



Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Appendix

WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Introduction

The following document is the appendix to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and contains background information used in the development of the policy.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy Development and Engagement.

We would like to thank Wokingham Voice for Inclusion and Equality forum, our residents, our community partners, our Staff Network Groups and our colleagues for their time and insight in developing the EDI Policy.

We used the Equality Framework for Local Government (EFLG) to develop our EDI Policy and objectives. This helps us to monitor our progress against equality best practice and compare it with other councils.





Engagement

Engagement

Our engagement took place between 2024 and May 2025.

Both the EDI Policy and objectives were developed using a co-production approach. We listened to the lived experience of our residents, community groups, partners and workforce. This shared approach shaped our EDI Policy and objectives.

Our key partners were Wokingham Voice for Inclusion and Equality and the Staff Networks. We met with both groups at each stage of the engagement and used their views to shape the policy and objectives.

We held an informal consultation from 9 December 2024 to 31 January 2025, using an online questionnaire, we received 179 responses. During this time, we held focus groups with the community and workforce. This helped us to further develop the draft policy, priorities, and objectives.

We engaged with the following groups:

- Social Care Future Core Group - 9 members
- Town and Parish Councils
- Engagement sessions with members of the school's workforce to incorporate the Voice of the Child - 8 people
- Tenants focus groups (sheltered housing) - 20+ people across 7 sites
- Voluntary Sector Action Group (VSAG) - 25+ local Voluntary Sector Organisations
- Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel - 8 people
- Tenant Volunteer Communities and Neighbourhoods Group
- Interview with resident with hearing loss
- Faith Groups
- Internal Council engagement via Staff Network Groups, whole work force focus groups, strategic leadership boards, Directorate briefings, the consultation panel and Leadership teams - approximately 150 people



Engagement

- We used feedback from the Youth Future Focus Survey (Autumn 2024) which reached over 2000 young people
- Analysed results of the Inequalities Project carried out by Wokingham Borough Council and partners to understand the lived experience of residents, including one to one and group sessions with 44 residents who face daily challenges and 45 community workers who support them.
- Engagement with hundreds of residents on our new council plan specifically asking, "What would make Wokingham Borough more fair?"

We used the feedback from the informal engagement to develop the draft EDI policy and objectives. We included the draft policy and objectives in the formal consultation which we ran via an online survey from 17 March 2025 to 14 April 2025, we received 179 responses.

Our Partners

We partnered with the following organisations by providing grant aid to enable them to consult with their members:

Epilepsy Berkshire - 16 members engaged

CLASP - 12 members engaged

Berkshire LGBTQ+ Parents Network - 20 members engaged

Me2 Club - 26 members engaged

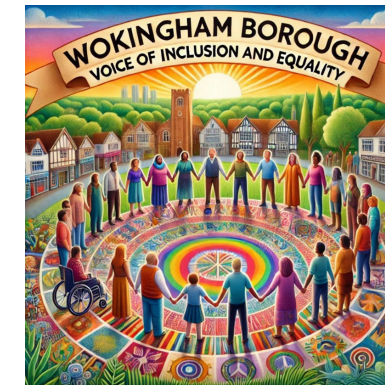
Buttons and Bubbles - 5 members engaged

Headway Thames Valley - 5 members engaged

Link Visiting Scheme - 13 members engaged

Project Salama - 52 members engaged

Wokingham Islamic Centre - 20 members engaged





Wokingham Borough **Profile**

Wokingham Borough Profile summary

At the latest census in 2021, there were 177,502 people living in Wokingham Borough. That is 15% more people than in the previous census 10 years prior in 2011, when the population was 145,380 people.

We have an ageing population. We have the lowest number of young people aged 20-34 years in the country.



As at the 2021 census most of the Wokingham Borough population are White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (72.7%). Other White ethnicities, and Asian Indian ethnicities make up most of the non-White British population in the borough.

Since the 2021 census, the borough, has become home to emerging populations who have migrated to live in Wokingham borough. Residents from Hong Kong have been the largest emerging group in recent years. The borough has also become home to asylum seekers from Ukraine, Iran, Afghanistan and Syria.

