



***Draft* Single Equality Scheme 2025**

**A Strategy for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

## **Section 1: Introduction**

Mid Devon District Council's Single Equality Scheme sets out how we are working to implement the equality duties that are set out in the Equality Act (2010).

The Equality Act (2010) protects us all from unfair treatment because of a physical or other specific characteristic that is fundamental to our being. It also requires public authorities to observe the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations.

Through the Equality Act (2010) legislation, we are all legally protected against discrimination on the basis of:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Section 149 of the Act imposes a duty on 'public authorities' and other bodies when exercising public functions to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct.
- Advance equality of opportunity (remove or minimise disadvantage; meet people's needs; take account of disabilities; and encourage participation in public life).
- Foster good relations between people (tackle prejudice and promote understanding).

These three parts of the Duty are complementary but must also be considered separately. The protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership only applies in relation to Work.

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.

'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).

### **Our Vision**

Mid Devon District Council is committed to providing quality services delivered in a fair and equitable way and to promoting good relations between different groups within the

community. We value the positive contribution that all our residents bring to the district, and want to work with individuals and groups to continue to improve our services and to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion.

### **How will we achieve this?**

In order to achieve our vision we will:

- Seek to understand the needs of our community
- Know our customers and their specific needs
- Involve the community in changes that might affect them
- Develop services that can respond to the requirements of different residents
- Develop an inclusive working environment
- Ensure equality in procurement and commissioning
- Promote equality through working with others
- Recognise the needs of specific equality groups

## Section 2: Equality Profile for Mid Devon

In order to provide services that meet the needs of people who live, work and study in our region, we must first understand our community. This equality profile aims to provide a brief overview of the people living in our district. This data is drawn from a range of published sources including the 2021 Census, the Office for National Statistics (ONS), Public Health England and various Government Departments. Wherever possible, the most recent data has been used.

Mid Devon is a rural district lying equidistant between the north and south coasts. Covering an area of 91,290.07 hectares, Mid Devon has three principle towns – Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton. These towns provide services for surrounding rural communities, Figure 1.



Figure 1: A map of Mid Devon showing electoral boundaries and major settlements.

### 2.1 Population

In 2021, the population of Mid Devon was 82,852 (51.2% female and 48.8% male, data derived from the 2021 Census). This is a 6.5% increase since the 2011 Census when the population was 77,750. This increase in population is lower than the average for the South West overall (7.8%). Mid Devon ranked 281<sup>st</sup> out of 309 local authority areas in England for total population, an increase of two places in a decade. **The population growth in Mid Devon is driven by internal migration (ONS, 2023) with Devon attracting large numbers of people in their late career/early retirement.**

**The population estimate for Mid Devon for 2023 was 84,100 (ONS, 2023 mid-year population estimate). This indicates that the population of the district continues to increase.**

The population pyramid for Mid Devon for 2021 indicates that the region has an aging population (Figure 2).

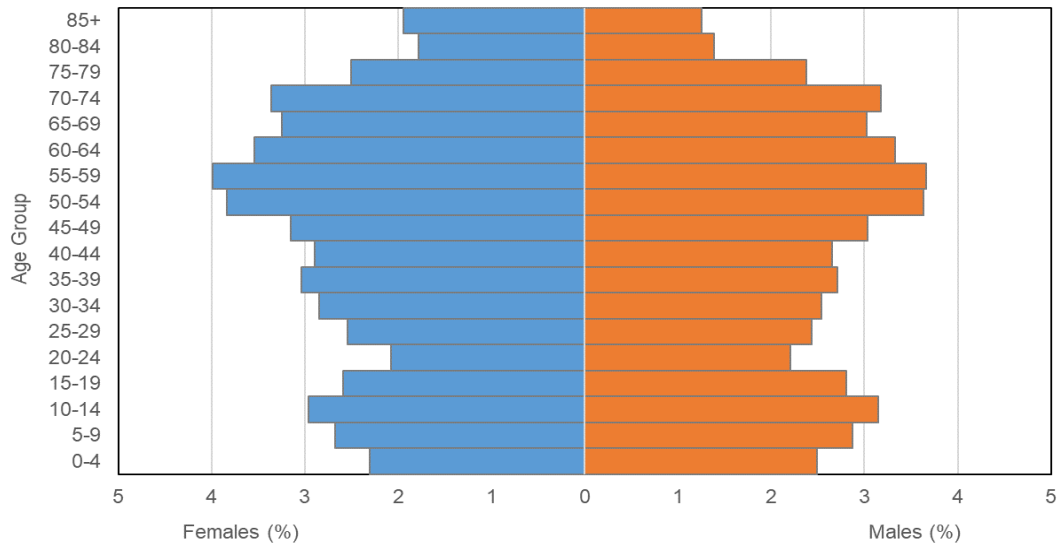


Figure 2: Population Pyramid for Mid Devon, 2021. Data from the Office for National Statistics.

The population distribution for Mid Devon shows a number of key differences to the South West (average), Figure 3:

- Mid Devon has more people aged 0-14 than the South West
- Mid Devon has fewer people aged 20-34 than the South West
- Mid Devon has slightly more people aged 50-54 than the South West

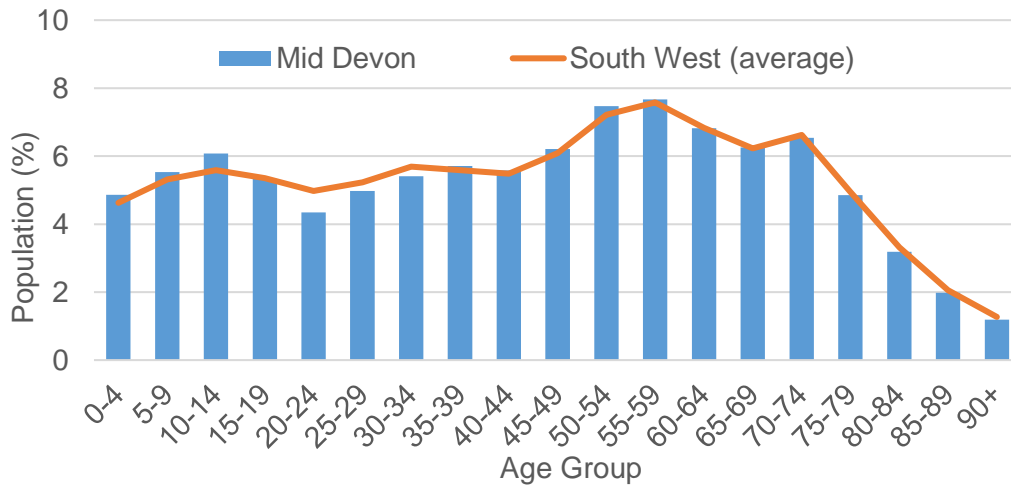


Figure 3: Population Distribution by age for Mid Devon and the South West of England, 2021. Data derived from the 2021 Census, LG Inform Plus.

