West Berkshire Council

EDI Needs Assessment
October 2022

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

temple

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Document Control

Version No.	Date	Author	Reviewed	Approved
1.0	27/9/2022	Sophia Dellafiora	Prudence Wales	
2.0	28/9/2022	Sophia Dellafiora		Mark Teasdale
3.0	21/10/2022	Sophia Dellafiora		Prudence Wales

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1 Executive Summary

1.1 Background and Scope

1.1.1 This Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Needs Assessment outlines the key trends and legal background West Berkshire Council must consider whilst developing their upcoming EDI Framework, as well as forecasting trends that should be integrated into the Council's EDI objectives and evaluation mechanisms. The Needs Assessment also provides further recommendations to ensure a robust understanding of West Berkshire's EDI needs is maintained beyond the scope of this work.

1.1.2 This Needs Assessment focuses on those protected characteristics defined in the Equality Act 2010 and provides background on wider geographic and socio-economic indicators to define key trends which may disproportionately affect vulnerable groups. As we are aware that a separate piece of work has been commissioned regarding public health inequalities these issues are not explored in this report. Additionally, whilst West Berkshire has close contact with and is therefore influenced by populations and infrastructure associated with Reading and nearby urban centres, this is also outside the geographic scope of this report.

1.2 Key Takeaways

1.2.1 As well as responding to the objectives within the Council Strategy, including supporting everyone to reach their full potential and ensuring that vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes, any upcoming EDI frameworks must also address West Berkshire's range of significant EDI challenges.

1.2.2 In analysing datasets about demographics for the local authority as a whole, it can be tempting to consider West Berkshire to be relatively affluent and generally reflective of regional and national averages. However, further analysis of smaller geographical areas and of hidden communities reveals that the local authority area faces a broad range of unique challenges. These challenges must be acknowledged if all citizens of West Berkshire are to be supported through appropriate and proportionate methods.

1.2.3 Some of the key issues emerging from our analysis include:

- Recognising the challenges that are associated with the urban-rural split such as accessing public services and transport, accessing social and community infrastructure, concentrations of fuel poverty, and urban-linked deprivation;

- Understanding that, although West Berkshire appears to be largely ethnically homogeneous (94.8% White British), minority and marginalised communities with varied needs are dispersed across the district. These include the racing community, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, asylum seekers and refugees, armed service members and their families, and veterans;

- Considering West Berkshire's aging population will be crucial to supporting vulnerable people as the district's population already has a large proportion of older residents (aged 60 years and older) and this is forecast to be a growing demographic; and

- Developing a more nuanced understanding of communities and how they are supported by the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector will aid the Council in both fulfilling its equalities duties and responding to framework objectives, especially as there are community and protected characteristics that are not currently well understood, as well as how different circumstances and characteristics interact with each other.

1.3   West Berkshire's Equality Duty

1.3.1   The primary legislative driver for considering equalities, diversity and inclusion is the Equality Act 2010, which requires local authorities under the Public Sector Equality Duty to consider the nine protected characteristics when developing policy, delivering services and employing people. This includes requirements for Councils to:

- Publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually; and

- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years.

1.3.2   Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to fulfil a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). In fulfilling the PSED public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

1.3.3   The Equality Act 2010 explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;

- Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and

- Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

1.3.4   Many of the duties included in the Equality Act can often not be fully understood by stakeholders including public sector officials, private sector suppliers, and the general population interacting with public services and facilities. As a result, local authorities like West Berkshire may be at risk of not fully fulfilling their duties, leaving them open to legal prosecution and judicial review. Local authorities are ultimately responsible for demonstrating their compliance with relevant legislation including showing that they have considered the protected characteristics in their decision-making process and how such consideration impacted final deliverables.

1.4   Looking Forward

1.4.1   The evidence presented here suggests West Berkshire Council must consider its equalities duty from a wider perspective in order to be fully compliant with both the letter and spirit of the Equality Act. Taking a more comprehensive approach will also support positive outcomes for more groups living in the district, including those who might normally be overlooked.

1.4.2   Ensuring that West Berkshire Council continues to monitor updated datasets, liaise with partner organisations, conduct qualitative research and engage with local communities will enable the Council to set clear and relevant EDI objectives which benefit the district's most vulnerable residents.

2   Introduction

2.1.1   This EDI Needs Assessment was prepared by Temple on behalf of West Berkshire Council to support the development of the Council's updated approach to EDI.

2.1.2   The Needs Assessment includes:

- A baseline assessment, which provides an overview of West Berkshire's demographic profile including geographic and socio-economic indicators, protected characterises, and other relevant groups, as well as relevant historic and geographic benchmarks;

- A policy and research review, which outlines the Council's duties under national and local legislation, sample EDI policy from other local authorities illustrating applicable best practice, and legal precedents illustrating the potential impacts of not complying with these existing policies; and

- A forecast of key trends and issues West Berkshire may face in the near future, with recommendations to the Council to better address these changes and challenges.

2.1.3   This report provides an evidence base identifying West Berkshire's key existing EDI-related issues and vulnerable groups, which should then be carried forward in the development of more formal, and legally required, EDI policy. Such policy should include specific outcomes rooted in this evidence base as well as in those sources included in the recommendations made at the close of the Needs Assessment.

3   Baseline Assessment

3.1   Approach to the Baseline

3.1.1   The baseline assessment provides an overview of West Berkshire's demographic profile regarding equalities characteristics through the mapping of key geographic and socio-economic indicators, protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010[1], and other relevant groups.

3.1.2   The key geographic and socio-economic indicators included in this baseline are:

- Deprivation;
- Land use and urban morphology;
- District infrastructure;
- Digital exclusion;
- Food deserts; and
- Fuel poverty.

3.1.3   These indicators have been identified in discussion with Council officers as the most relevant to understanding the socio-economic diversity of West Berkshire's population as it relates to the geography of the district, as well as offering strong insights into the roots of hidden inequalities issues. As those with particular protected characteristics may experience these indicators differently, these datasets will be used to highlight pinch points where West Berkshire might be more vulnerable to equalities challenges.

3.1.4   All the protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act are included in this baseline. They will be described in the following order:

- Age;
- Sex;
- Race;
- Religion and belief;
- Disability;
- Pregnancy and maternity;
- Sexual orientation;

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[1] Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2010. Equality Act 2010. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

- Gender reassignment; and
- Marriage and civil partnership.

3.1.5   The baseline also includes the following groups:

- At-risk children, youth and young people;
- Those who are homeless;
- Carers;
- The Armed Forces community; and
- Those in the racing community.

3.1.6   These four groups are not included within the defined protected characteristics but are often highlighted as 'other relevant groups' in EDI policy. People who fall under these categories may be sensitive to equalities issues, particularly if they also possess a protected characteristic, and their presence within the district may have implications for the provision of Council services and the execution of the Public Sector Equality Duty (see **Section 4**).

3.2   Data Sources and Limitations

3.2.1   Much of the information forming the baseline assessment has been sourced from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the Annual Population Survey (APS) and the UK Census. Wherever possible, the most recently available was used, ideally from ONS mid-2022 estimates, the 2021/2022 APS, or the Census 2021.

3.2.2   Notably however, for the Census 2021, most recent versions of many relevant datasets have not yet been released. Where 2021 datasets are not publicly accessible, Census 2011 data has been used instead. We have made recommendations throughout the baseline of where the Council should be particularly aware of upcoming data releases from the Census 2021.

3.2.3   Where other datasets are not available or do not exist, particularly around marginalised or at-risk communities, the baseline has been supplemented by conversations with relevant community members, representatives, or other spokespeople. These conversations will be clearly marked throughout the baseline as they appear and the links between the spokesperson and the community explained. In the forecasting section we discuss recommendations around qualitative and quantitative research that could be undertaken to improve knowledge of these communities.

3.2.4   In addition, where possible, the baseline features geographic comparators, including the South East and England, which will help to contextualise the West Berkshire baseline. These comparators will also help to highlight those key

trends, opportunities, challenges and target demographics which are borne out of initial analyses of the baseline.

3.3 Geographic Indicators

3.3.1 The follow sections discuss datasets and information which will help to contextualise West Berkshire and uncover those issues that may be overlooked in only mapping those with protected characteristics or in other relevant groups. In particular, this discussion of West Berkshire's geography will highlight the differences between West Berkshire's urban and rural populations, unequal access to social and community infrastructure, and varied urban morphologies.

3.3.2 These datasets have been selected as they highlight some of the nuances of EDI issues across West Berkshire, as well as demonstrating trends that might be overlooked in assessing the district as a whole. Although West Berkshire's population may appear to fall in line with the 'average' for England, there are pockets of inequality which require closer scrutiny.

3.4 District Infrastructure

3.4.1 West Berkshire is generally very rural, dominated by the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in the north and west. As illustrated in **Figure A**, some semi-urban clusters are distributed across the southern and eastern portions of the district.

Figure A – Rurality across West Berkshire

Source: Office for National Statistics, 2018

3.4.2   As illustrated in **Figure B**, public and private infrastructure, facilities and services are generally concentrated in the belt linking these two main semi-urban areas.

3.4.3   The rural nature of the eastern and northern parts of West Berkshire is important as rurality poses a number of challenges in terms of EDI. The most obvious challenge is the location of services. As people are so dispersed, so too are healthcare facilities, schools, food and other retail stores, and other public and private sector resources and amenities.

3.4.4   While a robust infrastructure and transport system would help to connect rural residents with necessary services, it is often difficult to construct these systems in such areas due to geographical constraints including the presence of hilly terrain or protected lands, like an AONB. It is also expensive to construct such systems and when the cost per person is higher, as is the case in more rural areas, it can be difficult to execute such needed development in a timely manner.

Figure B – Infrastructure across West Berkshire
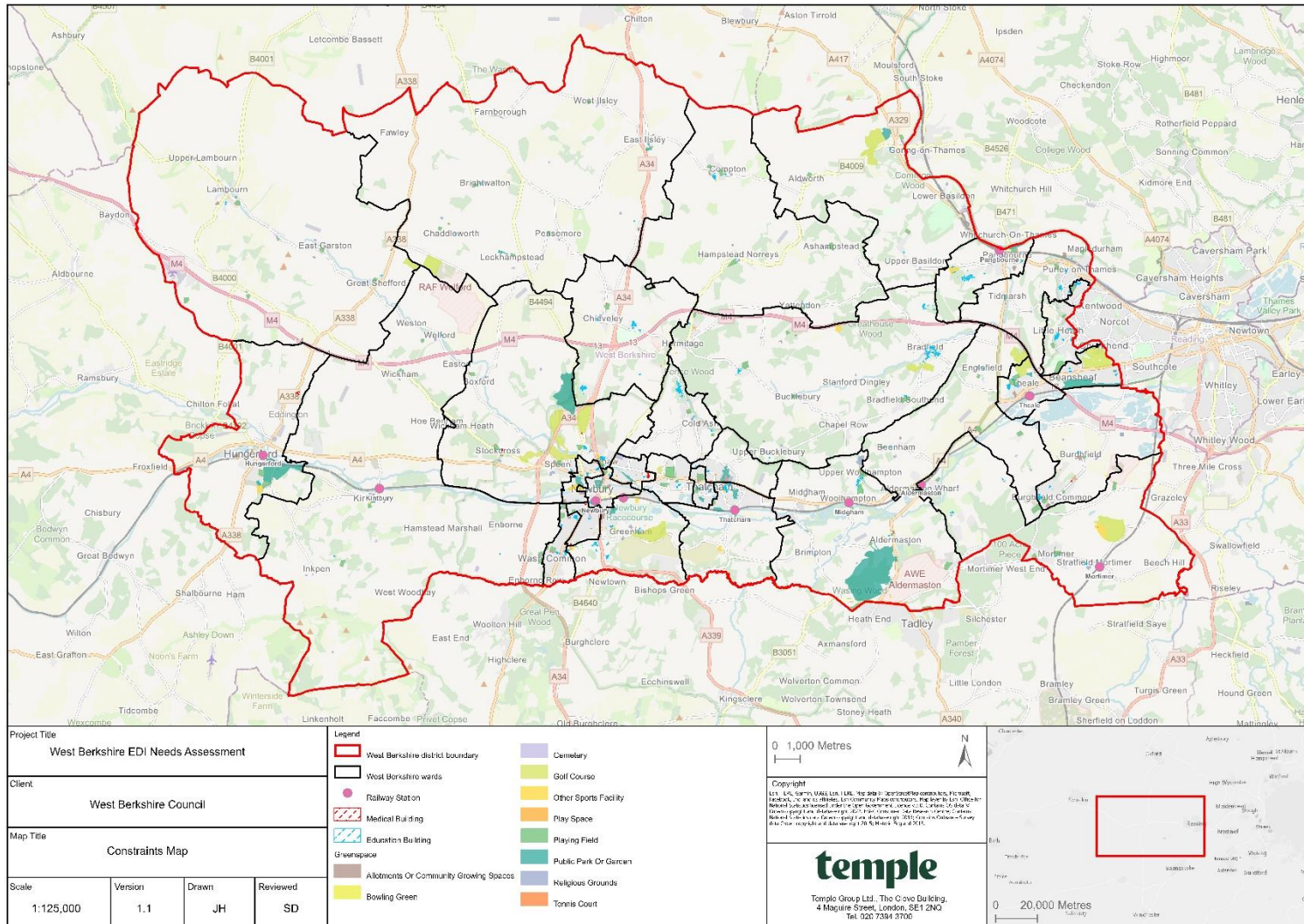
Source: West Berkshire Council, 2022

3.5   Population Density

3.5.1   West Berkshire's population is well distributed across the district, with only 225 people per hectare[2]. Nearly two thirds of the population live in the district's main urban centres at Newbury (28%) and Thatcham (16%) and in the Reading suburbs (20%). More than a third of residents (36%) live in the substantial rural areas and small settlements comprising the rest of the district. This distribution is depicted in **Figure C** below, with darker areas representing areas with higher population density.

