

Caerphilly County Borough Council

Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report

2020-2021

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This report is available in Welsh and in other languages or formats on request

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Introduction

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.

Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive, Caerphilly County Borough Council

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

Cllr. Philippa Marsden, 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 Taff, and to the east by Blaenau Gwent and Torfaen local authorities.

The area lies at the heart of both the South Wales Valleys and the Cardiff Capital Region. The Caerphilly county borough occupies some 108 square miles (28,000 hectares) of the Valleys area of South East Wales. It is a little over 18.6 miles long and nearly 11 miles wide, and is formed by the valleys of three rivers: the Rhymney, Sirhowy and Ebbw. The county borough has 180,000 residents living across a mixture of urban and rural communities. Three quarters of the county borough is used for agriculture and forestry. The Council is the 5th largest local council in Wales and is the largest employer in the area.

The Council employs nearly 8,500 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 and together with the Chief Executive make up the Corporate Management Team who oversee the strategic management of the council's business. The Council operates a cabinet style of local government which is led by a Leader and who is supported by 8 Cabinet Members. We have 73 elected Councillors who have a variety of roles including agreeing the Council's policy framework, Council Tax and budget.

Our vision and values are an integral part of our Transformation Strategy Team Caerphilly - Better Together. Its aim is to transform the way in which we have previously delivered services. It will examine how services are prioritised, how they can become more business efficient, explore new opportunities for greater customer focus and digital delivery, consider alternative delivery models and seek commercial opportunities.

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 dependants 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 21st 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.

Context and Legislation

The Strategic Equality Plan 2020- 2024 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 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.

The Covid-19 pandemic has created difficulties for every resident, community and business across the county borough. As we continue to deal with the changes this has brought to the way in which we deliver services we are mindful of the implications for people who hold one of the protected characteristics to ensure that they continue to receive services from the council equally and are not disadvantaged because of their personal circumstances. As we look forward to recovery over 2022-2023 and beyond we will continue to ensure equity of provision for all our residents and recipients of our services.

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 21st 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 Equality Impact Assessments, which carry the full authority of the Strategic Equality Plan. As we move into 2021-2022 we have new socio-economic duties that mean we will be changing the way we carry out impact assessments.

Through this Strategic Equality Plan Annual Report, the council has evidenced 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 Equality Impact Assessments. This report once approved, will be publicised and promoted widely both internally and externally in order to raise awareness of the work being done.

Collection of Council Performance, Data and Information

The Council's Performance

In 2018 we set our six Well-being Objectives and incorporated them into our Corporate Plan. Setting objectives is not new, we have been setting Well-being Objectives and Improvement Objectives for a number of years; however this was the first time we have set objectives over a five year planning period.

As circumstances can change over time it is important for us to ensure that our Plan remains fit for purpose. Therefore we undertook a review of our objectives to ensure that they are still relevant and as a result we made minor changes to the Plan as approved by the Council's Cabinet 10 July 2019. To view the updated Plan click [here](#).

Performance against the Corporate Plan is provided in our annual performance report, the building blocks of which are performance information from across the council. Services provide information which is fed up to Directorate and Corporate level through performance assessments. Equalities information is included within the performance assessments, however, over 2021-2023 we will be working to explicitly link our Equalities Objectives to the performance reports.

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 Equality 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 - CCBC](#)

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 (2020-2021)
- Employment practices
- Consultation and engagement programme
- Equality Impact Assessments (2020-2021)
- Employment monitoring information (2019-2020)
- Monitoring and delivery of the SEP action plan (2020-2021)

Non Collection and Effectiveness of Information

Whilst considerable relevant information has been collected for this report, it is acknowledged that it is sometimes difficult to collect and monitor all information in a council as large as Caerphilly County Borough Council. Services were diverted to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and it was not possible to collect information as we would in a normal year. Longer term it is recognised that improvements can always be made to encourage a consistent approach in information sharing. Our intention is to include equalities reporting explicitly within our main performance assessment processes.

Inclusive Engagement and Participation (Equality Objective 4)

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic the Council has been keen to maintain dialogue with its residents and to seek their views on a number of consultation and engagement exercises. Inclusive Engagement and Participation is one of our chosen Strategic Equality Objectives. Engagement and participation has continued in a meaningful way, across Caerphilly County Borough Council during 2020-2021, both internally with our staff and externally with our communities and partners.

To mitigate for limited opportunities for face to face engagement as a result of Covid-19, the shift towards digital mechanisms has been accelerated with a greater use of social and digital media where appropriate. Whilst we always endeavour to ensure that engagement and consultation is inclusive, additional effort has been made to ensure that those who wish to engage with us are able to do so in a way that best suits their needs and that those “seldom heard”, including those with protected characteristics, those who are economically disadvantaged and those who are digitally excluded are informed of these opportunities e.g. through the use of existing networks and groups using their established methods of engagement. We recognise that digital engagement presents difficulties for some people and we have used these networks and more traditional forms of communication to help us reach as many people as possible.

Work has continued to deliver on the Team Caerphilly ‘Consultation and Engagement’ Framework, ([Consultation-and-Engagement-Framework.aspx \(caerphilly.gov.uk\)](#)) endorsed by the council’s Cabinet in February 2020, which set out an approach for a common understanding to further improve engagement. It sets out the principles and standards for how the council will engage to build ‘*clear, shared expectations that enables a focus on what can be achieved*’.

The principles within the framework are:

- 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.

The strategic principles of the Equalities Act 2010 and Wales specific duties and the National Principles of Public Engagement in Wales are embedded throughout the document.

Following the secondment of the Senior Communications Officer into the Transformation Team last year, a business case has been approved to appoint an Engagement Project Officer to further support this area of work. The Transformation Team work closely with the Consultation and Public Engagement Officer who sits within the Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation Team to ensure that there is a joined-up approach across consultation, engagement and communication that reflects the differing needs of individuals as the council continues to transform.

Other activities that have contributed to this objective include:

Getting the council ready for the new socio-economic duty in readiness for the 1st April 2021. A new Integrated Impact Assessment process has been developed that combines a number of former assessments, equality impact assessment and the assessment against the new duty. This includes a strengthening of the relationship with data and consultation.

- Training delivered
 - Integrated Impact Assessment training to senior managers (4 sessions delivered March 2021)
- Planned training programme
 - Effective Consultation and Engagement (4 training sessions scheduled for May 2021)
 - Making information easy to read and understand, Learning Disability Wales (to be delivered May 2021)

Public facing consultation and engagement activities continue to be promoted proactively on the front page of the Council's website, as well as across its digital channels. Further details of current engagement activities (including links to live surveys where appropriate) and the outcomes of recent engagement activities are also recorded on the website. <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/Consultations.aspx>

During 2020-2021, the council carried out a number of key consultation activities both internally and externally including:

- **The Caerphilly Conversation** - provided people living and working across the borough with the opportunity to share their experience of life across the area and identify priorities to help shape the future delivery of services that meet the needs of citizens as we move forward. This consultation exemplifies how the Council uses a variety of approaches to encourage participation, promote consultations and ensure that all sectors of the community are enabled to have their say. A full summary report can be found at <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/Consultations/Join-the-Caerphilly-Conversation>
- **21st Century Schools Programme** - consultations on Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon (<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/Consultations/21st-Century-Schools-consultation>) and Trinity Fields Special School and Resource Centre ([https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/Consultations/21st-Century-Schools-consultation-\(1\)](https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/Consultations/21st-Century-Schools-consultation-(1)))
- **Active Travel Consultation Stage 1 Consultation** - All Local Authorities in Wales must resubmit their Active Travel Network Maps to Welsh Government by 31 December 2021. Consultation will be in three stages and Stage 1 sought feedback on barriers to walking and cycling through the commonplace online tool. Stage 2 sought views on the existing infrastructure within the Borough and what difficulties people experience in walking or cycling and Stage 3 will seek to identify routes for the future <https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/involved/Consultations/Active-Travel-INM-Consultation-Stage-1-Consultation>

- Agile working survey to staff who have already experienced working in an agile way, both during the coronavirus restrictions and previously, including whether their protected characteristics had made the change more difficult for them (June 2020).
- Staff survey (delivered early April 2021) to all staff, including those working frontline/non-office based to seek views on strategies that will have a direct impact on staff.

Covid-19 Response and Helping our Vulnerable Residents

The following section highlights a brief snapshot of some of the good practice measures the Council put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, which demonstrate our compliance and commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The emergence of the Coronavirus across the world posed a significant and unprecedented challenge to our way of life and the way upon which we provide services.

Officers and Councillors have worked relentlessly to meet the needs of our communities in new ways. In a matter of days, the Council repurposed, refocussed and reshaped itself in order to respond to the immediate needs of our communities. Our primary purpose has been throughout and remains, “to protect our people and place”.

