

**Reading Borough Council**

**Tackling Inequality Strategy  
2023 to 2026**

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## 1. OUR VISION FOR READING

Over the last two decades Reading has grown into one of the most vibrant and economically significant urban centres in the country. It has been consistently recognised as an area with a good quality of life and excellent prospects for economic achievement and growth.

However, there is a mismatch between this outstanding economic success and the benefit to residents within some of our communities who are missing out on the opportunities this success should bring them. Reading can be an unequal area in terms of wealth and life experiences, having some of the most affluent and some of the most deprived localities in the whole of the Thames Valley.

The most recent national analysis of deprivation (IMD 2019 & 2021 census) highlighted that within Reading there are some areas that are within the bottom 5% of the country for education, skills, and training, and for income deprivation affecting both children and older people. These pockets of substantial deprivation exist within broader areas of the borough which are within the bottom 10% and 20% of areas of the country for overall deprivation. Life expectancy data from the Office of National Statistics shows a life expectancy in Reading's most deprived area is ten years lower than in its most affluent.

The Council intends to close the gap between the life experiences of people in the most affluent and most derived areas of Reading. The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-25 'Investing in Readings Future' sets out the vision for Reading to reach its potential and to ensure that everyone living and working can share the benefits of our town's success. Delivery of this vision is focussed on three interconnected themes of Healthy Environment, Thriving Communities, & Inclusive Economy.

Beyond the Corporate Plan, this priority to tackle inequality is central to how we want to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents, how we want to provide high quality homes and sustainable communities, how we want to invest in our businesses and the potential in our residents, how we want to celebrate our culture and how we want our behaviours to protect our environment, now and in the future. To find out more about the breadth of action to tackle inequality in this way, summaries of the Council's key strategies and plans are set out at Appendix 1.

The specific scope of this Tackling Inequality Strategy is how to go beyond our existing activities and strategies to achieve a more consistent quality of life for our residents in our most deprived areas. The key focus is supporting and guiding our residents to become more self-sufficient, built on a bedrock of valued educational attainment, strong skills and practical knowledge that enables them to realise their potential through accessing suitable employment opportunities. We will deliver this through an innovative and targeted place-based approach to addressing the underlying determinants of deprivation within the Borough that adversely affect Education, Skills, and Training. We will take a holistic approach to working with our partners and shaped by engagement with our communities to understand the root causes and action needed to remove barriers to achievement.

We know that making sustainable change takes time. Our Tackling Inequality Strategy is a long-term commitment by the Council to give the people and places within the borough the skills and resources to make these changes and to embed them in our communities.

(Details of the full corporate plan can be found here: [Council Corporate Plan – 2022 to 2025 - Reading Borough Council](#) )

## 2. WHAT IS TACKLING INEQUALITY FOR READING?

Tackling inequality in Reading means delivering a more equitable society and improving people's standard of living and participation in economic, political, social, and cultural life. The purpose of tackling inequality in Reading is to provide additional focus on those who can't achieve this equity and share the benefits of its success by supporting our residents to obtain the education, skills, and abilities to realise their potential to improve their day-to-day lives and grasp opportunities. We know that the inequalities experienced by our residents are often evident within specific areas of the borough, and that to support our residents we also need to make changes to where they live to create a healthy and nurturing environment for them.

In tackling inequality, we also need to consistently be mindful of how our residents' individual circumstances and characteristics can affect their experiences of living in Reading. We know that Reading doesn't stay still and that the changing personal experiences of our residents is a key part of this. A good example of this are the latest results from the 2021 Census which show that the proportion of Reading residents from ethnic minority groups (including White minorities) has now risen to 46.5%, from 34.7% in 2011, and that the most common languages spoken in the borough after English are now Polish, Nepalese, and Romanian.

We also know that Reading currently has a younger than average population. However, the proportion of older people is predicted to increase, with the proportion aged 60+ rising from 16.8% in 2019 to 23.1% by 2043. Approximately 13% of Reading residents have a long-term limiting illness, any analysis shows that working-age adults who are disabled are more than twice as likely to live in poverty than those who are not (38% and 17% respectively).

We must ensure that our engagement, support, and opportunities for our residents is flexible enough to respond to individuals' diverse and changing circumstances and recognises their potential to achieve a sustainable future. A profile of Reading Borough is presented in Appendix 2.

### **Our Tackling Inequality Strategy Commitment:**

- **Our Tackling Inequality Strategy prioritises issues and areas where it is most needed by our residents, so that we can achieve our collective ambitions and deliver the successes we want for everyone within the borough to share in Reading's success.**
- **We will do this by driving attainment in skills, education and training and access to quality employment for people in the areas of the town where need is greatest.**
- **We will always be mindful of the diverse personal life experiences of our residents and how these can contribute to their equal enjoyment of life and achievements within the borough.**
- **The strategy develops and complements existing strategies, work, and partnerships aimed at closing the gap between the life experiences of our residents and achieving the vision laid out in our Corporate Plan of making Reading a more equal place to live by bringing the opportunities of growth and achievement to all Reading's communities.**

### 3. DELIVERING ON TACKLING INEQUALITY

The Council will deliver its Tackling Inequality Strategy to achieve improvements in the lives of our residents through focusing activities to remove barriers and support the development of education, skills, and training in our most deprived areas. Education in schools and our Adult and Community Learning College (New Directions) and other settings plays the key role, but there are many other council services that can be more focused on improving social mobility through in our most deprived areas. Adopting a place-based approach, which engages closely with residents and partners, will give further focus to these activities.

