

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Thursday, 21 March 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Strategic Equality Plan 2024-25
Purpose of Report:	To seek Cabinet approval of updated Strategic Equality Plan for the period 2024-25
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, Equalities and Regulatory Services
Responsible Officer:	Tom Bowring – Director of Corporate Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	The Strategic Equality Plan is relevant to all wards, individual Member consultation is therefore not appropriate
Policy Framework:	This is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Strategic Equality Plan sets out the Council's strategic equality objectives. The Council is required to do this under the Equality Act 2010 and the specific duties for Wales. The equality objectives frame how the Council will deliver its equalities vision for 'working together for a fairer future' and support the Council's corporate objectives for the next year. • Cabinet recently approved a proposal to engage with key stakeholders about keeping the equality objectives of the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 for another year. This was so a detailed review of recently published research and information could be undertaken and to develop a new set alongside the development of our corporate wellbeing objectives for 2025 – 2030. • The Council undertook engagement with key stakeholders and there was support for maintaining the current objectives for a further year. There were some suggestions that have informed some additional actions that have been included in the updated Strategic Equality Plan 2024 - 2025. • There will be a further review of the Strategic Equality Plan, the equality objectives and associated actions during the next twelve months. This will be done in alignment with the review of the corporate wellbeing objectives. 	

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approve the revised Strategic Equality Plan 2024 - 2025 (contained in Appendix A) and notes the Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix B).
2. That Cabinet uses the Urgent Decision procedure as set out in Section 15.14 of the Council's Constitution so that the revised Strategic Equality Plan can be published by 31st March 2024 (four years after publication of the last Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024).

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure that the Council has reviewed and has in place a Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2025 with equality objectives that reflect the work being undertaken across the Council to improve equality and fairness in the Vale of Glamorgan.
2. To meet the obligation to review the Council's equality objectives no less than every four years.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Equality Act 2010 includes a public sector equality duty ('the general duty'). The general duty requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.
- 1.2 In addition to this, the Council (as a listed body under the Act) must comply with the specific duties in Wales, designed to help performance of the general duty and to aid transparency.
- 1.3 The specific duties in Wales cover a range of requirements, including the requirement to draw up and publish a strategic equality plan which includes equality objectives.
- 1.4 The Strategic Equality Plan is a live document and is the vehicle for containing information about equality work that the Council does. It can be updated on a regular basis as new or updated information becomes available, or links can be created within it to allow people to access the information elsewhere.
- 1.5 There is a requirement to publish an equality objective to address any gender pay gap identified or else publish reasons why it has not done so. It must have due regard to the need to have objectives to address the causes of any pay differences that seem reasonably likely to be related to any of the protected characteristics. The Plan has an objective to deal with pay gaps.
- 1.6 The current Plan was developed in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the specific duties for Wales. It sets out the Council's equality objectives and how it will deliver them.
- 1.7 Progress is monitored annually and reported on in the Annual Equality Monitoring Report. This is scrutinised by the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee. This report is published on the Council's website.

- 1.8** The Equality and Human Rights Commission monitors compliance.
- 1.9** Equality objectives must be reviewed no less than every four years, and the Council published its current equality objectives in 2020.
- 1.10** The equality objectives need to be reviewed and objectives for beyond March 2024 to be agreed and in place by 31st March 2024.
- 1.11** This report seeks approval for the equality objectives (slightly amended in scope) and some additional actions for the period 2024-2025 (Appendix A).

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** A Strategic Equality Plan is the device used to detail information that demonstrates that the Council is meeting the general duty. It must include information on a number of prescribed issues, such as its arrangements to identify and collect relevant equality and employment information, arrangements for assessing the likely impact on protected groups of any policies and practices, and how the authority will promote knowledge and understanding of the general and specific duties among employees.
- 2.2** A key element of the Strategic Equality Plan is the equality objectives. The Council is required to publish objectives for each of the protected characteristics or to publish reasons why not. It is possible to have a smaller number of equality objectives which benefit a number of protected characteristics. The Council must justify where there is not an objective for each protected characteristic.
- 2.3** To formulate the Council's equality objectives for 2020 – 2024, national research from the Equality and Human Rights Commission ('Is Wales Fairer? 2018') was used which took account of the Welsh Government's equality objectives and listened to the views of members of the Equality Consultative Forum on our current equality objectives. This information was considered in the context of the Council's corporate wellbeing objectives. Areas were prioritised where it was believed the most impact could be made. It was believed this was a realistic approach given the resources available.
- 2.4** To update the 2024 – 2025 Plan and produce the Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2025, engagement took place with key stakeholders to gauge support for maintaining the equality objectives for another year. There were a number of reasons for doing this.
- 2.5** It is seen as important that an updated Strategic Equality Plan remains closely linked to the Council's corporate wellbeing objectives, but the timescale is out of kilter with this as the Corporate Plan runs from 2020 – 2025. New corporate wellbeing objectives will be developed in the next year, and it is important that the equality objectives continue to align with these.
- 2.6** Much has changed since the development of the Council's current equality objectives. These changes include Brexit, Covid, the Black Lives Matter movement, the publication of the Welsh Government plans, including its Anti-racist Wales Action Plan, LGBT+ Action Plan, and its Locked Out report from which a Disability Action Plan is anticipated to be published.

- 2.7** It is important to inform the Strategic Equality Plan with robust data and research. This is needed to ensure the Council’s equality objectives make a meaningful impact on areas of known disadvantage nationally and locally. As part of this, national research and information is taken into account including the Equality and Human Right’s research series ‘How Fair is Wales?’ and the Welsh Government’s equality objectives.
- 2.8** The latest ‘[Is Wales Fairer? 2023](#)’ report was published on 16th November 2023. The Council would like the opportunity to thoroughly consider this with Council Services in conjunction with developing the Council’s corporate wellbeing objectives for 2025 – 2030.
- 2.9** The Welsh Government’s equality objectives are taken into consideration. Its proposed equality objectives and principles of approach were published on 13th November 2023 for consultation. Within this document, it states: ‘We hope other Public Sector organisations in Wales will develop their own, tailored, local level objectives to match the national approach.’
- 2.10** The Council’s own local research needs to be taken into account which included the most recent public opinion survey ‘Let’s Talk about Life in the Vale.’ The results of this survey have only recently been analysed and will be considered by Services as new corporate wellbeing and equality objectives are developed in the coming year.
- 2.11** The Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2025 sets out the steps the Council intend to take to meet each objective and how it is intended to monitor progress. There are strategic level actions for each of the equality objectives.
- 2.12** There has been a slight amendment to the scope of one of these objectives to reflect a change in circumstances – to reduce the gender pay gap rather than to continue to reduce it to acknowledge that it has recently increased.
- 2.13** We have added information and some actions in response to feedback received during the engagement process. This feedback related to: employment opportunities for people with physical disabilities; making a reference to the Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Welsh in Education Strategic Plan as well as the intersection of Welsh language use with other protected characteristics; our work to become a County of Sanctuary.
- 2.14** Actions have been added where the Council knows there is relevant work being undertaken. This includes: the Council’s Participation Strategy; Older Persons Housing Strategy; workplace inclusivity for people with disabilities; greater inclusivity for global majority and ethnic minority colleagues; supporting our staff networks; involvement of elected Member Champions in equality work; and school Strategic Equality Plans.
- 2.15** For ease of reference, additional actions have been listed in Appendix C.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** The Strategic Equality Plan contributes to the national Well-being Goals as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act through the delivery of its strategic equality objectives.
- 3.2** The equality objectives were developed in accordance with the five ways of working.
- 3.3** The involvement of partners and stakeholders in the development and delivery of the equality objectives is important as is the need to work in a more integrated way, recognising the connections across Council services and with other partners.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no direct climate change or nature implications associated with this report. Climate change can have a greater impact on certain groups such as older people, women, poorer people, disabled people, and people in poor health particularly those with respiratory difficulties. In this context, the Council's work to address inequality is important.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. The equality objectives are in line with the Council's Corporate Plan objectives which reflect the Council's priorities for 2020 to 2025. This informs the way resources are allocated, whilst also taking account of the availability of resources to deliver it.
- 5.2** The outcome of the Council's budget consultation and revenue settlement from the Welsh Government will inform the content and extent of delivery of the plan in coming years.