The Council immediately enacted its Emergency Management Plan and business continuity arrangements to deliver and co-ordinate the response, working across Council services along with our key partners, neighbouring local authorities and Welsh Government. These bodies continue to operate in a dynamic and challenging environment, adapting and responding to a range of risks to service delivery and well-being of our staff and residents.

During the coronavirus pandemic, the education directorate repurposed itself, providing support to all children and young people. A range of officers, including education welfare officers, educational psychologists, youth workers community education teams and school based counsellors, were utilised to support the most vulnerable. Therefore, our assessment on performance focuses on wider than just performance data and tells of how actions taken to support pupils and schools through the pandemic has been effective.

The majority of our 500+ services continued to operate, albeit with reduced staffing levels. Staff have completely changed the way they work – either working directly on the front line; redeployed into newly introduced services or working remotely from home. New services were introduced, such as childcare hubs for key workers, providing grants to businesses and working with volunteers to distribute food and medicines, to highlight just a few.

The following provides further detail regarding the level of service provided in response to the pandemic based upon the overarching principle of “protecting our people and place”

Community Response

Following the initial lockdown, the Council wrote to over 76,620 households. The letter invited those residents who met a strict criteria (over 70 / with a health condition, are shielding/self-isolating and had no alternative support available to them from friends, family, neighbours or local community group) to get in touch to see how the council could assist.

Over 1,550 vulnerable residents responded to the letter and 590 members of council staff came forward to help (350 of those volunteering in their own time). Every vulnerable person was 'matched' with a member of staff and the council's 'Buddy Scheme' was formed. From that point forward the volunteer army provided vital support to those vulnerable residents picking up shopping and supplies, delivering medicines and making regular telephone calls to help prevent isolation during this time.

The feedback from the vulnerable residents on the buddy scheme has been extremely positive and it is clear that this scheme made a significant difference. Volunteering has also been a rewarding role for those supporting the vulnerable with 97.3% of those surveyed stating that they found the scheme either a positive or extremely positive experience. This service was supplemented and supported by the ongoing Meals Direct offer, which continued to serve high quality hot meals.

In seeking to ensure sustainability into the longer term and creating a positive legacy to an unprecedented situation, the team worked with GAVO on a model which would enable community members to provide similar support to vulnerable residents moving forward.

The Registration service re-focussed its work on registering deaths (many Covid-19 related) as marriage ceremonies and birth registrations were suspended. The death registration service operated remotely under some very emotional conditions, but the staff remained extremely professional throughout.

Staff within the Public Protection Service worked tirelessly and remotely to enforce social distancing legislation in business premises as well as playing a key role in developing the contact tracing model and infection control in care homes.

In November 2020, a proposal was approved to develop the existing Buddy Scheme and Community Regeneration Legacy into the Caerphilly Cares Service, which aims to ensure people receive the right support, in the right place, and right time, using a single point of contact through a triage system.

The new Caerphilly Cares Service provides advice, support and signposting through strength-based assessments to internal and external support services, to enable people to become more resilient and live as independently as possible through a community centred model as part of a phased approach to developing an integrated end to end journey through internal and external services for 'at risk' residents.

Social Services

The majority of services remained in place during the pandemic, however we took the decision to close our day centres and one of our respite care facilities. This decision was taken on the basis that the majority of people who would have been attending were on the shielding list and the fact that we needed to redeploy the staff into older people's services to cover sickness absence.

Problems in relation to the spread of Covid-19 in care homes received UK wide coverage. Care homes in Caerphilly county borough have not been immune from these issues with Covid-19 related deaths reported in a number of homes.

The ongoing provision of Children's Services has been complex. Social work contact with children and / or families has often had to be done over the phone or by video link and all but the most essential assessments / reviews were put on hold. In addition care proceeding in the courts were also suspended.

Housing

At the time of the outbreak the authority was well on target towards bringing to a conclusion its Welsh Housing Quality Standard programme in 2020 but obviously all but emergency work was stopped immediately. Welsh Government acknowledged the issue and accepted the need to extend the deadline for the completion of WHQS programme.

All tenants, other than those living in sheltered accommodation received reassurance calls. We began by initially targeting vulnerable tenants to check on their well-being but gradually expanded the service to all households.

The outcome of the calls included providing guidance on how to access financial support, contact details and advice on how tenants can pay their rent with the Rents Team and cashiers calling tenants back if they required additional support, providing information about how to report an emergency repair and advice on the repairs service, referring issues of anti-social behaviour to the relevant officer and advice to contact the Police, providing information on how to make a self-referral for a food parcel and also made arrangements on their behalf, information on how to request a free school meal and providing advice on what council facilities/service remained open.

Childcare Hubs

When Caerphilly's schools closed, six mainstream Childcare Hubs were set up almost immediately with Trinity Fields also established as an extra Additional Learning Needs (ALN) hub. Local authority staff worked through the weekend of 20-22nd March 2020 to assess and process the first 800 applications for childcare from key workers.

The Hubs opened on Tuesday, 24th March with 88 children, releasing 75 key workers with 21 families being supported at Trinity Fields. By June 2020 there were 9 mainstream hubs, 1 ALN hub and 1 hub for the most vulnerable pupils operating. Pupil numbers increased to 362 a day, with provision also being offered through the school holidays, including bank holidays. The hubs were supported every day by 255 volunteer school staff as well as staff across other council services.

Free School Meals (FSM)

Following the announcement that schools would close, the Council was faced with a huge challenge in continuing to meet the needs of over 5,500 FSM pupils within the county borough. While other Local Authorities explored the use of voucher schemes and cash payments, Caerphilly took the stance that they wished to put food directly on to the plates of our FSM pupils.

To make this happen the Council worked in partnership with several local suppliers to set up a cold storage vehicle and a packing and distribution centre at Penallta House. The meals being delivered to FSM pupils incorporated a box of 5 frozen meals, a loaf of bread, 2 pints of milk and a selection of desserts, a weekly fresh vegetable and fruit pack

accompanied with recipe cards to encourage parents/guardians to use the ingredients to cook along with their children. The scheme grew considerably as word spread regarding the high-quality service provided. At its peak the team planned delivery routes for over 60 vehicles to deliver FSM to over 5000 children and young people, with a rise in the FSM take-up from 70% to 91%. The delivery of the FSM meal package would not have been possible without a true “Team Caerphilly” approach with involvement of staff from over 20 areas of the Council.

Although the scheme has been a great success, with extensive positive media coverage, there is no greater endorsement than the extensive and overwhelmingly positive feedback from our community and the customers who actually receive the service. This quote sums up the community feeling:

“Fair play CCBC. Another great delivery of meals and surprised to see the fruit. You really have taken care of things through this pandemic. Every staff member that have dropped things have been so nice and polite. Thank you again so much.”

The service went on to win a national award ‘Best Service Team: Catering Service’ at the APSE Annual Awards Service. As of July 2021, a total of 1.3m meals had been delivered to vulnerable children and young people across the county borough since the start of the pandemic, with 31,215 meals delivered each week.

Early Years

Early Years staff supported more than 400 of the most vulnerable families with children, aged 0-3 years with a weekly e-mailed individual activity plan for child development and family support, followed up by a phone call appointment to check how the development is progressing and whether there are any other family needs or concerns. The parenting programmes moved courses online and were available to everyone in the county borough. Additionally, over 1000 activity packs for children aged 0-3 including a book, were delivered to Flying Start families engaged in the programme but unable to access childcare, parenting or language groups during the pandemic. Health teams were also phoning all parents of new births discharged from hospital to establish any support needs.

The wider early years service facilitated on average, 20 applications per day for either childcare or hub placements for children of critical workers. For those most vulnerable children a co-ordinated approach between Education and Social Services was provided, where places within Childcare Hubs were routinely offered.

Distance Learning

Schools received ongoing guidance from the Education Achievement Service on the implementation of a distance learning strategy that aims to maintain continuity of learning for pupils whilst at home. This support is in line with the Welsh Government strategy and utilises Hwb, a digital platform for teaching and learning, as the main tool for communication and professional learning. Developing practice and research was shared with schools, with the intent of improving and refining current strategies to engage pupils via remote access. Other areas within the education directorate, such as the Music Service and the Healthy Schools Team, provides additional learning opportunities for

pupils. The Youth Forum was a useful tool to gauge feedback on the effectiveness of the distance learning strategy.

The local authority is also implemented a Welsh Government initiative that supports 'digitally excluded' learners that do not have access to appropriate technology or sufficient broadband. This initiative helped pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to have the same learning opportunities as their peers by equipping them with laptops and broadband connections.