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[2] West Berkshire Council, 2021. Your District: Facts and Figures. Available at:
https://www.westberks.gov.uk/research#:~:text=West%20Berkshire%20has%20one%20of,with%20225%20people%20per%20hectare.

Figure C – Population Density across West Berkshire
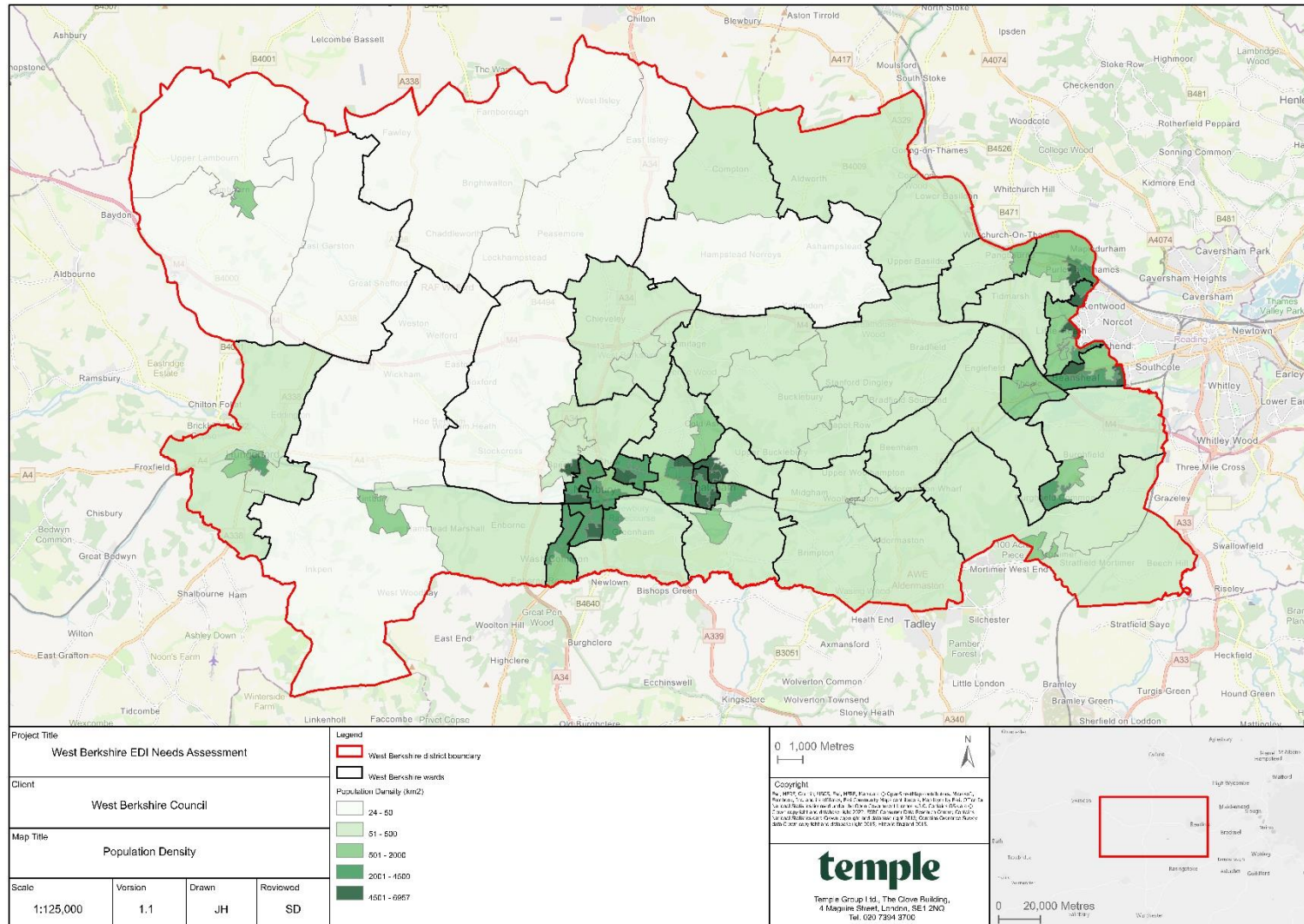
Source: West Berkshire Council, 2021

3.6   Urban Morphology and Land Uses

Neighbourhood Typologies

3.6.1   To provide an overview of the neighbourhood types within West Berkshire and their prevalence, we have used the Classification of Multidimensional Open Data of Urban Morphology (MODUM)[3] from the Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC). MODUM collates open data on features of the built environment to create typologies categorising neighbourhoods based on these features. Typologies are based on a number of physical attributes such as street and railway networks, green spaces, retail facilities and historic buildings.

3.6.2   **Countryside Sceneries** are, by far, the most common neighbourhood typology found in West Berkshire. Countryside Sceneries are found in or near open countryside and are dotted with primarily detached houses. Most rural villages are classed as Countryside Sceneries, as are some city fringe developments at the very edge of urban and suburban development.

3.6.3   West Berkshire also has a significant proportion of **Suburban Landscapes** and **Waterside Settings**, which dispersed among these Countryside Sceneries and are less rural but not yet truly urban. Suburban Landscapes are generally residential areas comprised of semi-detached houses in cul-de-sacs or other organised developments, near schools and parks, and far from town centres. Waterside Settings are defined by their proximity to aquatic features such as rivers, canals or the sea, although in the case of West Berkshire only inland water sources are present. These neighbourhoods are comprised of a wider range of uses such as villages, ports, industrial or post-industrial sites, and large infrastructure.

3.6.4   West Berkshire's more urban areas are comprised of **High Streets and Promenades**, **Old Towns** and some **Central Business Districts**. High Streets and Promenades are easily distinguishable areas representing the main commercial and retail centres of urban development, and they are often comprised of pedestrianised street networks. Old Towns are the traditional town centre and are usually located near to the main high street. These relatively low-density areas are defined by the presence of a large number of registered buildings, recreational facilities, administrative buildings and historical features. Although less common than High Streets and Promenades, and Old Towns, West Berkshire does have some Central Business Districts. Also known as city centres, these neighbourhoods are primarily comprised of high-

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[3] Alexandros, A., et al., 2016. A Classification of Multidimensional Open Data of Urban Morphology. *Built Environment*, Volume 42, Number 3, Autumn 2016, pp. 382-395(14). Available at: https://doi.org/10.2148/benv.42.3.382.

rise commercial and office spaces and tend to have good access to amenities and transport routes.

3.6.5   Finally, **Victorian Terraces** and **Railway Buzz** neighbourhoods make up the remaining neighbourhood typologies in West Berkshire. These areas tend to be on the outskirts of urban development and are dominated by Victorian-era terraced housing, in the case of the Victorian Terraces, and rail-centric infrastructure including stations and tracks, in the case of the Railway Buzz, although they have no other major distinguishing characteristics.

3.6.6   This data is illustrated in **Figure D** and should be considered in conjunction with **Figure A**, **Figure B** and **Figure C**, as these datasets all highlight the urban-rural split across West Berkshire. The built environment and urban settings have a powerful impact on numerous equalities issues, greatly affecting access to educational, economic, health and other resources and associated opportunities.

Figure D – Neighbourhood Typologies across West Berkshire
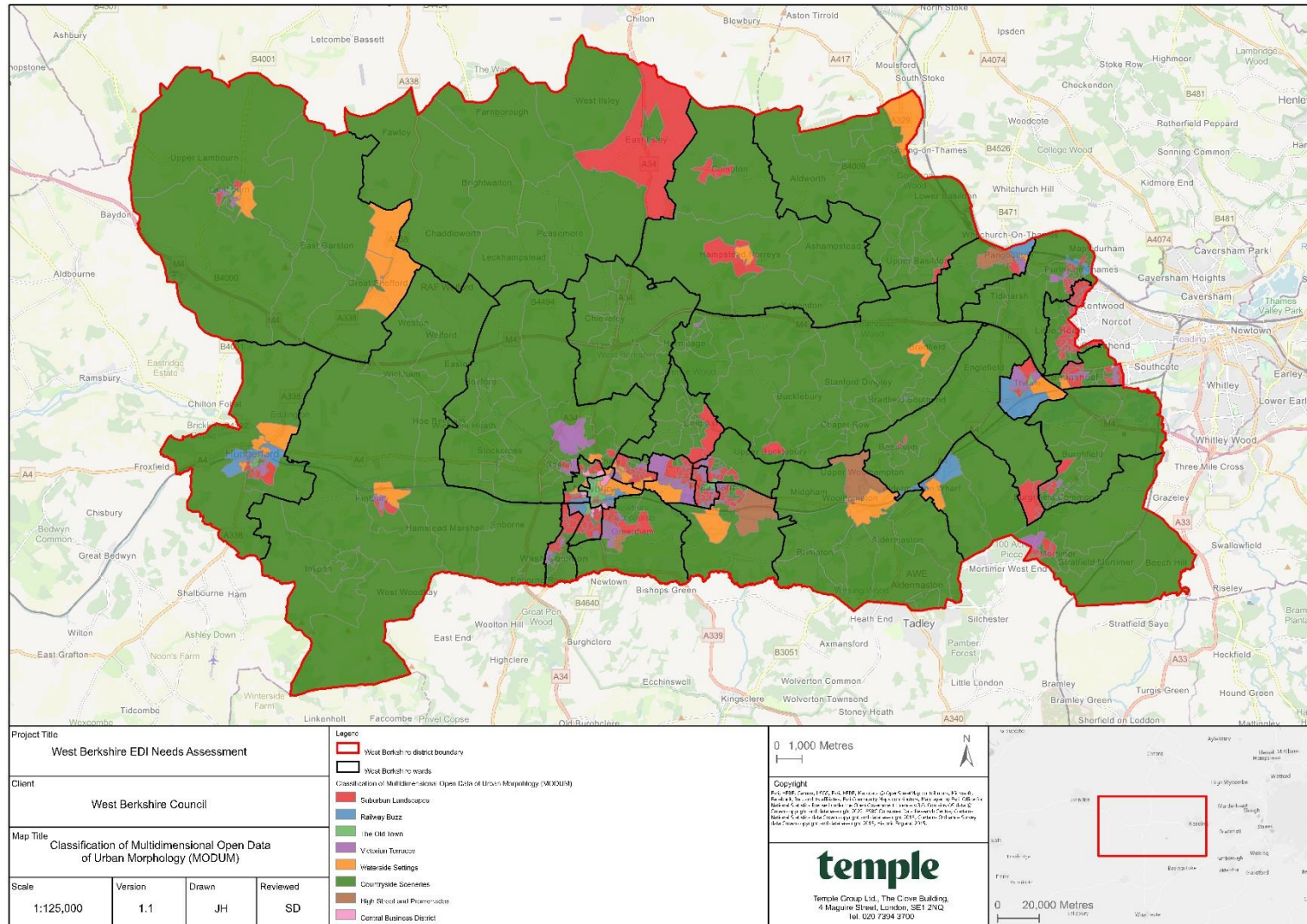
Source: CDRC, 2022

Retail Centres

3.6.7   The CDRC Retail Centre Boundaries are a hierarchical classification based on location, retail count, density, and function, and are intended to identify the prominence of retail centres within a given area[4]. The eleven retail centre types as defined by the CDRC include major city / regional centres, major town / subregional centres, town centres, market towns, district centres, local centres, small local centres, large retail parks, small retail parks, large shopping centres and small shopping centres.

3.6.8   Based on the CDRC's classifications, major retail centres in West Berkshire are generally linked to urban or semi-urban centres including Newbury, Thatcham, Hungerford, Lambourn, Theale, Pangbourne and the Reading suburbs, as depicted in **Figure E** below. The locations of these retail centres and areas of higher population density align with the location of relevant MODUM neighbourhood typologies including High Streets and Promenades, Old Towns, Central Business Districts, Suburban Landscapes and Railway Buzz.

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[4] Consumer Data Research Centre, 2022. Retail Centre Boundaries and Open Indicators. Available at: https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/dataset/retail-centre-boundaries-and-open-indicators.