The median age of Mid Devon residents has increased from 44 years old (2011 Census) to 46 years old (2021 Census). **In 2023, the median age was estimated to have increased further to 47.2 years (Data derived from the ONS, Mid-year population estimates: components of change).**

In Mid Devon there has been an increase of 25.4% in people aged 65 years and over in the past ten years (2011 to 2021), Figure 4. There has also been an increase of 1.8% in people aged 15 to 64 years old, and an increase of 1.1% in children aged under 15 years. When considering five year age bands, there has been a decrease in populations in six groups most notably those aged 40-44 (-19%), age band 45-49 (-14%), and 0-4 (-11%). The

largest increases are for those aged 70-74 (+45%), 75-79 (+39%), and those aged 90 years old and above (+32%).

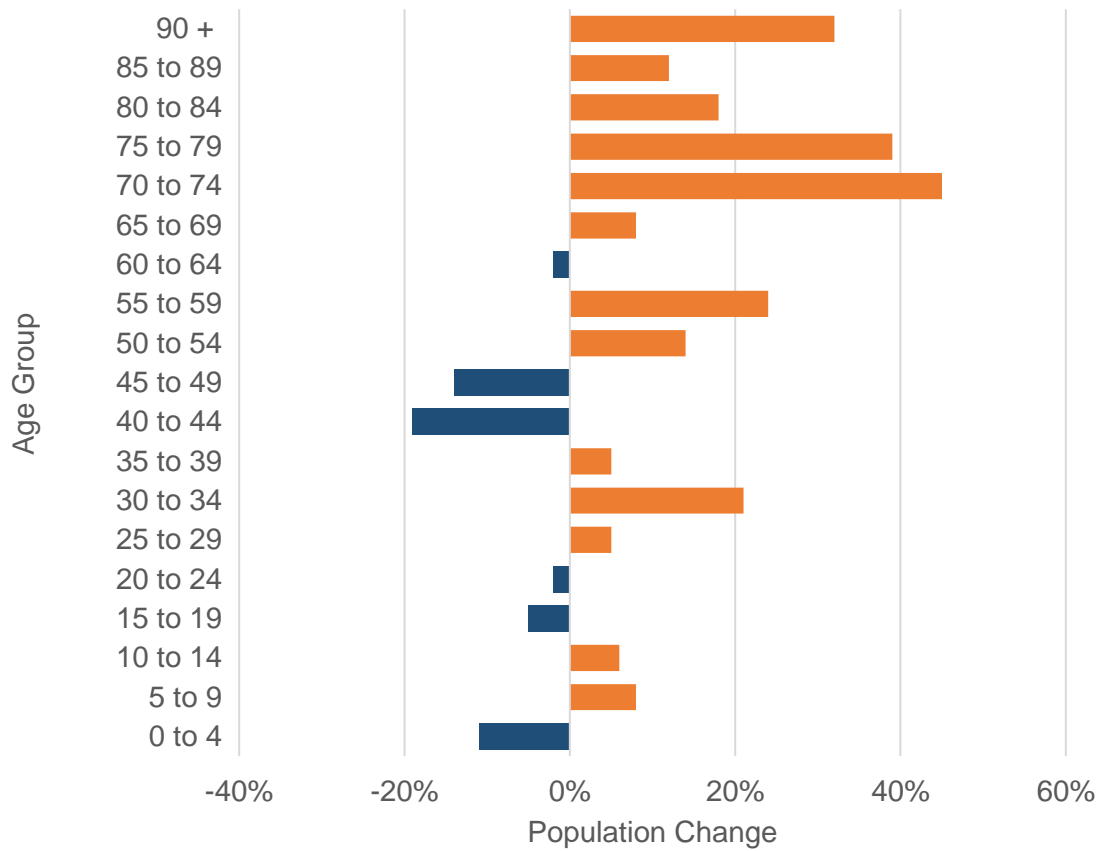


Figure 4: Population Change (%) by Age Group in Mid Devon, 2011 to 2021. Data derived from the 2011 and 2021 Census.

Mid Devon has a comparatively low population density. As of 2023, Mid Devon had a population density of 0.92 people per hectare (ONS, Mid-year estimates) compared to 4.43 people per hectare across England.

## 2.2 Ethnicity

In the 2021 Census, 81,068 (97.8%) residents in Mid Devon identified as White, with 1.1% identifying as Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups, 0.7% as Asian/Asian British, 0.3% selecting 'Other ethnic group', and 0.1% identifying as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British, Figure 5.

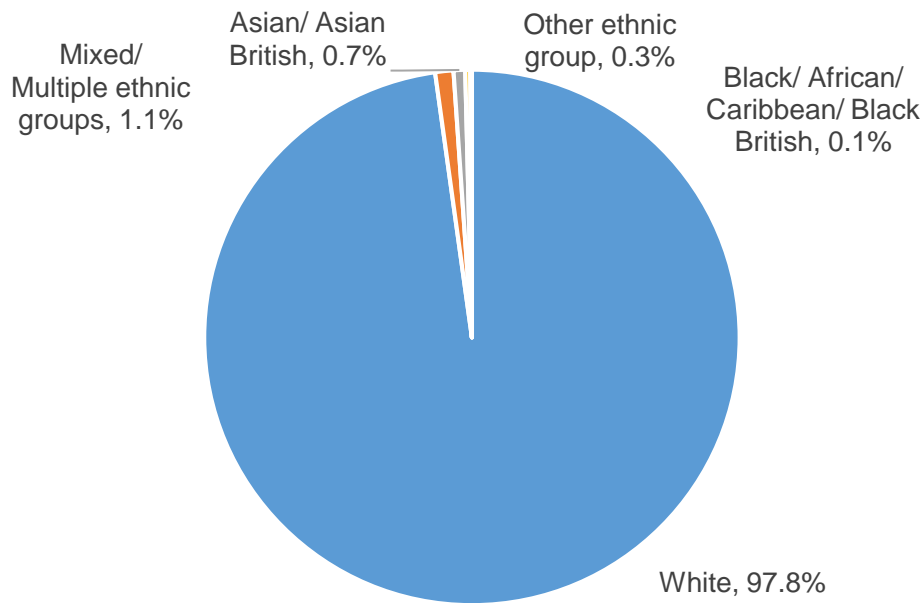


Figure 5: The ethnic split of Mid Devon residents in 2021. Data derived from the 2021 Census, LG Inform Plus.

