

Dover District Council

Equality Policy



October 2022

**CORPORATE
SERVICES**



**DOVER
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**

INTRODUCTION

The Dover District is a vibrant district that is culturally, economically, and socially diverse. The Council values this diversity and aims to support and encourage it.

Our aspiration is for a district where everyone shares in the district's prosperity, is respected, and treated fairly. To achieve our vision for inclusion, equality, and fairness in the district the Council will lead by example, work with others, invest in communities, and listen when people tell us how we can do better.

The Council has a key role to play in tackling inequality. We are committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination and we will treat people with dignity and respect and help people to be safe and socially included. We believe that everyone we deal with has a right to expect and receive high quality services that are appropriate and relevant to their needs and will be proactive in removing any barriers that might exist for users of our services.

We are committed to actively promoting equality of opportunity and diversity in employment and the delivery of services. Additionally, with diversity comes opportunity, in the form of a wide range of skills, talents, experience, knowledge and abilities. The Council is more likely to attract people from a wider pool of talent if it is explicit in its commitment to diversity and can demonstrate this through how it operates. Staff are more likely to perform well, feel motivated and committed and therefore be retained if they feel valued and respected in their working environment.

This policy sets out our equality objectives, key principles, the duties that inform our responsibilities and how we will deliver on these responsibilities. It guides the work of all staff, our contractors, and our District Councillors as we deliver public services. By defining our priorities for the coming years, we enable a consistent corporate focus on achieving greater equality of opportunity and inclusion in our district.

1. THE DOVER DISTRICT

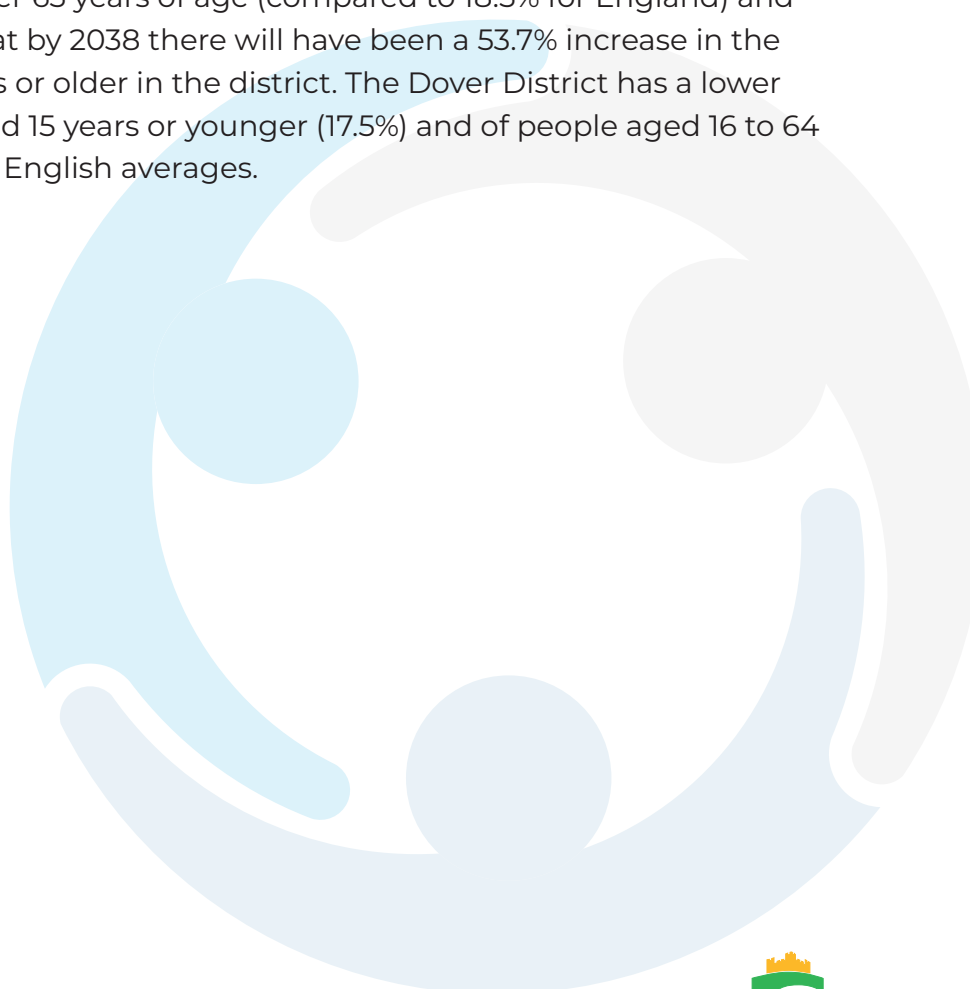
The Dover District has a population of 116,400.

