



# CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN 2024-2028

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.

This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

## **Foreword**

Caerphilly County Borough Council believes that nobody should be discriminated against or placed at a disadvantage because of their identity or background. We want a county borough where everyone is treated equally and fairly in all aspects of everyday life.

Whilst we strive for all residents and visitors to the county borough to be treated equally, we also recognise that people have different needs. This plan takes these differing needs into account and aims to ensure that there are no barriers which prevent anyone accessing council services.

As our communities change, diversity is a key issue for us. We believe that it is our duty to tackle discrimination and encourage greater cohesion; creating communities where everyone feels respected and safe from harassment.

We also remain committed to achieving equality within all aspects of our service delivery and in our employment practices, which is even more important during these challenging times and in such a difficult financial climate.

The plan will be monitored each year in order to review the impact of the progress we make and the annual reports will continue to be published. It will also be publicised and promoted widely both internally and externally in order to raise awareness of the work being done.

We hope that you agree that this plan continues to develop the equality and diversity work we have undertaken to date and shows our ongoing commitment to ensuring respect and fairness for everyone in the county borough.

**Christina Harrhy**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Caerphilly County Borough Council**

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

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## Section 1

### 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.

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 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

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.

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 our Integrated Impact Assessments, which carry the full authority of this plan.

The Council is committed to ensuring it achieves value for money from its third party procurement recognising the value of using procurement to support its wider Cultural, Social, Economic and Environmental objectives, in ways that offer real long-term benefits to the community it serves and the people of Wales, whilst balancing the issues of value for money.

Our Programme for Procurement is a living strategy, flexible, adaptable and alive to the changing environment; modular in nature so that it is easy to review and update annually in line with developments in the procurement landscape. Our approach will be continuous improvement to bring about real change and to improve the lives of those who live and work within our borough.

The Council will use its procurement processes to foster positive social change where appropriate. The Council has adopted the Ethical Supply Chain Code of Practice and we will apply this to foster fair working conditions for all.

This plan will be monitored each year in order to review the impact of the progress we make and our statutory Equality Report will continue to be published. It will also be publicised and promoted widely both internally and externally in order to raise awareness of the work being done.

## Context

This Strategic Equality Plan 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 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.

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

To assist us in writing this 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 equality objectives.

### **Is Wales Fairer? 2018 – Equality and Human Rights Commission**

The format of the 2018 report from the EHRC; *Is Wales Fairer? 2018*, outlined the following themes. The objectives within the plan were developed to align with these themes:

- Education
- Work
- Living Standards
- Health
- Justice and Personal Security
- Participation

The report identified that some progress had been made in making Wales fairer, but suggested that there was much more work that needed to be done. The Equality and Human Rights Commission's key focus was socio-economic disadvantage, disability, gender and race and these were reflected in the Council's Strategic Equality Objectives 2020-2024.

The Action Plan in Section 2 identifies how the equality objectives and actions link to the themes identified in the *Is Wales Fairer? 2023* report.

### [Is Wales Fairer? 2023 – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

The 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report, the Equality and Human Rights Monitor, is the latest review and the first since Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and the start of the cost-of-living crisis.

The report provides an evidence-based overview of progress on equality and human rights in Wales. It is arranged by the nine protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 and each one looks at the following themes in more detail:

- Education
- Work
- Living Standards
- Health
- Justice and Personal Security
- Participation

The report also contains a chapter focused on key priority areas including human rights, socio-economic status and the Welsh language.

To help to improve the annual actions, we also welcome any ongoing, general comments on the content, quality and accessibility of this document and on the impact of those actions on the people we serve and the people we employ.

If you have any comments or would like to know more about the work the Council is doing please contact:

Equality and Welsh Language Team  
Penallta House  
Tredomen Park  
Ystrad Mynach  
CF82 7PG

Email: [equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01443 864404 / 01443 864353

## Legislation

### Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 brings together and replaces previous anti-discrimination laws in a single Act. The Act includes a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which has replaced all the individual duties previously in place, namely race, disability and gender equality. Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the Public Sector Equality Duty, which places a duty on the Council, and other public organisations, to have due regard when making decisions and delivering services to ensure that we meet the requirement to:

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

In advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't we must also ensure that we;

- Remove and minimise disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics.
- Take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups whether these are different to the needs of other people.
- Encourage people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The third aim refers to fostering good relations and this means tackling prejudices and promoting understanding between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. This might mean in some circumstances that some people are treated more favourably than others as long as it's within the provisions of the Act.

There are 9 protected characteristics listed under the Equality Act 2010:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender Reassignment
- Pregnancy and Maternity
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and Civil Partnership

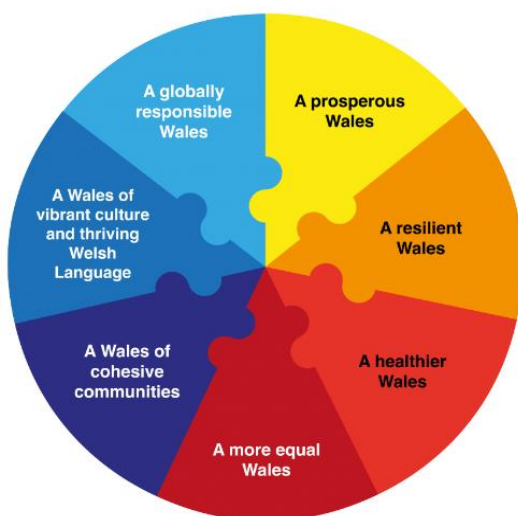


In Wales there are specific statutory duties, which are regulations that set out the actions the Council must take to comply. The ***Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011*** were published by Welsh Government in April 2011 and include the following areas:

- **Equality Objectives** – prepare and publish a set of equality objectives which meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Engagement** – involve people who represent one or more protected characteristics and who have an interest in how the Council undertakes its functions.
- **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)** – undertaking EIAs and publishing them alongside reports which require decisions.
- **Equality Information** – collect and publish equality information which ensures compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Employment Information** – collect and publish workforce monitoring data annually.
- **Pay Difference** – ensure the Council has an equality objective which specifically relates to gender pay differences.
- **Staff Training** – promote knowledge and understanding of the Equality Act 2010, the Public Sector Equality Duty and the specific duties in Wales. Use performance assessment procedures to identify and address the training needs of staff.
- **Strategic Equality Plan** – publish a strategic equality plan which sets out the Council's Equality Objectives to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- **Procurement** – when procuring works, goods and services from other organisations, include conditions relevant to the Public Sector Equality Duty within procurement processes.

## Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Council is committed to ensuring that the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) is embedded within its service delivery and activities. The Act puts in place a sustainable development principle with a view to improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. This will help us to create a Wales that we want to live, in now and in the future.



To make sure that we are all working towards the same vision, the Act puts in place 7 well-being goals, and whilst the Council's Strategic Equality Plan will cut across all of the well-being goals, the plan specifically supports progress against the following 3 goals:

- A Wales of Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A more equal Wales

The Sustainable Development Principle of the Act tells the council what to consider in meeting its duties under the Act. The Council, when making decisions has to consider the impact the decision could have on future generations. To do so there are 5 ways of working set out that must be considered and applied when making decisions. They are:

- **Long Term** - The importance of balancing short-term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs.
- **Prevention** - How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.
- **Integration** - Considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies.
- **Collaboration** - Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.
- **Involvement** - The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves.

The 5 ways of working have been used to shape the Council's equality objectives.



## Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 replaced the Welsh Language Act 1993 and as part of the legislation, in Wales the Welsh language has equal legal status with English and must not be treated less favourably.

Public bodies must comply with a set of national Welsh Language Standards which the Welsh Language Commissioner issued via a [Compliance Notice](#) to the Council. The Compliance Notice sets out which of the 176 standards in the legislation apply to the Council, along with any exemptions and their implementation dates.

Welsh language issues are not covered by the Equality Act but rather have a set of Standards under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, it has long been recognised that the equality and Welsh language policy agendas complement and inform each other. This is further

reinforced by the goal within the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 – A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

Welsh Language developments will be made corporately in line with the aims of the Measure, which:

- confirmed the official status of the Welsh language;
- created a new system of placing duties on bodies to provide services through the medium of Welsh;
- created a Welsh Language Commissioner with strong enforcement powers to protect the rights of Welsh speakers to access services through the medium of Welsh;
- established a Welsh Language Tribunal;
- gives individuals and bodies the right to appeal decisions made in relation to the provision of services through the medium of Welsh;
- created a Welsh Language Partnership Council to advise Government on its strategy in relation to the Welsh language;
- allowed for an official investigation by the Welsh Language Commissioner of instances where there is an attempt to interfere with the freedom of Welsh speakers to use the language with one another.

Each of the seven well-being goals forms a key part of how Wales should look, and although the seven goals are important in their own right, they should not be looked at individually because they are all interlinked with each other. If we look at the seven goals from a Welsh language perspective we can see how the Welsh language forms a part of, and plays a part in all aspects of education, health and social care, community cohesion, the economy and more.

Guidance issued by the Welsh Language Commissioner in 2018 called **Standards relating to promoting the Welsh Language**, included an illustration showing how the seven well-being goals relates to the Welsh language. It is for these reasons that Welsh Language has been integrated into the Equality and Welsh Language Objectives and Action Plan, and has been given a corporate equality objective of its own.

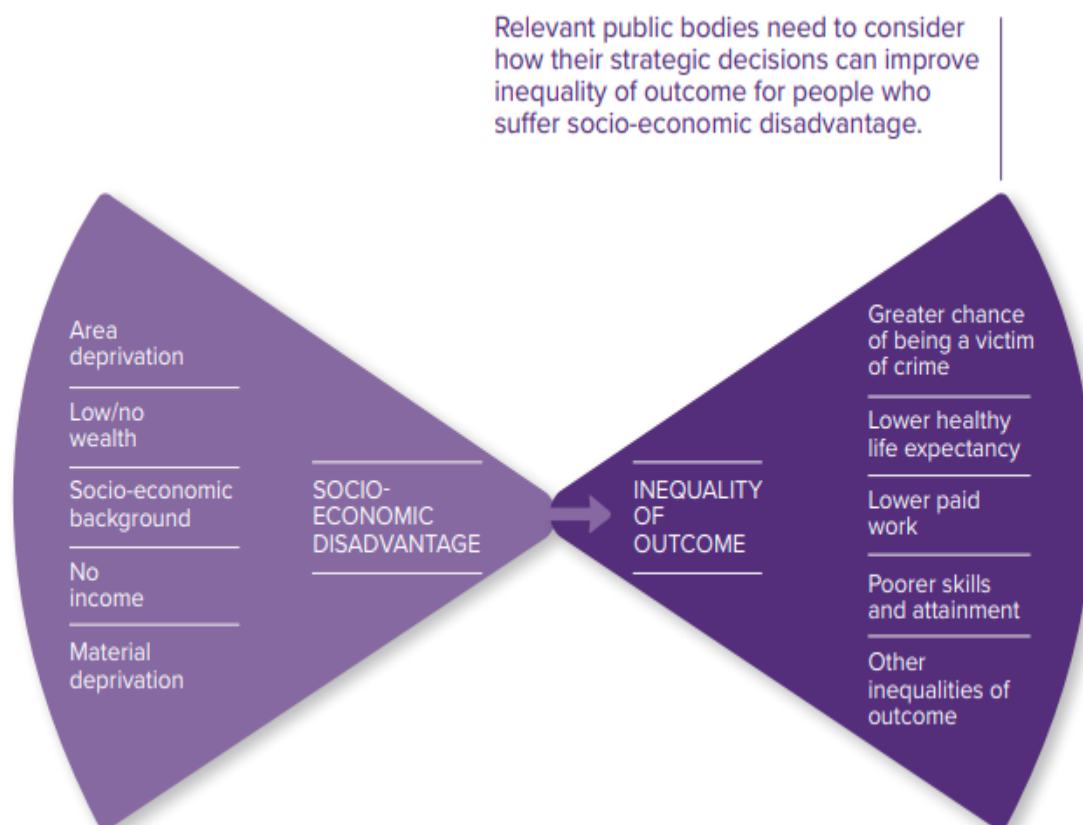


## Socio-economic Duty

On 31 March 2021 the Socio-Economic Duty came into effect in Wales. The Socio-economic Duty requires that we, as an organisation, when making strategic decisions such as deciding priorities and setting objectives, consider how our decisions might help reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

The overall aim of the duty is to deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. The Socio-economic Duty will support this through ensuring that those taking strategic decisions:

- take account of evidence and potential impact
- through consultation and engagement
- understand the views and needs of those impacted by the decision, particularly those who suffer socio-economic disadvantage
- welcome challenge and scrutiny
- drive a change in the way that decisions are made and the way that decision makers operate.