In the 2021 Census, around 75,700 Mid Devon residents said they were born in England. This represented 91.4% of the local population. The figure has risen from just under 71,900 in 2011, which at the time represented 92.4% of Mid Devon’s population.

Wales was the next most represented country of birth, with just under 1,000 Mid Devon residents reporting this country of birth (1.2%). This figure has remained relatively unchanged from 2011.

The number of Mid Devon residents born in Poland rose from just over 650 in 2011 (0.9% of the local population) to just over 850 in 2021 (1.0%).

### 2.3 Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term covering sexual identity, attraction, and behaviour. In the Census 2021 a new question on sexual orientation was asked. It was a voluntary question asked of those aged 16 years and over.

The sexual orientation of the residents of Mid Devon is presented in Table 1. Mid Devon has a slightly higher proportion of individuals reporting as straight or heterosexual than the South West or England. The total number of people reporting a sexuality other than straight or heterosexual in Mid Devon was 1,674 people.

Table 1: Sexual Orientation as recorded in the 2021 Census for Mid Devon, the South West and England. Percentages are calculated from the total usual resident population aged 16 years and over.

	Mid Devon	South West	England
<b>Straight or heterosexual</b>	90.18 %	89.84 %	89.37 %
<b>Gay or Lesbian</b>	1.13 %	1.48 %	1.54 %
<b>Bisexual</b>	1.06 %	1.29 %	1.29 %
<b>Pansexual</b>	0.18 %	0.11 %	0.10 %
<b>Asexual</b>	0.06 %	0.06 %	0.06 %
<b>Queer</b>	0.01 %	0.03 %	0.03 %
<b>All other sexual orientations</b>	0.02 %	0.13 %	0.16 %
<b>Not answered</b>	7.36 %	7.06 %	7.45 %

## 2.4 Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to a person's sense of their own gender, whether male, female or another category such as non-binary. This may or may not be the same as their sex registered at birth.

In the Census 2021 a new question on gender identity was asked. It was a voluntary question asked of those aged 16 years and over. The Gender Identity of Mid Devon residents is presented in Table 2. Mid Devon has a slightly higher proportion of individuals reporting their gender identity the same as sex registered at birth than the South West or England. The total number of people reporting a gender identity other than the sex registered at birth in Mid Devon was 240 people.

Table 2: Gender Identity as recorded in the 2021 Census for Mid Devon, the South West and England. Percentages are calculated from the total usual resident population aged 16 years and over.

	Mid Devon	South West	England
<b>Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth</b>	94.15 %	93.99 %	93.47 %
<b>Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given</b>	0.17 %	0.14 %	0.25 %
<b>Trans woman</b>	0.07 %	0.08 %	0.10 %
<b>Trans man</b>	0.05 %	0.08 %	0.10 %
<b>Non-binary</b>	0.03 %	0.07 %	0.06 %
<b>All other gender identities</b>	0.03 %	0.04 %	0.04 %
<b>Not answered</b>	5.50 %	5.59 %	5.98 %

## 2.5 Disability

The age-standardised proportion of non-disabled residents decreased in Mid Devon between the 2011 and 2021 censuses, but rose across England. Age-standardised



proportions enable comparisons between populations over time and across geographies, as they account for differences in the population size and age structure. In Mid Devon, the proportion of non-disabled residents fell from 83.3% in 2011 to 82.4% in 2021, while across England it rose from 80.7% to 82.3%.

The percentage of people who identified as being “disabled and limited a lot” in Mid Devon decreased from 7.1% to 6.6%, while the percentage of people who identified as being “disabled and limited a little” increased from 9.6% to 10.9%.

The Census in 2021 was undertaken during the coronavirus pandemic. This may have influenced how many people perceived their health status and activity limitations, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

## 2.6 Religion

In the 2021 Census, 45.0% of Mid Devon residents reported having “No religion”, an increase from 28.5% in 2011, Figure 6. This question is voluntary and as such there can be varying response rates between different areas or censuses. Across the South West, the percentage of residents who described themselves as having “No religion” increased from 29.3% to 44.1%, while across England the percentage increased from 24.8% to 36.7%.

In 2021, 47.3% of people in Mid Devon described themselves as Christian (62.1% in 2011), while 6.3% did not answer this question (8.4% in 2011).

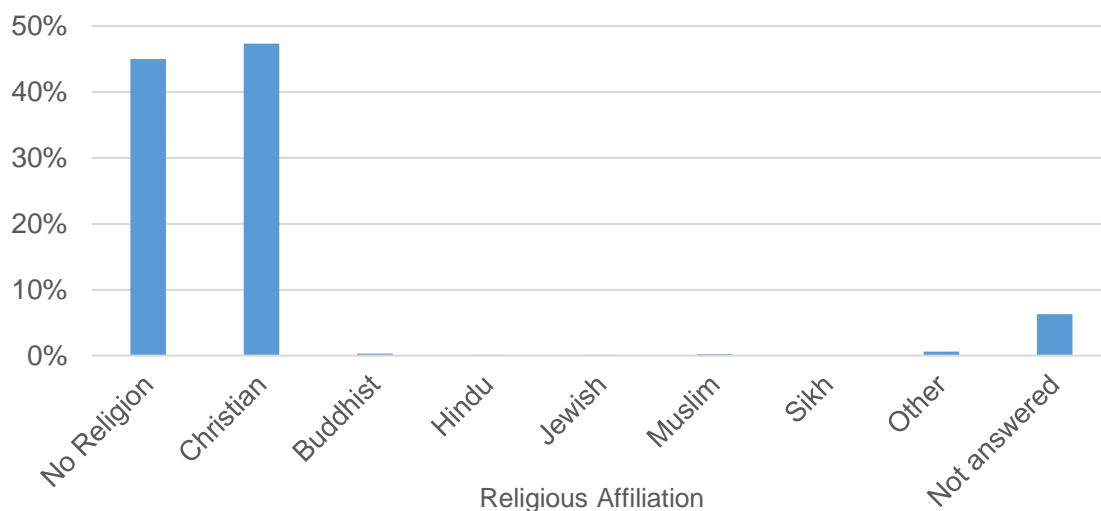


Figure 6: Religious Affiliation of residents in Mid Devon, 2021. Data from 2021 Census.

