



**TREATING PEOPLE WITH
DIGNITY AND RESPECT**

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**Single Equality Scheme
2017-2020**

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Who we are

We deliver high quality affordable homes and services for over 20,000 people in and around the Maidstone, Ashford, Medway, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge & Malling areas.

Established in 2004, we have invested over £100m in regenerating our homes and estates and have built over 1000 affordable new homes for local people. Our priority is to invest in our communities and improve the life opportunities of our residents.

Our passion is to provide an excellent service and aspire to be an organisation of choice for our residents and staff. We employ over 140 talented members of staff who are committed to ensuring we deliver our promises.

Our Vision and Mission

Golding Homes' Vision is Enhancing Life Opportunities. With this we are setting out our long term ambition to be an organisation which not only provides excellent services to our customers, but also helps to change the places where they live and the opportunities that they have in life to succeed.

This Vision is supported by our five year Mission – *To provide quality homes and create communities where people chose to live*. Importantly, we acknowledge that our customers should be assumed to have a choice and that the services we deliver are designed to reflect that. None of this can be achieved without ensuring that our policies, strategies and performance reflect the diverse needs of our customers and everyone at Golding Homes.

Why does Equality matter to us?

Knowing our community, customer and staff diversity demographic is essential to achieving an equal society. An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals, and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be.

What is the Single Equality Scheme?

The Golding Homes Single Equality Scheme (SES) outlines:

- how we plan to meet our legal and regulatory duties to promote equality and remove unlawful discrimination
- Golding Homes' commitment to promote equality and ensure that there is no discrimination in relation to: age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race (this includes ethnic or national origins, colour, caste and nationality), religion or belief, sexual orientation
- our objectives for 2017- 2020
- our work to date
- how we will monitor and review the scheme

We also recognise that certain groups and individuals are not always treated fairly because of their socio-economic status. We include within our scheme a commitment to reducing socio-economic inequalities, recognising the significance of this in social housing. We have published a separate Financial Inclusion Strategy to outline our work in this area.

Our scheme fulfils the function of our Equality and Diversity Strategy and provides the strategic vision and operational context for our Corporate Equality and Diversity Policy and Equality Impact Assessment process.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Equality Act brought together over 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act. Combined, they make up a new Act that provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all.

The Act simplified, strengthened and harmonised legislation to provide a new discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society.

The nine main pieces of legislation that have merged are:

- the Equal Pay Act 1970
- the Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- the Race Relations Act 1976
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations 2003
- the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003
- the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
- the Equality Act 2006, Part 2
- the Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

The Protected Characteristics

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sexual Orientation



Age

Definition

Age is the period of time since an individual's birth, and is marked by stages of mental and physical development and legal responsibility.

Why this matters

At different stages of life, we have very different needs for housing.

We also use the environment around our houses in very different ways.

We need to understand fully what these different needs are, so we can provide everyone with the services they need equally.

People can make assumptions about others because of their age, and this can affect their access to services and employment.

Older people are more likely to suffer ill-health, disability or impaired mobility. This means they could be more vulnerable and might find it difficult to access services.

Young people, on the other hand, can often be stereotyped. They tend to be less confident in accessing services or getting involved, and are likely to be less experienced in the responsibilities of having a tenancy.

Age in Kent

The mean age of residents in Kent¹ is 40.7 years. This is slightly higher than the national average of 39.6 years. The mean age of a Kent female is 41.7 years compared to the national average of 40.6 years. The mean age of Kent male is 39.6 compared to the national average of 38.6 years.

¹ When referring to Kent (unless otherwise stated) we mean the Kent County Council Area which includes all twelve local authority districts but does not include the Medway Unitary Authority

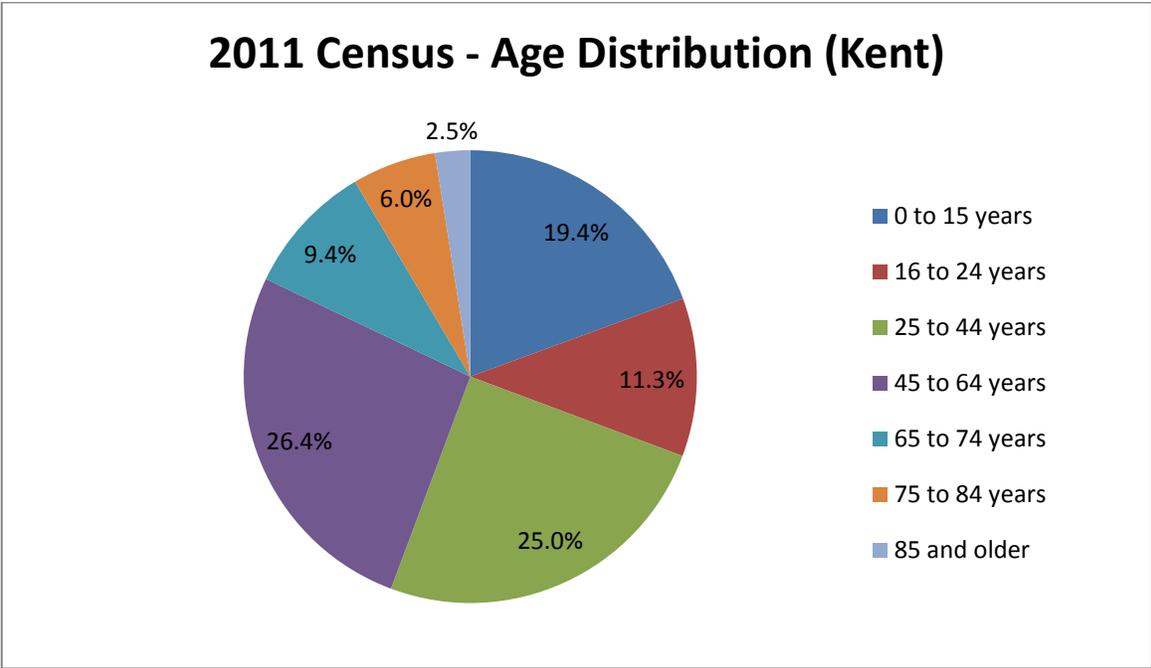
Mean age is slightly higher in East Kent with the mean age of residents in Dover, Shepway and Thanet all above 42 years. Mean age is youngest in Dartford (North Kent) at 37.9 years.

Shepway has the oldest mean age for females at 44.1 years and the oldest mean age for males at 41.8 years. Dartford has the youngest mean age for both females at 38.6 years and males at 37.2 years.

Kent has a slightly smaller proportion of 0-4 year olds than the national average, but on the whole Kent has a younger age profile than the national average, with a greater proportion of young people aged 5-19 years than England.

Kent has a smaller proportion of middle aged people compared to England, particularly in the age group 20-39 years.

Kent has an older age profile than the national average with greater proportions of people aged 45+ years than England.



