



# **MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL**

## **Equality and Diversity**

### **Progress Report 2021**

## INTRODUCTION

1. This is the Council's annual Equality and Diversity progress report, setting out the achievements made in supporting equality and diversity in Mid Sussex. The report highlights key pieces of work we have undertaken as a District Council and sets out the future direction in our provision of fair and inclusive services.
2. Progress is reported against the context of the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme 2020-24, which contains the following Equality Objectives:

**Objective 1-** We will show leadership and commitment in promoting equality and diversity.

**Objective 2-** We will consider the needs of individuals across the whole community, and especially those groups protected by the Equality Act 2010, when we plan and deliver our services.

**Objective 3-** We will seek to prevent discrimination and to promote good relations between different sectors of the community.

**Objective 4-** As an employer, we will seek to promote equality and respect for diversity in the workplace by providing appropriate policies, training and support, including assistance for former members of the armed forces.

3. The Scheme identifies actions to support the delivery of these objectives. It also sets out measures to ensure that the Council meets its public sector equality duty and ensures that discrimination does not occur on the grounds of the protected characteristics set out in the Equality Act 2010. These protected characteristics are disability; age; race; sexual orientation; religion or belief; sex; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership.
4. In addition to considering the needs of those with protected characteristics, our Equality and Diversity Scheme and this progress report considers disadvantage arising from income or skill level, by virtue of where people live and the Council's work to support the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

## PROGRESS IN DELIVERING SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS IN 2021

5. This section identifies service improvements for the protected groups, together with those who may find it difficult to access services by virtue of where they live and those with poor skills or low incomes. Some of our initiatives cover a range of equalities issues. These include our systems for reporting and dealing with hate crime and anti-social behaviour; safeguarding; the operation of our grants schemes; provision of activities through our leisure centres; and the Health and Wellbeing service.

### **Continued Implications of the Pandemic for the Protected Groups in Mid Sussex**

6. The Council's work to the Equality and Diversity Scheme during 2021 has continued to be greatly influenced by the pandemic, with the protected groups especially impacted. In the initial stages of the pandemic and first lockdowns, 5,194 elderly and vulnerable Mid Sussex residents were required to be shielded, with 2,300 registering for support. Emergency Community Voluntary Sector (CVS) support was developed

during the shutdown through the local authority community hubs and community responders, for example to support food supply and distribution to vulnerable people. There were also significant economic implications for the District, with 23,700 jobs in Mid Sussex in June 2020 supported through the Job Retention and Self-Employment Schemes.

### **Covid Grants Scheme**

7. Much of the Council's work to support the protected groups in Mid Sussex involves working with community groups and voluntary organisations. Grants to support the voluntary sector are especially important, given that many CVS organisations faced a reduction in their financial resources due to the pandemic, while demand for the services they provide increased.
8. As part of its Covid Recovery Plans, the Council introduced a £300,000 Covid Grant Fund Scheme for 2020/21 for community groups, voluntary organisations and local businesses affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Grants of £1,000 to £5,000 were made available to help local businesses and organisations in three key areas:
  - **Emergency Response** - financial help with the additional costs that are incurred while operating under Covid-19 restrictions
  - **Return to Pre-Covid Provision** – a grant to local groups and businesses to help them reopen and return to business as usual in a way that is Covid-19 secure.
  - **New service or business innovation** – financial support to help local businesses and support organisations adapt to new ways of working.
9. To ensure that the Community Voluntary Sector were able to take full advantage of the grant scheme, targeted engagement was undertaken by the Council's Community Services Team. The first round of grants awarded £70,108 to 26 community voluntary organisations, which were set out in the 2020 Equality Progress Report. The second round of grant awards were made in 2021 and amounted to £70,726 to 17 community voluntary organisations. Of these:
  - a. Five organisations were awarded funding to improve their facilities to accommodate and encourage attendance to their sessions/services. With the easing of Covid19 lockdown restrictions, the grants will enable a number of sports clubs to open and be fully compliant with Covid19-safe operation.
  - b. Two organisations running village halls were awarded grants to improve facilities and update their ability to provide a digital offer. Village halls have struggled to stay open for their users under Covid19 restrictions.
  - c. Five organisations were awarded grants to enhance their offer by introducing, improving and adding to their digital offer. This includes a specific service to provide increased networking and infrastructure support to those operating and managing village halls - to connect and be connected, strengthening the reach of a local radio station, broadening access to interactive online education lessons, support to find employment and enabling a small community group to communicate more effectively to respond to user needs.
  - d. Two groups were awarded funding to support the additional costs of PPE equipment that will enable them to operate in a Covid secure environment.