## 2.7 Economy

Strategically located on South West England’s main transport and communication corridor, Mid Devon is mid-way between Taunton and Exeter. Mid Devon has a number of business parks which are mostly concentrated around the edges of the three main towns and along the M5 corridor at Junctions 27 and 28, and at Willand. These sites have extremely high occupancy rates and units tend to be filled very quickly when one becomes available. New sites are under development and a major new development of up to 5,000 houses are planned for the ‘Culm Garden Village’. Key employment sectors in Mid Devon include Manufacturing (specialist/ light industrial), Agricultural, Food and Drink, and (Green) Tourism.

In Quarter 2 of 2024 (12 months ending), the overall employment rate for those aged 16-64 in Mid Devon was 84.6% (Data sourced from NOMIS). This shows an increase from the previous two reporting periods (83.2% for Q4 2023, and 82.9% for Q1 2024). The employment rate for Mid Devon is higher than the South West (79.9%).

In the 2021 Census, the total number of residents that were “economically active” was 61.1% in 2021, a decrease from 2011 (64.2%), Figure 7. In 2021, 1.7% said they were unemployed, compared with 2.4% in 2011. The percentage of retired Mid Devon residents increased from 25.3% to 26.5%.

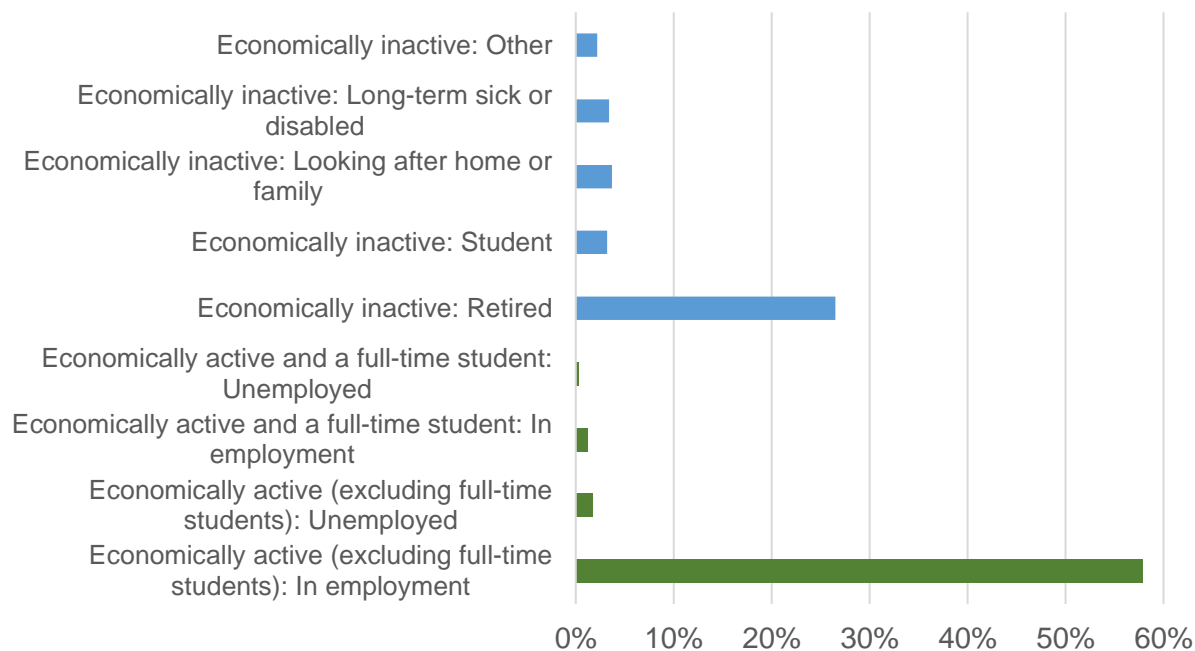


Figure 7: Employment status of Mid Devon residents, 2021.

The occupation of Mid Devon residents is shown in Figure 8. The most common occupation is classified as “Professional”, with this replacing “skilled trades” as the top profession in the district between 2011 and 2021. There has been the largest increase in the “Managers, directors and senior officials” category (+1,067), with the largest decrease (-533) for “Skilled trades”.

