



Closing the Gap: Working Towards Greater Equality for All

Equality objectives progress
report 2025/26

Introduction

This report provides an update on Sevenoaks District Council's progress against its equality objectives.

The report gives detail on how the Council has complied with the Public Sector Equalities Duty, and works to ensure that the council's policies, practices and services work to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, in keeping with the 2010 Equality Act.

Sevenoaks District Council's current Equality Objectives are to:

- Advance equality of opportunity by seeking to remove barriers to people with disabilities, and their carers, to participate in community life.
- Foster good relations by promoting understanding of issues affecting people with disabilities and older people.
- Advance equality of opportunity by improving access to leisure facilities and health activities for people with disabilities, younger and older age groups and men and women.
- Advance equality of opportunity by improving access to information about our services for people with disabilities and across age groups.
- Advance equality of opportunity by encouraging a broader range of people to apply for Council vacancies and apprenticeships.

Sevenoaks District Council's equality objectives will be revised this year.

Working to combat social isolation

Sevenoaks District Council's **Community Grants Scheme** offers funding to voluntary and charitable organisations that deliver services, activities, or projects benefiting residents across the Sevenoaks District.

Community groups can apply for grants of up to £5,000 to support their work.

In 2024/25 funding was gained by organisations including groups which support people with learning disabilities, mobility restrictions and people impacted by social isolation. Support was also provided to organisations that help older people with advice on issues such as benefits, as well as to those offering services for families, including families affected by domestic abuse.



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The **Better Together** online community hub was set up by Sevenoaks District Council in partnership with the Voluntary Sector. The Online Community Hub helps people in the community to discover what's happening across the Sevenoaks District and promote events.

Sevenoaks District Council coordinates events such as lunch clubs, fairs and Christmas gatherings. These activities are designed to support residents who may be experiencing social isolation, helping them to meet others and to build social connections. In 2024/25 around 300 older people attended these events.

Sevenoaks District Council in partnership with Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Health Care Partnerships, has delivered a local cooking and healthy-eating programme both online and in person. Over the past year, the Council has run a series of five-week, face-to-face cookery courses in four locations across Swanley and the northern parishes.



Keeping safe and healthy

Sevenoaks District Council is commissioned and funded by Kent County Council's Public Health Team to deliver the **One You Lifestyle Improvement Service**. **One You** includes weight management services and healthy lifestyle improvement services for adults. It is available to Sevenoaks residents aged 18+ who are looking for some help and motivation to change their lifestyle.

Our in-house designed **Why Weight** weight management course achieved strong outcomes with over 80% completion rates across 12-week programmes and with 75% of participants achieving weight loss.

The district has established a network of walking groups for all abilities, and **One You** has worked with the Sevenoaks Primary Care Network to set up new gentler groups, with health coach walks in Edenbridge, Stangrove Park and a new route in Westerham. The **Steps to Wellbeing** walking scheme continues to deliver 5 weekly walks across the District.

The **One You** team works closely with Sevenoaks Primary Care Network (PCN), Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT), and local GPs. In 2025, a Community Walk, Blood Pressure and Wellbeing event was held in Edenbridge in March, followed by a Menopause Awareness and Support event in October, along with multiple community drop-in screening and health check sessions across Sevenoaks District, which together attracted over 200 residents.

In partnership with **Mid Kent Mind** and the **Kent County Council Public Health team**, the Council marked World Suicide Prevention Day in September by launching suicide prevention training for both adults and young people at the Council. More than 60 people completed suicide-prevention first aid training, strengthening the support available to local communities.

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Sevenoaks District Council, in partnership with our leisure service providers, is committed to ensuring all residents can access activities that support their health and wellbeing.

Concession schemes for leisure facilities are available, though they vary by location, and include discounts for people who are unwaged, receiving benefits, carers and cared-for young people, people with disabilities, students and those in full-time education, and individuals recovering from illness or injury. These concessions help ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to take part in activities that support a healthy lifestyle.



