

Appendix 2: Equality Action Plan Report 2024/25

This Action Plan Report details the progress made by the Council in 2024/25 to date to meet its 2024/25 Equality Objectives. These objectives are organised under six themes.

1. Meeting the needs of an aging population.

- Implement the Meeting Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document

The Mid Devon Meeting Housing Needs Supplementary Planning Document was adopted in November 2023. This planning document highlights the growing need for housing for older persons and people with disabilities. It provides guidance on accessible and adaptable homes, wheelchair accommodation and bungalow provision. The document is capable of being a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and can therefore help ensure that new development responds positively to meeting the needs of Mid Devon’s aging population.

Additionally, the Council is undertaking a review of its Local Plan. This provides an opportunity to establish appropriate planning policy and site allocations to help meet the housing needs for older persons and people with disabilities. A Local Housing Needs Assessment has been prepared which provides up-to-date evidence on district-wide needs for this form of housing and this information will be reviewed and kept up-to-date as the plan review progresses.

Equality Objective	2023/24	2024/25 (YTD)				Notes
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
• Provide housing adaptations in MDH housing stock (No. per year)	214	58	108	146		87 Minor, 59 Major in 2024/25 so far.
• Provide adaptations for adults in private sector housing through grant awards (No. per year)	77	22	54	58		58 in 2024/25 so far. Funding allocation is fully committed and almost fully spent so approvals are currently being delayed, hence a decrease in awards in Q3.
• Increase our understanding of MDH tenants through the “Getting to Know You” project (Residents with data captured)	N/A	1.79%	6.62%	11.20%		1,566 tenants surveyed so far with 336 returned (21.5% response rate). We have around 3,000 tenants which means we currently hold data for 11.2% of tenants.

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).

Neighbourhood Officers signpost and refer MDH tenants to help and support where appropriate. Other tenant facing roles such as Tenant Involvement are also equipped to signpost. MDH host an annual rural roadshow where hubs are set up in five different rural areas across several weeks, with support from agencies such as the Police, Fire, CHAT, ECOE Advice and South West Water. Alongside this, Neighbourhood Walkabouts take place in the spring and autumn, Neighbourhood Officer's visit every street in Mid Devon where there are MDH properties and tenants are encouraged to either book a door knock to speak to their Neighbourhood Officer or are encouraged to join the entire walkabout. MDH offer online events to allow those that are unable to travel to a larger town, and also advertise that travel expenses can be paid and taxis booked for those that are unable to travel, particularly rural tenants, but wish to attend an event.

In 2024 a webpage was launched on the Council website which sets out some of the accessibility support from Mid Devon District Council, Devon County Council and other organisations: <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/your-council/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/accessibility-information/>

Equality Objective	2023/24	2024/25 (YTD)				Notes
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement the Care Leavers Council Tax Discount Policy (household uptake) 	15	7	22	22		At the end of Quarter 3 there were 22 households in receipt of Council Tax Discount in accordance with the Policy

- Carry out MDH Neighbourhood roadshows, "Neighbourhood Matters" based in communities where tenant satisfaction is low (Number of events/ attendees)

MDH organised five Rural Roadshows in 2024/25 to give rural tenants the chance to speak with housing staff in person, raise complaints, report repairs and to bridge that gap for those that feel less listened to or involved due to where they live. Events were held in Bampton, Hemyock, Bradninch, Newton St Cyres, and Lapford. These locations were selected for the relatively high levels of MDH properties in the area. Turnout for the events was low overall, although some important issues were raised by the tenants who were able to attend. Council officers have reflected on the strengths and opportunities arising from the events to ensure they are built upon in the future.

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)

Funding was put in place in 2021/22 for Council wide training on Trauma Informed – but COVID-19 affected this, and then budgetary pressures meant that this wasn't taken forward on a corporate basis.

A lot of trauma informed work and policy making happening across the Council/ Devon. Working with partner organisations who work in a trauma informed way is positively affecting the ways in which Mid Devon operates. Examples include:

- Devon Trauma network
 - ASB Panel approach
 - Serious Violence Strategy
 - Corporate Parenting response (with reference to Care Leavers)
 - Housing Options team have been trained in Trauma Informed
 - Changes in Housing policy – e.g. the new hoarding policy which looks at the underlying causes.
 - Changes to our Safeguarding policies
- Deliver on Serious Violence Duty through the Devon Preventing Serious Violence Strategy 2024-29 (narrative update)

Partnership funding was received from the Serious Violence Strategy fund to increase the use of Community Protection Notices across East and Mid Devon in 2024/25. We have worked with Mid Devon Housing and colleagues in Public Health to offer training, and delegated powers to MDH Neighbourhood Officers to start to issue the warnings and notices in April 2024. This has been welcomed by housing colleagues, who have embraced the new powers as another useful tool for them to manage tenancy problems caused by unreasonable behaviour impacting neighbours. Up until the end of January 2025, Mid Devon Housing have issued 15 Community Protection Warnings and 9 Community Protection Notices. Public Health have also issued 4 Community Protection Warnings.

The Council has worked collaboratively with the Police, the Youth Justice Service, East Devon District Council and Exeter City Council to launch a Youth ASB Intervention Panel (YASBIP) in November 2024. This approach has developed out of the innovative work carried out by Devon & Cornwall Police to introduce 'Intervention Clinics' which aim to decrease youth reoffending and prevent children entering the youth criminal justice system. Evidence shows young people who are kept out of the criminal justice system are less likely to offend in the future.

The Mid Devon Panel meets monthly and is chaired by the Council's Community Safety Officer, and includes representatives from the Neighbourhood Police Team, the Youth Justice Service, the Police Youth Intervention Officer and the Child Centred Policing Sergeant. Other agencies attend as necessary including Social Services, LINKS, Housing Services, Mental Health, Youth Services, Probation and Education.