Figure E – Retail Centres across West Berkshire
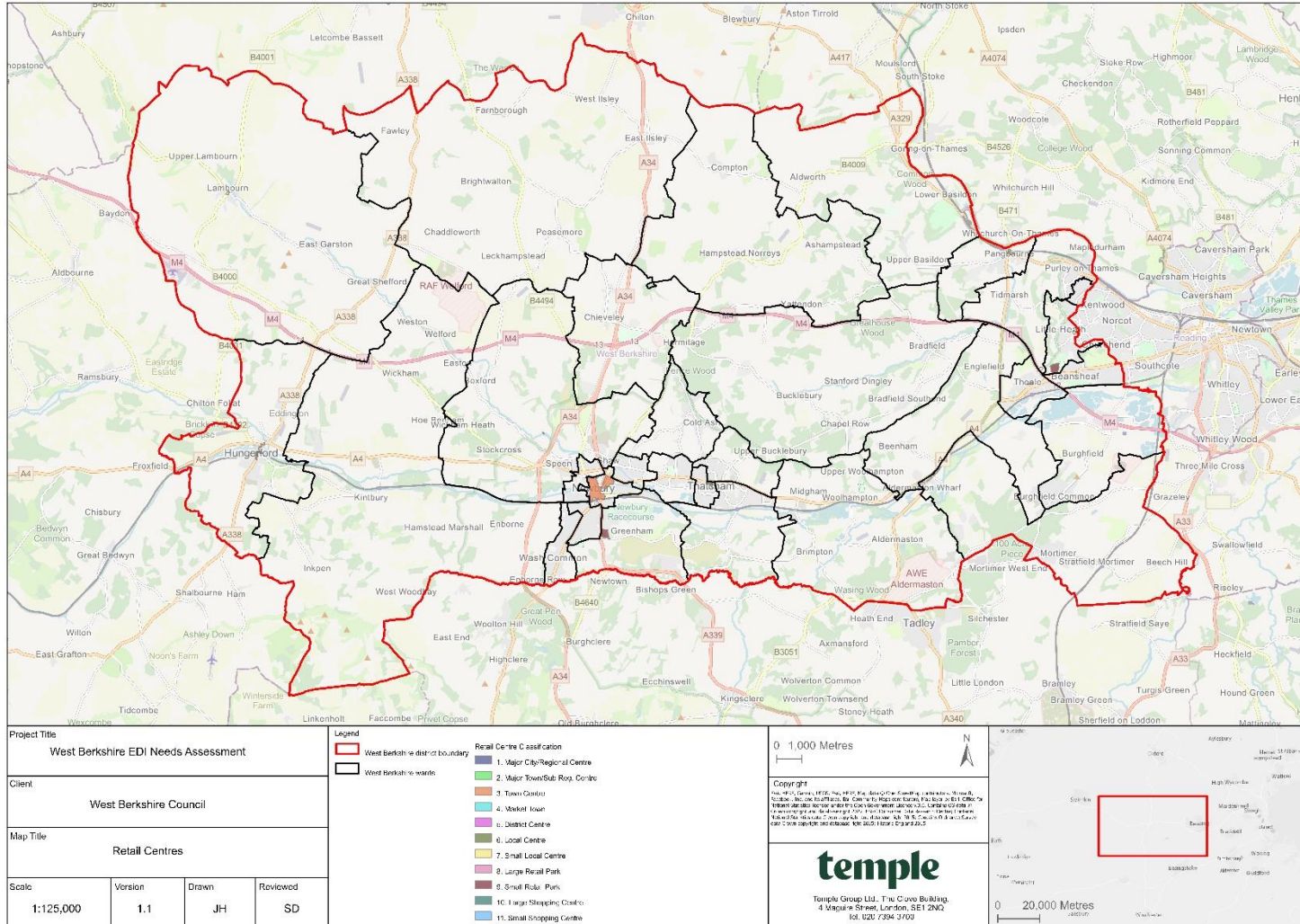
Source: CDRC, 2022

Unused Land

3.6.9   While West Berkshire does not feature a great deal of brownfield land, the Brownfield Land Register does feature some large brownfield sites which are potentially suitable for residential development in and around Newbury and Compton[5]. England does not currently provide data on the prevalence of vacant and derelict land in the country.

3.7   Socio-Economic Indicators

3.7.1   The follow section highlights socio-economic data that elucidates the implications of the geographic indicators described above, as well as providing greater context for the issues to which some demographics will be more vulnerable. The datasets below have been selected as most relevant to this needs assessment as they utilise national data sources to highlight the various factors that may affect equalities outcomes.
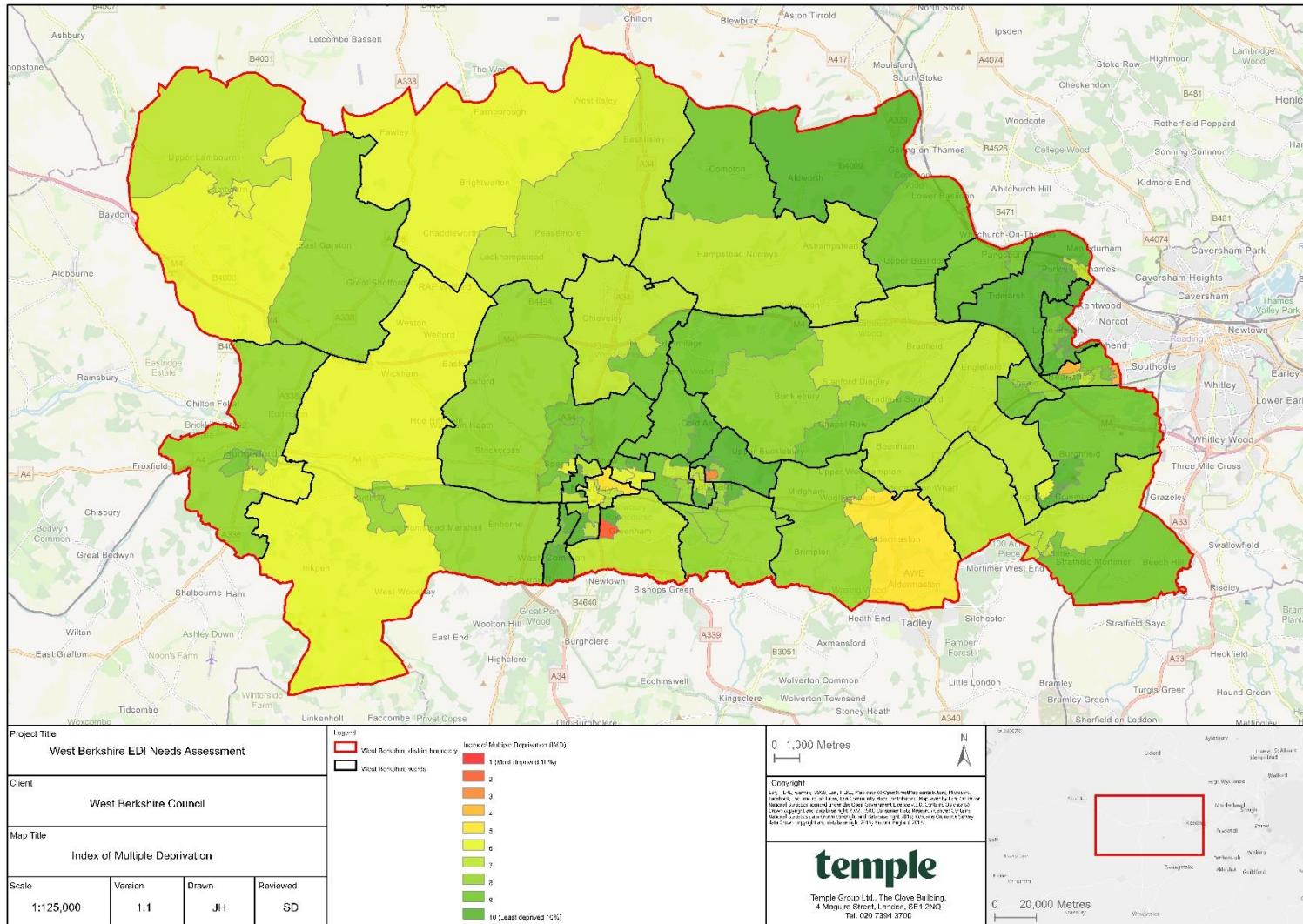
3.8   Deprivation

3.8.1   The English Indices of Deprivation 2019[6] (EID 2019) is the official measure of deprivation in England and provides a useful illustration of relative inequality within local authorities. The EID 2019 is based on seven distinct domains of deprivation: income, employment, education and skills training, health deprivation and disability, crime, barriers to housing and services and living environment, which are combined and weighted to form the overall index. Individuals living in areas of higher deprivation are more likely to experience inequalities based on the various domains which contribute to this deprivation.

3.8.2   As a whole, West Berkshire's Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs), which are the smallest geographic areas assessed in the EID 2019, do not show significant signs of deprivation, with the vast majority scoring in the 6th to 10th decile for overall deprivation. This places these 91 LSOAs amongst the 50% *least* deprived LSOAs in the country.

3.8.3   However, West Berkshire does have six LSOAs scoring in the 1st to 5th deciles, or amongst the 50% *most* deprived in the country. These LSOAs are generally clustered in and around the district's more urban areas, including Newbury and Thatcham in the south, the Reading suburbs in the east, and Aldermaston in the southeast, as depicted in the amber and red areas on **Figure F** below.

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[5] West Berkshire Council, 2019. Brownfield Land Register. Available at: https://info.westberks.gov.uk/brownfieldlandregister.

[6] Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019. English Indices of Deprivation 2019. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019.

Figure F – Deprivation across West Berkshire (overall EID 2019 score by decile)

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019

3.8.4   Although West Berkshire as a whole does not see high rates of deprivation, these six LSOA which are amongst the 50% most deprived in the country are more at risk of equalities-related issues based on their scores in each of the domains of deprivation. The individual scores for each domain of deprivation for West Berkshire's most deprived LSOAs are included in **Table 3.1** below.

Newbury and Thatcham

3.8.5   In Newbury, LSOAs West Berkshire 019B (Newbury Clay Hill ward) and West Berkshire 020B (Newbury Greenham ward) are ranked in the 5th and 2nd deciles for overall deprivation respectively. West Berkshire 020B faces particular deprivation as it is amongst the 20% most deprived LSOAs in England and scores particularly poorly in the domains of income (2nd decile), employment (2nd decile) and education and skills training (1st decile).

3.8.6   In Thatcham, West Berkshire 016E (Thatcham North East ward) is ranked in the 3rd decile for overall deprivation. It also scores particularly poorly in the domains of income (3rd decile), employment (3rd decile) and education and skills training (2nd decile).

Reading Suburbs

3.8.7   Near Reading, West Berkshire 006E (Tilehurst Birch Copse ward) and West Berkshire 008A (Tilehurst South & Holybrook ward) are both ranked in the 4th decile for overall deprivation. West Berkshire 006E scores particularly poorly in the domains of income (3rd decile), employment (3rd decile) and education and skills training (2nd decile). West Berkshire 008A scores particularly poorly in the domains of education and skills training (3rd decile) and barriers to housing and services (1st decile).

Aldermaston

3.8.8   Around Aldermaston, West Berkshire 011A (Aldermaston ward), is ranked in the 5th decile for overall deprivation. It scores particularly poorly in the domains of barriers to housing and services (1st decile) and living environment (2nd decile).

Table 3.1 – Domains of Deprivation in at-risk LSOAs (overall EID 2019 score and individual domain scores by decile)

	Overall	Income	Employment	Education and Skills Training	Health Deprivation and Disability	Crime	Barriers to Housing and Services	Living Environment
West Berkshire 019B	**5**	4	4	4	7	5	7	4
West Berkshire 020B	**2**	2	2	1	4	4	6	9
West Berkshire 016E	**3**	3	3	2	4	5	5	8
West Berkshire 006E	**4**	3	3	2	4	5	9	9
West Berkshire 008A	**4**	5	4	3	6	6	1	10
West Berkshire 011A	**5**	5	7	6	7	9	1	2

← More deprived   Less deprived →

Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019

3.9   Digital Exclusion

3.9.1   The Internet User Classification (IUC) describes how people interact with the internet in the UK, as well as common reasons for this behaviour based on national trends[7]. It is a useful tool to consider when assessing inequalities as it provides more detail about how people interact with the internet based on location, age and various socio-economic indicators[8].

3.9.2   **e-Rational Utilitarians** (40%) is the most common IUC in West Berkshire. These users tend to be more prevalent in rural areas and use the internet to access service applications, such as online grocery shopping or banking, rather than for entertainment or communication. This may be due to these areas having constrained internet speeds which limits the functionality of websites requiring faster connections.

3.9.3   The next most common IUC in West Berkshire is the **e-Veteran** (29.6%). These users tend to accumulate around cities and in suburbs, and are a more mature, affluent and engaged population of users. They generally use a range of devices in a variety of ways, particularly for information seeking and online services.

3.9.4   **e-Mainstream Users** (16.3%) are the next most prevalent class in West Berkshire. These users are usually found in heterogenous neighbourhoods at the periphery of urban areas, represent a wide range of socio-economic groups and exhibit average internet usage characteristics.

3.9.5   West Berkshire also contains a small proportion of **Passive and Uncommitted Users** (6.7%) and **Digital Seniors** (5.2%). Passive and Uncommitted Users generally reside in suburban or semi-rural areas, tend to hold semi-skilled or blue-collar jobs, and have limited to no interaction with the internet. This lack of interaction is likely because access to broadband is limited and not a requirement of professional life. Digital Seniors also generally reside in semi-rural areas, although they tend to be retired and relatively affluent, and rarely use the internet, though they may use it for information seeking and financial or other services applications. Again, this lack of interaction is likely because access to broadband is limited and not a requirement of professional life.

3.9.6   The least represented IUCs in the district are **e-Professionals** (0.7%), **Youthful Urban Fringe** (0.7%) and **Settled Offline Communities** (0.7%). E-Professionals are largely young, urban professionals with significant experience interacting

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[7] Consumer Data Research Centre, 2022. Internet User Classification. Available at: https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/dataset/internet-user-classification.

[8] Singleton, A., et al., 2020. Mapping the geodemographics of digital inequality in Great Britain: An integration of machine learning into small area estimation. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems*, Volume 82, July 2020. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compenvurbsys.2020.101486.

with the internet in a variety of settings and for a variety of tasks. The low prevalence of this user class in West Berkshire may be attributed to the corresponding dip in population size amongst people in their early- to mid-20s, as West Berkshire has a relatively small proportion of people in this age bracket (see **Figure I**).

3.9.7 Youthful Urban Fringe users often reside at the edge of materially deprived, urban communities and tend to use the internet for social media, although their overall engagement is average. The low prevalence of this user class in West Berkshire may be attributed to the corresponding lack of urban centres.

3.9.8 Finally, Settled Offline Communities tend to be comprised of older, retired people living in semi-rural areas who rarely engage with the internet except for information seeking and limited online shopping. This lack of engagement may be largely contributed to rare or even no internet access.

3.9.9 The clustering of IUCs across West Berkshire helps to illustrate the implications of West Berkshire's urban-rural split and provides possible reasons for why different communities interact with the internet differently. Rural areas, in West Berkshire and across the country, are not just categorised by geographic or physical indicators such as population density, infrastructure or architecture. They also demonstrate socio-economic trends which can have adverse implications in terms of equal access to vital services and opportunity.