## **Anti-racist Wales Action Plan**

In the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, Welsh Government states:

In early 2020, the Welsh Government started work on an action plan for race equality, following calls by the Wales Race Forum, and other grassroots organisations. Almost immediately however, the work was halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Then, in May 2020, the killing of George Floyd sent shock waves throughout the world. Both events shone a light on the systemic racism faced by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people, both in Wales and elsewhere. Both events reinforced the urgent need for action.

Through the development of the Plan we heard a clear message about the lack of trust felt by many people from ethnic minority backgrounds, over whether public bodies will enforce their rights – rights enshrined in law – but which often have little real impact on their lives. In this new Plan we outline how we have developed more focused actions, to help us make the necessary changes, and to fix broken systems.

Caerphilly Council fully support the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and its purpose, and have embedded the relevant actions within our equality objectives.

## **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales**

In the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, Welsh Government states:

The Welsh Government wants to make Wales the most LGBTQ+ friendly nation in Europe. It is an ambitious goal, but we believe we can support all LGBTQ+ people in Wales to live their fullest life: to be healthy, to be happy, and to feel safe.

As a government, we stand with our LGBTQ+ communities. That is why LGBTQ+ rights are embedded in our Programme for Government commitments (Welsh Government 2021a), are a key component of the Co-operation Agreement (Welsh Government 2021b) with Plaid Cymru, and why we have developed this ambitious Action Plan. Our aim, through this plan, is to show our clear commitment to respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the human rights of all LGBTQ+ people in Wales (OHCHR 2022a).

This plan will act as the framework for LGBTQ+ policy development across government and with our partners. It sets out the concrete steps we will take to strengthen equality for LGBTQ+ people, to challenge discrimination, and to create a society where LGBTQ+ people are safe to live and love authentically, openly and freely as themselves.

The Council fully supports the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales and its purpose, and have embedded the relevant actions within our equality objectives.

## Section 2

### Strategic Equality Objectives and Action Plan

#### Strategic Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information

Understand and remove the barriers people face when accessing services

##### Context

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. Some of what we have planned include creating community hubs, improving public transport and further developing active travel opportunities, which will enable our communities to live healthier and more active lifestyles.

Barriers experienced by groups and individuals may include, accessing information in appropriate language or 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.

Empowering groups with protected characteristics to be able to access the services they need is a key focus for the Council. This work is supported by the Council's Caerphilly Cares Team. Caerphilly Cares is a different way of working that moves away from transactional to 'what matters to people', changing organisational values and systems. Caerphilly Cares provides a new approach to service provision providing a changing perspective on building bridges with communities, mobilising individual and community assets. The long term vision is for a much larger range of services to work collaboratively 'under the umbrella' of Caerphilly Cares to support early intervention and prevention to meet the needs of all residents in Caerphilly borough with a focus on reducing inequalities and supporting the most vulnerable in our borough.

A particular group that might face challenges adapting to civilian life and accessing services is the Armed Forces and their families, which encompasses both individuals who have served in the Armed Forces and individuals affiliated with the Armed Forces, including military family members and dependants. The vast majority of the 2.8 million ex-Servicemen and women living in Britain today have successfully adapted to civilian life, putting the skills and experience they acquired while serving in the Armed Forces to good use. However, a significant minority can be in need of support either at the point of discharge or many years afterwards.

Caerphilly County Borough Council was one of the first local authorities to have signed the Armed Forces Covenant in Wales and are honoured to have been awarded Gold in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives. The Council also runs an e-learning programme for staff on the Armed Forces Covenant, so that staff equipped with skills to be able to support this community when accessing services.

### **Relevant Data**

In the Caerphilly Conversation (Autumn 2022) 93% felt we should increase opportunities for people to be physically and mentally fit. 93% of respondents thought Green Spaces and Parks were important to be prioritised in the 2023 budget, with 51% of the 93% saying they thought this was more important than last year.

Census 2021 data shows that 20.3% of households in the county borough do not have a car or a van.

Census 2021 data also shows that 0.04% of people aged 3 years and over in Caerphilly County Borough use British Sign Language as their main language.

According to the Census 2021 data there are 6,350 armed forces veterans living in Caerphilly County Borough.

In the 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report it states that people aged between 64-74 years of age and those over 75 were significantly less likely to have internet access at home in 2021-2022 than all younger age groups. However, the proportion of people in post-retirement age groups who have internet access increased between 2018-2019 and 2021-2022.

### **Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

### **Supporting Documents**

[Gwent Public Services Board – Well-being Plan 2023-2028](#)

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Customer and Digital Strategy – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Digital Strategy for Wales – Welsh Government](#)

[Active Travel Plans – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Regeneration Strategy – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Caerphilly Cares Team – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Armed Forces Covenant Duty – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Census 2021 - British Sign Language - Signature](#)

[Accessibility Statement – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

## Actions

### 1-2 Years

- Update and review staff guidance on developing accessible information
- Comply with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1 AA)
- Development of new accessible Council website
- Work with service areas to ensure that equality data collection is meaningful
- Service areas respond to all equality related complaints in a timely manner, and learn from them
- Embed the Armed Forces Covenant Duty in service delivery

### 2-3 Years

- Ongoing work to survey the council's building stock (including schools) for access improvements

### 3-4 Years

- Deliver on the principles of the Customer and Digital Strategy
- Support stakeholders to 'help themselves' by providing comprehensive advice and information, including signposting to other services
- Develop Community Hubs to bring access to council services closer to communities
- Improve access to public transport to keep towns connected and enhanced active travel opportunities between communities, so people can access education, services, information, employment and support

## Why?

**Digital Inclusion** – Upskilling citizens and staff enables them to use and access information digitally, removing a number of barriers and enabling citizens to be more engaged. This includes the use of social media and networking, the news, access to job opportunities, finance (online banking), transport information, housing options or even online purchases. Digital skills will enable citizens and staff to access details regarding council services, and have up to date information relating to developments which may affect them, such as consultations, roadworks, events etc.