- e. Three groups were awarded grants to fund changes in how they deliver their community services; such as replacing the usual Easter events with Easter baskets and visits for isolated older people, a Covid commemoration concert and a project to connect and re-connect those living with dementia and their carers.

## **Support to community organisations through our Community Development and Facility Grants Scheme**

10. The Covid Grants Scheme is in addition to the Council's existing Community and Development Grants Schemes, which continues to support a wide range of community organisations and projects that seek to assist vulnerable groups. The Scheme was reviewed in 2020, informed by an analysis of awards over the previous 5 years and an assessment of how representative this was of the Mid Sussex community.
11. The grants scheme includes partnership agreements with a core of voluntary organisations that support vulnerable people of all ages and backgrounds. These agreements are in place with Citizens Advice; Age UK West Sussex Brighton and Hove; Age UK East Grinstead; Mid Sussex Voluntary Action (MSVA); and Action in Rural Sussex. The partnership agreements are awarded over a six-year period (with break clauses) to provide continuity and financial security to these organisations.
12. Information about the contributions of the partnership agreement organisations to disadvantaged groups in Mid Sussex is provided below:
  - a. **Citizens Advice** deals with a variety of clients, with its biggest recent developments in its areas of advice for Mid Sussex clients being around Universal Credit claims and debt advice. They provide advice sessions at the job centre in Haywards Heath and at Saltworks, a community hub in the Bentswood area of Haywards Heath. The Council is working with Citizens Advice on the Mid Sussex Community Champions project, which is a network of volunteer community champions from EU, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups.
  - b. **Age UK** has around 800 older people in Mid Sussex who are members of their three centres in Burgess Hill, East Grinstead and Haywards Heath. There have been significant challenges to Age UK during the pandemic, but all three centres have continued to provide for older people in Mid Sussex, offering: information and advice, signposting, telephone befriending, hot meals, doorstep deliveries, wellbeing checks, welfare and safety support and wellbeing advice. During 2021, the Council has assisted Age UK West Sussex, Brighton and Hove with the provision of new accommodation at the Kings Weald community building in Burgess Hill.
  - c. **Mid Sussex Voluntary Action (MSVA)** supports local charities, volunteers, community groups, non-profit organisations and social enterprises. In 2020/21 MSVA had 431 member groups, advertised 98 new volunteering roles and offered 31 training courses and events. MSVA has been closely involved in supporting the voluntary sector in responding to the pandemic and assisting the Council in enabling the community voluntary sector to access its Covid Grants Scheme. Their initiatives last year included the setting up of the Mid Sussex Food Partnership and working on Digital Inclusion. The Council has provided support to Mid Sussex Voluntary Action to move to the Cherry Tree at Burgess Hill and work to make this into a Community Hub.

- d. **Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS)** provides valuable support to village halls, which are often the heartbeat of rural communities. This has included provision of legal, organisational and development advice for the trustees and management committees running these facilities on behalf of local people. They are working to support recovery for community halls and similar buildings for recovery from Covid19 closures and the impacts of related restrictions. AiRS were also awarded in 2021 a Covid Recovery Grant of £5,000 to fund the establishment of a Centre Manager Steering Group for community halls and similar buildings to support recovery from Covid19 closures and the impacts of related restrictions, development of a dedicated 'Basecamp' online forum and message board for Mid Sussex. The grant also funded website development, training and associated staffing costs
13. In addition to the Community Development Grants schemes, in 2021 there were 7 Facility Grants, funded through the release of s106 contributions, totalling £485,377. The awards supported sports club, community centres, arts organisations and playground improvements.

### **Leisure Centres**

14. The Council's Leisure Centres have been significantly affected by the pandemic, with periods of statutory closure and opening at reduced capacity due to social distancing. Centres reopened on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021. When able to operate, the centres aim to provide a balanced range of activities to suit all sectors of the community and includes a scheme for concessional use. Groups who benefit from concessional charges include the over 60's; juniors of 16/17 years of age; students in full-time education; those in receipt of certain benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance; and registered carers. The Leisure Centres also work through the GP Exercise Referral Programme and provide activities for local schools and community groups.