According to the 2011 census details, the district has slightly more females than males at 50.6% and 49.4% respectively. The population of the Dover District is expected to increase by 10.7% between 2018 and 2038.

The population of the Dover District is predominantly white (96.7%) which is higher than the Kent and English average. The Dover District has the lowest percentage in Kent of residents from other ethnic groups with the largest single ethnic group after white being Asian at 1.8% of the district's total population.

In terms of religion, 64.1% of residents describe themselves as Christian, followed by 26% who describe themselves as having no religion and 0.6% who describe themselves as being Hindu.

The Dover District has an ageing population, with an average age of 43.7 years which is higher than that for Kent (41.2 years) and England (40.3 years). In total 23.5% of the Dover District's population is over 65 years of age (compared to 18.5% for England) and this is forecast to increase so that by 2038 there will have been a 53.7% increase in the number of people aged 65 years or older in the district. The Dover District has a lower proportion of young people aged 15 years or younger (17.5%) and of people aged 16 to 64 years (58.9%) than the Kent and English averages.



2. WHAT IS THE PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY?

The Dover District has a population of 116,400.

As a public sector organisation, the Council follows the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010, to protect individuals from discrimination based on their protected characteristics. These protected characteristics are:

- **Age**

A person belonging to a particular age (for example 32-year-olds) or range of ages (for example 18- to 30-year-olds).

- **Disability**

A person has a disability if she or he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

- **Gender Reassignment**

A person has the protected characteristic of gender reassignment if the person is proposing to undergo, is undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex.

- **Marriage or Civil Partnership**

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman or between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples (except where permitted by the Equality Act).

- **Pregnancy and Maternity**

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

- **Race**

Refers to the protected characteristic of race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

- **Religion or Belief**

Religion refers to any religion, including a lack of religion. Belief refers to any religious or philosophical belief and includes a lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.

- **Sex**

A reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a man or to a woman.

- **Sexual Orientation**

Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

This Public Sector Equality Duty is designed to support decision making by ensuring public bodies consider how different people will be affected by their activities. It applies not only to public bodies but also applies to anyone carrying out public functions and states that they must have due regard to the need to:

- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not.
- (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Specific Duty requires public bodies to:

- Collate information to show their compliance with the Equality Duty, at least annually; and
- Set and publish equality objectives, which are specific and measurable at least every four years.

All information must be published in a way, which makes it easy for people to access it.

3. HOW WILL THE COUNCIL MEET ITS EQUALITY RESPONSIBILITIES?

Everybody has a role play in achieving this policy because all Council staff have legal duties and individual responsibilities in relation to equality. These roles are:

All District Councillors

- Championing equality within the Council, including undertaking a scrutiny role to ensure that equality considerations are integrated in the decision making and governance of the Council.
- A responsibility to consider equality and ensure that due regard is given to protected groups when making decisions.
- Leading, supporting, and advocating for the diverse people and communities they represent.

Chief Executive

- Responsible for a leadership role in the district, promoting improved understanding of equality and diversity.

Corporate Management Team (CMT)

- Members of CMT are responsible to the Chief Executive for ensuring that the Equality Policy is adhered to within their service areas and that the Council meets its Public Sector Equality Duty.
- They are responsible for ensuring that the impact of policies, strategies, projects, and functions within their service areas are assessed, and for embedding equality in the day-to-day working practices of their departments and service areas.
- They are also responsible for agreeing the Council's equality objectives and monitoring progress.

Head of Service/Managers

- Ensuring all staff are aware of their personal responsibilities in relation to promoting equalities.
- Inducting new staff regarding this Equality Policy.
- Setting clear standards of behaviours in line with the Council's values and promptly dealing with any instances of inappropriate behaviour, including discrimination, harassment, and bullying.

- Managing all staff fairly and equitably through the consistent and fair application of HR (Human Resources) policies and procedures.
- Consulting where appropriate with users of their services especially from protected groups to design services to meet the needs of the community.
- Working in partnership with other statutory and public bodies, the voluntary and private sector to develop good practice.
- Valuing all staff and providing them with the skills and training required to do their job well and to provide them with opportunities to progress within the Council.