Offering a helping hand to those who may be facing financial pressures

The **HERO** Service provides outreach support and advice services with residents across the District at Community Café, Community Halls, Foodbanks and Job Hubs.

HERO provides personalised advice and support for residents on:

- saving money on household bills,
- debt, rent or mortgage guidance,
- welfare benefits,
- retraining skills and finding work,
- volunteering,
- referrals to housing and other support services.

The Council's HERO service has assisted 133 households with 189 different issues to prevent potential homelessness at the earliest stages using housing, benefits, debt and social services data as part of an early intervention initiative to support customers, prevent homelessness and reduce the budget pressure on the Council (April 2025 to February 2026).

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The Council's **Housing Allocation Policy** sets out the Council's priorities for how social housing in Sevenoaks District is allocated and the guidelines that determine entitlement and eligibility to join the Housing Register.

The Policy has been reviewed and the proposed changes arising from the review will ensure that the Housing Allocations Policy 2026-2031 makes the most effective use of the social housing that becomes available across the District.

The draft Policy will go through a 12-week formal consultation process, surveys, meetings and focus groups will be held with members, partners, stakeholders and customers to get their views between the 4 May 2026 and 24 July 2026 on the draft Policy. The policy will take full account of equalities considerations.

Housing Strategy 2022-2027

The Housing Strategy 2022 to 2027 sets out our vision for housing in the Sevenoaks District. It sets out 4 major themes and under each 1, the priorities and objectives that we want to achieve..

- Theme 1: Developing Sevenoaks District's housing offer - building new affordable homes,
- Theme 2: Promoting quality and optimising range and suitability of new and existing homes,
- Theme 3: Reducing homelessness and improving routes into permanent accommodation,
- Theme 4: Healthy people, homes and places.

The Council's Housing Strategy was adopted in 2022, and its third-year review was completed in 2025, and progress was presented to the Health and Housing Advisory Committee in November 2025 for oversight.

A review of the Housing Strategy is currently being completed, and a draft Strategy will be presented to the Health and Housing Advisory Committee in October 2026 to go out for consultation.

Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy Review and draft Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2026-2031.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy was adopted by Council on 21 February 2023. Local Housing Authorities have a statutory duty to publish a Strategy every 5 years. The Strategy centers around 3 themes:

- **Prevention** – we want to help residents before they go into crisis and focus on preventing homelessness from happening in the first place.
- **Intervention** - the way we support and help people who have become homeless.
- **Sustainable solutions** - taking a long-term approach to establishing a range of sustainable housing and housing options for vulnerable and homeless households and rough sleepers.

With the launch of the cross Government Homeless and Rough Sleeper Strategy, 'A National Plan to End Homelessness', the current Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed to meet the new requirements and the Government metrics. A draft Strategy will be presented to the Health

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and Housing Advisory Committee in October 2026 to go out for consultation taking into full account equalities considerations.

To date, **Quercus Housing** (owned by Sevenoaks District Council) has delivered 52 new affordable homes for rent across the Sevenoaks District. The Council is seeking to support additional affordable homes.

In partnership with Kent County Council and the Household Support Fund, Sevenoaks District Council has provided vital funding to all seven **food banks** across the district.

A new food bank in Swanley, coordinated by the Community Cupboard, opened in 2024, and further funding has been received to sustain it for 2 years.

Between April 25 to Feb 26, 7 boilers have been replaced through the **KCC Boiler Replacement Initiative**. 17 residents have **received Warm Home Local Grants**.

Sevenoaks District Council sign posts both through our 'Here for You' leaflet, and 'Help with the Cost of Living' webpage (available here [Help with the cost of living | Sevenoaks District Council](#)). These resources include information on maximising benefit and pensions, access to childcare and the cost of school transport, budget planning and information on utilities.

Ensuring Accessible Services

Disability access grants allow a range of essential adaptations to be made for those with a disability. This includes installing stair lifts, installing 'wet rooms' and improving access into and around the home. From April 2024 to March 2025 109 home adaptations were made through the grant.