### **The Health and Wellbeing service**

15. The Council's Health and Wellbeing Hub continues to be developed with a high emphasis on targeting people in the community who are at risk of the poorest health, with their services of particular benefit to vulnerable groups. Ways of promoting healthy lifestyles were disrupted during the lockdown, with the Council's Wellbeing Team having to move to more virtual contact due to social distancing requirements. There has been a gradual movement back to more face-to-face interventions.
16. Examples of some of their work in 2021 include:
    - a. The falls prevention programme - which has been integrated into the Local Falls Pathway (especially useful for older people to improve their strength and mobility following periods of lockdown inactivity). During the COVID-19 pandemic the service quickly adapted to support its clients in a more virtual way and is now also providing face to face classes.
    - b. The Better You Virtual Exercise Referral Programme - has been introduced across Mid Sussex using Sport England Tackling Inequalities funding. This seeks to help reduce the negative impact of COVID-19 and the widening of the inequalities in sport and physical activity. It provides a bespoke programme of one-to-one consultations alongside 12 weeks of online fitness classes designed to improve your health and mental wellbeing. The programme seeks to engage people from lower socio-economic groups;

BAME communities; disabled people and those with long-term health conditions.

- c. Several new community talks – were developed by the service and provided in 2021. The free Community Health Talks are for any Mid Sussex to book onto and offer a range of topics which include: Sleep awareness, Food and Mood, Menopause, Physical Activity, Stress and Resilience & breaking habits (smoking and alcohol).
- d. Workplace health - recognised by Public Health as a key vehicle through which to engage with younger, working age adults who are best placed to avoid developing long term conditions by adjusting lifestyle and behaviours. Traditional interventions are delivered face to face and so transitioning to a virtual service, in a matter of months, has been challenging, but has ultimately been successful. Through the pandemic, the wellbeing service has supported colleagues in Revenue and Benefits identifying and contacting businesses yet to claim government support in response to COVID-19. The service also continued to promote its wellbeing offer to all the local Business Associations across Mid Sussex. In 2020/21, 413 employees engaged with the Mid Sussex workplace health service, with a total of 46 Community or Workplace Health talks being delivered to 25 different workplaces. The service has received excellent feedback from local businesses which enhances the Council's reputation and commitment to supporting business throughout the pandemic.
- e. Workplace health initiatives have helped to counter one of the more reported impacts of the pandemic on working age adults, which has been loneliness. Loneliness is experienced across all ages and traditionally in Mid Sussex there has been a focus on these issues for older people. As well as being an undesirable experience, chronic loneliness increases risk of mental and physical ill-health, premature mortality, increased health care use and societal costs. The recent government report – Employment and Loneliness 2021, evidences the benefits, for both employers and employees, of addressing loneliness and supporting social connections as part of workplace wellbeing. According to the report, the cost of loneliness to UK employers has been estimated to be £2.5 billion every year. These costs are primarily due to increased staff turnover (64%, £1.62 billion) as well as lower levels of wellbeing and productivity (26%, £665 million), the impact of caring responsibilities (9%, £220 million) and ill health and associated sickness absence (1%, £20 million).
- f. The Mid Sussex Health and Wellbeing Network- is convened by the Hub and is made up of approximately 80 organisations, both statutory and third sector, working within the broad field of wellbeing. This is a key source of exchanging information and getting referrals to and from the service. The Network has had to move to virtual meetings. Subjects covered this year have included the impact on children's and young people's mental health during and after the pandemic. This has led to the development of a "Power 4 Parents" project to provide information packs for schools and parents, offering signposting, drop ins and workshops relating to mental health support and activities for young people.

## Hate Crime Reporting

17. Figures for Hate Crimes reported in Mid Sussex for the last two years are shown below:

Table A: Reported Hate Crime

Type of Hate Crime	Mid Sussex		West Sussex	
	2020	2021	2020	2021
Transgender	9	6	31	46
Religion	5	2	66	46
Disability	10	20	127	128
Sexuality	26	35	205	229
Race	116	90	813	880
Total	166	153	1,242	1,329

18. A hate incident/hate crime is any incident where the victim or another person believes that they, the victim has been targeted because of their perceived race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or gender identity. Hate crimes tend to be under reported and increases can be seen as the success of initiatives to raise awareness of hate crime and how it can be reported. Training has previously been provided to staff and Members on the Prevent Duty in recognising and responding to hate crime and extremism.

## Safeguarding

19. Mid Sussex District Council has a duty to safeguard children and vulnerable adults and continues to work in partnership with both the West Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnership and Safeguarding Adults Board to ensure co-ordinated responses across West Sussex. The Council's Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy and Operating Procedures and Guidance were reviewed and updated in 2020. A programme of safeguarding training is also being delivered.