Languages spoken

Most Wokingham Borough residents (92%) reported English to be their first language. The second most spoken language in Wokingham Borough after English is Punjabi with 0.6% of Wokingham Borough Council residents speaking Punjabi as their first language. The School Census in January 2025, detailed 118 main languages spoken in schools within the borough.



Protected **Characteristics**

		
Age	Disability	Race
		
Religion or Belief	Gender Reassignment	Sex (Gender)
		
Sexual Orientation	Pregnancy & Maternity	Marriage & Civil Partnership



Indices of **Deprivation**

Wokingham Borough is a very affluent area overall, placed within the bottom (least deprived) 10% on the Indices of Deprivation. Reviewing the index at a local level, shows that there are four areas in the borough that are much more deprived than others. Ward level data also masks much smaller pockets of deprivation across the borough though, and we need to look beyond these averages to identify need including financial hardship.

Those on lower incomes are most affected, and this has had a big impact on younger age groups. Younger people are often either under-employed or have part-time rather than full-time jobs.

Many families are also experiencing financial hardship, examples of this are detailed below.

Indicator	Number
Children eligible for free school meals (FSM)	2525
Number of tenancies with rent arrears	93
Children living in low-income families (DWP estimate)	2798



Food **Poverty**

The national picture of foodbank usage has increased. The Trussell Trust, a foodbank charity, have seen a 94% increase in usage of food banks over the past five years. They have distributed 3.1 million emergency parcels over the past 12 months and 1.1 million emergency parcels for children.

Wokingham Borough Council works with partners to provide foodbanks for our residents. Food poverty is a concern for residents who are both employed and not employed. It is also another example of inequality. For some residents' in the borough, food banks are now an essential aspect of life.

A summary of data from one of the foodbanks in Wokingham Borough is listed below.

Measure	Quantity	Measure	Quantity
Residents referred	142	Single parents	63%
Total visits in 12 months	847	Residents not employed	72%
Total adults	189	Residents employed and accessing benefits	25%
Total children	176		
Total food distributed	19 tonnes	Members who are Disabled residents	48%
Residents who had used foodbanks during 2024	64%		



Reducing **Inequalities**

Inequalities in health, wellbeing, and opportunities to thrive

Many people in Wokingham Borough are thriving and have good health and wellbeing, but this is not the case for everyone in the borough.

Our ability to thrive is shaped by the conditions in which we are born, grow, live, work and age. This includes our homes, communities, work, surroundings and much more. These are the building blocks of our health and wellbeing. For many people in the borough, these blocks are firmly in place: they have what they need to be healthy. This includes having secure homes, good jobs, and supportive communities around them. This is not the case for everyone. When residents lack key needs such as warm homes and healthy food and have financial worries it puts a strain on their mental and physical health.

The COVID -19 pandemic and cost of living crisis has further weakened or taken away the building blocks of health for some of our

residents. This leads to differences in health, wellbeing and opportunities to thrive that are unfair and avoidable. As a result, in the most deprived areas of the borough, people are dying five years earlier than people in the least deprived areas. We are committed to taking action to reduce these differences.

- We are working with our partners and communities across our Borough, to adopt the Marmot Approach. [[Marmot Places - IHE](#)] This will reduce the unfair and avoidable differences that exist in people's opportunities to thrive. The Marmot approach involves strengthening the building blocks of health and wellbeing for people at all stages of their lives.
- providing support that meets residents needs to help everyone have the same, fair opportunities to thrive
- tackling racism, discrimination and the outcomes of these.

Reducing **Inequalities**



Diagram from The Health Foundation What builds good health? | The Health Foundation

The Marmot Approach, sets out eight evidence-based principles for health equity: We have developed our objectives to reflect the borough's future needs.

Other evidence

We also considered other evidence. This includes demographic data from residents, other council strategies and both national and local research.



Demographic Data

Wokingham Borough Demographic Data

Population

As of 2021, Wokingham Borough is the 28th most densely populated of the South East's 64 local authority areas.

At 15%, the rate of population growth in the last 10 years is faster in the borough than it is nationally. Wokingham Borough had the 3rd highest rate of population growth between 2011 and 2021 in the Southeast.