What we can achieve

We will target our resources, as appropriate, to ensure that customers of all ages are able to access the housing they need and the services and support they require.

We can make sure that everyone, no matter how old or young, is listened to and treated with respect and dignity.

We will work with younger people to understand how they want to engage with us and how our service delivery affects them, so they feel empowered to take responsibility and make choices and decisions.

We can make sure that we do not discriminate in employment on the basis of age.

Disability

Definition

A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Why this matters

Disabled people often face barriers of discrimination and stigma.

Disabled people are often disproportionately affected by issues of unemployment or finding suitable work even though many of them would like to work. As a group they are also more likely to have lower rates of activity and lower earnings.

Research shows a third of disabled people avoid specific places or change their routine to avoid harassment. And as many as one in four has moved house due to this.

People with learning disabilities appear to be particularly vulnerable to bullying and harassment.

Mental health and behavioural problems (e.g. depression, anxiety and drug use) are reported to be the primary drivers of disability worldwide. It is estimated that 1 in 4 people in England will experience a mental health problem in any given year.²

Inappropriate design of physical facilities in housing and offices make it difficult or impossible to access the same level of service others expect.

The same is true of the way in which we communicate information about our services.

Too often planning for disability equality is done at the end of a process, rather than at the beginning.

Disability in Kent

Using the broadest definition (as above and taken from the 2011 Census) 257,038 residents in Kent (17.6%) have a health problem or disability which limits their day-to-day activities.

Personal Independent Payment (PIP) was introduced to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for working age people in Spring 2013 and began to be phased

² Mental Health Foundation

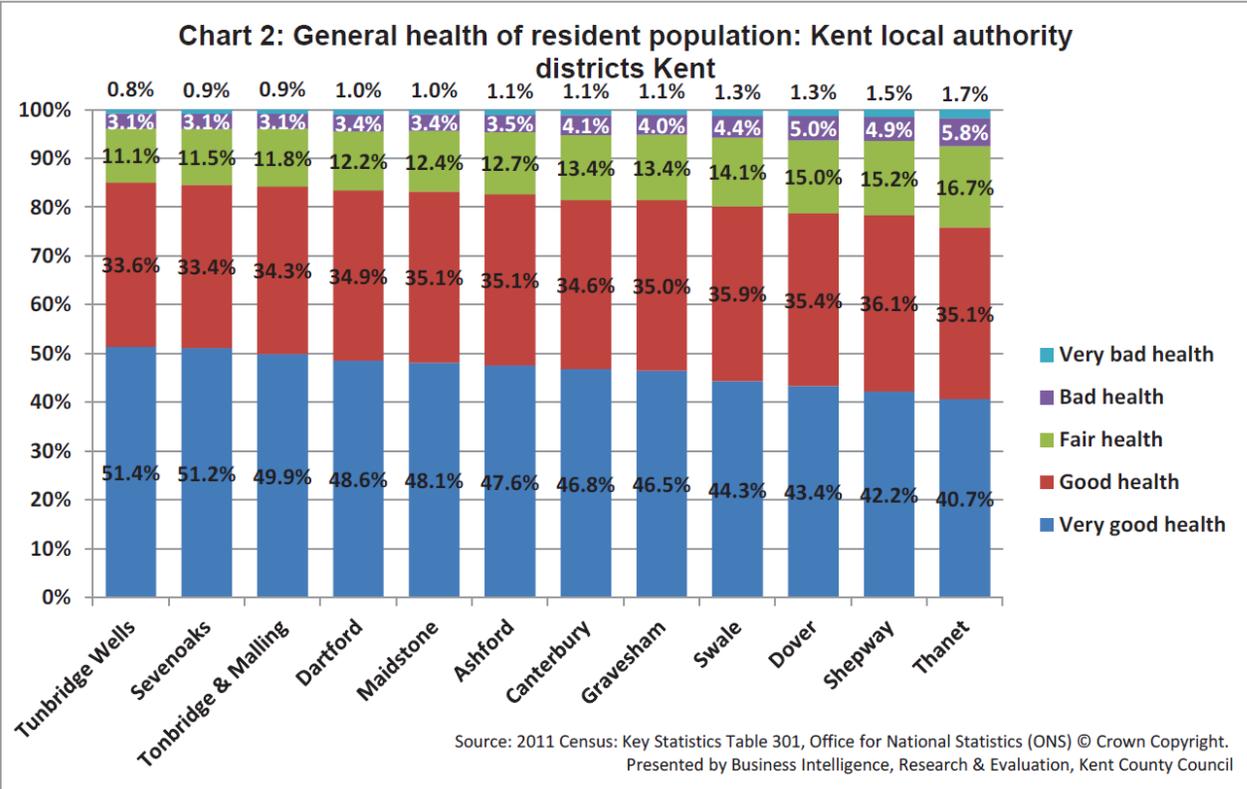
in Kent in July 2013. 7.4% of the population in Kent are claiming Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance, equivalent to 110,470 claimants. However, an additional 3,596 people are receiving PIP which makes the total number claiming a disability benefit 114,066 (7.6% of the total Kent population).

A higher proportion of women (7.8%) claim disability benefits in Kent than men (7.0%)

A physical disability or health condition is the most common reason for a claim for a disability benefit. This accounted for 73.1 % of all claims in Kent.

A higher proportion of people aged 65 and over (19.8%) claim disability benefits than those aged 16-64 (4.6%) or those aged 15 and under (4.0%)

People living in the east of the county (in Thanet, Dover, Shepway, Canterbury and Swale) are more likely to consider themselves to have a limiting health problem or disability than the average for the county. Thanet has the highest proportion with almost a quarter (23.4%) of the resident population stating that a health condition or disability limited their day to day activities to some degree.



The districts in the west of the county (Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling and Sevenoaks) have the lowest proportion of their population whose day to day activities were limited by their health condition or disability, all below 15%.

The employment rate for people who are disabled in Kent is 50.6%. This is lower than the employment rate for people without a disability which is 79.7% in Kent.

What we can achieve

The vast majority of disability groups prefer that the 'social model' towards disability equality is adopted.

This means seeing the problem not as the disability, but as the barriers that society puts in the way of equality – whether physical barriers or barriers of negative attitudes.

This is the approach we can take in the way that we design our housing stock, the shared spaces in housing estates and our own offices.

This can help to break down the barriers of discrimination and help people reclaim control over how they live their lives.

We can also make sure there is no discrimination in employment within the company and that disability is never a reason for people failing to progress in their careers.

We can also continue to build up good working relationships with groups representing disabled people.

We can encourage a sense of empowerment, recognising that it is disabled people themselves who are the experts in their own needs.

We monitor our customer satisfaction with services by disability and other protected characteristics to ensure our processes are not creating barriers.

Gender and Gender Reassignment

Definition

Gender is whether you are male or female, or, if you do not identify exclusively as either one of these, transgender.

Gender identity means whatever gender you regard yourself to be.

Gender Reassignment is the process of transitioning from one gender to another.

Why this matters

Women, men and transgender people have different needs for housing services. Despite the 1970 Equal Pay Act (now the Equality Act), women earn less than their male counterparts and are still under-represented at professional and managerial levels.

Transgender people often experience the discomfort of gender dysphoria – the feeling of being in the wrong body. This is not itself a mental illness, but it can have implications for mental health.

There is a widespread lack of understanding of transgender people. This can take the form of discrimination and harassment, which can inhibit people from living in the way that they choose.

Gender and Gender Reassignment in Kent

There are marginally more females to males in Kent and this pattern is seen in all of Kent's local authority districts. Thanet has the greatest proportion of females to males (51.8% female compared to 48.2% male). The difference is smallest in Gravesham, Maidstone, Shepway and Swale with 50.6% female compared to 49.4% male.

The male/female ratio changes with age. On the whole, there are more males compared to females in the younger age groups, but as age increases there become more females to males.

The number of transgender people in Kent is unknown, as this information is not requested in the Census or other surveys. The Home Office estimate that less than one in ten thousand people are transgender. This would suggest that, while the numbers are small, there may be a small number of transgender people living in our housing stock.

What we can achieve

We can make sure the services we offer are open to and meet the needs of everyone irrespective of gender.

We can make sure people have the same access to job opportunities at the same rate of pay, relative to experience and qualifications and we do not discriminate in any way because a person is male, female or transgender.

Everyone should have the opportunity to follow a career and still have a family and home life. We can make sure people can take up senior positions in our company, regardless of gender.

We can help men, women and transgender live and work free from the fear of discrimination and harassment, and encourage a wider appreciation of transgender people.

As a landlord our aim is that all people have the same access to our services and we do not discriminate in the provision of services because a person is male, female or transgender.

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Definition

Marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.

Why this matters

Historically, the Housing Act 1985, made different provisions for married and same sex couples.

Marriage and Civil Partnership in Kent

Between 2006 and 2011 the number of civil partnerships formed in Kent has decreased each year. This is a pattern seen nationally. However 2010 saw a small increase from 2009 in the number of partnerships formed in Kent.

2006 was the first year in which couples could form a civil partnership. It is for this reason that the number of formations was considerably higher in this year than in subsequent years.

Over time, the proportion of partnerships that were male has declined, whereas the proportion that was female has increased. In 2006, 60.3% of partnerships formed were male, whereas in 2011 the proportion had dropped to 50.7%.

In recent years, Kent has seen a higher proportion of female civil partnership formations than male formations, which is opposite to the national profile.

There were 134 civil partnerships formed in Kent in 2011. Of these, 68 (50.7%) were male partnerships and 66 (49.3%) were female.

0.2% of the Kent population are in a registered same-sex civil partnership which is the same figure regionally and nationally.

48.8% of the Kent population are married which is slightly less than the regional figure (49.3%) but higher than the national average (46.6%)

It is worth noting that currently the number of civil partnerships formed within Kent is the only data set that provides a measure of civil partnerships and sexual orientation. However, this data set only relates to civil partnerships that are formed within Kent. It does not necessarily provide a true reflection of the number of people living within Kent in civil partnerships.

What we can achieve

As a landlord our aim is that all people have the same access to our services and we do not discriminate in the provision of services because a person is married or in a civil partnership.

Freely awarding joint tenures to same sex couples, on the same basis as married ones.

Pregnancy and Maternity

Definition

Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for

26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

Why this matters

The former Equal Opportunities Commission (now the Equalities and Human Rights Commission) conducted a formal investigation into pregnancy discrimination in 2005. Their final report found that the main areas of unfair treatment during pregnancy were denial of a pay increase, refusal of promotion, having to take lower-paid work, being excluded from training and refusal of time-off for ante-natal care. Women involved in the in-depth interviews experienced a wide range of negative treatment at work, ranging from more subtle changes in the attitudes of their colleagues and employers, to unfair selection for redundancy, dismissal, denial of promotion opportunities and sexual and verbal harassment. Many also reported enforced changes to their job during pregnancy.³

Births in Kent

National Statistics:

In 2013, over half (51%) of all live births were to mothers aged 30 and over.

Nearly two-thirds (66%) of fathers were aged 30 and over in 2013 (excluding births registered solely by the mother).

The average age of all mothers increased to 30.0 years in 2013, compared with 29.8 years in 2012.

The average age of first time mothers was 28.3 years in 2013, compared with 28.1 years in 2012.

In 2013, 84% of babies were registered by parents who were married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting

Regional Statistics:

During the year 2013 there were 16,955 births in Kent. Maidstone saw the largest number of live births in 2013 with a total of 1,919.

The number of births in Kent has fluctuated over the years, which is a characteristic of births in general and therefore not something which is unique to Kent. The number of births in Kent increased throughout the late 1980's and continued to increase until the mid-1990's when they started to fall gradually. Since the start of this decade the number of births has begun to increase again. Although there were 1,192 fewer births in 2013 than there were in 2012.

³ Maternity Action

Area	No of Births in 2013
Kent	16,955
Ashford	1,452
Canterbury	1,413
Dartford	1,442
Dover	1,150
Gravesham	1,389
Maidstone	1,875
Sevenoaks	1,212
Shepway	1,067
Swale	1,683
Thanet	1,615
Tonbridge and Malling	1,403
Tunbridge Wells	1,254

What we can achieve

Everyone should have the opportunity to follow a career and still have a family and home life.

We can make sure people have the same access to job opportunities and at the same rate of pay, relative to experience and qualifications and we do not discriminate in any way because a person is pregnant or on maternity leave.

Race

Definition

Race is a group of people who share a distinctive genetic inheritance which is defined by their colour, nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.

Why Race matters

In general, people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities often experience difficulties in accessing the same quality of services as other people and in gaining employment.

This can be due to prejudice. Also, language barriers can make it difficult to know what is available and to make the best use of what is there.

Some communities also have cultural needs for particular kinds of housing.

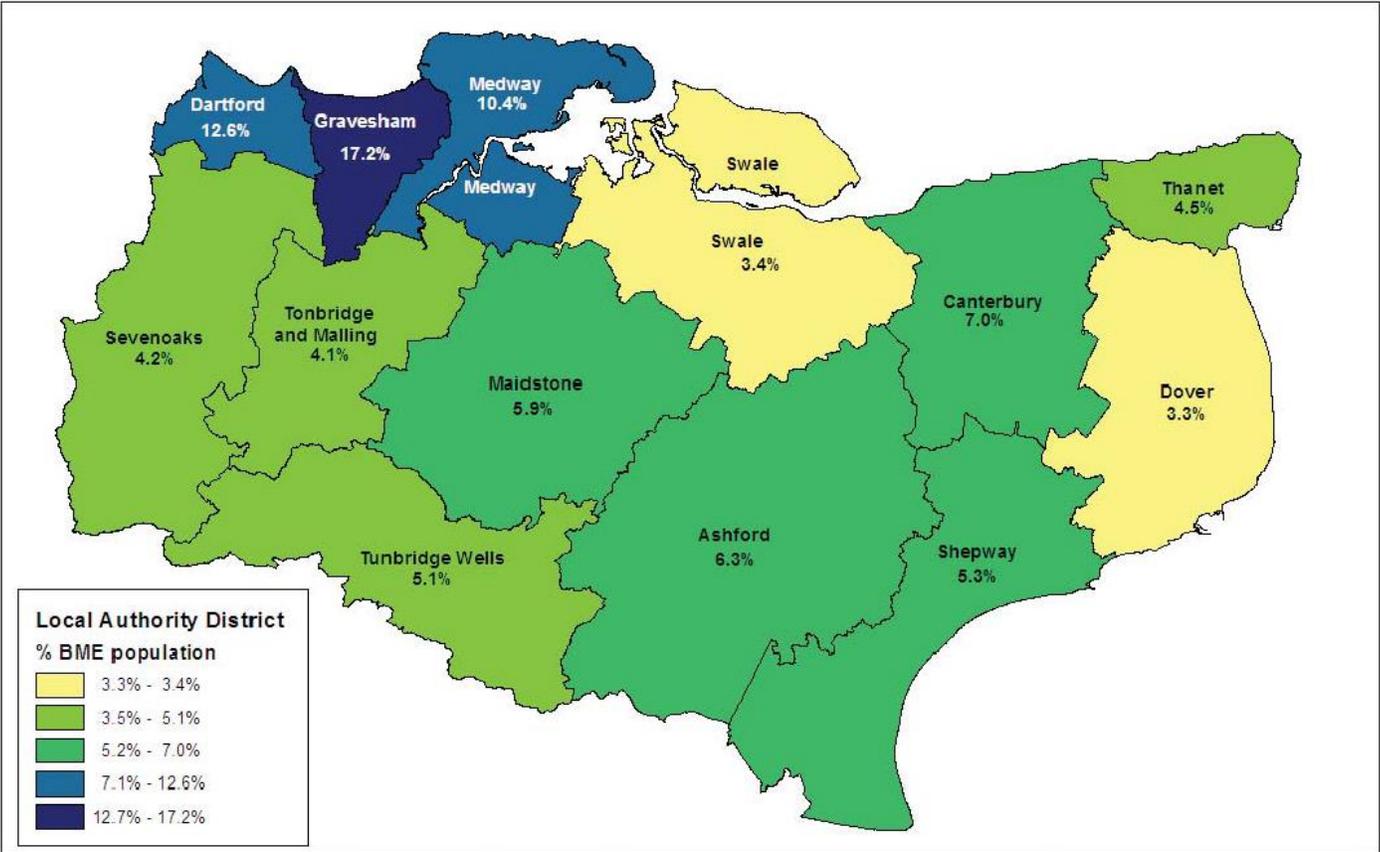
Race in Kent

The largest ethnic group in Kent is White with 93.7% of residents belonging to this ethnic group. The remaining 6.3% of residents are from a Black Minority Ethnic (BME) group.

The Asian/Asian British group is the 2nd largest ethnic group after the “White” ethnic group in Kent. The 3rd largest ethnic group is the mixed/multiple ethnic group with a population of 22,107 people. This accounts for 1.5% of Kent’s total population.

The Black/ African / Caribbean/ Black British group accounts for 1.1% of the total area population.

Map 1: Black Minority Ethnic (BME) population as a % of the total resident population: Kent local authority districts and Medway Unitary Authority



Source: 2011 Census Key Statistics Table KS201 (released 11 December 2012), The Office for National Statistics (ONS) © Crown Copyright
 This map is produced by Business Intelligence, Kent County Council © Crown Copyright and database right 2012, Ordnance Survey 100019238



The South East region has the highest proportion of ‘White:Gypsy/Irish Traveller’ although the number is relatively small (0.2 per cent, 15,000). Maidstone is in the top 10 highest local authorities in England and Wales for people declaring as ‘White:Gypsy/Irish Traveller’ (0.5%).

In 2011 just over 1.3 million of Kent residents were born within the UK. This equates to 90.9% of the total population and is a higher proportion than the national figure of 86.2% and the regional figure of 87.9%. Of the 133,752 Kent residents not born in the UK, 55,069 people were born in Europe and 78,683 were born in countries outside Europe. These figures equate to 3.8% and 5.4% of Kent’s total population.

The 2011 Census shows us for the first time the proportion of households that have at least one resident who has English as their main language.

In Kent, there are 574,564 households in which all people aged 16 and over in that household had English as their main language. This is equivalent to 94.8% of all households in Kent. This proportion is higher than the national figure of 90.9% and the regional figure of 93.2%.

Of the 5.1% of Kent households in which not all occupants had English as their main language, 2.5% of households had no residents whose main language was English.

What we can achieve

We need to make sure that people from all racial backgrounds have the same quality of housing services as the general population.

We also need to make sure that employees from Black and Minority Ethnic communities have equal access to employment and career development opportunities. They are often under-represented at higher grade positions and we need to make sure that this is monitored and addressed.

With the right action on our part, we can make sure that we offer housing that meets the needs of the whole community.

We can also address racist behaviour and encourage positive attitudes towards diversity in the community at large.

We will aim to ensure that the make-up of our own employees reflect the diverse needs of the community we serve.

Religion and Belief

Definition

The Equality Act 2010 states:

(1) Religion means any religion and a reference to religion includes a reference to a lack of religion.

(2) Belief means any religious or philosophical belief and a reference to belief includes a reference to a lack of belief.

(3) In relation to the protected characteristic of religion or belief—

(a) a reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular religion or belief;

(b) a reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons who are of the same religion or belief

The Equality Act introduced a framework that governs discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities and services.

It is also unlawful for someone to discriminate against an individual because of their religion or belief or because they have no religion or belief.

Why this matters

Religion and belief is about the things going on inside us: how we make sense of life and what 'makes us tick'.

It may involve questions about meaning, values, hope, love and things beyond the physical boundaries of life.

For many people, these questions are answered by their religion or beliefs.

However, not everyone expresses their spirituality through a particular religion or belief.

So spiritual care is not only for people of all faiths, but also for those who do not follow a particular tradition.

We want to celebrate the diversity of people in our community.

People express their religion and belief in different ways.

It can lead to a strong sense of community, and express itself in different family and household relationships.

It is important we understand how this affects people's housing needs.

Religion and belief in Kent

The religion question was the only voluntary question on the 2011 Census questionnaire and 7.3% of Kent residents did not answer the question. This is slightly higher than the national figure of 7.2% but slightly lower than the regional figure of 7.3%.

In 2011, Christianity remains the largest religion in Kent. A total of 915,200 Kent residents said that they were Christians. This is equivalent to 62.5% of the total population which is a higher proportion than the national figure (59.4%) and the regional figure (59.7%).

