

Mid Sussex District Council Equality Review

2026

Our Vision

Mid Sussex District Council continues to be committed to fostering a truly inclusive working environment and culture, where every colleague feels valued, supported, and able to thrive. Our ambition is for our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work to be meaningful, impactful, and enduring—strengthening our organisation and enhancing the quality and reach of our services across the district.

Our approach is shaped by the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty 2011 under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that we continue to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- b) Advance equality of opportunity
- c) Foster good relations

The Action Plan within our EDI Strategy sets out the Strategic Equality Objectives that guide this work. This Equality Statement highlights the progress we have made over the past 12 months and demonstrates how we are meeting both our statutory duty and our strategic objectives.

We are committed to learning, adapting, and evolving our approach. By engaging with employees, partners, and our communities, supported by our elected members we will continue to respond positively to feedback, embrace new ideas, and address emerging challenges.

This includes identifying the activities we have delivered, and those we plan to introduce, to build knowledge, skills, and confidence around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. We will also outline our refreshed recruitment approach, which actively supports applicants with specific protected characteristics, demonstrating how we have moved from traditional methods to more responsive and inclusive processes.

In addition, we will show how we meet our legal obligations to publish clear and transparent information on our progress against the equality objectives set out in both the Equality Act 2010 and our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2025–2029.

Our Pledge

We pledge to promote fairness and equity in everything we do—across employment, service delivery, policy development, and everyday working practices. As our organisation and our communities continue to grow and evolve, we will embed

inclusion, diversity, and equality into new initiatives from the outset, ensuring that we remain supportive, empowering, and reflective of the people we serve.

We aim to provide the right support so our employees can deliver high-quality work, feel motivated, and know that they are supported, and their contributions truly matter.

We promise to adhere to legal standards, protecting against discrimination based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity, race, religion/belief, sex, and sexual orientation. We extend the same standards of support to those with care-experienced backgrounds and to members of our armed forces community.

Our Strategy and Action Plans

In December 2025, we launched our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. [Mid Sussex District Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#). This sets out our Strategic Equality Objectives and accompanying action plans. These align directly with our Public Sector Duty, and our Strategic Equality Objectives. providing a clear framework that demonstrates how we are fulfilling our responsibilities and continuously strengthening our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.

Strategic Equality Objectives

As part of our Public Sector duty, we have refreshed the objectives for the council to work towards. The activity we undertake support these objectives and our Public Sector Duty.

1. Inclusive Leadership and Community Engagement
2. Empowerment Through Targeted Initiatives
3. Fostering Social Cohesion and Preventing Discrimination
4. Equal Access to Employment and Skills Development
5. A Diverse and Inclusive Workforce
6. Transparent Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

In addition to the strategic objectives, we continue to ensure alignment with other council strategies, specifically the Sustainable Economy Strategy and Action Plan 2025 to 2028 which incorporates the Social Value Sustainability Charter. We continue to conduct regular Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) across all major policies and services.

Activity and outcomes achieved from April 2025 to March 2026

To illustrate how we are meeting our Public Sector Duty under the Equality Act 2010 we have highlighted some key milestones, projects and achievements below.

Internal Activity and Achievements

New Strategy Development and Launch December 2025.

A new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy was developed in collaboration with councillors and employees to ensure organisational understanding of our EDI journey and fulfilment of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The creation of an Employee Network.

The Council's first Employee Equality Network was created, giving employees a stronger voice in championing diversity and inclusion. The network promotes key EDI topics and encourages allyship and learning, supporting a motivated and inclusive organisational culture.

Inclusive recruitment methods.

To attract applicants from diverse backgrounds, new recruitment approaches were introduced. This includes joining a Diversity Jobs Board and contacting shortlisted candidates to identify any reasonable adjustments needed.

Training and Development.

Training aligned with the new Equality Strategy has been rolled out for all employees and managers. This includes training to support neurodivergent employees and 'Inclusive Engagement: Practical Skills for Better Service Delivery,' aimed at helping staff engage with harder-to-reach residents and colleagues.

Governance and Performance Management

In September 2025, the Council launched the Professional Conversation—a quarterly meeting covering five key elements of the employee journey, including EDI. It provides employees with a safe space to discuss issues, ideas and opportunities.

Equality Policy refresh

A refreshed Equality Policy is under development and will be shared organisation-wide in April 2026, aligned with the Employment Rights Act, the Equality Act 2010 establishing and ensuring the right treatment of employees.

Updated Social Value and Sustainability Charter

The Charter guides how suppliers contribute to community social value through procurement, ensuring contracts deliver benefits beyond goods and services. [Microsoft Word - Appendix 1 - Social Value and Sustainability Charter Approved Amended](#)

Externally Focussed Achievements

Below there are a number of achievements that we feel are important to highlight. We are proud to be making a difference to different groups in our community through these initiatives.

Dare To Dream Initiative

The Council sponsored the 'Dare to Dream' initiative, supporting children at risk of disengaging from school through funded mentoring.

Parish Energy Plan Pilot

The council funded and supported a pilot project enabling communities to develop renewable-energy plans benefiting all local residents.