Over the last 50 years, the population of the borough has grown by 59% compared to 24.9% in England. The number of households in Wokingham Borough increased by 85.6% between 1981 and 2021, compared to 39.8% in England overall.

Age

The borough has an ageing population. The population of people aged 65+ has increased by 28.2% at the latest census in 2021. This is in comparison to the last census in 2011.

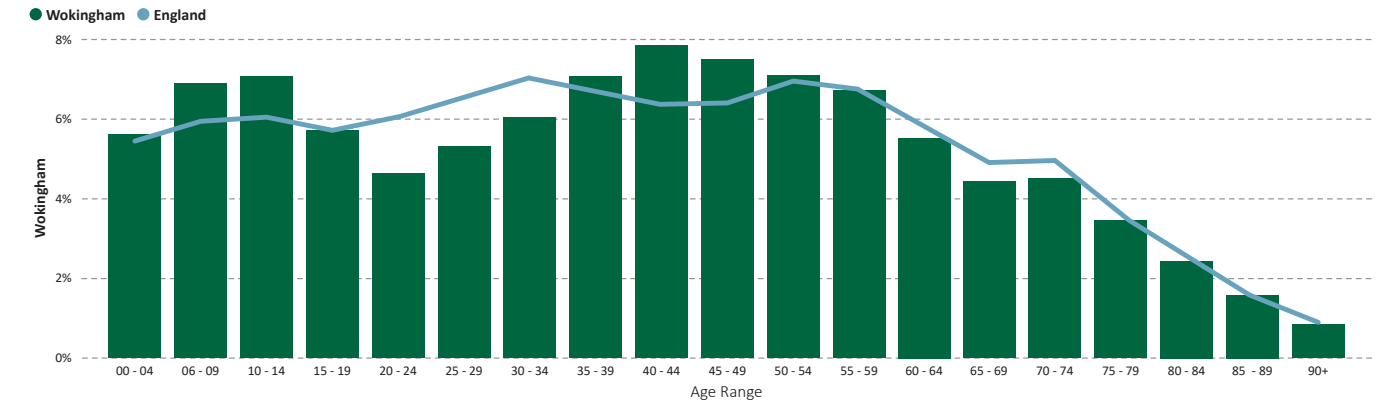
At the census in 2021, the borough has a lower proportion of younger adults (age 20 - 34 years old) than England overall. It has a higher proportion of adults aged between 40 and 50 years. The borough also has a higher proportion of children and young people than England as a whole.

By around 2030, the proportion of residents aged 65years + will exceed those aged 0-15 years old for the first time. From around 2035, the proportion of working age people, aged 16-64 years old, will begin to decline.



Demographic Data

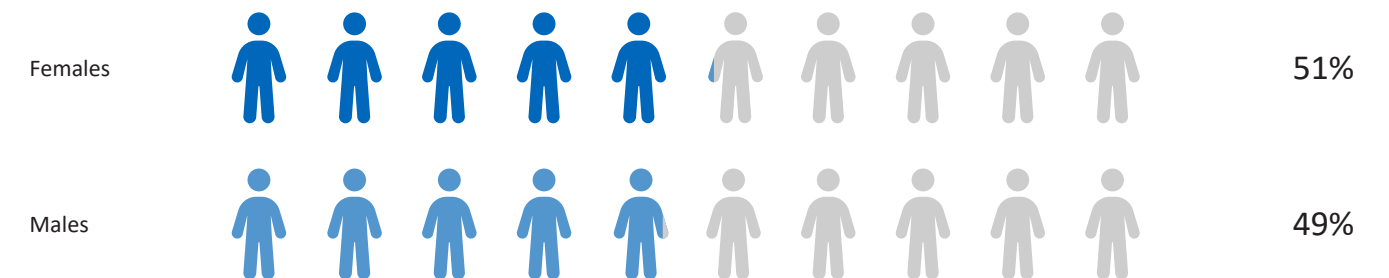
Wokingham and England Age Range Proportions 2021



Sex

There is an even split of males and females in the Borough. Females make up 51% and males 49%.