Employment

- 5.3** There are no direct employment implications associated with this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.4** The Council is required to review its strategic equality objectives no less than every four years.
- 5.5** The equality impact assessment for the 2020 – 2024 Strategic Equality Plan has been updated and can be found in Appendix B.

- 5.6** The equality impact assessment confirms that the impact of the equality objectives is anticipated to be positive. It acknowledges that there has been a focus on particular protected characteristics where the evidence supports this.

6. Background Papers

[Vale of Glamorgan Strategic Equality Plan 2020 - 2024](#)



Working together for a fairer future

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's
Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2025

Draft

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Working together for a fairer future

The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024 – 2025

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Introduction

We are pleased to be introducing the Council's Strategic Equality Plan for 2024 - 2025 – **'Working together for a fairer future'**.

You will note that we have set out a plan for the next twelve months only. We have engaged with key stakeholders to propose that we maintain our current equality objectives with some slight amendments to their scope and updating of the actions related to them. This proposal has been supported. We have chosen to do this because we want to develop a new set of equality objectives alongside the development of our new corporate wellbeing objectives for 2025 – 2030.

Amongst other data and research, we will take into account the analysis of our recent 'Let's Talk Life about in the Vale' public opinion survey, the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'How Fair is Wales? 2023' and the Welsh Government's equality objectives. We believe that developing the priorities for our Strategic Equality Plan in this way will better align them with our business and strengthen their impact.

Councils play an important role in ensuring essential services reach every member of our society, taking into account a range of needs. This Plan sets out the equality agenda for the Vale of Glamorgan Council for the next year. With partners and stakeholders, we look forward to working together to continue to deliver our vision of a fairer future.

It is only by working together, listening and respecting each other that we can successfully meet the many challenges facing our communities and public services today. To achieve this Plan and to meet the diverse needs of our communities, we will need to work in partnership. This partnership working is wide ranging. It includes working with families, children and young people, our partners in health, the Police and the Fire service, as well other public sector bodies, the third sector, Town and Community Councils, our trade union colleagues, and our communities.

In this Plan, we present our strategic equality objectives in the context of the Council's current four well-being objectives. We believe these complement each other and that collectively they will deliver our local well-being outcomes and the seven national well-being goals:

Draft Well-being Objectives	Draft Strategic Equality Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To work with and for our communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions. • Reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2021, and report on both annually. • Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2025. • Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2025. • Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support people at home and in their community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. • Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work

	<p>impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

The Vale of Glamorgan is a diverse area comprising very different communities with different aspirations, needs and concerns. Our Plan sets out how the Council will work to meet those needs, address concerns and help people of all protected groups achieve their aspirations. Whether you live or work in one of our towns or in one of our more rural communities, we will continue to strive to make life better and to play our part in addressing the issues that affect the people living, working, and visiting here.

We are an ambitious and forward-thinking authority. I am confident that staff, elected members, the community and all those with a stake in the Vale can continue ‘working together for a fairer future’. In this way, we can ensure we all achieve ‘Strong Communities with a Bright Future’.

Councillor Lis Burnett

Rob Thomas

Leader of the Council

Chief Executive

Purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan

The purpose of this Strategic Equality Plan is to describe what the Council is doing to fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (general duty) and the specific duties for Wales.

The public sector equality duty covers eight protected characteristics:

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

The duty applies to marriage and civil partnership, but only for having due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

The Equality Act lists councils as public authorities with certain duties. This means that when we carry out our public function, we must have due regard to the need to:

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

Having due regard for advancing equality involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages experienced by people due to their protected characteristics;

- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people; and
- encouraging people with protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The specific duties set out the steps that public authorities in Wales must take to demonstrate that they are paying due regard to the general duty. They cover:

Objectives	Staff training
Strategic Equality Plans	Procurement
Engagement	Annual reporting
Assessing impact	Publishing
Equality information	Welsh Ministers' reporting
Employment information	Review
Pay differences	Accessibility

This Strategic Equality Plan explains what action we take, and plan to take, to meet these duties.

To identify the priorities, we have used research from the Equality & Human Rights Commission and feedback from residents and organisations working in the Vale of Glamorgan. We also took into account the strategic equality objectives of the Welsh Government. We plan to use this information to help us improve the way we provide services and employ people.

Socio-economic Duty

On 31 March 2021, the Socio-economic Duty came into force in Wales. It improves decision making and helps those who are socio-economically disadvantaged. We have updated our

equality impact assessment process to reflect this and included actions related to this in the Plan. We will further strengthen this as we develop our equality objectives in the next year.

Welsh Language

We have a separate Welsh Language Promotion Strategy and Welsh in Education Strategic Plan to identify our priorities and actions for the Welsh language and Welsh speakers. Welsh speakers are people with protected characteristics and we will need to consider the intersectional impact on people of any proposals and plans that we have in place. Our equality impact assessment process is being updated to strengthen this consideration.

Context

The world is changing rapidly and the context for this Plan similarly changes regularly. What remains the same is the need for the Council to engage with the community and plan for the future, to work with our partners and embrace change. We must also consider how our actions and decisions will affect future generations.

Opportunities and experiences vary across the area with people living in some areas experiencing disadvantage and deprivation. In addition to this we have an ageing population and we need to ensure that services can meet the changing needs of the population as they grow older. We need to think about what services we provide and how we provide them. We must consider the diverse needs of the population whether that be due to their protected characteristics, financial circumstances, or one of the many other reasons that can affect what services and support people need.

Since we agreed the last Strategic Equality Plan in 2020, there have been many changes that have impacted upon people's lives including Covid, the cost of living crisis, the Black Lives Matter movement. The Welsh Government has published a number of plans such as the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan for Wales, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales and Age friendly Wales. There is some reflection of these priorities in this plan and we will further develop our thinking around these in the coming year as we develop the next set of equality objectives.

The Vale of Glamorgan and our Council

We want to make sure that everyone in the Vale of Glamorgan has fair and equal access to our services. We also want them to receive fair and consistent treatment in their dealings and employment with us.

The principles described in the general duty must underpin the wide range of services that we provide. These include housing, education, social care, and libraries as well as looking after our coast, parks and gardens.

The Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024–2025 links with the Corporate Plan 2020-2025.