Warmer Homes Programme

As part of a regional consortium, MSDC supports improvements to homes of low-income families, including insulation, heating upgrades, and renewable installations.

Connect To Work Programme

The council is working in partnership with WSCC and the DWP, on this programme which provides one-to-one mentoring to support individuals into employment.

STEM Engagement

The Council sponsors Mid Sussex Science Week and the Mid Sussex STEM Challenge, which is inspiring young people to explore Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and workplace skills.

Community Grants Programme

The programme continues to support local community groups, assisting vulnerable or underrepresented groups to get projects up and running. Over the past year the council has supported requests for community grants.

Wellbeing Team Impact

The Wellbeing Team engages with higher-risk groups, including carers, residents in low-income areas and those facing mental health challenges to reduce health inequalities. The Team received 517 referrals between September and December in 2025 for weight management and healthy eating, but the team also support with smoking cessation and

alcohol reduction. This team has supported people from different parts of our community including 1 care experienced young person, 13 people whose English was their second language, 19 individuals who had learning difficulties, 10 people with autism, and 68 people from the most deprived areas of the community.

Council Tax support

The Council Tax Support Scheme provides reduced council tax for working age residents on low income. Applicants in certain protected or vulnerable groups receive a higher level of support, including a full (100%) reduction where applicable, those who do not fall into a protected group receive a maximum of 60% reduction. These protected groups include disabled people, lone parents with children under 5, carers, and those receiving specific disability related benefits.

Of the 3948 households currently receiving Council Tax Support, they are categorised in the following way.

Category	Number	Percentage
Not covered under protected characteristics	1047	26.5%
Disabled Person	2322	58.8%
Household with a disabled child or other caring responsibilities	285	7.2%
Lone Parent with a child under five	294	7.5%

The past 12 months have allowed us to be able to gather some data linked to the agreed Key Performance Indicators in our strategy. We are working hard to gather this data, however we still have a little way to go, to gather all the data we need to ensure we are making a difference for our council and our community.

Housing Support

There has been work undertaken by the Housing team over the past 12 months, to identify gaps in representation aligned to people seeking support with temporary housing and to enable the service to forge relationships with different community groups. It is clear from the data that there is an overrepresentation in those applying for homelessness, especially from those aged 18-24, 25-34 and 35-49, those who are registered as having a disability and those from the BME community. Research was also carried out to establish reasons for these applications; with young people there is a lean towards families not being able to continue to offer a stable home. The data also shows

that those suffering health conditions are more heavily affected and those with drug and alcohol dependency issues. This data has helped the team understand who they are primarily working with and has allowed them to consider if changes need to be made around how they support with these applications.

The work undertaken has also identified different community groups that the council will aim to work with in the hope that we can forge relationships that will allow us to learn more about our harder to reach members of our community.

- Mid Sussex Islamic Centre and Masjid (Religion)
- Allsorts Youth Project (Youth and LGBT)
- Safe in Sussex (Domestic Abuse)
- Burgess Hill Youth and Haywards Heath College (Young People)

In addition to these groups the council continues to keep a directory of other community groups, charities and organisation so we can engage as required in all elements of our work.

This work will continue to develop as we go forward.

Data

The past 12 months have allowed us to gather some data linked to the agreed Key Performance Indicators in our strategy. We are working hard to gather this data; however, we still have a little way to go to gather all the data to ensure we are making a difference for our council and our community.

Action / KPI	Target	Outcome Achieved
High-Impact Leadership KPIs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Leadership Training Completion • Consultation Reach: distinct community groups engaged annually in service design? • EIA Compliance Rate: committee reports with completed Equality Impact Assessments 	100% 25+ 75%	100% 36 TBC
Service Access & Community Investment KPIs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation Services Usage: Track baseline and the percentage annual growth in residents accessing language support. • Disabled Facilities Grant Efficiency: processed within 6-month target 	TBC 90% 100%	TBC 100% TBC

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Accessibility: 100% WCAG 2.1 AA compliance across all digital services 		
<p>Social Cohesion & Discrimination Prevention KPIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 complaint 	<p>85%</p> <p>TBC</p> <p>100%</p>	<p>50%- 2 cases of hate crime reported. One closed and one still open for further work</p> <p>2 events attended</p> <p>100% 4 complaints investigated and positively resolved.</p>
<p>Employment & Skills Development KPIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 		<p>6.4% - This is below our community representation; however, we have put in new processes to encourage more diverse recruitment</p> <p>Mean 3.5% Median 4.9</p> <p>6.5%- this is above the percentage in line with our residents.</p> <p>0% - we have not recruited any apprentices in 2025 2026</p>

Conclusion

Council employees and councillors are continuing to deepen their understanding of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Our new strategy outlines clear priorities for the next four years, ensuring we provide meaningful support to colleagues who identify with protected characteristics, as well as veterans, and care-experienced people.

While we are proud of our progress, we recognise that there is more to learn, more to achieve, and more opportunities to grow. Working with partner organisation, community groups and other public sector bodies, we will continue to strengthen our approach. Our vision is to embed inclusivity within the Council and across the district, underpinned by ongoing learning, purposeful engagement, and a commitment to delivering positive, measurable outcomes for our workforce and communities.