Assisted rubbish collection – Sevenoaks District Council offers an assisted rubbish collection service. This service is for residents who are frail, elderly or those with disabilities who cannot lift or carry their waste sacks and recycling bags. Around 1,000 properties use this service.

Making sure information on our website is accessible - all documents Sevenoaks District Council produces and publishes on our websites and mobile applications should be accessible to people with disabilities.

We want our websites to be accessible to as many people as possible. On our main website (www.sevenoaks.gov.uk) customers and able to:

- change colours, contrast levels and fonts,
- zoom in up to 300% without the text spilling off the screen,
- navigate most of the site using just a keyboard,
- navigate most of the site using speech-recognition software,
- listen to most of the site using a screen reader, including the latest versions of JAWS, NVDA and VoiceOver.

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Sevenoaks District Council has access to translation services which can be used through telephone or video call. Our Customer Solutions team is available from 8.45am to 5pm (4.45pm on a Friday) both through the telephone and in person at the reception at the Council Offices at Argyle Road. A hearing loop is available at reception, as is a wheelchair accessible desk.

We will always try to ensure that communications are accessible. When requested we can print information in large print, or in different formats. This can be requested via our customer solution team.

Supporting our workforce

Sevenoaks District Council is committed to supporting the wellbeing of all staff. We encourage colleagues to:

- develop and reach their full potential,
- ensure our workplaces are safe and accessible,
- and foster an inclusive culture where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Our performance development scheme provides structured support, and coaching sessions are available to staff across the organisation. We also run an apprenticeship programme to help young people enter the workforce, alongside offering access to online learning and further development opportunities agreed through the appraisal process.

We are proud to have trained Mental Health Champions, Menopause Champions, Domestic Abuse Champions, and an LGBTQIA+ Champions and Allies Group. We actively support staff who wish to establish networks for those with protected characteristics.

Our office is wheelchair accessible via lifts, signage includes braille, and staff are trained in the safe use of Evac Chairs. Accessibility needs are discussed at interview and throughout the recruitment process to ensure appropriate support is in place for anyone wishing to join our team.

Sevenoaks District Council places dignity and respect at the heart of our core behaviours. All staff complete mandatory Equality and Diversity training, including during induction and as part of recruitment responsibilities, with further learning opportunities available. We also offer flexible working arrangements, along with enhanced maternity, paternity, shared parental leave, and sick pay.



How Sevenoaks District Council considers equality and diversity in the decisions it makes.

Supporting equality and diversity is important to Sevenoaks District Council. The council seeks to meet its requirements under the Public Sector Equality Duty by:

1. Conducting equality impact assessments to evaluate effects on service users and assessing implications across all protected characteristics.
2. Strengthening data collection around equalities, gathering relevant information where this is possible and appropriate.
3. Continuing to embed equality and diversity into corporate policy and strategy.
4. Supporting and growing our training offer around diversity and inclusion, ensuring that staff can recognise and mitigate potential barriers to access for services, and that decision-makers have access to information to support understanding of responsibilities under the equalities act.



Linked Policies

- Reasonable Adjustment Policy
- Modern Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking statement
- Safeguarding policy for children and adults at risk
- Strategy for Transport
- Waste Collection Service Standards
- Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy (1 April 2024 to 31 March 2029)
- Gypsy and Traveller Allocation Policy
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2023 - 2028
- Housing register allocation strategy
- Housing Strategy
- Community Safety - Action Plan and Annual report