**Equalities Monitoring** – Improving how equalities monitoring information is collected will identify what issues exist within services, and if citizens with protected characteristics experience any issues or are accessing services equally. Equalities monitoring data will help us understand who our customers are and assist us in tailoring our services to suit their needs. Collecting this data for compliments and complaints will help identify areas where we are doing well and areas where we need to improve. This information will enable us to provide equality of access to services and the removal of identified barriers.

**Accessibility** – Improving our accessibility for customers and rationalising our access points will support our Customer and Digital Strategy, including the rationalisation of contact points and numbers, and digitisation of customer services. Our steps to improve access to public transport and access between communities can be found in a range of Town Plans, Active Travel and Regeneration Strategy.



## Strategic Equality Objective 2 – Education, Skills and Employment

Improve education, skills and employment opportunities for all

### Context

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 unemployment.

Welsh Government, together with our own self-evaluation processes, suggest that the pandemic has affected some groups of learners more than others. The Council's new education strategy, ['Pursuing Excellence Together' - Education Strategy 2022-2025](#) reflects these concerns by recognising and supporting different groups of learners in an appropriate way. The vision of the strategy is that all children, young people and adults accessing education will be 'Pursuing Excellence Together'.

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 citizens who are not in employment, education and training, eliminating the economic inactivity gap; identifying the skills gaps and shortages in priority sectors; increasing the number and quality of apprenticeships; and improving people's perception of apprenticeships as a route into well-paid employment.

Caerphilly Council has developed a robust, single employment support model through the coordinated delivery of Communities for Work Plus (CfW+) and Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) - People and Skills Pillar funded by the UK Government. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF or the Fund) is a central pillar of the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda.

CfW+ acts as the employability support function within Caerphilly Council'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 (not in Education, Employment or Training), across all postcodes within Caerphilly County Borough.

This objective also has links to the Well-Being Objectives in the Corporate Plan in particular;

- Well-being Objective 1 – Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education
- Well-being Objective 2 – Enabling our Residents to Thrive
- Well-being Objective 4 – Enabling our Economy to Grow

### **Relevant Data**

According to the 2021 Census data, Caerphilly saw Wales' third-largest percentage-point fall in the proportion of people aged 16 years and over (excluding full-time students) who were unemployed (from 4.7% in 2011 to 2.6% in 2021). The data shows that 43% of the population aged 16 and over in the county borough are economically inactive. This data includes students and retired people.

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.

The 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report evidences that Welsh Government data suggests that 13.6% (14,200) of young people aged 16–18 were NEET at the end of 2021 compared with 11.7% (11,900) at the end of 2020. The data also shows that 16.3% (37,800) of young people aged 19–24 were NEET in 2021 compared with 15.8% (37,700) in 2020. A close eye will be kept on the impact of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis, as at the time of reporting these were not yet known.

Between 2010-11 and 2019-20, the 55–64 age group in Wales had a lower employment rate than all younger age groups. In addition to the low employment rates, this age group also had particularly high rates of economic inactivity. In 2019, 40.1% were economically inactive.

One of the priorities in the Welsh Government's 2022 employability and skills plan is to create 125,000 apprenticeships by 2026. Part of the government's national milestones is to have at least 90% of young people aged 16–24 being in education, employment or training by 2050.

### **Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

### **Supporting Documents**

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Prosperity for All: Economic Action Plan – Welsh Government](#)

[Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers](#)

[Education Strategy – 'Pursuing Excellence Together' 2022–2025 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Anti-Poverty Strategy – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Caerphilly Cares Team – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Employment Support Team – Caerphilly Council'](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

## Actions

### 1-2 Years

- Resettlement Scheme to signpost people to courses such as ESOL and other essential skills courses

### 2-3 Years

- Provide advice, support and training to help individuals gain the skills, qualifications and experience necessary to secure employment, in particular vulnerable children and adults
- Mentors to support citizens through Communities for Work Plus to seek training and employment opportunities
- Residents are provided with information, advice and assistance on a range of social welfare issues to enable them to increase household income, manage debt and develop skills to improve their financial capability
- Work closely with schools, in particular those with specialist resource bases and Trinity Fields School, to ensure adequate educational support is available

## Why?

**Skills and Employment Opportunities** – By tackling the causes of poverty and ensuring our anti-poverty grant programmes are working collaboratively, we will maximise our ability to support the most vulnerable in our communities. Increasing the number of citizens accessing education, training and employment will positively contribute to creating cohesive and resilient communities that will thrive, thus improving quality of life and the health of those living within the county borough.

**Education Opportunities** – The Council has listed the following two objectives in its new Corporate Plan 2023-2028 *‘Enabling our Children to Succeed in Education’* and *‘Enabling our Economy to Grow’* which will help us to meet some of the actions in this objective. *The vision of the Council’s new education strategy ‘Pursuing Excellence Together’; is to ensure that all children, young people and adults accessing education are equipped with the necessary skills required to access the work environment.*

As an authority we have committed to an ambitious Sustainable Communities for Learning investment programme. Two of the first projects of the Sustainable Communities for Learning Band B programme will assist the Council in meeting the needs of its most vulnerable learners and the Welsh in Education Strategic Plan.

## Strategic Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities

Promote and facilitate inclusive and cohesive communities

### Context

Community cohesion, as defined in Welsh Government's **Community Cohesion National Delivery Plan**, is the ability of all communities to function and grow in harmony together rather than in conflict. Caerphilly Council has a strong track record of responding to community cohesion challenges, whether it is the arrival of new communities, preventing radicalisation or mitigating tensions linked to crime and anti-social behaviour. Yet the continuation and polarisation of political debate, particularly regarding issues such as Brexit and broader migration patterns – accompanied with the prevalence of social media – continues to influence how communities respond to change.

For communities to flourish, there must be – and be seen to be – shared access to opportunities; a belief that all sections of the community have an equal stake in its success and its future, with no single part of the community perceived as undermining the opportunities of another and a shared belief in a set of common principles whereby:

- 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.

This vision is further strengthened by Welsh Government's **Anti-Racism for Wales Action Plan**, **Community Cohesion Action Plan** and the **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales**, all of which reflect the role local authorities play in nurturing community cohesion and are therefore embedded throughout this Strategic Equality Plan.

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 (e.g. ethnicity or culture, age group, religion or belief, sexual orientation, language, gender) or interests.

### Relevant Data

According to the 2021 Census data 97.7% of Caerphilly County Borough's population was White with 2.3% being from all other ethnic groups combined.