## FOCUSED WORK AROUND PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS IN 2021

20. The next section of the report identifies service improvements for the protected groups last year.

## Disability

21. The 2011 census showed that 14.2% of Mid Sussex households contained at least one person with a long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits their daily activities. Health Study information and projections to 2030, suggest a particular increase in the number of people aged 65+ with a disability in Mid Sussex. A further consequence of our ageing population is the projected increase in the numbers living with dementia in Mid Sussex, from the current 2,270 to 3,500 by 2030. Mental health issues have also been accentuated during the pandemic.

## Specific action in 2021 included:

- a. The Council's Housing Standards Team provided 134 Disabled Facilities Grants during 2020/21. These delivered a range of home adaptations to help

disabled people to live more independently in their own homes, including ramps, stairlifts, adapting kitchens for wheelchair use and replacing baths with level access showers. A further 73 have been awarded in the period April to December 2021.

- b. Improvements to the Council Chamber and Public Gallery at Oaklands have been progressed to improve accessibility. This has involved the installation of a lift to provide disabled access, together with the renewal of old and obsolete equipment, improved heating, air conditioning, audio-visual system and installation of hearing loops. The replaced audio-visual system will provide larger clearer pictures and improved sound, and together with the hearing loops will further improve access to those with hearing and visual impairments.
- c. A Community Grant of £5,000 was awarded to Carers Support West Sussex to fund their Check in and Chat befriending service. This grant funding will enable the charity to invest in digital equipment and expand virtual support groups that help carers connect with services and peers for support.
- d. A Community and Economic Development Grant was awarded to Disability Access East Grinstead to fund the continuing provision of advice to people and their carers on disability access, advice to providers of goods and services and input into planning applications.
- e. The Chairman's Charity for 2021 has been Kangaroos, which specialises in supporting and providing activities for children with learning disabilities.
- f. One wheelchair accessible new affordable unit was provided in 2020/21.

## **Age- older people**

22. Age is a fundamental factor affecting people's life experiences. Mid Sussex has an older age structure with 20% of residents over 65 compared to 18% in England as a whole. The number of people aged 65+ and 85+ is projected to rise in the next 10 years by 22% and 28% respectively. An increasing number of people have one or more long-term health conditions and there are over 14,000 carers in the District. A large number of older people live alone (over 7,500 65+ in 2011) and due to the predominantly rural nature of the District, there is an increasing danger that many older people will face social isolation and feel cut off from the wider community. Such isolation has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

### **23. Specific action in 2021 included:**

- a. The Council awarded a grant of £20,000 to Age UK West Sussex, Brighton and Hove towards the cost of furnishing and opening the new Kings Weald community building in Burgess Hill. The new building has been provided by developer Croudace as part of the Kings Weald planning development requirements. It will be run by Age UK and include a community café, provide extensive activities for children and families, services for older people and the halls and rooms will be available for residents to hire for a variety of events.
- b. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to Befriended to fund an Easter basket with an Easter egg and related seasonal items with a hand-written letter to hand delivered to isolated older people.



- c. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to Haywards Heath Dementia Friendly Community to support planned work for 2021 across the three towns - Haywards Heath, East Grinstead and Burgess Hill- including work in schools, local businesses, collaboration with primary care, cafes, pop up events and local groups, minority groups and rural areas.
- d. A Bringing people together living with dementia project has been completed, funded by the Mid Sussex Partnership. This was a cookery session within the Orchards Shopping Centre marquee run in partnership with the Council's Orchards team, the Impact Tasty Team, Haywards Heath Dementia Friendly Community and Mid Sussex Voluntary Action.
- e. The Council supported an event which was due to be held by Mid Sussex Older People Council with advice for people to continue to live in their own home. This event has been postponed to later in 2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Age – younger people**

24. Young people have been one of the groups most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic through:
  - a. Disruption to their education
  - b. Worsened mental health outcomes
  - c. Worsened economic wellbeing from loss of work and earnings
25. The number of NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training) in the District is one indicator of the economic wellbeing of young people. The Council facilitates a NEETs Forum, which is made up of representatives from the Better Young Lives Partners group forum and works to support young people who are NEET.
26. There was a total of 31 NEETs in Mid Sussex at 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021, split as follows:
  - NEETs seeking Employment, Education and Training: 22
  - NEETs not available (those young people who for personal circumstances are not able to look for work – e.g. through pregnancy, illness etc.) 9.
  - Unknowns 336 – these are young people who WSCC officers have been unable to contact who might be NEET or EET but no details are available.