The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision for the Vale of Glamorgan, our values and our main priorities. The priorities of the Corporate Plan will help make communities in the Vale of Glamorgan more equal. The equality objectives in this Strategic Equality Plan support this work and it is for this reason that the objectives of both plans are aligned. The equality objectives also align with the Council's Public Participation Strategy.

Vision and values

Our Council's vision is '**Strong communities with a bright future**'.

We have a set of corporate values that underpin our work: ambitious; open; together; and proud. Here are what they mean when we are thinking about equality and working together to build a fairer future.

Ambitious Forward thinking, embracing new ways of working and investing in our future.

For equality, this means supporting people to achieve their potential and a good life for themselves whatever their background or protected characteristics.

Open Open to different ideas and being accountable for the decisions we take.

For equality, this means talking to people and organisations that can help us understand the issues and barriers for people with protected characteristics. We can then take these into account when we are making our decisions.

Together Working together as a team that engages with our customers and partners, respects diversity and is committed to quality services.

For equality, this means working with partners to deliver services that meet the diverse needs of our residents and communities.

Proud Proud of the Vale of Glamorgan: proud to serve our communities and to be part of the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

For equality, this means that everybody feels that they are living in a community where they feel included, can be proud of who they are and the part they play in making the Vale of Glamorgan a good place to live.

Our values are consistent with the five ways of working central to the Well-being of Future Generations Act. They are long term, they work together, and involve working with others. Our values will support a greater focus on prevention as we work to deliver our vision.

Our equality priorities take into account the Well-being of Future Generations Act and in particular will help us to contribute to the Welsh Government's well-being goals, including creating a more equal Wales.

Developing this Plan

A variety of sources have been used to gather the information needed to produce this plan and the equality objectives. These include:

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission's national research reports 'Is Wales Fairer?'
- information from Council documents such as the Corporate Plan;
- local information and data;
- consultation;
- feedback from people representative of one or more of the protected groups through engagement and consultation between May 2019 and January 2020 and December 2023 to February 2024;
- equality objectives of the Welsh Government;

- information from the Equality and Human Rights Commission Wales.

This information, together with national evidence from research, has shaped the action that will be taken to achieve the Council's equality objectives between 2020 and 2025.

The following information about the local population provides some of the context for what needs to be achieved. This data is drawn from a range of external sources including the Office for National Statistics, Data Cymru and Stats Wales.

The most robust data available for the Vale of Glamorgan is data from the 2021 Census. Data is available for the Vale of Glamorgan from the Annual Population Survey 2019. Data is also available for a number of protected characteristics at a regional level from the Annual Population Survey. The Office for National Statistics produce both the Census and Annual Population Survey.

Equality Data

Ethnicity

The 2021 Census estimated that 131,800 people lived in the Vale of Glamorgan. Of these, the majority, 124,800 (94.6%) identified as White. 2,987 (2.3%) identified as Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups, 2,807 (2.1%) identified as Asian or Asian British, 624 (0.5%) identified as Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British. The percentage of people who identified their ethnic group within the "Other" category ("Arab" or "Any other ethnic group") increased from 0.3% in 2011 to 0.5% in 2021.

Nationality

Respondents are able to select multiple answers in response to the question of nationality in the Census. The 2021 Census estimated that of people in the Vale of Glamorgan, 55.5% or 73,276 identified with a 'Welsh only identity' and 21.1% or 27,805 identified as 'British only identity' and 2.5% or 3,357 identified as another nationality only.

Main Language

According to the 2021 Census, 98.2% or 125,798 people aged three years and over in the Vale of Glamorgan spoke English or Welsh as their main language. The next highest Main language at 0.4% was 'Other European languages (EU)' – this includes European languages such as French, German and Spanish.

Welsh Language

According to the 2021 Census, it was estimated that 13.3% of people in the Vale of Glamorgan could speak, read or write in Welsh. This is an increase from 10.8% or 17,047 people over 3 in 2011 with the Vale of Glamorgan being one of only four local authorities in Wales to see an increase (all other areas have seen a decrease).

Disability

The 2021 Census, 19.9% of respondents identified as disabled. Of these, 11% identified as disabled with 'day-to-day activities limited a little and 8.9% as disabled with 'day-to-day activities limited a lot'. 35.3% of households identified as having a disabled person in the household.

Age

The median age of the population in the Vale of Glamorgan was 44 years.

Between 2011 and 2021, there was an increase of 24.9% in people aged 65 and over. In 2021, it was estimated that 22% of the Vale of Glamorgan's population was aged 65 and over.

The Vale of Glamorgan has seen an increase of 4.3% in children aged under 15 years. In 2021, it was estimated that 18.6% of the population was aged 15 years and under.

Gender

The 2022 mid-year population estimates based on the 2021 Census estimated that 69,124 (52%) of the population were female and 64,368 (48%) were male.

Gender Reassignment

Gender identity refers to a person's sense of their own gender, whether someone is a man, women or another category such as non-binary. This may or may not be the same as their sex registered at birth. This was a voluntary question asked for the first time through Census 2021. Of those who answered the question on gender identity in the Vale of Glamorgan, 94.5% of people aged 16 years and over selected that they have 'a gender identity the same as their sex registered at birth', 0.36% of people selected that they have 'a gender identity different from their sex registered at birth', the remaining 5.17% chose not to answer the question.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term covering sexual identity, attraction, and behaviour. For an individual respondent, these may not be the same. This was a voluntary question asked for

the first time through Census 2021. Of those who answered the question on sexual orientation in the Vale of Glamorgan, 90.3% of people aged 16 years and over selected 'straight or heterosexual', 3.07% selected a 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Other (LGB+)' orientation, the remaining 6.6% chose not to answer the question.

Religion or Belief

Of the 124,397 people who chose to answer the voluntary religious question, the highest proportion, 47.9% or 63,164 people, answered that they had no religion. In 2021, 44.1% or 58,237 people answered that they were Christian. The next largest religious affiliation was Muslim at 0.9% and 1,205 people.

Marital Status

In 2021, 47.4% or 50,928 people in the Vale of Glamorgan were married or in a registered civil partnership (a slight fall from 48.9% in 2011).

Pregnancy and Maternity

Little data is available on pregnancy and maternity. In 2022, the most up-to-date data available, there were 1,171 live births in the Vale of Glamorgan.

According to the Office of National Statistics, in 2021, there were 824,983 conceptions for women of all ages in England and Wales, this is the first increase in the last six years. Women aged 30 to 34 years had the highest number and conception rate for the fifth year in a row and the lowest percentage of conceptions leading to abortion. The conception rate for women aged under 18 years in England and Wales has more than halved since 2011 when it was 30.9 conceptions per 1,000 women of the same age; in 2021 it was 13.2 per 1,000 women of the same age.

Socio-economic

The Office for National Statistics data published in February 2024 shows that:

- The employment rate was 76.6% for ages 16 to 64. Employment in The Vale of Glamorgan has decreased compared with the previous year. The Vale of Glamorgan's employment rate was higher than across Wales as a whole in the year ending September 2023.
- The unemployment rate was 32.2% for people aged 16+. Unemployment (people looking for work) has risen since a year earlier. The most recent unemployment rate for The Vale of Glamorgan was lower than across Wales as a whole.
- The Claimant Count was 2.9% for people aged 16 - 64. The Claimant Count was slightly lower in December 2023 compared with a year earlier. The [Claimant Count](#) measures the number of people who are claiming unemployment-related benefits.
- Economic inactivity rate was 22.8% for people aged 16 to 64. Economic inactivity has increased since the previous year. These are people who are neither employed nor seeking work.