Of residents aged 16 and over, 2.5% of the population described their sexual orientation as not being straight or heterosexual, with a further 6.6% of the population not answering the question. This was the first time that this question has been asked in a census.

As reported in 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023', according to the National Survey for Wales (NSW), in 2021-22 Christians were more likely to report being very satisfied with their local area than those with

No Religion. In the same period, 58% of Christian adults reported being very satisfied with their local area, compared with 51% of those with No Religion.

The NSW analysis also found that heterosexual respondents in 2018/19 were more likely (72.6%) to agree that they belonged to their local community than all other respondents (63.2%). Heterosexual adults were also more likely (72%) to feel safe than all other adults (64%).

Women are significantly less likely to feel safe in their local community than men and felt less safe in 2021/22 than they did in 2016/17. The NSW data for 2021/22 shows 51% of women felt safe at home and walking or travelling in the local area (56% in 2016/17) compared with 81% of men (82% in 2016/17).

Data evidenced in the 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' report shows that from all hate crimes recorded by the police in Wales between 2018-19 and 2021-22 increased from 3,932 to 6,295. In Wales, there were 1,074 racially or religiously aggravated offences recorded by the police in 2017-2018 with this figure increasing to 2,934 in 2021/22.

### **Themes from is Wales Fairer 2023**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

### **Supporting Documents**

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – Welsh Government](#)

[Anti-racist Wales Action Plan \(ArWAP\) – Welsh Government](#)

[LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales – Welsh Government](#)

[Community Cohesion Action Plan – Welsh Government](#)

### **Actions**

#### **1-2 Years**

- The Council to offer anti-racism and zero tolerance training for all staff groups and elected members on understanding and challenging racism on an ongoing basis
- Ensure employability programmes are inclusive and meet the needs of people with protected characteristics
- Continue to support and uphold the rights and best interests of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people
- Ensure homelessness services are inclusive of the specific needs of LGBTQ+ people
- Provide equalities training that includes the needs of LGBTQ+ people
- Continue our support of the LGBTQ+ Community by hosting our own annual Pride Caerffili

- Age Friendly Communities Officer to continue to build relationships with organisations that represent older people and with older residents themselves

### **2-3 Years**

- Encourage and support staff to attend any equalities and Welsh language training

### **3-4 Years**

- Ensure Caerphilly County Borough remains inclusive of LGBTQ+ people

### **Why?**

A Wales of Cohesive Communities is one of the 7 goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, this ensures cohesion remains at the heart of how the council and other public bodies deliver policies and services now and in the future. The Act, Welsh Government's National Delivery Plan, Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales, work hand in hand, following the same principles of integration, collaboration, involvement, and ensuring policies and services remain responsive to local needs. The actions in the Council's Strategic Equality Plan aligns with the actions in these plans, and demonstrate how we will continue to foster good relations and tackle deep-rooted inequality within our communities.

## **Strategic Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and effective engagement**

Effectively engage with our communities, overcome barriers to engagement and support and encourage all residents to have their voices heard.

### **Context**

Our “Consultation and Engagement Framework” sets out our approach for a common understanding to further improve engagement processes across the organisation. It defines engagement as anything that we do that informs citizens about what we do, or involves citizens in the Council’s decision-making process.

This framework is underpinned by the [National Principle for Public Engagement in Wales](#) and the [Law of Consultation](#)

The Wales specific Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 notes that the council must involve people who it considers representative of one or more of the protected groups and who have an interest in how a public body carries out its functions.

To support effective community engagement, strengthen relationships and work together with our communities to design and deliver services that best meet their needs, we need to understand and remove barriers to engagement. Whilst advances in technology enable us to provide information in digital formats, there continue to be barriers that prevent residents from engaging with us, e.g. transport, mental health, socio-economic status, low literacy and numeracy skills etc. We need to ensure that invitations to engage are accessible and targeted to the appropriate people, and that people have easy access to relevant information that is tailored to meet their needs – that the materials provided are relevant, appropriate and understandable and available in different languages and formats.

The capacity and ability of different stakeholders to participate varies. Working with the support of partner organisations who are experienced in supporting specific groups will enhance our engagement.

Inclusive and effective engagement is key in helping us to deliver on each of the well-being objectives within the council's Corporate Plan 2023-2028.

### **Relevant Data**

A full stakeholder analysis is undertaken at the outset of each consultation/engagement exercise to ensure that all those who may be affected or have a particular interest in taking part are encouraged and enabled to do so. The stakeholder analysis will identify different groups and individuals and allow for targeted engagement based on the topic of the consultation (as identified by an Integrated Impact Assessment). During the consultation and engagement period, we are able to monitor participation of different groups, including those with protected characteristics, and where necessary, further target under-represented groups, particularly when they have been identified as key stakeholders.

## Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

## Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

## Supporting Documents

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 – Welsh Government](#)

[Customer and Digital Strategy 2019-2023 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Communications and Engagement Strategy 2019-2022 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Consultation and Engagement Framework 2020-2025 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Children and Young People Participation Standards – Welsh Government](#)

## Actions

- Review and strengthen internal processes for undertaking Integrated Impact Assessments (IIA) and related consultation – ensure that the IIA forms the foundation for identifying the people we need to target (stakeholders) when engaging around specific topics
- Audit skills and develop training to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively engage with communities
- Identify barriers that hinder full and effective engagement with stakeholders; and identify the actions required to remove those barriers
- Review and update our key stakeholder groups across the county borough that represent protected characteristic groups and strengthen our relationships with relevant partner and stakeholder organisations.
- Monitor the accessibility, inclusion, and diversity of our engagement to make sure that we are hearing the voices of people with different protected characteristics and lived experience, including underrepresented people.
- Review and strengthen internal processes to ensure that we design our engagement to make a difference by clearly communicating both the purpose of the engagement (how they and their communities could benefit) and the process. e.g. through the internal consultation and engagement working group, new “Caerphilly Conversation” platform

## Why?

The views of residents and stakeholders are central to informing the Council's decision-making processes and in helping to shape the effective and efficient delivery of services to best meet the needs of our communities. As we face ongoing financial challenges, it is more important than ever that we work with our communities across our county borough to support them to have their voices heard.



## **Strategic Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language**

To ensure the Welsh speaking public can access services that comply with the statutory requirements

### **Context**

Welsh language issues are not covered by the Equality Act 2010 but 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.

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.

