

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Equality Policy Statement and Objectives (2016-2020)

**If you require this document in large print, please contact 01892 526121 or
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Policy statement

We want people to have the opportunity to reach their potential and access services that meet their needs. We will enable this through our roles as a community leader, service provider and employer. The commitments in this document apply to Councillors and staff and set standards for others who deliver services on our behalf.

As a community leader we will:

- Consider the effects of limited financial resources by taking decisions in an informed and accountable way.
- Enable people to be active in community life and exercise their democratic rights; and
- Listen and respond to the views of our communities.

As a service provider we will:

- Enable everyone to make use of the services to which they are entitled;
- Give information and advice in suitable ways; and
- Monitor and evaluate services to identify whether they are meeting people's needs.

As an employer we will:

- Select, appoint and promote individuals on the basis of merit;
- Encourage all staff to develop and reach their potential;
- Provide a safe and accessible workplace;
- Provide fair and open pay and reward systems; and
- Foster a culture where staff treat each other with dignity and respect.

To deliver our commitments we will:

- Update our equality information (see Appendix one) and progress against our equality objectives annually;
- Use equality impact assessments when making changes to our services; and
- Not tolerate inappropriate or offensive language or behaviour to staff or service users.

Rights and responsibilities

- The Chief Executive will have overall responsibility for implementing this policy statement.
- Senior managers will make sure their service areas comply with this document.
- Each member of staff has responsibility to read, understand and implement this policy statement and to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Each Councillor has responsibility to read, understand and make sure their behaviour has regard for this policy statement.
- Implementation of this policy statement will be monitored by the Corporate Equalities Monitoring Group and Management Team and progress will be reported to Cabinet.

Public sector equality duty

The Council is subject to the public sector equality duty (the equality duty). The equality duty is made up of a general equality duty which is supported by specific duties. The general equality duty requires public authorities, in the exercise of their functions, to have due regard to the need to:

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

Equality information

Under the Equality Act (2010) we are required to publish information to show how we comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This must include information relating to people, who share a protected characteristic, who are our employees and people affected by our policies and practices. We have provided information about our population below. We collect information about the protected characteristics of people that use our services and our employees, only where this is relevant to our policies and procedures. This information is attached at Appendix one.

Our population

The borough has a population of 116,100. The Office for National Statistics has predicted that the borough population will increase by a further 13,200 by 2021 (an 11.4 per cent increase).

Disability

The 2011 Census recorded that 12,763 households (27.1 per cent) in the borough include people with a long-term health problem or disability. Of these 2,260 households (4.8 per cent) include two or more persons with a long-term health problem or disability. 16,371 people (14.3 per cent) in the borough have their day to day activities limited a little or a lot by a long-term illness or disability. This is lower than the Kent average of 17.6 per cent and lower than the national average of 17.9 per cent.

Age

Mid-year population estimates (2014) recorded the average age of the borough's population as 40.4. This is slightly lower than the Kent average of 40.7 years but higher than the national average of 39.6 years. Currently, 18.4 per cent of the borough's population is aged over 65. Population forecasts indicate that 26.2 per cent of the borough's population will be aged over 65 by 2033. This is in line with population forecasts for the Kent area.

Sex (gender)

The 2011 Census recorded that 51 per cent of the population is female and 49 per cent is male.

Race

The 2011 Census recorded that 5,810 people (5.1 per cent) in the borough are from a Black or Minority Ethnic background. This is lower than the Kent average of 6.9 per cent and the national average of 14.6 per cent.

Religion or belief

The 2011 Census recorded that 62.9 per cent of the population is Christian. This is higher than the Kent average of 61.8 per cent and the national average of 59.4 per cent. 26.6 per cent of the population have no religion. Small proportions of the remainder of the population are Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish.

Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation data is not captured by the Census. Data from the Integrated Household Survey estimates that 1.6 per cent of adults in the UK identified their sexual identity as lesbian, gay or bisexual in 2014.

Pregnancy or maternity

In 2014, there were 57.6 births per 1,000 of the borough's population. This is lower than the Kent average of 62.4 and the national average of 62.1.

Marital or civil partnership status

The 2011 Census recorded that 50.1 per cent of the borough's population are married. This is higher than the Kent average of 48.9 per cent and the national average of 46.6 per cent.

Gender reassignment

At present, there is no official estimate of the trans population. Gender reassignment data is not captured by the Census.

Equality objectives

Under the Equality Act (2010) we are required to prepare and publish one or more objectives to show how we will achieve any of the things mentioned in the aims of the general equality duty.