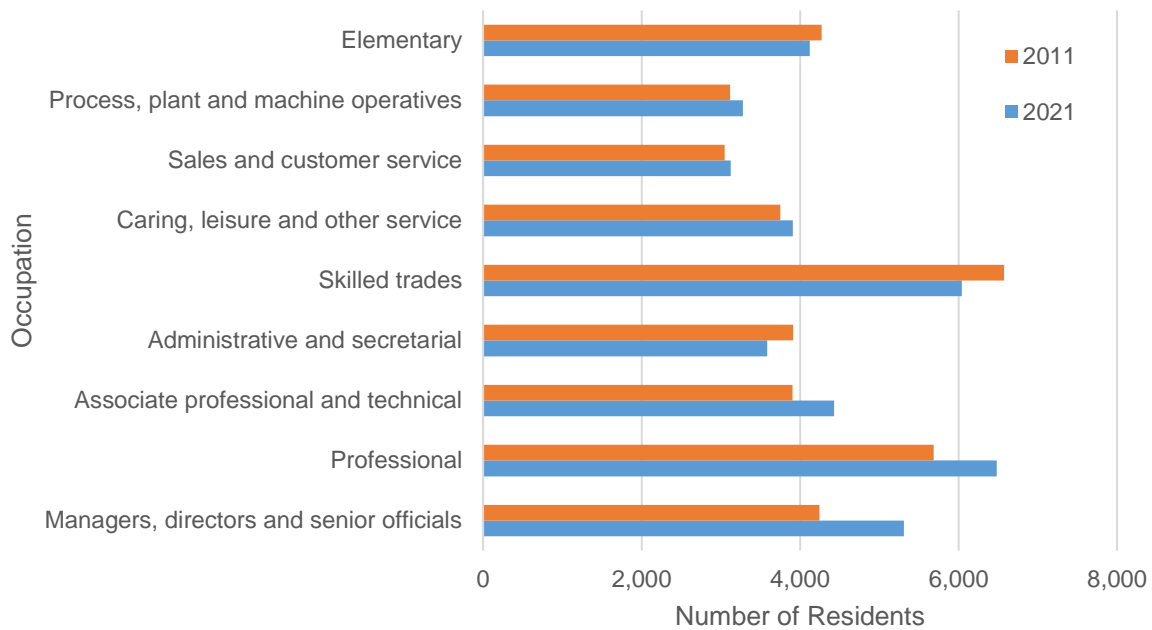


Figure 8: Occupations of the residents of Mid Devon, 2011 and 2021. Data from Census 2011 and 2021.

## 2.8 Housing

According to the 2021 Census, there are 35,633 households in Mid Devon. Mid Devon District Council has a social housing stock of approximately 3,000 homes. Household tenure in Mid Devon is:

- Owned outright (39.6%)
- Owned with a mortgage or a loan (28.0%)
- Rented from private landlord or letting agency (16.0%)
- Rented from Council or equivalent (7.9%)
- Rented from other social landlords (4.7%)
- Rented from other private owners, including from relative or employer (2.5%)
- Shared ownership (1.0%)
- Occupiers living rent free (0.1%)

The largest number of households live in properties owned outright (39.6%). This compares with 42.2% for Devon County and 37.7% for the South West.

The second largest number of households live in properties owned with a mortgage or loan (28.0%). This compares with 26.0% for Devon County and 28.2% for the South West.

Housing affordability has changed dramatically in Mid Devon. In 1997, the ratio of median earnings to average house prices was 4.16. In 2023, this had increased to 9.27 (ONS, 2024. House price to workplace-based earnings ratio). This rise is despite an increase in median income from £14,396 (1997) to £31,591 (2023) and reflects the significant increases in house prices in the district, of 389% between 1997 and 2023. The affordability of homes is driven more by house prices than wages, although both are factors.

In 2022, it was estimated that 14.6% of Mid Devon households were in fuel poverty (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero) compared to 12.9% for the South West and 13.1% of households in England.

## 2.9 Deprivation

When considering deprivation, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a useful tool. IMD is a combined measure of deprivation based on 37 indicators that have been grouped into seven domains. Each domain reflects a different aspect of deprivation experienced by individuals living in an area. Using the IMD produced using 2019 data, Mid Devon is ranked 9<sup>th</sup> (out of 18) districts in the South West, and 174<sup>th</sup> out of 317 authorities in England. When calculating the IMD, England is broken down into 32,844 small geographical areas called LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas). Mid Devon has no LSOAs that are within the 10% most deprived in England. Figure 9 shows the distribution of Mid Devon LSOAs according to levels of multiple deprivation.

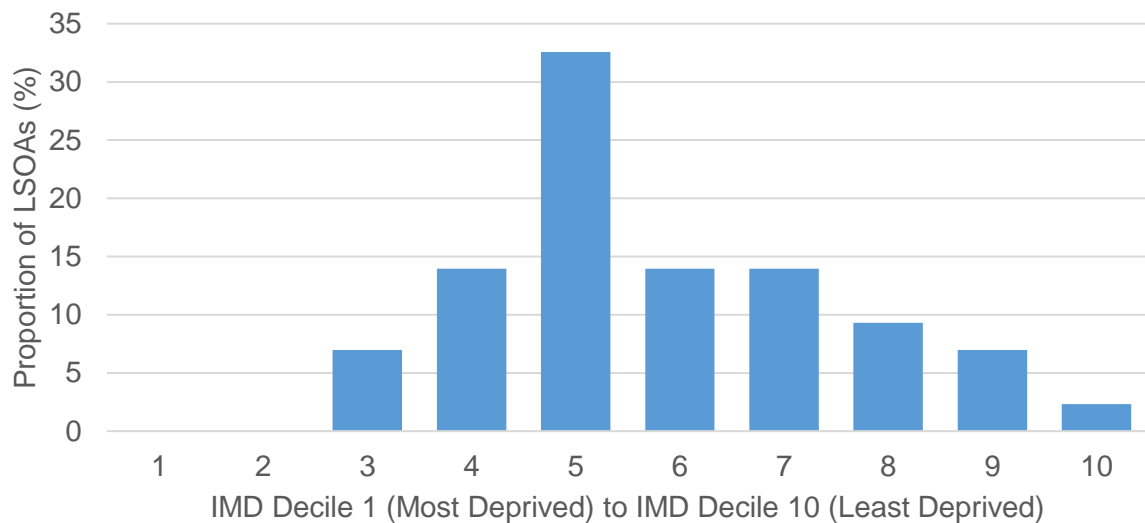


Figure 9: Proportion of Mid Devon LSOAs in each IMD decile, data from LG Inform for 2019.

When considering the seven domains which make up the IMD tool, Mid Devon achieves the following rank position in 2019 for each week (where rank 1 is the most deprived district in England, and rank 317 is the least deprived):

- Living Environment (24<sup>th</sup>)
- Barriers to Housing and Services (68<sup>th</sup>)
- Education, Skills and Training (147<sup>th</sup>)
- Employment (186<sup>th</sup>)
- Income (198<sup>th</sup>)
- Health and Disability (259<sup>th</sup>)
- Crime (284<sup>th</sup>)

This shows that using the IMD tool, the lowest scoring domain for Mid Devon is “Living Environment” which is calculated based on the quality of housing, air quality, and road traffic accidents. **The IMD is currently being updated, with a provisional release date of late 2025.**

## 2.10 Education

The Census asks residents about their highest level of educational qualification, Figure 10. There has been an increase in residents having higher levels of qualifications in Mid Devon, with the number of residents with a qualification at level 3 or above increasing from 39% (2011) to 49% (2021). The number of residents indicating they have no qualifications has decreased from 23% (2011) to 17% (2021).