This compares to the figures for June 2021 of a total of 40 NEETs with 25 seeking Employment, Education and Training, 14 not available and 114 unknowns.

27. The meeting of the Mid Sussex Partnership Board in January 2021 focused on issues for young people in Mid Sussex arising from the pandemic and the support available. Haywards Heath College are now represented on the Board and provided a presentation on providing inclusive educational services, including their apprenticeships, vocational and support services.
28. The Council continues to work with West Sussex County Council's Youth Cabinet who have young members resident in Mid Sussex. During the pandemic there has been an increase in cabinet members and Mid Sussex has 7 representing areas across the district. Regular contact through Zoom meetings is now taking place with the Youth Cabinet. Recent discussion at these meetings have been with Mid Sussex Voluntary Action who are piloting a Volunteering App on which members of the Youth Cabinet have given their feedback and will help trial.

29. The Council's Community Engagement and Events Officer leads a forum of professionals from both the statutory and voluntary sector, Better Young Lives, to ensure better lives and outcomes for children and young people. The current number of partners is 66 representing 34 organisations. Three meetings are held per year with updates given by local organisations on the services provided. Issues discussed at meetings of the Better Young Lives Group in 2021 have included: finding suitable secure meeting rooms for professionals to meet 1:1 with young people; accessing sexual health services; redesign of WSCC Early Help Service and implications of this for Mid Sussex; mental health and wellbeing of young people; and appropriate services in the area.

**30. Specific action in 2021 included:**

- a. Play Days on Tour took place over the Summer holidays provided at 9 locations across the district, with lots of free activities to join in with for local families. These took place at Hassocks, Hurstpierpoint, Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath, Cuckfield, Ardingly, East Grinstead, Crawley Down and Ashurst Wood.
- b. The 2021 Mid Sussex Applauds awards recognised the contribution made by young people in the District through the young achiever and the young volunteer of the year awards.
- c. Skate Fests events were provided in the Summer at St John's Park, Burgess Hill, Victoria Park, Haywards Heath, and King George's Field East Grinstead. This included a DJ taking requests and running mixing workshops.
- d. The Places For People Young Persons Cancer Rehabilitation Project has been introduced funded through the Mid Sussex Partnership. The project works with Places Leisure to offer up to 10 cancer patients on a low or no income to take part in the 12-week exercise programme. This will be able to support them both during and after their treatment to improve both their mental and physical wellbeing.
- e. Section 106 developer contributions in the sum of £100,000 have been released to Mid Sussex District Scouts Council to help fund a new community centre they intend to build at Barn Cottage Recreation Ground in Haywards Heath. The new community building will enable the Scouts to accommodate an additional 180 young people per week and the facility will be available for community use during the daytime and at weekends.
- f. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to The Escape Youth Club to fund the purchase of equipment to allow use of outside space – cover and seating.
- g. A Community Grant of £5,000 was awarded to Sussex Clubs for Young People to fund youth sessions at Court Bushes, Hurstpierpoint.
- h. A Community and Economic Development Grant was awarded to Albion in the Community to part fund a Premier League Kicks project in Burgess Hill and Oathall, Haywards Heath.

- i. A project has been completed funded through the Mid Sussex Partnership for Sussex Oakleaf to run 10 emotional resilience workshops. presented via virtual means through the Escape Room project in Burgess Hill. These sessions allowed growth, insight and understanding of common mental health concerns that 12-17 years old can struggle with locally. Key topics covered were anxiety and depression, eating disorders, suicide awareness and safe social media including virtual bullying

## **Race**

31. The 2011 Census showed that 9.7% of the Mid Sussex population are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Groups. "White Other" is the biggest of the BME Groups at 4.8%, with Asian or Asian British: Indian the largest single other group at 1%. There is increasing evidence of the disparity of Covid-19's impact on Black, Asian and Minority ethnic groups. This is reflected in Covid-19 diagnosis and mortality rates.