All Staff

All employees of the Council, including those above, have a responsibility to:

- Be aware of the Council's legal equality duties and our organisation's commitments and what they mean for them in their roles.
- Treat service users, colleagues and residents with dignity and respect whilst responding positively and appropriately to meet diverse needs.
- Ensure their behaviour towards colleagues and service users is of the appropriate standard and challenging and reporting to managers incidents where equality practice has not been followed, including discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
- Encourage respect, understanding and dignity for everyone living, working, and visiting the district.
- Consider equality in the course of their work and ensure that due regard is given to protected groups at the start of and through the development of any new policy, procedure, project, or function. They should share their findings with those making decisions so that they are fully informed.
- Highlight issues in existing policies and functions for equality relevance, taking steps to mitigate any equality issues.
- Consult where appropriate with service users from the community especially protected groups to inform the decision-making process when designing services.
- Ensure that they supply enough information in their reports to enable those making decisions to pay due regard to the needs of protected groups.

All employees have the right to be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. If an individual feels that they have not been treated fairly, they can contact:

- Their manager, or the next tier manager
- Human Resources
- Trade Union

The above are expected to take such complaints seriously, to treat information confidentially, to investigate as necessary using the Council's established complaints procedure, and to ensure that no victimisation of any of the parties takes place.

All employees have individual responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 which include:

- Not to discriminate in any matter of employment or service delivery against individuals who hold a protected characteristic and those who do not
- Not to induce or attempt to induce any colleagues to discriminate
- Not to harass, abuse, intimidate or victimise, other colleagues or members of the public
- To take appropriate action if there are apparent breaches in the policy

Human Resources

Human Resources are responsible for workforce profiling and ensuring a fair and equitable employment and equal pay policy.

Equality Officer

The Equality Officer, a member of the Corporate Services team, will collate and report on equality activity as required by legislation and provide advice on compliance issues.

The Equality Officer will also monitor progress against equality objectives and report as required by the Equality Act (2010).

Contractors/Partners

Where the Council's services are provided by external contractors or third parties based on a specification set by the Council, these contractors or third parties are responsible for implementing the Equality Policy when providing these services on the Council's behalf. This applies also to sub-contractors.

All contracts and service agreements include arrangements which make sure our funded providers can meet our legal duties for equality and inclusion. This includes a requirement to monitor services by protected characteristic and use this to inform service improvement.

The Council will monitor the performance of contractors and/or third parties and take all necessary steps to ensure good performance.

4. HOW WILL WE ENSURE COMPLIANCE?

Each Head of Service and Manager will be responsible for assessing their service areas existing and future functions, strategies, projects, and formal policies, highlighting any that may have an adverse impact and carrying out a full assessment where it is appropriate.

Equality Monitoring

Whenever the Council requests personal information needed for equality monitoring it will:

- Only ask for the information that is required
- Explain why the information is needed and how it will be used
- Ensure that individuals cannot be identified from the information collected, especially when the results are shared or made public
- Act legally in relation to confidentiality, data protection and freedom of information

Training

Appropriate training will be given to all employees on their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

Complaints

If a member of the public feels that they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly especially in relation to a protected characteristic this should be reported to the Corporate Complaints Officer.

Scope of this Policy

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, placements, contractors, and elected members of the Council and will be reviewed as and when required.

Communication

This policy will be made available via Dover District Council's website and the staff intranet.

GUIDANCE NOTE - PRONOUNS

Why are gender pronouns important?

Dover District Council is committed to equality, diversity, and inclusion. As a service provider and employer, we want people to be confident to be themselves.

If a person chooses to tell you their pronouns (in their email signature or phonebook entry, or when introducing themselves), they are simply letting you know how you can refer to them, without you having to make any assumptions.

What are pronouns (or “gender pronouns”)?

Pronouns are used in language all the time when we refer to ourselves or other people. Examples of pronouns you might use to refer to others are:

- **He/him/his** (for someone who might identify as male)
- **She/her/hers** (for someone who might identify as female)
- **They/them/their** (for someone who might not identify as male or female, these pronouns are ‘gender neutral;’ they are also used when referring to multiple people).

Why would someone tell you their gender pronouns or add their pronouns to their email signature?

If a person chooses to tell you their pronouns (in their email signature or when introducing themselves), they are simply letting you know how you can refer to them, without you having to make any assumptions.

This is important as people typically make assumptions about what pronouns to use for someone. For example, if a person’s appearance seems to be female and they have a ‘female’ name, we would be likely to use she/her/hers when talking to or about them. If a person’s appearance seems to be male and they have a ‘male’ name, we would likely use he/him/his.

In most cases this may well be the correct pronoun but that is not the case for everyone. So, when a person tells you their pronouns or includes them on their email signature, they are simply taking the guesswork away for you.

What is the Council doing?

As part of the Council’s ongoing efforts to be inclusive of all gender identities anyone wishing to add pronouns to their email signature under their name and job title are encouraged to do so.

The suggested format would be as follows: (Pronouns: she/her/hers);
(Pronouns: he/him/his); (Pronouns: they/them/theirs).