

Sevenoaks District Council

Closing the Gap

Working towards greater equality for all

Our Equality Policy Statement and Objectives

Draft

If you require this document in large print, please contact 01732 227000 or email equality@sevenoaks.gov.uk

Public sector equality duty

The Council is subject to the public sector equality duty (the equality duty). The equality duty is made up of a general equality duty which is supported by specific duties. The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and

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

Rights and responsibilities

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for implementing this policy statement.

Senior managers will make sure their service areas comply with this document.

Each member of staff has responsibility to read, understand and implement this policy statement and to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Each Councillor has responsibility to read, understand and make sure their behaviour has regard for this policy statement.

Implementation of this policy statement will be monitored by the Strategic Management Team and progress will be reported to Cabinet.

Policy statement

We want people to have the opportunity to reach their potential and access services that meet their needs. We aim to take an inclusive approach in our roles as a community leader, service provider and employer. The commitments in this document apply to Councillors and staff and set standards for others who deliver services on our behalf.

As a community leader we will:

- Seek to understand the needs of all our residents by listening and responding to the views of our communities.
- Seek to make good decisions by taking in to account a range of views and information and being accountable for them; and
- Seek to help people to take part in community life and exercise their democratic rights.

As a service provider we will:

- Seek to help everyone to use the services to which are there for them;
- Seek to give information and advice in clear and suitable ways; and
- Review services to identify whether they are meeting people's needs.

As an employer we will:

- Select, appoint and promote individuals on the basis of merit;
- Encourage all staff to develop and reach their potential;
- Provide a safe and accessible workplace;
- Provide fair and open pay and reward systems; and
- Foster an inclusive culture where staff treat each other with dignity and respect.

To deliver our commitments we will:

- Update our equality information and progress against our equality objectives annually;
- Use equality impact assessments when making changes to our services; and
- Not put up with inappropriate or offensive language or behaviour to Councillors, staff or customers.

Equality information

Under the Equality Act (2010) we must publish information to show how we comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This must include information about people, who share a protected characteristic, who are our employees and people affected by what we do.

Information about our population from the 2011 Census is provided below. We collect information about the protected characteristics of people that use our services and our employees, only where this is relevant to what we do and the decisions we take.

Our population

Sevenoaks District has a population of 117,800 living in 47,020 households. The Office for National Statistics says that the district populations will increase by a further 13,000 by 2026.

Disability

The 2011 Census recorded that 13,404 households (28.5 per cent) in the District include people with a long-term health problem or disability. Of these, 2,651 households (5.6 per cent) include two or more people with a long-term health problem or disability.

17,091 people (14.9 per cent) in the District have their day to day activities limited a little or a lot by a long-term illness or disability. This is lower than the Kent average of 17.6 per cent and lower than the national average of 17.9 per cent.

The percentage of people with a disability remains similar to that recorded in the 2001 Census.

Age

The average age of the District's population is 41.7. This is slightly higher than the Kent average of 40.7 years and the national average of 39.6 years.

20.6 per cent of the District's population was aged over 65. This has increased from 17.2% in 2001.

Population forecasts suggest that 28 per cent of the District's population will be aged over 65 by 2033. This is in line with population forecasts for the Kent area.

Sex (gender)

51.6 per cent of the population is female and 48.4 per cent is male. There has been little change in these proportions since the 2001 Census.

Race

The 2011 Census recorded that 4,864 people (4.2 per cent) in the District are from a Black and Minority Ethnic background. This is lower than the Kent average of 6.9 per cent and the national average of 14.6 per cent.

Religion or belief

The 2011 Census recorded that 65.4 per cent of the population is Christian. This is the highest proportion of any district in Kent and higher than the national average of 59.4 per cent. 25.2 per cent of the population have no religion. Small proportions of the remainder of the population are Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish.

In adopting this Policy Statement, and assessing the impact on race, religion or belief, the Council has adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation data was not captured by the last Census. Data from the Integrated Household Survey estimates that 1.6 per cent of adults in the UK identified their sexual identity as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Pregnancy or maternity

There are 64.3 births per 1,000 of the population. This is higher than the Kent average of 62.4 and the national average of 62.1.

Marital or civil partnership status

The 2011 Census recorded that 54.5 per cent of the District's population are married. This is higher than the Kent average of 48.9 per cent and the national average of 46.6 per cent.

Gender reassignment

At present, there is no official estimate of the trans population. Gender reassignment data was not captured by the last Census.

Equality objectives

Under the Equality Act (2010) we are required to prepare and publish one or more objectives to show how we will achieve any of the things mentioned in the aims of the general equality duty.

Equality objective one

As a community leader, we will advance equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers to people with disabilities, and their carers, to participate in community life.

We have chosen this objective to further improve access to Sevenoaks by walking, cycling and public transport and taking measures to ensure people with disabilities, and their carers are supported and able to participate in community life.

Equality objective two

As a community leader, we will foster good relations by promoting understanding of issues affecting people with disabilities and older people.

Why we have chosen this objective as further understanding the whole community is a priority and that our work to deliver dementia friendly communities was working well. Councillors also said that improving disability awareness is a priority.

Equality objective three

As a service provider, we will advance equality of opportunity by improving access to leisure facilities and health activities for people with disabilities, younger and older age groups and men and women.

We have chosen this objective to continue to improve promotion of activities that help to tackle health inequalities, and to encourage local people to access the parks, open spaces and leisure facilities that are available to them.

Equality objective four

As a service provider, we will advance equality of opportunity by improving access to information about our services for people with disabilities and age groups.

We have chosen this objective to encourage further expansion and improvement of online services, whilst also ensuring that needs of people who do not use technology and need information in different formats is considered.

Equality objective five

As an employer, we will advance equality of opportunity by encouraging a broader range of people to apply for Council vacancies and apprenticeships.

We have chosen this objective to ensure that proactive and open recruitment policies are a priority and that we continue to make sure that we demonstrate that discrimination does not take place