Working to support equality

Our Council

The information below provides some key facts about the Council, its resources and how the organisation works to support equality.

- To support the services we deliver, the Council relies on a skilled workforce that includes teachers, engineers and social workers.
- In total, the Council employs over 5,000 staff, including those employed in schools.
- In the Staff Survey 2022 76.7% of staff either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I am proud to work for the Vale of Glamorgan Council'. 68.2% of people either agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the Vale of Glamorgan Council as a good place to work.
- There are 55 schools across the Vale of Glamorgan, including 7 Welsh medium schools.
- The Council has nearly 4,000 homes.
- There are 54 elected councillors including the Cabinet, made-up of the Leader of the Council and seven other Councillors (five women, three men).

It is clear that the public sector will go through a period of significant change over the next five years. How we work, what is expected of us and the level of resource available to us will be subject to many changes.

Our duty is to ensure that we continue to deliver services to the most vulnerable members of our community, that young people have the best start in life and that the Vale is safe, clean and an area where people still want to live, work and visit.

The objectives and actions detailed in this Strategic Equality Plan provide the framework for our activities over the next year, working with and for our local communities to meet their diverse needs and aspirations.

Training

We provide equality training so that staff know how to provide a fair service that meets the needs of the diverse range of people using it. The corporate training provided includes:

- Equality awareness
- Equality impact assessment
- Lesbian, gay and bisexual awareness
- Transgender awareness
- Race awareness
- British Sign Language awareness

From time to time , we arrange other training and awareness sessions such as race equality awareness. In addition to this equality training, equality issues are covered in other corporate training, such as recruitment training.

Assessing Impact

A process is in place to evaluate the likely impact of policies or practices being proposed , reviewed or revised on protected groups and people experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. The process helps the Council to consider the impact of our work on each of the protected groups.

Staff are encouraged to collect and analyse data to see how people are using Council services. We try to improve on this each year by increasing the number of services that collect data and

encouraging better analysis of data. Staff can use this information as part of their evidence base in equality impact assessments.

This process is used, for example, to assess the likely impact of policies and practices including the Corporate Plan and the annual budget. We think about whether there is a risk that our decisions are likely to have a significant impact on protected groups. If we can see that there might be one, we carry out a full assessment of impact.

Where there is a significant impact, details are published on the Council's website.

We have updated this process to include consideration of socio-economic impact and we are in the process of strengthening consideration of impact on Welsh speakers.

Examples of good practice

We are committed to advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between different people. We carry out a wide range of work that contributes to this.

Here are some examples of our work.

- We support staff networks: GLAM - our network for lesbian, gay, bisexual trans and non-binary (LGBTQI+) colleagues; Diverse – our network for global majority and ethnic minority colleagues; and Abl – our network for colleagues with disabilities.
- We have Wellbeing Champions. The role of the Wellbeing Champion is:
 - promoting health campaigns such as World Mental Health Day and Stress Awareness Day;
 - encouraging colleagues to participate in the Council's wellbeing initiatives;
 - involvement in events and collaborative working with other Champions across the Council and other organisations;
 - role modelling and promoting a health culture within the workplace;

- organising activities such as lunch-time walks, book club or hobby group;
 - signposting colleagues to relevant services.
- We have run workshops for corporate and school staff on race awareness.
 - We are actively working towards greater race inclusivity, working within relevant frameworks to guide our work so that we are informed by people's lived experience. Race Equality Matters has awarded us Bronze Trailblazer and Safe Space Plus Trailblazer status.
 - We have held Safe Space meetings between our Diverse Staff Network and our Senior Leadership Team to discuss race issues and agree priority actions.
 - We are actively working towards greater inclusivity of lesbian, gay, bisexual trans and non-binary people, working within relevant frameworks, to guide our work so that we are informed by people's lived experience. We are a Stonewall Diversity Champion. We have been awarded Silver for our Workplace Equality Index submission.
 - We work with partners to provide job opportunities.
 - We hold an annual Holocaust Memorial Day event.
 - We support the Vale 50+ Forum. This is a very active public engagement group that offers a voice for people over 50 years of age.
 - The Vale of Glamorgan's largest town, Barry, has been awarded 'Dementia Friendly Town' status by the Alzheimer's Society. We have an active steering group to make sure we achieve our action plan. We have a significant number of trained Dementia friends.
 - We have a digital inclusion working group developing a strategy to get more people on line. Our library staff are digital champions who are able to help the public with their queries. The public can access computer suites in libraries. The Adult Community Learning team and

libraries offer a range of digital inclusion training programmes. We have improved wi-fi access in sheltered homes and plan on doing this in care homes.

- We provide Greenlinks community transport in rural and urban areas. This includes buses that can be used easily by disabled people. Greenlinks helps people without transport to access services and to interact socially.
- We provide a bus to Dinas Powys Voluntary Concern, a grass roots community support service. This helps to transport people to a new medical centre which is not easily accessible.
- We have TREV (The Reassurance and Engagement Vehicle) that helps us take information about safety out into the community.
- We have an annual leave purchase scheme in place and are piloting changes to our flex time system to give staff greater flexibility in managing their work-life balance.

We are committed to continuing with this work. More examples can be found in our [annual equality reports](#) published on our website.

Equality objectives – achievements

Between 2020 and 2024, good progress was made against each of the ten equality objectives. The following provides a summary of what has been done for each.

Strategic Equality Objective 1

Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.

Contact centre - ContactOneVale

There were 171,986 phone calls to the C1V call centre between April 2022 and March 2023. The average wait time was 327 seconds. There were also around 35,000 emails to C1V. Approximately 87% of customer service enquiries were resolved at first contact.

Public Participation Strategy

The Communications team published our Public Participation Survey in May 2022 and have made strides in establishing an internal network to coordinate the Council's participation work. This includes representatives from key corporate teams and other services such as the Youth Service.

The Public Participation Strategy outlines the Council's current position on engagement and consultation. It sets out how we will be diverse in our engagement methods to provide as many stakeholders as possible the opportunity to participate and get involved with the decision-making process. We want people to be able to shape what we do and how we do it.

We aim to use a variety of methods and means to engage with our stakeholders including face-to-face sessions, Zoom webinars, and social media. We continue to explore new and innovative ways to connect with the public.

The Strategy ensures that we bring all the Council's consultation, engagement and participation activities together into a single, easily accessible online hub, with the long-term objective of developing a portal that joins together all pathways for participation in the Vale.

Consultations

We have engaged with residents of the Vale of Glamorgan throughout 2022-23 and held several consultations including:

- Local Development Plan
- Recycling and Waste Management Strategy
- Active Travel scheme proposals
- Keep Wales Tidy services
- Wellbeing Plan
- Penarth Pier and Esplanade
- Penarth Food Pod and Information Hub
- Draft budget proposals

Responses to the draft budget proposals were considered when putting forward final budget proposals to Cabinet.

