

**Report for: Community, People and Equalities
PDG**

Date of Meeting:	25 March 2025
Subject:	Single Equality Scheme
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Jane Lock, Cabinet Member for Working Environment
Responsible Officer:	Matthew Page, Head of People, Performance and Waste; Stephen Carr, Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager
Exempt:	N/A
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1: Single Equality Scheme 2025 Appendix 2: Equality Action Plan Report 2024/25

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To provide Members with an update on action taken to help meet the Council's statutory duties under the Equality Act (2010).

Recommendation(s):

- 1. That Members recommend to Cabinet that they approve the Single Equality Scheme together with the Equality Objectives for 2025/26.**

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** The Equality Act (2010) replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with the aim of simplifying the law and removing inconsistencies. The Act places a requirement on public bodies to demonstrate compliance with each part of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

- 1.2 Under the Equality Act 2010 local authorities have a duty to have ‘due regard’ to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 1.3 Underpinning the General Duties are Specific Duties which require public authorities to:
- Publish information that demonstrates how the authority is meeting the General Duty (updating this at least annually).
 - Publish one or more specific and measurable objectives to achieve the General Duty (updating these at least every four years).
 - Publish the information and objectives in an accessible way, so that the public can see for themselves how the authority is performing.
- 1.4 ‘Information’ includes that relating to the protected characteristics of employees and other people affected by policies and practices:
- Workforce profiles (this can include data about recruitment, training, promotion, flexible working, maternity returners, grievance/issues, dismissal, leavers, service, pay, satisfaction, Members). Only applies where the organisation has more than 150 employees.
 - Service user/community profiles (this can include information about outcomes such as health, safety and wellbeing, achievement such as skills and education, access to services, satisfaction, complaints, feedback, demographics).
- 1.5 Case law has clarified that considerations of equality should not only be placed at the centre of policy development but that bodies subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty must apply this duty to the carrying out of any functions of a public body not just statutory functions.
- 1.6 Local authorities also have specific duties under the Act to publish Equality Information annually and ‘Equality Objectives’ at least every four years. All such information is either included in this report or signposted to. The Council’s [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion webpages](#) were updated in 2023/24 to better promote this information. The [Equality Impact Assessments](#) webpage lists all the Equality Impact Assessments the Council has completed (since September 2023) that are in the public domain.
- 1.7 The Council wants to understand the needs and views of our residents and people working in our district. We have a dedicated [web page](#) to access all our consultations and welcome residents to participate. The public and interested stakeholders are encouraged to respond to consultations via the “[Let’s Talk Mid Devon](#)” portal.

- 1.8 Whilst the Council aims to provide high-quality services to all who live or work in the district, we recognise people may wish to complain, or pay a compliment to our officers or give us suggestions on how we could improve a service. Full details for providing feedback are available on our [website](#) using a number of different mediums.
- 1.9 The Single Equality Scheme has been reviewed and updated by officers (Appendix 1). This is a detailed strategy document which sets out the Council's approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. This document has been revised and updated for 2025/26. Any changes to the document are marked in red text. The document is now structured in four sections:
1. Introduction
 2. Equality Profile for Mid Devon
 3. Equality Objectives
 4. Mid Devon District Council – Working Practices
- 1.10 A key addition to the Single Equality Scheme 2025 is a new section on Roles and Responsibilities.

2.0 Equality Objectives

- 2.1 In 2024/25, the Council changed its approach to Equality Objectives to make them more specific and measurable whilst retaining the ambitious outcomes we wish to deliver.
- 2.2 Progress to meet the Equality Objectives in 2024/25 is detailed in the Equality Action Plan Report at Appendix 2.
- 2.3 The Equality Objectives for 2025/26 are arranged by six themes, and proposed measurement is provided in parentheses. They have been discussed by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group and reviewed by Leadership Team. Some adjustments have been made to the Objectives since 2024/25, these are:
- A simplification of the reporting measure for “Tackling damp and mould in council housing stock”.
 - Widening out the equality objective relating to our leisure offer to carers
 - Adjusting the equality objective relating to financial drop in sessions for tenants to an annual cost of living event.
 - Closing the equality objective relating to accessible Council facilities. This objective related principally to the Changing Places grant monies which have been successfully utilised to create accessible toilets at Exe Valley and Culm Valley leisure centres.