### **Relevant Data**

The Council's workforce data, up to and including 31 March 2023, showed that 24.6% of employees (including school-based staff) had Welsh language skills graded 1-5 based on the ALTE Framework (Association of Language Testers in Europe).

According to the Pupil Level Annual School Census 2023, 16.9% of the school population in Caerphilly County Borough is in Welsh medium education.

In 2021, there were around 1,400 fewer Welsh-speaking Caerphilly residents (over the age of three years) compared with 2011. The number of people who did not speak Welsh increased by 150. [How life has changed in Caerphilly: Census 2021 \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/people-in-the-uk/population-and-demography/ethnicity-and-nationality/ethnicity-and-nationality-in-the-uk). According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the percentage of Welsh speakers in Caerphilly remained at 10.5% in 2021.

### **Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

## Supporting Documents

[Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice - Caerphilly Council](#)

[Five Year Welsh Language Strategy 2022-2027 - Caerphilly Council](#)

[Cymraeg 2050: A Million Welsh Speakers](#)

[Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015 - Welsh Government](#)

[Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-23 - Caerphilly Council](#)

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’ – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

## Actions

### 1-2 Years

- Raise awareness regarding the importance and availability of providing Welsh medium activities for families
- Work with young people to raise awareness of Welsh as a valuable skill for training and employment
- Work with partners to hold job fairs and follow up with mock interview sessions and raise awareness of job vacancy websites
- Implement a policy on using the Welsh language internally for staff and elected members

### 2-3 Years

- Regional partnership with councils, Welsh in Education Forum, and Welsh Language Forum working together to plan Welsh medium activities and promote Welsh medium education
- Support community groups to mainstream the use of the Welsh language and provide new speakers with the opportunity to use Welsh every day

### 3-4 Years

- Maintain the Welsh Language Skills data on the internal payroll system
- Develop a new Welsh Language Friendly Businesses Scheme to encourage and support local businesses to use more Welsh when delivering services

## Why?

**Communication and Accessibility** – Information must be available bilingually as required by the Welsh Language Standards. We will consider the needs of Welsh speakers and new speakers in relation to providing all communication. When consulting with citizens and delivering frontline services, staff must be equipped with the required Welsh language skills to deliver services as required by the Welsh Language Standards. By promoting the availability of bilingual council services we will increase the demand for these services and meet our obligations under the county borough’s Five Year Welsh Language Strategy and Welsh Government’s Million Welsh speakers by 2050.

**Voice** – Engage and consult with local Welsh language groups and organisations, such as the Welsh Language Forum, Menter Iaith Caerffili, and the Urdd etc. Encourage Welsh speaking citizens to become members of the council’s Viewpoint Panel to ensure that it is representative. Co-production will help build relationships with Welsh speakers and learners so they feel they can

influence and make decisions around the services they need. They can also support the Council to identify examples of good practice and where improvement is required.

**Remove Barriers** – Working in partnership with Welsh medium groups and organisations will help us communicate with a wider audience. It will help us deliver services to members of our community, who may think that the Council does not deliver services through the medium of Welsh. Service areas should actively promote the availability of bilingual services, making Welsh speakers and learners feel a part of the community they live in and that they can access services using their language preference without having to ask.

## **Strategic Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**

Create a workforce which reflects and respects the diversity of the communities within the county borough

### **Context**

Creating a workplace and promoting a culture which is safe and inclusive and where every individual can feel safe and have a sense of belonging will promote a positive working environment. 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, and at every stage of the employee's lifecycle, to ensure that our recruitment practices and our policy development are fair and inclusive.

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 Welsh Government's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) includes commitments to improve recruitment and conditions for ethnic minority workers across the public sector, including a new workforce race equality standard to address poor experiences of ethnic minority health and social care workers.

### **Relevant Data**

According to the 2021 Census data 97.7% of Caerphilly County Borough's population was White with 2.3% being from all other ethnic groups combined.

The Council's workforce data, up to and including 31 March 2023, showed that 24.6% of employees (including school-based staff) had Welsh language skills graded 1-5 based on the ALTE Framework (Association of Language Testers in Europe). The same data showed that 38 members of staff have British Sign Language Skills.

The National Survey for Wales (NSW) in 2019-20 found that ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities) are most likely to experience discrimination at work (28%), compared with White minority groups (21%) and White British workers (9%).

Consistently disabled people are much less likely to be employed than non-disabled people. Disabled adults are also more likely to be economically inactive than non-disabled adults (in 2019-20), however, this gap in economic inactivity narrowed between 2013/14 and 2019/20. Disabled adults are also more likely to be unemployed, and the size of the gap showed no significant change from 2013-14 to 2019-20.

## Themes from 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Justice and Personal Security, Participation

### Relevant Protected Characteristics

Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex, Sexual Orientation, Welsh Language

### Supporting Documents

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

['Is Wales Fairer? 2023' – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Level 2 Disability Confident Employer](#)

[Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice - Caerphilly Council](#)

[National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence](#)

[The Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#)

[Welsh Language Standards Annual Report 2022-23 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[Armed Forces Covenant Duty – Caerphilly Council](#)

### Actions

#### 1-2 Years

- Ensure appropriate Welsh language and British Sign Language (BSL) training is available to staff, from basic to advanced levels
- Develop a policy on using the Welsh language in the workplace
- Development of new Intranet site for employees to access employment information
- Promote the Armed Forces Covenant Training as part of the Equalities and Welsh Language Training Programme
- Promote and support a menopause at work café for employees

#### 2-3 Years

- Ensure compliance with Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011 and encourage disclosure
- Identify levels of ethnic diversity using HR data and use this as a benchmark to explore any structures and cultural barriers
- Promote and demonstrate commitment to inclusivity in recruitment, ensuring inclusive language in materials and processes
- Clearly communicate a Policy on dignity and respect at work to staff
- Provide opportunities for staff to improve their existing Welsh language skills for business use
- Provide opportunities for Welsh speaking staff and learners to use their language skills in the workplace

#### 3-4 Years

- Develop online equalities training which will be mandatory for all staff
- Develop online Welsh language training which will be mandatory for all staff
- Disability Confident – improve on our current standard

- Work collaboratively and maintain the brand 'Proud Councils' to support Pride events
- Embed the National Training Framework on violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence:
  - % 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

### Why?

**Workforce** – The mantra of *Stonewall Cymru* is that 'people perform better when they can be themselves'. We also believe to get the best out of our employees and ensure they provide the best services to our citizens; we must nurture a workplace culture that is safe and inclusive. Encouraging greater disclosure will support our equalities monitoring process and will provide us with a greater understanding of the diversity of our workforce.