Population by sex for Wokingham (2023)





Demographic Data

Sexual Orientation

Census 2021 showed that a total of 128,426 people in the borough said they were straight or heterosexual. There were 1467 residents with a range of sexual orientations including gay or lesbian, bisexual and queer.

Straight or Heterosexual	128426
Gay or Lesbian	1467
Bisexual	1311
Pansexual	233
Asexual	83
Queer	28
All other sexual orientations	20
Not answered	9253

Gender Reassignment

Census 2021 reported that 0.3% of the borough's residents identify as a different gender than the sex they were assigned at birth. This is about 530 residents.

On 16 April, the UK Supreme Court ruled that the legal definition of a woman should be based on biological sex.

At the time of writing, we are waiting for an updated Code of Practice from the UK Government. We continue to support our transgender community.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

In the Census 2021, 44% of Wokingham Borough's residents are married. This figure has decreased from 64% in 1991. There were 18 residents in the borough who were in a civil partnership in 2021.

Ethnicity

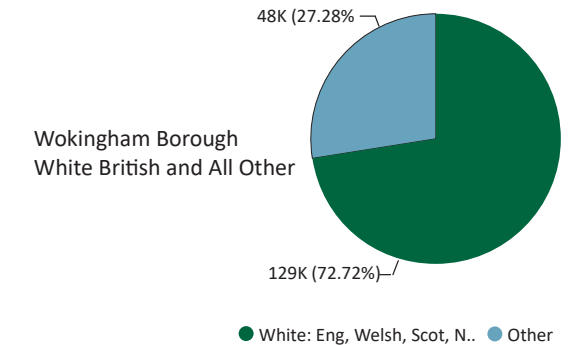
The 2021 census reported that 72.7% of the Wokingham Borough population are White. This figure represents people who are English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British.



Demographic Data

Other White ethnicities, and Asian Indian ethnicities make up most of the non-White British population in the borough.

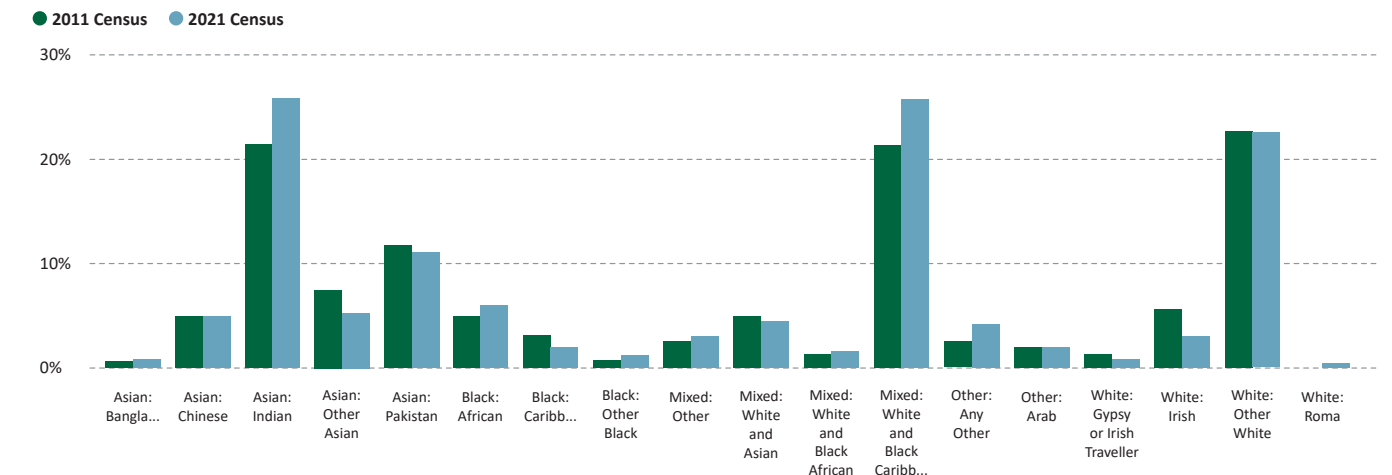
The non-White British population is predominantly made up of two ethnicities. These are other White groups and Asian Indian groups. The number of Asian Indian residents in the borough has grown since the last census in 2011.