We held an in-person event at the Civic Offices which was well attended by tenants interested in getting involved in more engagement activity.

Age Friendly

The new Age Friendly Vale Officer has been recruited to focus on developing the Vale 50+ Strategy and progressing the application to achieve Age Friendly status. The Age Friendly Vale Officer has held events to continue to engage with older people and members of the Vale 50+ Forum, including the Festive Coffee Morning in December and other 'warm space' events.

Electoral Services

We work hard to reach various demographics. To encourage eligible residents of the Vale of Glamorgan to register to vote, we continued to undertake a variety of activities to ensure everyone can register to vote. Activities include the following:

- We used social media campaigns for International Youth Day and Local Democracy Week.
- We facilitated a point of contact in each Vale of Glamorgan care home to ensure that vulnerable adults can register without barriers.
- We use the weekly movement sheets provided to us to by the Homelessness Department so we can encourage homeless residents to register to vote. We started an incentive of £10 shopping voucher for any successful registration for anyone in homeless or supported accommodation.
- We distribute all our social media output for sharing to the Vale of Glamorgan's Regional Resettlement Officer, who works with Syrian and Afghan nationals who have resettled in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- We have used social media and a resources pack for schools which was shared for distribution on Google classroom and other platforms to encourage registration for young people.
- We have utilised bus stop advertising aimed at young people and qualifying foreign nationals.
- We ran a competition to encourage young people between 14-17 to register.
- We carry out an annual house to house canvass to enable anyone that might need assistance to have the opportunity to register to vote.

In addition, we have engaged with disabilities groups and charities for feedback on enhanced accessibility features at polling stations following implementation of the Elections Act. This Act introduces Voter ID in polling stations. We have included an information about this in a flyer

with all council tax bills to every household in the Vale of Glamorgan. This has been particularly helpful to older residents as we have received most enquiries about Voter ID from this group.

We have successfully applied for funding from Welsh Government on regional level with Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf to purchase video equipment and training for Public Awareness Offices. They will create 'How to Vote' videos aimed at specific groups including young voters, voters with disabilities, and qualifying foreign nationals.

Social Services – Children and Young People

In 2022/23, we redeveloped our foster carer surveys to produce three separate surveys: recruitment and induction; training and development; and support. We created more detailed questionnaires for the adoption service to ensure questions are more reflective of the experiences of adopters throughout their adoption journey. We continue to utilise a wide variety of communication methods to ensure that Flying Start families remain informed and involved. We have provided opportunities for parents to attend drop-in sessions at nursery settings.

We have included young people in the recruitment and interview process for Children and Young Peoples Services operational managers.

We have included young people attending Ysgol y Deri in our engagement process to get their experiences and opinions on social workers, activities, and professional support. We worked with their parents to explore their views about support and communication throughout their involvement. We consulted with involved professionals to obtain a full picture and feedback of our services.

For the 14 Plus Team, we expanded the question areas to include level of involvement in planning for the future, communication, and social worker contact. We discussed signposting and support from other involved services.

We ensure all consultation and engagement communication is in plain English and available in easy read format. Citizen engagement is important to ensuring that our services are appropriate, effective and that we listen to our service users.

Social Services – Adult Services

Members of Vale People First are on the interview panel for all social care staff and manager appointments within the Learning Disabilities team. Vale People First are also key partners in monitoring the Supported Living Contract.

We ensure we have a person with lived experience on the interview panel at all mental health and substance misuse appointments. We have developed a proposal for a peer-led research project looking at people’s experiences of being assessed under the Mental Health Act, with the aim of delivery in 2023-24.

We engage with our service users to ensure that all citizens have an opportunity to have a say in improving the service they receive. We complete a feedback form in all consultation reports. We engage with users in Adult Placements, New Horizons day opportunities, residential services, and Vale Community Resource Service. We continue to explore whether citizens feel that they have more autonomy and choice over decisions that affect their care, and that methods we use to engage citizens and their families are open, accessible, appropriate, and interactive.

We worked with other local authorities and led on the Regional Medication Policy which was finalised in September 2022. Within this, we considered the support we give to maintain service users’ independence.

Replacement Local Development Plan

We invited residents to complete our ‘Register Your Interest’ form to receive updates on the Replacement Local Development Plan and other consultation exercises. The majority of respondents are white, heterosexual, Christian men with no disabilities who speak English and identify as British. By monitoring this information, we are able to highlight underrepresented

groups to target directly in order to diversify and strengthen the scope of our public engagement.

We have engaged with residents and stakeholders about the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal scoping report and Supplementary Planning Guidance consultation, as well as with members of the Gypsy and Traveller community with Housing colleagues.

Strategic Equality Objective 2

Reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2022, and report on both annually.

We monitor the gender pay gap on a quarterly basis. We have seen a significant decline in the median gender pay gap which we report to the Welsh Government. The mean gender pay gap has remained similar over the last few years. We report on this quarterly through performance indicators and annually through this report.

The gender pay gap has increased slightly from last year. The difference in mean hourly rate between male and female employees is £1.03, an increase from £0.71 last year. The difference in median hourly rate between male and female employees is £1.02. The mean gender pay gap as a percentage of men's pay is 6.38% and the median gender pay gap as a percentage of men's pay is 7.06%, which is less than the UK median gender pay gap of 8.3%.

We also monitor the ethnicity pay gap on a regular basis, reporting as part of the Council's Quarterly Performance Indicators. The difference between White British and ethnic minorities' mean average hourly pay is £0.65. The difference between median average hourly pay is £0.37. The mean ethnicity pay gap is 4.20%. The median ethnicity pay gap is 2.66. Both have increased from last year.

The last pay review in 2019 in relation to the revised NJC spine had a positive impact on the gender pay gap. We are undertaking work to review the current pay structure and we will again consider both the gender and ethnicity pay gaps. When recruiting to roles, we consider

where we advertise to ensure we are getting representation across all applicant groups. We continue to work on improving our diversity profile.

We increased salaries to the equivalent of the Real Living Wage and implemented new pay awards across the organisation. We agreed to increase pay for staff on first two grades of Council's scale to £9.90 per hour from £9.60 and £9.79 per hour.

Strategic Equality Objective 3

Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2024.

We have explored how we reach different groups in relation to posting job adverts such as using different outlets and more varied imagery. We will continue to work with our staff networks to look at ways in which we can attract a more diverse range of applicants. We plan to consult with both internal and external groups to identify barriers to employment.

Colleagues from Human Resources, Communities for Work, Adult Services, Equalities, and the Integrated Autism Service came together for a Disability Task and Finish Group to discuss how the Council could better promote itself to applicants with disabilities as well as improving conditions and retention levels for current staff with disabilities. The overarching aim is for the Council to become an employer of choice. In the group, we discussed the application and interview process, and what changes could be made to make the process easier for applicants with disabilities. We also discussed and implemented actual changes such as adding the Communities for Work banner to the Jobs page on the Vale of Glamorgan website:

 <p>Cymunedau am Waith Communities for Work</p>	<p>Need help with applying for these jobs? For employment support and further advice and guidance please contact Communities for Work:</p> <p> 07860784880 / 07874635237  c4w-barry@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk</p>
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We promoted National Apprenticeship Week in February 2023. We held a Youth Event in the Memo with the Communities for Work team to showcase the wide range of employment and training options for young adults in the Vale of Glamorgan. We offer a variety of apprenticeship and work experience opportunities through community investment opportunities such as the council housebuilding scheme. This has helped enhance peoples' skills and readiness for work. Opportunities are matched to local people via the Community Investment Team and are targeted towards individuals participating in employability initiatives.

