

Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Introduction

West Kent's vision is to be the leading community provider of affordable homes in Kent. Our core purpose is to provide homes for those who struggle to afford them in the open market and to nurture the communities around those homes.

To achieve this we are committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity and treating everyone fairly.

Our approach to equality and diversity is to embed and mainstream it within everything we do. To check we are doing this we have set strategic priorities and action plan (Annex A), and established an Equality and Diversity Steering group to help ensure we deliver in relation to them.

Our research and profiling information tells us that our residents broadly match the profiles of the districts we provide services in. We have a strong Gypsy and Traveller presence in the Sevenoaks district and have built up good working relationships with local Gypsy and Traveller groups. Our knowledge of our customers and how we can tailor services continues to increase.

2. Legal framework

The Equality Act 2010 requires public bodies to meet certain statutory duties. While West Kent is not considered a public body we carry out some public functions. To deliver our vision, and in accordance with our value of 'integrity', we chose to meet the legal duties of a public body).

These are to:

- Stop unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Promote equality of opportunity between people
- Foster good relations between people.

The Equality Act 2010 outlaws discrimination on the basis of:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender re-assignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and faith
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

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3. Commitments

West Kent's commitment to treat all people fairly applies to all of our functions. In particular it covers:

Our customers

Our Board and
our workforce

Our partners

Equality and Diversity are inter-dependent but not inter-changeable: equality of opportunity happens when difference is valued, harnessed and taken into account. We define equality and diversity as:

Equality – we use the word equality to describe equal opportunities in the workplace and in accessing our services. Equality protects people from being discriminated against and we will comply with the Equality Act 2010.

Diversity – we describe diversity as celebrating differences and valuing everyone. This means appreciating our colleagues and customers' individuality and embracing alternative views. The differences between people can bring added value to West Kent creating a richer working environment and help us design and deliver better services.

We will:

1. Take into account our customers diverse needs, views, preferences and aspirations when designing and delivering services, including information.
2. Use equality impact assessments when designing and reviewing services to ensure that they are non-discriminatory and fair to all.
3. Integrate the concept of diversity into our business planning, policies and procedures, and performance monitoring.
4. Ensure work places are accessible.
5. Monitor uptake and user satisfaction of our services by age, disability, race, religion and faith, sex, and sexual orientation, where customers are comfortable about disclosing this information.
6. Profile our customers, employees and board and how far these reflect the communities we work in and our strategic priorities (Annex B) – using the 'protected characteristic' categories from the Equality Act 2010.
7. Provide appropriate learning interventions and guidance to support our board, staff and partners implement our commitments on equality and diversity.
8. Adopt a fair and open system for selecting board members, employees and partners.
9. Work with our customers, staff, board and partners to prevent and tackle harassment and other forms of anti-social behaviour in the community and the workplace.
10. Require our partners to demonstrate they have appropriate policies in place to ensure their service to our customers meets our expectations.
11. Promote our commitment to equality and diversity.

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4. Impact assessments

We will consider the equality impact when introducing or reviewing policies, procedures and service changes.

5. Monitoring and review

We will provide annual reports for the board setting out our progress on meeting our equality and diversity commitments.