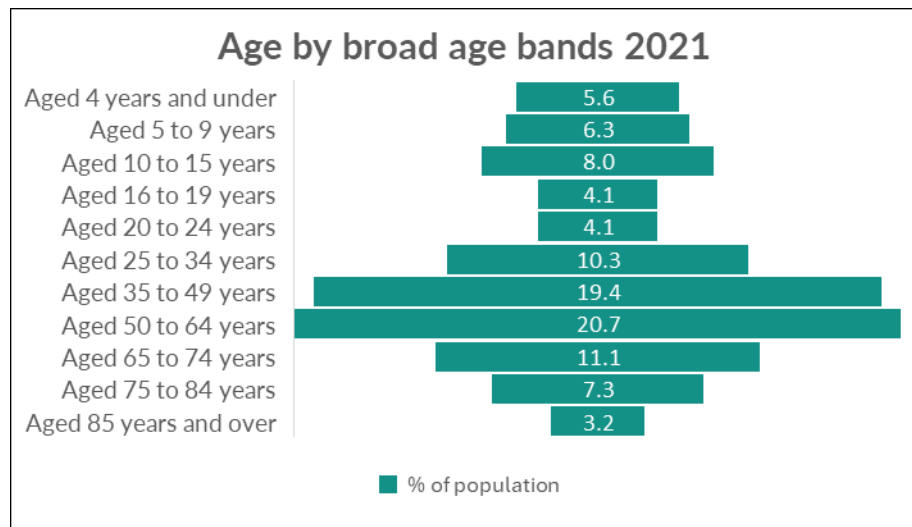
Our Population Statistics

Sevenoaks District has a population of 120,514. It has grown by 4.9% between the last two censuses (2011 and 2021), a smaller percentage than the overall population of the South-East region (7.5%). The population in Sevenoaks is projected to increase to 126,281 people in 2032.

The population density in the District slightly increased between 2011 and 2021. In 2011 there were 2.2 people for every area of land the size of a football pitch; by 2021, this has risen to approximately 2.3 people.

51.7% of residents are female, 48.3% are male.

The birth rate in the District in 2024 was 1,109, with a mother's average age being 31.9 years, compared with 1,275 births in 2021, with an average age of 31.5 years.



Between the last two censuses, the average age in the District rose by one year, increasing from 43 to 44 years of age. This average is higher than that of the South-East region overall, which stood at 41 years in 2021.

In 2032, 23% of the population in the District is projected to be aged 65 years or over.

Between 2011 and 2021, the percentage of households in the District made up of a couple without children dropped from 19.1% to 16.5%. The figure across the South-East region decreased from 18.7% to 17.4%.

The proportion of residents in Sevenoaks District (aged five and over) who reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care per week decreased between the two censuses. The age-standardised figure fell from 7.4% in 2011 to 4.9% in 2021.

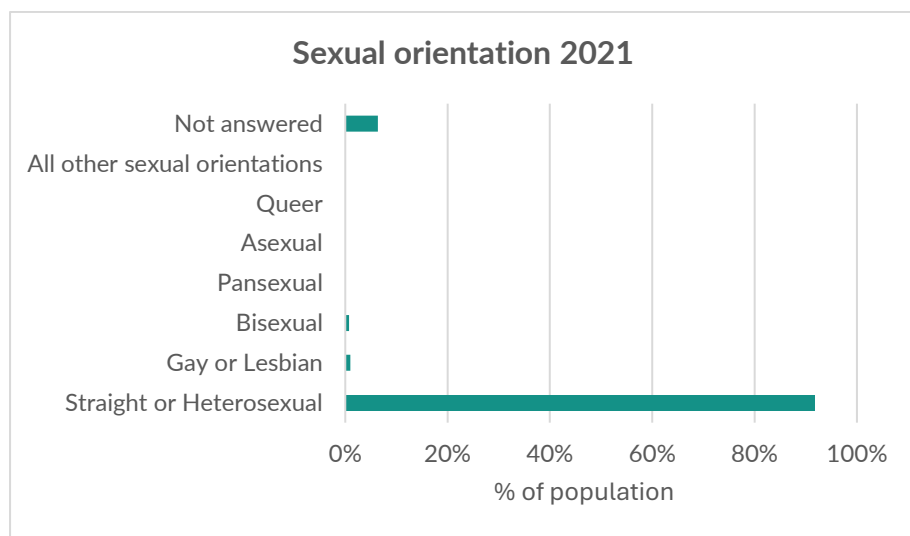
Provision of unpaid care 2021	Sevenoaks District	South-East Region
Provides no unpaid care	91.2%	91.6%
Provides 19 hours or less unpaid care a week	4.9%	4.4%
Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	1.4%	1.5%
Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week	2.5%	2.4%