3.9.10 A map illustrating the geographic dispersion of these IUCs is included in **Figure G** below, highlighting the clustering of various IUCs in different geographic areas across the district.

Figure G – Internet User Classifications across West Berkshire
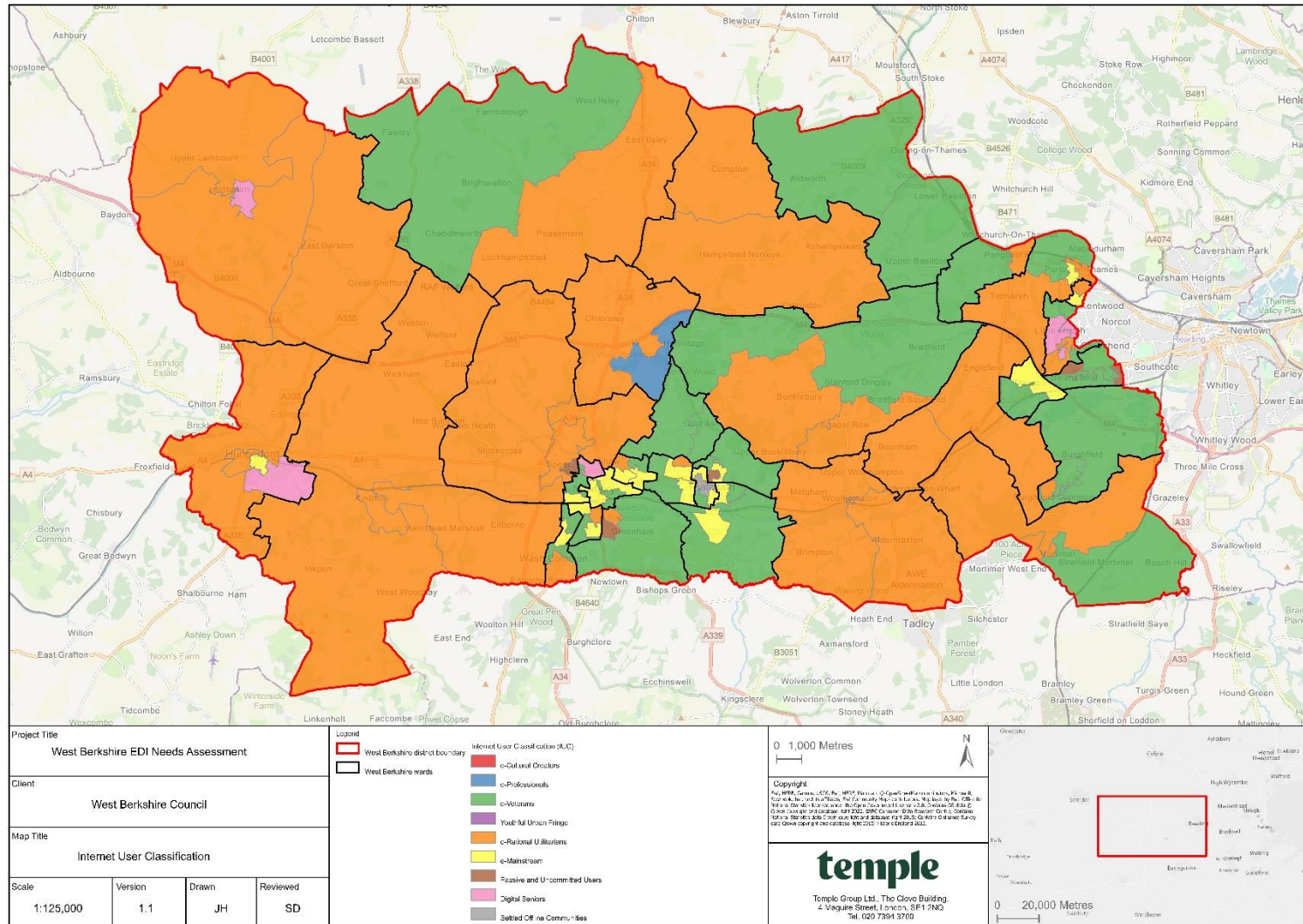
Source: CDRC, 2022

3.10   Food Deserts

3.10.1   Food deserts are defined as areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food. They tend to be inhabited by residents in lower income brackets with poor access to transportation, which make them less desirable to major supermarket chains that would supply fresh, whole foods. This often results in a concentration of fast-food takeaways and other convenience food outlets, which in turn can contribute to poor health outcomes such as obesity and diabetes.

3.10.2   The e-Food Desert Index (EFDI) measures the extent to which neighbourhoods exhibit those characteristics associated with food deserts including: 1) proximity and density of grocery retail facilities, 2) transport and accessibility, 3) neighbourhood socio-economic and demographic characteristics, and 4) e-commerce availability and propensity[9].

3.10.3   In West Berkshire, food deserts are more prevalent in more rural areas of the district, which corresponds with the relative lack of retail facilities, infrequent public transportation and limited internet access. Conversely, food deserts are less prevalent in and around urban centres like Newbury, Thatcham and Reading where there are more retail facilities, more comprehensive public transport routes and greater internet use.

3.10.4   The prevalence of food deserts across West Berkshire again illustrates the divide between those occupying urban and rural areas, further demonstrating the broader challenges facing those living in different areas within the district.

3.10.5   Although this data reinforces broader issues around rural access, it is important to keep in mind that there are many complex factors beyond the scope of this report that can affect individual equalities outcomes such as income, access to private transport and overall health indicators.

3.10.6   **Figure H** below shows the prevalence of food deserts across West Berkshire, with areas shown in amber and red having more food deserts.

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[9] Consumer Data Research Centre, 2022. E-food Desert Index. Available at: https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/dataset/e-food-desert-index.

**Figure H – Food Deserts across West Berkshire**

Source: CDRC, 2022

3.11   Fuel Poverty

3.11.1   Fuel poverty is determined using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) indicator which considers household income, household energy requirements and fuel prices[10]. A household is defined as fuel poor if: 1) the household occupies a property with a fuel poverty energy efficiency rating of band D or lower and 2) if spending the minimum required to heat the home leaves the household with a residual income which is below the poverty line.

3.11.2   Generally, West Berkshire has fewer households experiencing fuel poverty (6.6%) than both the South East (7.9%) and England (10.3%)[11]. As was the case regarding overall deprivation, digital exclusion and food deserts, households that are more likely to experience fuel poverty tend to be distributed across more rural areas in the district while households that are less likely to experience fuel poverty are in more urban areas.

3.11.3   This data is particularly pertinent now as the UK is currently facing rapidly rising fuel costs and a cost-of-living crisis. As fuel, and other necessities, become more expensive, the gap between those experiencing fuel poverty and not will likely continue to grow and the Council may need to offer additional support to those struggling most.

3.11.4   That said, as above, although this data reinforces broader issues around rural access, it is important to keep in mind that there are many complex factors beyond the scope of this report that can affect individual equalities outcomes such as income, access to private transport and overall health indicators.

3.11.5   **Figure I** below shows the distribution across West Berkshire of households facing fuel poverty. The areas shown in amber and red have the highest proportions of fuel poor households.

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[10] Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2022. Fuel poverty statistics. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fuel-poverty-statistics.

[11] Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2020. Sub-regional fuel poverty data 2020. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/sub-regional-fuel-poverty-data-2020.

Figure I – Households Experiencing Fuel Poverty (%)
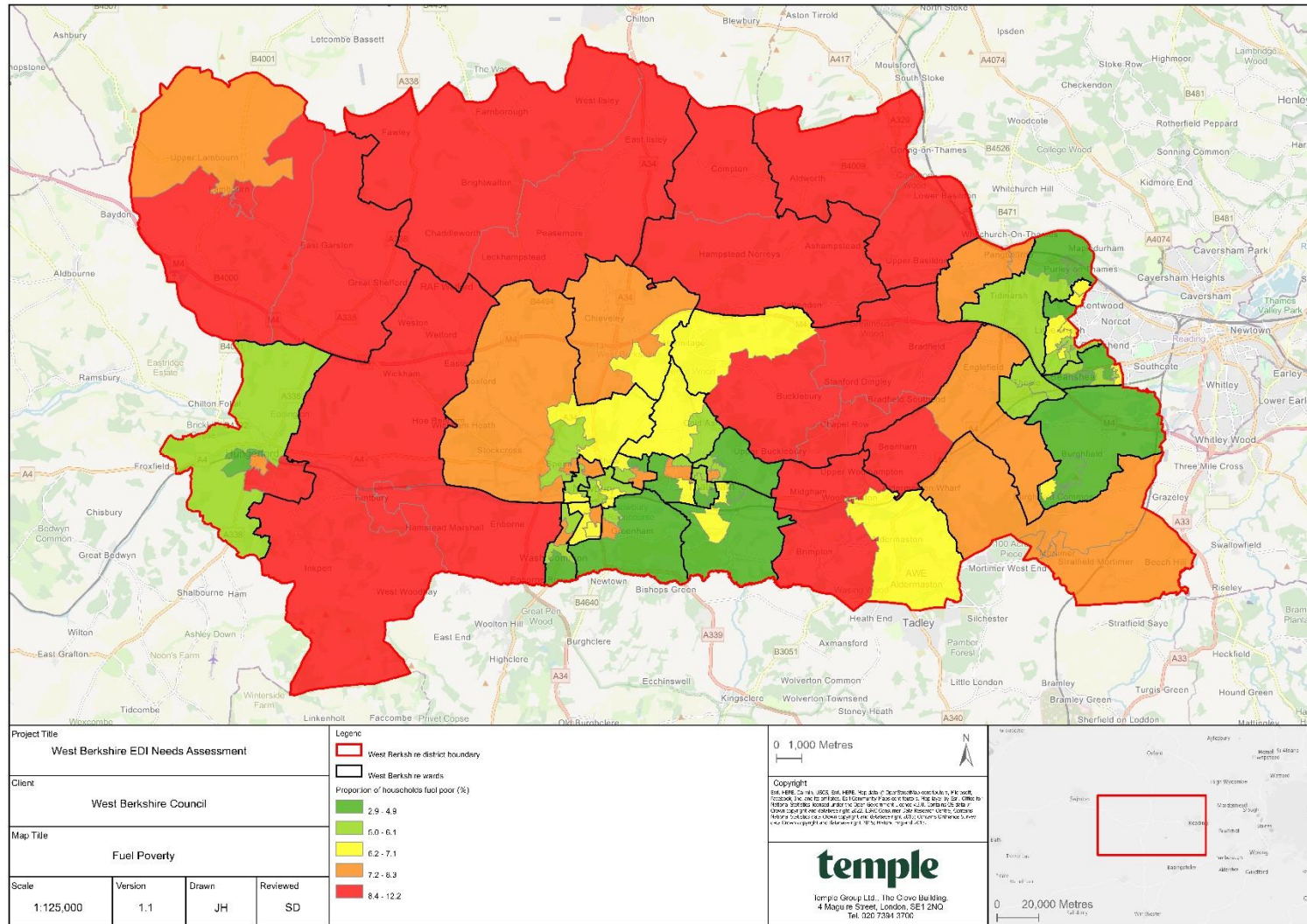
Source: Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, 2020

3.12   Protected Characteristics

3.12.1   This section outlines key data regarding the core protected characteristics outlined in the Equality Act, as well as additional commentary on the implications of these figures.

Age

3.12.2   Overall, the age distribution of West Berkshire's population is consistent with trends seen across the South East and England, with most residents between 15 and 64 years of age (62.7%), and the rest closely split between children aged 14 and younger (17.17%) and older people aged 65 and older (19.6%).

Table 3.2 – Population by Age (under 15 years, 15 – 64 years, over 64 years)

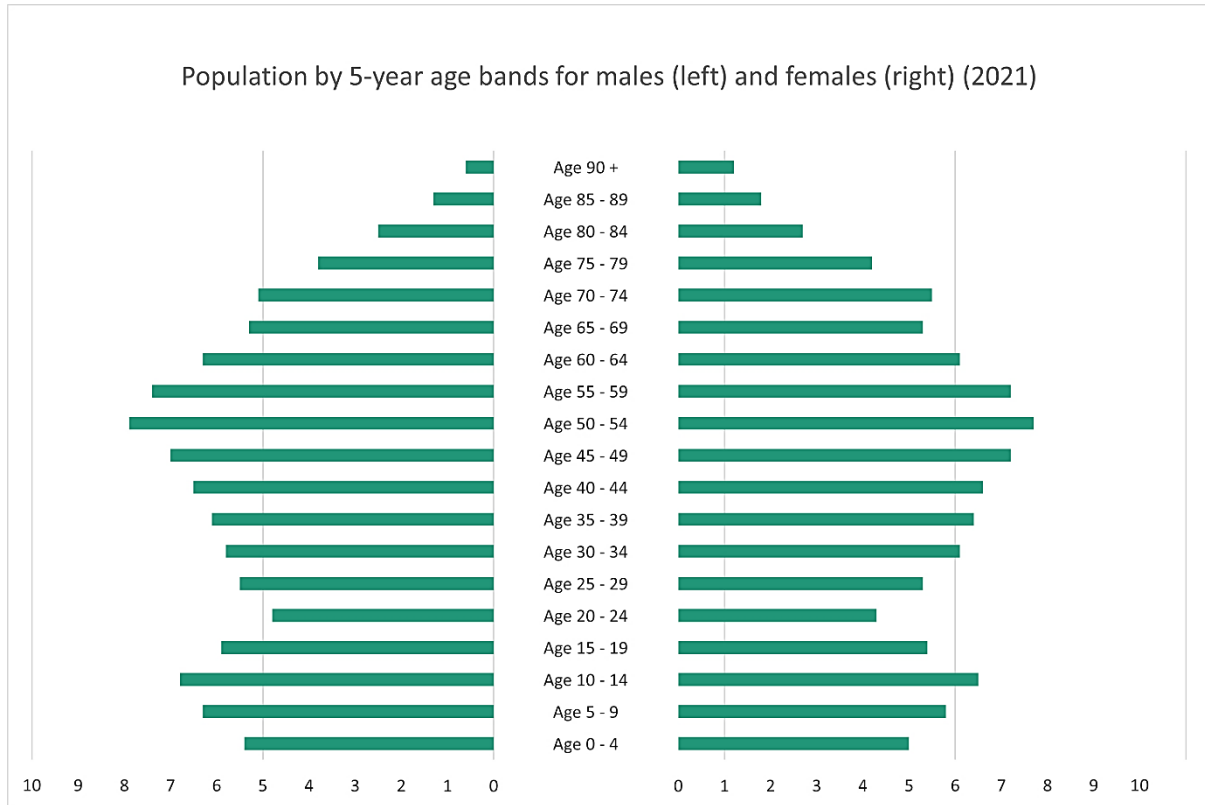|	West Berkshire		South East		England	
	Population	**%**	**Population**	**%**	**Population**	**%**
Under 15 years	28,600	17.7	1,616,500	17.4	9,838,700	17.4
15 – 64 years	101,200	62.7	5,857,300	63.1	36,249,800	64.2
Over 64 years	31,600	19.6	1,804,300	19.4	10,401,200	18.4

Source: ONS, Census 2021

3.12.3   Generally, population distribution based on age is expected to follow a bell curve, with fewer residents occupying the age brackets at either end of the spectrum. A bell curve that shows more younger people indicates a growing population, while a curve showing more older people indicates an ageing population.