### **32. Specific action in 2021 included:**

- a. The Council continues to work with Citizens Advice to engage with local minority communities to improve access to support, information and services. The Community Champions project finds informal volunteers in our community to be champions; to share information at a community level and to help develop preventative messaging to ensure they are more effective across all of the District's diverse communities. The project now has a full-time post and has moved forward from providing champions with up-to-date information about Covid-19 to share with their communities online to face to face interactions on a broader range of support people to take up vaccinations, helping people returning to work, benefits, and refugee resettlement.
- b. We have previously worked to assess the need for additional pitches for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the District and are actively identifying potential sites for their location through the Traveller Sites Allocations Development Plan.
- c. The Council continues to manage the Bedelands site at Burgess Hill, which provides 9 plots for Gypsies and Travellers and has been working with residents to promote their welfare. This has included assisting them to contact a charity to help them access their winter fuel entitlements.

## **Sexual Orientation**

33. Hate crime reporting on the basis of homophobia continues to be reported through the Community Safety Partnership.

## **Religion or Belief**

34. Information from the 2011 census shows that 62.7% of Mid Sussex residents stated their religion as Christian, with the second largest group being those with no religion at 26.6%. Of the remaining 2.8% who stated their religion, responses were spread across a number of faiths, with Muslim being the largest at 0.8%.

35. Churches and other places of worship are often the first to recognise problems in their local communities and many offer help to vulnerable people who are affected. The Council's work in this area centres upon countering religiously motivated hate crime, helping to promote good relations between the different faiths in Mid Sussex and using our links with faith-based groups to provide access to services.
36. Our Housing Needs and Benefits Teams refer people to the Burgess Hill, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead Foodbanks, which have connections to local churches. Vouchers are provided which can be redeemed for three days of emergency food.

## **Sex**

37. Burgess Hill Shed have been successfully delivering 'The Shed' in Burgess Hill a men's mental health project and are expanding with "The Kiln", for which the Council awarded them a grant of £2,700. They have agreed a 3-year lease with New River on a retail unit in the Martlets Shopping Centre which will enable them to increase membership, attendance and income all of which will contribute towards the group becoming financially self-sustaining.
38. The Wellbeing Team have been running the MEN programme (Motivation, Exercise, Nutrition) a 12 week programme designed to give men support to make changes working towards a healthy lifestyle.
39. The Wellbeing Team also provide menopause advice as part of their Community Health Talks and Workplace Health programmes.

### Men and Women Suffering Domestic Abuse

40. An important aspect of our service provision related to the protected characteristic of sex is the assistance provided for people suffering domestic abuse. The number of recorded domestic abuse crimes in Mid Sussex fell slightly in 2021 to 1,052 compared to 1,165 crimes in 2020. In 2020/21, the Council's Housing Needs Team took 60 homeless applications from households who said the main reason for loss of their settled home was domestic abuse or other forms of violence. There have been concerns arising from the pandemic and periods of lockdown that there is a greater incidence of domestic abuse, some of which may be unreported.
41. There are a range of services and initiatives available aimed at responding to domestic abuse. These include the Worth Specialist Domestic Abuse Service which supports people at high risk of harm or homicide as a result of domestic abuse. They have teams of IDVAs (independent domestic abuse advisors) across West Sussex who work to identify, assess and assist people at risk.
42. There is Safe in Sussex, a registered charity providing help and support for people affected by domestic abuse in West Sussex. They provide emergency refuges, drop-in centres and one to one help and practical support for anyone affected by domestic abuse. Also, the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) brings together responsible agencies in West Sussex to discuss those cases with the highest risk of harm.

## **Gender Reassignment**

43. Community safety - our hate crime incident reporting includes the recording of hate crime motivated by transphobia, which refers to various kinds of aversion towards transsexual people.
44. With regard to gender identity issues amongst young people, the Council's Community Engagement and Events Officer leads a forum called Better Young Lives, which provides an opportunity to share information and network. The group has discussed support services available for young people facing gender identity and wider LGBTQ+ issues. These support services include Allsorts, which is a charity that works with young people that identify as LGBTQ+ through offering advocacy for 11-19 year olds and delivering work in schools. They also work with the Youth Emotional Support Service (YES) who refer to the service for young people who identify as LGBTQ+ for support on various issues.
45. A new page has been developed for the Council's website – "Information for Parents and Carers of Teens" – recognising that Parenting teenagers can be challenging, and many parents find it hard to adapt to changes in their child's behaviour as they grow up. This includes specific information and advice for LGBTQ+ young people. This can be found at [Information for Parents and Carers of Teens - Mid Sussex District Council](#)