Emerging Communities

Wokingham Borough is home to the biggest migrant population in the Southeast. The largest population has been migrants from Hong Kong. There have been 4,413 new residents to Wokingham Borough under the British National Overseas (BNO) scheme.

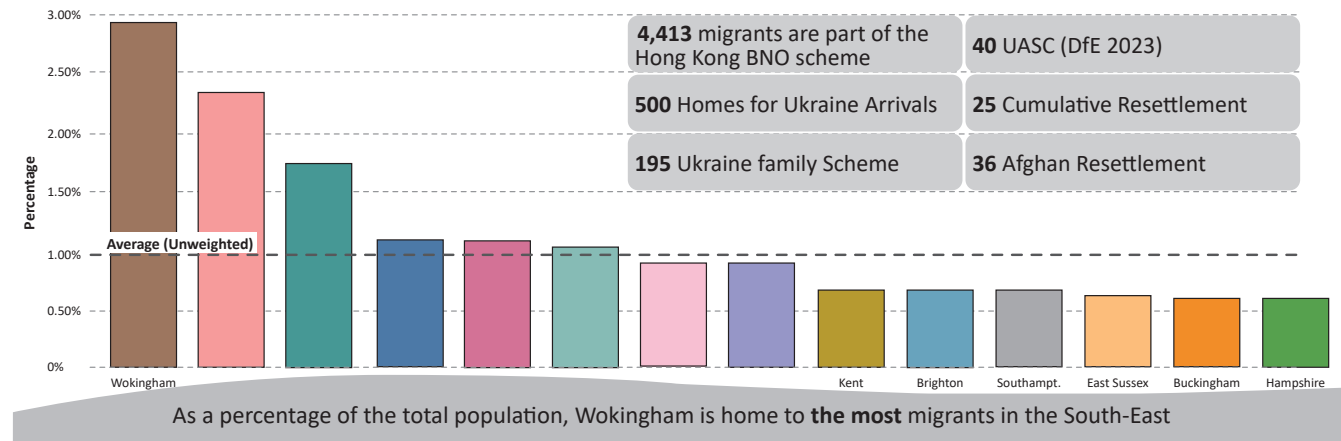
Ethnicity in the Wokingham Borough - Excluding White British



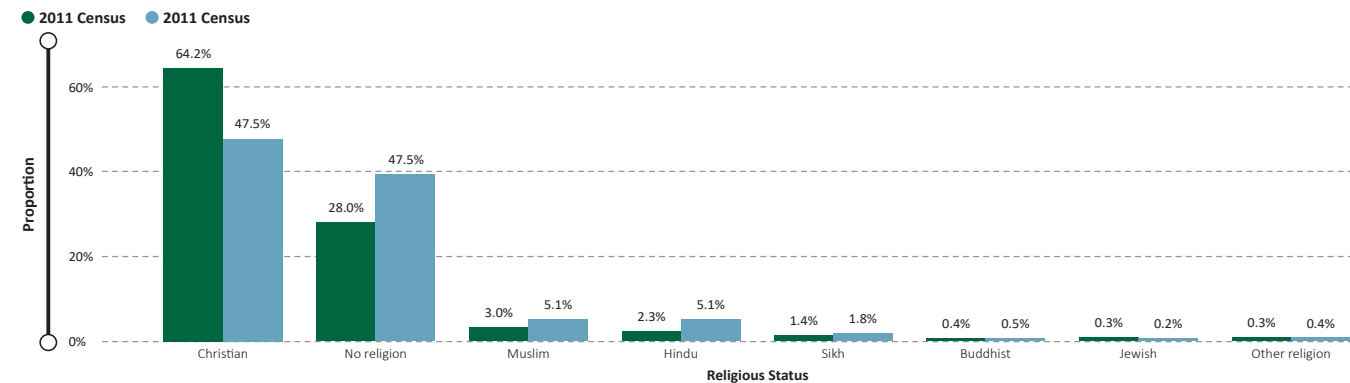


Demographic Data

Emerging Communities



Religion - Excluding Christian, No Religion and Not Answered



Demographic Data

Religion or belief of Wokingham Borough Residents

In the 2021 census, 47% of the borough's residents identified as Christian. Meanwhile, 37% reported having no religion.