The 2nd most popular religion in Kent is Muslim with 13,932 people which equates to 0.95% of the total population.

However, the 2nd highest proportion of the population claimed to have no religion. This is equal 26.75% or 391,591 Kent residents.

Within the local authority districts in Kent:

- Sevenoaks has the highest proportion of Christian residents. A total of 75,169 people stated that their religion was Christianity which is equal to 65.4% of Sevenoaks' total population.

- Gravesham has the highest proportion of Sikhs with 7.6% of the population stating they were Sikh which equates to 1,894 people. Gravesham also has the highest proportion of Muslims with 1.9% of the population stating that they were Muslim.

39,087 people in Swale, which is equal to 28.8% of the population, said that they have no religion.

Tunbridge Wells has the largest proportion of people who did not answer the question. 8% of the population in Tunbridge Wells, which is equal to 9,152 residents, did not state a religion.

Change between the 2001 and 2011 Census

Between 2001 and 2011 there has been a decline in the number of people who identify themselves as being Christian. The 2001 Census shows that 75.1% of Kent residents said that they were Christians. This is a fall of -8.4% in the Christian population between 2001 and 2011.

In Kent the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim religions have seen the greatest increases in real and percentage terms. These have all seen an increase of more than 100%. The reason for such a large percentage increase is that the initial numbers in Kent were very low in 2001.

Within the local authority districts in Kent, Ashford has seen the smallest decrease of Christian residents between the censuses whilst Thanet has seen the largest decrease.

Maidstone has seen the highest increase in population who say that they have no religion. This group saw a 108.3% increase compared to 2001 which is equal to 21,577 residents.

Tunbridge Wells saw the largest increase in the proportion of people who did not answer the question on religion. This group saw a +18.8% increase compared to 2001 which is equal to an extra 1,447 residents.

What we can achieve

We will make sure that we provide fair and equal access to homes and services to individuals and to the community regardless of religion or belief and we work with diverse communities to promote understanding and community development.

We can make sure all of our employees are given the opportunity to practise their religion and beliefs at work, and that this is never a barrier to employment or career progression.

Sexual Orientation

Definition

The Equality and Human Rights Commission state, “Your sexual orientation means the general attraction you feel towards people of one sex or another (or both).”

People are generally attracted to:

- a) People who are the same sex as them (gay or lesbian)
- b) People who are the opposite sex to them (heterosexual)
- c) People of both sexes (bisexual).

Why this matters

Lesbian, gay and bisexual people are often forced to choose in their work and personal lives between being open and honest about their sexuality, avoiding the issue, or lying to colleagues and friends.

This can cause a huge amount of stress to the individual, both at work and in their personal life. Stonewall⁴ highlight that nearly one in five lesbian and gay people have experienced homophobic bullying in the workplace in the last five years and one in five have experienced some form of hate crime in the last three years.

Homophobic hate crime is believed to be widely under-reported and ranges from verbal harassment to violent physical assault. According to one Stonewall survey, two thirds of lesbian and gay people said they had experienced a homophobic incident but less than one in five such incidents were reported.

There is limited research about the housing needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people but Stonewall have identified specific issues such as; homelessness as a direct cause of their sexuality, experiences of homophobic harassment and violence in their neighbourhood, domestic violence and limited emergency accommodation for LGB people, especially men.

Sexual Orientation in Kent

The Government estimates five to seven per cent of people living in the UK are lesbian, gay or bisexual people.

National lesbian, gay and bisexual organisations feel this is a reasonable estimate.

However, there is no accurate evidence, as this information is not requested in the Census or other surveys.

We presume we have a similar profile to the national and regional average until further work is undertaken.

⁴ Stonewall is a national campaign, research and lobbying group supporting lesbians, gay men and bisexual people

What we can achieve

We can aim that lesbian, gay and bisexual people are made to feel comfortable when accessing our services and getting involved.

We can encourage positive attitudes to diverse sexual orientations within our workplace and make sure there is no form of discrimination that might affect employment or career progression.

We can monitor incidents of hate crime, provide appropriate support to victims and refer people to relevant agencies.

Hate crime and harassment is not tolerated and can result in the eviction of perpetrators.

We can promote positive images of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

The Single Equality Scheme

It is important to us that our scheme has been developed in consultation with our staff, customers and partners. We have used a broad range of consultation and research to develop our scheme:

Review of regulatory and legal requirements/Consultant – In 2011, we commissioned NTM Consultants, a consultancy in the field of equality and diversity, to critically examine Golding Homes' activities and performance in this area. They undertook an assessment of Equality and Diversity within our current service provisions against the previous TSA standards, the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) historically used by the Audit Commission and Equality Framework for Local Government. The recommendations have been incorporated into this scheme to help shape our scheme and action plan.

Analysis of our customer profile – the 2013 STAR survey has provided us with an up-to-date profile of Golding Homes' customers. We have used previous STAR surveys to identify areas for further research and service improvement.

Data on local community profiles – We have gathered data from the 2011 Census to contextualise and understand our customers profile against the needs and challenges within areas where we work.

Consultation with Staff – feedback from our staff forum, leadership team and staff survey results from 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 has been reviewed to inform our scheme.

Results from Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's) – As we develop our EIA process we will use these to further inform our strategy.

Implementation

The implementation of this scheme is key to embedding equality and diversity in all that we do and will be the responsibility of the senior management team, leadership team and all employees of Golding Homes. With the senior management team and leadership team having central responsibility to ensure;

- Compliance with the framework
- Compliance with current legislation and codes of practices
- Consistency in approach and development
- The sharing and dissemination of good practice

Organisations working in partnership with Golding Homes will be made aware of the scheme and their role in contributing to its success. This includes our suppliers, contractors and consultants to whom we pass on our expectations in respect of equality and diversity and monitor their performance in this area. Details of our approach can be found in other policies relating to procurement within Golding Homes.

The Leadership Team will set the framework for monitoring the organisations performance against key performance indicators. The group will facilitate challenge and raise awareness so that we are continuously improving our efforts to eliminate discrimination, deliver excellent customer service and demonstrate continuous improvement.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's)

We will carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIA's) to identify the equality consequences for a service, function or policy for particular groups or communities. The assessments will ensure that any negative impact on a particular group or sector in the community can be eliminated or minimised by other measures.

The key aim of the impact assessments is to identify the actions needed to ensure that the services we provide, the policies we develop and our employment practices eliminate discrimination and actively promote equality and diversity.

As well as enabling us to comply with legislation regarding the protected characteristics, equality impact assessments will enable us to be totally inclusive to:

- a) improve services by identifying where improvements are needed and taking appropriate action;
- b) engage with services users and stakeholders to identify/measure unequal outcomes or unmet needs;
- c) become a better employer by identifying the needs of different groups of employees and making changes as appropriate.

Golding Homes will carry out Equality Impact Assessments as part of the normal process of reviewing policies. The assessments will identify the effect the proposed changes on equal opportunities and will include, where necessary, an assessment of risk.

Golding Homes recognises our statutory obligations to assess the impact of new and amended policies, practices and procedures on the protected characteristics. We believe the purpose of carrying out equality impact assessment is to remove inequalities in the application of policies or implementation of processes and procedures. All policies or service improvements require the completion of an equality impact assessment before approval.

Golding Homes commits to:

- Carrying out EIA's on all proposals for new policies, practices and procedures where appropriate;
- Regular reviews to existing policies, practices and procedures;
- Ensuring that the views of all the communities we work with that are likely to be affected by the proposals are taken into account as part of the decision-making process;
- Using the EIA to address any issues of differential impact that may arise from such proposal, including the identification of potential discriminatory outcomes;
- Where the potential for adverse impact is identified, action will be taken to address this;
- Work with relevant groups and ensure they are consulted during the EIA process, by developing and sharing a forward plan of consultation for all policies under their bi-annual cycle; and
- Develop consultation terms of reference for all policies before the review takes place to ensure community engagement.

Golding Homes conducts Equality Impact Assessments on all policies, strategies and projects to ensure that they do not discriminate on the grounds of any of the protected characteristics. Our Equality Impact Assessment process encompasses a thorough review of our procedures by looking systematically at all areas of potential discrimination, harassment and inequality.

The involvement of stakeholders is vital to this process, and consultation is required for every team, when they are carrying out every Equality Impact Assessment. This is carried out through a variety of mechanisms including:

- One to one consultation
- Individual or group email
- Focus Groups
- Meetings
- Events

Golding Homes works with as many partners as possible when carrying out assessments to ensure that all equality groups are represented, and that a variety of issues can be addressed. We regularly work with the Leadership team and Staff Forum.

Golding Homes has a toolkit available which provides clear guidance for all managers and policy reviewers to ensure the Equality Impact Assessment process is robust and meaningful. This process is carried out over a number of stages.

Responsibility

It is essential to the success of this Single Equality Scheme that all staff are aware of its contents and have a clear understanding of their role in its delivery.

Equality and Diversity will be a regular theme and all new staff members will be made aware of the scheme and their role in its delivery, as part of their induction.

We will ensure that tenants are kept updated with our progress through regular features in our tenants newsletter and updates at the various tenant involvement groups.

The Chief Executive has responsibility for the developing culture in which this scheme can operate effectively and for ensuring it is implemented. Members of the Senior Management Team are individually and corporately responsible for ensuring that the scheme is implemented in their particular area of responsibility.

Measuring Success

Whilst we recognise that we have more to do, we are proud of the actions we have taken and our achievements so far and these are outlined in Sections 9 and 10.

Publication of the Scheme

A copy of Golding Homes' Single Equality Scheme will be made available to all staff, to relevant community and voluntary groups, organisations and businesses via our website and will also be available in hard copy in various formats upon request.

Monitoring and Review of the scheme

We will review our Single Equality Scheme every three years to ensure that:

- we have complied with our duties under legislation;
- equality of opportunities have been advanced and evidenced;
- improvement on what we have already achieved can be recognised;
- areas for improvement are identified and acted upon;
- consultation is undertaken to monitor our tenants' and staff's perception, and satisfaction is monitored and acted upon.

Wherever possible examples of successful existing systems will be replicated. Golding Homes will liaise with tenants across the range of involvement opportunities offered to raise awareness of the Single Equality Scheme, promote diversity as a whole and gather meaningful feedback that shapes further policy and service delivery.

The Senior Management Team and Leadership Team will monitor and review the implementation of this scheme and its associated actions. Progress reports will be provided to our Board members via an overall Annual Report. This scheme is published on our website and available in other formats. We will publicise the scheme via newsletters to our customers and stakeholders.

Equality Audit

Our performance on equality and diversity is subject to periodic audits by internal auditors and a report on the outcome of these will be made to the Board.

Our Senior Management Team and Leadership Team will have prime responsibility for leading and championing the delivery of the Single Equality Scheme and will monitor the implementation of the scheme and its associated actions. Management teams and staff locally will be required to carry forward key actions to support the delivery of this Scheme into their performance objectives.

Golding Homes has in place a number of information gathering mechanisms which will help us effectively monitor the impact of our policies and practices on different equality groups.

These include:

- Customer Profiling Survey
- Equality Impact Assessments
- Monitoring of complaints and compliments received by Golding Homes
- Monitoring of employees by equality category
- Staff surveys
- Results from a wide range of customer satisfaction surveys
- Golding Homes Customer Service Panels and Customer Sounding Board

Using these methods Golding Homes will be able to measure our progress in meeting equality objectives set out within this Scheme and we will publish regular updates on the Scheme on our website.

Where appropriate we will seek external validation to give credibility to the review process. To do this Golding Homes will participate in benchmarking networks such as Housemark.

These methods for reporting and gathering information will also help us to monitor the effectiveness of this Single Equality Scheme and help us prepare for the publication of future schemes.

The next Scheme will be published in 2020.

Delivering our Objectives

This section summarises our progress to date within each of the objectives of our scheme. We are proud of our achievements to date yet recognise there is much more to do.

Objective 1

Encourage a corporate culture where E&D is key value and ensure that everyone in the organisation is aware of our stance and demonstrates personal leadership and accountability

Our Commitments:

We will develop, raise awareness and promote the Single Equality Scheme

We will ensure we champion diversity achieving high levels of performance

We will regularly report on performance in relation to equality and diversity

What we have achieved so far:

We have reviewed and updated our equality and diversity policy statement and developed this Single Equality Scheme to meet legal and regulatory responsibilities and to reflect our moral stance and commitment.

We provide an annual report on equality and diversity to the Board.

In 2011, equality and diversity was added to the annual staff appraisal as one of the core values and behaviours.

In our Internal Audit on Equality and Diversity, carried out by Mazars in August 2011, we received Substantial Assurance.

We monitor employee perception on equality and diversity at our annual staff survey. The results from our 2015 survey showed that:

- 93% of our staff believe Golding Homes is an equal opportunities employer.
- 92% think Golding Homes respects individual differences e.g. cultures, working styles, backgrounds, ideas

An Equality Impact Assessment toolkit is available for those who have responsibility for writing and reviewing policies.

Objective 2

Ensure that homes and services are accessible to all sections of the community and meet diverse needs

Our Commitments:

We will ensure that nobody is denied access to any of our services because of the layout or design features of our premises.

We will make sure everyone has access to information about the company

What we have achieved so far:

We undertake a range of surveys and consultations with our tenants and stakeholders and review the data to confirm that all our residents are receiving the same high quality of services and that there is no disparity in satisfaction levels between those with protected characteristics and take appropriate action where we identify any disparity.