2.4 Equality Objectives for 2025/26

1. Meeting the needs of an aging population.

- Implement the Meeting Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document (narrative update)
- Provide housing adaptations in MDH housing stock (Number per year)

- Provide adaptations for adults in private sector housing through grant awards (Number per year)
 - Increase our understanding of MDH tenants through the “Getting to Know You” project (% of residents with data captured)
- 2. Overcoming the problems faced by vulnerable individuals caused by rural isolation.**
- The Council, and partners, effectively signpost individuals to relevant information e.g. neighbourhood officers signpost vulnerable individuals to support, MDH surgeries (narrative update).
 - Implement the Care Leavers Council Tax Discount Policy (household uptake)
 - Carry out MDH Neighbourhood roadshows, “Neighbourhood Matters” based in communities where tenant satisfaction is low (Number of events/ attendees)
- 3. Overcoming the effects of multiple disadvantage in families and individuals with complex needs.**
- As a partner of The Community Safety Partnership, practitioners within the Council support to transition from being Trauma Aware to Trauma Informed (CSP Annual report)
 - Tackling damp and mould in council housing stock (% of homes reporting damp or mould that quarter)
 - Increase the understanding of MDH tenants through the “Getting to Know You” project (% of residents with data captured)
 - Deliver on Serious Violence Duty through the Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy 2024-29 (narrative update)
 - Provide adaptations for children in the private housing sector (Number of grants approved)
 - Monitor cases dealt with where hoarding, cluttering or cleanliness in the home is an issue (Number of cases)
 - Monitor homeless approaches (Number per year)
 - Undertake private rented housing inspections and monitor those that related to damp and mould where action is taken (Number per year)
- 4. To continue to concentrate on mental health issues within MDDC and the wider community.**
- Include regular articles contained within internal communications (Number of articles in “The Link”)
 - Ensure that our leisure facilities are accessible and affordable for all carers and young carers, providing them with opportunities to enhance their mental and physical wellbeing. Committing to removing barriers to access and actively encouraging their participation and social connections (narrative and number of people taking up the offer)
 - Increase our understanding of MDH tenants through the “Getting to know You” project (% of residents with data captured). Supported by the MDH Vulnerability Policy.
 - As a partner of The Community Safety Partnership, practitioners within the Council support to transition from being Trauma Aware to Trauma Informed (CSP Annual report)

- Host an annual cost of living event supported by external agencies such as CHAT to address financial stress (narrative)

5. Secure decent digital connectivity for all of Mid Devon

- Monitor and lobby for better digital connectivity (narrative update)

6. Continuous improvement at Mid Devon District Council

- Staff and Councillors undertake training to improve their understanding of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Equality and Diversity course, % completion/ uptake)
- Develop a better understanding of our workforce (% of workforce with equality monitoring data)

2.5 Progress to meet our Equality Objectives will continue to be monitored by the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Group and be reported annually to the Community, People and Equalities PDG. Progress to meet our Equality Objectives in 2024/25 is detailed at Appendix 2.

3.0 Further Updates on Equalities, Diversity, and Inclusion

3.1 Gender Pay Gap

Information about our pay policy and pay supplement policy was presented to Cabinet in March 2025. Within our pay policy we include reporting on the council's gender pay gap, this is included at Table 1 for ease of reference.

	Mean Average Hourly Rate	Median Average Hourly Rate
Male	£16.48	£14.91
Female	£16.53	£15.43
HMRC % Gap	-0.30%	-3.49%

Table 1: Mid Devon District Council gender pay gap, as reported in the Pay Policy 2024.

3.2 The mean gender pay gap for the whole economy (according to the ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) figures) is 7.7%. The Council's mean gender pay gap is -0.30% and is therefore significantly lower.