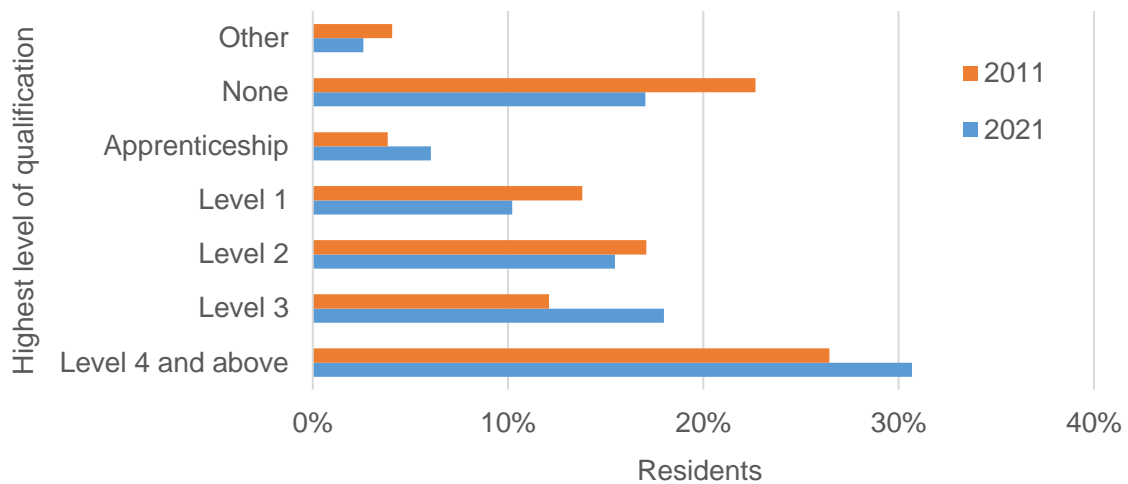


Figure 10: Highest level of qualification for residents of Mid Devon for 2011 and 2021, from Census data.

### 2.11 Access

Being a rural district, a large proportion of residents live in rural areas. This brings challenges for residents to access a variety of services, including employment opportunities. The average travel time to access key services by car in Mid Devon is 15.4 minutes (2019, Department for Transport), compared to 10.3 minutes for England. The average travel time to access key services in Mid Devon has increased from 12.8 minutes in 2014. Journey times are likely to be considerably longer when considering alternative forms of transport.

The need to be digitally connected in rural areas is also high. **In Spring 2024, 86.1% of homes in Mid Devon have superfast broadband available (data from Connected Nations, Ofcom). By this metric Mid Devon is ranked 364<sup>th</sup> out of 374 local authority areas in the UK.**

### 2.12 Health

In the 2021 Census, 48.9% of Mid Devon residents described their health as “very good”, increasing from 47.2% in 2011. Those describing their health as “good” fell from 35.5% to 34.5%. These are age-standardised proportions.

The proportion of Mid Devon residents describing their health as “very bad” was 1.0% (similar to 2011), while those describing their health as “bad” remained as 3.4%. This data reflects people’s own opinions in describing their overall health on a five point scale, from very good to very bad.

Census 2021 was conducted during the coronavirus pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and rated their health, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond.

Life expectancy has increased across the UK over the past 40 years, but has remained fairly stable over the past decade. Life expectancy (at birth) is higher in Mid Devon than the average for the UK, Table 3. There is some evidence for a slight decline in life expectancies for **2020-22** due to COVID-19 pandemic leading to a greater number of deaths than normal

in this period. Life expectancy at birth in 2019-20 was 84.7 years (female) and 81.4 years (males) in Mid Devon.

Table 3: Life Expectancy at Birth, 2020-2022. Data from LG Inform.

	Female	Male
Mid Devon	84.2 years	81.3 years
South West	84.2 years	80.3 years
England	83.0 years	79.1 years

Obesity levels are lower in children are measured at both reception year and in year 6 (Data from NHS England). For the 2023/24 academic year, the obesity levels were:

- Reception year: Mid Devon (9.4%), South West (8.7%), England (9.65%)
- Year 6: Mid Devon (17.5%), South West (18.9%), England (22.1%)

Obesity levels have increased in Mid Devon when measured at reception year, from 4.9% (2018/19 academic year) to the current figure, 9.4%. Similarly, when measured at Year 6, obesity levels have increased from 12.7% (2018/19 academic year) to 17.5% in 2023/24.

### 2.13 Marriage and Civil Partnership

Of Mid Devon residents aged 16 years and over, 30.0% said they had never been married or in a civil partnership in 2021, up from 26.4% in 2011 (Data from the 2011 and 2021 censuses).

In 2021, 50.7% said they were married or in a registered civil partnership, compared with 53.9% in 2011. The percentage of adults in Mid Devon that had divorced or dissolved a civil partnership increased from 9.7% to 10.0%.

## **Section 3: Equality Objectives**

Mid Devon District Council has reviewed its Equality Objectives for 2025/26 onwards. These are arranged by six themes, and proposed measurement is provided in parentheses.

- 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)



## Section 4: Mid Devon District Council – Working Practices

### 4.1 Knowing Our Customers – Equality Monitoring

Mid Devon District Council understands that it is important to know who uses our services. By comparing this with what we know about the community as a whole, we can see if there are any groups who are underrepresented, highlighting where there may be barriers to overcome.

Where customers are prepared to share information regarding equality, data is captured to inform and shape services and customer engagement based on customer needs. For example, the Housing service has been undertaking work to better understand its tenants.

The Mid Devon Housing “Getting to know you project” is surveying all tenants to gather a better understanding of our tenants to ensure we can tailor of services to meet specific needs. The estimated end date for the survey is October 2025 and is building upon our existing knowledge of our tenants.

Our Complaints and Feedback policy was reviewed in **August 2024**. It details our commitment to encourage and accept customer feedback of all types. This will enable the identification of recurring issues and support us to learn from any mistakes. It also sets standards for all staff in recording and managing feedback received.

As part of the complaints process within the Council, complainants are asked if they believe they have been discriminated against because of protected characteristics. If yes is selected, they are asked to provide details of their reasoning for this. This process enables the Council to identify any equality issues that may contribute to the complaint or problem. The equality information collected can be used to:

- Review service delivery
- Compare our performance over time
- Assist in the development of services in line with people’s needs
- Monitor the impact of any service changes

Under current legislation, we will publish relevant equality information. This includes:

- An equality profile of the district
- Workforce information

### 4.2 Involving the Community

As part of our commitment to good consultation, the Communications and Engagement Strategy and Action Plan were reviewed and approved during 2023. The Council is keen to make sure that people from different equality groups take part in consultation, and will try to find the most appropriate way to consult with them according to their needs.

