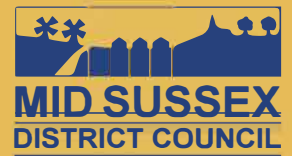


# Mid Sussex District Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025 to 2029



# Mid Sussex Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025–2029

## Foreword

Mid Sussex District Council prides itself on its commitment to building a community that is open and welcoming to everyone. Through our work across the council, we have worked towards protecting the rights of our residents and employees. As the district has grown more diverse, our role as a council has evolved so that we recognise the characteristics of everyone in Mid Sussex and seek to entrench the rights of all. This strategy sets out our aim to work towards a more equitable and inclusive society and will embed values and commitments that will see the council represent all of its residents to the best of our abilities. We are lucky to live in such a community that respects everyone's rights, and we understand our responsibility to ensure that every Mid Sussex resident feels that they are part of an environment in which their individual rights and identities are acknowledged and celebrated by the council.

Council leader Robert Eggleston said: “As an area which has always welcomed new communities, we are proud of our culture of openness. Our people are our greatest resource: through them we innovate and create opportunities for the future. This strategy recognises that we must strive for a more equitable workplace, and it will hopefully help us to become a more inclusive council.”

## Introduction

This Equality, Diversity and inclusion Strategy outlines Mid Sussex District Council's commitment to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and equitable environment for all residents and employees. It builds upon previous schemes and incorporates the latest demographic data from the 2021 Census to ensure our policies and practices reflect the evolving needs of our community.

The recognised protected characteristics that are covered in this strategy are.

- **age**
- **disability** (a disabled person being defined as someone who has a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. We know that many people who are neurodivergent do consider this a disability, but some do not. In all cases we would look to accommodate reasonable adjustments where needed. )
- **gender reassignment** (covering all people considering or undergoing or who have undergone gender reassignment whether they have medical treatment)
- **marriage or civil partnership**
- **pregnancy and maternity**
- **race** (including colour, nationality, and ethnic or national origins)
- **religion or belief**
- **sex**
- **sexual orientation.**



In addition to the nine protected characteristics, the Council's equality and diversity activities address issues arising from our rural location, income or skill level. We recognise Armed Forces veterans, those from Armed Forces families, and are now extending this to care-experienced young people. We acknowledge how people's protected characteristics and social identities overlap and intersect, creating unique experiences of exclusion or discrimination.

Our residents and employees are what makes Mid Sussex and the Council. We are excited to explore how we can do things differently to support the changing demographics, to support and educate our communities and council employees on the changes surrounding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, across the council, locally across our towns and to promote allyship for all those who identify with the different recognised protected characteristics, and those we choose to include.

