

# **Caerphilly County Borough Council Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report 2022-2023**

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**This report is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.  
Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatai eraill ar gais.**

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## Contact

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## **Introduction**

A key part of our collective 'Team Caerphilly' ethos is to create an organisation – and a wider community – where everyone is treated equally and fairly in all aspects of everyday life.

We believe that nobody should be discriminated against or placed at a disadvantage because of their identity or background. It is important that we reflect this approach in everything we do, at all levels across the organisation.

This key strategic document has been developed to provide a robust framework, which will help ensure there are no barriers to prevent anyone accessing our services at any time.

I would like to thank all those involved in developing this strategy and we must now focus on implementing the key actions that will help deliver positive outcomes for all.

As we look forward, we will continue to strengthen our approach to equality and diversity through staff training and development, adopting good practice from elsewhere and by learning from partners.

**Christina Harray, Chief Executive, Caerphilly County Borough Council**

The needs of our communities are constantly changing, so it is important that we are able to adapt and flex as an organisation accordingly.

Diversity is at the heart of this change agenda and we have a collective duty to tackle all types of discrimination and encourage greater community cohesion. We must work together to create communities where everyone feels respected and safe from harassment.

As one of the area's biggest employers, we are also committed to achieving equality across all our services through positive employment practices, effective policies and learning from others.

This plan will help us achieve this and it is important that we continuously monitor and review our progress, as well as keeping all our key stakeholders updated to help raise awareness of the all the positive work that is being done.

We will continue to build on our success and take positive steps to promote equality, diversity and respect in all that we do.

**Cllr. Sean Morgan, Leader, Caerphilly County Borough Council**

## About Us

The Caerphilly county borough covers an area stretching from the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north, to Cardiff and Newport in the south. It is bordered to the north by Merthyr Tydfil, the west by Rhondda Cynon Taf, and to the east by Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen local authorities.

We provide services to approximately 176,000 residents living across a mixture of urban and rural communities, living in 76,000 households. The 2021 Census showed that 40.9% of our population is aged over 50 years; we know that this figure will increase proportionately as life expectancy increases.

The Council is the 5th largest local council in Wales and is the largest employer in the area. The Council employs just over 8,000 staff with 73% of them living in the county borough. They are employed into a variety of different roles within service areas which make up the following Directorates:

- Corporate Services and Education
- Social Services and Housing
- Economy and Environment

In relation to protected characteristics we have growing diversity in terms of ethnicity and national identity, and more people are more open to stating their gender identity and sexual orientation. We have a higher proportion of people with no qualifications than the Wales average, 24.1% as compared to 19.9% for Wales, and a lower proportion of people with level 4 qualifications or above, 25.3% as compared to 31.5% for Wales. However, the economic activity of our population is broadly comparable to the Wales average with 53.2% of females and 60.6% of males in work. Changing working patterns show that 23.9% of people now work mainly from home, with 59.7% travelling to work by car or van. 4% of our residents have served in either the UK regular or reserved armed forces.

The Directorates are headed by Corporate Directors who together with the Chief Executive, and Deputy Chief Executive, make up the Corporate Management Team who oversee the delivery of the Council's business, including delivery of this plan.

The Council operates a cabinet style of local government which is led by a Leader and who is supported by 9 Cabinet Members. We have 69 elected Councillors who have a variety of roles including agreeing the Council's policy framework, council tax and budget.

The Council delivers over 600 services to the county borough to ensure our people and place are thriving and resilient. From early years support to social care, schools to care homes, environmental protection and infrastructure, provision of social housing, planning, public protection, economic regeneration, and transport planning etc. Our breadth of responsibilities is wide ranging and increasing.

We face significant challenges, the financial outlook for the Council is of serious concern, and the projections for government financial support are worsening year on year. We must reshape and repurpose our services to ensure we can meet the challenges head on and continue to support our people and place.

## Context and Legislation

The Strategic Equality Plan 2020- 2024, to which this report relates, has been developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011.

It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports four of the seven aims of Welsh Government's Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015; A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities and A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. It also outlines how the council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Building on our previous equalities work the plan explains to staff, citizens, stakeholders and elected members, how Caerphilly County Borough Council intends to deliver its equalities commitments whilst continuing to be an inclusive organisation that does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

To assist us in writing our Plan, we engaged with our citizens, staff, stakeholders and elected members. We also used a range of equality information, which supported us in defining what would be our equality objectives for the next 4 years, and by listening to them, we hope that these objectives are both meaningful and achievable for us to deliver.

We looked at what priorities there were to consider both nationally and at a council level, and based them on what evidence we had available to us to support the work. A lot of work has been undertaken over the years into assessing our progress against the Public Sector Equality Duty through service plans and the self-assessment process.

We considered external sources of information such as reports by the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Welsh Government, policies and priorities, research reports and other relevant statistics available to help us. A number of external reports undertaken by the Equality and Human Rights Commission have supported and influenced the development of our new equality objectives.

Sources of information include:

- Anti-racist Wales Action Plan
- LGBTQ+ Action Plan
- Census 2021 data.

## How We Meet the Duty

The Council's equalities statement makes its commitment clear:

The Council recognises that people have different needs, requirements and goals and we will work actively against all forms of discrimination by promoting good relations and mutual respect within and between our communities, residents, elected members, job applicants and workforce.

We will also work to create equal access for everyone to our services, irrespective of ethnic origin, sex, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, religious beliefs or non-belief, use of Welsh language, BSL and other languages, nationality, responsibility for any dependents or any other reason which cannot be shown to be justified.

Respect for diversity is a key issue as our communities change and develop in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We must respect what has been before and the achievements up to that point but we must also accept and respect that things have changed and continue to evolve. We must be respectful for every individual who lives or works here, who represents or who visits the county borough.

Council services must reflect these diverse needs and Caerphilly County Borough Council already has a strong background in delivering accessible services in a sensible, measured and cost-effective way. Local government finances are increasingly under challenge and any changes have to take into account the impact on the most vulnerable in society through Integrated Impact Assessments, which carry the full authority of the Strategic Equality Plan.

This Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report evidences the monitoring undertaken to review the impact of the progress we have made to meet the actions of the Equality Objectives. Relevant information is collected from internal and external sources including public consultation exercises, Census data, local hate crime data or Integrated Impact Assessments. This report once approved, will be published and promoted widely both internally and externally in order to raise awareness of the work being undertaken.

## Collection of Council Performance, Data and Information

### The Council's Performance

The Council continues to deliver against the actions set in the [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#), focussing on making services as accessible as possible and to engage more with our residents.

The Council developed an Integrated Impact Assessment Template in April 2021, in accordance with the Socio-economic Duty. This has helped ensure that services understand and consider the impact any proposals have on protected characteristics, the Welsh language, the Socio-economic Duty, and the Future Generations Act. By linking the assessment to the reports going forward for a decision, it ensures that decision-makers are well informed and able to understand the impacts when it comes to our decision-making process.

The Council has integrated equalities and Welsh language into the Directorate Performance Assessments (DPAs) so that when reporting on progress by directorate, there is an integrated view of service delivery.

The [Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-2023](#) showed that we received one complaint which related to the Welsh Language during this financial year. The complaint raised a number of issues, but reference to the Welsh language related to the complainant wishing to only receive correspondence in English. The response to the complainant explained why in some instances the Council must provide bilingual communication and outlined the relevant Welsh Language Standards.

The Council published its second [Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#) and this can be viewed on the website along with all supporting documentation.

There was another increase in the number of Welsh speaking staff recorded on our HR system for 2022-2023 across all three directorates. There was also an increase in the number of staff learning Welsh across the organisation with the figure almost doubling on the previous year with 61 recorded. This coincides with us changing the way staff are offered courses and the process for registering on a course. It is now a much more streamlined process which has helped reduce our administration time.

It is evident from the content of the report that there has been some progress during 2022-2023. Over the next 12 months, the Council will continue to ensure that services are being delivered in line with the Welsh Language Standards. The Council will also work with service areas to identify and address any Welsh Language training or Welsh Language skills requirements to deliver services.

### Collection of Relevant Information

When considering and gathering information to include in the annual report, we used the Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 Action Plan as a template. Service areas hold information that could assist the council in identifying how it is meeting the General and Specific Duties, Heads of Service were contacted and asked to provide a progress update for their service area against each of the relevant actions.

We looked at council reports that had been written during the 12 months to gather relevant information to provide the bigger picture of the work undertaken, and which shows equalities at the heart of the decision-making process. Most council reports had a completed Integrated Impact Assessment to evidence the equalities considerations of the proposal.

We also used employment monitoring data, which is provided via the council's HR system. The employment data provided within this report also includes teachers and school-based employees.

The Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan can be accessed via the Council's website: [Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024](#)

## **Sources of Information**

When considering what information should be used, it was important that areas of good practice were identified across service areas to demonstrate that a commitment to delivering equality exists throughout the Council. Information used in this report includes:

- The Council's Corporate Plan (2018-2023)
- Service delivery/projects (2022-2023)
- Employment practices
- Consultation and engagement programme
- Integrated Impact Assessments (2022-2023)
- Employment monitoring information (2022-2023)
- Monitoring and delivery of the SEP Action Plan (2022-2023)
- Annual Self-Assessment Report (2022-2023)

## **Non-Collection and Effectiveness of Information**

Equalities and Welsh Language data is still collected as part of the Directorate Performance Assessment across all Directorates of the Authority, but we continue to review what type of information should be collected and reported to ensure this is still relevant. Some of the information is escalated up to Corporate Performance Assessment for example Welsh Language data and complaints with an equalities and/or Welsh language element. The information is fed into the annual Self-Assessment report, which is an evidence based self-evaluation of how effective the Council's organisational effectiveness is. The Self-Assessment is going to Governance and Audit Committee in February 2024, Joint Scrutiny and Cabinet after that, as part of our commitment to 'mainstream' inclusivity as part of our day-to-day activity.

Joint Scrutiny identified in 2022 they would like more data on the gender balance across the workforce in the Self-Assessment. Therefore, we are looking to expand more of this data and are currently working on this for our second self-assessment with further analysis, to continue routine monitoring throughout 2024. Equalities data and its analysis is part of continuous improvement of performance reporting.



## **Inclusive Engagement and Participation (Equality Objective 4)**

Endorsed by the Council's Cabinet in February 2020 our 'Consultation and Engagement Framework' outlines the following principles:

- We will empower our residents to have greater influence over the issues that affect them
- We will increase and strengthen the role of communities in how we live, work and visit Caerphilly county borough
- This will help us to understand the needs of our communities, which in turn, will help to ensure the services we deliver meet those needs, and that available resources are used effectively and in line with agreed priorities
- We will support communities to take action, by helping them identify needs and support them in developing community led solutions.

Our internal consultation and engagement working group has become a key mechanism to disseminate information, share good practice and embed these principles with staff across the organisation and in turn, further improves engagement practices.

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/Consultations/Consultation-and-Engagement-Framework.aspx>

The strategic principles of the Equalities Act 2010 and Wales specific duties, the National Principles for Public Engagement in Wales (updated in 2022) and the law of consultation are embedded throughout the framework document.

The shift towards digital engagement was accelerated during the pandemic with a greater use of social and digital media. We recognise that whilst digital engagement reduces barriers for some and provides an invaluable channel for engaging our communities, it can present difficulties for others. We have adopted a creative approach to ensure that everyone is able to get involved and have their say in a way that best suits their needs and public facing consultation and engagement activities continue to be promoted proactively on the front page of the Council's website and across digital channels. We have worked hard to re-engage with our communities face-to-face wherever this is appropriate and necessary which is particularly important for those with protected characteristics, those who are economically disadvantaged and those who are digitally excluded. Face-to-face engagement allows us to gain a deeper insight into understanding what matters to our communities. We continue to work with existing networks and groups using their established methods of engagement.

Key actions that have helped in the delivery of this objective during 2022-23 include:

- The development of a new digital engagement platform called "The Caerphilly Conversation" to be launched in April 2023. This will act as a central repository for all consultation and engagement activities across the Council and provide a number of online interactive engagement tools including mapping, quick polls and online discussion boards. To find out more please visit: <https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>
- Following the establishment of our internal Consultation and Engagement Working Group, the group has continued to meet quarterly to coordinate and share engagement plans and good practice. An action plan has been developed

for the group and a database of planned activity is updated on a quarterly basis. The group has been particularly useful in bringing together officers, including the Caerphilly Cares team and the Youth Service, who work with all sectors of our communities to support engagement with underrepresented groups.

- The Community Empowerment Fund was created to enable communities to develop and deliver projects aimed at meeting the needs of their residents. One of the criteria of this fund is to “Increase active inclusion and develop opportunities for enhanced engagement for groups that are more vulnerable and harder to reach”. In the 2022/23 period, the Community Empowerment Fund provided grants to over 80 organisations from across the county borough.
- Continued membership of the Co-production Network and training and support offered by this.
- Establishment of the ‘Caerphilly Cares’ approach. This is a long term model for offering holistic support to Caerphilly county borough residents. ‘Caerphilly Cares’ aims to offer individuals a single point of contact, to assist them in getting to the root cause of their issues and linking them up with existing services, both within Caerphilly County Borough Council and with partners, including the voluntary sector and local community groups, supporting that individual through their journey with those various services, from end to end.

Further details of current engagement activities can be found, including links to live surveys where appropriate, and to the outcomes of recent engagement activities by visiting: <https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Some of the key consultation/engagement activities are outlined below:

### **The Caerphilly Conversation**

[Join the Caerphilly Conversation | Council Budget Setting 2023-2024 | The Caerphilly Conversation](#)

A two-stage engagement process was undertaken through the “What Matters” conversations between 7th November to 6th December 2022 followed by a formal budget consultation from 19th January to 8th February 2023.

Like all councils in Wales and across the UK, we are facing budget pressures and in order that we can protect the things that are most needed we have been asking our residents, through an ongoing conversation, which council services are most important to them. Their feedback is helping us to continue focusing our efforts on the issues that most impact on them and ensure that the services we deliver are in line with residents’ needs.

### **Pontllanfraith Centre for Vulnerable Learners**

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/consultations/pontllanfraith-centre-for-vulnerable-learner>

The 21st Century Schools and Colleges programme is a major, long-term, strategic capital investment programme. It is jointly funded by the Welsh Government and local authorities and aims to create a generation of 21st century schools in Wales.

A consultation was undertaken on the establishment of a Centre for Vulnerable Learners (Pupil Referral Unit) on the former Pontllanfraith Comprehensive School site between 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022 and 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022. It is a statutory requirement to make available the draft application for review and comment prior to its formal submission for Planning Approval.

### **Childcare Sufficiency Assessment**

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/consultations/childcare-sufficiency-assessment-2022>

The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment must measure the nature and extent of the need for, and supply of, childcare in the area. Effective consultation is a core element of the sufficiency assessment and gives those with an interest in childcare an opportunity to highlight relevant issues or concerns. This consultation ran between 9<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and 5<sup>th</sup> June 2022.

## Snapshot of Key Decisions

The following section highlights a brief snapshot of some key decisions the Council put in place during the last 12 months. They demonstrate our compliance and commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty, Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

### **Education Strategy 2022-2025 (Pursuing Excellence Together)**

The Education Strategy redefines the vision for all children, young people and adults accessing education in Caerphilly County Borough council. 'Pursuing excellence together' will further develop the culture of trust, strong working relationships and a passion for making a difference that have underpinned our collective response to the recent challenges. While learner aspiration can sometimes be constrained by circumstance, they should never be defined by it. Our new vision is a public commitment to continuously seek out, promote and share excellence throughout our education system in order to deliver sustained improvement over the coming years.

The new Education Strategy 2022-25 sets out to identify and re-set the educational priorities for Caerphilly post Covid-19 and for the next three years. The Strategy also outlines how we will know if we are making a difference to children and young people, through a set of principles for evaluation and improvement both at school and Local Authority level. The approach fits coherently with the responsibilities linked to:

- the Curriculum for Wales,
- the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and Tribunal Act (2018),
- the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act,
- Welsh Government Renew and Reform post-Covid-19,
- the Tertiary Education Bill,
- the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme,
- Children's Rights in Wales,
- Flying Start and Childcare,
- Parenting & Inequality strategy and the universal offer of free school meals for primary pupils.

The Strategy recognises the cost-of-living pressures being faced by families across the County Borough and it will seek to alleviate those and reduce the impact of poverty and disadvantage on the educational achievement of affected learners and supports:

### **Equality Objective 2: Education, Skills and Employment – Improve education opportunities for all.**

#### **Ukraine Resettlement**

The Ukraine crisis began during March 2022. The UK Government offered several visa routes to arrivals; an extension of the visas of people already living here, the Ukraine Family Scheme whereby extended family members could apply for a 3-year visa to live and work in the UK, and the Homes for Ukraine Scheme where local families offer up a space in their homes, or self-contained accommodation to arrivals from Ukraine.