#### A Place-Based Approach

Many issues resonate across the Borough and the Council's and partners' response to them can be similar no matter where in the Borough they are needed. However, deprivation is specific to certain areas and there will be local as well as generic needs and therefore solutions that need to be found to raise attainment.

Each area of the borough has its own inherent strengths and opportunities for improving the lives of the people who live and work in that area. The Council's approach to developing its Tackling Inequality strategy is to understand these inherent aptitudes and how to focus its activities, supported by partners, as required by each area. Raising attainment in an area isn't just about giving it a facelift or putting in one or two new facilities. It is about understanding how an area works for the people and their many reasons for being there.

A place-based approach uses a clearly defined and understood geographical area to focus skills, knowledge, and resources to a common goal. It is crucial in this approach that everyone who has a stake or an interest in the area can contribute and share their experience and perspective about what future they would like to see. This enables the place-based work to deliver improvements for everyone and not just from a single perspective, which in turn creates more sustainable and embedded change than other approaches.

Aims and outcomes will be tailored to each area and developed with partners and stakeholders. The Strategy therefore does not set out interventions that residents should expect to see. It is, however, helpful to indicate the types of interventions that may be identified. An area may see some or all of these, as well as other interventions identified through the place-based approach:

**Targeting Services and Resources** - this is where the Council and other stakeholders focus their efforts and resources in tackling a specific issue or challenge to raising attainment. This could include things like increasing educational activity for children and adults, removing the barriers to residents to access skills development such as transport, or increasing the availability of out-of-hours education services. A Place-Based approach is a good way to clearly manage and direct activities and in turn to measure its impact.

**Regeneration** - this aspect focuses on the physical assets and infrastructure within an area and how they support positive outcomes for residents, often with a strong element of improving the economic vibrancy and sustainability of the area. Improving educational attainment and the skills residents possess to deliver a self-sustaining future requires good local facilities that can adapt to the different ways that residents need to use them. It is also

important that local facilities support the economic vitality of an area so that there are good employment opportunities for a more skilled and capable workforce. Regeneration can be big, developer-led regeneration schemes like a new housing estate but can also be smaller approaches such as improvements to local shops, or improved play and leisure facilities in an area. Within this type of activity, it's crucial that the local community are a key stakeholder who is directly engaged with the development of the proposed changes.

**Community Development** - it is important to recognise local people as an invaluable source of knowledge, strength, and commitment with an area. Connecting and engaging with a local community helps to create solutions that are tailored more accurately to the needs and aspirations of an area and avoids making decisions based on assumptions about an area. In this context, Place-Based change represents a real opportunity to break out of historic cycles of behaviour and unsuccessful interventions within an area. This approach will be crucial in tackling multi-generational experiences of low attainment and narrow employment opportunities, especially in creating strong support networks within communities that harnesses local skills and capacity and enable residents to play a positive role in securing a better future.

**Devolution** - the approach places more responsibility for decision-making in the hands of those within the area, with the expected benefits of seeing decisions taken with improved local knowledge and a greater level of commitment and buy-in from the local area. Devolution also encourages more engagement and participation in change projects/activities from local stakeholders who can see a more direct influence in the means of delivering change and the outcomes it wants to achieve. An investment in the skills and ambitions of an area provides more opportunities for residents to take control of the delivery of services and facilities within their communities, creating an environment where communities are using their own capacity to deliver increased attainment and positive outcomes for residents. Reading Borough Council is leading the exploratory work around the devolution of the Adult Education Budget as part of the Berkshire County Deal. Devolution of AEB could specifically deliver more skills and community learning opportunities for adults aged 19+ throughout the Borough.

**Systems Based Change** - this approach focuses on the interrelationships between council services, other statutory services, local businesses, and voluntary and community organisations, and how these relationships impact on a specific area. This approach enables holistic or joined-up solutions to be identified for an area, along with the removal of any unintended or unwanted outcomes of historic silo-based activities. This approach would identify the positive contributions between these different organisations which reinforce educational achievement and improved life chances, and those elements which are hindering these outcomes, and which need to be altered or removed.

### **Tackling Inequality Engagement**

The Council collects and holds a lot of data about the outcomes for residents across the borough, including the attainment of children in school, what jobs people have, how much crime gets reported, and what type of homes they live in. What is essential when looking to reduce inequality within the borough is that we build on this data with the experiences of our residents to tell us what needs to change within our communities to improve the outcomes and life experiences of our residents.

We know that residents will have examples of positive and negative experiences of living in Reading. It is the scale of the impact of these experiences that determines their ability to participate fully in the economic, political, social, and cultural life within the borough. We also know that more examples of negative experiences can be felt by residents in specific areas of the borough.

The Council wants to put individuals and communities in control of making changes to their lives. To do this, we will focus the conversation with communities on understanding the experience of their lives and working with communities to realise their potential and deliver the improvements they want to see.

We know that tackling inequality can mean something different for each resident of the borough. For some it could mean a small change to the opening times of a community centre or starting a new course at one of our leisure centres, but for others it could mean working much more closely with a broad range of council officers to tackle longstanding issues that are concerning them about their lives or their neighbourhood. It can also mean addressing years of longstanding prejudices or stereotyping of individuals and communities to focus on their skills and potential for achievement.

We know that building a positive relationship with our residents where they feel safe and confident to be open with us can take time, and it's crucial to our successful engagement with our residents that we take this time so that we can know them well enough to understand and empathise with their personal life experiences.