## **Residential Location**

46. The Council recognises that whether our residents live in a rural or urban location can affect how they access our services. Issues from rural isolation include transport difficulties for those dependent upon public transport, high local housing prices and a lack of community facilities.
47. Supporting local communities
  - a. A Community Grant was awarded to Sheddingdean Community Association to fund their annual rental cost of Sheddingdean Community Centre up to the end of their current lease.
  - b. A Mid Sussex Covid 19 Recovery Grant was made to Being Neighbourly East Grinstead to fund the purchase of 2 Covid screens and an outdoor shelter to be erected on the café terrace.
  - c. A Mid Sussex Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to Burgess Hill Community Radio to fund the purchase of equipment which will improve the service offered to users and allow more presenters to work from home, along with equipment to ensure studios are Covid secure.
48. Community facilities and Housing Initiatives
  - a. The Council has contributed to the development of a new multi-use community building and village centre in Ansty, which was provided through grants and the release of section 106 developer contributions.
  - b. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to Ansty Village Centre Trust to fund additional costs to the fit out of the new village centre to meet a post

Covid19 standard and installation of electronic door access control and proximity taps.

- c. A Covid19 Recovery Grant was awarded to Hurstpierpoint Village Centre to fund the purchase of audio-visual equipment for the Village centre to enable residents to attend in person and remotely.
- d. £171,160 of S106 contributions were released to Sussex Clubs for Young People Ltd to fund the extension and refurbishment of the pavilion at Barn Cottage Recreation Ground to make it suitable for a wider range of activities and community management.
- e. £5,814 of S106 contributions were released to Ashengound Community Centre to fund the installation of LED lighting to improve energy efficiency and reduce overhead costs.
- f. £2,000 of S106 contributions were released to Scaynes Hill Millennium Village Centre to fund the upgrade of the existing air ventilation system with a purification unit to improve the facilities and encourage more users to take part in social and community activities in the centre in a Covid secure environment.
- g. New affordable housing delivered in 2020/21 included 123 outside of the three main towns of which 69 were in rural villages.

## **Income or Skill Level**

- 49. The District is generally prosperous, but there are pockets of deprivation in each of the three main towns. Worklessness is more prevalent amongst those in social housing and people on low incomes are also in a growing danger of suffering from fuel poverty. The pandemic has implications for the prosperity of the District with the Universal Credit claimant count increasing from 990 in March 2020, to 3,180 in December 2020, before falling back to 1,845 in December 2021.
- 50. 245 new affordable housing units were delivered in 2020/21, 174 for rent and 71 shared ownership. A further 257 new affordable homes have been delivered in the period April to December 2021.
- 51. The Council's Housing Needs Team assisted 103 households to access private rented sector accommodation in 2020/21 and a further 73 in the period April to December 2021.
- 52. The Council has signed up to the national Citizens Advice Good Practice Protocol, a public commitment to the principles of fairness, partnership working and transparency in local authority debt collection. This includes sending people locally for debt advice. The Council's Revenues team put people struggling to pay their Council Tax in touch with the Money and Pensions Service, who provide free independent debt advice.
- 53. A Covid 19 Recovery Grant was awarded to The Kings Church to fund the Re-Work Programme - a free course that equips anyone who has lost their job during the

pandemic with the skills, mind-set and confidence they need to re-enter the workplace.

### **Support for the Armed Forces Community**

54. Mid Sussex District Council signed the Armed Forces Community Covenant in September 2014, which is a statement of mutual support between the District Council and the local Armed Forces community. The Council also received the Bronze Employer Recognition Scheme award in January 2018, which shows support for the Armed Forces community through its employment policies. Initiatives associated with this have included the adoption of a guaranteed interview scheme for suitably qualified applicants with an armed forces connection and proper recognition in the Council's employment policies of provision for members of the Reserve Forces.
55. The main Council service that has had contact with veterans, reservists or active members of the Armed Forces is Housing. The Housing Register identifies those with an armed forces connection as they are exempted from the usual requirements to have a local connection. The Housing Needs Team provides specialist advice and support to homeless ex-forces people and liaises with organisations such as the armed forces charity SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association).
56. The Council continues to publicise the Heroes Welcome Scheme and there are 12 businesses signed up to the scheme in Haywards Heath.