The Youth Service

The Youth Service demonstrated flexibility and innovation in providing support for vulnerable young people and their families throughout the pandemic response. In conjunction with colleagues across the council, Youth workers assisted in the distribution of emergency food parcels for those qualifying for free school meals and activity packs designed to motivate young people and provide informal education. They were also helping to reduce the spread of the virus by working in the community with Gwent Police advising young people, face to face, regarding appropriate behaviour.

Over one thousand young people were supported during lockdown by the Youth Service, the majority of whom have one or more vulnerabilities. The service remained on track to meet its post-16 NEETs target, that is, below 2.5% not in employment, education or training. The Youth Service's curriculum was adapted for online delivery. This included the use of technology to communicate with groups of young people on a one-to-one, support-oriented basis.

Protecting the Economy

The pandemic and associated lockdowns had a severe economic impact. As part of the response to this the Welsh Government launched a number of grants which have been made available to support business. Payment of these grants were administered by Local Authorities and Caerphilly Council. Indeed, the Council has made the highest percentage and value of business support grant payments across Gwent and is in the top quartile across Wales.

Staff in the council's Business Enterprise and Renewal Team have been providing advice and support to businesses that are not eligible for the Business Grants and have been sign-posting them to other alternative sources of funding that may be available.

The 2020-21 delivery year has been unprecedented, and the Covid-19 pandemic has presented unique challenges for the economy, with far-reaching consequences for both employers and employees. The first quarter of the year saw an almost total stall in employment across many sectors, followed by a slow and intermittent recovery throughout the remainder of the year, which was impacted by further lockdowns.

Although the Furlough scheme has provided security for many employees, mass redundancy and unemployment has been an inevitable feature of the economic fallout from the pandemic. Internally, the initial onset of the pandemic also saw large sections of the Council's workforce redeployed to priority service areas, for example employment

programme staff were redeployed to support foodbanks and free school meals. This resulted in unavoidable effects on employment support capacity. Unsurprisingly, these major external factors have had a significant impact on the progress of the Objective within the reporting period. However, at an overall level and taking into account the challenges of the pandemic, this objective is judged to be progressing satisfactorily, particularly in relation to employment support.

Summary

Even though we were only able to focus on providing essential services in 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Welsh Government guidance and a requirement to provide support to vulnerable people, we made sure we continued to work hard, making a difference in the lives of Caerphilly's residents and tenants.

Detailed examples of what went well in 2020-2021 are detailed in the Council's Annual Performance Report 2020-2021. To view the report click [here](#).

Preparing for the Socio-economic Duty

The Socio-economic Duty in Wales, which should have been implemented in April 2020, was delayed until 31 March 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The delay gave us the opportunity to review our current Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) toolkit and develop an Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) toolkit to ensure we had an assessment toolkit which was fit for purpose and included the Socio-economic Duty.

The purpose of the duty is to ensure that specified public bodies listed, when making strategic decisions, deciding priorities and setting objectives, consider the Socio-economic Duty. They must also deliver better outcomes for those who experience socio-economic disadvantage. Involving communities in decision-making is key to getting decisions right and making sure they achieve positive outcomes. They must also consider (undertake an assessment) how their decisions might help to reduce inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

The Council has a statutory requirement to complete impact assessments under a number of legislative requirements. These requirements are a legal obligation for the Council and failure to meet these duties may result in the Council being exposed to legal challenge for not following due process.

Although there is no reporting requirement associated with the duty, it is for relevant listed bodies to evidence how they are meeting the statutory requirement. Welsh Government encourages relevant public bodies to be able to evidence a clear audit trail for all decisions made under the duty and should fully understand the likely impact of such decisions, in order to pay due regard to reducing inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage. Due regard is an established concept in equalities law. It's basically giving weight to a particular issue in proportion to its relevance, and the same principles are expected of us in regards to the Socio-economic Duty.

In reviewing our own existing EIA toolkit and comparing with what other councils in Wales were using, it was evident many had already transitioned to using an IIA toolkit. They not only assessed the impact on equalities and Welsh language, but also other areas, such as Well-being of Future Generations, Sustainable Development Principles, Rights of the Child, Environment Act, Corporate Plan (Well-being Objectives), Risk and Data Protection.

Following numerous discussions and several drafts, the Council implemented the use of an IIA with effect from the 31 March 2021, to coincide with the implementation of the duty. This assessment ensures that all proposals going forward for a decision will evidence and show due regard to five pieces of legislation as well as aligning the proposals with the Well-being Objectives in our Corporate Plan.

The IIA incorporates the requirements of the following legislative requirements into one impact assessment (See **Annexe 1**):

- [Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [Socio-economic Duty 2021](#)
- [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) and the [5 Ways of Working](#)
- [Welsh Language Measure 2011](#) and [Welsh Language Standards](#)
- [the Gunning Principles](#)

Equalities Promotion Work

In 2020-2021 the Council marked a number of awareness days either by raising awareness through press releases and social media posts. The following were celebrated/marked either publicly or internally with staff:

May 2020

[Mental Health Awareness Week](#)

[Foster Care Fortnight](#)

[Goodwill Day](#) (Urdd)

June 2020

[Pride Month](#)

[Carers Week](#)

[Armed Forces Day](#)

July 2020

Anti-social Behaviour Awareness – due to Covid-19 restrictions events were cancelled

August 2020

[Pride Cymru](#)

September 2020

Macmillan Coffee Morning (internal)

October 2020

[Black History Month](#)

[Hate Crime Awareness Week](#)

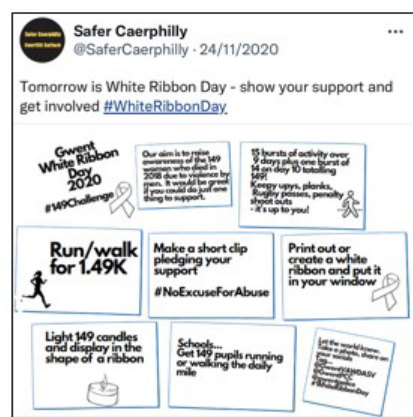
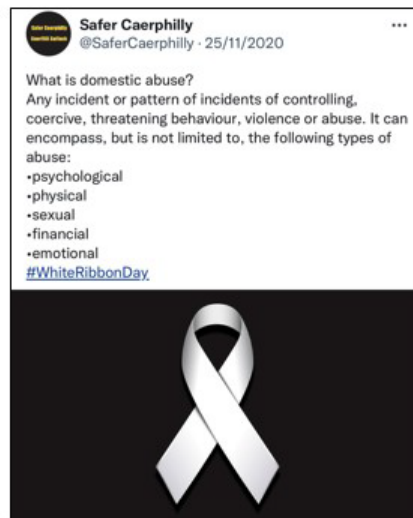
World Mental Health Day (internal)

Diwrnod Shwmae



November 2020

[White Ribbon Day](#)



December 2020

[Welsh Language Rights Day](#)

January 2021

[Holocaust Memorial Day](#)

February 2021

[LGBTQ+ History Month](#)

March 2021

[St David's Day](#)

[International Women's Day](#)

[Zero Tolerance to Racism](#)

[Commonwealth Day](#)

Case Studies

The following case studies are good practice examples of the local authority delivering services during a pandemic in a way which demonstrates the inclusive culture of the organisation. At what was an extremely challenging time for many vulnerable people, families, communities and businesses it was important that the Council stepped into new support spaces to help protect people and places.

Case Study 1: Free School Meals Service

During the pandemic, Caerphilly County Borough Council worked closely in partnership with local suppliers who helped support the free school meals initiative. Just hours after the school closures were announced on Friday 20 March 2020, Caerphilly Council's Catering Team leaped into action working with staff and suppliers to create a system to ensure that every child in receipt of free school meals would receive 5 healthy and balanced meals every week.

In March 2020, the Catering team were challenged to feed over 6,000 children and young people in the Caerphilly borough area who were eligible for free school meals. Sandwiches were provided for the first fortnight, until the team and local suppliers could organise frozen meal packs to be delivered to eligible households.

Deliveries continued when the children went back to school in September until catering was safely reintroduced and have continued during the 2021 lockdown when schools were closed.

The delivery service operated for the Easter holidays and has also been provided to those pupils who are self-isolating.

Castell Howell Foods, Woosnam Dairies and W R Bishop helped supply fruit, vegetables, desserts, milk, bread and much more to over 5000 children across the county borough.

The team reached a milestone in March 2021 having reached a year of delivering free school meals to pupils across the county borough.



Case Study 2: Covid-19 Buddy Scheme

The Buddy Scheme began on 16 March 2020 with a need to deliver a community response to support the following group to remain self-isolated:

- Over 70 and/or with an underlying vulnerability related to a health condition.*
- With no other support network or close family



That same week 385 staff responded to an initial email asking for volunteers to support this group; to provide support with shopping, prescription pick-up, keeping in touch etc. This initial staff volunteer cohort included school based staff and Elected Members. Volunteers were categorised by postcode area so that they could help as close to their own community as possible.