The Adult Community Learning team continue to monitor equalities data of users to help identify individuals or groups who may require additional support, to inform the Curriculum Offer, and to offer more learner hours and out of classroom activities.

We have run an Employability Hub and warm spaces hub to support job seekers and people adversely impacted by the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis. We have run employability events for focused groups including young people, over 50s, and Welsh speakers. We continue to hold our Men's Shed group and social speaking groups for ESOL learners.

Social Services

Communities for Work have been engaged to help open training and employment opportunities for citizens that attend the Day Service, following engagement with service users.

We have worked in partnership with colleagues in Prevention and Partnership which has resulted in securing funding through the Shared Prosperity Fund for three supported employment mentors to work with people with mental health problems, physical and / or learning disabilities, sensory needs, and autism to develop skills and confidence to secure voluntary and paid employment.

Strategic Equality Objective 4

Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2024.

We continue our work as a Stonewall Diversity Champion using the Stonewall Workforce Equality Index to guide our work.

We continue to monitor and evaluate improvements towards further inclusion of our LGBTQ+ workforce. We take part each year in the Stonewall Workplace Equalities Index. We were awarded a silver award for 2022/23 and ranked 126th, with a score of 60.5 out of 200.

We have two established staff networks in the Vale of Glamorgan Council: GLAM and Diverse. We are working to support the establishment of a new Disability staff network, Abl, which has met several times in the last year.

GLAM is our staff network for LGBTQ+ members and allies; Diverse is our network for Black, Asian, global majority and ethnic minority, racialised people and allies; and Abl is the Disability network will be for staff with disabilities, staff with family or friends with disabilities, and allies.

The staff networks provide support and information to members, share knowledge and experiences, consult on Council policies, and help inform training. The networks are important in showing how the Council delivers its corporate values and culture as an inclusive employer of choice.

Throughout the year, we post articles on Staffnet to mark various awareness days and events. These include Black Inclusion Week, National Inclusion Week, Race Equality Week, Pride Month, Black History Month, and specific days like IDAHOBIT, Windrush Day, Transgender Day of Visibility, and Non-Binary Awareness Day. Sharing information about these awareness days and events means we can raise awareness of different groups and minorities, contributing to a

more inclusive work environment. In addition, we ensure relevant equalities-related content on iDev is up-to-date and promoting the right message.

As an outcome from the HR-run Disability Task and Finish Group, we have added the Communities for Work banner to the Jobs page of the Vale of Glamorgan website. We have also re-registered for the Disability confident scheme. These actions show how we strive to be a more inclusive and supportive place of work.

We continue to make wellbeing of staff a priority. We promote staff health and wellbeing through a range of activities and initiatives from remote exercise sessions to online courses. We support colleagues to become wellbeing champions. They promote healthy living and wellbeing. We have opened a wellbeing garden for staff in the Civic Offices providing an outside space to take a break. Over 1300 employees completed the staff wellbeing survey, which is more than previous surveys. This success can be attributed to innovative engagement events to reach staff.

The new political leadership of the Council was agreed in May 2022 with the new Cabinet formed of five women and three men. The Leader stated that the new Cabinet “reflects my desire for better gender balance and diversity not just in politics but all positions of power.” This also reflects the gender balance of the Council’s workforce.

Social workers within the Vale Locality Mental Health Team received co-production training developed in liaison with Cardiff and Vale Action on Mental Health and delivered by a person with lived experience. Following this training, we developed a good practice toolkit for staff to use.

Staff and managers from a number of services including Social Services and Environment attended an interactive race awareness workshop.

Strategic Equality Objective 5

Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

Members have access to iDev where they can find a range of e-learning modules on equality issues. They are also able to access previous sessions and presentations via MemberNet. Information has been provided during the year specifically in relation to race awareness.

We keep Members' training and development under review and arrange to meet identified needs. Equality and diversity training has been mandatory for all members from 2022 with an initial session held in June 2022 as part of the new Member Induction programme. This included information from the staff networks, GLAM and Diverse. Female members attended a Digital Citizen Workshop with Glitch in October 2022. Sessions run by Red Shiny Apple about Equalities in Decision Making and Scrutiny were held for members in October 2022 and January 2023.

The presentations, links and resources from all training are available to members at any time via Membernet.

Strategic Equality Objective 6

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

Vulnerable Groups Team

The Vulnerable Groups Team continues to support children and young people in elective home education (EHE). We provide support for pupils who speak English as an additional language as well as advanced support for pupils in the Syrian Resettlement Programme (SRP) and other ethnic minorities.

The Vulnerable Groups Team operate alongside schools and Careers Wales to ensure all pupils in the SRP access education and careers support. We assist young people in the SRP with the need to accelerate their learning, access training and gain employment. Our aim is to raise the achievement for all pupils, whether they are from a black, Asian or ethnic minority background or not.

In July 2022, the Vulnerable Groups Team launched Education Workshops for Parents to help parents from Syria and Afghanistan understand and become more involved in their children's education. The interpreters and multilingual Learning Support Assistants delivered the workshops in the parents' home languages. The first workshop took place at Holton Primary School. It was an enormous success because parents said they felt included. The parents engaged and were interested to know how to support their children's learning in schools in Wales. The parents requested that the Education Workshops took place on a termly basis. In July 2022, the Team re-assessed all targeted pupils in the SRP. The pupils made substantial progress in English language, reading accuracy and comprehension.

A third of the children in the SRP have an identified additional learning need (ALN) and just under half require extra targeted support. Children in Year 11 achieved GCSEs in line with their abilities in Summer 2022 and another has started university. These show significant successes for the support provided by the team.

Social Services – Children and Young People Services (CYPS)

CYPS is delivered based on eligibility for care and support which considers the individual, including their specific characteristics. As such, it is important that we accurately and effectively monitor equalities information in particular age, gender, disability, ethnicity, national identity, and religion. In the last quarter of 2022/23, we started to produce weekly reports for managers to monitor and improve the recording of equalities information on our recording system Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS).

We collate data on all protected characteristics as part of our citizen engagement programme and are looking at how we could include this data in WCCIS. We use data to inform and assist service delivery as well as to report in annual statutory returns to Welsh Government.

The majority of service users are white, British, and English speaking. Slightly more boys than girls are registered. There is a noticeable decrease in the number of children not recording their ethnicity and religion this year. This is a direct result of us introducing weekly monitoring.

Our work has demonstrated that we are providing a high quality of services for individuals and their families. We receive feedback on a wide variety of services. Overall, the individuals we support feel involved in their care planning and the services we provide meet their assessed needs.

We have worked with local leisure centre provision to enable young people to get more access to reduced rate physical activities and support to attend the gym. This is an ongoing concern with further engagement planned.