3.4 EDI Group

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Group meets four times per year. This group contains both council officers and elected members. It has had a wide ranging focus over the past 12 months, including:

- Monitoring the Equality Action Plan
- Reviewing of the Single Equality Scheme and the Equality Objectives
- Considering the establishment of Equality Champions
- Monitoring complaints where protected characteristics are indicated
- Considering ongoing work from regional equality networks

3.5 Household Support Fund

The Government stopped the winter fuel allowance for some pensioners depending on what benefits they were in receipt of, for example those on 'pension credit' would still qualify. Mid Devon and other Local Authorities assisted in a campaign to promote the uptake of pension credit. Nationally the Department for Work and Pensions received many applications which caused a backlog. It's likely some pensioners are still waiting for an outcome on their application and/ or winter fuel payment.

To help those that were unlikely to qualify, The Council created a scheme using some of the funds from Housing Support Fund (6) and invited 325 households to claim awards (energy vouchers) of up to £300 for a couple. The scheme was adjusted to pay food vouchers where applicants paid a provider and had less to live on. The uptake was very good at 82.46%, circa. £67k.

3.6 Mental Health Champions

In 2023/24 it was recognised that there was a lack of knowledge across the Council of the Mental Health First Aiders. The group reviewed their role and rebranded, becoming the Mental Health Champions. This clarifies their role as listening and signposting, and recognising the importance of line managers still asking about wellbeing at monthly team meetings and 1:1s.

3.7 To raise awareness, regular wellbeing articles are featured in the internal staff newsletter and details of the scheme are promoted on staff notice boards and the staff intranet, and a Mental Health Champions booklet was produced. The group meets each quarter, where a basic reporting of requests with an indication of the broad theme is discussed (without breaching confidentiality). A dedicated Teams Channel was created where resources are shared.

3.8 Leisure services to support unpaid carers

A proposed pilot project to support unpaid carers by providing access to leisure services is likely to have several positive equalities impacts. It is being carefully considered to ensure that the project is inclusive and accessible to all carers:

- The project can include programs designed specifically for different demographics, such as young carers or older adults, addressing the unique needs of various groups.
- By removing some of the financial barriers to leisure services, the project promotes equal access for all unpaid carers, regardless of socioeconomic status. This is particularly beneficial for low-income carers who may otherwise lack the means to afford leisure activities.
- Involve care ambassador representatives from the community in the planning process to ensure that the project meets the needs of all carers.
- Prior to launching the pilot, an equality impact assessment will be undertaken to identify potential disparities and areas for improvement.

3.9 Menopause Awareness

The provision in place for staff regarding menopause awareness is under review. Following recent examples and insight gained within our Leisure Services, which were reported in national publications, The Council is in early discussions with a third party to provide staff awareness sessions. Other considerations on how we help raise awareness and educate staff are being considered and will be discussed by the Leadership Team to ensure approaches taken align with our wider commitments to staff.

Financial Implications

The Single Equality Scheme does not have any financial implications itself beyond those identified in individual service's equality impact assessments.

Legal Implications

The Single Equality Scheme contributes to the Council's complying with the Equality Act (2010). Failure to adopt Equality Objectives or to collect relevant data could lead to the Council being in breach of the Equality Act 2010.

Risk Assessment

Approving the Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives helps to ensure the council meets its legal responsibilities in relation to the Equality Act (2010).

Impact on Climate Change

No impacts identified for this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

The Single Equality Scheme sets out the Council's approach to delivering improved equality outcomes for the district. It details an equality profile for the area and outlines specific objectives the council is undertaking.

The adoption and monitoring of Equality Objectives helps to ensure that the needs of all protected groups are taken into account in service delivery. The reframing of these objectives will ensure that progress being achieved by the Council can be more easily measured and demonstrated.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The Equality Objectives contribute to various sections of the Corporate Plan, but in particular help support the Council achieve its objectives under the Community, People and Equalities theme, helping to ensure that the Council is "Involving and Engaging with our communities, ensuring everyone is treated with equity and respect, and protecting our most vulnerable."

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151 Officer

Date: 11 March 2025

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 11 March 2025

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

Date: 11 March 2025

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 25/02/2025

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (No)

Appendix: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information. (No)

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Dr Steve Carr

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Background papers: