

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
DRAFT Equality Policy Statement and Objectives
2022 – 2026

The Council has an important role in tackling inequality and will ensure services are provided to those people experiencing greatest disadvantage. We will work with people to reduce exclusion and ensure equality of opportunities.

The Council is subject to the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#), which 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
- Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it

This Policy Statement sets out our equality objectives and areas of focus and action. We want to make sure that people have the opportunity to reach their potential and that our services meet their needs. We will achieve this through our roles as a community leader, service provider and employer.

As a Community Leader we will:

- Manage the effects of reduced financial resources by taking informed decisions and being accountable for them;
- Encourage and support people to be active in community life and exercise their democratic rights; and
- Listen and respond to the views of our communities.

As a Service provider we will:

- Help everyone to make use of the services to which they are entitled;
- Give information and advice in suitable ways; and
- Monitor and evaluate services to identify whether they are meeting people's needs.

As an employer we will:

- Select, appoint and promote individuals only 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
- Make sure staff treat each other with dignity and respect.

To deliver our commitments we will:

- Ensure that we monitor and record progress against our objectives
- Consider any equality impacts arising from decisions
- Not tolerate inappropriate or offensive language or behaviour to staff or customers.

Rights and Responsibilities

- The Chief Executive will have 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 Management Team.

Equality Information

Under the Equality Act (2010) we are required to publish information to show how we comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This must include information relating to people, who share a protected characteristic, who are our employees and people affected by our policies and practices. We have provided information about our population below. Information about people that use our services is set out in the rationale for each of our equality objectives. Information about our employees is included in the annual update to our Human Resources Strategy.

Disability

The 2011 Census recorded that 14,057 households (29.2%) in the Borough include people with a long-term health problem or disability. Of these 2,919 households (6.1%) include two or more persons with a long-term health problem or disability. 17,946 (14.9%) people in the Borough 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% and lower than the national average of 17.9%.

Age

Mid-year population estimates (2020) recorded the average age of the Borough's population as 40.9. This is slightly lower than the Kent average of 41.4 years but similar to the England & Wales average of 40.4 years. Currently, 19% of the Borough's population is aged over 65. Population forecasts indicate that 23.6% of the Borough's population will be aged over 65 by 2039.

Sex (Gender)

Mid-year population estimates (2020) recorded that 51.2% of the population is female and 48.8% is male.

Race

The 2011 Census recorded that 4,933 people (4.1%) in the Borough are from a Black or Minority Ethnic background. This is lower than the Kent average of 6.9% and the national average of 14.6%.

Religion or belief

The 2011 Census recorded that 63.7% of the population is Christian. This is higher than the Kent average of 61.8% and the national average of 59.4%. 27.3% of the

population have no religion. Small proportions of the remainder of the population are Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation data is not captured by the Census. Data from the Integrated Household Survey estimates that 1.6% of adults in the UK identified their sexual identity as lesbian, gay or bisexual in 2014.

Pregnancy or maternity

In 2014, there were 62.8 births per 1,000 of the Borough's population. This is slightly 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 53.4% of the Borough's population are married. This is higher than the Kent average of 48.9% and the national average of 46.6%.

Gender reassignment

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

Equality Objectives

Under the Equality Act (2010) we are required to prepare and publish at least one objective to show how we will achieve any of the aims of the general equality duty. Our current objectives are set out below:

Equality Objective 1 – Training

As an employer, we will eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation by giving staff and Councillors the necessary skills and understanding to support equality and diversity in their actions and through the services delivered. By end of July 2022 online training will be provided to all staff and Members as well as being included in the induction programme for new starters. Additional enhanced training will be undertaken for staff in key frontline roles.

We have chosen this objective as it was a recommendation from the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee to develop a clear plan for training for officers and Members. Training will be a priority to ensure we continue to demonstrate commitment to eliminate discrimination and retain a good understanding of equality and diversity.

Equality Objective 2 – Equality of Opportunity

As a community leader, we will enhance equality of opportunity by improving access to support around health, wellbeing, employment, digital inclusivity, and education in areas of deprivation.

We have chosen this objective as some areas of the Borough experience higher levels of worklessness, poor health and poverty, in addition to lower levels of

educational attainment. Community Development work will be focussed in areas of deprivation and reports will be published annually.

Equality Objective 3 – Employment

As an employer, we will advance equality of opportunity by encouraging a broader range of people to apply for Council vacancies. We will also monitor and review the gender pay gap.

We have chosen this objective to ensure that proactive and open recruitment policies are a priority. The Council is a Disability Confident Committed employer and has signed up to the Disability Confident Scheme, to take action to improve how the Council will recruit, retain and develop disabled people.

Equality Objective 4 – Housing

As a community leader we will foster good relations by promoting understanding of issues affecting people who are in need of our temporary housing support.

We have chosen this priority as we want to further improve housing services, gaining feedback from those who use the service, particularly those with protected characteristics, to ensure we are meeting their needs in relation to temporary housing provision and support.