We also want our residents to be an integral part of the changes we make together to improve their lives. It's vitally important that our residents remain invested and connected with the services and activities that are making a difference to them, so that these remain relevant for them in the future. We know that building a positive relationship with our residents where they feel safe and confident to be open with us can take time, and it is crucial to our successful engagement with our residents that we take this time so that we can know them well enough to understand and empathise with them.

It's not always easy for our residents to take the time to engage with the Council about their lives or the area in which they live. Most of us have very busy lives already, which have been made even more complicated as we navigate our way out of the Covid pandemic and into an immediate future dominated by the rising cost of living. It is crucially important that our residents have the confidence that what we do will make a difference to them that they value and shows in turn, how the Council values them.

There isn't a one-size fits all solution to tackling inequality. Some activities that promote equality will happen quickly and have an immediate impact for our residents, whereas others will be more complicated and require more time to deliver. We also need to be realistic that we can't do everything we would want to across the whole borough at the same time, and we will need to focus our activities on specific issues and areas of the borough that make a real difference for our residents.



## **Working with Partners**

There are some things which the Council cannot achieve on its own and we need the skills and resources of our partners to deliver them for our residents.

Working effectively with our partners will be critical to tackling inequality. To help our residents obtain the skills and abilities to realise their potential, will require us to work closely with key partners such as Brighter Futures for Children, New Directions College and the Reading Economy & Destination Agency, along with our schools, colleges and businesses who are also focused on securing outcomes for residents that provide opportunities for learning and development. Our local economy needs to be strong so that there are the good jobs that our residents want, or the markets to sustain small businesses and the self-employed.

Working with our partners can also mean investing in them to create more capacity to support our resident's educational attainment and improved life chances. It is within this context that the Council actively commissions services from the voluntary and community sector within its Closing the Gap programme to provide a strong local voluntary and community sector infrastructure, enhance resilience, independence, and wellbeing for residents, and to help people get out and stay out of poverty. Whether commissioned or not, our voluntary and community sector partners have important specialist knowledge, insight, skills and expertise that can inform and improve Council services.

Whether it's engaging with businesses and employers to help stimulate new jobs, or training and skills providers to ensure people have the right skills to access them; with health services, on shared priorities to ensure people are well and active, or can access the care they need if they are not; with the police to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour that undermines and disrupts our neighbourhoods; or with the voluntary and community sector on the services and support they provide to support residents with the cost of living crisis and build resilience and wellbeing across our communities; partnership working will be key.

Everything the council, and its public, voluntary and private sector partners does has the potential to make positive change for the people who live in the borough; but this potential is maximised when partners work jointly to address overlapping issues and challenges.

## **Arrangements for Delivery**

This strategy and linked action plan bring together and highlight the council's work on tackling inequality in a single document and coherent work programme, ensuring there is clarity of focus on council-wide work on this important agenda. The strategy is approved by the Policy Committee

Delivery of the Tackling Inequality Strategy will be managed by the Council's Social Inclusion Board which is chaired by the Chief Executive and comprises senior council managers and key local delivery partners.

Central to our delivery of this strategy is the establishment of area-based projects which enable Council services, local partners, our voluntary and community sector, and our residents, to come together as part of the multi-disciplinary project team and utilise all available resources to deliver the

changes needed for our residents to realise their potential. These area-based projects are not quick fixes, they are long-term commitments that recognise the time needed to align our efforts and expertise to create the right environment for positive change. More detail on the specific arrangements for place-based working is presented in Appendix 3.

Our progress in achieving our tackling inequality ambitions will be available for everyone to see. The Council's Policy Committee will monitor ensuring that scrutiny of strategy delivery is public and everyone in the borough can be confident that positive changes are happening.

Beyond the work of Reading Borough Council, there is scope for a huge number of different ideas and activities to improve the equity for people who live and work in Reading, extending well beyond the specific focus of the actions associated with this strategy. We hope that our approach and commitment to tackling inequality will inspire other organisations to consider how they can focus their work on tackling inequality in Reading through connecting with our residents to understand their needs and aspirations, and how they can help people realise them in all areas of the borough.

Everyone will be able to find out details of the Council's Tackling Inequality Strategy and its current priorities at a dedicated page on the Reading Borough Council website ([www.reading.gov.uk](http://www.reading.gov.uk))

#### **4. OUTCOMES - WE KNOW WE'VE BEEN SUCCESSFUL WHEN:**

##### **For our Children and Young People:**

- Additional learning needs for children are identified early and education provision responds to meet these needs
- All Reading children are included, engaged in learning and barriers to achievement removed
- Young people in Reading with the greatest need are supported to achieve positive destinations and futures
- Local schools work in partnership to realise the potential of all Reading children

##### **For Post-16 Learning and Achievement**

- Delivered learning programmes that meet the needs of local communities and businesses and support local economic development and skills priority plans.
- Provided an outstanding quality of education that is rated good by Ofsted and is highly valued by learners, local communities, and employers.
- Improved equality of access to learning for learners from different communities across all parts of Reading, including those who are digitally excluded and/or suffer hardship.
- Built strong and effective partnerships with local employers, sector bodies, business associations and stakeholders, that lead to improved outcomes for our residents.
- Leading by example by providing work experience and apprenticeship opportunities within the Council's workforce

##### **For the Borough**

- Reading's economy has recovered from the impact of the covid-19 pandemic, is more inclusive, and all local people can access the skills, training, and jobs they need
- Ensuring social value is at the heart of the Council's procurement and investment practices to support improved life chances for residents
- Measures of inequality between groups and communities - such as life expectancy and unemployment - are declining.
- Relationships between partners in the town - businesses, local institutions, the voluntary sector and the Council - are stronger and more productive.
- Our residents tell us they are more satisfied with Reading as a place to live, and with the services and value for money delivered by the Council.