3.12.4   In West Berkshire, the population follows a largely recognisable bell curve shape, with a larger younger population indicating overall growth. One significant deviation from the standard bell curve is the significant dip in population size between the 10 to 14 year and 20 to 24 year age bracket. From the 25 to 29 year age bracket the population size steadily increases again before falling as expected as the population ages. The lack of universities in the area is the most likely explanation for this dip, as 17 to 24 year olds pursue higher education and take graduate jobs in other areas, before returning to West Berkshire in their late 20s to raise families.

3.12.5   It is important to consider the various age groups present within West Berkshire as different age groups have different needs and therefore different relationships to EDI issues. For example, children and young people will be

more directly impacted by access to education, working age adults will be more susceptible to changes in regional employment opportunities, and older people will be more reliant on healthcare services.

Figure J – Population by Age (overall distribution, males and females)

Population by 5-year age bands for males (left) and females (right) (2021)

Source: ONS, Census 2021

Sex

3.12.6   West Berkshire's population is evenly divided between females (50.6%) and males (49.4%), and this split is consistent with distributions of the sexes across both the South East and England more broadly. As there is no disproportionality between male and female populations, limited inferences can be made about their implications. According to ONS 2020 data there is also no significant difference among the majority of LSOAs in terms of the ratio of females to males.

Table 3.3 – Population by Sex

	West Berkshire		South East		England	
	Population	%	Population	%	Population	%
All persons	161, 400		9,278,100		56,489,800	
Females	81,700	50.6	4,738,800	51.1	28,833,500	51.0
Males	79,700	49.4	4,539,300	48.9	27,656,300	49.0

Source: ONS, Census 2021

3.12.7 Looking at the distribution of females and males across various age brackets, it is apparent that West Berkshire's female population is generally older than its male population. 20.7% of the female population is 65 years and older while only 18.6% of the male population is 65 and older[12]. This trend continues with age, with 5.7% of the female population aged 80 years and older and only 4.4% of the male population aged 80 years and older. This is consistent with trends across England, as 19.6% of the national female population is 65 years and older and 5.8% is 80 years and older, while only 17.3% of the national male population is 65 years and older and 4.2% is 80 years and older.

3.12.8 This discrepancy is important to note as women tend to live longer than men and older people are likely to face greater health challenges, indicating that the Council may need to address individual elements of aging populations in different ways. More information regarding the context and implications of these statistics should be addressed in the health-related needs assessment being conducted in parallel to this work.

Race

3.12.9 West Berkshire is not a particularly ethnically diverse area, with most residents identifying as White (94.8%) rather than as a non-White ethnic minority (5.2%). This is both less ethnically diverse than across the South East (90.7% White) and across the whole of England (85.4% White).

3.12.10 Of the West Berkshire residents who identify as a non-White ethnic minority, most residents identify as Asian / Asian British (2.5%), Black / African /

[12] Office for National Statistics, 2022. Population and household estimates, England and Wales: Census 2021. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationandhouseholdestimatesenglandandwalescensus2021.

Caribbean / Black British (0.9%) or mixed / part of multiple ethnic groups (1.6%). Only 0.2% identify as being part of another ethnic group. These figures are proportionally lower than across the South East and England.

Table 3.4 – Population by Ethnicity (White and non-White ethnic minority)

	West Berkshire	South East	England
White (%)	94.8	90.7	85.4
Asian / Asian British (%)	2.5	5.2	7.8
Black / African / Caribbean / Black British (%)	0.9	1.6	3.5
Mixed / multiple ethnic groups (%)	1.6	1.9	2.3
Other ethnic group (%)	0.2	0.6	1.0

Source: ONS, Census 2011

3.12.11 Among the district's White residents, it is worth taking a closer look at the sometimes overlooked and often hard-to-measure Gypsy, Traveller and Roma population. According to official Census records, Gypsies and Travellers make up only 0.1% of West Berkshire, which is consistent with rates across the South East and England, although they frequently represent "some of the most disadvantaged people in the country".

3.12.12 Furthermore, it is often difficult to determine exact figures for Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities for a variety of reasons. The most obvious reason for this is the historic persecution by both state and individuals, resulting in a continued distrust in the government and government bodies. Members of these communities have also traditionally led a nomadic lifestyle without a fixed address and, according to the Census 2011, about one quarter of Gypsies and Travellers still do not live in a fixed dwelling such as a house, flat, maisonette or apartment[13].

3.12.13 Although little data is available regarding the prevalence of these communities within West Berkshire, conversations with Amanda Povey (Consultation and Engagement Officer at West Berkshire Council) suggest that they are generally

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[13] Women and Equalities Committee, 2019. Tackling inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Available at: https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html#content.

found in rural areas and in the Lambourn Valley. Further research into the location and socio-economic status of community members would be useful to better assess their needs and community-specific challenges beyond the geographically-linked indicators described in **Sections 3.3 to 3.11**.

Table 3.5 – Population by Ethnicity (White and White ethnic minority)

	West Berkshire	**South East**	**England**
White British (%)	90.4	85.2	79.7
Gypsy / Traveller (%)	0.1	0.2	0.1
Irish (%)	0.8	0.9	1
Other White ethnic group (%)	3.5	4.4	4.6

Source: ONS, Census 2011

3.12.14 West Berkshire also has a small but significant refugee community, primarily comprised of Ukrainians and Afghanis. According to Sam Shepherd (Local Communities Programme Manager at West Berkshire Council), as of early September 2022, there were roughly 300 adults and 200 children from Ukraine with asylum status in West Berkshire, as well as 70 adults and 110 children from Afghanistan occupying two local hotels.

3.12.15 These families face a range of issues including finding housing, registering with schools and GPs, applying for bank accounts, learning English and registering for relevant courses, and securing residency permits. They are also intensely vulnerable given the often-distressing circumstances of their arrival in England generally and the fragility of their legal status. It is therefore imperative that these communities are connected to a strong network of services as quickly and smoothly as possible.

Religion and Belief

3.12.16 The religious affiliation of West Berkshire's population does not differ significantly from that of the Southeast or England. Most of the population has religion (66.2%) while only about a third has no religion or did not state a religion in the Census.

Table 3.6 – Population by Religion (religiosity)

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Has religion (%)	66.2	65	68.1
Has no religion (%)	26.7	27.7	24.7
No religion stated (%)	7.2	7.4	7.2

Source: ONS, Census 2011

3.12.17 In terms of those who do have religion in West Berkshire, the majority identify as Christian (63.6%), which is consistent across the rest of the South East (59.8%) and England (59.4%). The most common minority religion is Islam (0.8%), which is again consistent across the South East (2.3%) and England (5%). In West Berkshire, Islam is closely followed by Hinduism (0.7%), then Buddhism (0.3%), Sikhism (0.2%) and Judaism (0.1%). The remaining proportion of residents who have religion identify as having some other religion (0.4%).

Table 2.7 – Population by Religion (religious affiliation)

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Christian (%)	63.6	59.8	59.4
Muslim (%)	0.8	2.3	5.0
Hindu (%)	0.7	1.1	1.5
Buddhist (%)	0.3	0.5	0.5
Sikh (%)	0.2	0.6	0.8
Jewish (%)	0.1	0.2	0.5
Other religion (%)	0.4	0.5	0.4

Source: ONS, Census 2011

Disability

3.12.18 Disabled people have a physical, psychological or learning impairment, which in turn often makes them inherently more vulnerable to EDI-related challenges.

The ONS provides a series of comprehensive datasets regarding the intersection of disability and education, employment, housing, wellbeing and loneliness, which highlight the frequent disparity between disabled and non-disabled people[14]. Some of the core challenges facing disabled people more than their non-disabled counterparts include, but are not limited to, long-term conditions such as cancer, obesity and diabetes, and the need for ongoing financial, physical and mental health support[15].

3.12.19   According to Public Health England (PHE), 13.2% of West Berkshire residents report having a limiting long-term illness or disability, which is lower than the average across the South East (15.2%) and England (17.6%)[16].

3.12.20   According to Census data, the proportion of residents having a long-term illness or disability, whether limiting or not, is much higher, affecting the majority of the population (95.3%). Fortunately, the percentage of people whose day-to-day activities are limited in some way by these traits is much lower, impacting only about 12.5% of residents. These figures are largely consistent across the South East and England, although West Berkshire's residents are generally less impacted by life-limiting illnesses and disabilities.

Table 3.8 – Population by Disability

	West Berkshire	**South East**	**England**
Possessing a long-term illness or disability (%)	13.2	15.2	17.6
Day to day activities limited a lot (%)	5.1	6.4	7.8
Day to day activities limited a little (%)	7.4	8.2	8.8
Day to day activities not limited (%)	82.7	78.4	77.3

Source: ONS, Census 2011

3.12.21   In terms of learning disabilities, children in West Berkshire are generally less likely to have a learning difficulty than their peers across the country, although

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[14] Office for National Statistics, 2021. Disability. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability.

[15] Office for National Statistics, 2022. Disability pay gaps in the UK: 2021. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilitypaygapsintheuk/2021.

[16] Public Health England, 2022. Local Health. Available at: https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/local-health/data#page/0/gid/1938133184/pat/6/par/E12000008/ati/402/are/E06000037/yrr/1/cid/4/tbm/1.

the district does see slightly higher rates of Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (1.6%) compared to the South East (1.1%) and England (1.3%). West Berkshire also has a higher proportion of children with Autism (33.5%) compared to the South East (19.3%) and England (18%).

Table 3.9 – Population by Learning Disability

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Children with learning difficulties known to schools (%)	18.0	31.4	34.4
Children with Moderate Learning Difficulties known to schools (%)	12.7	26.6	29.1
Children with Severe Learning Difficulties known to schools (%)	3.7	3.7	4.0
Children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties known to schools (%)	1.6	1.1	1.3
Children with Autism known to schools (%)	33.5	19.3	18.0
Adults with a learning disability receiving long-term local authority support (%)	3.8	3.3	3.5

Source: PHE, Learning Disability Profiles 2020

Pregnancy and Maternity

3.12.22 Overall, pregnant people in West Berkshire see good outcomes in regard to pregnancy and maternity figures. West Berkshire's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) (1.78) is higher than that of the South East (1.7) and England (1.62), indicating that more people who conceive in West Berkshire successfully carry the baby to term. TFR is a better indicator of overall fertility trends than the number of live births as it accounts for the size and age structure of a female population, including viable childbearing years. In addition, West Berkshire generally has lower rates of stillbirths (2.6) than the South East (3.6) and England (4.1).

Table 3.10 – Fertility Rates

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Total Fertility Rate (TFR)	1.78	1.7	1.62
Stillbirth rate	2.6	3.6	4.1

Source: APS, 2021

3.12.23 It is also worth noting that children born in West Berkshire are likely to be healthier than those born across the South East and England, as mothers in West Berkshire are more likely to have early access to maternity care. In addition, mothers are less likely to be obese and smoke during early pregnancy, to smoke at the time of birth, and to have babies with a low birth weight.

Table 3.11 – Maternal and Natal Health

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Early access to maternity care (%)	65.7	**	57.8
Obesity in early pregnancy (%)	19.4	20.9	22.1
Smoking in early pregnancy (%)	11.1	11.3	12.8
Smoking at time of delivery (%)	6.2	9.0	9.6
Low birth weight of term babies (%)	2.2	2.6	2.9

Source: PHE, 2021

** Value not available.

3.12.24 More information regarding the implications of maternal health and other indicators, as well as the context and implications of the above statistics, should be addressed in the health-related needs assessment being conducted in parallel to this work.

Sexual Orientation

3.12.25 Sexual orientation is an 'umbrella term' used in the Annual Population Survey (APS) which broadly intends to capture sexual identity, attraction and behaviour

rather than specific, detailed trends and associated issues[17]. According to the APS, sexual orientation is useful as a tool to help identify one component of sexual orientation, especially in relation to EDI challenges such as disadvantage and discrimination, but should not be used to identify sexual attraction or behaviour.