It is also important that staff are culturally aware, in particular frontline staff who work with citizens on a daily basis. Staff will be offered relevant training on different subject matters, relating to Equalities, Welsh Language, British Sign Language and Armed Forces Covenant Training, on an ongoing basis, and while budget allows.

**Disability Confident** – We are currently a Disability Confident employer. Attainment to Level 3 accreditation status in acting as a champion for Disability Confident will help us to transparently express our commitment to support the recruitment, retention and development of disabled people who support our services to achieve and succeed as valued employees. In achieving recognition as a Disability Confident Leader, we can gain recognition from disabled staff in our business, disabled people outside of our business, our customers and the wider community through transparent recording and reporting on disability, mental health and well-being in the Council.

**Identify levels of ethnic diversity using HR data and use this data as a benchmark to explore any structure and cultural barriers** – Our Pay Data, recruitment data and work experience data can give us an evidence-based understanding of our workforce and inform strategy, policy development and recruitment practices. Using what we learn from this data and working with our staff who share protected characteristics and the organisations that support them, we can create more inclusive workplaces which attract diverse talent. Everyone stands to benefit from the diversity of thoughts, ideas and ways of working of people from different backgrounds, experiences and identities and an inclusive culture is essential for this to happen.

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

### **Reducing the Gender Pay Gap**

#### **Context**

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 the vast majority of part time posts are held by females and that these are the posts that attract salaries in the lower quartiles.

#### **Relevant Data**

Looking at the data in our Gender Pay Gap Statement as of 31st March 2022, the total number of employees in the organisation was 6,368. The number of Females was 4,527 (71.1%) and the number of Males was 1,841 (28.9%).

#### **Themes from is Wales Fairer 2023**

Education, Work, Living Standards, Health, Participation

#### **Relevant Protected Characteristics**

Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Sex

#### **Supporting Documents**

[Corporate Plan 2023-2028 – Caerphilly Council](#)

[‘Is Wales Fairer? 2023’ – Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

[Gender Pay Gap Statement – Caerphilly Council](#)

## **Actions**

### **1-2 Years**

- Publish employment information as required by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011
- Regularly review and update HR policies to include matters such as flexible working, part-time or job-share options, shared parental leave etc.
- Wherever possible advertise jobs as flexible

### **2-3 Years**

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

### **3-4 Years**

- 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
- Develop supportive and inclusive strategies, which reach out to female employees across the Council, including flexible working, making career paths transparent, reviewing recruitment and selection processes, and analysing our people data.

## **Why?**

Reporting on gender pay gaps helps us to understand the size and causes of our pay gaps and identify any issues that need to be addressed.

The reasons for the gender pay gap organisationally and across Wales are complex and inter-related to cultural, economic, societal and educational factors. A lack of flexible working opportunities, women predominantly being the main providers of childcare and caring responsibilities and occupational segregation are all factors.

Having a gender pay gap does not necessarily mean that there is gender discrimination or pay discrimination. Publishing and monitoring pay gaps will help us understand the reasons for any pay gap and consider where we can develop strategies which will reach out to the female employees across the workforce and attempt to tackle the causes. For example, if analysis shows unequal distribution of men and women in occupations and the over-representation of women in lower paid positions.



## Section 3

### Development of Equality Objectives and the Engagement Process

#### The Well-being Plan for Gwent 2023-2028 – Gwent Public Services Board

In September 2021 the five Public Services Boards in Gwent, Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Newport, Monmouthshire and Torfaen, came together to form the Gwent Public Services Board.

Since then, the Gwent Public Services Board together with partners, communities and stakeholders have produced the [Gwent Assessment of Well-being](#), identifying the issues that contribute to the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of the region.

Using that information, the Well-being Plan for Gwent was published in August 2023. The Plan sets out what the Public Services Boards wants to deliver, in collaboration with statutory, private and third sectors, with and for our communities over the next five years and beyond.

The Plan has two high level Objectives:

- We want to create a fairer, more equitable and inclusive Gwent for all
- We want a climate-ready Gwent, where our environment is valued and protected, benefitting our well-being now and for future generations

These objectives are supported by five steps and four overarching principles about how the Public Services Board will work together for the benefit of the region.

To make sure that the local aspects of well-being are not overlooked, five Delivery Groups have been established to help deliver the plan at a local level.

Detailed action plans, at both a regional; and local level, are now being developed outlining what needs to be done, making the best use of collaborative resources and maximizing the contribution to the national well-being goals for Wales, as well as sharing best practice, and trying to avoid duplication.

#### Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

The Act came into force in April 2016 and means that councils must provide information, support and services in the way that the Act sets out. The Act gives individuals and their carers more of a say in the care and support they receive. To support people to achieve well-being, they will make decisions about their care and support in equal partnership with professionals. To help them to do so, they will have easy access to information and advice about what is available in their area.

A new assessment process for care and support will be based on what matters to them as an individual. It will consider their personal strengths and the support available to them from their family, friends and others in the community.

The Act focuses on helping people to stay well, to be safe from harm, to be as independent as possible and to be supported within and by their local community.

The Act has five principles:

- **Promoting Well-being:** Working with people to understand what matters to them and helping them achieve what is important for their well-being
- **Voice and control:** Putting people at the centre of their care; giving them a voice in making decisions about their life and control over reaching the outcomes that matter to them
- **Prevention and early intervention:** Increasing preventative services within the community to help people to keep well and help us to know when they may need extra support to prevent problems reaching a critical stage
- **Coproductio**n: Providing opportunities for people to be involved in how their care and support is designed and provided
- **Collaboration:** Strong partnership working between the various organisations and people that support them, helping people live the life they choose for longer

### Caerphilly County Borough Corporate Plan – Well-being Objectives 2023-2028

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is designed to help public bodies work together to improve our environment, our economy, our society and our culture.

The law asks us to apply sustainable thinking to our decision-making and to develop our Well-being Objectives to improve the lives of our residents and the environment they live in.