## 5. PRIORITIES, ACTION PLAN & MONITORING FRAMEWORK

The Social Inclusion Board has identified the following mutually reinforcing priorities for the first year of the Tackling Inequality Strategy to enable the Council to take a more holistic as well as a more targeted place-based approach to addressing the underlying determinants of deprivation within the Borough:

### **Area Focus - South Reading Area Pilots**

2019 IMD analysis shows a consistent picture of deprivation in the South Reading area. However, the South Reading area has significant positive local resources to build on, including schools, churches, open space, community centres, leisure centre, and local retail facilities, providing scope for an asset based, community development approach to improving tackling inequality.

Our priority is to establish two area-based pilots within the South Reading area focusing on the areas within the Whitley and Church wards to focus our activities and resources where they are most needed.

### **Raising Educational Attainment & Improving Life Chances**

2019 IMD Data for the **Education, skills and training domain** shows that 4 LSOAs, all within South Reading, are in the most deprived 5% nationally. We have identified schools with multiple weaknesses in outcomes and key data (covering EYFS, phonics, KS1, KS2, attendance and exclusion) and are developing a targeted programme of work to support these schools to improve outcomes.

Ensuring that our residents develop the necessary skills and confidence they need to make positive choices and achieve their ambitions is the key to making sustained improvements to tackling inequality within the borough.

## TACKLING INEQUALITY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

### 1. IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, SKILLS, AND LEARNING

#### Early identification of additional needs, aligned with a wide range of provision

Intention/Aim	Owner
Agree partnership action to deliver the priorities of the SEND Strategy 2022-2027	Brighter Futures for Children
Establish clear pathways and provision from early intervention through to specialist provision	Brighter Futures for Children
Improve Sufficiency of SEND placements	Brighter Futures for Children
With health partners, develop integrated working to identify and respond to children's additional needs	Brighter Futures for Children

#### Ensuring all Reading children are included, engaged in learning and barriers to achievement removed

Intention/Aim	Owner
With Reading schools, understand and take action to improve attainment and reduce attainment gaps	Brighter Futures for Children
Coordinate education and wellbeing recovery action to support children's learning	Brighter Futures for Children
Promote attendance and remove the barriers to engagement in education using trauma-informed and relationship-based approaches, including targeted work to prevent exclusions and reducing the number of Children Missing Education	Brighter Futures for Children
Targeted School Effectiveness intervention with priority schools	Brighter Futures for Children

#### Promoting positive futures for all Reading young people, focusing on those most in need

Intention/Aim	Owner
Identify young people at risk of NEET and take targeted action to prevent them becoming NEET	Brighter Futures for Children
Develop and promote a wider range of EET opportunities and possible futures for all Reading young people	Brighter Futures for Children
Reinvigorate the 16-19 partnership, building relationships with HE and FE providers	Brighter Futures for Children
Broker strong partnerships between businesses and schools to harness Reading's economy for the benefit of young people	Brighter Futures for Children
Promote enrichment, cultural and leisure opportunities for primary and secondary pupils to help children develop their interests and skills	Brighter Futures for Children

#### Local schools work in partnership to realise the potential of all Reading pupils

Intention/Aim	Owner
Reading's leaders of education, working with the community and businesses, deliver an Education Vision and strategy promoting education, skills and opportunities for all pupils.	Brighter Futures for Children
Targeted school effectiveness support to Reading community schools ensures quality education for all pupils	Brighter Futures for Children
Peer to peer school support ensures consistent quality across all of Reading schools	Brighter Futures for Children

**To provide outstanding adult (age 19+) skills and community learning that meets the needs of learners, communities, and local businesses.**

<b>Intention/Aim</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Establish an Adult Skills and Community Learning Strategy for Reading that links to the Berkshire County Deal and the work being undertaken to devolve the Adult Education Budget.	New Directions College
Contribute to the development and delivery of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and where appropriate, bid for structural development funds.	New Directions College
Offer bespoke provision for adults with Learning Difficulties/Disabilities with a focus on developing pathways to employment.	New Directions College
Offer/commission provision for adults with mental health conditions that will support their recovery and enable them to progress to further learning or employment.	New Directions College
Offer/commission family learning activities which promote the development of basic skills and parental engagement in education.	New Directions College
Celebrate Adult Learner success throughout the year and via the annual Adult Learning Awards.	New Directions College

**2. SOUTH READING PLACE-BASED PILOTS**

**Whitley & Church Place-Based Pilots:** Area Based approach to improving attainment, skills and outcomes for residents who are not realising their potential, supported by long-term improved economic sustainability

<b>Intention/Aim</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Agree Terms of Reference	Social Inclusion Board
Map current resources available in each ward area	Social Inclusion Board
Develop baseline paper for each ward area	Social Inclusion Board
Develop engagement activities with residents in each area	Social Inclusion Board
Develop resource allocation proposals	Social Inclusion Board
Develop place-based monitoring framework that measures multiple outcomes for accredited learning, non-accredited learning, and community/civic engagement.	Social Inclusion Board
Identify local community champions	Social Inclusion Board
Establish New Directions College as a centre of excellence for adult and community learning.	New Directions College