The communications team uses multiple channels to engage and inform our communities to ensure we reach as many people as possible, with the resources available. We acknowledge that engaging with minority groups can be difficult in Mid Devon, particularly due to the limited diversity within the district. However, the communication team will engage with groups on an issues basis and will ensure all our communications are provided in multiple formats and channels. This is through Language Line, by ensuring our website is (WCAG)2 compliant and through our multiple channels – print, online, in person, social media, sign up notification systems and through our many stakeholders.

Mid Devon District Council will:

- Work with groups representing the interests of people from different equality groups to get feedback on proposed service changes particularly relevant to them
- Develop and support forms of consultation that are appropriate to the communication needs of different groups within the community
- Monitor and assess the consultation methods used and where necessary adapt them to meet the needs of different participations
- Publish the results of these consultations and feed them back into our decision-making processes in an open and responsible way

### **Customer feedback**

Mid Devon District Council positively welcomes feedback. We want to ensure residents' views, whether positive or negative, are noted and their concerns are addressed. We are aware that the Council's formal feedback process may be inaccessible to those sections of the community who have difficulties in accessing services. The Council encourages helper organisations to act as advocates for a complainant if necessary.

### **Mid Devon Housing**

Mid Devon Housing (MDH) is committed to listening to residents, and offers a wide range of opportunities for tenants to have their say using different communication methods and at a level that suits them. **When tenants get involved, it enables us to tailor our service to better meet the needs of tenants and provide real, positive outcomes for residents, communities and for MDH.**

Opportunities to get involved include:

#### **Online engagement:**

- Consultations – Involvement in any future changes that may have an impact on a tenant's home or neighbourhood. (we also post neighbourhood related consultations directly to those it affects)
- Annual report and newsletters - Every year, MDH produce and publish a report which reflects on their performance and achievements. We also publish quarterly newsletters. Even reading these publications means tenants are getting involved.
- Social media – Follow us on Facebook to keep up to date with the latest housing news @middevonhousing
- Let's Talk Mid Devon – Our online engagement hub where we post consultations, surveys, idea boards and housing news.
- Tpas - MDH are a member of TPAS. This allows tenants to join and take advantage of free support and training to help MDH continuously improve the housing service.

#### **Formal Engagement:**

- Focus groups – Where there is a common theme identified, MDH will hold focus groups for feedback, develop ideas and create change
- Local meetings – Sometimes we will host a meeting in certain areas if a specific topic or issue requires this
- Tenant resident associations – Made up of tenants and leaseholders living in an estate, block or street who meet quarterly to help improve their area and drive change. We encourage and support any neighbourhoods who wish to set up a TRA.

#### **Informal Engagement:**

- Community events – We host regular coffee mornings in our largest towns and organise ad hoc events across the district. From rural roadshows, housing matters events and police street surgeries, these events encourage tenants to pop by in an informal manner to discuss any issues they may be experiencing.
- Satisfaction surveys – A quick and easy way to give us feedback on a service

- Neighbourhood walkabouts – Meet with our housing officers twice yearly and join them on an estate walkabouts.
- Mid Devon in Bloom – Enter our yearly gardening competition

#### **Activities and Tools:**

- Mystery shopping – we will ask tenants that wish to take part to test the quality of one of our services such as repairs and let us know how we did.
- Champion roles – We have four roles available, Complaints, Estates, Publications and Sustainability. These roles provide tenants with the opportunity to drive service changes, from personal experiences or from their desire to promote positive service development.

### **4.3 Developing responsive services**

A primary factor in making a service accessible is providing information and advice in a usable and convenient format.

We seek to ensure that all users:

- Know about the relevant services they might need
- Are given support where necessary e.g. with completing forms
- Are confident about using and contacting a service and, if necessary, complaining about it

We will do this by:

- Communicating clearly both internally and externally
- Providing information in plain English
- Making services as internet accessible as possible
- Ensuring that buildings that are open to the public, including leisure and community facilities, can be accessed and used by all residents
- Making sure that our employees are trained and supported to deliver the highest possible levels of customer service in line with this policy

#### **Accessibility**

Mid Devon District Council will endeavour to make online services compliant with the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018. Website(s) or mobile app(s) will be made accessible by making them 'perceivable, operable, understandable and robust'.

#### **Changing services and policies**

Mid Devon District Council has a responsibility to assess the likely impact on residents and employees of policies or services it is proposing to change or introduce before they are adopted. This is to make sure that any changes do not disproportionately affect any particular group, and any adverse impacts can be reduced as much as possible. Policies, in particular, are frequently adapted or replaced to reflect changes in the legal, social and political environment. Our objective is to build equality and diversity into the policy making process and to make that process clear, open and inclusive.

The Council undertakes detailed Equality Impact Assessments on those changes most likely to impact on the wellbeing of certain individuals or groups. The impact assessment process asks how the service or policy affects the different groups in the community. Each Equality Impact Assessment includes an action plan for describing what actions can be taken to mitigate any negative impacts identified. The template includes the consideration of rurality which is identified as a specific issue in Mid Devon.

It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they had considered the general equality duty and considered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will help to ensure that robust processes are followed. We publish our EIAs alongside all relevant committee reports, and an [online catalogue](#) of our EIAs.

Reviewing the impact a decision or policy change might have on equalities should be proportionate. For some decisions, with little impact on the public or staff, such as a change in stationary provider, a brief statement of any equalities impact should suffice. For decisions where there may be an impact on staff or the public, e.g. policy changes to housing provision, a full EIA is likely required.

#### 4.4 Developing an inclusive working environment

The Council considers equality and diversity in all aspects of employment, from advertising vacancies, recruitment and selection, terms and conditions of employment, training and personal development, to reasons for ending employment.

