

Equality and Diversity Policy



Places to live. Space to grow.

1. Introduction

West Kent's vision is to be the leading community provider of affordable homes in Kent. We will help to create in Kent a prosperous, strong and sustainable society; a place of opportunity for all; where people can plan for their futures. 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.

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 or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

We will comply with the The Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017 by publishing and reporting specific figures about our gender pay gap.

3. Commitments

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

- customers
- board and our workforce
- 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 discrimination 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 ensure we comply with the law and proactively foster diversity by:

1. Taking into account our customers' diverse needs, views, preferences and aspirations when designing and delivering services.
2. Integrating the concept of diversity into our business planning, policies and procedures, and performance monitoring and all our activities.
3. Ensuring work places are accessible¹.
4. Using our, and others' data to deliver this policy, including help monitor compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and proactively foster diversity, whilst also having regard to data protection issues and compliance.
5. Ensuring we comply with our duty to make allocations fair and non discriminatory, reporting within the CoRE; and within the terms of our Service Level Agreement with Sevenoaks District Council and nomination agreements with other local authorities.
6. Monitoring the profile of job applicants, employees and board members in relation to the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010 and using the data to inform our recruitment practices.
7. Providing learning interventions and guidance to support board, employees and service delivery partners to implement our commitments on equality and diversity.
8. Adopting a fair and open system for selecting board members, employees and partners
9. Working with customers, employees, board and delivery partners to prevent and tackle harassment and other forms of anti-social behaviour in the community and the workplace.
10. Requiring delivery partners to demonstrate they have appropriate policies in place to ensure their service to our customers meets our expectations.
11. Promoting our commitment to equality and diversity.

5. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)

We will assess equality impacts when designing and reviewing services, policies and procedures to ensure we are non-discriminatory and fair to all. Sign off approvals will require documentary evidence of the EIA process.

6. Monitoring and Review

We will provide annual reports for the board reviewing our delivery of this policy and update the policy when required.

¹ Our Sevenoaks office has limited access currently. To date, this has not raised major issues but there are limits to the reasonable adjustments we could make for an employee based permanently in the building who was unable to use the stairs.