In addition, as a nation of sanctuary the Welsh Government agreed a super-sponsor route, where arrivals could apply for visas with the support and sponsorship of Welsh Government.

In terms of arrivals into the county borough many local families/individuals have offered up a room or property to Ukrainian individuals or families. By March 2023, 113 arrivals were living with hosts, 78 arrivals via the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and 35 guests via the Welsh Government Super Sponsor route.

Families integrated well, and a dedicated Ukraine Arrival Liaison post was created with a Ukraine national supporting the Council's resettlement officers in welcoming the cohort. Several social events to assist with integration and support for hosts have also taken place.

Ukrainian's have been given status like other domestic households for allocation via the common allocation policy and via the common housing register. The allocation policy is being amended to reflect this change by Welsh Government. We await further guidance on how housing and accommodation is accessed by the Ukrainian nationals during this humanitarian crisis. Our work with Ukrainian nationals directly supports:

### **Equality Objective 3: Community Cohesion – Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities.**

#### **Participation Strategy 2023-2027**

Local authorities in Wales must, under the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, publish a Participation Strategy that sets out the ways in which local people are encouraged to participate in decision making by the council.

The Council's Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025, adopted in February 2020, confirms the commitment to ensuring high quality, citizen focussed services for the communities that comprise our county borough. In future-proofing public services, the council recognises the need to ensure effective engagement is central to decision making - involving residents in the design of local services and the things that affect them.

- The Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-25:
- Highlights the importance of effective consultation and engagement and the clear strategic link to the decision making process
- Demonstrates the key role that engaged, empowered communities have in supporting the future-proofing public services.
- Provides a clear definition of engagement and outlines the spectrum of engagement.
- Outlines the principles and standards that underpin meaningful engagement and consultation to enable a consistent, transparent and high-quality approach to the planning and undertaking of community engagement.

The Participation Strategy, in reaffirming these commitments in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, seeks to build further on this work, ensuring the council is open and responsive to the needs of its communities.

The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a number of duties on local authorities regarding participation. These are to:

- Promote awareness of the functions the council carries out to local residents, businesses and visitors.
- Share information about how to go about becoming an elected member and what the role of councillor involves.
- Provide greater access to information about decisions that have been made, or that will be made by the council.
- Provide and promote opportunities for residents to provide feedback to the council, including comments, complaints and other types of representations.
- Promote awareness of the benefits of using social media to communicate with residents to Councillors.

The Participation Strategy reaffirms the council's commitment to listening, conversing with and responding to the needs of our communities - building clear, shared expectations and two-way engagement, and clearly demonstrates how the participation duty is being fulfilled.

In developing the strategy, an in-depth audit of existing resources and activity was carried out by, and engagement with communities through the council's ongoing engagement programme 'The Caerphilly Conversation' has highlighted some key areas that have shaped the objectives within this strategy. It is anticipated that further community engagement will continue to help shape the strategy's delivery, evolving over time as the benefit of new conversations, ideas and national best practice become evident.

Each objective within the Strategy includes a set of measurements to support the evaluation process. Consultation and engagement is currently reported through the council's annual self-assessment report and it is proposed that this would be extended to include the actions within the Participation Strategy. Our work on the new Participation Strategy directly supports:

**Equality Objective 4: Inclusive Engagement and Participation – Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery**

#### **Review of Welsh Language Recruitment Practices**

In January 2022, the Council received correspondence from the Welsh Language Commissioner relating to the Council's duty to comply with Standards 8, 9, 11, 17, 52, 55, 56, 136A, 137, 137A and 139. Standards 136A, 137, 137A and 139 relate to the Council's recruitment process.

A forward work plan was developed to address a number of urgent matters relating to recruitment.

## Recruitment Action Plan – Web Recruitment and Welsh Translation

Actions	Date	Progress
CCBC Internet – Redesign content of Job Pages	Completed	CCBC Internet Job Pages (Outside of ITrent) have been redesigned to support the customer experience. The web recruitment introductory pages including the supporting information and documentation contained therein are 'live'. (English and Welsh views). Evidence of this progress below.
Redesign English Web Recruitment view within iTrent.	Completed	Midland HR consultants supporting ITrent have been consulted and the web recruitment view within ITrent has presented limited opportunity to influence the overall design. Navigation around the site and the main content area however have been updated in line with the recruitment forward plan to support the user experience.
Produce a streamlined CCBC job application form	Completed	A tested and final streamlined CCBC job application form inclusive of help text and in an easier to complete format, has been produced within the ITrent test environment for the purpose of data extraction and Welsh translation.
Web Recruitment Welsh Language	12/08/2022	<p>Aligned to and following the work above, the work relating to data translation configuration; the tables that require translation and the data extraction of those tables for translation was completed 08/06/2022.</p> <p>The extracted tables inclusive of the streamlined CCBC application form and automated messages has of the 09/06/2022 been sent for translation.</p> <p>On receipt of the translation, the translated converted tables will be reimported back into ITrent 'test' environment and the URL supporting the Welsh view will be enabled. Midland HR Consultancy and the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language Team are on standby to support the testing of the web recruitment life cycle in this capacity.</p>
BPR Recruitment Administration Processes- Analyse current processes and procedures to cover cohesive Welsh Language into recruitment campaign	30/09/2022	<p>The Welsh translation of documents and forms that sit outside of the translation configuration tables referred to above, such as invite to interview, reference requests and job descriptions have been prioritised for translation.</p> <p>Following a successful test with the support of Midland HR and the Council's Equalities and Welsh Language Team, training of the Clerical and HR Assistant Team whose roles support the recruitment process will be in place for the next stage of 'Testing' before Going 'Live'. Requisitions will be raised in the Welsh language and all posts advertised to incorporate the Welsh and English languages simultaneously.</p>

The following screenshots of webpages and an example job description, are evidence of some of the progress made to date. These were developed to recruit the recent apprentice posts we had created:



To assist with the translation of the recruitment pages and their content, we recruited a Welsh Translator to facilitate this. They commenced their role in February 2023.

### [Web Page - Jobs with Caerphilly Council](#)

Our improvements to our recruitment practices directly supports:

**Equality Objective 5: Welsh Language – To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements.**

### **Summary**

Detailed examples of what went well in 2022-2023 are detailed in the Council's Annual Self-Assessment 2022-2023. To view the report click [here](#).



## Equalities Promotion Work and News Stories

In 2022-2023, the Council marked a number of awareness days either by raising awareness through press releases and or social media posts. The following were celebrated/marked either publicly or internally with staff:

### April 2022

- [Welcome evening for hosts and Ukrainian guests](#)

### May 2022

- [Gwent Royal British Legion 100th Birthday Commemoration](#)
- Mental Health Awareness Week



- Foster Care Fortnight



### June 2022

- [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month](#)
- [Proud Councils nominated for a PinkNews Award](#)

➤ [Ffilifest](#)

The Council's second [Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#) strategy was launched at Ffilifest 2022 by the Leader Cllr Sean Morgan and the Mayor Cllr Elizabeth Aldworth.



➤ [Caerphilly Veterans Support Hub](#)

➤ [Armed Forces Day](#)

➤ [Pride Month](#)

A Year 10 assembly was held at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymini to celebrate Pride month, which was delivered by the Council's Senior Policy Officer and Policy Officer for Equalities and Welsh Language. The assembly focussed on being different and what the term LGBTQ+ means



➤ **Pride of Pengam**

The Council's Senior Policy Officer and Policy Officer for Equalities and Welsh Language also delivered an assembly at Lewis School Pengam during their Pride of Pengam day.



**July 2022**

- [Free School Meals](#)
- [Youth Work Week](#)
- [Siarter Iaith Gold Award – Ysgol Penalltau](#)
- **Ukrainian Cultural Event**

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> July the Council organised an event at Llancaiach Manor for our Ukrainian guests and hosts. It was an opportunity to bring everyone together and immerse everyone in a little history of the Manor House and its significance in the local area.



## August 2022

### ➤ Ukraine Independence Day

Today 24<sup>th</sup> August marks Ukraine's Independence Day, which commemorates the anniversary of the country's independence. Prior to 1991, Ukraine was a constituent republic of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.). On August 24, 1991, after a failed coup in Moscow, Ukraine declared its independence. About 90 percent of Ukrainians voted for their country's independence following this declaration, on December 1, 1991. #IndependenceDay2022



Wales is the first ever 'Nation of Sanctuary'. The Welsh Government and Members of the Senedd across political parties have expressed strong support to provide sanctuary in Wales for those fleeing Ukraine. As a local authority we are thankful for all the individual sponsors across our local authority for giving up their homes and supporting our Ukrainian arrivals. #IndependenceDay2022



There have been 8 sponsors in Blaenau Gwent that have joined this scheme and come forward as a sponsor with an extraordinary act of kindness. They have extended the hand of friendship to a stranger in their hour of need. Could you offer a place of safety for an individual or family? You will find more information at <https://gov.wales/homes-ukraine-guidance-sponsors-html#section-94903>



### ➤ [Pride Cymru](#)



## September 2022

### ➤ [County borough of sanctuary to asylum seekers](#)

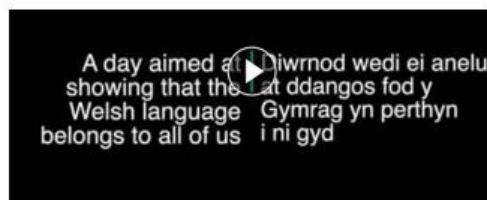
## October 2022

- [Cost of Living support for residents](#)
- [Disability 6 Nations Event](#)
- [Black History Month](#)

[Black History Month \(unisoningwent.org.uk\)](http://unisoningwent.org.uk)

- Diwrnod Shwmae

As part of Diwrnod Shwmae / Su'Mae this year, we attended a Welsh Language group in Cross Keys to raise awareness of the Welsh language in the wider community and also visited Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni. We used this as an opportunity to create a video for social media to show people across the county borough saying "Shwmae", and Llancaiach Fawr Manor also promoted Diwrnod Shwmae / Su'Mae with their visitors.



Caerphilly County Borough Council  
15 October 2022 at 09:05

### Shwmae Day 22 final

Happy Shwmae Su'mae Day!

A day aimed at showing that the Welsh language belongs to us all – fluent speakers, learners or those shy about their Welsh!

Try greeting someone with shwmae or su'mae today to celebrate the Welsh language!

Diwrnod Shwmae/Su'mae Hapus!

Diwrnod wedi ei anelu at ddangos fod y Gymraeg yn perthyn i ni gyd – siaradwyr rhugl, dysgwyr neu'r rhai sy'n saif am eu Gymraeg!

Ceiswch gyfarfwrth ymwun gyda 'shwmae' neu 'su'mae' heddiw i ddatlu'r Gymraeg!

Caerphilly County Borough Council  
14 October 2022 at 15:14




Llancaiach Fawr Manor 14 October 2022 at 09:45

Early celebrations for Shwmae Su'mae Day, 15th of October, 2022! If you want your photo taken pop along today or tomorrow!

Dathliadau cynnar ar gyfer Diwrnod Shwmae Su'mae, 15fed o Hydref, 2022! Os ydych chi eisiau tynnu eich llun galwch draw heddiw neu yfory!

## November 2022

- White Ribbon Day



caerphillycbc  
@CaerphillyCBC

Residents across Gwent are being asked to get involved and support White Ribbon Day on Friday 25 November.

White Ribbon Day is an annual event that marks the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

[bit.ly/3Oy9Irp](https://bit.ly/3Oy9Irp) [pic.twitter.com/lyl2olwv4o](https://pic.twitter.com/lyl2olwv4o)

25/11/2022, 10:45

## December 2022

### ➤ Welsh Language Rights Day

On 7 December we celebrated Mae Gen i Hawl (Welsh Language Rights Day). We used social media again to ensure residents are aware of their rights as Welsh speakers when accessing services.

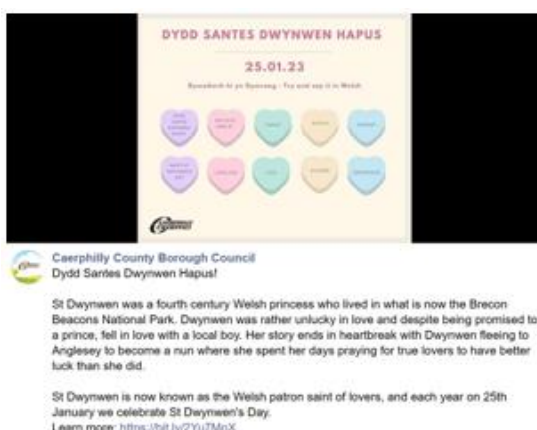


Internally we made reminded staff about the Welsh Language Standards and what is expected when communicating with members of the public. This included information on answering phones bilingually, ensuring automated bilingual out of office messages are correct, making sure general correspondence is bilingual, and ensuring that Welsh speakers wear lanyards with the Work Welsh logo on them.

## January 2023

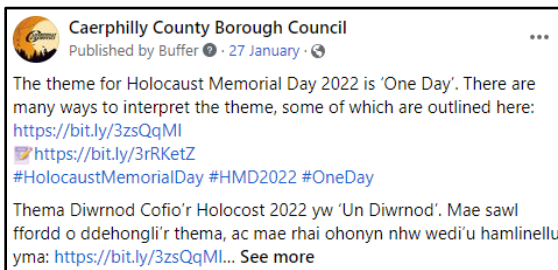
### ➤ [St Dwynwen's Day](#)

On 21 January, we put out social media posts explaining the story of Santes Dwynwen and encouraged members of the public to use Welsh language phrases.



Internally we made reminded staff about the Welsh Language Standards and what is expected when communicating with members of the public. This included information on answering phones bilingually, ensuring automated bilingual out of office messages are correct, making sure general correspondence is bilingual, and ensuring that Welsh speakers wear lanyards with the Work Welsh logo on them.

## ➤ [Holocaust Memorial Day](#)



## February 2023

### ➤ [LGBTQ+ History Month](#)

We kicked off LGBTQ+ History Month by making a very special announcement, with the Council holding its first ever Pride Caerffili event on Saturday 24 June 2023.

To mark LGBTQ+ History Month, staff were invited to attend the **Gwent LGBTQ+ Timeline** on 27 February 2023. The timeline was pulled together and organised by Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, the author and historian Norena Shopland, and Proud Councils colleagues.

Norena Shopland utilised her Welsh historic material collection on sexual orientations and gender identities to inform the timeline, as well as stories and information from those that contributed to the Hanes LHDT+ Cymru / LGBTQ+ Research Group Wales, a group established to encourage and promote research into Welsh LGBTQ+ history.

The event was an opportunity for people to help review the work to date and put forward suggestions for additional content.

## March 2023

### ➤ [The Council supporting people with learning disabilities](#)

### ➤ St David's Day

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2023, we marked St. David's Day by launching our internal Clwb Clebran. A group formed to give staff who are Welsh speakers and staff learning Welsh the opportunity to come together to use their Welsh in the workplace. The day was also promoted via social media.



➤ International Women’s Day

We ran a Menopause Webinar for staff to mark International Women’s Day. The event was well-attended, with attendees being signposted for further advice, support and information on the subject.

<p>Sent: 08 March 2023 10:31          To: List: All Users &lt;List_AllUsers@CAERPHILLY.GOV.UK&gt;          Subject: International Women's Day</p>	
<p>Mae 8 Mawrth bob blwyddyn yn nodi Diwrnod Rhyngwladol y Menywod.</p> <p>Dathlwn y diwrnod hwn bob blwyddyn er mwyn gwerthfawrogi'r cyfraniadau enfawr a wneir gan fenywod yn ein cymdeithas.</p> <p>Eleni, hoffem gynnig y cyfle i bob aelod o staff (dynion a menywod) ymuno yn y seminar canlynol er mwyn deall mwy am un o'r bwydrau beunyddiol, anghofiedig a wynebwr gan fenywod.</p> <p>Mae'r seminar ar gyfer menywod a dynion, yn enwedig os ydych yn gweithio gyda menywod, yn rheolwr ar fenywod neu gydag aelod o'r teulu sy'n fenyw.</p> <p>Am ragor o wybodaeth, gwelwch y atodiadau gan Sarah Williams a fydd yn rhedeg y seminar neu cysylltwch â <a href="mailto:cydraddoldeb@caerphilly.gov.uk">cydraddoldeb@caerphilly.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>20 Mawrth – Ymwybyddiaeth Menopos, seminar 1 awr</b></p> <p>Byddwch yn rhan o greu amgylchedd gweithle cynhwysol lle gall pobl siarad yn agored am y menopos. Wedi'i gyflwyno gydag ymagwedd sensitif a chadarnhaol, trwy lens gynhwysol. Sesiwn ragweithiol, rhyngweithiol a byw ar-lein.</p> <p>I sicrhau eich lle ar y sgwrs, llenwch y ffurflen ganlynol:  <a href="https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/office/equality-training-form">Ffurflen Hyfforddiant Cydraddoldeb (office.com)</a></p>	<p>8 March every year marks International Women's Day.</p> <p>We celebrate this day every year in order to appreciate the huge contributions made by women in our society.</p> <p>This year, we'd like to offer all staff (men and women) the opportunity to join in the following seminar in order to understand more about one of the often forgotten, everyday struggles faced by women.</p> <p>The seminar is for women and men, especially if you work with women, manage women or have a woman in the family.</p> <p>For more information, please see the attachments from Sarah Williams who will be running the seminar or contact <a href="mailto:equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk">equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>20 March – Menopause Awareness, 1 hour seminar</b></p> <p>Be part of creating an inclusive workplace environment where people can talk about menopause openly. Delivered with a sensitive and positive approach, through an inclusive lens. A live-online proactive, interactive and session.</p> <p>To secure your place on the talk, please fill out the following form:  <a href="https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/office/equality-training-form">Equalities Training Form (office.com)</a></p>

To view the Council’s other news stories please click on the link to search - [Caerphilly Council - News Centre](#)



## Case Studies

The following case studies are examples of key local authority services delivering and making a difference to people's lives and taking the time to support vulnerable people and families to be independent, and to seek training and employment opportunities, as well as housing and benefits advice.

### Case Study 1: Communities for Work Plus (CfW+)

CfW+ acts as the employability support function within Caerphilly CBC's employability team for those who are ready or available for work, or who have been assessed as near work readiness. Mentors will support all unemployed customers with barriers to employment - Economically Inactive, Short Term Unemployed, Long Term Unemployed, and 16-24 year old NEET's, across all Caerphilly postcodes.

Anybody requiring employability support, including CV writing, application and interview skills, support with barriers such as transport, mild to moderate poor mental health, training needs, work limiting health conditions/disabilities, history of offending, homelessness, challenges owing to age (e.g. 16-24 or 50+), caring responsibilities or any other barriers will be offered intensive 1-2-1 support via a CfW+ Mentor.

SPF support is tailored for those with the most complex barriers to engagement with a focus on pre-employability support for unemployed and economically inactive residents age 16+ for those furthest away from the labour market with multiple/complex barriers to work - support via mentors will focus on 1-2-1 keyworker support, developing mental and physical wellbeing, accessing the benefits system, increasing basic and life skills, building personal and financial resilience, confidence and accessing relevant training courses. SPF provision complements CfW+.

SPF mentors also provide individual support those in employment, who wish to increase contractual hours, gain secure work, re-train or change career direction, providing support to those on low incomes or who are under-employed but not limited to this. Work related qualifications, interview skills, and job search will be the focus.

Under the SPF People and Skills pillar, support is also provided to focus on: Work related qualifications – focus on addressing skills gaps for employed and unemployed - with bespoke training pathways and recruitment needs linked to skills gaps. Pathways will be delivered both locally and jointly commissioned regionally.

Green skills and Green Industries bespoke courses - addressing skills gaps and recruitment needs in relation to 'green' skills and green industries to develop a skilled workforce that can work towards the Governments Net Zero and wider environmental ambitions - supporting unemployed and employed by jointly commissioning and locally procuring bespoke courses.

Retraining & upskilling support for those in high carbon sectors - Upskilling and reskilling the current workforce across sectors affected by the Green agenda is a priority, e.g., sectors such as Housing, Construction, and Transport. Work will be undertaken with local employers, including Caerphilly Council to identify skills gaps

and a bespoke programme of learning to enable an employee to upskill / retrain as appropriate to their role.

This work supports:

**Equality Objective 2: Education, Skills and Employment – Improve education opportunities for all.**

## **Case Study 2: Policy on Awarding Grants**

The Council is required to meet all of the 171 standards included in the final Compliance Notice issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

The Welsh Language Commissioner wrote to all Local Authorities in Wales on the 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to provide "guidance to organisation on the correct interpretation of the standard (94)" and requiring the Council to "confirm that we will produce a policy and provide a date for publishing".

The Welsh Language Commissioner wrote to the council again in April 2022 stating that as a result of evidence gathering, they were requesting further actions be made to ensure full compliance with specific Standards. One of these actions relates to Standard 94, which is to produce and publish a policy on awarding grants.

The Welsh Language Commissioner's advice document outlines the expectations in relation to the implementation of policy making standard 94 and highlights:

- formally adopting via a management board decision
- having arrangement for someone with the relevant Welsh language expertise and experience as part of the process
- that the amount of money is irrelevant – the standard covers small and large grants

The Equalities and Welsh Language Team worked in partnership to develop a Policy on Awarding Grants at Caerphilly Council to assist services to comply with the relevant standards, which will ensure officers take the following into account –

- How the grant could impact opportunities for people to use and promote the Welsh Language (Positive or Negative) and if in any way it treats the Welsh Language less favourably than the English Language
- How positive impacts could be increased, or negative impacts be decreased

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 established a legal framework to impose a duty on local authorities to comply with Standards of conduct in relation to the Welsh Language. In particular, this means that Local Authorities cannot treat the Welsh language less favourably than the English language, and must promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language therefore making it easier for people to use it in their daily life.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011's aim is not to treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality but rather to have positive effects on the Welsh language. As such, the Measure allows bodies to exercise this aim independently of any effect on the English language.

The Standards affect all areas of the Council's work and the Welsh Language Commissioner may apply a selection of sanctions including financial sanctions for each proven breach of a standard.

With regards to policy making standards, the Welsh Language Commissioner has found that many organisation under the Welsh Language Standards No.1 Regulations were failing to comply with Standard 94.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council led on the development of this policy approach across our region, as requested by their Chief Executive, in order to ensure a consistent approach from all organisations subject to the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations. The following organisations have agreed to implement the policy:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf CBC
- Torfaen CBC
- Newport CBC
- Merthyr CBC
- Monmouthshire CBC
- Cardiff Council
- Welsh Government

The following organisations are also hoping to adopt the policy –

- Powys CBC
- Blaenau Gwent CBC
- Vale of Glamorgan CBC
- Denbighshire CBC

The [Policy on Awarding Grants](#) was approved by Corporate Management Team in June 2022, which was shared with officers who administer grants, and published on the Corporate Policy Unit Portal and on the Council's website.

This work support:

**Equality Objective 5: Welsh Language – To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements.**

## Employment Monitoring Data

The following information is high-level data of what the *iTrent* payroll system holds as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 regarding the Caerphilly CBC workforce profile, in terms of protected characteristics and language ability of staff.

- Gender, Ethnicity and Disability data is currently shown by Directorate.
- Religion or Belief and Sexual Orientation data is currently shown by corporate total only. Data has improved during the last financial year.
- Language Ability is available by Service Area but the data is provided here as Corporate totals for information.
- Other information has not been presented as the categories are currently showing zero records.

<b>Gender by Directorate</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Undisclosed</b>
Economy & Environment	1023	1125	1
Education & Corporate Services	885	3900	0
Social Services & Housing	475	1435	0
<b>Authority Total</b>	<b>2239</b>	<b>6108</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>Ethnicity by Directorate</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>BME</b>	<b>Undisclosed</b>
Economy & Environment	1866	13	193
Education & Corporate Services	3800	40	917
Social Services & Housing	1793	27	89
<b>Authority Total</b>	<b>7088</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>1178</b>

<b>Disability by Directorate</b>	<b>Disabled</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Undisclosed</b>	<b>Unwilling to declare</b>
Economy & Environment	62	1815	198	0
Education & Corporate Services	68	3756	937	0
Social Services & Housing	61	1747	102	0
<b>Authority Total</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>6960</b>	<b>1209</b>	<b>0</b>

<b>Sexual Orientation (totals)</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Bisexual	34
Gay	35
Heterosexual	3423
Lesbian	32
Other	31
Undisclosed	4883
Unwilling to Declare	97
<b>Authority Total</b>	<b>8535</b>

<b>Religion or Belief (totals)</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Buddhist	7
Christian (All Denominations)	1264
Hindu	4
Jewish	1
Muslim	2
Sikh	3
Humanist	9
No Religion	2068
Undisclosed	5076
Unwilling to Declare	56
Other	45
<b>Authority Total</b>	<b>8535</b>

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
British (Not Channel Islands or IOM)	1203
English	97
Northern Irish	3
Irish	10
Welsh	2507
Scottish	8
Cornish	2
Other	44
Undisclosed	4652
Unwilling to Declare	9
<b>Authority Total</b>	<b>8535</b>

<b>Language Ability (Other than English)</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
Braille	1
BSL (British Sign Language)	38
Dutch	1
French	27
German	9
Hebrew	1
Hindi	2
Italian	1
Makaton Sign Language	1
Malayalam	2
Spanish	11
Tamil	1
Turkish	1
Welsh	2100

\*(No staff total is recorded as some staff speak more than two languages)

**Welsh Language Skills\*\***

Total Staff*	8535
Welsh Speakers*	2100
Percentage of Workforce	24.60%

\*The Total Staff and Welsh Speakers do not equal the overall workforce total due to some members of staff having more than one post within the organisation and those posts are within different service areas.

\*\*These totals includes teachers and school-based employees.

## Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024

The Strategic Equality Plan was developed to primarily demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011. It highlights links to legislation and regulations covering the Welsh Language Standards and Human Rights issues and how it supports 4 of the 7 aims of Welsh Government's *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*; *A Healthier Wales*, *A More Equal Wales*, *A Wales of Cohesive Communities* and *A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language*. It also outlines how the council will meet its responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, to advance equality and inclusion for all protected groups.

Our new plan was due to be approved at the end of the 2019-2020 financial year, however the pandemic and the immediate response required by the Council meant that it was not formally agreed until October 2020. We chose seven Strategic Equality Objectives, and, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, we have been able to show good progress against them. The following summary includes information that we gather to meet the reporting requirements of our 4-year plan. Our chosen objectives are:

**Equality Objective 1** – Service Planning and Delivery – Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

**Equality Objective 2** – Education, Skills and Employment – Improve education opportunities for all

**Equality Objective 3** – Community Cohesion – Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

**Equality Objective 4** – Inclusive Engagement and Participation – Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery

**Equality Objective 5** – Welsh Language – To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

**Equality Objective 6** – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce – Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough

**Equality Objective 7** – Reducing the Gender Pay Gap

We measure our progress against these objectives through an action plan and the following sections give a snapshot of the activity we have progressed during this reporting year.

## **Progress against the Objectives and Actions:**

### **Equality Objective 1 - Service Planning and Delivery - Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services**

This objective focuses on the provision of accessible and inclusive services to the citizens of the county borough. We will achieve this by continuing our engagement with service users to identify and eliminate barriers to services.

Barriers experienced by groups and individuals may include, accessing information in appropriate formats to suit their needs, mental health difficulties, transport, unemployment or accessibility to technology. Service areas should implement plans and strategies collaboratively to successfully address and remove identified barriers.

Education, health and mental health services, housing, social services and transport are areas which we wish to improve upon.

Empowering groups with protected characteristics to be able to access the services they need is a key focus for the Council.

#### **Action 1**

Deliver on the principles in the Customer and Digital Strategy - connect technology and knowledge to deliver excellent customer experience and opportunities

#### **Progress**

Capita Pay360 is currently being migrated to SaaS, which will provide the foundation for delivering payment services in more ways, providing improved customer experience.

RPA and My Council Services have continued to be used across the Council reducing repetitive tasks and improving customer experience.

We continue to improve our security stance in an ever changing environment where threats continue to be developed and cyber-attacks are increasing. Security awareness training is delivered to all computer users annually and this is supplemented with attack simulations throughout the year, which feeds into future training developments.

Digital services in school have been developed in line with WG standards. A dedicated team looks after the end user computing in schools while the infrastructure is managed through existing teams. Continued review and development of these technologies is in place, linking with current strategies and work programmes from WG.

Procurement services have lead on the all Wales EdTech programme which provides a route to market for school technologies.



The Council continue to be a lead on the all Wales learner experience project, collaborating with all public sector bodies across Wales.

	<b>Followers</b>	<b>Posts</b>	<b>Reach</b>
<b>Facebook</b>	35,268	3,101 (bilingual)	605,485
<b>Twitter</b>	21.8K	1,886 (bilingual) *likely to be an inaccurate number due to loss of data	1.46m
<b>Instagram</b>	4,130	20 (bilingual)	14,380
<b>LinkedIn</b>	9,330	3,101 (bilingual)	6,057

Another method the Council uses to convey messages is a free subscription service for Gov Delivery Email Bulletins. By registering for this service, residents receive key Council information direct to their email address, with hyperlinks included to take the reader to further information.

Gov Delivery, email bulletin data for the period 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023 are as follows:

### **Welsh**

- 209 email bulletins sent
- Subscribers have increased from 766 to 826 (+7.86%)
- Engagement rate (those who opened and clicked on a link in a bulletin) 66.60%
- Impressions 8140 (clicks on links) (+16% increase on previous year)
- 1643 subscriptions +172 +10.46%

### **English**

- 259 email bulletins sent
- Subscribers have increased from 39,734 to 44,122 (+5.75%)
- Engagement rate (those who opened and clicked on a link in a bulletin) 69.30%
- Impressions 1.24million (clicks on links)
- 186,342 subscriptions +11,139 +6.36%

### **Action 2**

Ensure our staff have the necessary skills to deliver digital services – *linked to Staffing, Skills and Development Theme*

### **Progress**

The Information, Insight & Intelligence Corporate Review concluded earlier this year – some of the review work streams were completed, others were returned to the relevant service area for completion as part of their own forward work programmes, and some have helped inform the ongoing Mobilising Team Caerphilly portfolio. A new DigiHub was developed on the intranet as a resource to support staff, as well as delivering a programme of IT training sessions.

Training and further development is offered via the MY TIME process to enhance skills and development.

### **Action 3**

Explore and consider adopting the Communication Access Symbol to ensure information is provided using different formats and languages including BSL

#### **Progress**

The Council has a Translation and Interpretation Framework in place and service areas request translation or interpretation services via the approved providers on the framework. The framework will be out to tender in spring 2024.

The Housing strategy is available in an Easy Read format.

The new occupation contracts have been forwarded to all Caerphilly Homes contract holders, including in several different languages, audio and BSL in line with identified language preferences.

### **Action 4**

Upskill citizens to enable greater use of digital technology to address digital exclusion

#### **Progress**

The Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service continues to offer a wide range of digital skills classes to residents across the borough. We are also able to loan out iPads and laptops to learners enrolled on ACL courses who need this facility. The new (£5.5 Million) Multiply project will offer a wide range of “numeracy” based learning opportunities to Caerphilly county borough residents, such as shopping online and using online comparison sites.

Libraries offer free PC or laptop access to all residents who wish to access digital technology for education, learning support or for recreational purposes.

The Community Education Team and other partner organisations use libraries to host training sessions and events to address digital exclusion.

Libraries regularly survey customers to gain information on their needs and requirements – this is completed by using the biannual Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The Tenant and Community Involvement have provided tablets on loan to some of our involved tenants to help them become more digitally involve; tablets still in use but we haven't expanded the numbers.

Willmott Dixon have provided 20 tablets in total to Caerphilly Cares as part of their Social Value obligations. The tablets have been distributed to local charities who are addressing social isolation.

### **Action 5**

Identify service needs of specific user groups; what barriers prevent access; and what actions are required to remove those barriers – use complaints and compliments

## Progress

The Tenant and Community Involvement Team have been involved in a project with the RNIB to train staff to be aware of tenants with sight loss issues and to be able to offer assistance; it's called Vision. The Vision Friends training has been rolled out to all sheltered housing and floating support front line staff.

We have undertaken a consultation exercise with all Caerphilly Homes tenants on the proposed closure of the decentralised housing offices as part of a transition to providing more community based services and home visits.

As part of the corporate 'Mobilising Team Caerphilly' work, the customer experience is being explored and will include work to identify the needs of specific user groups. The work will seek to understand the customer experience in detail, user needs and barriers so that the experience can be improved and be more responsive to all user needs.

People Services will continue to review complaints and compliments and look for learning opportunities relating to barriers to our service. HR and Communications will support other service areas as appropriate.

The Corporate complaints digital database developed is operational. This new system will streamline our lines of communication and provide prompts where timeframes for responding need to be met or extended. The system will also improve interrogation of the data records, which can be accessed in a more efficient manner than the previous manual interrogation, to produce the information we need to learn from complaints and improve our services as an authority.

An additional column has been included to our complaints database to identify which complaints and compliments include equalities or Welsh language issues.

Equalities and Welsh language complaints data forms part of the biannual reporting to the Governance and Audit Committee and Cabinet as part of the Corporate Complaints process, and the Senior Policy Officer (Equalities and Welsh Language) sits on the corporate *Learning from Complaints Group* that meets quarterly to discuss specific and cross-cutting complaints.

Corporate complaints are those that are due to failure of process or failure to operate Council policy correctly. These are complaints that could ultimately be forwarded to the Public Services Ombudsman or Welsh Language Commissioner for example. Code of conduct issues around staff behaviour or attitude are dealt with via internal HR processes.

There are separate complaints processes for dealing with social services complaints and school-based complaints. The Social Services Complaints Procedure Wales Regulations 2014 outlines the procedure for handling complaints from persons receiving a service from social services. School-based complaints are dealt with by the School and Governing Body.

During 2022-2023, we received 10 equalities related complaints and they are broken down as follows:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Equalities	Agreement via Bin Assist that recycling bin should be returned on to pavement due to disability but the crew forgot to do so again.
Equalities	Waste collection crew not returning bins to the pavement and instead leaving them on the road and blocking the driveway to a property where a disabled person lives
Equalities	Chasing up SMI for Huntington's Disease rebate. Spoken to 3 receptionists and still no progress. People with Huntington's have no filters and swear. Receptionist saying stop swearing and refused to pass the call to the manager. Staff need Mental Health Training
Equalities	<b>a)</b> Resurfacing disturbance, signage not clear and advance warning not known - Visual Impairment <b>b)</b> Further correspondence received not as requested
Equalities	School Transport issues for disabled student
Equalities	Wrongly informed about Resident's Parking Scheme and felt ignored due to Polish accent
Equalities	Issues with Council Tax, Housing benefit, Libraries, Housing - in relation to rented accommodation, benefits and discounts in receipt and discounts outstanding
Equalities	Complaint regarding a number of issues to do with his housing and the way he has been treated. Lack of reasonable adjustments, light bulbs, sewage etc.
Equalities	Complaint regarding EHO dealing with noise complaint and responses have had a detrimental impact on the complainants mental health

Also recorded were 4 equalities and Welsh language service requests, and they are broken down as follows:

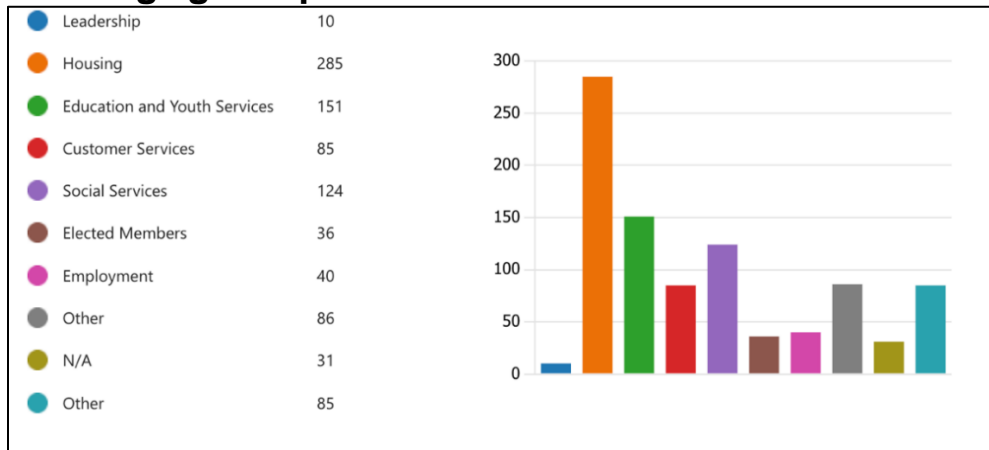
<b>Category</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Welsh	Winter Fuel Support Scheme - On the rejection page, after the Welsh, that the words 'plug in' are there each time, but this does not happen in the English
Welsh	Green sacks page on website in English. Problems ordering green sacks on a mobile device.
Equalities	Black Flag being flown from property stating: WOMAN Noun Adult Human Female - complainant deems this to be transphobic.
Equalities	Young white males portrayed in Community Safety poster as being involved in violent disorder

The Armed Forces Covenant is now in Law for Housing, Education and Health. This means that organisations must pay 'Due Regard' in these policies areas. To upskill staff on the responsibilities under the legislation Armed Forces Covenant training continued to be delivered via Microsoft Teams. The training provides an overview of the unique challenges of Service life and how staff can help support the Armed Forces

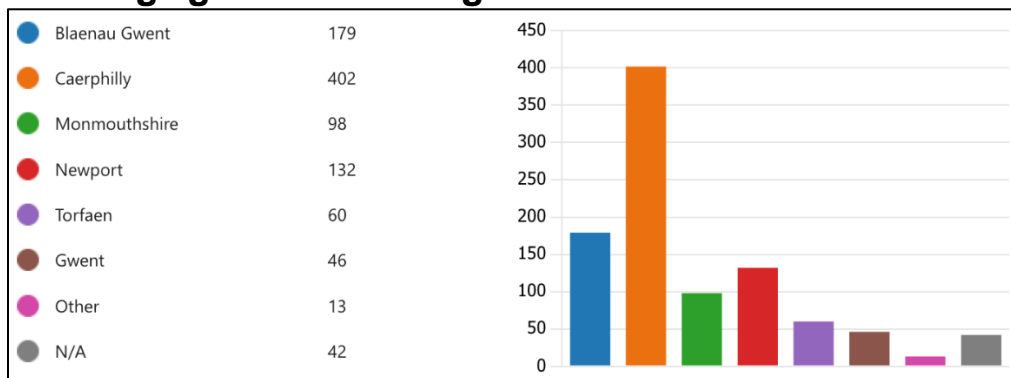
Community. It will help staff understand and apply the principles of the Covenant at a local level. It includes sources of further information and support, including:

- What the Covenant is?
- Who the Armed Forces Community are and what challenges they face?
- How the Covenant is applied in real-life scenarios?
- Armed Forces Covenant legislation – What is Due Regard?
- Sources of Support

### Training figures per service area



### Training figures from a regional level



### Action 6

Ensure the Council’s website and intranet is accessible so that people with disabilities can still engage

### Progress

Intranet is currently being replaced and new version is in user acceptance testing. The site will be fully accessible to all staff, including those who are not office-based, with the site being accessible from personal devices. The Council’s Communications Team, has full responsibility for this product going forward. Accessibility standards compliance was a key requirement of the specification.

A project to replace the Council's website is underway and the specification is being finalised.

Our web team have undertaken work to improve the accessibility of the Council's website. In the last report the Council's accessibility score was 91% accessible. At time of reporting the Council's website is now has an overall accessibility score of 96%. We are acutely aware that there are still aspects that still require work. Our primary focus is on removing the large number of non-accessible PDF documents on the site, with the aim of replacing them with HTML format text. To support this, we have developed a tool to allow staff to create accessible, HTML 'web documents' using Microsoft Word.

We are working to achieve full compliance with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA. Sourcing testing software to assist with this process. Preparation for the redevelopment of the Council's website is underway with compliance with WCAG 2.1 AA a key driver. To further facilitate full compliance, we are currently looking at a replacement website.

The Council has an internal Accessibility Working Group of officers from across different service areas who meet, discuss and share good practice of accessibility issues. The group has developed intranet pages for members of staff to refer to for further guidance and training information to enable them to develop literature in an accessible manner.

Over the last 12 months, we have trained a further 11 members of staff, some of them acting as 'gatekeepers' within the organisation, to check documents are accessible and to prevent inaccessible reports going through the system. We have delivered numerous presentations of the importance of accessibility at a range of sessions including Management Network, and we are currently piloting and considering how to roll out the new tool developed in-house to convert text into HTML for the Council's web pages.

Each member of the group is an Accessibility Champion and is available to help other members of their departments to deal with queries and promote learning. There are plans in the pipeline around induction and report writing for new employees starting work within the organisation.

Participation Officers have been working with corporate staff to update our web pages. This will be improved as part of the Mobilising Team Caerphilly work to improve the customer experience across all service areas within Caerphilly Homes.

Our Accessibility Statement is updated annually, you can read our full statement here: <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/my-council/data-protection-and-freedom-of-information/accessibility-statement?lang=en-GB>

## **Action 7**

Improve the collection and recording of equalities monitoring information of our citizens across council services

## Progress

The equalities monitoring questions asked have been updated by members of Proud Councils and are now used for collecting relevant monitoring questions as part of consultation exercises and recruitment. These questions are consistent across Gwent.

In Housing this is achieved via the Common Housing Register (CHR) and Private Sector Housing Equality monitoring.

In autumn 2022, as part of preparation for Renting Homes Act, all tenants were sent a form to update general contact details, tenancy details and language preferences, and also to let us know of any support needs. More than 5,000 tenant records were updated.

## Action 8

Collect equalities monitoring information for compliments and complaints

## Progress

Complaints officers are aware of the requirement to complete the additional data on our complaints database to identify which complaints/compliments include equalities or Welsh language issues.

The table below shows a count and list of findings resulting from the Housing complaints in this reporting period that relate to Equalities or Welsh language.

<b>Characteristic Strand</b>	<b>Count - Stage 1, Stage 2 &amp; Escalated 1 to 2</b>
Age	0
Disability	4
Gender Reassignment	0
Marriage and Civil Partnership	0
Pregnancy and Maternity	0
Race	0
Religion/Belief or Non-belief	0
Sex	1
Sexual Orientation	0
Welsh Language	0

Extracts from cases linked to the Disability characteristic:

- Following shower being fitted the boiler was adjusted to ensure hot water was coming from shower. This has caused water from the hot water tap to be deemed too hot for her daughter concerned daughter will scald herself. This issue was considered at both stage 1 and Stage 2 and was not upheld.
- Contract Holder advised they were unhappy with the banding they were placed on the Common Allocations Register due to their medical conditions and feel they should have a priority banding. This complaint was considered at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 and was found to be upheld with lessons learnt.

- Resident raised issues of sexism within Housing Solutions Team as there would be more options available to him if were female. The resident later decided to withdraw this complaint.

### **Action 9**

Survey the council's building stock (and schools) in relation to accessibility using the Local Access Group

### **Progress**

The Council owns and manages 10,700. We assess the level of accessibility of each home before it is let and best match properties with those that require the assessed level of accessibility. We also carry out adaptations to those home to improve levels of accessibility where our tenants require them.

### **Action 10**

Survey polling stations in relation to accessibility using the Local Access Group

### **Progress**

Polling station inspectors surveyed all polling stations during the Local Council Elections in 2022. 88% were accessible and 12% were not. It is important to note that many polling stations are based within buildings not owned by the Council.

All polling stations will be reviewed as part of a statutory polling station review from October 2023 and a decision made on future use.



## **Equality Objective 2 - Education, Skills and Employment - Improve education opportunities for all**

The primary aim of this objective is to ensure that our communities are well equipped to secure sustainable and well-paid employment as a means of preventing poverty. Through ensuring our citizens are ready to enter the working environment we will prevent long-term problems associated with low skills and un-employability.

*'Improve Education opportunities for all'* as detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan, will be delivered using outcomes identified within the Shared Ambitions 2019-2022 Strategy. This strategy outlines the Council's commitment to work with schools and the Education Achievement Services (EAS) to improve educational attainment and achievement.

Increasing the number of citizens accessing education, training and employment will positively contribute to creating cohesive and resilient communities that will thrive. The skills agenda is fundamental to the economic development and economic prosperity of the nation, Cardiff Capital Region and Caerphilly County Borough.

Key to this will be focussing our work on reducing the number of young people who are not in employment, education and training, eliminating the economic inactivity gap; identify the skills gaps and shortages in priority sectors, increase the number and quality of apprenticeships and improve people's perception of apprenticeships as a route into well-paid employment.

### **Action 1**

Improve the skills of citizens by providing opportunities to gain qualifications and support to obtain employment

### **Progress**

The Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service continues to offer a wide range of ACL classes and clubs to residents across the borough. The service also works closely with Shared Prosperity Fund projects, in particular People and Skills, to offer a range of learning opportunities to gain employment.

The new (£5.5 Million) Multiply project will offer a wide range of "numeracy" based learning opportunities to Caerphilly county borough residents, including Multiply Your Way to Employment and job specific numeracy courses.

Libraries offer free PC or laptop access to all residents who wish to access digital technology for education, learning support or for recreational purposes. All libraries are DDA friendly.

Our library bookstock is relevant, modern and educational.

The Community Education Team and other partner organisations use libraries to host training sessions and events to address digital exclusion.

The Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Programme Team worked with Gelligaer Young Farmers Club to host and deliver a training day in all-terrain vehicle use, enabling young

farmers to play a more active role in agricultural production on farm and support their transferable skills.

The Rent Section work in partnership with Caerphilly Cares and our employment team, we refer tenants are work ready or require training opportunities.

The team accepted refers and carried out “what if” and better of calculations which highlighted the impacts on benefits over a series of scenarios e.g. 10 hours worked, 20 hours 30 hours.

Caerphilly Homes are in the process of creating a Construction related employment programme. Together with Willmott Dixon this programme will provide opportunities for citizens to obtain new qualifications and employment opportunities. It will also include a specific work stream for ex-military personnel who are currently on the Council’s housing register and seeking work.

Older Persons Housing also operate a tablet loan service and where possible we support Contract Holders with IT queries; we have one Senior Housing Officer who is RNIB Vision trained too and she has contributed to joint training sessions with another officer to raise staff awareness. We also refer to different support agencies and regularly promote and report on ‘good news stories’.

The Council’s Employability projects provided all participants with the opportunity to gain work related qualifications and appropriate courses in line with their chosen employment route They also provided the opportunity for participants to improve their basic skills via the Adult Community Learning team.

Fair work principles are embedded in our employability support projects which seek to match people with protected characteristics, carers and adults with responsibility for children with opportunities and working hours that suit them.

See Equality Objective 1: Action 4 for work undertaken with Armed Forces Veterans to upskill to enable access to goods and services.

Caerphilly Council’s Employability team has worked with the Armed Forces Liaison Officer to further support the Armed Forces Community. The team will support the applicant through the application under the guaranteed interview scheme and will arrange work experience where appropriate. The ‘Launch into Local authority scheme’ will ensure that the Armed Forces Community is not disadvantaged when applying for vacancies due to their inexperience.

## **Action 2**

Develop support for Adult Community Education to deliver digital literacy courses that will support local employability programmes

## **Progress**

The Adult and Community Learning (ACL) service continues to offer a wide range of free Essential Skills digital skills classes as well as ICDL to residents across the borough. We are also able to loan out iPads and laptops to learners enrolled on ACL courses who need this facility.

We actively encourage employers on the Council's tenders to employ local residents.

For Libraries – see response under Equality Objective 2 Action 1

### **Action 3**

Aim to reduce the impact of poverty by supporting citizens into improved employment opportunities and conditions

### **Progress**

The CCBC Employability projects support participants to improve their employability skills, confidence, and motivation, and to manage their expectations in relation to finding sustainable employment. The projects also assist participants to progress in employment by increasing their work related skills and help those who are underemployed to find work more suited to the skills and experience, or to increase hours or levels of responsibility.

Participants on the CCBC Employability Programmes will be invited to attend group information sessions held in partnership with partner organisations such as the DWP to apply for jobs in a variety of sectors – for example Care, Hospitality. Participants will meet employers and then be supported to gain qualifications and the skills along with interviews to fill the gaps in specific sectors.

Participants will be supported by the team of mentors to reach their goals and reduce barriers to gain qualifications that make them more employable to apply for jobs in their chosen career pathways.

All CCBC Employment programmes were advertised in different formats for participants to access information so they can self-refer or be referred by a third party for support to upskill or gain sustainable employment.

The suite of employment support programmes available seek to support and empower individual participants to achieve fair work; or in the case of Working Skills for Adults (WSfA) and Nurture, Equip and Thrive (NET), to upskill and improve the employment opportunities for those that are already in work. In particular, the NET programme aims to increase the ownership of generic, transferable skills across the workforce through community-based provision, helping to improve the opportunities for low skilled workers to sustain employment and increase their earning potential.

NET outcomes within CCBC vary from finding new jobs for individuals, either increasing hours or pay, or both; in addition to contractual improvements such as moving to a more stable contract. From April 2022- January 2023, 47 participants supported by the NET project (towards achieving fair work) of which 50% improved their labour market situation either by increasing their hours/and/or wage in a new or current role or by finding an additional role to supplement their existing employment hours.

In addition to NET, the Working Skills for Adults (WSfA) project provides support in terms of upskilling opportunities for participants across the Borough who are in work and have either no qualifications or low-level qualifications, as a route to progression (including progression towards fair work). For the period April 2022 – March 2023, WSfA support was provided to 44 participants of whom 38 gained qualifications.

Communities for Work (CfW), Communities for Work Plus (CfW+), Bridges into Work (BiW) and Inspire 2 Work (I2W) programmes also supported *unemployed* individuals to secure work, through the provision of intensive mentoring to address barriers, source relevant training and improve employability skills. Whilst the types of work that individuals may secure is varied and wide-ranging, the aim of employment mentors will always be to support participants to access employment that is sustainable and fair – and this will be done at the point of job searching and application. The provision of ongoing in-work support for a period after commencing work, supports with any issues that may arise in the first weeks, which may include issues related to fair work (such as health and safety concerns, salary or working hour negotiations, accessibility etc.). Alternatively participants may be also be referred to NET project.

Across the Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) programmes during the 2022/23 we supported 198 residents into employment.

There were positive outcomes for the 16-24 age group with young people being supported into employment. Delivery of Priority 3 which focused on (16–24-year-olds) within the ESF funded Communities for Work programme ceased in October 2021 owing to exceeding programme profiles but continued its' support as part of Welsh Government funded, Communities for Work Plus programme via YPG funding (Young Person's Guarantee). Skilled Youth Mentors were transferred from C4W to C4W+ to continue to provide support to young people aged 16–30-year-olds. At the end of 2023 this funding continued as part of the overall C4W+ WG funding offer.

Our employment programmes continue to provide excellent support for those with disabilities and work limiting health conditions. In particular, the CfW+ programme was able to further increase the proportion of customers with a disability or work limiting health condition that were supported into employment, with 23% (46 people) of job entries relating to participants with either a disability or work limiting health condition.

Support for customers with disabilities and work limiting health conditions – the Caerphilly Employment programmes have continued to provide support for customers with disabilities and work limiting health conditions for both unemployed and underemployed residents. The NET Project supported 16 participants with work limiting health conditions of whom 9 improved their labour market situation.

The Council agreed to fund the Welsh Government Free School Meals (FSM) holiday payments for the school Summer holidays, due to Welsh Government withdrawing the grant funding at short notice to families eligible for FSM. The service also undertook a new payment system of the School Essential grant for the first time this year, which enabled the authority to reach far more families in need.

For Armed Forces Covenant - see response under Equality Objective 2 Action 1.

For Libraries – see response under Equality Objective 2 Action 1.

For Housing – see response in Equality Objective 2 Action 1.

## **Action 4**

Meet the targets set within the local employability programmes by upskilling and supporting citizens into well-paid work

### **Progress**

With the cessation of the European Social Fund (ESF) funding and the Communities for Work (CfW) provision in March 2023 we have undergone several changes locally; a new management structure, has seen the merger of the Council's two Employment programmes from different service areas (due to the cessation of ESF, CfW provision and ESF Bridges into Work / Inspire 2 Work and Working Skills for Adults and Nurture, Equip, Thrive under the Education Directorate) and the introduction of the UK Government Shared Prosperity Funds (SPF) People and Skills Pillar funding to replace the ESF provision. This has been a long awaited move towards a 'single employability programme' offer in Caerphilly with no postcode restrictions or difficult eligibility issues, with the team able to support residents with all aspects of employability for both unemployed and employed 'in-work' support.

For the period up to March 2023 all of the above projects continued working well towards their targets towards resuming our preferred service delivery format of face-to-face support.

The Council's Employment Managers continued to work across the teams to ensure no duplication across all programmes in Caerphilly with other funded Employability Programmes. Regular meetings continue to be held with the Managers and Partnership Manager from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support participants to the right programme, to ensure that they were eligible for the right support and supported into paid work.

Employment Managers have continued to attend the Regional Skills Partnership meetings to work in partnership with other Local Authorities to address needs and paid opportunities across the Cardiff Capital Region.

As a whole, and historically, the employment programmes have found it difficult to engage with economically inactive participants and long term unemployed aged 25+,

However, Caerphilly Council's CELT Pilot Project was CRF funded and was considered a precursor to the SPF was delivered from March 2022 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2022. Delivered by the ESF team - support focused on engaging economically inactive participants with the aim of referring them to the employability projects and Community Educations classes, or any other appropriate services as employability projects have often found it difficult to locate/engage with economically inactive residents. This was an opportunity to use a variety of engagement methods and utilise/ create links with partners to create a more sustainable employability journey. CELT successfully engaged with 86 economically inactive participants across the Borough from March 2022. This was over the original target of 75.

Support for our NEET young people (aged 16-24) across the employment teams has easily met our profiled targets.

The following headline figures represent stats from all of the Council's employment programmes (funded by both WG and ESF):

- Total Participants Supported 821
- Qualifications Gained 104
- Job Entries 259\*

(\*this figure includes improved labour market situations for underemployed residents)

*(Please note: these figures may include some double counting of participants due to customers becoming eligible for different programmes at different stages; however each outcome claimed represents a separate event).*

The Catering Department took part in a recruitment pilot to increase recruitment to cater for the Universal Primary Free School Meal implementation in September 2023 for all primary age pupil. The pilot was run in partnership with our HR department and was successful in recruiting over 90 new positions to the service area.

For Housing - See comment in Equality Objective 2 Action 1 which will include a team Caerphilly approach involving Caerphilly Homes, the Council's employment team, Caerphilly Cares and the Regional Armed Forces Officer.

For Libraries – see response under Equality Objective 2 Action 1

## **Action 5**

Through investing in our educational and housing stock, and providing apprenticeships, training opportunities and work placements within our organisation, we will increase the number of local citizens who are skilled and qualified workers and contributing to Community Benefits.

## **Progress**

Bedwas and St Martin's Comprehensive Schools established and delivered STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) workshops undertaken together with support from Willmott Dixon and their supply chain to the Council's annual foodbank appeal and the Free School Meals deliveries.

Housing Repair Operations did not take on any apprentices in 2021. To date 19 have been employed in 2022.

Asset Maintenance and Repairs (HRO and PAMS), recruited 7 new Apprentices (varying trades) this year and we have 25 Apprentices built into our structure, so as Apprentices qualify we will be looking to replace these on a year on year basis.

Full time employment opportunities including apprenticeships, graduate and for long term unemployed will be offered on all Caerphilly Homes new build developments. It will be mandated as part of the chosen contract arrangements that the delivery of targeted recruitment and training outcomes are as equally important to residents and our communities as the new homes we build.

The Catering Department were successful in recruiting an apprentice into their service area, which is continuing to make good progress in completing their qualification and gaining vital experience to support them in finding permanent employment within the industry.

Library services offer work placement opportunities by liaising with support agencies. We will be working with the Caerphilly Cares team to possibly look and offer longer-term voluntary support posts and have used the Kickstart Apprenticeship scheme. Through the latter scheme we have appointed a new library assistant.

Caerphilly Homes currently has 25 largely local, male and female apprentices working within the Asset Maintenance and Repairs team, learning a trade. This is the highest number of apprenticeships we have ever had at any one time within this part of Caerphilly Homes.

## **Action 6**

To further develop an inclusive approach to apprenticeships

### **Progress**

In 2022, the Council held a highly successful corporately funded recruitment campaign for Apprentices, appointing 30 across a range of services. 5 of the Apprentices have since secured permanent posts within the Council.

Additionally, in the same year, Housing Services independently ran their own recruitment campaign for Apprentices, appointing 13 across a range of trades, 1 of which has already secured a permanent role within the service.

Funding has been committed to support Apprenticeship recruitment every 2 years, with the next scheduled to be held in 2024. Again, the focus will very much be on inclusivity and creating opportunities for all.

The Council launched a new Recruitment Team in the summer of 2023. Based within Human Resources, the team is working collaboratively with managers across the organisation to address their varying and complex recruitment needs. Supporting the organisation to embed workforce planning, the team will help managers to shape their workforce, exploring different pathways to employment including the possibility of creating Apprenticeship opportunities funded by services.

## **Equality Objective 3 - Community Cohesion - Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities**

Community cohesion as defined in Welsh Government's Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan (latest document) is described as the ability of all communities to function and grow in harmony together rather than in conflict. It aims to build communities where people feel confident, that they belong and are comfortable mixing and interacting with others, particularly with different people and people with different protected characteristics.

Caerphilly adopts the principles that a cohesive community is one where:

- there is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued;
- those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities;
- strong and positive relationships are developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

When we refer to 'communities' we are often describing a geographical neighbourhood, but the term community may also be used to define individuals who share a protected characteristic (for example ethnicity or culture, age group, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, gender) or interests.

### **Action 1**

Raise the profile for discriminatory incidents reporting in schools through further staff training

### **Progress**

The Local Education Authority (LEA) delivered 4 training sessions on discriminatory incident reporting and awareness raising of the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.

- 1x New Headteachers
- 2x Headteachers
- 1x Pastoral Leads

Schools should record and report all discriminatory incidents to the Local Education Authority (LEA). All schools provide data at the end of each term and any schools not providing a response are followed up. The LEA collates the data to explore trends and to provide support to any schools which provide data of concern. Data collection was significantly disrupted in 2019-2020 due to the impact of diverting resources to managing the pandemic, so this data has not been included in the table below. The LEA recognises that the number of reported incidents is unlikely to reflect the actual number of incidents across our schools for several reasons, including a mismatch between pupils' experiences and their willingness to share their experiences (as highlighted by a number of external reports based on pupils' experiences across Wales).



The LEA has made efforts to raise awareness of the need to report incidents and the thresholds for reporting. The following table shows the data collated.

Type of discrimination	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2020/21	2021/22 (2 terms)	2022/23
Caring /Cared for	2	0	0	0	0	0
Cultural	3	18	3	6	7	9
Disability	2	2	5	2	1	3
Gender	5	7	4	3	5	12
Homophobic	27	31	26	24	29	46
Language	3	14	2	4	0	28
Nationality	11	8	5	6	7	4
Pregnancy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Race	54	57	71	47	70	107
Religion or belief	4	7	15	6	2	14
Transphobic	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>224</b>

## Action 2

Evolve the regional integrated approach, to improve the health and well-being of individuals and families subjected to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV)

## Progress

Improve health and wellbeing through implementation of integrated Active Travel routes.

The Council is collaborating closely with colleagues across the region through Gwent VAWDASV to develop improved training solutions to upskill the workforce and raise awareness.

Training for Group 1 VAWDASV has been included in the induction process and recruiting managers are requested to ensure all new staff access the eLearning through our Learning@wales pages.

Further work is required to ensure the volume of Group 2/3 training keeps pace with the Group 1 training.

In relation to monitoring community tensions, we work closely with both internal and external partners to ensure awareness is raised of any concerns and we co-ordinate an appropriate response. Internally, Private Sector Housing and Caerphilly Cares are important partners to achieve this objective.

We are also working closely with our colleagues in private sector where we have applicants living in unsuitable accommodation and where they have a physical housing need that cannot be met in the borough are working with our Registered Social Landlords (RSL) partners to ensure that when new developments are coming on line these accommodation needs are being considered.

Supporting People service has been commissioned and is in place and is accessible to anyone who requires support and we have also set up pathways with Caerphilly Cares, our Caerphilly Homes rents teams and our RSL partners for early referral and discussion regarding preventative measures for homelessness.

The migration from a property-based to a person-based IT system continues to be progressed to ensure that in future, all Caerphilly Homes records are held in one place. This will improve accessibility of person-centred information from all Housing service areas, increasing the likelihood of incidents/trends being identified that could indicate the possibility of domestic abuse.

Awareness of incidences of domestic violence affecting our tenants has been reduced since the discontinuation of the Domestic Abuse Conference Call several years ago. Should they be made or become aware of domestic violence involving a tenant officers, in addition to considering their Duty to Report, are expected to attempt to make or request a welfare call or visit to the victim to offer support and assistance, supported by partners where necessary, and give consideration as to whether the offer of target hardening equipment or other assistance would be appropriate. These staff also work with the customer to help them to report to third parties as sometimes victims feel reluctant to report incidents.

All staff have received safeguarding training appropriate to their role and are aware of the Duty to Report. We also offer target hardening if there is no ongoing relationship between the parties, and support transfers. The introduction of the Renting Homes Wales Act will enable us to further assist victims due to the ability to approve the removal of contract holders from a joint tenancy, without bringing the whole contract (tenancy) to an end.

Details of the alleged perpetrator and alleged victim are recorded on data entries involving domestic abuse by the relevant case worker to avoid assumptions being made.

Further discussions are being held with Llamau to recruit a Domestic Abuse support worker to be based within the Housing Solution team to support and provide advice to those who present as a part of a holistic assessment and to prevent homelessness where possible.

The use of local lettings policies is relevant both for new developments within existing communities, and those existing communities where we are aware of concerns as to community cohesion. The Operation Bang for bonfire night and our work within the community following the murders at Long Row would be examples of partnership working, together with the use of management discretion to facilitate emergency moves for tenants.

### **Action 3**

Advocate community diversity work with services and partners to celebrate equality of difference by championing commemorative and celebratory dates (i.e. Refugee Awareness Week, Holocaust Memorial Day, and Hate Crime Awareness Week)

## Progress

Cohesion Team update;

- The Cohesion Team has mapped local Ukraine and European communities to support leadership teams in preparation for arrivals regarding the Family Visa Scheme for Ukraine.
- We have also worked with communications teams across the region in respect to the Home for Ukraine Scheme and the publishing of accurate information on council websites and via Social media.

Aside to supporting refugee resettlement, the Cohesion team have recorded further episodes of the regional podcasts which provides a platform for lesser heard voices, sharing local stories from minority community members from a variety of background focusing on Trans issues, Black and Asian minority communities and refugees. One of which includes a local resident who arrived into the UK as an Asylum Seeker, his story helped in promoting key messages of community spirit and belonging. This podcast depicts 'his' story and how he has made South Wales his home. The podcast has been published on Spotify (and was promoted during refugee awareness week).

Other campaigns also feature in the work of the Cohesion Team throughout this period;

- Ramadan campaign – 'Did you know' social media campaign alongside school-based activities were also conducted.

Learning about other religions broadens perspectives and helps build a culture that reduces intolerance, hate speech and bullying. Last year we put together a Ramadan live event for schools, this was a collaborative project with colleagues from Newport and a local imam (Islamic leader). Even though this was a live event last year, it has still been used this year as a great resource to explore Ramadan and Eid - [\(47\) Ramadan 1st Session - YouTube](#)

We have also provided useful resources to all schools which look at:

- The origins of Ramadan
- Provide an understanding on why Muslims fast for a month
- Discuss the importance of observing Ramadan in the UK
- LGBT plus history month – during this month we developed an awareness campaign, the 'did you know' campaign was developed to increase the knowledge of readers ranging from the origins of the rainbow flag to a breakdown of terms such as bi, non-binary, pansexual etc. and what these mean alongside key messages of acceptance.

We have hosted further training with the hate crime for schools project. We have also been in discussion with local education authorities, in particular with regard to a select number of schools that have reported an increase in hate related bullying within the region to conduct a series of classroom workshops and assemblies to support the wider themes of acceptance.

During this period, the Cohesion Team also hosted 3 regional Homes for Ukraine open evenings with hosts and their guests – these sessions have supporting authorities conduct the appropriate checks required as part of hosting families. The third session was co-delivered by a clinical psychologist and centred on well-being, promoting good wellbeing amongst host and guests and reflected the emotional challenges (and

techniques to overcome these challenges) that may be experiences in hosting families who have experienced trauma

Throughout this period the Regional (West Gwent) Cohesion Team also ran the annual Community Cohesion Small grants scheme and approved community projects that support themes of togetherness and inclusion;

### **Project #1 - TLC Café (run by year six students)**

Funding was made available for this Caerphilly based project to support the café being set-up during the mornings over the course of a week in March 2022 (10:00 – 11:30 each day). The project's success has now led this to become a permanent arrangement in the community.

During the week of activities, as well as providing refreshments the Café also hosted activities organised for each of the mornings:

- Monday refreshment, chat and bingo
- Tuesday refreshments, light exercise, puzzles, arts and crafts
- Wednesday refreshments, chat, board games and baking
- Thursday refreshments, chat, quiz and entertainment by pupils (linked to winners of Saint David's day competitions)

The success of the week has now meant the Cafe will be used on a regular basis with a main aim to forge relationships in the community to benefit peoples through intergenerational activities that include sharing experiences, knowledge and skills

Social Media continued to be instrumental in the sharing of information and the championing of commemorative dates, none more so in the marking of Black History Month and Hate Crime Awareness Week during the second quarter. Where we developed campaigns, projects and engaged with the whole school estate in the planning and delivery of school activities and have supported local authorities and community groups in the coordination of events (i.e. the unveiling of the Roy Francis Status, Brynmawr).

### **Black History Month included;**

#### **Schools/community:**

Poetry competition and resources were distributed to Schools in the lead up to BHM. Resources included lesson plans, posters and assembly presentation were also circulated, including:

- List of TV and book resources linked to Black history
- Information about the Windrush exhibition and how Schools can attend

#### **Corporate:**

- Staff Bulletin which included 'did you know campaign' (including information on the key days. Social achievement of Black communities members, historical milestones etc.)
- The link to the pre-recorded Cohesion Team's 'Valley Voices' podcast of Sean Wharton, a prominent campaigner for Black Minority Ethnic Communities was also included.

- Further links to events taking place across South Wales with Black History Wales such as their launch and premier at the Senedd.
- Online quiz for staff – celebrating the achievements of the Black communities (internationally/national).
- Social Media content saluting our sisters. A post circulated across all social media platforms (one on each day).
- Support provided to the coordination of the unveiling of Roy Francis statue. Regional ITV news coverage were in attendance, the Cohesion Team supported the press release.
- Sharing of the Windrush video that Torfaen Comms have created to showcase Gwent exhibition.

### **Hate Crime Awareness Week;**

- The Community Cohesion Team developed a series of activities for local schools which mark the importance of inclusivity. Canvas were distributed across a series of schools, each school had the opportunity to decorate the canvas with a theme of cohesion/inclusivity and submit into a regional competition – with a winner awarded to Primary School and Secondary schools.
- Social media pack circulated throughout the week – working with Victims Support to provide consistency in the messaging.
- Hate Crime Road shows have been held in Cwmbran, Ebbw Vale and Caerphilly (Town) throughout the week (Cohesion Teams held a presence at each)
- The Cohesion Team have also conducted a series of Anti-discrimination sessions for Comprehensive Schools throughout the week.

### **Action 4**

Engagement – develop a minority communities citizens panel as a means to improving the engagement with lesser-heard voices.

### **Progress**

We have continued to engage with seldom-heard groups through existing networks where good relationships have already been established. We have established good relationships with several groups e.g. Caerphilly People First, Caerphilly Parent Network, Menter Iaith Caerffili etc. and will continue to expand these network contacts across a wider range of groups to ensure all those protected characteristics groups are engaged more effectively.

### **Action 5**

Community cohesion team will work with LEA (Local Education Authority) and partners to develop improved equities practices and anti-discrimination work in schools. (This will include training to staff, raising the profile of discriminatory incident recording, support for schools to develop the inclusion of equalities work in the curriculum through schools workshops and a schools swap project linking a local school to one in a different and contrasting area)

## Progress

Further to discussions held with regional Channel Chairs – who have noted a marked increase in the number of referrals from local schools to ‘Channel’ (which include cases of learners expressing racism and misogyny), the Cohesion Team have developed an Anti-Discrimination programme which will be delivered to schools across the region. To combat the raise in these behaviours and attitudes this programme (which consists of a 2-hour workshop provided to classrooms in secondary Schools) explores how we are influenced, how this influence can impact our behaviours towards others and the impact this can have.

This approach further extends our existing programme of anti-discrimination sessions which are delivered in a primary setting. We continue to work in collaboration with Healthy Schools Officers and Channel Chairs on the role out, ensuring this opportunity is directed towards appropriate and ‘at risk’ audiences.

During Quarter four – 9 sessions have been facilitated by the Cohesion Team received by over 70 pupils in schools that include;

- Lewis School Pengam, year 9s (Caerphilly)
- Abersychan Comprehensive year 8-9 (Torfaen)
- Cwmffrwdor year 6 (Torfaen)
- Our Lady’s of the Angel year 6 (Torfaen)

80% of pupils expressed a marked improvement of awareness of the topic (including what is racism, how our attitudes of others have the potential in influence our behaviours, how we recognise this, what to do if you experience or witness discrimination within the community and/or school).

We are continuing to work with Healthy Schools Officer and Channel/Prevent leads on the future delivery of the programme – with the Cohesion Team securing places on Head Teacher’s forums across the region to promote this opportunity.

8 schools participated in the Anti-hate Crime Project.

Education Psychologists (EPS) commissioned 6 workshops from No Boundaries which is being offered to up to 180 members of staff (30 in each session). Workshops running in November 2023. So far, 50 members of staff have signed up to attend.

The Regional Cohesion Team continues to liaise with Victim Support on the roll out of Victim support training – we are now in discussion to hold a session for Youth Offending teams across the region.

We continue to deliver our in-house anti-discrimination workshop to a number of primary schools across the region.



Further Emphasis has been placed on promoting inclusion online – the below video generated over 30,000 clicks on Facebook alone.

[Instagram Inclusion togetherness video](#)



**Action 6**

Engage with EU nationals with regards to the EU Settlement Scheme

**Progress**

The EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) is now closed.

Private sector housing have been involved in sourcing and assessing suitability of accommodation for the Afghan and Syrian resettlement schemes and for Ukraine.

The Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator (RCCC) has provided briefings for key officers in the lead up to the launch of the Settled Status scheme. Migration mapping, reflecting inward migration into each authority, has also supported local authorities (LAs) in their Brexit resilience building.

We continued to prioritise awareness raising of the EUSS and worked collaboratively with partners such as Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), Ethnic Youth Support Team (EYST) and Local Education Authorities (LEAs), alongside Police and Registered Social Landlords. Utilising local networks, resident newsletters and social media to increase awareness. Supported via the Cohesion budget, we also printed EUSS literature available in multiple EU languages which have been distributed across the region to all departments, schools and community buildings.

During this reporting period, we worked with libraries and partners to host drop in sessions to promote the scheme, and utilised the EUSS funding made available by Welsh Government to purchase additional hard copy resources. Additionally the Regional Cohesion Team commissioned a EUSS Radio Advert on Capital Radio, which was broadcast for 6 months in the lead up to the EUSS deadline. We also established the 'We are digital' services in all boroughs of West Gwent, meaning local libraries were able to assist those making an application.

Overview of progress:

- Facebook campaign via Facebook Marketing
- Regional radio campaign (i.e. Capital radio)
- South Wales Argus (advert Paper and Website)
- Resident newsletter
- Regional drop in sessions

Whilst large-scale migration is not experienced in the West Gwent Region the possible impact of EU nationals leaving the area had been explored within local resilience forums. As part of this discussion the RCCC mapped all economic migration across West Gwent LAs – highlighting the communities where EU migrants have settled. This has supported readying the local economy to promote the settled status scheme in areas which have experienced higher levels of inward migration.

The RCCC has held discussions with the Inclusion and Equality organisation (Victim Support) on the collation of data, crime trends and stats have been shared with lead officers at the community tension monitoring group.

## **Action 7**

Monitor community tensions – link with Partners and take proactive steps to mitigate tensions from escalating in the community

## **Progress**

Throughout this period the Regional Cohesion Team focused efforts on improving awareness of hate crime and the available reporting channels, this has included;

The coordination of Hate Crime Training for elected members and youth services across the region

In collaboration with Victim Support, we have adapted training to different audiences and delivered sessions to Blaenau Gwent's Youth Service, Torfaen Youth Service, and Caerphilly elected members.

Hate incidents are discussed as cases at Partnership Tasking meetings. Any cases that come to the attention of the partnership are monitored and dealt with. The majority of these are reported to police and are dealt with accordingly by police action. The Regional Cohesion Team monitors these incidents to look at emerging trends, hotspots etc. and put plans in place when trends are identified.



Housing have taken the lead with the Homes for Ukraine scheme and provided additional accommodation via the Transitional Accommodation Capital Programme Project Board (TACP).

### **Action 8**

To continue support for the LA's engagement with the UK Resettlement Scheme

### **Progress**

Significant focus throughout Quarter 1 centred on the local authorities and partners developing the local response to the Homes of the Ukraine scheme.

Each local authority area stood up a multiagency Ukraine response group. The cohesion team were present at each group offering practical support, sharing experience of previous resettlement programmes. This also includes sharing any community tensions that we have been made aware of either via social media or through other tension monitoring groups.

## **Equality Objective 4 - Inclusive Engagement and Participation - Engage with citizens to encourage participation, to have their voices heard when planning service delivery**

The availability of information in various formats is essential to ensure that all citizens are able to participate in any engagement exercise. Whilst advances in technology enable us to provide information in digital formats, there continue to be barriers to engagement. Transport, mental health, socio-economic status, low literacy and numeracy skills and particular difficulties experienced by seldom heard groups, are amongst the barriers that continue to prevent citizens from engaging with the council and wider support services.

This Objective reflects one of the council's Corporate Objectives to 'Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being'. It includes supporting people to help themselves by providing comprehensive advice and guidance including signposting to other services. It is about having meaningful conversations with people to help them identify what matters to them, which will inform services to suit their needs.

### **Action 1**

Support citizens to 'help themselves' by providing comprehensive advice and information, including signposting to other services

### **Progress**

Library Services are redeveloping and refurbishing Rhymney Library to a Community Hub model setting. The library will offer an extended support face-to-face network including Council officers, community partners and a Caerphilly Cares Duty Officer.

Working with Regener8 Cymru, the Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Team supported and provided 80% project funding to the Managing Anxiety and Supporting Resilience Project. Regener8 Cymru worked with a range of schools, including Heolddu Comprehensive and Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni to deliver class scale plus bespoke and tailored project support to young people. The project helped reduce truancy, increased pupil engagement, and provided skills to support young people become more resilient in and out of school life.

Employability projects have continued to sign post service users to many other services including internal partners e.g. Supporting People, Caerphilly Cares, Community Education as well as external partners Job Centre Plus, Careers Wales, MIND, and many more.

Within Social Services, the Information, Advice & Assistance Team provide comprehensive guidance and signpost to alternative and more appropriate services and the Dewis Cymru website aims to help people with their well-being and provides information and advice for adults and their carers.

The Early Years Integration Transformation Programme has been moving forward to implement a borough wide early years model for antenatal to 7 years. The Early Years Hub now incorporates the Family Information Service team and wider professionals to support families have the right support at the right time to meet their needs. Frontline staff have trained and are implementing What Matters conversations with families to

support a strength-based approach with interventions to meet the family's needs and not just give a menu of services to meet wishes. The What Matters approach aims to build a relationship with the family to understand root causes and not just superficial symptoms to support the building of family resilience and move away from reliance on services.

The Early Years website has been developed from the family perspective to ensure information is easy to find and linked to wider partner sites to ensure families have the most relevant updated information. Dewis is now being used for Family Information Service Childcare and family activity searches to ensure a comprehensive national database for searching beyond the Caerphilly borough boundaries. Both the website and Dewis database will continue to evolve to ensure families have comprehensive information available. In addition, we are working with midwifery to implement Badgernet Midwifery notes in 2023 which will push information directly to families antenatally across Gwent and ensure families have the information direct to their phone.

The Early Years model is now borough wide to ensure families who need support living outside of Flying Start areas are able to access the support for their child's development and family circumstances. While there is not yet funded childcare placements for all families, there is access to antenatal programme, family support, early language development, child development and early support for developmental delays. This has removed barriers for many vulnerable families who lived outside of Flying Start areas.

The development of the Early Years model has been part of a system thinking approach in the last two years. Families and stakeholders have helped us to design the values and principles of the early years system, through sharing their own lived experiences, explaining what they valued from the support they had accessed, and highlighting the aspects which showed less value, duplication, or bureaucracy. The family and stakeholder involvement were critical in developing a system based on values and principles and avoiding assumptions which caused unnecessary bureaucracy / paperwork. Families continue to inform the system change as it is implemented.

Advice provided on website and CHR. In addition Estate Management Officers, Rent Officers and Tenancy Enforcement Officers make appropriate referrals and signpost customers.

Through the Caerphilly Veterans Support Hub we have arranged for many of the Caerphilly staff to attend and give advice. Cornerstone homeless charity is employed under CCBC Supporting people programme attend each Saturday to help with housing and benefits. In one year she has clawed back over £67,000 worth of benefits for the veterans. Caerphilly Cares and Citizens advice also have attended the hub.

## **Action 2**

Have 'meaningful conversations' to help citizens identify what matters to them to inform outcome focussed planning.

## **Progress**

We have continued to engage with residents in our communities and stakeholders and consulted with them on key issues that will affect them.

The development of a new digital engagement platform called “The Caerphilly Conversation” to be launched in April 2023. This will act as a central repository for all consultation and engagement activities across the Council and provide a number of online interactive engagement tools including mapping, quick polls and online discussion boards. To find out more please visit:

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

<https://trafodaeth.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Following the establishment of our internal Consultation and Engagement Working Group, the group has continued to meet quarterly to coordinate and share engagement plans and good practice. An action plan has been developed for the group and a database of planned activity is updated on a quarterly basis. The group has been particularly useful in bringing together officers, including the Caerphilly Cares team and the Youth Service, who work with all sectors of our communities to support engagement with underrepresented groups.

Rent consultation on Affordability, Value for money and cost of living crisis. Had responses from over 300 people via completed surveys, online and face to face sessions with tenants.

With the new WHQS 2023 requirements, include tenant engagement on the programme. Tenant Information Exchange held every 6 to 8 weeks (online/face to face) opportunity to find out what is happening in Housing and share their views. Guest speakers have covered topics such as tenancy enforcement, new build programme, tenant participation strategy.

Regular email to involved members providing details of opportunities for them to participate both with Caerphilly Homes and TPAS Cymru.

Regular updates and good news stories posted on social media and using Egov. E.g. you said, we did in relation to Rent consultation.

Change to Caerphilly Homes is currently undertaking a comprehensive tenant satisfaction survey with results due in January 2024, for discussion with Members and subsequent submission to WG in February 2024.

Consultation undertaken with all contract holders (tenants) on proposals to modernise the provision of the Landlord Service to improve customer access to officers within the community.

Early Years – See response against Equality Objective 4 Action 1

The Cwm a Mynydd Rural Development Programme team continue to engage in dialogue with a broad section of Caerphilly residents and organisations through the Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent Local Action Group, a partnership of third sector, private sector and public sector members. The group has an eligible voting membership of 23 and is comprised 52%Male 48%Female 0%other. The group is an active forum for the development and funding of projects and interventions targeted at rural communities that are often experience greater isolation, poverty and greater access to service provision than more urban populations.

The Rural Development Team held a series of engagement days to enable stakeholders and project partners to actively contribute to the development of the rural development grant funds and targeted support. These were facilitated by Cwmpas who delivered two sessions and Welsh ICE who delivered one. Participants helped frame issues affecting rural areas, the opportunities for meaningful project development and a suite of project ideas to develop. From the sessions, support for food start-ups and Welsh language business start-up clubs has been commissioned and developed.

We held a public consultation on the Covid Memorial Woodland in March last year, one in person at the community hall in Cwmfelinfach and online.

Additionally, the Green Space Strategy section and Rights of Way team support the Local Access Forum where members from organisations and the wider community engage around access to the wider rights of way network.

### **Action 3**

Identify and support carers

### **Progress**

To support individual carer's well-being, we have:

- 17 leisure memberships provided for adult carers
- 67 leisure memberships provided for young carers
- Organised over 87 activities for all carers, with 1335 carers attending organised and individual activities (some may have attended more than one)
- Provided 55 YC ID card scheme
- Facilitated 61 support groups/drop in sessions
- Increased number of carers on mailing list from 1727 to 2019
- Increased number of carers accessing Facebook groups from 860 to 1172
- Carried out 181 carers' assessments
- Supported carers to successfully apply for approximately £44k in direct grants via the Small Grants Scheme, administered by The Care Collective
- Organised an in person Carers Rights Day, attended by 56 adult carers and 15 organisations

### **Action 4**

Embed the *Consultation and Engagement Framework* into all consultation exercises undertaken by council services to ensure key stakeholders are consulted with and given time to respond

### **Progress**

Endorsed by the Council's Cabinet in February 2020 our 'Consultation and Engagement Framework' outlines the following principles:

- We will empower our residents to have greater influence over the issues that affect them.
- We will increase and strengthen the role of communities in how we live, work and visit Caerphilly county borough.

- This will help us to understand the needs of our communities, which in turn, will help to ensure the services we deliver meet those needs, and that available resources are used effectively and in line with agreed priorities
- We will support communities to take action, by helping them identify needs and support them in developing community led solutions.

Our internal consultation and engagement working group has become a key mechanism to disseminate information, share good practice and embed these principles with staff across the organisation and in turn, further improves engagement practices.

Typically, Housing and other teams across the Council engage with the central team for advice and guidance regarding best practice in consultation and engagement.

**See previous responses for Equality Objective 4 - Action 1, 2 and 3.**

### **Action 5**

Identify service needs of specific user groups; what barriers prevent access, and what actions are required to remove those barriers

### **Progress**

Design standards are implemented to make schemes inclusive and DDA compliant. Also review consultation data to identify needs of specific groups.

During the past year, the Rural Development Programme (RDP) Team have worked with Menter Iaith Caerffili to engage with members of the Welsh language community to identify opportunities for greater provision of services in rural areas through the medium of Welsh. The project engaged with after school clubs, schools, parents and Welsh language clubs to explore how rural support can be tailored to meet their needs. The RDP team are now working to support the delivery of some of the identified projects.

The Covid Memorial Woodland masterplan and frequently asked questions were translated in Welsh for the online consultation.

Early Years – See response against Equality Objective 4 Action 1

The service needs and barriers of the participants form part of the initial assessment process in the employability projects and subsequent action plans are put in place to remove barriers through 1-2-1 support. Communications will continue to support work driven by service areas.

It is recognised that veterans are particularly susceptible to loneliness and social isolation. To combat this many trips have been organised to afford the opportunity that veterans can attend such outings free.

We have managed to organise an excursion once a month. These have included:

- The National Arboretum,
- Imperial War Museum
- London
- Fleet Air Arm Museum
- Cosford Air Museum
- Tenby



### **Female Veterans in Wales**

There are over 15,000 female veterans in Wales. Many have been systematically disadvantaged through their Armed Forces Service. In June 2022 CCBC hosted the first ever Female Veterans Workshop to hear first-hand their experiences in order to advocate for support and change.



A research paper was commissioned titled 'Female Veterans: the forgotten and invisible servicewomen of our Armed Forces.

The paper has been well received and has gone on to inform the UK's first Women's Veterans' Strategy.

We continue to advocate as per the recommendations on the next page.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Peer to peer support	Transition/ Resettlement	Medical Services	Financial & Employment	'Life Skills' Workshop
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buddy scheme</li> <li>• Increasing support for female veteran run services</li> <li>• Female only therapy groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of transition officer to ensure quality of support</li> <li>• MOD allow briefs from outside organisations</li> <li>• Female specific toolkit/directory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to a trained Female Mental Health practitioner</li> <li>• Increased research/training into PTSD in female veterans</li> <li>• GP awareness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial credit advice</li> <li>• Support fund for those in need of financial aid</li> <li>• Female specific CTW</li> <li>• Information on benefits &amp; childcare support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Childcare &amp; time management</li> <li>• Transferability of skills and confidence building</li> <li>• Financial advice on tax, pensions etc.</li> <li>• Career options</li> </ul>

Caerphilly Council are Gold on the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and offers a Guaranteed Interview Scheme for members of the Armed Forces Community if they pass the essential criteria. Members of the Armed Forces Community are encouraged to work with the local authority's employment team to support into employment. Support is offered via the Council's employment team.

This year CCBC hosted the first ever civil service employability workshop for the Armed Forces Community. The workshop provided advice and guidance on vital skills needed to apply for a role within the civil service.



Barriers to participating online - Tablet loan scheme developed working with Digital Wales and have provided support to assist tenants to join us at online sessions using their own equipment. Also set up dial out so could telephone those who were unable to join us online

A lack of transport and other issues (such as caring responsibilities) may prevent people from taking part in any housing related activities. When we organise activities we make sure that our venues are suitable and accessible.

Ensuring our activities and services are accessible from a language perspective - we have used various translation services, such as BSL, Punjabi, live captioner at our events

Time is also a factor – we are now able to offer online activities for those who prefer to engage this way and offer sessions at different times for those tenants who are working or need to meet during school time.

We have spoken to tenants about how they like to be involved so that we can identify their needs and remove any barriers that are in place where possible.



Currently working on the Customer portal which will provide tenants the opportunity to for example log a repair online etc. This would remove the barrier for tenants with hearing loss as an example to access services in a way that is suitable for them.

The service needs and barriers of the participants form part of the initial assessment process in the employability projects and subsequent action plans are put in place to remove barriers through 1-2-1 support. Communications will continue to support work driven by service areas.

## **Action 6**

Review and update our key stakeholder groups within the county borough that represent protected characteristic groups

## **Progress**

We have undertaken a thorough stakeholder analysis and maintain a stakeholder database that represent protected characteristic groups. This is regularly reviewed and updated. This database is shared with officers undertaking consultation exercises across the service areas.

Contact made using social media and Tenant & Resident Association groups to try to recruit more volunteers from the protected characteristic groups. However, we do not currently monitor these characteristics within our engaged tenant list.

We are aware of some characteristics e.g. age and disability but do not monitor as part of our day-to-day activity or store data. We ensure that where we are aware we offer opportunities to participate e.g. attend specific networks e.g. Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru Disability network. Caerphilly Homes is a member of Tai Pawb, an organisation which promotes equality and social justice in housing.

## **Action 7**

Review and strengthen internal processes for undertaking Integrated Impact Assessments and related consultation

## **Progress**

The Council developed an Integrated Impact Assessment during 2020 to include Socio-economic Duty. See above. We also updated the questions asked around impact on Welsh Language in line with guidance published by the Welsh Language Commission relating to the Policy Making Standards.

The Armed Forces Covenant was passed as law in December 2021 for Housing, Education and Health. Staff will have to apply 'due regard' in respect of the Armed Forces Community. Caerphilly was the first local authority in England and Wales to include consideration for Armed Forces Community as a category under the Socio-economic Duty section.

Presentations have been delivered and the section shared with a number of local authorities as an example of good practice. Due regard must be considered in the following circumstances:

- How obligations and sacrifices affect access to requirements of my public service?
- Are the Armed Forces Community disadvantaged compared to the end user experience of local civilians?
- If so, should I mitigate/resolve this disadvantage?
- Can disadvantage only be resolved through Special Consideration?
- Guidance will be provided but has to go through parliament for approval
- Due Regard must be in place by the end of 2022

## **Action 8**

Ensure that activities related to service change and transformation embed the principles of good consultation with communities as part of 'The Caerphilly Conversation'

## **Progress**

As part of the ongoing Caerphilly Conversation, residents were engaged in a "What Matters" engagement during November/December 2022.

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/council-budget-setting-2023-2024>

The development of a new digital engagement platform called "The Caerphilly Conversation" to be launched in April 2023 will act as a central repository for all consultation and engagement activities across the Council and offer an additional tool for engagement. To find out more please visit:

<https://conversation.caerphilly.gov.uk/>

Housing will follow all corporate guidance and where necessary consult with our Consultation and Public Engagement Officer.

## **Equality Objective 5 - Welsh Language - To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements**

The Equality Act 2010 does not cover Welsh language issues but we have a set of standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011. These are detailed in the regulations approved by Welsh Government as the Welsh Language Standards (No. 1) Regulations 2015.

Internal working practices continue to evolve to ensure that the principle of language equality is respected in every aspect of service provision. To assist the council in meeting the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards and to meet the needs of the Welsh speaking population of the county borough, we work in partnership with organisations such as; Menter Iaith Caerffili, Fforwm Iaith, Welsh medium schools etc. This work is detailed in the county borough's Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027.

Cabinet approved the new Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 for the county borough on 9 March 2022.

We must comply with all agreed Welsh Language Standards as detailed in the Council's Compliance Notice to ensure that the Welsh-speaking population, whether they be staff, citizens, students or visitors can access the council's services in Welsh.

Our progress is recorded each year in the Welsh Language Standards Annual Report, which is published below for 2022-2023. The council's Cabinet approved publication of the report on 14 June 2023. To view the 2022-2023 report click [here](#).

### **Action 1**

Raise awareness amongst staff that come into contact with children and young people of the need to foster positive attitudes towards the Welsh language

### **Progress**

Libraries hold an extensive number of Welsh language stock available as book, eBook or eAudiobook format.

Youth Support Grant funding is enabling Cluster based provision in the North and South of the borough to develop Welsh Language youth work delivery, supporting staff in their work with young people and in developing provision for young people, this includes recent provision of youth work through the medium of Welsh, and conversational Welsh sessions for young people with staff who are Welsh learners.

Welsh Language Partnership work between the Youth Service, Urdd, Menter Iaith and SYDIC is continuing throughout 23/24 to ensure the Service is developing its accessibility for young people to access youth work in Welsh and engage in Welsh culture and heritage learning through an enhanced and bilingual curriculum.

A new Welsh Language Youth Club has opened in the Service's new centre at Virginia Park. Initial engagement levels are very good, as the club develops, the service will support the provision with enhanced curriculum delivery and opportunities for accredited learning through the medium of Welsh, and youth voice and participative processes, linked to the Youth Forum.

In March 2022, the Council's 5-year Welsh Language Strategy was approved following consultation with key stakeholders. Internal stakeholders included the Youth Service, Early Years and Library Service.

The Welsh Language Standards require the council to develop a 5-year Welsh Language Strategy that sets out how it intends to promote the use of the Welsh language, and facilitate the use of the Welsh language more widely in the county borough.

The strategy must include a target (in percentage terms) for increasing or maintaining the number of Welsh speakers in the area by the end of the 5-year period. In addition, the strategy must include a statement setting out how the target will be met. The strategy must be reviewed and renewed at the end of each 5-year period (Standard 145).

In developing the new strategy the Council undertook a range of evidence gathering and pre-consultation engagement activities to develop a revised set of actions of the draft 5-year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027. These actions will enable us to plan how we will promote the Welsh language and facilitate the use of the language locally to increase the Welsh speaking population over the next five years.

The objectives in the Strategy include:

- The Family – More Welsh spoken at home
- Children and Young People – Children and young people use Welsh outside of education settings and understand its value as a skill in future life. Children and young people have better access to social events and services in Welsh.
- Communities – Community groups and businesses increase and support the use of Welsh within their localities.
- Welsh Language Services – Promote and improve availability of Welsh medium services in Caerphilly county borough
- The Workplace – Increase opportunities for people to use the Welsh language in the workplace
- Infrastructure (Policies and Practices) – Organisations and services integrate the Welsh language into all policies and activities.

To view the Strategy please click on the following link: [5-Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027](#).

For Children's Services, all children that we work with are encouraged to engage in education and training and in relation to Children Looked After; their carers are clear about the need to promote Welsh language skills in line with the National Curriculum in Wales.

## Action 2

Develop bilingual leadership skills amongst young people to help them become community champions of the language within their communities

### Progress

A project involving books for schools have been created bilingually and workshops conducted through the Welsh language were delivered in the development process. The book - Ein Llyfr – Ein Hanes: Llewellyn Bren was co-produced with local historian Dr. Elin Jones and school children to showcase and chart the life of Llewellyn Bren and engage school children across the county with local history. The book has been distributed to every primary school in the county borough.

## Action 3

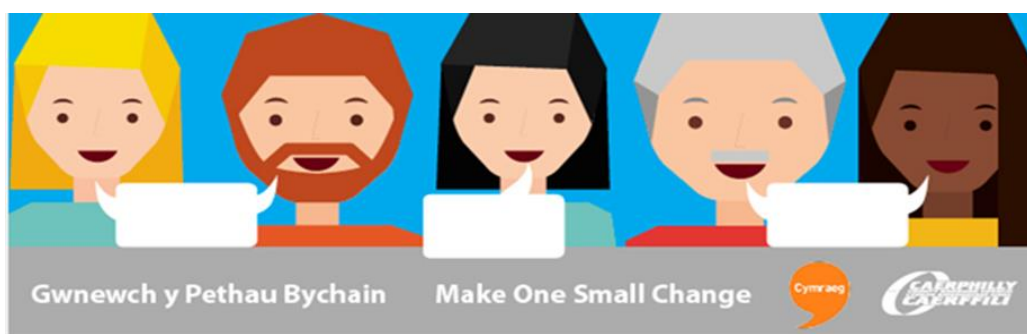
Promote the availability of bilingual services by ensuring Welsh speakers and learners within service areas wear an appropriate lanyards /badges

### Progress

We keep a stock of 'laith Gwaith' lanyards and badges for staff to request. They are requested on a regular basis and officers are aware of whom to contact to receive them. All our frontline service officers have been given these resources to use.

## Make One Small Change Campaign

On St David's Day 2022, we launched a campaign where colleagues, through a year-long engagement campaign, were encouraged to 'make one small change' to further their use and understanding of the Welsh language, particularly within the context of the workplace. Our '[Make One Small Change](#)' campaign shared ideas, tips and encouraged colleagues to make a pledge about small changes we can all make.



The key message throughout was that there are many small changes that all of us can make in our daily lives which, collectively, can make a big difference. Among these pledges were to use the cashpoint in Welsh, read a Welsh book, and sign up to learn Welsh.

We also launched for staff and internal 'Clwb Clebran' (chat club) to encourage Welsh speakers and Welsh learners to come together and speak Welsh in a social context at work.

We celebrated Diwrnod Shwmae on 15 October 2022 with an online campaign to raise awareness of the significance of the event. Service areas with social media accounts were encouraged to use #shwmaesumae and #shwmaecaerffili.

On 7 December we celebrated Mae Gen i Hawl (Welsh Language Rights Day). We used social media again to ensure residents are aware of their rights as Welsh speakers when accessing services.

Internally we made reminded staff about the Welsh Language Standards and what is expected when communicating with members of the public. This included information on answering phones bilingually, ensuring automated bilingual out of office messages are correct, making sure general correspondence is bilingual, and ensuring that Welsh speakers wear lanyards with the Work Welsh logo on them.

**See Page 17 - Equalities Promotion Work and News Stories**

#### **Action 4**

Support the development and promotion of a directory of Welsh medium services available locally

#### **Progress**

The Early Years Hub offers a bilingual service to families and has all available registered childcare including Welsh medium available to the public on the Dewis database search engine. Early Years commissions Menter Iaith to support our English medium settings to improve the Welsh offered in the setting as well as support Welsh learners to improve language in Welsh medium settings. Early Years provision has been mapped and actions to improve Welsh language provision are given priority.

#### **Action 5**

Ensure that Welsh medium events and activities are a part of the Council's community events programme

#### **Progress**

Caerphilly Library Service regularly create, re-tweet and re-post information from Welsh language organisations on our social media platforms.

This year the Countryside Service has undertaken the following:

- Provided 2 guided walks through the medium of Welsh to local walkers in the country park as part of Menter Iaith Caerffili's Clwb Ceredded
- Attended 2 Welsh medium Christmas fairs at Ysgol Penalltau and Llancaiach Fawr

In addition, we advertised for a Welsh speaking Education Officer which enables Welsh language schools to access educational visits to the park including pond dipping, forest school activities and woodland discovery sessions through the medium of Welsh. The officer will start in the role in May 2023.

Since the summer we have held 3 Welsh language/bilingual school visits for nearly 110 pupils with schools based within Caerphilly county borough. This work forms part of the Stronger Roots Program, delivered in collaboration with the NHS, and which have also been delivered in Welsh.

In addition one of our Rangers at Parc Penallta is currently undertaking Welsh lessons and another Ranger was recently supported by the Council and attended a week residential Welsh course at Nant Gwrtheyrn, Llŷn Peninsula.

The Summer of Fun grant actively supported Urdd and Menter Iaith to offer summer activities through the medium of Welsh for children and young people.

The Strategy and Planning Officer in Early Years is actively engaging with members in the Early Years team to support their access to Welsh language courses and support Welsh learners to increase their confidence to use Welsh in the workplace. In addition, the workforce audit across Early Years has identified Welsh speakers who are happy to support Welsh learners to use their Welsh in settings and the workplaces increasing confidence.

We are also working with Mudiad Meithrin to develop Ti a Fi around the borough to improve access to provision for families.

A number of events provided by Menter Iaith Caerffili are run in partnership with council services, for example the Welsh medium Walking Group is supported by a Ranger from Countryside Services, and the Summer of Fun grant actively supported Urdd and Menter Iaith to offer summer activities through the medium of Welsh for children and young people.

## **Action 6**

Promote Welsh language as a recognised objective for managers, to enable them to map Welsh language provision across their service area and increase capacity where necessary

## **Progress**

Library Service staff continue to wear the Iaith Gwaith and Dysgu Cymraeg lanyards at our service points.

Library staff are actively encouraged and supported to enrol on Welsh language courses supported by the authority.

Early Years – See response against Equality Objective 5 Action 6

During 2022-2023, the RDP team undertook its appraisal of Welsh language skills for the current year. Two confident Welsh language staff members and two learners are employed within the team of 4.

The Green Space Strategy Team recruited a Welsh Language Education Officer to increase our service areas offer to the Welsh Language community. The current audit identified two fluent Welsh Language officers, one confident learner and one additional learner within the Countryside section.

All of our printed material is bilingual, and the Welsh text precedes the English text. In 2022, the Council held a highly successful corporately funded recruitment campaign for Apprentices, appointing 30 across a range of services. 5 of the Apprentices have since secured permanent posts within the Council.

Additionally, in the same year, Housing Services independently ran their own recruitment campaign for Apprentices, appointing 13 across a range of trades, 1 of which has already secured a permanent role within the service.

Funding has been committed to support Apprenticeship recruitment every 2 years, with the next scheduled to be held in 2024. Again, the focus will very much be on inclusivity and creating opportunities for all.

The Council launched a new Recruitment Team in the summer of 2023. Based within Human Resources, the team is working collaboratively with managers across the organisation to address their varying and complex recruitment needs. Supporting the organisation to embed workforce planning, the team will help managers to shape their workforce, exploring different pathways to employment including the possibility of creating Apprenticeship opportunities funded by services.

### **Action 7**

Consider the impact on the Welsh language when planning housing developments, in particular Welsh medium school places, street names etc.

### **Progress**

Welsh Language is a material planning consideration which is embedded within current Local and National Planning Policy. Street names are encouraged to reflect the history of an area and bilingual policy in place.

The majority of historical street names are monolingual. New street names are allocated on a 50/50 basis, however at present the bias is to Welsh street names to rectify the historic imbalance. The gazetteer can hold both English and Welsh addresses and where a street name is bilingual, i.e. it has a bilingual street plate, and it is held in both languages.

A report to standardise Welsh place names will be prepared following work undertaken in partnership with the Welsh Language Commissioner, to ensure a standard list of place name spellings for the county borough.

### **Action 8**

Ensure the council's website is bilingual and pages are monitored and updated in both languages on a rolling programme basis

### **Progress**

Measures are in place to ensure that any content for the website is bilingual and no information is published without translation. It should be noted that there are very rare occasions where, due to the urgent nature of a communication, the English will be published first whilst awaiting translation, but these situations are infrequent. Consultations and newsletters are produced bilingually and published on the Council's website.



## **Action 9**

Ensure the council's Intranet has a Welsh interface and menus in line with Standard 126

### **Progress**

The new Digital Workspace (new intranet) will be fully bilingual – specification has been signed off and about to go to tender. Ongoing conversations with Communications Unit. Expected to be launch in October 2023.

Welsh speaking members of Housing staff are nominated when a customer asks to converse in Welsh.

## **Action 10**

Create a campaign to attract young Welsh speaking citizens into youth work, sport and art activities as leaders

### **Progress**

This is an action in the five Year Welsh Language Strategy. It requires partnership working.

## **Action 11**

Work with young people to raise awareness of the Welsh language as a valuable skill for training and employment

### **Progress**

Over the past 2 years we have been working closely with Careers Wales to build links with our secondary schools, raising awareness of careers with the council but in particular how important having Welsh language skills is in the workplace.

Presentations were made to Year 10 and 11 across both sites of Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni regarding the importance of Welsh language skills in the workplace, and explain how the language is used as a part of daily work. All these sessions consisted of delivering a number of presentations to pupils promoting career and apprenticeship opportunities within the Council, with the students using their chrome books to search the Council's website for current job opportunities.

The presentation focussed in particular on how important and valuable having and using Welsh language skills are in the workplace. Students were encouraged to wear the 'iaith gwaith' orange speech bubble badges and lanyards to show employers and members of the public that they can speak Welsh.

In February, a presentation was delivered to key stage 4 students at Lewis Girls' School on the use of the Welsh language in everyday life, with a focus on the language as a skill in the workplace. A focus was also put on how the language belongs to everyone, no matter what their ability is in the language and the importance of taking pride in the language and making an effort to learn and use it where possible.

## **Action 12**

Hold an annual Welsh language jobs fair to raise awareness of the value of the language to employment in the Welsh public sector and the ability to contact the council in Welsh by telephone, face to face and by written communication

## **Progress**

See response to Action 11. We are slowly moving towards forming a Welsh language jobs fair, but that requires collaboration to materialise and building stronger links with schools and young people.

## **Equality Objective 6 - Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce - Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough**

Creating a workplace, which is safe and inclusive, promotes a positive working environment where staff feel valued and empowered, enabling them to provide high quality services to our citizens.

We need a greater understanding of the diversity of our workforce. To achieve this, collection of equalities monitoring data is crucial. Data must be captured at the beginning of the employment process, cleansed, and updated on a regular basis.

Fairness at work and good job performance go hand in hand. Tackling discrimination helps to attract, motivate and retain staff and enhances an organisation's reputation as an inclusive employer.

Equalities and Welsh language training equips staff with the skills and understanding required to engage with citizens sensitively. Upskilling staff to have an awareness of protected characteristics ensures that citizens with specific needs, receive services that are accessible and compliant.

The Council's HR system has been upgraded so that it can record language skills of staff and be able to pull reports should they be required.

### **Action 1**

Develop online equalities training which will be mandatory for all staff and elected members

### **Progress**

The enhanced provision of equalities training courses for staff and managers is one of the actions identified within the Workforce Development Strategy 2021–2024, with a timescale of Q3 2021-2022. Work is ongoing to achieve this target. The Workforce Development Team will be coordinating this work.

The Council actively promotes training to all staff to complete, including online training opportunities.

### **Action 2**

Implement the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV).

- % of workforce who have completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1) / No of staff completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1)
- % of identified staff who have completed Ask and Act training (Group 2)
- % of identified staff who have completed Enhanced Training (Group 3)
- Implement Refresher training when available and appropriate

## **Progress**

4846 staff members have completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1) (62.46%).

76 staff completed this training in 2022/2023.

2 staff members were trained on the Train the Trainers WWA course for group 2 "Ask and Act" and have completed and passed the accreditation work.

156 professionals have been reached through group 2 "Ask and Act" awareness training.

2 staff members were trained on the Train the Trainers WWA course for group 3 "Ask and Act" Champions Training and have completed and passed the accreditation work.

9 professionals have been reached through group 3 "Ask and Act" Champions training?

41 elected members have completed Enhanced Training (Group 3). The TSG decided in June 2022 that they would run Elected Member awareness sessions aligned to the 2022 elections. They ran these sessions between January-April 2023.

All delivery of this training across this last year has been via the NHS E-Learning website for Group 1 and online and regionally delivered for Groups 2 and 3. For Groups 2 and 3, this approach has worked well for us and monitoring of attendance at these sessions has been clear. Group 1 training which is accessible via the NHS E Learning website has not worked so well for us this year but we are investigating why this is and how we can monitor and maximise attendance through our internal processes. Maximising attendance for Group 1 training is a priority for us over the next 12 months.

## **Action 3**

Disability Confident – improve on our current standard

## **Progress**

This year, we have received confirmation of our position Level 2 Registration as a Disability Confident employer for another three years and we will work collaboratively with our Trade Union partners to improve on our current standard.

Working collaboratively with our Trade Union colleagues, we continue to raise awareness of all forms of discrimination and the requirement to effectively challenge prejudice at source.

## **Action 4**

Ensure compliance with the *Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011* and encourage disclosure:

- the publishing of pay differences by protected characteristic groups,
- the annual publication of our employment data, and
- work linked to improve staff disclosure rates of employment data, either through recruitment or via iTrent Self-Service

## Progress

We are currently working with our Digital Services Team to redesign and enhance our equalities reporting now that we have purchased enhanced modules in the HR / Payroll system.

The modules will not only provide us with the opportunity to improve our equalities reporting on a real time basis, but aligned to our revised recruitment processes will provide us with more opportunities to encourage and improve staff and applicant disclosure rates.

## Action 5

Re-establish our membership to support Stonewall's Workplace Diversity Champions Index

## Progress

Re-establishing our membership of Stonewall Cymru is one of the actions within the Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021–2024. No progress has been made.

## Action 6

Work collaboratively to build the brand 'Proud Councils' to support Pride events

## Progress

Caerphilly Council is an active member of the Proud Councils partnership, which brings together several councils in South Wales in a visible and unified way, to support and promote equality for LGBTQ+ communities.

The purpose of Proud Councils is to improve support offered to LGBTQ+ staff within local authorities in Wales and ensure that local government across Wales is a visible leader in the field of LGBTQ+ rights and actively championing LGBTQ+ inclusion in our communities.

In 2022, 'Proud Councils' reached the finalists shortlist in the PinkNews Awards 2022, for the Public Sector Equality Award.

*"Representation in the public sector is paramount to creating a better future for minorities. That's why the Public Sector Equality Award celebrates those exceptional parts of our country's governmental or other public bodies that are making a change for the better."* - [PinkNews Awards nominees 2022: Full list \(thepinknews.com\)](https://www.thepinknews.com/pinknews-awards-nominees-2022/)

Although Proud Councils did not win the award, it was a proud moment to have been nominated and to reach the finalists shortlist.

Proud Councils worked on a number of promotional campaigns during 2022-2023 such as LGBT History Month and Pride Month. They also supported local community run Pride events namely Swansea, Abergavenny and Pride in the Port.

Caerphilly Council members also supported local LGBTQ+ activities through leading school assemblies at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni and Lewis School Pengam. They also supported the Pride of Pengam pride event.

See Section Equalities Promotion Work and News stories from page 17



### Action 7

Ensure appropriate Welsh language training is available to staff, from basic to advanced levels

### Progress

The Engineering service area have recently developed and implemented a new frontline staff newsletter so can use this to promote training opportunities including Welsh Language etc.

Caerphilly CBC has provided conversational Welsh courses for staff and elected members since 2001. Courses are also accessible to members of the public and staff members from partner organisations to attend. The courses range from basic taster courses for beginners to courses, which cater for those who are now fluent Welsh speakers. During the initial lockdown, all courses moved to being held online; this in turn has led to the majority of lessons continuing to be held online, with a small number of staff attending lessons in person.

The data for the Welsh courses offered and attended by Caerphilly CBC staff for the academic year 2022-2023 is as follows:

COURSE OFFERED	NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING
Taster Courses	6
Entry Level Year Courses	31
Foundation Level Year Courses	8
Intermediate Level Year Courses	7
Advanced Level Year Courses	2
Proficiency Courses	7
Withdrawn	5

Caerphilly Council is proud to support staff in a wide range of Welsh language courses via the Learn Welsh website. Courses include year-long courses, lasting between 30 and 32 weeks; online courses, 10 hour self-study modules; summer and residential schools; and taster and supplementary courses, each ranging from Entry Level to Proficiency level.

### Caerphilly Staff Figures – 2018-2023

Academic Year	Year courses	Taster and Supplementary Courses	Total Number of Learners	(Numbers withdrawn)
2018 – 2019	53	91	144	(6)
2019 – 2020	62	185	223	(0)
2020 – 2021	27	219	246	(2)
2021 – 2022	35	-	35	(1)
2022 – 2023	50	11	61*	(5)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>879</b>	<b>(21)</b>

\*Some members of staff completed more than one course.

The number of staff learning Welsh increased during this financial year to 61. This coincides with us changing the way staff are offered courses and the process for registering on a course. It is now a much more streamlined process which has helped reduce our administration time.

Working closely with the National Learn Welsh centre, staff can start a Welsh course at any point during the academic year, and as noted above courses vary in delivery style and location. Some staff have even followed intensive week long courses at Nant Gwrtheyrn on the Llŷn Peninsula.

To further encourage staff to attend courses, we set-up a 'Clwb Clebran' (chat club) for Welsh learners and speakers, to come together and to create a welcoming environment for staff to use their Welsh language skills. The network of people will support each other in the workplace, and help develop Welsh language skills for the workplace.

During 2022-2023, staff were given 2 opportunities to attend a Welsh Language Awareness course, which attracted 19 attendees across the two sessions, up from 10 attendees from the previous year's two sessions. This course must be provided for staff in line with Standard 132;

*You must provide training courses so that your employees can develop –*

*(a) awareness of the Welsh language (including awareness of its history and its role in Welsh culture);*

*(b) an understanding of the duty to operate in accordance with the Welsh language standards;*

*(c) an understanding of how the Welsh language can be used in the workplace.*

The Welsh Language Awareness courses can be very effective in changing attitudes and explore the following points:

1. Why do we need to give attention to the Welsh language?
2. What do we need to know about the language and its speakers?
3. How can we act in a way that facilitates the use of the Welsh language?

Staff who attended the sessions gave very positive feedback, a comment from which is below:

“The session was very informative with great interaction. I didn't attend the course looking to learn Welsh but came away inspired and motivated to start learning again. I was expecting some information about meeting the Welsh Language Standards but know where to find this now. Thank you and great trainer.”

In accordance with Standard 128, the council must provide training to staff through the medium of Welsh in the following areas:

You must provide training in Welsh in the following areas, if you provide such training in English –

- (a) recruitment and interviewing;
- (b) performance management;
- (c) complaints and disciplinary procedures;
- (ch) induction;
- (d) dealing with the public; and
- (dd) health and safety.

No requests from staff were received for any of the above listed courses to be delivered through the medium of Welsh, therefore there are no staff training figures recorded. The above information is published here to provide continuity with previous reports.

Staff who attended the sessions gave very positive feedback and a selection of the feedback is below:

- The session was very information with great interaction.
- I didn't attend the course looking to learn Welsh but come away inspired and motivated *to start learning again*.
- I was expecting some information about meeting the Welsh Language Standards but know where to find this now. Thank you and great trainer.

## **Action 8**

Provide opportunities for staff to improve their existing Welsh language skills for business use

## **Progress**

There are a number of courses available for staff to improve their Welsh language skills along with the promotion of activities run by Menter Iaith Caerffili and Welsh Language Forum partners of events and activities Welsh speakers and learners of all levels can attend and put their skills to use, regardless of level of standard.

Here is feedback from one member of staff who was progressing from Entry Level 1 to Entry Level 2:

I have really enjoyed the Mynediad 1 Welsh language course that I have been taking this year. I have found the course to be an excellent refresher from my school days, and it has been instrumental in continuing my interest in learning Welsh.



I have been impressed with the structure of the course, the units are well-organised and easy to follow, and the activities and exercises have been helpful in reinforcing my learning. I am keen to continue learning Welsh, and I am confident that I will be able to build on the foundation that I have laid in this course. I am grateful for the opportunity to have learned from such an excellent resource, and I look forward to continuing my studies in the future.

All staff in Early Years are encouraged to take up conversational Welsh courses as well as the opportunity to do Mynediad or Sylfaen. Staff are encouraged to use their Welsh in the workplace especially in childcare and in Canolfan Blant Integredig Parc y Felin. With the increasing availability and diversity of courses, staff are more encouraged to access the courses and are being supported by various Welsh speaking members of the team.

Opportunities given to staff to improve Welsh language skills.

### **Action 9**

Provide opportunities for Welsh speaking staff and learners to use their language skills in the workplace

### **Progress**

In line with the Welsh Language Standards, staff are given opportunities to use their Welsh Language skills in the workplace. This includes answering the telephone, producing bilingual social media posts, or drafting bilingual correspondence. Staff are aware that all services the Council provides must be provided bilingually, and are supported by the Equalities and Welsh Language Team who provide advice, support and resources.

Table showing the number of Welsh speakers working for the Council in 2022-2023:

<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>Welsh Speakers</b>	<b>%</b>
8,535	2,100	24.60

Welsh speaking members of staff are nominated when a customer asks to converse in Welsh.

## **Equality Objective 7 - Reducing the Gender Pay Gap**

We are required to look at gender pay differences within the council and identify an objective that will address any identified difference.

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties Wales) Regulations 2011, the Council is required to collect and publish annual employment data across a number of protected characteristics. Information regarding the number of people employed by the council, arranged by, job, pay, contract type and working pattern, should only be broken down in relation to women and men. In addition, the Council must publish data on pay differences and their causes, between employees with and without protected characteristics.

As a Council, we are confident that our gender pay gap does not stem from paying male and female employees differently for the same or equivalent work. The gender pay gap is the result of roles in which male and females currently work and the salaries that these roles attract.

Our gender pay gap is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. For example, research has identified that, although parents are increasingly flexible, the responsibility of childcare still falls disproportionately upon women. It is a fact within this data that females hold the vast majority of part time posts and that these are the posts that attract salaries in the lower quartiles. To view the Council's Gender Pay Gap Statement 2021 click [here](#).

### **Action 1**

Review the data relating to the workforce and determine actions required to meet the general duty as laid down in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011

### **Progress**

Gender pay gap reporting will continue with 2023 data due to be published in March 2024.

Encouraging disclosure and increasing disclosure of staff with protected characteristics (Objective 6, Point 4) will enable us to provide more meaningful data aligned to meeting the general duty as laid down in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties (Wales) Regulations 2011.

### **Action 2**

Publish employment information as required by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011

### **Progress**

We continue to publish information as required by the Equality Act 2010. We are committed to refining and increasing our reporting aligned to the investment in the upgraded HR / Payroll system.

### **Action 3**

Use the *My Time* appraisal process to develop female staff

#### **Progress**

My Time/My Time Extra is embedded across the organisation and is being used by Services across the Council to develop female staff.

Female staff are developed internally to progress to principal and senior engineer levels.

### **Action 4**

Raise awareness of job and business opportunities to non-traditional groups (i.e. not stereotyping jobs to gender)

#### **Progress**

Supported by additional funding agreed Cabinet, we have recently recruited officers to a dedicated Recruitment Team in People Services.

Underpinned by service planning, online recruitment, targeted recruitment, social media sourcing, tailored recruitment solutions, hybrid recruitment and effective networking continue to be used to recruit the right individuals with the right skills and capabilities to deliver the Council's goals.

Apprenticeship programmes, Career pathways, working with Kickstart Wales and with Schools, Colleges and Universities enable the Council to raise awareness of job opportunities and encourage applicants from non-traditional groups.

Encouragingly Engineering job adverts regularly attract female applicants.

### **Action 5**

Review and update HR policies regularly to include matters such as flexible working, part-time or job-share options, shared parental leave etc.

#### **Progress**

Our Agile Working Policy, Annual Leave Policy, Flexi Scheme and Mileage Scheme were all reviewed and supported by Council to become effective in January 2023. These support equity and encourage flexibility. A review of the Council's Leave of Absence Procedure and underpinning family friendly policies is currently in progress.