A dedicated Covid-19 vulnerable telephone line was set up and 76,620 letters were sent out to all households informing that if people met the criteria above they could request support. At the same time 50,000 'Good Neighbour' cards were distributed among the community and to Elected Members, AMs and MPs.

The Corporate Policy Unit managed the system with assistance from across all Council services. Services that had effectively shut down mainstream activity offered staff to the Buddy Scheme as part of the normal working week. Guidance to buddies was developed, updated regularly and issued by email, SMS and through a dedicated web page.

At peak 1,560 Vulnerable People (VP's) were registered on the scheme, and as at 30 June 2020 the figure was 1,157. The Covid-19 telephone line was listed on the Covid-19 web pages and was promoted on social media and in the general advice leaflet that went to all NHS shielded households.

Housing also conducted reassurance calls to all vulnerable Caerphilly Homes tenants, this added a few more referrals. Referrals tended to come from client support bodies e.g. Social Services, Housing, and Supporting People providers. The 'Test, Trace and Protect' process increased referrals slightly, as the government advice at the time was for anyone self-isolating that could not access food or medicine to contact their local authority or the third sector.

Other activity associated with the Covid-19 pandemic included:

Welsh Government Food Parcels

For NHS extremely clinically vulnerable people a weekly home delivered food parcel was made available from Welsh Government, if no other support network existed. 296 people on the NHS shielded list, resident within Caerphilly county borough, requested a weekly food parcel and this system was also administered by the Council, with a daily upload to the Welsh Government system. The shielding period ended on 16 August 2020, and this group of people were encouraged to shop for themselves and use priority online shopping slots available to them.

Pharmacy Deliveries

To alleviate the long wait times for Buddies and communities we offered enhanced DBS checked Council drivers to supplement pharmacy delivery arrangements. 7 local pharmacies took up the offer of support.

Community Response Partners

In the first week a group of partners was convened to share information during this period including: Adult Services, GAVO, Integrated Well-being Networks, 50+ Forum, Parent Network, Families First, Flying Start, Supporting People, Housing, Age Cymru, Emergency Planning etc. Information on community support resources was created and circulated within the group, including businesses offering food delivery services, details of local Covid-19 mutual groups, third sector support services etc. This information was kept up to date and was also shared on the main [Covid-19 web page](#).

Foodbanks

Foodbanks came under pressure as volunteers self-isolated and donations dried up. A temporary system was put in place by the Community Regeneration team to support provision with vouchers, donations and delivery. A triage system was put in place to connect individuals to a local voucher distributor. Foodbank volunteers prepared parcels, with Community Regeneration staff coordinating and delivering them. Stock was replenished and managed from Llancaiach Fawr by securing food donations, and monetary donations from the private sector and community groups. Over 2,000 people received foodbank support.

What happened next

The level of support offered on the buddy scheme by Council staff was not sustainable as services started to resume, however there was still a need within communities, albeit the medium term aim was to encourage personal resilience among Vulnerable People.

It was difficult to anticipate what the balance between demand and resources would look like, however plans had to be put in place for staff returning to normal duties over the weeks and months ahead. This equally applied to other community response type activity e.g. free school meals delivery and foodbank delivery. To estimate and plan for demand needs in the buddy scheme we gathered data in two ways:

- A survey of all buddies to ask them how the role has been for them and whether they have any interest in continuing to volunteer in the role moving forward. 150 responses were received and are summarised as **Annexe 2**
- Reassurance calls were made to all Vulnerable People registered on the scheme to ask how they are and what level of support they think they might need until lockdown eases for this group. See **Annexe 3**.

Step-down proposals

It was agreed by Cabinet that the management of the buddy scheme be transferred to the Council's Community Regeneration team, as soon as was practicable, which allowed:

- Easier identification of vulnerable people in communities
- Better engagement
- Identification of new service needs in communities
- The opportunity to build on and expand the Covid-19 mutual aid groups
- Mobilisation of community assets in empowered co-production
- Support the Resilient Communities strand of the Public Service Board's (PSB) work

Case Study 3: Staff Volunteering Scheme

One of the aims of the **Team Caerphilly: Better Together strategy** is to implement a Corporate Volunteering Scheme. The Buddy Scheme survey (**Annexe 2**) indicated that 95.4% of the 150 staff who responded (out of 590 buddies) would definitely, or likely, want to continue volunteering in a similar capacity in the future. The staff involved have gained a definite sense of pride and worth.

As a precursor for Corporate Volunteering, building on the goodwill evidenced in the responses received from buddies volunteering on the Buddy Scheme, it was proposed that staff are supported to continue in the buddy role by adding a category to the Leave of Absence Policy of up to 2 days per annum in hours, pro rata. The expectation being that this would be matched with an equivalent period of their own time. The results will be evaluated after 6 months by surveying the staff and managers involved with a view to establishing a wider Corporate Volunteering Scheme.

By allowing staff to continue in the Buddy role with, potentially, a little encouragement through paid time off in supporting older and vulnerable people will undoubtedly help combat longer term loneliness and isolation beyond the Covid-19 period as well as provide resilience in the Buddy Scheme. The oft-quoted research is that highly lonely people suffer the health equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day, and that highly lonely people are twice as likely to develop Alzheimers. Maintaining a buddy-type befriending scheme would be a preventative service at the same time as allowing staff to feel involved in their communities and the Team Caerphilly effort. Corporate Volunteering is also a Public Services Board strand with links to external partners including Aneurin Bevan University Health Board's 'Ffrind i mi' project.

Employment Monitoring Data

The following information is high-level data of what the *iTrent* payroll system holds as at 31st March 2021 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 totals 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.

Gender by Directorate	Male	Female	Undisclosed
Communities	867	616	0
Education and Corporate Services	899	4169	0
Social Services and Housing	476	1430	0
Authority Total	2190	6106	0

Ethnicity by Directorate	White	BM E	Undisclosed	Unwilling to declare
Communities	1374	12	93	4
Education and Corporate Services	4214	36	814	4
Social Services and Housing	1806	28	70	2
Authority Total	7241	70	975	10

Disability by Directorate	Disabled	No	Undisclosed	Unwilling to declare
Communities	56	1324	103	0
Education and Corporate Services	73	4145	850	0
Social Services and Housing	58	1755	93	0
Authority Total	176	7078	1042	0

Sexual Orientation (totals)	Numbers
Bisexual	20
Gay	31
Heterosexual	2914
Lesbian	21
Other	25
Undisclosed	5183
Unwilling to Declare	102
Authority Total	8296

Religion or Belief (totals)	Numbers
Buddhist	5
Christian (All Denominations)	1185
Hindu	4
Jewish	1
Sikh	2
Humanist	4
No Religion	1644
Undisclosed	5349
Unwilling to Declare	63
Other	39
Authority Total	8296

Nationality	Numbers
British (Not Channel Islands or IOM)	1060
English	71
Northern Irish	2
Irish	6
Welsh	2167
Scottish	5
Cornish	1
Other	32
Undisclosed	4944
Unwilling to Declare	8
Authority Total	8296

Language Ability (Other than English)	Numbers
Braille	2
BSL (British Sign Language)	44
Dutch	2
French	33
German	11
Greek	2
Hebrew	1
Hindi	2
Italian	2
Makaton Sign Language	1
Malayalam	2
Rumanian	1
Spanish	11
Tamil	1
Turkish	1
Welsh	1825

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

Welsh Language Skills**

Total Staff*	8296
Welsh Speakers*	1825
Percentage of Workforce	21.99%

* 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. 2020-2021 was the first year of delivery against our objectives. We chose 7 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

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 & 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

All services and processes are developed and delivered with a customer focus. Covid-19 has meant the development of online forms has become more focused. Forms follow a standardised approach so customers are familiar with the design. All forms are developed for the web (digital by default), then tweaked to be used via telephone and face to face.

Automation has improved the customer experience for Supporting People referrals, Free School Meals and Pupil Development Access Grants, enabling 1000's of service requests to be processed without the need of human intervention. This has allowed staff to be free to deal with responding to Covid-19 and supporting our most vulnerable residents.

Customer Services Standards are embedded and these are used as part of Customer Services coaching.

The Council uses different methods of communicating information to the public. These methods include the Council's website and multiple social media platforms.

	Follower s	Posts	
Twitter	20,345	5,442	(50% are in Welsh)
Instagram	3,560	208	(Bilingual and Welsh)
Facebook	25,984	4,761	(Bilingual and Welsh)
LinkedIn	5,908	366	(Bilingual and Welsh)

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 Data for 1 November 2020 to 31 October 2021

Welsh

- 97 email bulletins sent
- Subscribers have increased from 344 to 676 (+99.40%)
- Engagement rate (those who opened and clicked on a link in a bulletin) 47.4%
- Impressions 3,299 (clicks on links)
- 1,277 subscriptions +512 +66.93%

English

- 107 email bulletins sent (10 were internal, for staff only)
- Subscribers have increased from 36,180 to 39,734 (+10.70%)
- Engagement rate (those who opened and clicked on a link in a bulletin) 70.20%
- Impressions 1,400,000 (clicks on links)
- 164,094 subscriptions +20,307 +14.12%

Action 2

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

Progress

This action has been included in one of the Corporate Reviews currently being undertaken, however due to the pandemic there is no progress to report.