### 3. ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

#### Emerging Skills & Jobs

Intention/Aim	Owner
New Directions College to build and deliver foundation level talent pipelines into jobs within key emerging sectors across Berkshire, including Film and Production Industries and Green Skills.	New Directions College
Employer led employment Opportunity and Support for every Reading student with strong focus on development of skills needs from emerging sectors (Low Carbon Economy and Creative Film Sector Jobs)	REDA
Co-ordinating and supporting new developer led S106 Employment and Skills Plans to meet local priorities	REDA
New Employment Opportunities for Residents emerging from Developer ESPs	REDA

#### Start Up Reading and Small Business Support

Intention/Aim	Owner
Start Up and Employment Advice and Guidance in Community Setting	REDA
Supported Ways into Self- employment through training	REDA
Introduction to Self-Employment Taster Events	REDA
Workshop and Mentoring Programmes by business owners	REDA
Creating Strong Local Business Pathways and Growth Support to help business survive and grow local employment including skills and training	REDA

#### Core Skills for Local People

Intention/Aim	Owner
New Directions College to deliver a service that is effectively aligned and connected to local projects and programmes of work linked to improved economic and social outcomes and skills for adults.	New Directions College
New Directions College to deliver provision that addresses foundation level skills gaps and meets the needs of unemployed and underemployed adults.	New Directions College
Deliver Multiply (national Numeracy skills development project) to over 1000+ adults in Reading until 2025, providing innovative numeracy courses that promote skills development and progression to further learning.	New Directions College
Work with local FE and learning providers to build strong learning and skills pathways and avoid duplication, to ensure equality of access to high quality learning provision across Reading.	New Directions College

## Employment And Employability

Intention/Aim	Owner
New Directions College to build on the successful employability opportunities that are created in partnership with local employers, key stakeholders such as REDA and JCP i.e. Sector Based Work Programmes linked to specific employers/sectors and targeted at specific learner groups.	New Directions College
New Directions College to grow the delivery of Apprenticeships and technical/vocational education that meets the skills gaps within key sectors and is responsive to employer demand.	New Directions College
New Directions College to offer the National Skills Fund and Lifetime Skills Guarantee to Adults across Reading looking to secure their first full L3 qualification.	New Directions College
New Directions College to offer bespoke provision for adults with Learning Disabilities/Difficulties, with a focus on developing pathways to employment.	New Directions College
Post Covid and Cost of Living Crisis: Access to employment opportunities for all our residents through a range of jobs and skills events around the Borough, working with National Careers Service, New Directions and JCP to provide recruitment support and soft skills	REDA
Ensuring our workforce has the skills that employers need and where there are jobs waiting to be filled - including construction, hospitality, digital and healthcare.	REDA



## TACKLING INEQUALITY STRATEGY - MONITORING FRAMEWORK

Achieving positive sustained change within the lives of our residents is something which we know can take years to realise. As a result, much of the monitoring information relating to activities to tackle inequality has been done on a local authority basis, with results reported annually, or even sometimes after a few years.

A significant amount of this type of analysis is already undertaken to understand the impact of the Council's Corporate Plan across the borough. This will be used as part of the monitoring framework for the Tackling Inequality strategy as this includes monitoring success in improvement of educational attainment, skills, and learning, and how we are creating improved communities with better economic prospects for our residents. Details of the Council's Corporate Plan and its monitoring framework can be found here:

[Council Corporate Plan – 2022 to 2025 - Reading Borough Council](#)

Whilst we will be continuing to examine and review this type of data to understand the impact of our activities, the monitoring framework for the Tackling Inequality Strategy will also include the development of data which can be reviewed and analysed throughout the year to determine any specific issues or improvements which have been realised.

Specifically, this will include developing monitoring information for the following key activities and outcomes:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improving Educational Attainment</li><li>• Promoting School Attendance &amp; reducing School Exclusions</li><li>• Supporting children &amp; families at most risk</li><li>• Impact of additional school support</li><li>• Apprenticeship starts and completions</li><li>• Community-Based / Adult Learning - rates of participation and success</li><li>• Employment Support</li><li>• New Jobs Created / Employment Outcomes</li><li>• Supported Employment Opportunities</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supporting New Businesses and Reducing Business Failures</li><li>• Community-Based Activities</li><li>• Community Facilities Availability &amp; Usage</li><li>• Receiving Benefits and Direct Financial Support</li><li>• Youth Crime / Offending</li><li>• Supporting Cultural Diversity</li><li>• Actively Supporting Improved Health</li></ul> |
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## APPENDIX 1 - TACKLING INEQUALITY IN READING BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

The [Local Plan for Reading](#), which runs to 2036, sets out the council’s approach to housing, employment, transport, leisure and the natural environment, providing an overarching framework for development on issues that are crucial building blocks of tackling inequality, as well as linked to other council strategies highlighted below. The theme of socially inclusive communities runs throughout the local plan’s objectives.