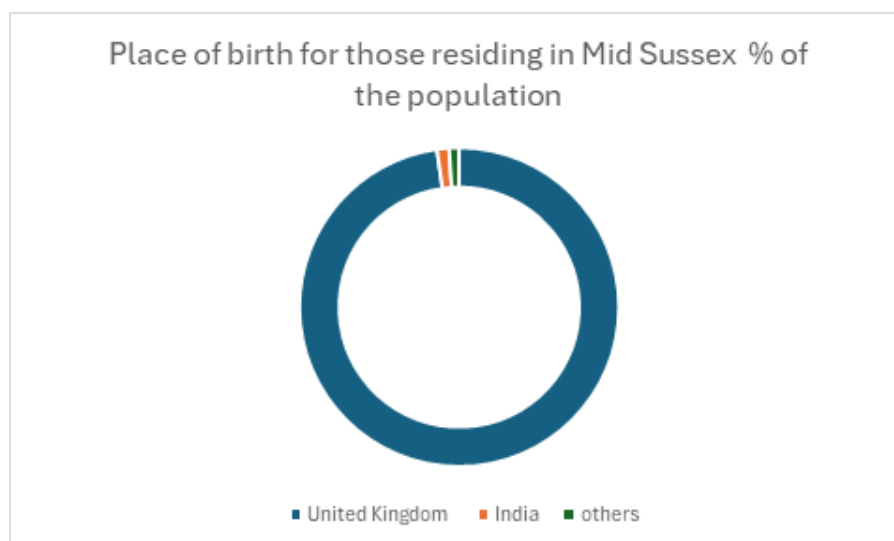
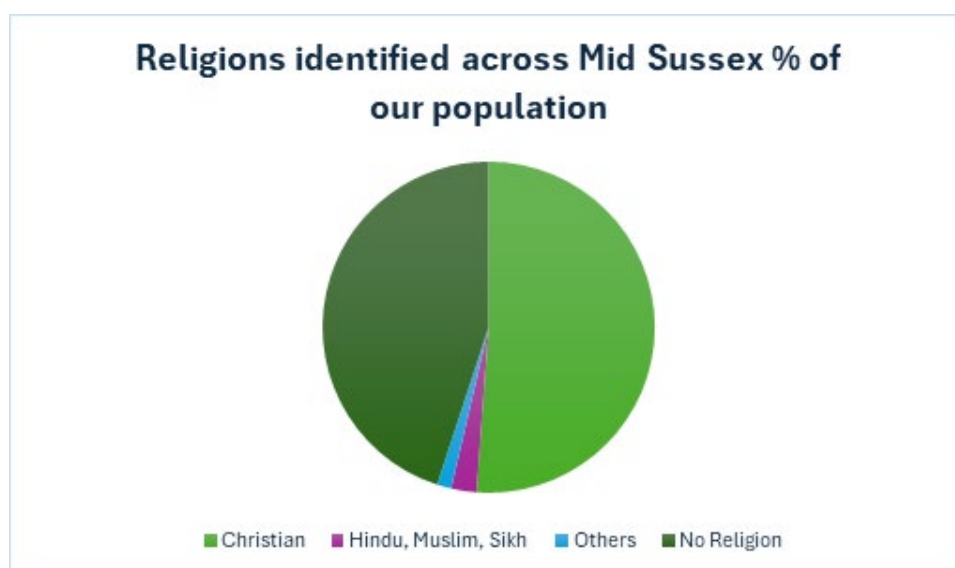
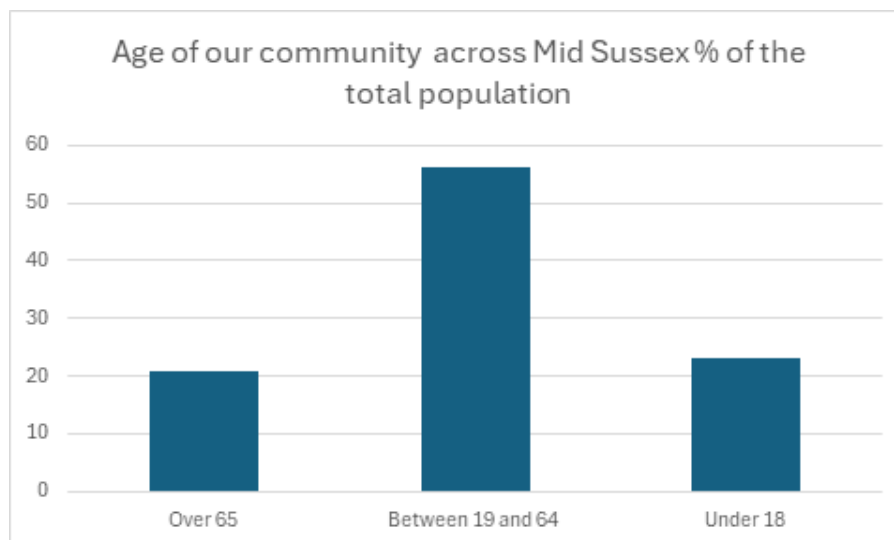
## Demographic overview of Mid Sussex