We continue to provide the following services:

- Families First Advice Line (FFAL)
- Team Around the Family (TAF)
- Vale Parenting Service (VPS)
- Flying Start
- Fostering and adoption services

We ensure that our literature is available in both English and Welsh. We provide interpreters for other languages where required. We work with parents with disabilities, making necessary adjustments to our practices where required.

All members of the Social Services Senior Management Team have attended an interactive Race Awareness workshop hosted by No Boundaries.

Youth Service

We provide social and informal educational opportunities through open access provision to all young people between the ages of 11 and 25. Most of our members are aged between 11 and 16. Members from this age group have grown in number in line with increased activity with Year 7 and 8 children following Covid. There has been a decline in the number of members aged over 17 as there has been a reduction in post-16 NEET provision.

We produce young person friendly documents such as consultation results and feedback and annual reports. We distribute this information through paper copies and digital media.

We have an active participation unit that supports a number of forums and the youth cabinet across the Vale and supports us to consult with protected groups and those hard-to-reach young people.

We are developing a new membership form to improve how we collect equalities data. We have increased opportunities to access Welsh language provision for speakers and learners by working with the Urdd. We continue to seek further opportunities to develop this work. We recognised a lack of older members and we are working on opportunities that are specifically aimed at this group. We recognise that we could do more to engage with ethnic minority groups and are utilising a Welsh government grant to research what this should encompass. This grant will also look to pilot a disability project.

We run an LGBTQ+ youth group, I AM ME. This is a targeted youth club for 13 to 18 year olds who are part of the LGBTQ+ community or allies. I AM ME aims to create a safe space for young people to express themselves, explore their identity and feel a sense of belonging. The group has been promoted at secondary schools in the Vale, including Llantwit Major High's wellbeing event. The group meets weekly in Barry and current membership for the group is approximately 15 members from across the Vale of Glamorgan. In the last year, I AM ME has had several guest speakers including SHOT who spoke with the young people about healthy relationships and safe sex; and Mike Mainwaring from Children in Wales who delivered LGBTQ+ training to the group. Members have taken part in consultation exercises and questionnaires about the Transgender Toolkit and youth homelessness.



I AM ME members also requested pronoun badges. Members and staff across the Vale Youth Service now wear these badges. We obtained a badge making machine so pronoun and flag badges can be made at Youth Service events and sessions.

We also run an 18 plus additional needs youth club - Youthy 18+. Membership is currently around ten young people aged between 18 and 25. Many of our members have a range of additional learning needs (ALN) from mild autism to more profound ALN. Young people can attend with their own support workers if necessary. The aim of this group is to provide older young people with a safe space to meet with their friends, work on life skills such as cooking, college applications, CVs, employment opportunities, and support socialising.

Members worked on the 'Fake Away Project' which aimed to tackle the cost-of-living crisis and provide young people with healthier and cheaper alternatives to fast food. The project has provided them with skills around budgeting, new cooking skills and new recipes. Previous projects also include money management where the young people completed an Agored Cymru accreditation on budgeting and money management, and as a reward the Youth Service paid for the young people to get their provisional driving licenses.

We provide informal Welsh language youth activities. We fund disability dance and Teenscheme activities through our Welsh Government grant funding. This also supports the ongoing development of projects with this group. Our teams work with individuals to assess their needs and work on bespoke activities.

Transgender Toolkit for Schools

We have revised our Transgender Toolkit and Guidance for Schools. We put this out for consultation in February 2023 with different stakeholders such as governors, headteachers, school staff, parents, pupils, and community groups through Participate Vale. Members of the I AM ME youth group also provided feedback. The Toolkit was formally agreed by the Council in January 2024. The toolkit forms part of the suite of guidance documentation that we provide to schools on a range of issues including bullying, safeguarding, and protected characteristics.

School meals

From September 2022 we offered Free School Meals offer to all Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 children. This was extended to all primary school children (Reception, and Years 1 to 6) from April 2023. Both dates were in advance of Welsh Government ambitions.

The continued rollout ensures as many as children as possible will enjoy a healthy free meal in school and contributes towards the Council's cost-of-living support.

Pupil Development Grants

Schools have been proactive in encouraging qualifying parents to apply for Free School Meals and Pupil Development Grants, and we have not seen a decline in applications following universal free school meal entitlement. In fact, we received more Pupil Development Grant applications for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 from September 2022 to March 2023 than a full year's worth of applications from September 2021 to August 2022, 699 compared to 860. This may well reflect the greater financial pressures on families and parents than previous years. Benefits staff have also invited families to claim, identifying cases through reports based on qualifying income.

For the period September 2022 to March 2023, we awarded 3345 Pupil Development Grants (also known as School Essentials Payments), of which 69 were for Children Looked After. A total of £774,750 has been paid out. This is higher than previous years because the Welsh Government provided an additional £100 for each qualifying school year, so £300 for children in Year 7 and £225 for Reception to Year 11. The amounts will revert to £200 and £125 respectively from September 2023.

Bullying

The Additional Learning Needs and Wellbeing team analyse school bullying data to identify trends and to review anti-bullying strategies to address findings. In January 2021, a Model Anti-Bullying policy was provided to all schools within the Vale of Glamorgan. We took into account the Welsh Government's 'Rights, Respect, Equality' 2019 guidance when developing this policy.

The policy not only considers 'unkind' behaviour in the form of traditional bullying but also places significant emphasis on the focus of all forms of bullying. This includes one off prejudice related incidents that focus on protected characteristics.

We will similarly use the Welsh Government Peer on Peer Sexual Harassment action plan in which will set in place clear actions for schools, Local Authority, and Welsh Government in tackling peer on peer sexual harassment along with misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, and biphobia.

In Spring 2022, we developed a 'How to Guide' for schools to assist in tackling peer on peer sexual harassment in secondary school settings. This was in response to the initial Welsh Government action plan. We distributed the guide to all schools to:

- Provide detailed guidance for a school approach for raising awareness, supporting victims, and challenging learners who carry out discriminatory and prejudice behaviour.
- Improve confidence of School and Directorate staff in recognising, supporting, and tackling those affected by discriminatory behaviour.

Analysis of school bullying data captured by the 'My Concern' bespoke ICT system used by Vale schools between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 shows the following headlines:

- We recorded 86 incidents of bullying across all schools.
- The bullying category with highest recorded levels was 'bullying focussed on appearance' (23 records), followed by homophobic/biphobic/transphobic bullying (18 records).
- We recorded a total of 100 'one-off prejudice incidents', the highest recording for a particular category was for 'race' with 58 being recorded.

We are working on producing comparable data on an academic yearly or termly basis.

We actively engage with third sector providers, such as No Boundaries and Barnardo's to support schools in raising awareness of race and other forms of prejudice. Bullies Out have

delivered workshops and training programmes to schools in the Vale of Glamorgan. This continues to be a very successful partnership.

We engaged Barnardo's to deliver awareness training on harmful sexual behaviour to secondary school staff, youth service staff, and Additional Learning Needs staff.

Social Inclusion and Wellbeing

We continue to monitor rates of attendance in relation to protected characteristics, some on a case-by-case basis, to analyse if pupils with protected characteristics have lower attendance rates than expected.

We monitor the rates of attendance for pupils who are entitled to free school meals as this is an indicator of socio-economic disadvantage and helps to promote equality of opportunity.