Action 3

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

Progress

We have a team member who can converse in BSL. Pre-Covid-19 this staff member has supported interpretation at meetings at Penallta House for both Customer Services and other Service areas where sign language was needed. During Covid-19 where a need has been identified the staff member has undertaken meetings that have been required for customer services via Microsoft Teams to enable communication via BSL.

Action 4

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

Progress

During the 2020-2021 academic year there were 65 enrolments on digital literacy/ICT courses in our adult education service. We were unable to run our Digital Friday's sessions in local libraries as they remained closed due to the pandemic.

A device loan scheme was set up whereby learners and participants can loan laptops, iPads, or Chromebooks whilst on a Caerphilly Adult Community Learning (ACL) programme or engaged with European Social Fund (ESF) provisions. Devices were purchased through Welsh Government funding.

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

Caerphilly ACL were awarded £50,000 from the Digital Transformation Fund to run a regional piece of research to deep dive into understanding Digital Exclusion. The research looked at the number of people with/without digital devices; the number of people with and without connectivity; and how long it takes to become digitally literate. The region consisted of Caerphilly as lead, Blaenau Gwent (Aneurin Leisure), Monmouthshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan. The report can be accessed here:

<https://www.caerffili.gov.uk/Dogfennau-Caerffili/Newyddion/Mynd-ir-Afael-ag-Allgau-Digidol> (Welsh)

<https://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/CaerphillyDocs/News/AddressingDigitalexclusion> (English)

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.

A new authority complaints process is currently being developed. This will standardise the approach to complaints across the authority, and will monitor that complaints are being dealt within timescales. The system will also produce the information we need to learn from complaints and improve our services as an authority.

Complaints officers have been advised that an additional column will be added on 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 quarterly reporting to the Governance and Audit Committee as part of the Corporate Complaints process where appropriate, and the Senior Policy Officer (Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation) now 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.

During 2020-2021 we received 5 equalities and Welsh language related complaints and they are broken down as follows:

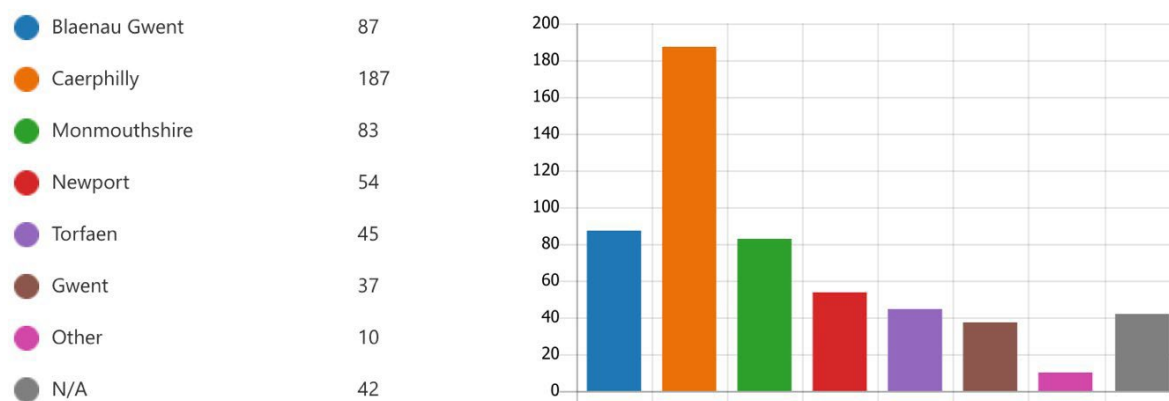
Category	Detail	Outcome
Disability	Disabled parking space	Response sent, shortcomings identified and addressed and apologies conveyed. Audit of process undertaken and report sent to the Ombudsman.
Disability	Vehicles parking on pavements	Response sent and complaint referred to the Police to consider enforcement action
Race	Racial abuse in school	School contacted the parents of the perpetrator to discuss the incidents. School arranged a police liaison officer visit to class to address racial discrimination. Family of victim supported and guided through the discriminatory incidents procedure so that any future incidents are reported and recorded.
Welsh	No response received to Welsh correspondence	Response sent in Welsh apologising for delay
Welsh	Letter from Chief Executive and Leader sent in English only	Explained the Welsh Language Standards to the complainant. Welsh version of the letter was published the following day once translated.

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

Category	Detail	Outcome
Equalities	Text on council's Community Cohesion and Hate Crime webpage required updating	Text on webpage was updated and a link to the webpage included in response
Welsh	Letter to staff from Chief Executive was sent in English only	Correspondence to all staff will be bilingual
Welsh	Typing errors in retweeted post	Tweet belonged to a third party who were contacted to correct and update the post
Welsh	Translation on temporary signage incorrect	Contractor signage. Sign corrected. Council designed guidance which was shared with staff and contractors (Annexe 4)
Welsh	Text on temporary signage almost completely in English only	Contractor signage. Sign corrected. Council designed guidance which was shared with staff and contractors (Annexe 4)

Category	Detail	Outcome
Welsh	Clarity required regarding translation on road signage	Copy of internal Translation Guidance sent and staff reminded to check signage with the Translation Team
Welsh	English only social media post during Christmas shutdown	Measures put in place to ensure that there is a translation resource available in future
Welsh	Problem requesting parking permit through the medium of Welsh via website	IT Services notified and the issue resolved

The Armed Forces Covenant is due to come into law for Housing, Health and Education by December 2021. This added layer of legislation means that it is important that staff are trained on the Armed Forces Covenant. To date 187 staff from various roles within the local authority have attended the training. The Integrated Impact Assessment toolkit has been amended to reflect this cohort.



Action 6

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

Progress

Accessibility Regulations which came into force for public sector bodies on 23 September 2018 means that all public sector web sites and mobile applications will need to meet certain 'accessibility standards' and that all documents that go on the website must be 'accessible'

Work was undertaken to make the current website 97% accessible in line with standards (at the start of the exercise we were only 54%). All new material is not published unless it meets accessibility standards. Committee services are still working through retrospective committee documents published online to ensure they are compliant.

A new website and digital workspace is being developed and when in place will be fully compliant with accessibility standards.

More than legislation, we want our communications to be 'accessible' and inclusive to all our citizens and we want our communications to be understandable and reach all potential audiences. There are easy ways to check our documents and simple ways to make them accessible and to help officers, we have placed a wide range of resources on the Council's Intranet to help our staff do this.

We have set up an Accessibility Working Group with representatives from most service areas, so if officers require any particular help or support they can contact the department representative from that group who can assist.

Action 7

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

Progress

The equalities monitoring section for public consultation exercises has been updated and standardised and shared with officers.

Action 8

Collect equalities monitoring information for compliments and complaints

Progress

Complaints officers have been advised that an additional column will be added on our complaints database to identify which complaints / compliments include equalities/Welsh language issues.

Action 9

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

Progress

No visits done due to Welsh Government Covid-19 guidance and schools being closed to visitors to manage infection risks.

Action 10

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

Progress

No visits done due to no elections during 2020-2021.

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 Council’s Employability projects provide all participants with the opportunity to gain work related qualifications and courses. They also provide the opportunity for participants to improve their basic skills.

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.

Between April 2020 and September 2021, covering the Covid-19 period, the Adult Community Learning (ACL) service delivered the following courses:

Coleg Y Cymoedd Franchise:

- Independent Living Skills (ILS – adults with Additional Learning Needs (ALN)) - (online and support packs / work booklets x 4) – 60 enrolments

Coleg Gwent Franchise (Essential Skills):

- Digital Literacy/ICT (online) - 65 enrolments
- ESOL (online) – 18 enrolments

- Literacy (online and support packs) – 13 enrolments
- Engaging with ACL (online and support packs) – 84 enrolments
- Summer School (face-to-face) – 52 enrolments

A total of 292 enrolments* (*some individuals attended more than one course).

Highfield Qualifications

- Classroom (low number) courses
- 45 courses with 120 learners achieving qualifications in total

Online Portal (LMS) learners

- 8 in total – 319 qualifications achieved, 40 in progress, 98 not started the course.

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.

Very little progress was made in regards to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard work during 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many housing staff were redeployed to assist with the council's Buddy Scheme and Free School Meal deliveries.