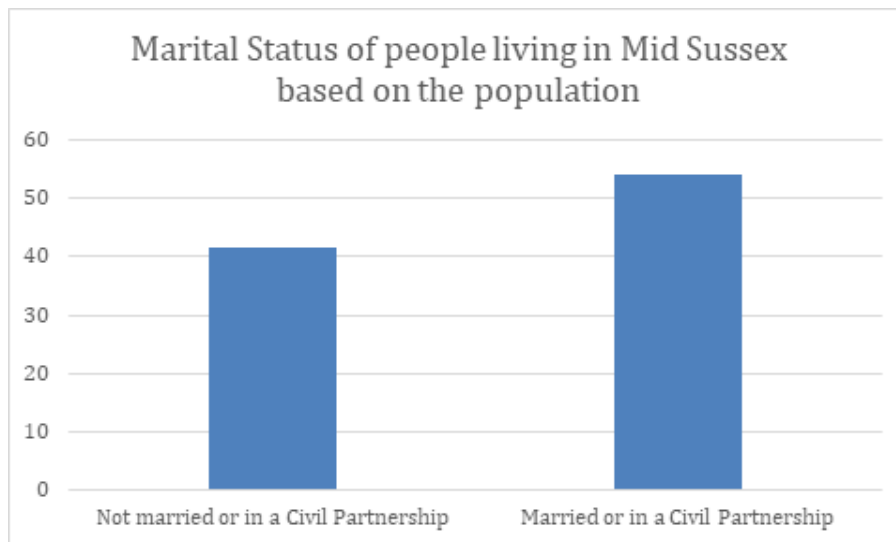
According to the 2021 Census, Mid Sussex has experienced notable demographic changes. The population has aged, with a higher proportion of residents aged sixty-five and over. There has also been an increase in ethnic diversity and a shift in religious affiliation, with more residents identifying as having no religion. The district remains predominantly White British, but the proportion has decreased slightly, reflecting broader national trends.

Mid Sussex is home to more than 155,000 residents. Recent census data reveals:

- An increasingly vibrant older community, with 20.6% of residents now aged sixty-five and over a rise of 5% since 2011, bringing valuable experience and perspectives.
- Growing ethnic diversity, with around 15% of the population identifying with ethnic backgrounds other than White British, enriching the cultural fabric of the area.
- Greater openness around disability, with 14.2% of residents sharing that they experience limitations under the Equality Act — helping shape more inclusive services and environments.
- Increased visibility and recognition of LGBTQ+ identities and gender diversity, reflecting a more open and accepting community.
- Valued contributions from veterans, with 3.8% of residents having served in the Armed Forces, bringing unique skills and experiences to civic life.
- A shift toward religious diversity and secular identities, with 42.1% of residents now identified as having no religion, reflecting evolving beliefs and worldviews.







The information for this document is taken from [How life has changed in Mid Sussex: Census 2021](#)

## Strategic Purpose

The purpose of this strategy has been aligned to the council priorities. This will ensure that we have a golden thread linking our one council approach to changes, initiatives and delivery across our district and the council services.

Council Priorities



This strategy serves to:

- Demonstrate how the Council will meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The public sector equality duty means that the Council must ensure when delivering services and undertaking council business that they are:
  - Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
  - Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Define clear, measurable equality objectives. These objectives assist us with service planning, employee management, and support, and to ensure we listen and communicate effectively with our community.
- Establish a framework for monitoring and reporting progress. Linked to our objectives, action plans highlighting what we are currently doing and what we are working towards.
- Ensure transparency and accountability to the public. Reporting back on our achievements and future developments will hold us accountable to the promises we make as a council.

## Strategic Equality Objectives (2025–2029)

The Council has agreed on the six objectives identified below, with a view to ensuring they result in meaningful outcomes for our residents and our employees and members.

### 1. Inclusive Leadership and Community Engagement

- Establish regular forums with underrepresented community groups to design services.
- Ensuring senior leaders and elected members champion inclusive decision-making.
- Publishing an annual Equality Impact Statement to demonstrate progress and accountability.

### 2. Empowerment Through Targeted Initiatives

- Launching community-led pilot projects to address barriers in service access.
- Providing targeted funding through our grants program to support grassroots equality initiatives.
- Partnering with voluntary and faith-based organisations to amplify community voices.

### 3. Fostering Social Cohesion and Preventing Discrimination

- Delivering district-wide campaigns to challenge prejudice and celebrate diversity.
- Facilitating interfaith and intercultural dialogues to build mutual understanding.
- Embedding anti-discrimination principles into all Council policies and procedures.



#### 4. **Equal Access to Employment and Skills Development**

- Partnering with local employers and training providers to create inclusive pathways to work.
- Supporting digital inclusion and adult learning programs for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.
- Promoting apprenticeships and internships for young people from underrepresented backgrounds.

#### 5. **A Diverse and Inclusive Workforce**

- Implementing inclusive recruitment practices.
- Providing mandatory training on unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, and neurodiversity.
- Establish employee networks and mentoring schemes to support career progression.
- Providing appropriate training for our employees and members to ensure knowledge, education and understanding of people from groups identified under a protected characteristic or as an underrepresented group.