The Sustainable Development Principle is based on **five ways of working**:

- **Long Term** – looking at long term solutions without compromising the well-being of future generations
- **Integrated** – helping other public bodies to meet their goals for the overall good of residents
- **Involvement** – Involving those who have an interest in the well-being of the area and the delivery of our objectives
- **Collaboration** – working with a range of people, and sharing ideas and resources, to help deliver the outcomes
- **Prevention** – understanding the root causes of issues so we can put the right solutions in place to prevent problems arising or getting worse

Using the above principles was the beginning of the process to develop our Well-being objectives.

Our Well-being Objectives should be considered as an integrated set that are complementary to each other. We have set ambitions for the outcomes we would like to see at the end of the five-year period. These are ‘future statements’ that set our intent and will help us to realise what we want to achieve.

We are very aware of the challenges we face, in particular our financial outlook, however it was important to us to be aspirational in what we hope to achieve for the county borough over the term of our Corporate Plan.

Our Well-being Objectives are set out as follows:

- **Objective 1** – Enabling our children to succeed in education
- **Objective 2** – Enabling our residents to thrive
- **Objective 3** – Enabling our communities to be inclusive
- **Objective 4** – Enabling our economy to grow
- **Objective 5** – Enabling our environment to be greener

Our Strategic Equality Objectives will support progression in advancing equality and inclusion for all protected characteristics and delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty. The objectives will ensure we are fulfilling our obligations as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

To ensure our Strategic Equality Objectives are relevant, views were sought on whether the objectives outlined would help the Council reduce inequalities in the workforce and assist service access and delivery.

### **Consultation Process of the Strategic Equality Plan and Outcomes**

A formal consultation was conducted from 30 October 2023 to 1 December 2023. The consultation was widely promoted, accessible on a variety of platforms and was available bilingually, easy read format and British Sign Language videos.

The consultation was published on the Council's website via [The Caerphilly Conversation](#) page. Downloadable versions of the survey were available in a variety of formats on request. Details of the consultation were shared via the Council's social media platforms reaching 5,324 people and resulting in 43 engagements. A press release was prepared for local media and promoted on the Council's Website.

We requested a number of engagement events with key stakeholder groups. Only two stakeholders engaged with us regarding this consultation and offered their views on the draft Equality Objectives, they were a registered blind resident and the LGBTQ+ Youth Group. Whilst an effort was made to consult with all sectors of the community, it is evident that some stakeholders did not engage in the process.

Consultation responses highlighted a number of overarching themes as well as specific issues and barriers in relation to the draft objectives outlined.

What people think we should do:

- Caerphilly County Borough Council should ask residents over the next 2 years what their access challenges are and work on these – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- Continue to work with members of the Armed Forces – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information** and **Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- To improve educational opportunities, there is a need to understand the difficulties people with disabilities have in accessing and maintaining employment and the impact a change of circumstances regarding employment can have on the lives of people with disabilities. – **Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Continue to provide Unconscious Bias training to staff to combat negative impacts on the protected characteristics – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities, Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement, Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language, Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Consider how we can include older members of the community and those with disabilities in order to make them more included – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities**
- Keep respondents and the wider community including those from particular groups of disabilities informed about the progress of the Plan and other consultations that are undertaken – **Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
- Keep respondents and the wider community including those from particular groups of disabilities informed about the progress of the Plan and other consultations that are undertaken – **Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
- As corporate parents, why not provide apprentices, work experience, training or even full - part time employment opportunities to NEET, Children about to leave CCBC LA Care
- Create an 'Adopt a Granny' scheme to appeal to elderly Volunteers. This would be of minimal costs to cover basic expenses; aim is for lone parents to be adopted, befriended by a granny (or a grandpa)
- Community accessibility on the lines of poverty, the cost implications on lower income families using public transport – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- A suggestion was made around applications for Housing Benefit etc, providing options for Adults with Learning Disabilities such as a DVD, easy read version with pictures to enhance their understanding and promote independence.
- Doing more to support people experiencing menopause in the workplace – **Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Ensuring minimum wage
- Social class and social needs including rehabilitative services that could be addressed in more detail. Also, people effected by trauma and adverse childhood experiences.
- Transgender issues – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities**
- Approach towards supporting employees with disabilities needs to be reviewed and consideration should be given to a Disability Leave Policy
- Fair access to training and development – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities, Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement, Equality Objective 5 – Welsh Language and Equality Objective 6 – Inclusive, Diverse and Equal Workforce**
- Consider how we can include older members of the community

- Communication and coproduction along with effective engagement with those directly affected, including all staff, must be key – **Equality Objective 4**
- More support for staff wellbeing and during the cost-of-living crisis – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- Hold open sessions in Libraries and encourage the local community to use this resource – **Equality Objective 4 – Inclusive and Effective Engagement**
- Access to CCBC buildings for those with disabilities – **Equality Objective 1 – Access to Services and Information**
- Provide in-person services rather than digital which is a barrier
- Consider the impact reduction in services has on older people and people with disabilities – **Equality Objective 3 – Inclusive Communities**

Where relevant we have included actions in the Strategic Equality Plan following a review of the responses received. Those not included will be passed to relevant service areas as they are service specific, and it will be for those service areas to enact on what has been suggested.

Whilst an effort was made to engage with all sectors of the community, a low number of responses were received from individuals representing religious groups or the Black and Ethnic Minority community.

To see the report in full visit <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/my-council/strategies,-plans-and-policies/equalities/strategic-equality-plan.aspx>

## **Section 4**

### **Delivery and Monitoring of the Equality Objectives**

#### **Self-Assessment**

We implemented a reporting framework called 'Directorate Performance Assessments' (DPA) and an overall high level performance picture called the 'Corporate Performance Assessment' (CPA). These assessments are designed to bring together a range of separate reporting information together to integrate information and understand cause and effect. Ultimately to improve organisational learning and act on the learning to continuously improve. Progress on the Strategic Equality Plan will be included in the overall Council reporting to ensure we integrate equalities and Welsh language rather than act as 'stand-alone' subjects. Reporting of the Directorate Performance and Corporate Performance Assessment includes equality and Welsh language information and is also reported to Scrutiny Committees, Audit and Governance, and Cabinet, and is made available to the Public on the Council's website.

#### **Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report**

Under the Public Sector Equality Duty the Council has a legal duty to produce and publish a Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report, which reports on the Council's progress in delivering services against the statutory duties, the Public Sector Equality Duties, and the Council's own Strategic Equality Objectives. The annual report must be published by the 31<sup>st</sup> March each year.