256 participants supported into employment (across all CCBC employment programmes)

189 participants supported to gain qualifications.

Training courses and opportunities for gaining qualifications covered a range of subject areas. Work carried out with local employers to develop and deliver successful training pathways (including guaranteed interviews) within specific sectors (Contact Centre and Hospitality) as part of planning for pandemic recovery.

Despite these outcomes, Training figures for the period were lower than expected. Many training providers were not running courses during the earliest lockdown phases; and the limited provision that was available was delivered online, excluding those with lack of digital skills and/or appropriate equipment. In addition, many accredited courses and licences, which are a requirement of specific vocations, were not able to be granted without assessment conducted face to face, which was not an option during the strictest lockdown periods.

Action 2

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

Progress

Coleg Gwent Franchise (Essential Skills):

- Digital Literacy/ICT (online) - 65 enrolments

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, 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.

Participants on the CCBC Employability Programmes will be invited to attend group information sessions held in partnership with Services and Organisations to apply for jobs in certain sectors that have been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Participants will meet employers and then be supported to gain qualifications and the skills along with interviews to fill the gaps in these certain 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.

Participants will continue to be referred to the CCBC Employability Programmes and assessed by the assigned Mentor so barriers can be reduced for the participant to gain sustainable employment.

All CCBC Employment programmes will be 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.

The vast majority of NET outcomes within CCBC relate to 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 March 2020, the breakdown of the types of support offered by the NET project (towards achieving fair work) are as follows:

- 36 participants achieved increased wage/hours/responsibility as a result of a new role
- 10 participants had improved contracts including a move to Permanent or Full time hours
- 8 participants were supported to achieve increased wage/hours/responsibility or promotion in their existing role

- 6 participants achieved improved wellbeing due to changes in their employment, including greater flexibility etc.
- 5 participants were supported to gain an additional role to supplement 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).

Alongside NET and WSfA, which support those already in work to achieve improved (or “fair”) working conditions as outlined above, the Communities for Work (CfW), Communities for Work Plus (CfW+), Bridges into Work (BiW) and Inspire 2 Work (I2W) programmes also support *unemployed* individuals to secure work, through the provision of intensive mentoring to address barriers, source relevant training and improve employability skills such as developing an appropriate CV and interview 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 (through close working with the Business Liaison team), but also through the provision of ongoing in-work support for a period after commencing work, to support 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.). Often this support may be in the form of empowering the individual to address these issues directly with their employer, but it may also constitute working with the Business Liaison team to contact the employer.

Within the employment teams, we also have specific initiatives or activities to promote awareness, increased knowledge and develop specific support relating to certain barriers, so that individuals experiencing these barriers may be supported to achieve fair work.

Support for customers with disabilities and work limiting health conditions

Employment programmes also continued to provide excellent support for customers with disabilities and work limiting health conditions, despite the fact that the pandemic and subsequent increased risks to health exacerbated barriers for many of these individuals. For example, the Communities for Work Plus programme met Welsh Government targets for supporting those with disabilities, with 20% of all job entries relating to participants with either a disability or work limiting health condition.

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.

Very little progress was made in regards to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard work during 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many housing staff were redeployed to assist with the council’s Buddy Scheme and Free School Meal deliveries.

Action 4

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

Progress

All projects are working towards their targets although Covid-19 has had a massive impact on all projects, including staff redeployed to many different service areas. The UK government initiative with Serco has also had an impact on participant engagement numbers.

The Council's Employment Managers continue to hold positive meetings to build positive relationships so no duplication is delivered across all programmes in Caerphilly with other funded Employability Programmes. Meetings will be held on a quarterly basis to discuss, caseloads, targets, any concerns or issues.

Despite the major challenges to employment presented by the pandemic, the Council's employment programmes continued to deliver a high-quality employment support service which supported customers into employment throughout the year. Whilst these challenges did ultimately result in outcomes falling below target across the various employment programmes, it is felt that this can be reasonably explained given the unprecedented circumstances of the reporting period.

In particular, outcomes relating to Economically Inactive participants, those aged 25+ and those from the most deprived communities have been the most negatively impacted. Whilst all customers have experienced increased barriers as a result of the pandemic, these groups in particular have been disproportionately impacted due to factors including childcare/home-schooling considerations and also by shielding due to increased medical vulnerability.

Positive Outcomes for 16-24 age group

The picture in terms of young people (aged 16-24) was far more positive, with delivery generally running according to profile. This is of particular importance given that this age group were determined to have been most at risk with regards to employment prospects as a result of the pandemic.

Despite falling below profile in some areas as outlined above, employment programmes still achieved the following headline outcomes in 2020/21, representing very real successes for those customers who felt able to engage throughout the pandemic. The impact of gaining employment is significant and presents a very clear route of poverty and social exclusion for many customers in deprived communities. For those customers who may have become unemployed as a result of the pandemic and were then supported back into employment, these outcomes may have prevented a long-term reliance on benefits and potential other issues including debt and housing concerns which may arise from longer-term unemployment.

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

• Total Participants Supported	718
• Qualifications Gained	78
• Vocational Training	56
• Voluntary Placements	6
• Job Entries	256

(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).

Regular meetings will be held with the Managers and Partnership Manager from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to support participants to the right programme, so they are eligible for the right support and supported into paid work.

Employment Managers will continue 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.

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

Very little progress was made in regards to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard work during 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many housing staff were redeployed to assist with the council's Buddy Scheme and Free School Meal deliveries.

Action 6

To further develop an inclusive approach to apprenticeships

Progress

Enhancing the provision of apprenticeships, work placements and work experience opportunities is one of the actions within the Workforce Development Strategy 2021 – 24, with a timescale of delivery by the end of 2021-2022. Work is ongoing to achieve this target.

The Council has committed £500k to the appointment of Apprentices in 2021 and work is being undertaken to identify how many business cases can be supported with match funding, to support more apprenticeship opportunities.

Very little progress was made in regards to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard work during 2020-2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many housing staff were redeployed to assist with the council's Buddy Scheme and Free School Meal deliveries.

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 2016-17** (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

Further training sessions were delivered to pastoral leaders' forum and booked onto Primary Head Teachers forums (the latter was postponed as a result of Covid-19 closures and will be rebooked in spring 2022). Advice has been given to 5 primary schools in relation to queries about thresholds for reporting.

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

Progress

We have VAWDASV (Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) training in place, which all employees must undertake Group 1 as a statutory requirement. This is currently available online for staff, further training of Group 2 is available for those in jobs where VAWDASV may be an issue for their client group, who are in a position to 'Ask and Act'. There is availability for further groups then such as Group 6 which is for senior leaders and elected members.

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, Hate Crime Awareness Week)

Progress

Whilst the challenges of lockdown have prevented the usual methods of delivering cohesion activities, it has also provided the Gwent Community Cohesion Team with opportunities to explore engagement via digital means. For instance, our campaigns relating to equality related commemorative dates - Black History Month, Refugee Awareness Week, LGBTQ+ History Month – have focused more than ever on a digital platform and this has allowed us to have a more interactive social media presence.

Additionally, community diversity work throughout this period includes; Awareness campaign conducted on social media and competitions launched throughout West Gwent Schools re Black History Month and Hate Crime Awareness Week.

Hate Crime Awareness Week activities overview – collaboration with Gwent Dragons to promote Hate Crime Awareness Week at their home match during the week. This included match day programme information, loudspeaker announcements, Hate Crime Awareness Week banner picture with players before kick-off. This also included sponsoring match balls, selling Hate Crime Awareness Week t-shirts from a locally hosted competition and presenting winners of this competition with Gwent Dragons merchandise.

The Gwent Community Cohesion Team also purchased and are circulating beer mats to all affiliated rugby clubs across the west Gwent region. The beer mats contain the Gwent Dragons equality logo and the hashtags #RugbyForAll #RugbyAgainstRugby #HateHurtsWales

We have also allocated funding to third sector organisations and supported them to deliver their activities throughout the week, which included supporting Menter Iaith Caerffili with their proposal.

During this time we have also explored other ways of communication and storytelling and are now developing a local podcast that explores themes of ethnic and cultural diversity - allowing a new way to engaging and championing lesser heard voices.

Action 4

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

Progress

Due to Covid, we have needed to concentrate on engaging 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. This action will be worked on once the pandemic has allowed group to meet safely face to face.

Action 5

Community cohesion team will work with LEA 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

Community cohesion forum delivered sessions to 4 primary schools prior to Covid-19 closures. Schools swap programme was not possible due to Covid-19 restrictions. 1 primary school has been highlighted in an ESTYN good practice report in relation to their equalities work. 7 Caerphilly schools are involved in the Welsh Government Hate Crime project, which involves training for teachers and workshops for pupils. Gender variance training has been delivered and a draft toolkit is ready for consultation.