Our Five Year Plan 2014-2019 sets out what we can achieve over the next five years to help local people, businesses and visitors to our borough. The plan was widely consulted on and received extensive feedback. In addition our Corporate Priorities support the Five Year Plan and are reviewed and consulted upon annually. In 2015, we also carried out a Residents' Survey of a representative sample of the borough's population.

The information gathered through our consultations, and the data collected in Appendix one, has been used to determine our equality objectives which are linked to our Five Year Plan and Corporate Priorities. Our equality objectives for 2016-2020 are summarised below.

Equality objective one

As a community leader, we will advance equality of opportunity by mitigating the potential impacts of welfare reform on 16-24 year olds who require our housing services.

Equality objective two

As a service provider, we will advance equality of opportunity by investigating whether we can increase the number of people who are able to easily access the information they need, and satisfactorily complete the transactions they require, on the Council's website.

Equality objective three

As a community leader and a service provider, we will foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity by increasing participation in our heritage, arts and culture programme for people with disabilities, younger and older age groups, ethnic groups, religious groups and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people.

Equality objective four

As an employer, we will advance equality of opportunity by encouraging a broader range of people to apply for Council vacancies.

Equality objective one

We will advance equality of opportunity by mitigating the potential impacts of welfare reform on 16-24 year olds who require our housing services.

Why we have chosen this objective:

Welfare reform changes will result in cuts to housing benefit entitlement which could mean that some social housing is no longer affordable for younger households.

Link to Five Year Plan:

A confident borough.

We will measure outcomes against this objective for the following protected characteristics:

- Age

We will report the following information against this objective on an annual basis:

- Number of rough sleepers by affected age group.
- Number of households in temporary accommodation by affected age group.
- Number of homeless acceptances by affected age group.
- Example case of changes in welfare entitlement for relevant age group.

Our action plan to deliver this objective is:

1. Introduce monitoring of above indicators (by March 2017).
2. Develop example case of benefit recipient to illustrate changes in welfare entitlement (by March 2017).
3. Identify whether there are any percentage differences in welfare entitlement and housing indicators (by March 2018).
4. Consider the impacts of changes in welfare entitlement on housing service users and identify any further actions as appropriate (by March 2018).

The lead officers for delivering this objective are:

Head of Customers and Communities

Head of Revenues and Benefits

Equality objective two

We will advance equality of opportunity by investigating whether we can increase the number of people who are able to easily access the information they need, and satisfactorily complete the transactions they require, on the Council's website.

Why we have chosen this objective:

The Residents' Survey in 2015 showed that those aged 35-54 were more likely to use the Council's website as their primary means of communication than those aged over 55. Those aged 16-54 were more likely to think that the internet is essential than those aged over 55.

Internet usage data indicates that there may be a correlation between wards where there are a higher number of households who do not use the internet and wards where there are a higher number of households who have one or more persons with a disability.

Further information is needed to establish whether those who do not use online services share a protected characteristic and whether there are people with protected characteristics who would like to access services online but are currently unable to. Our Digital Inclusion Plan will make sure that people who want to use our online services are able to, and that those who do not currently use them are not left behind, whilst still providing other ways to access services.

Link to Five Year Plan:

Our Five Year Plan sets out our aim of 'all of our business that can be done digitally, will be done digitally'.

We will measure outcomes against this objective for the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity

We will report the following information against this objective on an annual basis:

- Demographic report from google analytics giving profile information by age.
- Usage figures for website accessibility features on the Council's website.
- The number of complaints received from people who are unable to access our services.

Our action plan to deliver this objective is:

1. Conduct an accessibility audit of our website (by March 2017).
2. Start collecting age profile data with google analytics to establish baseline profile of people using our website (by March 2017).
3. Investigate whether we can monitor usage of website accessibility features on the Council's website (by March 2017).
4. Use information to design provision of services on the Council's website (ongoing).
5. Complete usability testing of website with people with disabilities and different age groups (by March 2017).
6. Website design to maintain AA compliance (ongoing).

The lead officers for delivering this objective are:

Head of Digital Services and Transformation
Digital Services Team Manager

Equality objective three

We will foster good relations and advance equality of opportunity by increasing participation in our heritage, arts and culture programme for people with disabilities, younger and older age groups, ethnic groups, religious groups and lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people.

Why we have chosen this objective:

Our Cultural Strategy (2014) recognises that the Museum and Art Gallery and Assembly Hall Theatre could offer more and provide a better cultural focus and attraction in Royal Tunbridge Wells. Redevelopment of the Museum & Art Gallery and enhancement of the Assembly Hall Theatre is a priority to enable more people to have an opportunity to participate in culture.