Theme	<h1>Social</h1>				
Council strategy	<a href="#">Brighter Futures for Children business plan for 2022-25</a>	<a href="#">Berkshire West Healthy and Wellbeing strategy</a>	<a href="#">Housing strategy, Empty homes strategy, Preventing homelessness strategy</a>	<a href="#">Customer experience strategy</a>	Community safety and serious violence strategy
Summary of existing approach	Getting the right start in life, good quality education and aspiration are all key drivers of tackling exclusion, and this plan therefore prioritises early help services and support for families as well as supporting education settings to offer high quality teaching for all, including a focus on those requiring bespoke or specialised support.	Jointly agreed by RBC, West Berkshire and Wokingham councils, the strategy is fundamental to tackling exclusion, recognising that health and wellbeing are foundations of both individuals’ ability to fulfil their own potential and prosperous societies. It sets out priorities to reduce health differentials between different groups, focus on early years support and promote good mental health and wellbeing for all.	Housing supports the economy, prevents homelessness, helps create vibrant and sustainable communities and provides a foundation for the health and wellbeing of residents; therefore, ensuring everybody can access good quality, affordable housing in safe and welcoming neighbourhoods is a key pillar of our ambitions for tackling exclusion.	The way we respond to, and support residents is central to how the council takes an inclusive approach to its own services and meets the specific needs of different groups of residents in their dealings with the council. Our customer excellent strategy sets out how we will ensure residents can engage with us in the different ways that suit them best.	The council’s new community safety and serious violence strategy, currently being developed, will include priorities aimed at reducing violence in the areas with the worst crime rates, improving work with communities to target anti-social behaviour and hate crime, and tackling knife-crime and county line activity, all of which typically impact neighbourhoods with higher levels of income deprivation and undermine people’s sense of place and wellbeing.

<p>Ongoing/ planned activity</p>	<p>Engage health partners to identify and reach families to access support and learning opportunities before school age. Build on the establishment of the Reconnect team to identify and support young people at risk (e.g. from extra-familial harm) and those disengaged from their families or support circles.</p> <p>Work with parents from pre-birth onwards to increase their resilience and confidence to parent better.</p> <p>Provide community support through a team of family support workers.</p> <p>Champion our most vulnerable children and young people by challenging barriers to educational access, lack of aspiration and inappropriate outcomes, working with RBC to drive up attainment and skills linked to inclusion.</p> <p>Work to identify circumstances in which young people may become NEET (Not in Education,</p>	<p>Use information and intelligence to identify the communities experiencing poorer health outcomes and ensure the right services and support are available to them. Ensure services and support are accessible to those most in need. Work to provide support for parents and carers during pregnancy and the early years.</p> <p>Increase the number of two-year-old who experience disadvantage accessing nursery places. Implement the Berkshire West Future in Mind transformation plan for CYP mental HWB, including raising awareness of services, improving waiting times and developing services that bridge the gap for those on waiting lists, ad build a Berkshire West 0-25yo comprehensive mental health offer.</p> <p>Work with the communities and the VCS to re-build mental resilience and tackle the stigma of mental health.</p>	<p>Deliver 671 new homes per year, with a strong focus on affordable housing including 200 new rented affordable council properties by 2025 and large-scale town centre build to rent schemes accessible to local people. Ensure good quality, energy efficient private rental properties through increasing take up of Reading Rent with confidence scheme, private sector licensing and development of a private sector action plan.</p> <p>Working with residents to agree priorities for deliverable / affordable improvements to their neighbourhoods, including physical improvements, improvements to services such as cleaning, water management and grounds maintenance, and communications to encourage residents to look after their areas.</p>	<p>We will create a consolidated customer fulfilment team able to deal with a range of different issues, removing the need to pass customers on to different teams, accessible by a single phone number. We will use digital processes, including AI and robotic process automation, to enable self-service and automation where possible.</p> <p>Create a golden record of our customers so all their data is held in one place, removing the need for them to repeat information and enabling us to better predict customers' needs based on the shared data we hold.</p>	
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	<p>Employment or Training), working with partners to ensure young people are accessing a range of opportunities.</p> <p>Focusing on support and measures to make sure children are properly engaged in learning, continue to be included in school activities and are not disadvantaged.</p> <p>Use the Virtual School model to work in partnership with schools to help children looked after achieve their full academic potential.</p>				
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Theme	Economic			Cultural	Political
Council strategy	<a href="#">Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-2025</a>	<a href="#">Powered by People: Reading's economic recovery and renewal strategy 2021-24</a>	<a href="#">UK shared prosperity investment plan</a>	<a href="#">Culture and heritage strategy 2015-30</a>	<a href="#">Consultation and engagement approach</a>
Summary of existing approach	<p>Evidence suggests that more vulnerable people in our societies will be most impacted by climate change; yet conversely, the transition to a carbon neutral future provides an opportunity to harness skills and employment opportunities across the green economy and can therefore be a pillar of our approach to tackling inequality.</p> <p>The strategy sets out how the ambition of making Reading carbon neutral by 2030 can deliver a cleaner and more inclusive economy, and communities that are cohesive and engaged in a shared agenda.</p>	<p>The post-Covid reading recovery and renewal strategy has three priorities; an Inclusive Reading (employment, skills, and training for all), smart Reading (a resilient economy, businesses and city centre fit for the future) and Destination Reading (a great place to live, work and do business).</p> <p>With a focus on ensuring employment opportunities and skills development, the strategy sets out a framework for the council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan.</p>	<p>Our UKSPF investment plan sets out our proposed activities across the themes of communities and place, business support and people and skills. The plan will make a direct contribution to the ambition of reducing inequality in Reading through targeted interventions in areas most in need of support for economically inactive people, including through adult learning and skills development, business start-up support and building community infrastructure.</p>	<p>Culture and heritage can support tackling inequality through their contribution to jobs and the economy and, where they are accessible to everyone in the borough, through the role they play in stimulating people's enjoyment of place and sense of cohesive identity.</p> <p>The strategy recognises the role of cultural opportunities in combatting inequalities; and aims to increase participation and engagement in culture and heritage and use events to celebrate Reading's identity and diversity.</p>	<p>Underpinning all of the council's strategies and work programmes, our consultation and engagement demonstrate our commitment to taking a socially inclusive civic participation by actively seeking the input and views of local residents to co-produce our priorities, plans and service activity.</p>