A proportion of the Community Cohesion Grant was earmarked to work on preventative approaches, this included supporting the work of anti-racism charities such as Show Racism the Red Card (10k earmarked for this project) as well as undertaking class room anti-discrimination initiatives ourselves.

Prior to lockdown the Gwent Community Cohesion Team liaised with a host of schools across the West Gwent region, delivering anti-discrimination workshops to over 500 pupils. These sessions support schools in promoting equality and awareness and focused on positive messages about diversity, the sessions also helped to inform teachers with regards to what constitutes hate related bullying.

In the lead up to lockdown and in the event of a prolonged period of working from home – we recognised that this presented new challenges, particularly with regards to how we engage children and young people - but this also provided an opportunity to develop resources/lesson packs and off the shelf products, which could support anti-discrimination workshops/school assemblies online. And whilst duties have changed in the short/medium term – i.e. less school focused and less public facing - the Team were given an opportunity to plan (and deliver in a different way) how we mark future commemorative dates which support messages of inclusion. This has resulted in developing a suite of activities (campaign approaches/pop ups/ materials, links to be shared via the local authorities' social media) and these activities have allowed the Gwent Community Cohesion Team the opportunity to roll awareness out across the region on a digital platform.

Action 6

Engage with EU nationals with regards to the EU Settlement Scheme

Progress

We pooled EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) funding with Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Newport and Blaenau Gwent Councils to provide a radio advertisement for the EUSS, which ran until the closing date (30th June 2021). The superintendent registrar helped individuals apply for the scheme within Caerphilly county borough.

The additional capacity of two Regional Community Cohesion Officers has allowed for more operational support to proactively engage minority communities. Throughout this reporting period the Gwent Community Cohesion Team have maintained regular engagement with groups vulnerable to harassment (in relation to Brexit) for example; EU citizens, BAME communities, and other protected characteristic groups - helping to gathering intelligence and disseminate information on citizens' rights and to signpost citizens onto advocacy services.

Throughout this period, we have prioritised awareness raising of the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and have worked collaboratively with partners such as Citizens Advice Bureau, Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST), alongside Police and Registered Social Landlords – in utilising local networks, resident newsletters and social media to increase awareness.

We have also supported (via the Community Cohesion budget) the dissemination of EUSS literature and have made available in multiple EU languages – information which has been distributed across the region to all departments, schools and community buildings.

We have also hosted drop in sessions at libraries to promote the scheme, and we have utilised the EUSS funding (made available by Welsh Government) to purchase online advertisement space, to commission a radio advert (the Capital advert ran until the close of the scheme) and, we have coordinated online seminars for communities and services leads to learn more about how to apply for the EUSS and on EU citizens' right post the close of the scheme. We also established the 'We are digital' services in all boroughs of West Gwent, meaning local libraries had the ability to assist those making an application.

Action 7

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

Progress

The team have been identifying and mitigating community tensions (hate crime, extremism, anxiety, anti-social behaviour) relating to Brexit and Covid, and the additional capacity of two regional Community Cohesion Officers has allowed for more operational support to proactively engage minority communities. Throughout this reporting period the Cohesion Team have maintained regular engagement with groups vulnerable to harassment for example EU citizens, BAME communities, and other protected characteristic groups.

Cohesion Officers are represented at appropriate local forums – where cohesion/ tension monitoring is a standard item on the agenda of community safety partnership meetings, and to date our involvement at these forums has covered migration patterns, hate crime and social media monitoring. This has helped direct the team's efforts to target and mitigate tensions for instance school anti-discrimination workshops, community mediation -with regards to neighbour disputes, where we have worked with Police regarding ongoing community disputes - and establishing counter narrative on social media (linked to commemorative equality related themes/campaigns).

On a weekly basis details of all hate crimes reported into Gwent Police are forwarded to the Cohesion Team, this is monitored and anything of note is discussed at the appropriate forums. Partnership meetings are the main platform for monitoring/ capturing community tensions and partnership relationships are a particular strength. We also monitor social media (open source) platforms and work with communications teams and community safety to mitigate and, where appropriate, target counter narrative. Tensions have largely been Covid related; with anti-Vax rhetoric continuing to cause mistrust in the vaccination programme and far right narrative centred on migration and global resettlement.

Action 8

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

Progress

Throughout this reporting period the Gwent Community Cohesion Team have continued to support Local Authorities with their participation in the Vulnerable Persons/Children Resettlement programmes (now known as the UK Resettlement Scheme). This has ensured Local Authorities have the capacity to meet emerging needs, and more recently this has included the emerging issue of Afghan resettlement. Earlier this year (2021) the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy, which was developed as a consequence of NATO forces withdrawing from Afghanistan, placed anticipation for Local Authorities to play a part in supporting new arrivals. The policy was changed to include all Refugees and Asylum Seekers as we are now running a UK Relocation Scheme (UKRS). In response we were able to mobilise quickly, and as a region we have already resettled 4 families (West Gwent). Caerphilly remains one of the lead authorities in supporting the Welsh efforts and across West Gwent Local Authorities we have pledged to resettle up to 20 families.

As part of the daily support extended to these scheme the Gwent Community Cohesion Team also managed the contracts for ESOL support - which has been procured to ensure all families are in receipt of consistent provision, and the case worker contract delivered by Displaced People In Action (DPIA).

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 in ensuring that all citizens are able to participate in any or all engagement exercises. Whilst advances in technology enable us to provide information in digital formats, there continue to be barriers that prevent citizens from engaging. Transport, mental health, socio-economic status, low literacy and numeracy skills and particular difficulties experienced by hard to reach or seldom heard groups, are some of the barriers that continue to prevent citizens from engaging with the council and wider support services.

This Objective is reflected in one of our Corporate Objectives that looks at how we can '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's 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

Progress has been made in a number of key areas:

Employability projects 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, Remploy 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** website is being 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 (FIS)** Childcare searches to ensure a comprehensive national database for searching beyond the Caerphilly borough boundaries.

The **Early Years** model has been extended borough wide to ensure families who need support for their child's development and family circumstances are able to do so. This has removed barriers for many vulnerable families who lived outside of Flying Start areas. While funded childcare is not available for all families, there is access to antenatal programmes, family support, early language development, child development and early support for developmental delays.

In South Wales there are currently over 120 organisations supporting members of the **Armed Forces Community (AFC)**. Many of these organisations are third sector or voluntary groups who rely on not only members of the AFC but the general public to volunteer their time to help. While many organisations offer excellent development packages in ensuring their staff/volunteers are suitably trained to support those in need, many groups do not have the resources (funds), capacity or access to training to do this. In 2020 we were successful in receiving £19,440 from the **Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust** to offer those working with and/or members of the Armed Forces Community access to Mental Health First Aid Training and other Mental Health Courses including Your Mental Wellbeing Toolkit and Family Applied Support to Trauma.

Individuals trained in **Mental Health First Aid** can help to assess, listen, give support, encourage support from others, and signpost to other relevant services, when someone is in crisis and needs help. To date over 130 people have been trained on these courses.

Action 2

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

Progress

One example of where progress has been made is in relation to the **Early Years Integration Transformation Programme**. This has been moving forward in the last year to develop a borough wide early years model antenatal to 7 years. The Early Years Hub now incorporates the Family Information Service team plus 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.

Action 3

Identify and support carers

Progress

Social Services provide a dedicated Carers Support Service which covers both adult carers and young carers. Information, advice, support groups, activities and community events are all publicised through electronic newsletters and mail drops.

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

The framework was adopted in February 2020. Training on Effective Consultation and Engagement was delivered in April 2021 to the Management Network and other officers involved in public engagement work across the organisation.

Action 5

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

Progress

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 was critical in developing a system based on values and principles and avoiding assumptions which caused unnecessary bureaucracy/paperwork.

All forms part of the assessment process in the employability projects. 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. This database has been vitally important during 2020-2021 when, due to Covid restrictions we have needed to make additional efforts to ensure that people are given an opportunity to share their views on proposals and that the responses received are representative of the community.

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 Commissioner relating to the Policy Making Standards.

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

Caerphilly Conversation survey was the starting point for a new dialogue with communities. Many people put themselves forwards to assist in a new 'relationship' with the council. However, the intended face to face focus groups were delayed due to COVID.

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

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 2017-2022**.

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 2020-2021. The council's Cabinet approved publication of the report on 9 June 2021. To view the 2020-2021 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

A presentation on the Welsh Language Standards, the Commissioner's annual audit and Welsh language in general was delivered to the Council's Management Network in December 2020. The session reminded senior officers of the requirement to comply with the Standards, links to other pieces of legislation and practical guidance on how to ensure services are delivered bilingually.