3.12.26 While current, reliable datasets capturing sexual orientation within West Berkshire are not readily available, according to experimental research statistics from 2017 the vast majority of West Berkshire's population appears to identify as heterosexual[18]. Per the 2020 APS, the same appears to hold true across England, however this figure has been steadily declining since questions about sexual identity, later sexual orientation, were first introduced to the APS in 2014[19].

3.12.27 As sexual orientation continues to gain traction in the public sphere, not least because it is included as a protected characteristic under the Equality Act, more comprehensive and up to date datasets will become available. For example, the Census 2021 includes questions regarding sexual identity and orientation, the results of which will be published later this year.

Gender Reassignment

3.12.28 Gender reassignment, much like sexual orientation, is difficult to track statistically because there are few reliable datasets available, especially at the local level. However, also like sexual orientation, gender reassignment is becoming more of a mainstream topic of discussion among both the public and public bodies.

3.12.29 As such, the Census 2021 also includes questions about gender reassignment, or those whose gender identity is different to the sex they were registered at birth[20]. Although this data has not yet been published, it will help to provide a clearer picture of who may possess this characteristic and what broader EDI-related challenges they may face.

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[17] Office for National Statistics, 2022. Sexual identity. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality.

[18] Office for National Statistics, 2017. Subnational sexual identity estimates, UK: 2013 to 2015. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/articles/subnationalsexualidentityestimates/uk2013to2015#sexual-identity-local-authorities.

[19] Office for National Statistics, 2022. Sexual orientation, UK: 2020. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/sexuality/bulletins/sexualidentityuk/2020.

[20] Office for National Statistics, 2022. Exploring existing data on gender identity and sexual orientation. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/genderidentity/exploringexistingdataongenderidentityandsexualorientation.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

3.12.30 Generally, West Berkshire sees higher rates of marriage (54.1%) than the rest of the South East (49.3%) and England (46.6%), although rates of same-sex civil partnerships are broadly the same across all regions (0.2%). The district also sees marginally lower rates of divorce (8.8%) and legal separation (2.3%) than the South East (9.1% and 2.5%) and England (9% and 2.7%). These figures are in turn reflective of West Berkshire's smaller single population (28.6%) compared the rest of region (31.9%) and the country (34.6%).

Table 3.12 – Population by Marital and Civil Partnership Status (aged 16+ years)

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Married (%)	54.1	49.3	46.6
Same-sex civil partnership (%)	0.2	0.2	0.2
Divorced or in a now-dissolved same-sex civil partnership (%)	8.8	9.1	9
Separated (%)	2.3	2.5	2.7
Widowed or surviving partner is a same-sex civil partnership (%)	6	6	6.9
Single (%)	28.6	31.9	34.6

Source: ONS, Census 2011

3.13 Other Relevant Groups

3.13.1 The following section examines other relevant demographic groups commonly associated with equalities considerations by local authorities due to vulnerable circumstances and other factors.

3.14 At-Risk Children, Youth and Young People

Educational Attainment

3.14.1 Among primary school students, pupils in West Berkshire perform at similar rates to pupils across England, with 64% meeting expected standards,

compared to 65% of all pupils in English schools[21]. Students are considered to be meeting the expected standard if they achieve a scaled score of 100 or more in their reading and maths tests, and their teacher assesses them as 'working at the expected standard' or better in writing.

3.14.2 Within this context, West Berkshire's 79 primary schools demonstrate a range of educational proficiencies. Based on 2019 data, the best performing schools are Enborne C.E. Primary School, the Ilsleys Primary School and Woolhampton C.E. Primary School, all of which have 100% of their pupils meeting the expected standard. However, there are also schools with much lower performance scores, including some in which 0% of pupils meet the expected standard.

3.14.3 Among secondary school students, the average Attainment 8 score for pupils across England for the 2020 to 2021 academic year was 50.9 out of 90[22]. In West Berkshire, for the 2018 to 2019 academic year, pupils across the district's 29 secondary schools scored an average of 47.7, slightly below the national standard. Attainment among female pupils (49.3) was slightly higher than among male pupils (46.1), which is a trend mirrored across the country. Likewise, students with Chinese ethnic backgrounds scored the highest (61.8) and students of unknown backgrounds scored the lowest (21.4), again mirroring national trends.

3.14.4 Based on discussions with Pamela Voss (EMTAS Team Lead at West Berkshire Council), we understand that in West Berkshire, Gypsy, Traveller and Roma students, as well as students from other ethnic minorities, are supported through the Ethnic Minority and Traveller Achievement Scheme (EMTAS). This scheme promotes cultural awareness in schools and among teachers and staff, as well as helping pupils and their families achieve educational milestones and navigate potentially emotive subjects and transitions.

3.14.5 West Berkshire also offers support to students with English as an Additional Language (EAL). Students in these programmes most commonly speak Polish, Portuguese and Romanian, as well as Indian languages such as Tamil, Urdu and Gujarati.

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[21] UK Government, 2022. Find and compare schools in England. Available at: https://www.compare-school-performance.service.gov.uk/schools-by-type?for=primary&step=default&table=schools&region=869&geographic=la&orderby=ks2.0.PTRWM_EXP&orderdir=asc.

[22] Department for Education, 2022. GCSE results (Attainment 8). Available at: https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/education-skills-and-training/11-to-16-years-old/gcse-results-attainment-8-for-children-aged-14-to-16-key-stage-4/latest.

Children in Care and Care Leavers

3.14.6   The UK government publishes a range of data sets describing children in care and care leavers at the national level based on statistics submitted by local authorities. However, these authorities' datasets are not publicly available.

3.14.7   Based on communication with Jenny Legge (Principal Performance, Research and Consultation Officer at West Berkshire Council), there are approximately 175 children in care and 125 care leavers in the district. Given these relatively low figures, and at the request of the council, we are unable to provide a map illustrating potential hubs for these individuals in order to preserve their anonymity.

Youth Offences

3.14.8   In 2021, 158 children aged 10 to 17 years committed approximately 240 offences in West Berkshire, the most common of which included violence against another person (35%), drug related offences (16.9%), criminal damage (16.5%), public disorder (12.2%), and theft and handling (5.2%)[23]. Most of these young offenders are male (71.5%) although there are also some female offenders (28.5%).

3.14.9   Young people who have offended, or who are at risk of offending or re-offending, are supported by West Berkshire's Youth Offending Services (YOS). Those supported by YOS are split into three cohorts: the In-Court Cohort; the Out-of-Court Cohort; and the Community Resolution and Prevention (CRP) Cohort.

3.15   Homelessness

3.15.1   0.7 households per 1,000 are in temporary accommodation in West Berkshire, which is below rates seen across the South East (2.7) and England (4). While Homelessness is not a major issue in West Berkshire in the same way it is in major metropolitan areas, it is still an issue and likely to become a growing problem due to the cost-of-living crisis[24].

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[23] West Berkshire Youth Offending Team, 2021. Youth Justice Plan 2022/2023. Available at: https://info.westberks.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=44358&p=0.

[24] Shelter, 2021. 274,000 people in England are homeless, with thousands more likely to lose their homes. Available at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/media/press_release/274000_people_in_england_are_homeless_with_thousands_more_likely_to_lo se_their_homes#:~:text=London%20comes%20out%20worst%2C%20with,homeless%20in%20Brighton%20and%20Hove.

Table 3.13 – Homelessness

	West Berkshire	South East	England
Households in temporary accommodation (per 1,000)	0.7	2.7	4
Households owed a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act Numerator (per 1,000)	7.5	9.9	11.3

Source: MHCLG 2020/2021

3.15.2   Although West Berkshire Council was able to move all rough sleepers into temporary accommodation over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic through a joint campaign with local charity organisations, these figures are once again on the rise. It is also important to keep in mind that rough sleeping can be very difficult to trace as many rough sleepers also experience hidden homelessness which is not always captured on traditional surveys[25]. As such, it is important to consistently monitor the homelessness situation and ensure varied individual needs are addressed as people move across the various types of homelessness.

3.16   Carers

3.16.1   According to provisional results of the 2021-2022 Caring for Others Survey[26], carers in West Berkshire generally care for older people, with 68% of respondents caring for individuals over 65 years and 27% caring for individuals over 85 years. The most common conditions amongst these individuals are frequently associated with older populations including physical disabilities, sight or hearing loss, and dementia. Carers are generally satisfied with the level of service provided, and the proportion of carers who are 'extremely' or 'very' satisfied in West Berkshire is consistently higher than across the South East and England, as well as having increased since the 2018 – 2019 Survey.

3.16.2   However, carers frequently suffer in other areas of their life, citing a lack of time to do some (63.1%) or any (15.3%) of the things they value or enjoy, or to look after themselves (27.9%), with some going so far as to say they are neglecting

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[25] Crisis, 2022. Types of homelessness. Available at: https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/homelessness-knowledge-hub/types-of-homelessness/#:~:text=Hidden%20homelessness&text=This%20means%20staying%20with%20family,leave%20the%20person%20extremely%20vulnerable.

[26] West Berkshire Council, 2022. Caring for Others Survey 2021-22 – summary report.

themselves (14.8%). Carers also commonly feel they are lacking some social contact (47.7%) or feel socially isolated (13.9%), as well as lacking control over their lives (58.5%) or even having no control at all (13.4%). Finally, many carers feel they do not receive enough encouragement or support in their roles (38.9%), or do not receive any encouragement or support (20.9%).

3.16.3   Given that finalised Survey data is not expected to be published until November 2022, and the latest West Berkshire Carers Health Needs Assessment is from 2014/2015[27], it is important to continue to monitor the caring community and their needs. Especially as carers perform such a range of tasks and interact with such a diversity of individuals in their roles, their interaction with EDI-related issues will vary widely across West Berkshire.

3.17   Armed Forces

3.17.1   West Berkshire's armed forces community is largely linked to Denison Barracks, located in the village of Hermitage near Newbury. There about 1,000 armed forces personnel living and working at the Barracks, primarily from the British Army (approximately 95%), although a small proportion represent the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force (approximately 5%). The link between the armed forces and responsibilities is further explored in the key legislation and policy section.

3.17.2   According to Captain Lorraine Dotchin (Welfare Officer at Denison Barracks), the British Army has robust existing EDI policies which are particularly relevant to the Barracks given its diverse makeup. About 5% of Denison's personnel come from commonwealth or other nations, including a particularly large constituency of Nepalese personnel, as well as prominent Nigerian and Fijian constituencies.

3.17.3   Although all members of the armed forces and their families are welcome at Denison, many junior personnel do not meet the UK salary requirements to bring their families over from their home countries, so a large part of Captain Dotchin's role involves writing letters regarding visiting families and those soldiers who wish to remain in the UK once they have completed their service. In addition, Hermitage is not well connected by transportation, nor does it have 'international' facilities like Nepalese or other 'minority' grocery stores, so it can be a difficult transition for those families that can make it to the area, especially for spouses who cannot drive or have limited English. Given these challenges,

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[27] Mahal, S., 2014. West Berkshire Carers Health Needs Assessment 2014/2015.

many of the soldiers stationed in West Berkshire tend to be from the UK and of senior ranking.

3.17.4   In addition, about one third of the personnel at Denison Barracks are married and, as such, have a right to military housing. There are about 118 quarters available for married military personnel, and 28 quarters for married officers, although this is insufficient for the roughly 300 married personnel stationed at the Barracks. As a result, many married service members choose to live onsite during the week and return to their homes and families elsewhere in the country at the weekend, live at a nearby base in Oxfordshire, or find housing within the larger Hermitage community.

3.17.5   Beyond finding adequate and nearby housing, military families face additional challenges. While active service personnel have access to healthcare and dental care through the armed services, their families do not and have to use civilian services. Although finding a GP is a relatively straightforward, dental care is much more difficult to come by. Children must also be enrolled in civilian schools, although this is also a fairly smooth process and Denison has a close working relationship with the local system including safeguarding processes.

3.17.6   General, the armed forces community associated with Denison Barracks appears to be well integrated into the community, with personnel and their families using local services and facilities and participating in local events. Denison Barracks is especially involved in the veteran's community, hosting parades and memorial services, and lending out equipment for events. The Barracks even publishes a newsletter for service members and their families about opportunities to become more involved in the local community. That said, Captain Dotchin finds that she and her colleagues sometimes feel like a 'hidden community' which is not ignored by WBC and other local bodies, but rather not considered in larger policies because they are deemed to be somewhat separate from the more permanent-seeming community elements.

3.18   Racing Community

3.18.1   West Berkshire's racing community is one of its more unique features both within West Berkshire and across England more generally. Largely centred around the Lambourn Valley, including the parishes of Lambourn, East Garston and Great Shefford, economic activity in the area is largely centred around racehorse training and associated services[28].

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[28] SQW, 2019. Horse Racing in Lambourn Valley: The Industry's Economic and Social Impacts. Available at:
https://d1jxmchgl7b0ql.cloudfront.net/documents/Lambourn-FINAL-v10.pdf?mtime=20190325112802.

3.18.2   In terms of key demographic trends, economically active residents of the Lambourn Valley are more likely to be self-employed (14.7%) than residents across West Berkshire (11.3%), while economically inactive residents are more likely to be retired (14.3%) than residents across West Berkshire (12.6%)[29]. However, conversations with Amanda Povey suggest that these figures may not fully reflect the economic status of all residents in the area, as initial engagement exercises indicate that there may be more transient, hidden labour communities which are not being captured by national datasets. There are also some concerns about immigrant and migrant workers' ability to access local services given language, transport and other similar challenges.

3.18.3   Looking at deprivation and the EID 2029, the Lambourn Valley performs less well than Berkshire as a whole in the domains of education, skills and training, income and employment, particularly in Central Lambourn[30]. It also performs less well in terms of crime and barriers to housing and services, particularly in Lower Lambourn and Upper Lambourn. The Valley's relatively poor score on the education, skills and training domain is especially noteworthy as it may indicate a trend among training and equestrian staff who possess acquired informal skills, rather than formal qualifications.