<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Ongoing/ planned activity</p>	<p>Reducing fuel poverty by targeting retrofitting at those most in need / referral mechanisms for those in poor health and/or fuel poverty.</p> <p>Ensuring that services, leisure facilities and employment opportunities are located close to where people live and/or in locations easy to access by sustainable transport services.</p> <p>Increasing the amount and quality of green space to enable residents to benefit from improved physical and mental health; mapping nature recovery priorities against indices of deprivation data to support people and wildlife where it's most needed.</p>	<p>Ensuring employment opportunities and support for every Reading student, including work experience and placements, virtual internships and business mentoring.</p> <p>Promoting employment opportunities through jobs and skills fairs/sector events.</p> <p>Launching Kickstart broker scheme enabling employers to access funding to create jobs for young adults on UC. Reskilling courses for growth areas for target cohorts. Support for digital upskilling and reducing digital exclusion.</p>	<p>Intensive business support programmes for businesses at the start-up, running and growing stages to boost community enterprises, create jobs and offer a route out of low pay.</p> <p>Using the Berkshire Opportunities skills and employment portal to address post-Covid employment/skills challenges.</p> <p>Provide employment support for economically inactive people; intensive, wraparound one-to-one support to move people closer to mainstream provision and employment. Support local residents to develop the skills and abilities to access opportunities in the growing film and media sector in South Reading.</p> <p>Improve the pavilion at Whitley Wood Recreation Ground.</p> <p>Providing support and capacity development for the events and festivals programme.</p>		<p>Annual <a href="#">residents survey</a>, our <a href="#">citizen's panel</a> provides regular survey and focus group insight into to the council's work <a href="#">consultation processes</a> ensure regular community input on a range of service and ward based issues 48 ward councillors working closely with and representing their communities, to ensure that the voices of all residents can be heard (eg ward surgeries, regular correspondence etc)</p>
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## APPENDIX 2 - What We Know About Reading 2022

Reading is the principal regional and commercial centre of the Thames Valley, a major retail and leisure destination, with a thriving night-time economy.

Reading has a compact service economy which specialises in business and insurance services and has some of the finest high-tech business parks in the South-East, with many international companies such as Microsoft and Oracle choosing Reading as their home.

The town is a major transport interchange, continuing to benefit from its strategic location on the M4 corridor and proximity to Heathrow Airport and London. Reading is also home to the University of Reading and Reading College, with a large percentage of the local working population highly skilled.

However, prosperity has brought its own problems, with pressure on infrastructure, communities, and the environment. The high cost of living and the high cost of housing have had a significant impact on local communities. Although Reading can undoubtedly demonstrate success and wealth, the town also contains wards amongst some of the most deprived in the country.

Currently 174,200<sup>1</sup> residents and 67,700 households live within the Reading borough boundary, while around 233,000 people live in Reading's greater urban area<sup>2</sup>. The population is estimated to increase by 3.2% by 2043<sup>3</sup>, and the number of households is predicted to rise to 69,119 by 2043.

Reading has a very diverse population, with 46.5% now belonging to a Black and Minority Ethnic community, the third highest proportion in the South-East after Slough and Oxford.

Reading has a generally younger population; however, the proportion of older people is predicted to increase, with the proportion aged 60+ predicted to rise from 16.8% in 2019 to 23.1% by 2043.

Reading's continued success has further increased demand for housing, resulting in higher than national average prices, with the median house price almost 3 times higher in 2020 than 2000. Because of this, the property market has become increasingly inaccessible to those on low incomes, due to the shortage of affordable housing.

Over the last 20 years, Reading has developed from an economy based on trading and manufacturing into a centre for leading edge information communication technology (ICT) companies and is now one of the largest insurance and business service centres in the country. Reading is now a major retail centre, with a significant evening economy.

Reading has a highly skilled workforce, however there is a disparity between the workforce and the skills and earnings of Reading residents, with in-work poverty increasing in certain areas. In terms of occupation profile, Reading has a higher proportion of residents in professional occupations than the national average.

In terms of unemployment, the claimant count rate (proportion of working age population claiming JSA or Universal Credit) is currently 4.1% (August 22)<sup>4</sup>, compared with 2.9% for the South-East and 3.8% nationally. This has increased from 2.6% in August 2019 pre-covid. The average gross annual salary for workers in Reading in 2021 was £36,500 for residents and £34,222 for workers<sup>5</sup>, both higher than the national and regional averages.

Although the pace of change in Reading has been rapid, there is a clear mismatch between outstanding economic success and the level of benefit to local people, leaving a significant gap between Reading's most and least prosperous neighbourhoods. Reading has, within a small geographic area, some of the most affluent and the most deprived neighbourhoods in the whole of the Thames Valley.

According to the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, Reading is ranked the 141st most deprived out of 317 local authorities in the country. However, there are five areas in Reading within the most deprived 10% nationally for overall deprivation and four areas which are in the bottom 5% for deprivation relating to education, skills and training.

In general terms, Reading tends to score better than the national average for most health measures, although this hides problems within particular communities. One of the most significant health-related statistics is that life expectancy is 6.8 years lower for men and 7.8 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Reading than in the least deprived areas<sup>6</sup>.