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

No progress to date, delayed due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Action 3

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

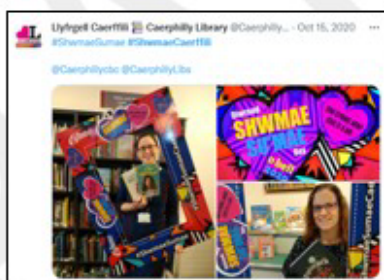
Progress

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 who to contact to receive them. All our frontline service officers have been given these resources to use.

We celebrated Diwrnod Shwmae on 15 October 2020 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 18 November we celebrated 15 years of the laith Gwaith logo. We posted a number of messages via our social media channels to celebrate and raise awareness of the logo and internally with staff also, with an emphasis on the importance of wearing the badge or lanyard with the logo on it or by displaying a poster in our main reception areas.

For the second year we celebrated Welsh Language Rights Day on 7 December 2020. Again social media presence was key in raising awareness of the event and the rights of Welsh speakers when accessing services.



Action 4

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

Progress

A directory of Welsh language services was published in 2012. This requires updating and developed into an electronic version to make be more accessible. The directory will be reviewed and updated by working with Caerphilly Welsh Language Forum and Menter Iaith Caerffili.

Early years provision has been mapped and actions to improve Welsh language provision are given priority. 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.

Action 5

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

Progress

Most Council run community events were cancelled during 2020-2021 due to Covid restrictions. However, Welsh medium events run by Menter Iaith Caerffili and other Welsh Language Forum partners have been promoted via the Council's social media and website.

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

A presentation on the Welsh Language Standards, the Commissioner's annual audit and Welsh language in general was delivered to the Council's Management Network in December 2020. The session reminded senior officers of the requirement to comply with the Standards, links to other pieces of legislation and practical guidance on how to ensure services are delivered bilingually.

Following this, a bespoke session was delivered to Procurement Services to provide an update on the implications of the Standards specifically in relation to procurement and the delivery of procurement services.

The employability programme delivers qualifications through the medium of Welsh should the participants require and internally, the Welsh language will continue to be promoted with staff wherever possible and we will continue to encourage increased capacity.

Action 7

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

Progress

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, it is held in both languages.

Action 8

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

Progress

A working group meets on a quarterly basis to discuss any issues or concerns regarding the Council's bilingual website content. The Website is fully 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.

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.

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. No progress to date, delayed due to Covid-19.

Action 11

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

Progress

Working with Careers Wales, there were plans to deliver presentations to students in comprehensive schools in the county borough during 2020-2021, but they were cancelled due to Covid-19. Instead we produced a video on careers with the Council and skills required.

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

Plans to deliver presentations to Year 11 students at Y G Cwm Rhymni during 2021-2022. Plans to hold a jobs fair delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

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 and 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.

Action 1

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

Progress

In October 2020, Caerphilly Council became the first Local Authority in Wales to adopt the Unity Over Division Charter, joining with our Trade Union partners, to build a more inclusive and harmonious workplace. A briefing session for Members has taken place and is also now being rolled out to employees. For example, all Customer Service staff have completed the appropriate level of training required.

During 2020-2021 we delivered Unconscious Bias Training, sourced through Academi Wales. Funded via the Community Cohesion budget, 500 places were shared with Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent Councils. Of the 167 places allocated, 156 officers have taken up the course.

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 recently created Workforce Development Team will coordinate this work.

Action 2

Implement 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

Progress

Good progress has been made over the last 12 months despite the complications of Covid-19 restrictions. This included a roll out to all schools and local virtual delivery of Group 2 courses. Staff have also been able to access the Group 2 regional courses delivered virtually. Delivery of Group 1 face to face sessions has been halted due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The recently appointed Workforce Development team will now be responsible for coordinating the implementation and reporting of this training.

- 60% of workforce who have completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1) / No of staff completed Basic Awareness training (Group 1)
- 7.75% of identified staff who have completed Ask and Act training (Group 2)
- 15 members of staff identified who have completed Enhanced Training (Group 3)

Action 3

Disability Confident – improve on our current standard

Progress

Upgrading our membership of the Disability Confident Scheme from Employer to Leader is one of the actions within the Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 24, with a timescale of 2022.

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 drafting the Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024, inclusivity and equality lies at the heart of this Strategy. The key priorities and actions contained within the strategy are designed to have a positive impact on each of the protected characteristics, supporting compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) regulations 2011.

The annual Gender Pay Gap Report and associated Statement that was endorsed by Cabinet in March 2021 for the period relating to March 2020.

Some protected characteristic data will be published in the Workforce Development Strategy 2021–2024 and the Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021–2024, which are currently going through the approval process.

Collation of the data to publish and fully meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty in its entirety is underway.

See ‘Employment Monitoring Data’ on page 25.

Action 5

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

Progress

Delayed due to Covid-19 however, re-establishing our membership of Stonewall Cymru is one of the actions within the Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021–2024, with a timescale of 2022.

Action 6

Work collaboratively to build the brand ‘Proud Councils’ to support Pride events

Progress

Caerphilly 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.

For the first time, 2021 saw Proud Councils uniting to promote LGBTQ+ History Month through producing an interactive calendar of activities that were taking place during the month of February. In addition to informative and interesting short films of inspiring stories and programmes highlighting key moments in LGBTQ+ history, there was also a live webinar with author Norena Shopland and an ‘LGBTQ+ Global history’ lecture with Coleg y Cymoedd.

Action 7

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

Progress

Caerphilly CBC has provided conversational Welsh courses for staff and elected members since 2001. The courses range from basic taster courses for beginners to courses which cater for those who are now fluent Welsh speakers. All courses moved to being held online during the initial lockdown, and from September 2020 onwards all courses now run online.

COURSE OFFERED	NUMBER OF COURSES OFFERED	NUMBER OF STAFF ATTENDING
30 Week	40	23
Online 10 Hour Course	24	219
Say Something in Welsh	3	4
Withdrawn	N/A	2

During the pandemic we noticed a significant increase in the number of people completing the 10 hour online courses, especially from the education and social care sector, with staff using their time effectively to enhance their continued professional development. 219 people completed these courses with some completing part 1 and part 2 of the course, giving us a total of **517** of these online courses completed.

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.

Across the organisation, Welsh language skills are promoted amongst the workforce and staff will continue to be supported and actively encouraged to attend Welsh language learning wherever there is an opportunity or need is identified. For example, 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-fFelin.

Within the Customer Services team, there has been a failure to fill a vacant post for a Welsh speaking customer services advisor. Posts are being advertised stipulating that the Welsh language must be learnt as a requirement of the role.

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 could be answering the telephone bilingually, producing bilingual social media posts or drafting bilingual correspondence. Staff are aware that all services the Council provides must be provided bilingually. Staff are supported by the Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation Team who provide advice, support and resources.

COUNCIL TOTAL FOR 2020-2021

Total Staff	Welsh Speakers	%
8296	1825	21.99

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 the vast majority of part time posts are held by females and that these are the posts that attract salaries in the lower quartiles. To view the Council's Gender Pay Gap Statement 2020 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

The annual Gender Pay Gap Report and associated Statement that was endorsed by Cabinet in March 2021 for the period relating to March 2020.

The data provided a trigger for further investigation about the reasons why the gap exists and this will continue to be reviewed. The Council does not pay males and females differently for work deemed to be of equal value. Our gender pay gap is reflective of the causes of gender pay gap at a societal level. The vast majority of posts in the lower quartile of data are part time posts. These are the posts that continue to predominantly attract female applicants. HR will continue to work with service areas to review this position and address the gender pay gap wherever possible in accordance with service needs.

Action 2

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

Progress

Some protected characteristic data has been published in the recently agreed Workforce Development Strategy 2021-2024 and the Employee Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2024.

Collation of the data to publish and fully meet the requirements of the PSED in its entirety is underway.

See 'Employment Monitoring Data' on page 25

Action 3

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

Progress

The majority of the Social Services workforce is female and the Directorate continue to operate Supervision and Appraisal processes rather than *My Time* in order to meet Regulatory and Registration requirements.

Embedding the *My Time/My Time Extra* programme and training managers to deliver effective conversations is one of the actions within the Workforce Development Strategy 2021-2024, with a timescale of Q3 2021-2022. The process is embedded and the training needs now needs to take place.

Within Customer Services all staff have regular 121's and all end of year *My Times* booked with team members.

Action 4

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

Progress

HR and Communications will continue to support service areas as appropriate.

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

Updating HR policies and procedures is one of the actions within the Workforce Development Strategy 2021-24, with a timescale of Q3 2021-2022. Work is ongoing to achieve this target.

Annexes

Annexe 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment Toolkit

Annexe 2 – Buddy Scheme Survey Responses

Annexe 3 – Vulnerable People Survey Responses

Annexe 4 – Guidance - Welsh Language Standards Manual for CCBC Works Signage

CONTACT

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ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

This report is also available in other languages and formats on request via the contact details above.