The numbers of Wokingham Borough's residents identifying themselves as other religions, increased. This increase was residents identifying as Muslim and Hindu. The proportions for each group stood at around 5% of the Borough population. Wokingham Borough has a higher proportion of Hindu residents than England or the Southeast.

Physical Disability

In 2021, 4.4% of Wokingham Borough's residents were identified as being disabled and limited a lot in their day-to-day activities. This figure decreased from 5.5% in 2011.

In 2021, just over 1 in 12 people (8.6%) were identified as being disabled and limited a little in their day to day activities, compared with 8.1% in 2011. The proportion of Wokingham Borough's residents who were not disabled increased from 86.4% to 87.0%.

The 2021 census estimated that by 2025, there would be 1,731 people aged 18 to 64 years old in the borough with a physical disability. Its prediction is that there would be 981 people with a serious personal care disability. There would be 70 people with a visual impairment. It was also predicted that 681 people would have a hearing impairment.





Demographic Data

Pansi, Poppi Projection (2016)

	2025	2030	2035
Physical Disability 18-64	1,681	1,702	1,712
Have a serious personal care disability	952	968	976
Visual Impairment	68	69	69
Hearing Impairment	661	665	667
Physical Disability 65+	11,465	13,090	14,452
Unable to manage at least one activity on their own	6,540	7,401	8,258
Visual Impairment	2,035	2,278	2,477
Hearing Impairment	2,890	3,411	3,717
Total Physical Disability	13,146	14,792	16,164
Have a serious personal care disability	7,492	8,369	9,234
Visual Impairment	2,103	2,347	2,546
Hearing Impairment	3,551	4,076	4,384

2021 Census Projection

	2025	2030	2035
Physical Disability 18-64	1,731	1,753	1,763
Have a serious personal care disability	981	997	1,005
Visual Impairment	70	71	71
Hearing Impairment	681	685	687
Physical Disability 65+	10,662	12,174	13,440
Unable to manage at least one activity on their own	6,082	6,883	7,680
Visual Impairment incl.	1,893	2,119	2,304
Hearing Impairment	2,688	3,172	3,457
Total Physical Disability	12,394	13,927	15,204
Have a serious personal care disability	7,063	7,880	8,685
Visual Impairment	1,963	2,190	2,375
Hearing Impairment	3,369	3,857	4,144

Physical Support PSR in Jan 24: **710**
Sensory Support PSR: **77**



Demographic Data

The census 2021 predicted that there would be 12,394 disabled residents aged 65. The prediction is that 6082 will be unable to carry out at least one activity on their own. It was predicted that there would be 1893 people with a visual impairment. The number of people with a hearing impairment was predicted to be 2688.

Pansi, Poppi Projection (2016 ONS)

Physical Disability	2025	2030	2035
Aged 18-64	2,520	2,571	2,590
Autistic spectrum disorders	1,034	1,055	1,059
Down's syndrome	65	66	66
Moderate and severe	580	593	598
Aged 65	704	787	863
Autistic spectrum disorders	319	359	395
Down's syndrome	1	1	1
Moderate and severe	92	103	112
Total adult population	3,224	3,358	3,453
Autistic spectrum disorders	1,353	1,414	1,454
Down's syndrome	66	67	67
Moderate and severe	672	696	710

We expect to see more people with Learning Disabilities over the next 10 years (6.8% increase)

2021 Census Projection

Physical Disability	2025	2030	2035
Aged 18-64	2,596	2,648	2,668
Autistic spectrum disorders	1,065	1,087	1,091
Down's syndrome	67	68	68
Moderate and severe	597	611	616
Aged 65	655	732	803
Autistic spectrum disorders	297	334	367
Down's syndrome	1	1	1
Moderate and severe	86	96	104
Total adult population	3,250	3,380	3,470
Autistic spectrum disorders	1,362	1,421	1,458
Down's syndrome	68	69	69
Moderate and severe	683	707	720

Total Adults with Learning Disability
Primary Support Reason in Jan 24: **513**



Demographic Data

Learning Disability

The Census 2021 predicted that 2,596 people aged 18-64 years old will have a learning disability by 2025. The prediction was that 1065 residents would be on the autistic spectrum and 67 residents would have Down's syndrome.