In 2021, 92% of the District's residents identified as White, and 8% from other ethnic groups. The proportion of residents identifying as "Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups" increased from 1.5% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2021. The South-East region saw a similar rise in this category, from 1.9% to 2.8%.

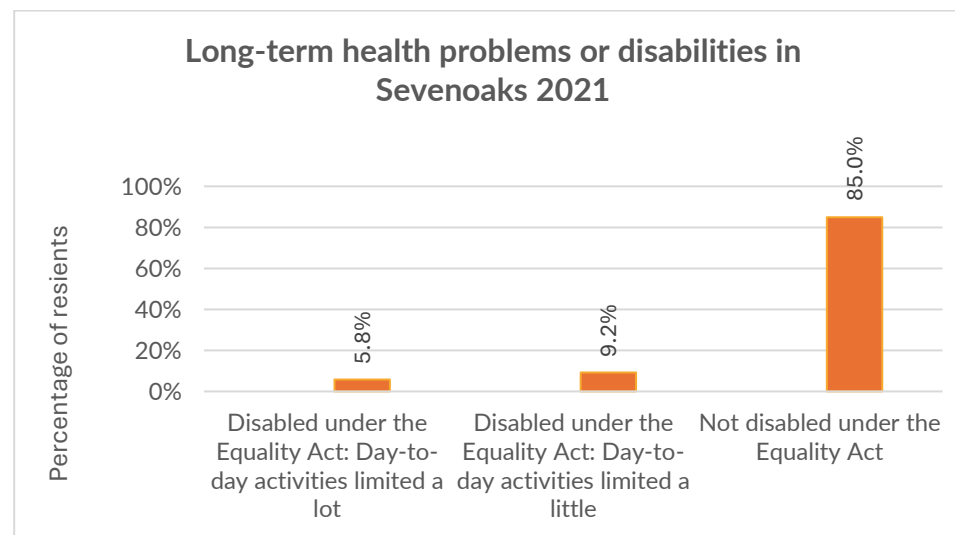
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Ethnic Group by percentage of residents in the Sevenoaks District	Census 2011	Census 2021
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	1.8%	2.9%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	0.7%	1.6%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	1.5%	2.6%
White	95.8%	92.1%
Other ethnic group	0.2%	0.8%

In 2021, of the 96,602 residents aged 16 and over, 91.8% identified as straight or heterosexual, 1% as gay or lesbian, 0.7% as bisexual, 0.1% as pansexual, 0.1% all other sexual orientations, and 6.3% did not answer.



In 2021, 15% of the District's residents were identified as being disabled under the Equality Act. 85% were not disabled, compared with 83.8% in the South-East Region