3.18.4   The most serious challenges facing the racing community appear to be staff recruitment and housing[31]. The primary reason for recruitment challenges is the anti-social nature of many jobs associated with the racing industry. Even with higher pay, the long, unpredictable hours and the increase in weekend racing make positions less attractive for potential employees. The lack of affordable housing stock and social amenities in such a rural area heighten recruitment difficulties, especially amongst younger workers who make up a large proportion of racing staff.

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[29] Office for National Statistics, 2011. Economic Activity by sex by age. Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/dc6107ew.

[30] Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2019. English Indices of Deprivation 2019. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019.

[31] SQW, 2019. Horse Racing in Lambourn Valley: The Industry's Economic and Social Impacts. Available at: https://d1jxmchgl7b0ql.cloudfront.net/documents/Lambourn-FINAL-v10.pdf?mtime=20190325112802.

4   Key Legislation and Guidance

4.1   National Policy

Equality Act 2010

4.1.1   The overarching aim of the Equality Act is to protect individuals from unfair treatment and promote a more equal society[32]. It legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and across society more widely, consolidating and strengthening previous anti-discriminatory legislation including the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. As well as defining who is protected from discrimination and the types of discrimination under the law, the Act also outlines what actions someone who feels they have been discriminated against can legally take.

4.1.2   Anyone with a 'protected characteristic' as identified within the Equality Act can be discriminated against. These nine characteristics are as follows:

- **Age**: A person of a particular age or persons of a particular range of ages, for example, children (0-17); younger people (aged 18-24); older people (aged 60 and over).

- **Disability**: A person with physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, i.e., disabled people.

- **Gender reassignment**: A person proposing to undergo, is undergoing or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

- **Marriage and civil partnership**: A person in a civil partnership or marriage between the same sex or opposite sex.

- **Pregnancy and maternity**: A person who is pregnant or expecting a baby and a person who has recently given birth.

- **Race**: A person defined by their colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, for example, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) groups.

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[32] Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2010. Equality Act 2010. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents.

- **Religion and belief**: A person with any religious or philosophical belief including a lack of belief[33].

- **Sex**: A man or a woman, recognising that women are more frequently disadvantaged.

- **Sexual orientation**: A person's sexual orientation towards persons of the same sex, persons of the opposite sex or persons of either sex.

4.1.3   There are four types of discrimination under the Equality Act including:

- **Direct discrimination**: treating someone with a protected characteristic less favourably than others.

- **Indirect discrimination**: putting rules or arrangements in place that apply to everyone, but that put someone with a protected characteristic at an unfair advantage.

- **Harassment**: unwanted behaviour linked to a protected characteristic that violates someone's dignity or creates an offensive environment for them.

- **Victimisation**: treating someone unfairly because they've complained about discrimination or harassment.

4.1.4   The Equality Act also introduces a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)[34][35] which requires public bodies to consider all individuals in shaping policy, delivering services, and in relationships amongst their own staff, by:

- Eliminating discrimination;

- Advancing equality of opportunity; and

- Fostering good relations amongst all people when carrying out public duties.

4.1.5   This provision is particularly important within the context of EDI, as it shifts the focus of such policies away from merely addressing instances of discrimination and towards promoting equality, and equity, more broadly. This in turn helps to prevent instances of discrimination and inequality from occurring at all.

4.1.6   More specifically, the PSED requires public bodies to:

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[33] Religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion. Belief means any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief.

[34] Government Equalities Office, 2011. Equality Act 2010: Public Sector Equality Duty What Do I Need to Know? A quick start guide for public sector organisations. Available at:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85041/equality-duty.pdf.

[35] Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2021. Technical guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty: England. Available at:
https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/technical-guidance-public-sector-equality-duty-england.

- Publish information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually; and

- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years[36].

4.1.7 The PSED does not require public bodies to:

- Prepare or publish equality schemes, equality action plans, equality impact assessments, or separate annual reports on equality;

- Ask every member of staff about their protected characteristics;

- Ask service users about their protected characteristics;

- Publish any more information than is necessary to demonstrate compliance with the Equality Duty; and

- Produce a stand-alone annual equality report.

4.1.8 The Equality and Human Rights Commission is responsible for assessing and enforcing public bodies' compliance with the PSED and its specific duties. In doing so, the Commission can issue a compliance notice to public bodies who do not comply with the specific duties and can apply to the courts for an order requiring compliance. While the PSED more broadly can be enforced through judicial review, its specific duties cannot.

4.1.9 In addition, as of 2021, the Armed Forces are no longer exempt from the PSED and must now fully comply with it and its individual duties[37]. This has resulted in a new Armed Forces Covenant which aims to both better protect those with protected characteristics involved in the armed forces and provide clear, fair and effective means of handling relevant issues[38].

4.1.10 The Armed Forces Act 2021 further enshrines the Armed Forces Covenant into law to help prevent service personnel and veterans being disadvantaged when accessing public services[39]. Under the Armed Forces Act 2021, Public Authorities must have 'due regard' to the Armed Forces in the provision of housing, education and healthcare.

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[36] Government Equalities Office, 2011. Equality Act 2010: Specific Duties to Support the Equality Duty What Do I Need to Know? A quick start guide for public sector organisations. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/85049/specific-duties.pdf.

[37] Centre for Military Justice 2021. The Ministry of Defence can no longer discriminate against veterans on the grounds of their disability – it breaches their human rights. Available at: https://centreformilitaryjustice.org.uk/the-ministry-of-defence-can-no-longer-discriminate-against-veterans-on-the-grounds-of-their-disability-it-breaches-their-human-rights/#:~:text=The%20Equality%20Act%202010%20on,effectiveness%20of%20the%20Armed%20Forces.

[38] Ministry of Defence, 2021. Armed Forces Covenant. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/defence-and-armed-forces/armed-forces-covenant.

[39] Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2021. Armed Forces Act 2021. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/35/contents.

4.1.11   All councils, including West Berkshire Council, have signed the Armed Forces Covenant, which symbolises a pledge by councils to ensure that public civilians and those associated with the armed forces, including serving personnel, reservists, veterans and service families, have equal access to public services[40]. Further guidance is expected to be issued which will provide further detail regarding what will be required of public authorities under the Covenant and how all parties might better comply with the PSED.

Human Rights Act 1998

4.1.12   The Equality Act is underpinned by the Human Rights Act[41] which outlines the fundamental rights and freedoms everyone in the UK is entitled to, incorporating the rights defined by the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) into British law.

4.1.13   The Human Rights Act includes the following 16 'Convention Rights':

- Article 2: Right to life;
- Article 3: Freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment;
- Article 4: Freedom from slavery and forced labour;
- Article 5: Right to liberty and security;
- Article 6: Right to a fair trial;
- Article 7: No punishment without law;
- Article 8: Respect for your private and family life, home and correspondence;
- Article 9: Freedom of thought, belief and religion;
- Article 10: Freedom of expression;
- Article 11: Freedom of assembly and association;
- Article 12: Right to marry and start a family;
- Article 14: Protection from discrimination in respect to these rights and freedoms;
- Protocol 1, Article 1: Right to peaceful enjoyment of your property;
- Protocol 1, Article 2: Right to education;

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[40] Local Government Association, 2022. Armed Forces Act 2021: background implications for councils and practical steps to get ready for the Act. Available at: https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/armed-forces-act-2021-background-implications-councils-and.

[41] Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1998. Human Rights Act 1998. Available at: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents.

- Protocol 1, Article 3: Right to participate in free elections; and

- Protocol 13, Article 1: Abolition of the death penalty.

4.1.14 While Article 14 is the most obvious reference to discrimination and equality, the entire Act is relevant to EDI, as it promotes *human* rights which are applicable to all. For some people to be treated unfairly based on a protected or other relevant characteristic is not only noncompliant with the Equality Act, but also with the Human Rights Act.

4.2 Local Policy

West Berkshire Council Equality Objectives 2015 to 2019 (2017)

4.2.1 WBC outlines its primary areas of focus in fulfilling its Equality Duty, as outlined in the Equality Act, through its published Equality Objectives[42]. These define key goals related to improving equality in the district and relevant performance measures to ensure these goals are met.

4.2.2 The four equality objectives include:

- Ensure our workforce is reflective of our communities;

- Endeavour to minimise discrimination, harassment and victimisation and advance equality of opportunity for employees and all members of our communities;

- Implement new ways of working to develop communities to be more resilient in meeting the needs of vulnerable people; and

- Close the education gap for vulnerable pupils.

4.2.3 Although a useful policy within the context of the Council as it guides equitable practices within the context of providing services, employing staff, and procuring and commissioning services, it does not directly address broader equality issues across the district, and thus does not fully fulfil the PSED. Fortunately, this gap is being addressed through this EDI Needs Assessment.

West Berkshire Council Equality Policy (2018)

4.2.4 Expanding on its Equality Objectives, WBC more fully outlines how it will achieve its vision for more equality of opportunity and respect for diversity through its

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[42] West Berkshire Council, 2017. West Berkshire Council Equality Objectives 2015-2019. Available at: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/40945/Equality-Objectives-2015-19/pdf/Equality_Objectives_2015-19_final_June_2017.pdf?m=636589471617430000.

Equality Policy[43]. This document provides a broad overview of the Council's expectations and responsibilities with respect to equality, again linking back to the Equality Duty.

4.2.5   The five main aims of the Equality Policy are to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination;

- Promote equality of opportunity;

- Promote equality of access;

- Demonstrate that we value diversity; and

- Promote good relations between diverse communities.

4.2.6   Again, while this a useful policy within the context of providing services, employing staff, and procuring and commissioning services within the Council, it does not directly address broader equality issues across the district. It demonstrates that WBC has a strong foundation in mitigating against discrimination and promoting equality, but a broader strategy is required to address wider reaching issues.

Equality Impact Assessment Guidance (2017)

4.2.7   As well as its overarching Equality Objectives and Equality Policy, WBC has also published Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Guidance[44]. The main aims of EqIA are to ensure that Council services and their delivery are suited to the differing needs of the West Berkshire community, and to ensure that the Council provides a working environment which recognises different employees' needs and supports their ability to contribute fully. To this end, the EqIA is used to evaluate how effectively the Council is promoting equality and suggest measures to mitigate any potential inequalities, especially in terms of the protected characteristics.

4.2.8   In essence, the EqIA guidance provides a clear assessment methodology for evaluating how equitable WBC's processes, services and facilities are, as well as relevant context and rationale for that methodology. It illustrates that the Council has taken an informed, systematic approach to equalities in those spheres in which it has direct jurisdiction, as well as indicating that a similar approach could be taken district-wide. However, impact assessments are not

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[43] West Berkshire Council, 2018. West Berkshire Council Equality Policy. Available at: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/32429/Equality-Policy/pdf/Equality_Policy_Final_2018___Eq_in_Employment_Policy.pdf?m=636512647802370000.

[44] West Berkshire Council, 2017. Equality Impact Assessment Guidance. Available at: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/media/38336/Guidance-on-the-Equality-Impact-Assessment-EqIA-process/pdf/Equality_Assessment_Guidance_Final_Jan_2017.pdf?m=636536011838100000.

mandatory under the Equality Act and do not necessarily demonstrate compliance with the PSED, so they cannot be used as proof of fulfilling the PSED in a court of law.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JHWS) for Berkshire West (2021)

4.2.9   The JHWS for Berkshire West[45], which covers West Berkshire, Reading and Wokingham, defines key challenges in the area related to health and wellbeing and outlines the ways in which health and social care services can work together to address these challenges, ultimately improving outcomes for the entire population. Although not strictly under the remit of EDI, health and health-related inequalities are often linked to other types of inequalities, causing or exacerbating issues which may on the surface appear unrelated.

4.2.10   The challenges and aims identified within the JHWS are defined as 11 'target areas' and include:

- Helping everyone have the same chance to live a healthy life;

- Supporting vulnerable people to live healthy lives;

- Supporting families with young children to be healthy;

- Helping people get over addictions to alcohol, etc;

- Being healthy and well at work;

- Fitter communities;

- Supporting people with lots of health needs;

- Supporting people who had a traumatic (difficult) childhood;

- Building strong and healthy communities;

- Mental health support for children and young people; and

- Mental health support for adults.

4.2.11   The first target area (helping everyone have the same chance to lead a healthy life) is the most obviously linked to equality. However, all the areas support a broader vision to promote health and wellbeing across the district, regardless of protected or other relevant characteristics. In addition, achieving these aims would help to mitigate the causes and negative impacts of other equalities issues and promote equity in West Berkshire.

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[45] Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group, 2020. Berkshire West Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy: A plan to improve people's health and wellbeing. Available at: https://www.berkshirewestccg.nhs.uk/media/4750/joint-hwb-strategy-jan-2021.pdf.

4.2.12   As a Health and Wellbeing Needs Assessment is being undertaken in tandem with this EDI Needs Assessment, and the two projects have distinct remits, if related goals, further evaluation of this policy should be addressed by the appropriate team.

5   Existing Best Practice and Legal Precedents

5.1   Examples of EDI Policy

5.1.1   The policies below provide two examples of thorough local authority EDI policies, highlighting the ways in which they follow best practice and how West Berkshire Council might improve upon them.

Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework (Oxfordshire County Council, 2020)

5.1.2   The relevance of Oxfordshire County's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework[46] as an example of a comprehensive EDI framework within the context of this assessment is twofold. Firstly, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire share geographic and demographic similarities which make elements of Oxfordshire's EDI Framework readily translatable to West Berkshire. Secondly, the Oxfordshire EDI Framework is comprehensive and well written, and a strong example of what West Berkshire's own framework might achieve.

