of black and ethnic minority employees	10.24%	11.00%	Green
L070 % of employees with a disability	4.30%	5.80%	Red
L068 % of disabled staff in top five percent staff earners	8.67%	8.20%	Green
L067 % of BME staff in top five percent of staff earners	17.15%	15.00%	Green
L269 % of working age population in employment	80.0%	N/A	Monitoring only
L268 % of working age people who are unemployed	3.0%	N/A	Monitoring only

Actions as at 31 March 2024	Status	Due date	Percentage Complete
1.02.02 Identify and engage low income households	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
1.02.03 Review Workforce and Organisational Development Strategy	Green	31/03/2024	75%
1.02.06 Deploy Recruitment and Retention Strategy	Green	31/03/2024	85%
1.02.17 Deliver the Digital and ICT Strategy	Green	31/03/2024	80%
2.01.02 Develop a Supplementary Planning Document in relation to Affordable Housing supply	Amber	31/03/2024	50%
2.02.02 Work on development of The Deck and the sustained viability of Town Centre	Amber	31/03/2024	30%
2.02.03 Develop an Arts, Heritage and Culture Strategy	Amber	31/03/2024	85%
2.03.01 Develop a strategy for governor recruitment though the governance reference group	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
2.04.02 Deliver the work programme set out by the Economic Skills and Development Partnership	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
2.04.03 Provide support for Local Economy	Green	31/03/2024	80%
2.04.05 Prepare and publish a borough-wide Economic Strategy	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
2.05.05 Commission a feasibility analysis for the Business Improvement District	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
2.07.07 Secure grants for transport and infrastructure	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
3.04.03 Undertake a comprehensive review of all youth services	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
3.05.01 Continue to increase the number of apprenticeship roles throughout the council	Green	31/03/2024	90%
3.05.02 Effectively use the apprenticeship levy	Green	31/03/2024	80%

Actions as at 31 March 2024	Status	Due date	Percentage Complete
3.07.01 Support care leavers to access education, training or employment	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
3.08.01 Establish a culture of high expectations for all children	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
3.08.04 Deliver the agreed actions within the Written Statement of Action (WSOA)	Amber	31/03/2024	82%
4.01.01 Increase participation in sports, leisure and cultural activities	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
4.01.02 Implement and monitor the key actions set out in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
4.01.04 Deliver the financial hardship action plan	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
4.01.05 Deliver the pilot first phase of “Thriving Communities” programme	Amber	31/03/2024	35%
4.01.07 Develop People Strategy	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
4.07.01 Family hub services expansion and development of multi-disciplinary teams	COMPLETE	31/12/2023	100%
4.13.01 Coordinate and lead on the work of the Bracknell Forest Civilian Military Partnership	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
4.13.03 Support the delivery of a Berkshire Civilian Military Partnership	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
5.03.01 Implement parking bay schemes	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
5.06.07 Improve energy efficiency for low income households	Green	31/03/2024	75%
6.02.01 Support for Community Associations	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
6.02.03 Develop the offer in Libraries to support the Adults and Children’s agendas	Green	31/03/2024	89%
6.07.01 To provide property support for the initial phases of development of Opladen Way	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%

Actions as at 31 March 2024	Status	Due date	Percentage Complete
6.10.08 Support community engagement with and integration of displaced people who arrive in borough	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
7.017 Deliver and monitor the implementation of the 2022 - 2025 'All of Us' Equality Scheme and act	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
7.019 Support maintenance of high levels of cohesion and the integration of our diverse communities.	COMPLETE	31/03/2024	100%
7.021 Celebrate the diversity of the workforce	Green	31/03/2024	60%
7.209 Delivery of the commitments set out within the DWP and BFC Partnership Agreement.	Amber	31/03/2024	75%
7.309 Renew the contract for consultation and engagement services	COMPLETE	31/12/2023	100%



If you need a reasonable adjustment to communicate with us,
please call 01344 352000 or email:
customer.services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.