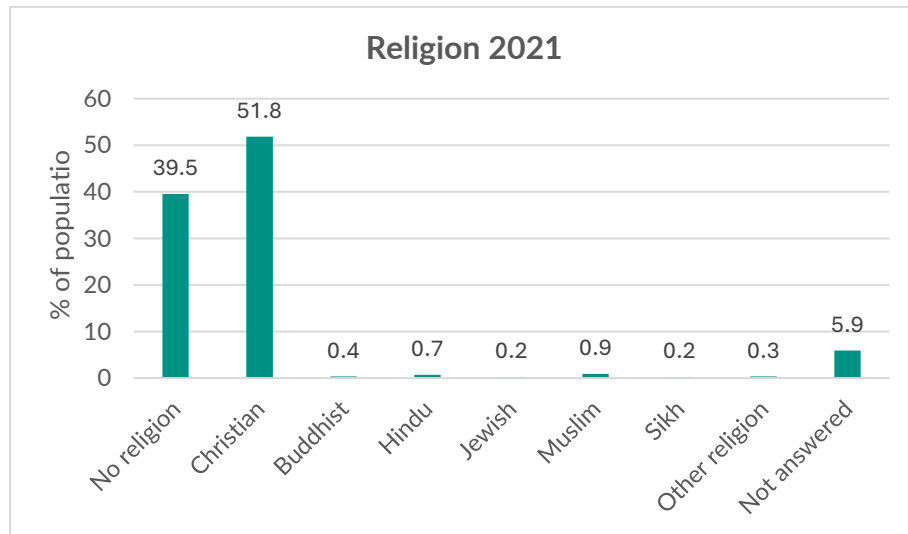


In 2021, 52.6% of the District's residents described their health as "very good". 50% of residents in the South-East region described their health as "very good".

Gender identity in Sevenoaks District 2021	Total
Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth	95%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth but no specific identity given	0.1%
Trans woman	0.1%
Trans man	0.1%
Non-binary	0.0%
All other gender identities	0.0%
Not answered	4.8%

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In 2021, 51.8% of people in the District described themselves as Christian (down from 65.4%) and 2.7% belong to other faiths, 39.5% had no religion (up from 25.2% in 2011). 5.9% did not answer. 46.5% of residents in the South-East region described themselves as Christian.



In 2021, 52.2% of the District's residents aged 16 years and over said they were married or in a registered civil partnership, compared with 54.7% in 2011.



In 2021, 3,342 of residents in Sevenoaks District have previously served in the UK armed forces.

Gender Pay Gap Reporting

As at March 2025, Sevenoaks District Council has 417 (334 FTE) employees.

All employees are paid in accordance with the National Joint Council terms, conditions and pay scales. This means that every job role at the Council is subject to job evaluation to ensure the pay for that role is fair, regardless of the gender of the post holder.

The Council provides approximately 70 services to the 50,000 households and 120,000 people that live in the District. This means that there are a wide range of diverse roles from refuse collectors and vehicle maintenance staff, to customer services, qualified planning and environmental health officers.

Pay quartiles

The table below shows the proportion of male and female staff that make up each of the pay quartiles.

Pay Quartile	Male	Female
Lower Quartile	69%	31%
Lower Middle Quartile	49%	51%
Upper Middle Quartile	36%	64%
Upper Quartile	47%	53%

Our quartile analysis shows that currently there is a greater proportion of male employees in the lower and lower middle quartiles. There is a

greater proportion of female employees in the upper middle and upper quartiles.

The table below shows the mean and median pay

	Mean Hourly rate	Median Hourly rate
Male	£19.15	£16.46
Female	£19.33	£18.13
Gender Pay Gap	(-0.9%)	(-10.14%)

Our mean pay gap shows that male employees are paid on average 0.9% less than female employees.

Our median pay gap shows that male employees are paid on average 10.14% less than female employees.

Mean and median bonus pay

Bonus pay is required to include any remuneration that relates to productivity or performance.

Through the Council's appraisal scheme, which all employees participate in, those that achieve high quality or outstanding performance can receive payment of £250 or £500, which is subject to normal deduction of national insurance, tax and pension contributions. In circumstances where an employee is at the top of their pay band the achievement of outstanding performance is recognised with a payment equivalent to 2.5% of salary or £500 (whichever is greater).

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The table below shows the gender pay gap between mean and median bonus pay.

	Mean Bonus Pay	Median Bonus Pay
Gender pay gap	3.1%	0.0%

Our analysis of pay shows that 42% of male employees receive a bonus and 58% of female employees receive a bonus.

Our mean bonus pay gap shows that male employees receive on average 3.1% more than female employees. This is explained by the greater proportion of male employees that are currently at the top scale point of their salary band.

Our median bonus pay gap shows that female and male employees receive median bonus pay of £250 for the year.

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

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