Crime and the fear of crime have become more significant issues as Reading's evening economy has grown over recent years. However, Reading has an average crime rate, when compared to similar areas.

Reading is a major population and employment centre within the Southeast, benefiting from proximity to London and Heathrow, and with excellent links to national road and rail networks as well as to Heathrow Airport. Such connectivity is represented by Reading's status as a regional transport hub, international gateway, and a major transport interchange. As with most other towns and cities in the UK, Reading experiences congestion on many of its main routes during the week, with the commercial success of the town adding to weekend congestion.

Reading has one of the UK's busiest railway stations, catering for 17 million passengers a year, with a further 4 million interchanging passengers. Reading attracts many trips from surrounding communities. In the AM peak period (07:00-10:00), 30,000 people arrive and 24,000 people leave the Reading area.



## APPENDIX 3 - TACKLING INEQUALITY THROUGH PLACE-BASED WORKING

### READING BOROUGH COUNCIL PILOTS - 2023/25

#### Objective

To support the delivery of the Tackling Inequality Strategy by piloting place-based working within the Church and Whitley Wards.

#### Place based approaches

Place based working approaches use clearly defined and understood geographical areas to focus skills, knowledge, and resources to a common goal. Crucial to the success of this approach is that everyone who has a stake or an interest in the area can contribute and share their perspective about how best the desired outcome might be achieved.

Place-based approaches can involve:

- **targeting** services and resources deployed either by councils and/or other stakeholders
- utilising and building local **community** skills, knowledge, and commitment from residents
- **regeneration** approaches to assets and infrastructure
- **devolution** of decision making to local communities, with greater engagement and participation at neighbourhood level, and
- **systems based** change, focusing on the interrelationships between council services, other statutory services, local businesses, and voluntary and community organisations, how the relationships impact on a specific area and removing silos

Previous LGA research has identified five elements that form the basis of placed based approaches, which should be considered at the strategic and locality level:

- Developing creative ways of working which involve partnership approaches to overcome departmental and organisational silos.
- Strengthening capacity and social capital in the locality to support self-help and independence.
- Building on existing resources by adopting an asset-based approach.
- Reducing the demand for services through early intervention and prevention approaches.
- Actively engaging communities.

These principles are incorporated within the proposed approach for the RBC pilots of placed based working set out below.

#### Reading placed based pilots: proposed approach

The place-based pilots will cover two areas of the Borough: Church and Whitley Wards and the new approach will be piloted over a period of twenty-four months.

The aim of the pilots is to test whether by taking a more holistic, targeted and co designed approach to the deployment of Council, community, and private sector resources; residents in our least affluent Wards can be better supported to improve their life chances. There are three areas of activity for the pilots all of which are important:

- Coordination and visibility of internal service delivery within the pilot areas.
- Engagement, sharing of intelligence and coordination of agreed activity with key external partners and agencies in the pilot areas.
- Community and resident engagement.

### **Coordination and Visibility of Internal Service**

This involves ensuring that services are delivered in a coordinated, joined up, place-based way, rather than being arranged in organisational silos. This does not necessarily mean changing what services are delivered, but, through understanding service linkages and what each team is doing in the pilot area it may change how and when they are delivered.

There is already a huge depth of intelligence and knowledge about the two pilot areas spread across the organisation. Working together with a focus on place will create the opportunity for service areas - education, adult skills, social care, housing, environmental and cultural etc. to come together to:

- Share intelligence about the areas including their assets, strengths and challenges,
- Identify which partners we already work with in the areas,
- Share and coordinate work programmes to enable more impactful delivery,
- Troubleshoot internal blockages/service delivery issues; and
- Agree and facilitate new activity to deliver the pilot's objectives.

### **Engagement and Coordination with Key Partners**

Proactive positive engagement with key partners working in the area - Head Teachers, GP surgery, voluntary and community sector, faith leaders, community associations etc. has the potential to significantly enhance the impact of place-based working by similarly sharing information and intelligence, aligning activities and codesigning solutions to issues.

### **Community Engagement**

Our residents and communities are all different in terms of ethnicity, lived experience, access to facilities, community resilience etc. Understanding their views - issues and aspirations as well as the community's strengths will help target activity, facilitate codesign and improve wellbeing.

### **Place Based Pilots - Detailed Objectives**

To support the delivery of the Tackling Inequality Strategy by piloting place-based working within the Church and Whitley Wards. Specifically, this will include:

- Promote and develop collaborative working between Council departments and services, to increase visibility and coordination of service delivery, to share intelligence and programming information and identify and implement opportunities for improvement.
- Engage with key local partners to share intelligence, understand issues, and promote a collaborative and coordinated approach to addressing 'common' problems.
- Proactively engage with residents to understand their perspective and concerns and facilitate codesign to inform service delivery.
- Facilitate a local, targeted approach to delivery of services which both directly and indirectly support improved education, skills, and training outcomes as well as employment.

- Identify and develop local community champions to promote and imbed sustained change and strengthen community resilience.
- Utilise the skills and resources available within the Voluntary and Community Sector to facilitate the development of new opportunities and models to meet local needs.
- Consider how features of a public health approach can be incorporated into placed-based working to improve wellbeing within the pilot areas.
- Promote activities and outcomes to residents in the area.
- Agree an Action Plan and metrics for evaluation of the pilot and provide regular update reports to the Social Inclusion Board.
- Share and identify approaches that work and make a tangible difference to residents' lives.