We collect information on the profile of our customers which helps us analyse satisfaction and other data by various community profiles and protected characteristics. In addition, it helps us plan for the future and allows us to target services and resources to better meet the needs of our community.

A Customer Experience Survey was conducted in 2011 to evaluate the accessibility of our office receptions at Shepway and Whatman House. All of our offices are accessible to disabled people.

Our office receptions at Whatman House and Shepway are both fully wheelchair accessible. We provide facilities for young children and have private interview rooms. Our offices at Whatman House were refurbished in 2014/2015 with lift improvements made and new hearing loop equipment in meeting rooms.

We aim to use the information we collect to tailor our services to our customers. This includes ensuring that letters and newsletters are produced in large print, on audio CD/tape and other formats, as requested. We subscribe to Language Line and provide translated information where necessary and appropriate.

We will provide any information in easy read format on request.

Other free support we provide to ensure everyone can access our services, include:

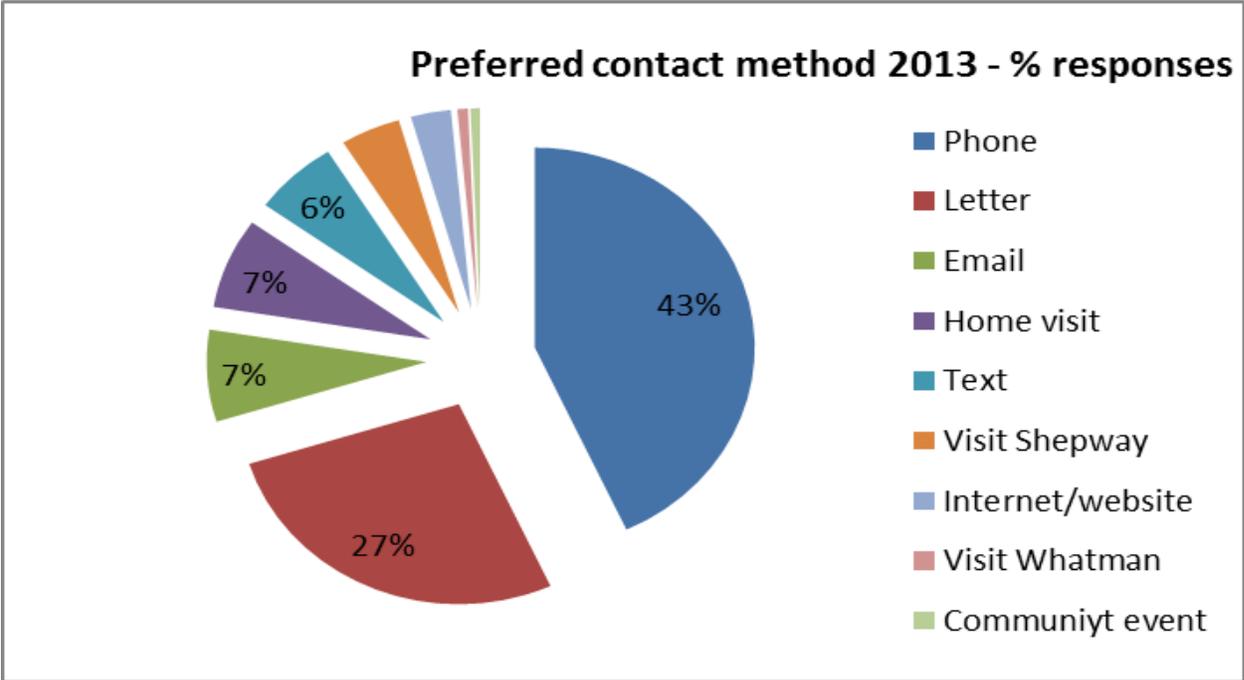
- Documents available in any language
- Browse aloud available on our website
- Hearing Induction Loop Systems available at all offices and for home visits
- Same sex interviews on request
- A range of contact methods are available including letter, fax, e-mail, telephone, Minicom and text
- Assistance is available to complete forms.

Information is also provided on our website about how to access information in different formats.

We have been rated as Double-A conformance following a web accessibility audit.

We have set up Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn pages in order to widen our methods of communication with residents.

In December 2013 all tenanted properties were sent a customer contact and preference survey in order for Golding Homes to understand customers preferred method of contact. The results are shown in the chart below:



Objective 3

Invest in communities through active engagement with residents, and consult a diverse range of customers to ensure that their views form an integral part of the decision making process.

Our Commitments:

We will ensure our communities are places where people want to live

We will build sustainable communities

We will encourage greater community involvement and empower residents to improve their neighbourhoods

What we have achieved so far:

We recognise that opportunities for involvement must be varied, accessible and inclusive. We provide the following opportunities for involvement:

- Customer Sounding Board
- Operational Core Groups – responsive, planned and community investment
- Customer Talkback
- Leaseholder Forum
- Neighbourhood Services Panel
- Neighbourhood Walkabouts
- Mystery Shoppers

Community Development

We have a dedicated Community Development team, who has lead responsibility for delivering our community development strategy and customer engagement strategy.

We have a Community Development Strategy which sets out our strategic priorities. These focus on tackling issues such as social exclusion, poverty and the causes of poverty, poor health outcomes, discrimination and inequality, worklessness, crime and fear of crime.

We have a Customer Engagement Strategy which sets out our overall aim to increase individual opportunities for customers to become involved in our decision making and to extend opportunities for wider customer engagement reaching new groups and committing to developing the use of technology to enable more customers to become involved from their own homes.

Our Community Chest Fund provides funds up to £50,000 each year to local community, voluntary or charity groups to help deliver a project or event, in order to encourage greater community involvement and empower residents to improve their neighbourhoods

Golding Vision

Golding Vision is a part of Golding Homes and supports its work in building sustainable communities and improving the life opportunities for its residents.



Working in partnership with other agencies, we invest £400,000 each year on an innovative programme of community development projects which focus on four key themes:

- Place Shaping
- Safer Communities
- Health and Wellbeing
- Financial Inclusion

Personal Development Grant

We offer Personal Development Grants to residents who need financial help in order to help improve their prospects, whether it be through training, learning, etc. Residents can apply for up to £150 and there's no need to pay it back. The grant can be to cover the total cost or be a contribution to a larger amount they are trying to raise.

Awards

In September 2010, Golding Homes won the Innovation in Tenant Engagement award at the Kent Housing Group Excellence Awards for their Community Chest Fund.

In September 2011, Golding Homes won the Excellence Award in Supporting Vulnerable People for our Love Shouldn't Hurt project on relationships in partnership with the New Line Learning Academy.

Shortlisted for the Community Impact Awards 2012 for our Water for health project under the Better Health Award category.

Winner of the KEiBA Business Commitment to the Community in 2013.

Winner of the PPC TPC Awards – Innovation in Partnering 2015.