### **Equality and Diversity and the Council's staff**

57. In addition to looking at improvements to services in the context of equality and diversity, this progress report also provides information about the Council's staff. As part of the requirement to publish Equality Data, we produce an annual monitoring report about the composition of our staff compared to the background Mid Sussex population. This includes information about age, sex, gender pay gap and ethnicity and is published on the Council's website <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/my-council/about-the-council/equality-and-diversity/equality-data/>
58. At the end of December 2021, the Council had 314 employees (288 full-time equivalents), 229 full-time and 85 part-time, with the following profile:
  - 126 (40%) are men and 188 (60%) women
  - 38% of senior managers (defined as the top 5% of earners) are women
  - 19 (6.05%) have identified themselves as disabled
  - 15 (4.78%) are from ethnic minority communities
  - 1 (0.3%) are under 21 years of age
  - 27 (8.6%) are 21-29
  - 56 (17.8%) are 30-39
  - 83 (26.4%) are 40-49
  - 111 (35.4%) are 50-59
  - 36 (11.5%) are over 60.
59. The Council's gender pay gap in 2020/21 was 11.9% calculated by comparing the mean average male and female employee pay. This compares to 10.9% in 2019/20. The median average gender pay gap for 2020/21 was 10.8%, compared to 10.0% in the previous year. The 2021 ONS national median average pay gap was 15.4% for

all employees and 16.6% nationally for local government administrative staff. The gender pay gap is different to equal pay. Equal pay deals with the pay differences between men and women who carry out the same jobs, similar jobs or work of equal value. It is unlawful to pay people unequally because of their sex.

60. The Council is required to submit this gender pay gap information to Government, together with the proportion of males and females in each of four pay quartiles as shown below for 2020/21:

Upper Quartile-	Men 58.44%	Women 41.56%
Upper Middle Quartile	Men 40.26%	Women 59.74%
Lower Middle Quartile	Men 31.17%	Women 68.83%
Lower Quartile	Men 32.46%	Women 67.54%

61. For staff with a disability, the Council is a “Disability Confident Committed” employer, recognising our commitment to the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees. This includes a commitment to interview all disabled applicants who meet the minimum criteria for a job vacancy and to consider them on their abilities.

## Equality and Diversity Training

62. All recent new starters at the Council have received equality and diversity training. This has had an emphasis on understanding unconscious bias. All staff are also required to complete an equality and diversity on-line training module and a recent addition has been a module on Transgender Awareness. Equalities training for Members was also provided in March 2020 which covered recognition of the nine protected characteristics and enhancing communication with our communities.

## Equality Impact Assessments

63. The Council completes impact assessments where there are major changes to a service area or new policies. The assessments identify opportunities to promote equality and the barriers to services/differential impact on the protected groups in Mid Sussex and disadvantage arising from income or skill level and by virtue of where people live. The format of the Council’s Equality Impact Assessments has been reviewed for 2022 to update the descriptions of the protected groups and to add consideration of issues for the armed forces community as a new category. This is in line with the Council’s Equality and Diversity Scheme.
64. The assessments that have been completed in 2021 are:
- Implementation of CCTV measures for East Court and Mount Noddy Recreation Ground, East Sussex
  - Proposed Disposal of Land at Courtmead Road, Cuckfield.
  - Introducing a new flexible Season ticket offer and increasing pay and display charges
65. Completed impact assessments are included with relevant Committee reports and published on the Council’s website. These can be found at <http://www.midsussex.gov.uk/my-council/about-the-council/equality-and-diversity/equality-impact-assessment/>



66. There is also a standard section in all of the Council's reports to Members, which assesses the "Equality and Customer Services Implications" of the actions referred to in the report.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD TO THE YEAR AHEAD**

67. This report includes many examples of how the Council, working with its partners, is providing for the needs of the protected groups in the District and addressing disparities arising from where people live and their income or skill level. This is in the context of the continued implications of the pandemic, which has changed the way that the Council delivers its services, greatly affected partnership working with the community and voluntary sector and especially impacted the protected groups.
68. The Council will be looking to further develop its equality and diversity work in the year ahead. Specific areas for development in 2022 include:
- a. Support for community events to celebrate the Queen's platinum jubilee through our grants scheme.
  - b. Further development of the Community Champions initiative working with Citizens Advice to engage with the BAME community in Mid Sussex, including the setting up of language cafes for diverse communities in partnership with Aspire.
  - c. Work to combat fuel poverty and to maximise the take up in the District of the available assistance to those most affected by the increase in energy costs.
  - d. Completion of the improvements to the accessibility of the Council Chamber and Public Gallery.
  - e. Further initiatives to support young people and mental health issues arising from the pandemic, including the Power4Parents project.
  - f. Play Days – delivering Play Days on Tour, Skate Fests and Activity Events.