5.1.3   Oxfordshire, located immediately to the north of West Berkshire, is a predominantly rural area with relatively low population density including significant open and green space, AONBs, various rivers and canals, and small villages and towns, much like West Berkshire. In addition, Oxfordshire's population is split evenly across the sexes, has a relatively standard age distribution, is primarily White-identifying and faces low levels of deprivation overall. Although Oxford has a much larger student-aged population than West Berkshire centred around Oxford University, this is not a significant enough difference to discount the policy as irrelevant to West Berkshire.

5.1.4   The purpose of the Oxfordshire EDI Framework, outlined in the policy, is to creative inclusive communities, services delivery, and workplaces. Each of these three interlocking visions are in turn supported by two corresponding goals which are specific, measurable, assignable, and realistic. This fulfils four of the five criteria for SMART goals, save for 'time-related', although this criterion is addressed in the document's introduction, which includes a commitment by the Council to annually review and track the County's progress against these goals.

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[46] Oxfordshire County Council, 2020. Including Everyone: Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework. Available at: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/plans-performance-policy/includingeveryoneequalitiesframework.pdf.

5.1.5   Supporting the six goals are four 'underpinning principles' which provide further guidance as to how the goals should be achieved. These principles, as well as further detail about why each is necessary, are defined in the policy as:

- Inclusion is everyone's responsibility;

- We listen and learn together;

- Flexibility supports diverse needs; and

- Diversity is embraces and celebrated.

5.1.6   The Framework also includes an evidence base for its existence through a succinct overview of relevant policies including the Equality Act 2010 and the PSED. Further evidence of the need for an EDI framework is provided in an outline of relevant inequalities present across Oxfordshire, highlighting those areas where EDI-related challenges are most prevalent and any particularly vulnerable groups.

5.1.7   Finally, the Oxfordshire EDI Framework addresses EDI in and of itself through its use of reader-friendly colours and graphics, and through the provision of an easy-read version of the document.

5.1.8   Although this policy largely follows best practice, it would benefit from an embedded reporting mechanism through which Oxfordshire County Council might better monitor and evaluate the success of the policy.

Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 to 2025 (Leeds City Council, 2021)

5.1.9   Although Leeds City Council's EDI strategy will inherently be quite different from West Berkshire's, as Leeds is a major metropolitan area in the North rather than a rural district in the South, Leeds City Council's (LCC) Equality Improvement Priorities[47] still provides a strong example of a comprehensive and actionable EDI strategy, from which WBC may draw some insight.

5.1.10 The Leeds policy, like many public policies, opens with an outline of the Council's overarching vision for the city and its commitments to supporting residents and following legal obligations. This includes addressing the stipulations of the Equality Act, such as safeguarding those with protected characteristics and fulfilling the PSED, as well as going beyond the Act to address other types of disadvantages, such as poverty.

5.1.11 The policy then goes on to outline the eight Best City Priorities, which are:

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[47] Leeds City Council, 2021. Equality Improvement Priorities 2021 to 2025. Available at: Equality improvement priorities 2021 to 2025 (leeds.gov.uk).

- Age-Friendly Leeds;

- Health and Wellbeing;

- Child-Friendly City;

- Culture;

- Sustainable Infrastructure;

- Inclusive Growth;

- Housing; and

- Safe, Strong Communities.

5.1.12 These city-wide aims are distinct from the three cross-council priorities, which prioritise improving EDI within LCC itself, and include addressing the Council's:

- Budget;

- Employment and organisational structure; and

- Procurement.

5.1.13 The real strength of LCC's Equality Improvement Priorities policy lies in the commentary accompanying each of the Best City Priorities. As well as the pithy title given to each priority, an additional explanation is provided which clarifies what types of inequality each priority is intended to address. This is followed by an explanation of it is important to address these disadvantages, key actions the Council will take to address them, and key measures or performance indicators to assess whether LCC is actually meeting its goals. This section takes up the bulk of the policy and manages to be both succinct and comprehensive, clearly defining what LCC hopes to achieve and how it will achieve it. The key actions and measures are particularly useful to consider as they also fulfil four of the five criteria for SMART goals, save for 'time-related', and frequently feature very specific target figures.

5.1.14 The Equality Improvement Priorities could be strengthened by a clearer evidence base, including links to further EDI-related policy and a local Needs Assessment. Although each of the priorities are accompanied by an overview of why they should be considered in the strategy, more detail such as relevant datasets or visual aids would provide greater context and more clearly demonstrate their significance. As is the case above, it would also benefit from an embedded reporting mechanism through which Leeds City Council might better monitor and evaluate its successfulness.

5.2 Legal Precedents

5.2.1 As EDI-related policies come into effect and associated issues become more prominent, it is more important than ever for local authorities to comply with relevant legislation. Failing to comply, and failing to get ahead of even stricter regulations, opens local authorities to the risks of judicial review and other legal actions.

Brown, R v Secretary of State for Work & Pensions (2008, EWHC 3158)

5.2.2 In late 2007, a proposal to shut down several Post Offices in Sussex was granted, including a branch located in the village of Old Town, Hastings. Mrs. Brown, an older and disabled resident of Old Town, subsequently sued on the grounds that she was unable to access another, farther Post Office. She claimed that the closure of the Post Office and the lack of a disability impact assessment or EqIA in the closure process indicated both a failure to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (now part of the Equality Act) and a failure to pay 'due regard' to equality duties.

5.2.3 The Court ultimately ruled that authorities must demonstrate 'due regard' to equality obligations, which is akin to the existing PSED set out in the Equality Act. However, the Court did not define a prescriptive way of demonstrating this 'due regard'. Instead, it stated that consideration may be exhibited through various suitable methods including reports comprised of research gathered from desk-based studies, fieldwork, and consultation and engagement exercises, much like in a Needs Assessment or evidence-based EDI strategy.

5.2.4 In addition, the Court outlined several best practice principles which should inform authorities' compliance with the duty to give 'due regard' to equality needs, and which are logically be addressed in this EDI Needs Assessment and its consequent Strategy. Of particular significance within the context of West Berkshire is the need to exercise 'due regard' as an integral element of public functions, integrating the duty into a deliberate approach to policy-making rather than as a 'box ticking exercise'. Furthermore, it is important for authorities to keep an appropriate record of efforts to consider and fulfil equality duties. Documents including Needs Assessments, EDI Strategies and EqIAs allow for greater transparency into public processes and serve as evidence in the event of a legal challenge.

5.2.5 Although this case is from several years ago, it is still very relevant to contemporary West Berkshire as it illustrates the Court's ongoing desire to uphold authorities' obligation to pay 'due regard' to equalities, an obligation which has now been codified into the PSED. In addition, the ruling provides useful best practices for WBC to continue to follow regarding the integration of

EDI and policy-making, and adequate record keeping. Finally, this case provides a very real example of the kind of legal challenges WBC could conceivably face in a similar scenario given the rural nature of the district.

Sheakh, R v London Borough of Lambeth (2021, EWHC 1745)

5.2.6   In 2020, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, central government guidance was issued which urged Local Authorities to make urgent changes to their travel networks to promote low carbon and active travel in the short window before people restarted their pre-pandemic travel patterns. This resulted in the widespread establishment of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) across the UK which encouraged walking and cycling over motorised transport, particularly on local roads.

5.2.7   Two such LTNs were established in the London Borough of Lambeth, in Brixton Oval and Streatham respectively. These LTNs were subsequently challenged on the grounds that Lambeth Borough Council (LBC) had breached its PSED by not carrying out adequate EqIAs and by taking a 'rolling' approach to monitoring the impacts of the LTNs.

5.2.8   Ultimately, the Court ruled that LBC had met its PSED in establishing the LTNs because the circumstances of the pandemic and the resulting statutory guidance permitted the Council to bypass a more robust research base for establishing the LTNs. However, the Court also maintained that this practice would not be suitable under normal circumstances and that authorities who continue to take a 'rolling' approach do so 'at their peril'.

5.2.9   This case is particularly relevant to West Berkshire because it provides a very recent example of the ways in which Local Authorities may be challenged for not complying with the Equality Act and the PSED. While these complaints against LBC were ultimately dismissed, the Court also indicated in its ruling that as the country moves out of pandemic-era regulations it is important for Local Authorities to begin re-prioritising EDI and associated legislation.

6 Forecasting and Recommendations

6.1 Forecasting

England

6.1.1 The United Kingdom's population is growing and becoming more diverse as it grows. Between mid-2020 and mid-2030 the national population is expected to increase by 2.1 million inhabitants[48]. Although birth rates (6.6 million) are predicted to be slightly lower than mortality rates (6.7 million), an estimated 5.6 million people will immigrate long-term to the UK while only an estimated 3.4 million people will emigrate from the UK.

6.1.2 These estimates are in line with existing demographic trends, which show that minority groups within England have become increasingly more prevalent since the Census 1991[49]. While most foreign-born White British, White Irish and Black Caribbean immigrants arrived prior to 1981, most South Asian and Black African immigrants arrived after 1981. More recently, the largest non-UK born ethnic group, made up of Other White immigrants primarily from Ukraine and other Central and Eastern European countries, arrived in the 2000s.

6.1.3 This ethnic diversity mirrors trends in religious diversity. For example, many immigrants from Poland, Nigeria and the Philippines have brought their Christian identity, while those arriving from the Middle East and South Asia identify as Muslim[50]. Likewise, many Sikh immigrants hail from India, while many new Buddhists claim Thailand, Sri Lanka and China as their country of origin.

6.1.4 As well as becoming more ethnically and religiously diverse, England is becoming older. The baby booms following World War II and during the 1960s

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[48] Office for National Statistics, 2022. National population projections: 2020-based interim. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/2020basedinterim#:~:text=3.,million%20(6.9%25%20increase).

[49] Office for National Statistics, 2015. 2011 Census analysis: Ethnicity and religion of the non-UK born population in England and Wales: 2011. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/2011censusanalysisethnicityandreligionofthenonukbornpopulationinenglandandwales/2015-06-18.

[50] Office for National Statistics, 2015. 2011 Census analysis: Ethnicity and religion of the non-UK born population in England and Wales: 2011. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/2011censusanalysisethnicityandreligionofthenonukbornpopulationinenglandandwales/2015-06-18.

is reflected in population spikes among people in their mid-70s and in their 50s, respectively[51]. Conversely, a smaller population of teenagers reflects a decline of birth rates in the early- to mid-2000s and fertility rates in the 2020s and 2030s are assumed to be even lower. In addition, life expectancies are increasing as healthcare improves, and the population of people aged 85 years and older is expected to nearly double from 1.7 million in mid-2020 to 3.1 million in mid-2045.

6.1.5   These trends are significant as an aging population has specific and varied needs including more frequent and more serious healthcare, disability and mobility considerations, and more public and private assistance.

West Berkshire

6.1.6   Like the rest of the country, West Berkshire is expected to have an older, more diverse population in the coming decade. These changes will not only impact the demographic makeup of the district – they will also alter the challenges both faced by the inhabitants of West Berkshire and to be addressed by the Council.

6.1.7   According to mid-year estimates, the population of West Berkshire has grown from approximately 136,800 inhabitants in 1991 to approximately 161,000 inhabitants in 2021[52]. This figure is expected to stay relatively stable for the next two to three decades.

6.1.8   Looking more closely at the age breakdown of West Berkshire's population, children and young people aged 0 to 15 years are expected to make up a smaller proportion of the overall population, dropping from 19.8% in mid-2020 to 17.1% in mid-2043. Likewise, working age adults between the ages of 16 and 64 will drop from 60.6% to 54.5% of the population. Consequently, older people aged 65 years and older will take up a much bigger share of the overall population, rising from 19.7% in mis-2020 to 28.4% in mid-2043.

6.1.9   Although Census 2021 data is not yet available for datasets on race and religion, West Berkshire's ethnic diversity is expected to become more varied in line with national trends. This supported by information in the baseline regarding diversity within schools, amongst refugees and asylum seekers, and across the armed forces community.

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[51] Office for National Statistics, 2022. National population projections: 2020-based interim. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/2020basedinterim#:~:text=3.,million%20(6.9%25%20increase).

[52] West Berkshire Council, 2022. Population: West Berkshire. Available at: https://westberkshire.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/population/#/view-report/63aeddf1d7fc44b8b4dffcd868e84eac/__iaFirstFeature/G3.

6.2 Recommendations

6.2.1 As results from the Census 2021 are published throughout 2022 and 2023, it is important to monitor those datasets which are most relevant to those impacted by the socio-economic indicators, protected characteristics, and features of other relevant groups outlined in the baseline assessment. A full breakdown of the Census 2021 release plans is available on the ONS website[53].

6.2.2 West Berkshire Council should also seek to draw on Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector data. This will help to flesh out some of the figures provided by national and regional datasets, providing a more detailed picture of West Berkshire's population specifically. VCSE and other third party data, such as that provided through the Citizens Advice Bureau, can be used to help illustrate a local authority's compliance with the PSED.

6.2.3 Where comprehensive datasets are not yet available or are not included in existing data collection programmes, West Berkshire Council would benefit from undertaking its own data collection exercises to better map where vulnerable groups might be located across the district and what their individual needs might be. In some cases, a more in-depth consultation programme may be required, especially in regard to the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, refugees and asylum seekers, and at-risk children, youth and young people. Qualitative data borne out of such a programme would allow the Council to get under the skin of these groups' core challenges and their root causes, helping them to fully address key issues and avoid misdirecting efforts and funding.

6.2.4 Overall, this Needs Assessment is a strong first step by the Council to identify EDI challenges, opportunities and vulnerable groups, and illustrates a commitment to comply with the Equality Act, the PSED, and its specific duties. However, it does not actually prove compliance. To do so, West Berkshire Council will need to take the key trends and issues identified above and use them to inform meaningful, tangible objectives, which are reflective of West Berkshire's diverse population now and in the future.

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[53] Office for National Statistics, 2022. Release plans. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/aboutcensus/releaseplans.

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