We will promote equality in recruitment by:

- Advertising jobs as widely as possible (i.e. online)
- Providing job details and accepting job applications in alternative formats on request as appropriate to the needs of the applicant
- Monitoring recruitment processes and taking action as a result of the findings
- Acknowledging that recruitment and selection decisions should be based upon objective, measurable and reasonable selection criteria
- Asking only for the skills and qualities actually needed to do the job. **Basing interview questions on the requirements outlined within the job description.**
- Commitment to equality in employment and in service delivery will be reinforced in staff induction programmes for new staff **(Note, staff induction programme is being refreshed for January 2025).**
- Training managers on how to recruit in a non-discriminatory way, making sure that all job applicants, whether redeployment candidates, existing employees or people who do not currently work for the District Council, demonstrate that they are qualified, motivated and competent to do the job. **(All recruitment training is completed in house)**

We will promote equality in disciplinary procedures by:

- Regularly reviewing our disciplinary and grievance procedures to ensure an appropriate mechanism is in place to deal with bullying and harassment at work

We will promote equality in pay and conditions by:

- Using a pay structure that makes sure employees are treated fairly and equitably.

We publish information on our website about our pay policy and gender pay gap. **We are looking to improve the visibility of this information.**

We will promote equality in training and development by:

- Providing training programmes for staff to raise awareness of equality issues and assist them in applying equality principles to their role within the Council
- Recognising and supporting the potential of all employees by offering opportunities for training and personal development
- Monitoring employee development to make sure that training and development opportunities continue to be open to all employees

## 4.5 Roles and Responsibilities

Everyone who works for the Council is responsible for ensuring that the objectives of the Single Equality Scheme 2025 are reflected in the planning and delivery of their services.

Community, People and Equalities PDG	This Policy Development Group is responsible for taking a lead in ensuring that the Single Equality Scheme represents a robust and shared vision, meets the needs of the Council, is adopted across the Council, and that measures are in place to monitor, challenge and review its progress.
Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	This senior political role will: Promote, support and drive improvement with regard to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion through all activities of Mid Devon District Council, both for Service delivery and in employment activities; Promote equality, diversity and inclusion to other Members as appropriate; and Ensure that the Council provides an equitable service to all people.
Elected Members	Have a role in championing equal opportunities and promoting cohesion and fostering good relations
Leadership Team and Heads of Service	Leadership Team are responsible for ensuring that the Single Equality Scheme is integrated into all aspects of service planning and delivery, and is effectively implemented across the Council. Individual officers are expected to have oversight of the strategy in their areas and ensure that information about the impact of their services on equality is gathered, made available and evaluated.
Corporate Performance and Improvement Manager	Responsible for coordinating the development of the Single Equality Scheme, Equality Objectives, and monitoring performance through the Equality Action Plan. Ensuring that officers understand their roles in implementing the Single Equality Scheme.
EDI Group	The aim of the EDI Group is to ensure that the Council complies with legislation as well as the Equality Scheme with regard to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to ensure we continue to develop and improve the diversity and culture of the Council. The group will look for every opportunity to drive and embed good practice in EDI delivery with all officers by ensuring knowledge and skills are maintained and individual capabilities are increased.
Managers	All managers are responsible for ensuring that the Equality Objectives are pursued appropriately within their teams, for gathering and making available information about the impact of their work on different communities and for ensuring that individual staff members understand their specific responsibilities with regard to equalities, diversity and inclusion.
Employees	All staff are responsible for conducting their work in a way that supports delivery of the Single Equality scheme and the Council meeting its Equality Objectives.
Trade Unions	Support their members on matters relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.

#### **4.6 Ensuring equality in procurement and commissioning**

Mid Devon District Council is a major purchaser of services. Every year we spend over £6 million with businesses so that we can deliver our services. We recognise that our spending power gives us the chance to influence how others work and to promote equality. We will:

- Require any company or business that wishes to be one of our contractors or suppliers to demonstrate appropriate consideration in their policies on equality in relation to employment and service delivery
- Seek to encourage any company, business or individual wishing to provide goods or services to Mid Devon District Council, to contribute to our policy by implementing fair practices in employment and training
- Review our own policies and practices and where necessary make changes to them to ensure they do not discriminate or place unfair requirements on small businesses from Mid Devon
- Cease issuing contracts to, purchasing from or commissioning any contractor, business or organisation, where we believe they fail to comply with our values in relation to equality and diversity
- Follow good practice by having a procurement strategy that gives a clear commitment to equality of opportunity and to tackling discrimination and disadvantage.

#### **4.7 Promoting equality through working with others**

The Council recognises that it cannot meet its equality responsibilities without working closely with other public bodies, community groups and individuals. Mid Devon District Council will:

- Use our standing in the area to help shape public opinion to promote understanding between different sections of the community
- Work with other public, private, voluntary and community groups in Mid Devon to ensure that equality and diversity policies and plans similar to our own are adopted and implemented more widely
- Share information, experience and examples of good practice on equality through links with other public, private, voluntary and community organisations in the region
- Promote equality and diversity within partnership working and in our dealings with the media
- Involve people from different equality groups in influencing our work and progress on equality
- Learn from the equality and diversity policies and plans of other local authorities and organisations

#### **4.8 Meeting the needs of specific equality groups**

The Council is aware that certain groups within society are particularly vulnerable to discrimination because of a particular protected characteristic (e.g. age, disability, gender, etc.). In order to eliminate discrimination and promote equality we recognise the need to work with representatives who can advocate on behalf of particular equality groups in order to develop services that meet their specific requirements. We also recognise that people are individuals, and that although they may be included within a particular equality group, they also have individual needs that may differ from the rest of the group. We are committed to dealing with every resident as an individual with their own particular needs.

## **4.9 Monitoring**

### **Monitoring Impact and Acting on Results**

Mid Devon District Council recognises that monitoring is an important way of assessing the effects of policies in practice and is a vital part of any strategy to promote equality. Monitoring will help us check whether our policies, operations and organisational culture are discriminating against some groups and individuals. This will help us find out why and how discrimination takes place. Where we see that any of our policies or procedures have a negative impact we will investigate the reasons for this and revise them accordingly.

### **Publishing Results**

If Mid Devon District Council is to be successful and keep public confidence, we need not only to promote equality but also to be seen to be doing so. The Council will therefore publish the results of its monitoring, assessment and consultation activities. This includes our Equalities Impact Assessments, an annual report on the Single Equality Scheme, and our pay policy and data on the gender pay gap.

## **4.10 Concerns**

If there are any concerns about any matter regarding equality of opportunity or discrimination is suspected, you are referred to the following related policies:

- Whistleblowing Policy
- Dignity at Work and
- Grievance Policy