Link to Five Year Plan:

A prosperous borough

We will measure outcomes against this objective for the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

We will report the following information against this objective on an annual basis:

Museum:

- Total number of interactions with young people visiting Tunbridge Wells Museum or having outreach visits in school groups participating in events onsite and offsite settings.
- Other PIs will be established after 2016/17 once evaluation measures are in place.

Assembly Hall:

- Number of attendances at signed performances at the Assembly Hall Theatre.
- Number of tickets sold to wheelchair users by the Assembly Hall Theatre.
- Number of complimentary carer tickets issued by the Assembly Hall Theatre.

Our action plan to deliver this objective is:

Museum:

1. Continue our work on Dementia Friendly museums by working with University College London to evidence impact on well being (by March 2017).
2. Work with the Polish Community in Tunbridge Wells to offer an exhibition: 'Wycinanki: The Art of Polish Paper Cuts' (by April 2016).
3. Improve provision for visitors with visual impairments and special educational needs through staff training, job shadowing and development of new interactive resources (by March 2017).
4. Improve exhibition evaluation to adopt a more systematic interdepartmental approach involving curatorial, visitor experience, and audience development staff (by March 2017).
5. Development of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans (LGBT) exhibition and contemporary collection plan (by March 2018).

Assembly Hall:

6. To provide signed performances (by March 2017, and annually).
7. To offer complimentary carer tickets (by March 2017, and annually).
8. To provide wheelchair accessible spaces and introduce monitoring of ticket purchases.

The lead officers for delivering this objective are:

Head of Partnerships and Engagement
Head of Customers and Communities

Equality objective four

Equality objective

We will advance equality of opportunity by encouraging a broader range of people to apply for Council vacancies.

Why we have chosen this objective:

This objective has been chosen as it reflects a key part of our HR strategy 2016-2020, ensuring that we are able to recruit the right people to work for the Council in order to meet the future challenges.

Link to Five Year Plan:

Our Five Year Plan sets out our aim of 'all of our business that can be done digitally, will be done digitally'.

We will measure outcomes against this objective for the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Sex (gender)

We will report the following information against this objective on an annual basis:

- Demographic information about applicants for Council vacancies (where available).

Our action plan to deliver this objective is:

1. Use LinkedIn as a recruitment tool (March 2017).
2. Compare demographic profile of applicants between Jobs Go Public and LinkedIn and identify any further actions as appropriate (March 2017).

The lead officer for delivering this objective is:

Head of Human Resources

Appendix one: Equality information (services and employees)

The following information was collected between April 2014 and March 2015.

Access Guide

Number of times the DisabledGo-Tunbridge Wells online access guide has been used (January-December 2015).	2,402
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Assembly Hall Theatre

Number of signed performances offered at the Assembly Hall Theatre.	7
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Number of complimentary carer tickets issued by the Assembly Hall Theatre.	2,133
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Cemetery and Crematorium

Percentage of Muslim burials at the Crematorium.	1.8 per cent
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Community Safety

Number of hate incidents in the borough (recorded by Kent Police).	81
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Housing

Percentage of applicants from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background on the housing register.	18 per cent
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Percentage of applicants from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background housed through the housing register.	15.1 per cent
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Percentage of full-time and occasional wheelchair users on the housing register.	3.3 per cent
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Percentage of full-time and occasional wheelchair users housed through the housing register.	4.9 per cent
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Number of Disabled Facilities Grants completed per year.	67
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Human Resources

Average age of the Council's workforce (mean).	44
Percentage of women in top 10 per cent highest paid Council employees.	46.7 per cent
Percentage of local authority employees with a disability.	4 per cent
Percentage of local authority employees from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background.	3.6 per cent
Percentage difference between male and female employee's average hourly pay (gender pay gap).	12.7 per cent
Note: the national average gender pay gap is 19.2 per cent. The pay gap does not indicate that men and women are being paid differently for equal work. The key contributory reason behind this pay gap is that there are more women working part-time and in lower grades than men.	
Percentage of applicants for Council vacancies with a disability.	4.3 per cent
Percentage of those recruited with a disability.	3.5 per cent
Percentage of applicants for Council vacancies from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background.	15.1 per cent
Percentage of those recruited who are from a Black and Minority Ethnic Background.	15.8 per cent

Licensing

Number of licensed wheelchair accessible taxis and private hire vehicles.	30
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Museum

Number of interactions with young people visiting Tunbridge Wells Museum or having outreach visits in school groups participating in events onsite and offsite settings.	2,980
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Planning

Number of planning applications for future large scale developments in the borough which could incorporate Changing Places facilities that are available during the evening as well as the day.	1
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