#### 6. **Transparent Monitoring and Continuous Improvement**

- Publishing annual progress reports aligned with our Equality Objectives.
- We will gather appropriate data in line with GDPR on the residents that use our services which will help us establish any gaps and the support we need to put in for underrepresented groups.
- Continue to ensure alignment with other council strategies specifically the Sustainable Economy Strategy and Action Plan 2025 to 2028 especially appendix 1 Social Value Sustainability Charter.  
<https://www.midsussex.gov.uk/media/ymkfmxyz/msdc-social-value-and-sustainability-charter-2024.pdf>
- Conduct regular Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) across all major policies and services.

## **Monitoring and Governance**

Progress will be reviewed annually and through an Equality and Diversity Progress Report which will be presented to the Council. This will cover agreed KPI's and qualitative feedback. A formal review of this strategy will occur in 2029 or earlier if required. Oversight will be provided by senior leadership and Cabinet Members, ensuring alignment with corporate priorities and community expectations.

### **Authorisation**

Name: **Paula Moore**

Title: **Assistant Director, Organisational Development**

Date: **December 2025**





# Action Plans and Strategic KPI Framework Summary to Support the Councils Equalities Scheme Objectives

## Support for our community

Action Plan	Activity
1. Council officers establish regular engagement with underrepresented community groups to design services.	Our Communities Service and our Housing Support teams listen to the people they work with and use their feedback to create new services when they identify a gap. Ensure our Customer Services function listens to challenges and feedback as appropriate. Recently, the Housing Service has been running lived experience workshops for those granted asylum status to understand their perspective with regards to the journey of homelessness.
2. Good governance ensuring senior leaders and elected members champion inclusive decision-making, through scrutiny processes.	Reports provided to our councilors through scrutiny, and Council will all have considered Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion aspects prior to signing them off.
3. Our Communications team will publish an annual Equality Impact Statement to demonstrate progress and accountability.	Using resources that can shine a light on and celebrate our achievements as a council around our commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion in all we do. As well as publishing the yearly report they will run good news stories on our external media channels to showcase the excellent work we are doing.
4. Appropriate services launching community-led pilot projects to address barriers in service access. Implement agile, responsive solutions to emerging community needs.	Those services, communicating and supporting the public directly, will create initiatives which have been bought out of feedback from our residents. Housing have started to run English lessons for those who are granted refugee status. Wellbeing Teams work across different businesses in the hope of promoting wellbeing to their workforce, in addition to targeting their wellbeing services to those from high-risk groups such as carers, those from lower socioeconomic areas, English as a second language or living with serious mental illness. The Benefits team provides their information in large print if requested. They will be looking into providing this in different languages should it be requested going forward.





<p>5. Our Communities Service provides targeted funding through our grants program to support grassroots equality initiatives.</p> <p>When delivering district-wide campaigns, they challenge prejudice and celebrate diversity.</p> <p>Ensuring the language, we use with our campaigns speaks to people of all different groups.</p>	<p>The Communities team is awarding thirty applications for funding specialist projects per year in the region. The community grant is supported by a budget of £100,000. Examples of these projects include.</p> <p>a) Juno Project working with the schools and colleges providing support for young girls with mental health issues.</p> <p>b) Rocking Horse Children's Charity, supporting children who are unexpectedly taken into hospital.</p>
<p>6. Where appropriate, services work with external partners to amplify community voices.</p>	<p>Through our procurement processes, we ensure the external partners we allocate contracts to have the same ethics and views on supporting equality, diversity, and inclusion.</p> <p>Within our Communities Services we work with partners across the region, including:</p> <p>Working with town councils to provide targeted screening events, prediabetes and blood pressure encouraging people of working age to take up early screening.</p> <p>Community Transport Sussex with training to support their services, which in turn supports people with disabilities and long-term health issues.</p> <p>Play Days for families with children under ten working with local businesses, sports clubs, and other charities.</p>
<p>7. Collaborate with community and minority groups to design accessible services where possible.</p> <p>Facilitating interfaith and intercultural dialogues to build mutual understanding.</p>	<p>Our externally focused services will link closely with different community groups to gain feedback on the needs of the local people.</p> <p>Funding community days facilitated by the Baptist church. Further work will be undertaken to build relationships with underrepresented faith groups across the district.</p>