Agencies can refer into the Panel young people of concern, and the Panel aims to take a trauma informed, child centred approach in deciding what support can be offered by agencies to seek to change behaviours and support the child and their family, as well as considering what ASB sanctions should be applied.

Equality Objective	2023/24	2024/25				Notes
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
• MDH homes reporting damp or mould that quarter*		4.26%	1.89%	4.74%		Data for 2023/24. Q1: 3.68%; Q2: 2.71%; Q3: 4.06%; Q4: 5.15%
• Increase the understanding of MDH tenants through the “Getting to Know You” project (% of residents with data captured; YTD)	N/A	1.79%	6.62%	11.20%		1,566 tenants surveyed so far with 336 returned (21.5% response rate). We have around 3,000 tenants which means we currently hold data for 11.2% of tenants.
• Provide adaptations for children in the private housing sector (Number of grants approved)	4	1	1	0		2 in 2024/25 so far.
• Monitor cases dealt with where hoarding, cluttering or cleanliness in the home is an issue (Number of cases)		0	0	1		1 new case in 2024/25
• Monitor homeless approaches (Number per year; YTD)	802	211	407	579		
• Undertake private rented housing inspections and monitor those that related to damp and mould where action is taken (Number per year)	30 (24)	7 (5)	7 (3)	10 (4)		Total for 2024/25 so far is 24 private rented housing inspections, with 12 related to damp and mould where action was taken.

*This equality objective was originally: “Tackling damp and mould in council housing stock (% of all homes have received damp and mould relating inspections or works in the past 5 years)”. It has been changed in-year on the basis of advice from Council officers.

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”)

Six specific wellbeing articles have been published in the Link. With articles aimed to coincide with national and international wellbeing dates: February Time to Talk Day; April Stress Awareness Month; May Mental Health Awareness Week; June Men’s Health Week; October World

Mental Health Day; November Stress Awareness Day (international stress awareness week). In addition, every issue of the Link includes a quote and the link to Random Acts of Kindness Foundation.

Monthly team meetings have been formalised (from January 2025), with standing items on Climate Resilience and Environment Matters, Communication, and Health & Safety. There have been Wellbeing articles provided to employees, e.g. 5 best free things for your back; let's talk, let's act managers guide – to starting the conversation about mental health in the work place and a mental health quiz.

- Provide free at the point of use leisure services for adult carers, parent carers and young carers (provisional, uptake)

A proposed pilot project to support unpaid carers by providing access to leisure services is likely to have several positive 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 ambassadors representatives from the community in the planning process to ensure that the project meets the needs of all carers.
 - Prior to launching the pilot, undertake an equality impact assessment to identify potential disparities and areas for improvement.
- 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)

Funding was put in place in 2021/22 for Council wide training on Trauma Informed – but COVID-19 affected this, and then budgetary pressures meant that this wasn't taken forward on a corporate basis.

A lot of trauma informed work and policy making happening across the Council/ Devon. Working with partner organisations who work in a trauma informed way is positively affecting the ways in which Mid Devon operates. Examples include:

- Devon Trauma network
- ASB Panel approach
- Serious Violence Strategy
- Corporate Parenting response (with reference to Care Leavers)
- Housing Options team have been trained in Trauma Informed
- Changes in Housing policy – a good example being the new hoarding policy which is no longer just a “property led” approach, and looking at the underlying causes.
- Changes to our Safeguarding policies

- Host financial support drop in sessions supported by Navigate (Number of events/ attendees)
MDH will be organising a cost of living event in 2025 offering advice, budgeting help and packs of essentials for tenants that need them, i.e. tinned food, toiletries, nappies etc.

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5. Secure decent digital connectivity for all of Mid Devon

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

In Spring 2023, 87.4% of homes in Mid Devon have superfast (at least 30 Mbit/s) broadband available (data from Connected Nations, Ofcom). This compares to 97% for the UK as a whole. As operators focus increasingly on delivering gigabit capable services, any future increase in superfast coverage across the UK are expected to be modest and publically funded.

The [Connecting Devon and Somerset](#) (CDS) is a local government-led partnership which helps to deliver next generation broadband infrastructure to areas where the market has failed to invest. In 2024 it was announced that CDS and Airband had agreed to scale back Airband’s contract agreements to deliver full fibre to properties in the region. In total, Airband was contracted to deliver 55,493 premises. To date the operator has delivered 18,794 premises in collaboration with CDS. Airband has now committed to provide full fibre access to 8,377 more homes and businesses covered by the contracts, providing a total of 27,171 out of the 55,493 premises it was originally contracted to deliver. This additional build will further unlock fibre delivery by Airband to 10,997 non-contracted premises along the network build routes, giving an overall commitment to connect a further 19,834 premises in Devon and Somerset.

[Gigaclear](#) also undertake projects to deliver fast and reliable broadband to rural communities. Householders and businesses can register their interest on the Gigaclear website.

6. Continuous improvement at Mid Devon District Council

- Develop a better understanding of our workforce (% of workforce with equality monitoring data)

In an attempt to develop a better understanding of our workforce, equality monitoring information can now be collected through the Council's employee records portal, MyView. The forms to collect this data have been under development in 2024/25 and will soon be launched to staff.

Equality Objective	2023/24	2024/25				Notes
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and Councillors undertake training to improve their understanding of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Equality and Diversity course, % completion, Current) 		93.17%	87.75%	91.63%		538 individuals have it assigned to them of which 493 have completed (Q3). Member training on protected characteristics and inclusive practices on 03 Feb 2025. Attended by 18 Members.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve accessibility to council facilities, particularly accessible toilets (projects completed; YTD) 		1	2			Accessible toilets completed in Exe Valley and Culm Valley leisure centres.