Winner of the Youth Matters Award 2016 for Maidstone YMCA



Objective 4

Be an employer of choice by attracting and retaining high quality staff and suitably qualified Board members who reflect the communities in which we work.

Our Commitments:

We will monitor the diversity of our Board membership and staff to ensure we reflect the diversity and nature of the communities we serve.

When vacancies arise, we will try to attract people from diverse and under-represented groups.

Board members and employees will undertake Equality and Diversity training.

What we have achieved so far:

We currently record and monitor our board and employee age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, marital status, gender reassignment and religion and belief profile. We compare and monitor this alongside our customer and census data for Kent, South East and England and Wales.

Advertising Vacancies

We have a branded, fair, cost effective and modern recruitment process that reaches as wide a range of the community as possible. The process for applying for jobs is more accessible as a result of improvements to our website and the introduction of various accessibility features.

We make reasonable adjustments and provide support for staff that require it where needs are identified; for example through recruitment process or work station assessments.

Management Training

Our first group of managers have completed Golding Homes' Management Development Programme endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM).

Equality and Diversity was incorporated into our Golding Manager Programme and Equality and Diversity training for managers was provided in April 2015 for new managers and those who were not involved in the manager programme. In November/December 2015 managers attended Being a Mindful Manager and Being Resilient workshops.

Employee Training

In January 2013, 92% of our employees attended a one day Equality and Diversity training workshop and in April 2015 we held further Equality and Diversity training for new members of staff.

In February 2015 we ran Mental Health Awareness training for customer facing staff and in November/December 2015 all staff were invited to attend Being Resilient Workshops.

Appraisals

Our appraisal system includes assessment against a number of behaviours and key competencies including Equality and Diversity which support our values. All our staff received appraisal training which include references to the assessment on this behaviour.

Staff Survey Results

The results from our 2015 staff survey showed that:

- 95% said Golding Homes supports improvements in the personal health and wellbeing of staff
- 88% said they would recommend Golding Homes as a good place to work
- 86% said they were proud to work for Golding Homes

- 82% said that considering everything, they were satisfied with Golding Homes at the present time

Investor in People

Golding Homes achieved Investor in People Silver accreditation in 2013.

Objective 5

Influence our contractors, partners, consultants and suppliers to meet the highest standards of E&D

Our Commitments:

We will ensure our procurement arrangements with contractors, consultants, suppliers and partners reflect our ethos and commitment to equality and diversity.

We work with many partners and agencies in the delivery of our services and functions, by working together we are able to achieve better outcomes for local people. We will continue to ensure that equality and diversity is embedded within all our collaborative working.

Our procurement processes will demonstrate our commitment to equality and inclusion to all of our suppliers and contractors. This will be demonstrated in the questions we ask, the advice we provide and by making sure that contractual arrangements actively promote equality, diversity and inclusion.

Golding Homes recognises our procurement activities (the processes by which we obtain and provide goods, work and services) can contribute to the delivery of our equality objectives. Our published Procurement Policy embraces equality as a core component of any quality assessment process.

What we have achieved so far

Golding Services

We have set up a wholly owned subsidiary, Golding Services, to deliver gas maintenance, responsive repairs, void refurbishments and planned works to all of our properties, through our long term partnering contract with MITIE.

Aids and Adaptations

We work closely with Kent County Council's (KCC) Occupational Therapists, providing a much needed aids and adaptations service to our tenants, with some of the smaller works being funded directly by Golding Homes.

Discretionary decorating schemes

We operate a discretionary decorating scheme to support older and vulnerable residents with works that are the tenant's responsibility. These services are high in demand and valued by those who use them.

Other Achievements

Awards and Accreditation

We are proud to have been recognised for our achievements and the work we do for our customers and staff.

- Winner of the Wellbeing Award category of the UK and Ireland Employee Engagement Awards 2016
- Finalists in the Health and Wellbeing Award category of the Personnel Today Awards 2016
- Winner of the Excellent Partnership with Business category at The Kent Housing Group Excellence Awards 2016
- Winner of the Excellent in Repairs and Maintenance award at the Kent Housing Group Excellence Awards 2016
- Wallis Fields shortlisted in Inside Housing's Top 60 Development Awards 2016
- Outstanding Approach to Repairs and Maintenance Awards, UK Housing Awards 2016
- Innovation of the Year award, CIH South East Awards 2016
- ASB work accredited by HouseMark and Resolve ASB 2015
- Armstrong Road Development shortlisted in Kent Design & Development Awards 2014
- Director of Development & Regeneration shortlisted in Wolfson Economics Prize 2014
- Top 50 UK Affordable Development for Armstrong Road, Maidstone (Inside Housing)
- Winner of Best Major Development category at the Kent Design and Development Awards 2012 for the Rosemary Gardens scheme in Park Wood
- Kent Housing Group 2011 Excellence Awards under the Design (place making and quality of design) category
- Shortlisted for the Builders and Engineer 2011 Architect of the year
- Customer Service Excellence Award

Financial Inclusion Strategy

We recognise that tenants and residents require access to advice, information and support on money matters. Our Financial Inclusion Strategy aims to coordinate and promote initiatives that will help to maximise household income and promote affordable warmth. One of our initiatives has included the production of five short films offering advice about paying rent, managing money and debt, credit unions and welfare reform.

Golding Lifeline

Golding Lifeline is a service we offer to all customers and not just Golding Homes' residents and enables many people to continue to live independently in their own homes.

Teenage Parent Unit

The Teenage Parent Service is delivered by our Support Services Team in partnership with other statutory and non statutory agencies. Willowbrook Place is a purpose built Teenage Parent Unit offering accommodation and housing related support to young people between 16-21 years olds who are pregnant and/or have dependent children. The service is funded by Kent County Council and is designed to help young parents manage their tenancy, develop their life and parenting skills, encourage independent living and reduce homelessness.

Community Living for the over 50s

Golding Homes offers a variety of bungalows and apartments for people of 50 plus who require housing related support but would still like to live independently in their own home. We have 12 Community Housing schemes in and around Maidstone and the surrounding villages.

Abacus Furniture Shop

Golding Vision has joined forces with West Kent Extra and Abacus Furniture to open a shop in Park Wood, selling low cost pre-used furniture and household items. The aim of the project is to help people furnish their homes with good quality goods, but without incurring debt. The store also offers a loyalty scheme where customers can get money off their next purchase. For tenants moving into a new home Abacus can provide them with a starter pack of essential items.

Proof of Health Concept/Health MOT Bus

The Health MOT Roadshow project brings together the Private, Public and the Third Sector to deliver enhanced outcomes around community engagement and public health. The project is co-funded between Golding Homes, Mitie, Wellbeing People, Kent County Council and Kent Community Health Foundation Trust. The operational collaboration means that over a 12 month period we will engage with 25,000 people and deliver 4,500 Health Mot's, 1,500 NHS Health Checks and 1,000 referrals onto other funded interventions from Kent Community Health Foundation Trust and Maidstone Borough Council.