## Support for our Employees and Councilors

Action Plan	Activity
All officers embed anti-discrimination principles into all council policies and procedures.	Utilising different bodies to gain knowledge and support. The Housing team are working with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) to gain accreditation. Currently we hold the bronze award with the Armed Forces Covenant and are working towards the silver. Work towards accreditation with the Two Ticks disability scheme.
Through networks and matrix work we will share best practices across departments to ensure consistency and innovation.	Currently the council has an Early Careers Network and an Equalities Network. These networks are encouraged to bring ideas and give feedback on service provision and employment at the council.
Promoting apprenticeships and internships for young people from underrepresented backgrounds.	Over the past 2 years, the council has recruited ten apprentices and has offered three places on the IMPACT local government graduate scheme. Prior to an apprenticeship being advertised, we work with the County Council to ensure care experienced young people have the opportunity and support to apply for our apprenticeship.
Human Resources will use targeted advertising on diverse focused job sites to ensure we attract applications from all people across the district and the region.  Ensuring managers carry out inclusive recruitment practices	The council uses various jobs boards to advertise their jobs; this ensures we are also attracting applications from people from under-represented groups.
Promote inclusive career development and reasonable adjustments for all staff to ensure they all have the skills and ability to work well.	The council is using all the tools available to them to ensure that we support our employees with reasonable adjustments. We work closely with our occupational health provider to understand and learn what we can do to help our employees do their job well.
To provide training and development opportunities for employees and Councilors  To equip staff and councilors with the knowledge to champion equality in their roles.	Providing mandatory training on unconscious bias, inclusive leadership, and neurodiversity for all managers and employees. Include targeted training on cultural competence, neurodiversity, and gender / sex, to all employees and councilors. We do this through our learning portal and face-to-face sessions.



Conduct regular Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) across all major policies and services.	The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process and documentation has been updated. This will ensure that those undertaking the EIA will have more knowledge on completing them to be appropriate and informative to the outcomes of the project.
Using data analytics to identify gaps, measure outcomes, and inform future strategies.	Management information is key to us continuing to develop our services in line with the needs of our residents and employees. Each service has a set of management Information which would include equality data to ensure we understand who is using our services and if they identify with protected characteristics. Regarding employees, we need to ensure that we are making our council attractive to people from all backgrounds so they can represent the community they support. We will also use the data available to provide facilities for employees in line with needs and legal requirements.

## Strategic KPI Framework

Based on the Objectives set, we will monitor their success through the following Key Performance Indicators.

### High-Impact Leadership KPIs (3 indicators)

- Senior Leadership Training Completion: 100% of senior leaders completing equality training within 12 months
- Community Consultation Reach: 25+ distinct community groups engaged annually in service design?
- EIA Compliance Rate: 75% of committee reports with completed Equality Impact Assessments

### Service Access & Community Investment KPIs (4 indicators)

- Translation Services Usage: Track baseline and the percentage annual growth in residents accessing language support
- Disabled Facilities Grant Efficiency: 90% processed within 6-month target
- Digital Accessibility: 100% WCAG 2.1 AA compliance across all digital services
- Equality Grant Investment: Maintain £100k minimum annual investment in equality-focused projects?

### Social Cohesion & Discrimination Prevention KPIs (4 indicators)

- Hate Crime Monitoring: Quarterly trend analysis of reported incidents
- Hate Crime Resolution: 85% of cases receiving appropriate support/resolution
- Interfaith Events: Support interfaith/intercultural community events annually
- Discrimination Complaints: Monitor and investigate trends in service-related discrimination complaints



## Employment & Skills Development KPIs (4 indicators)

- Workforce Ethnic Diversity: Reflect local demographics (15% ethnic minority representation)
- Gender Pay Gap: Maintain below 5% gap
- Disabled Employee Representation: Above national average (4%+)
- Apprenticeships for Underrepresented Groups: 50% of apprenticeships offered to underrepresented communities

## Monitoring & Accountability KPIs (3 indicators)

- Service Monitoring Completion: 100% of services completing equality reports where relevant
- Public Reporting: Yearly public progress reports published