The forecast for residents aged 65 years and older expected 297 people on the autism spectrum by 2025. It was predicted that one resident in this group would have Down's syndrome. The total adult population predicted to have a learning disability by 2025 was 3250.



Mental Health

The Census 2021 predicted that by 2025, there will be 7,723 people aged 18 to 64 years old with a mental health issue. For those aged 65 years and older, the forecast was 890 individuals.

The Census predicted that 2,438 of the boroughs residents aged 65 years + would have dementia in 2025. This figure consists of 897 men and 1542 women.

We expect 7% fewer people with dementia in 2035 than previously projected. However, it is important to note this is still an increase of 29.8% on 2025 numbers.

We currently provide direct support to a small percentage.



Demographic Data

Pansi, Poppi Projection (2016 ONS)

	2025	2030	2035
MH Conditions, 18-64	1,034	1,055	1,059
MH Conditions, 65	65	66	66
Total adult population with MH conditions	8,455	8,677	8,799

	2025	2030	2035
Dementia, 65+	2,621	2,991	3,403

Total mental Health PSR in Jan 24: 513
Memory and Cognition PSR: 176

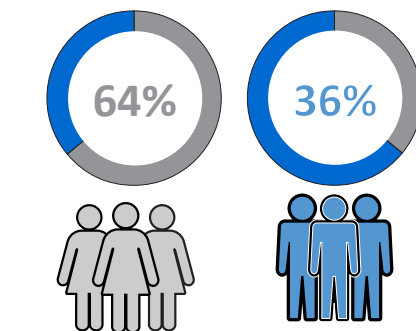
2021 Census Projected

	2025	2030	2035
Adult population with MH conditions, 18-64	7,723	7,848	7,869
Adult population with MH conditions, 65+	890	984	1,078
Total adult population with MH conditions*	8,613	8,832	8,947

* Excluding dementia

	2025	2030	2035
Dementia, 65+	2,621	2,991	3,403
Males	897	1,026	1,186
Females	1,542	1,756	1,979

Dementia



Equalities Framework

Equalities Framework for Local Government

This framework supports local authorities to deliver the Public Sector Equality Duty. It also supports local authorities to make equality improvements in the following areas:

- Understanding and working with your communities
- Leadership and organisational commitment
- Responsive services and customer care
- Diverse and engaged workforce

Local authorities can be assessed at three levels of performance, these are developing, achieving and excellent.



The council worked with its partners to self-assess against the framework. The self-assessment identified that the council was at the achieving level in three of the four areas.

There was one area where the Council had achieved excellent and that was commissioning and procuring services.

We shared our assessment with our focus groups during the engagement meetings. The feedback from focus groups on how we were performing helped us to shape the equality objectives. The assessment will also be used to develop the equality action plan.

We will work with our partners to self-assess against the framework each year and share details of our progress.

The immediate focus for the council will be in the areas where we are assessed at developing.

Additional Information

Other Evidence

We have considered both local and national data in the development of the policy.

Other Council Strategies

The EDI policy and objectives are related to themes in other council priorities. These include:

The Council Plan

Marmot report

Communities Vision - [Community Vision 2035.docx](#)

Tackling Poverty Strategy

Literature referenced for evidence

Beyond crisis: analysing responses to the racist riots - Runnymede Trust - [Runnymede post-riot response V2](#)

Inequalities amplified - The alarming rise of child poverty in the UK - Runnymede Trust - [Inequalities Amplified](#)

Equal Pay Day 2022: Women's Missing Money - Fawcett Society - [Equal Pay Day 2022: Women's Missing Money | The Fawcett Society](#)

UK Poverty 2025 - The Joseph Rowntree Foundation - [UK Poverty 2025: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK | Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)



