

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
2022-2025**

*Working towards greater equality in
Maidstone*

Public Sector equality duty

Rights and Responsibilities

As a public authority the Council has responsibilities and a duty to fulfil for both its residents and staff. This was introduced in the Equality Act 2010 which replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act; simplifying the law, removing inconsistencies, making it easier to understand and comply with. It also strengthened the laws to help tackle inequality and discrimination.

The Equality Duty applies to public bodies which includes the Council and other organisations carrying out public functions.

It supports good-decision making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected, helping them to deliver policies and services that are efficient, effective and accessible to all by meeting different types of people's needs.

The duty applies to nine 'protected characteristics': age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation.

What the Council must do to fulfil this duty is:

- Publish information to show compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually.

The information published must show due regard to:

Eliminating unlawful discrimination harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act

Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share protected characteristics and people who do not share it

Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

- Set and publish equality objectives, at least every four years. These should be specific and measurable.

By publishing relevant equality information to demonstrate transparent decision making processes the Council becomes accountable to its service users. This in turns provides the public with the information they need to hold it to account, should they need to, for its performance on equality.

Armed Force Act 2021

All councils have voluntarily signed the Armed Forces Covenant. The further enshrinement of the Covenant into law is an opportunity to build upon work councils are already leading to help serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and their families to have the same equality of access to public services as their civilian neighbours. This includes the areas of focus in the Act – housing, education and healthcare. Councils play a key role in the provision or commissioning of these services with partners and joining-up support around the needs of an individual and their family.

Our Armed Forces Community is included in our consideration of equalities impacts as part of decision making.

Policy Statement

Maidstone is the County Town of Kent, a historic market town with a rich and diverse history. It is constantly changing and evolving. What remains important as Maidstone changes and grows is that residents have a sense of belonging and community in order to prosper.

As a council we want to know our residents, we want to ensure that we are meeting their needs by offering opportunity and access to services through a conscious awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues.

Our commitment to achieving this is outlined in the standards and actions set out in this document. These apply to staff, councillors and to those who deliver services on our behalf.

Maidstone Borough Council's [Strategic Plan 2019-2045](#) sets the Council's strategic vision for the borough of Maidstone. It outlines the council's priorities and informs on its values. Equalities are firmly ingrained in the council's values. This document helps determine not only the decisions made by the officers and elected members but it also advocates our approach to day to day business and conduct, and the way we treat our customers and each other.

Services

Everything we do impacts on our customers, both internal and external. We will listen to and understand their needs, then take action to provide the right service in a positive and professional manner.

Teamwork

Working together to achieve our objectives and goals in a way that utilises the talents and creativity of everyone in our organisation.

Responsibility

We work in an environment that encourages us to take ownership for our actions. Making the right choices and decisions that lead to a satisfactory outcome for all.

Integrity

We have the courage to act on our convictions to build trust and honesty. We work with our partners and customers to create a feeling of openness and transparency in everything we do.

Value

Taking care and weighing up our options, aiming to get the maximum effect for every penny of public money we spend.

Equality

Valuing our differences and understanding how they can contribute to a better working environment and services that are fair and easy to access

We will deliver on our commitment to equalities by setting an organisational standard through clear objectives for each of the three important **roles and responsibilities** we have as a council:

Role 1: As a Community Leader: We will engage with residents in an open and meaningful way.

Role 2: As a Service Provider: We will ensure our services are inclusive, accessible and support residents and customers.

Role 3: As an employer: To have a workforce that feels valued and respected.