We analyse and monitor this data at a local authority level, school level, and individual case level. If we identify issues at specific schools around inclusion and protected characteristics, then we implement targeted support and partnership work. We provide bespoke support measures on a case-by-case basis. We undertake multi-agency working to ensure schools receive the appropriate support and signposting to other agencies and professional services.

We are trained by the Resilience Project in supporting mental health needs and offering support to learners who are transitioning or facing difficulties linked to their sexual orientation. We continue to share resources from Mermaids and Stonewall to support learners and their families with this information.

We have used the Elective Home Education (EHE) Welsh Government grant to support EHE learners with vulnerabilities and protected characteristics access support and services.

We have emphasised the need for training related to inclusion and exclusion issues in terms of pastoral care in schools. We have created new Liaison Engagement Officers (LEO) from September 2022 to link schools with help and support for vulnerable families through biweekly LEO surgeries. We are already identifying areas of need that may not previously have come to

the attention of the inclusion team. This approach shows our focus on understanding and meeting the specific needs of vulnerable learners rather than a punitive approach to incidents, in line with the wider Local Authority approach to addressing pupils' needs related to early childhood trauma.

We have created and are rolling out a new training offer that identifies the Welsh Government approach to penal measures and incorporates the use of emotional based school avoidance (EBSA) approaches to embed and enable a way to deal with the rise in learners with anxious and phobic issues and needs. This aligns with revised and updated training on Pastoral support plans. The exclusion training has an enhanced focus on the public sector equality duty and protected characteristics.

The Vulnerable Groups Team started an action research project with six schools to produce case studies on how schools can be actively anti-racist and contribute to the Council Anti Racist Action Plan. The Team developed a portal to track the attainment of looked after children. This portal supports the Vulnerable Groups Team to identify the gaps in progress for looked after children. The Team developed a virtual school to track the attendance of pupils who are refugees and asylum seekers.

We provided all schools with a template to update their Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) which is aligned to the Council's Strategic Equality Plan. The SEP for schools will support them to demonstrate how they are evaluating their school-based programmes and interventions aimed at addressing gaps in progress for vulnerable pupils.

Ysgol y Deri

We have worked with Ysgol y Deri on a Bocs Bwyd project. This will provide site catering for the three Barry Secondary Learning Community projects. Pupils from Ysgol Y Deri will gain first hand work experience in addition to their general studies on the site. A mobile canteen unit has been donated by Morgan Sindall to enable this function to be sustained after project completion. Bocs Boyd and Ysgol Y Deri are also working with the Big Fresh catering company in developing paid work opportunities for young people.

Opportunities

As part of the Sustainable Communities for Learning programme, we are committed to providing top class educational facilities for school pupils and also the wider community.

During the 2022 summer holidays, we provided 4G pitches at Whitmore School free of charge to the Joe Ledley Football Academy who offered discounted rates to their soccer camps. We were also able to provide free lunch and snacks from the Big Fresh Catering Company. This allowed lots of children to attend who otherwise would be excluded due to costs.

420 pupils in five Barry schools participated in Welsh Government's 'Reform of the School Day'. The schools developed a joint timetable of an extended school day to include additional learning and wellbeing opportunities and activities for vulnerable pupils outside of school hours. We have also progressed specific localised projects to tackle inequalities. This includes the Active Beyond the School Day project at Pencoedtre High, which supports pupils to access free afterschool sports provision alongside provision of food.

We have created a number of apprentice places across the Council which provide employment opportunities for young people aged 16 to 24 in Neighbourhood Services and Housing and Building Services. We have collaborated with the Vale Academy and Communities for Work schemes.

Youth Offending Service

The Vale of Glamorgan Youth Offending Service (YOS) was given an overall rating of 'good' following an inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation. Staff were praised for their knowledge and overall delivery of work that helps deter children and young people from crime. The service was found to have met the balance between helping children and protecting the public. The YOS offer a range of support to prevent offending, drug counselling, and enable children to address any harm caused to victims or the wider community through victim awareness, as well as assisting parents to promote positive behaviour and outcomes.

Strategic Equality Objective 7

Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse, and sexual violence.

The Community Safety Team has continued to process anti-social behaviour incidents across the Vale of Glamorgan and work to deliver preventative measures to reduce anti-social behaviour. There has been a reduction in referrals from Stage 1, demonstrating the effectiveness of the process in reducing anti-social behaviour escalation.

There has been an increase in the perpetration of anti-social behaviour in specific areas such as derelict buildings in Penarth and fires started in Barry Island by young people with particular vulnerabilities. This has prompted the Community Safety Team to deliver more preventative measures and successfully bid for PCC funding for engagement work with these young people and other multi-agency discussions to discuss prevention work. The Community Safety Team has worked with South Wales Police analysis in reaction to an increase of off-road biking incidents. Anti-social behaviour along the Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan coastline has more than halved in the last two years as a result of Operation Elstree, a multi-agency approach aimed at keeping coastal areas safe and family friendly. From May to September 2022, there were over 1800 fines issued for public offences, 23 arrests, and over a thousand additional patrol hours on foot, horse, quad bike, and boat.

We have continued to work on the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Strategy. We provide twice-weekly meetings which have improved outcomes for victims of high-risk domestic abuse by ensuring a more rapid multi-agency approach is provided. There were around 12 cases reported each month. Approximately 3% of cases were LGBT+ victims and 5% were Black or minority ethnic. On average, 7% of cases were diverted away from the multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) process. Of cases reviewed in MARAC process, most victims were female.

We continue to actively promote Clare's Law as a vital tool to support the safety of women who think they might be at risk of being in a relationship with a perpetrator of domestic abuse. There were on average 11 applications per month to Clare's Law.

We have processed standard and medium Public Protection Notices (PPNs) where the victim has given consent for their data to be shared. In the first half of the year, we had 270 cases. Most cases were female victims. Over 100 of these cases were repeat offenders, which is within expectations. Over 500 referrals were made by DAARC (Domestic Abuse Assessment and Referral Coordinator). 100% of domestic abuse victims reported feeling safer as a result of security improvements to their homes delivered by the Safer Vale Partnership.

On average we see around 12 hate incidents every month. Of these, the majority are migratorily racial incidents. The next most common incidents are due to sexual orientation and disability. We continue to work with South Wales Police to actively promote the reporting of hate crime so increases in the number of reported incidents are not necessarily seen as negative indications of actual increases in hate crime. We continue to receive community tension monitoring referrals and process any referrals through a partnership approach due to the complex issues of tension in some communities.

We continue to make progress on the Safer Vale Partnership delivery plan. We are also working on a communication strategy to be launched alongside the Safer Vale Strategy 2023-28 which has been drafted.

We continue to look at improving the Community Cohesion Group Agenda and membership, including reaching out to communities that are currently under-represented. We have recruited a new Community Cohesion Officer who has supported progress on the actions in the Community Cohesion Plan and helped to promote community initiatives and national days via our social media platforms.

The Community Safety team continues to have an active online presence to improve cohesion and provide information to residents. We have also shared messages around Halloween, Bonfire Night and Christmas on different platforms. In this period, Community Safety posted over 200 times on

Instagram to 170 followers, tweeted an average fifty times a month to the 960 followers on Twitter, and posted regularly to the 640 Facebook followers. Facebook posts also included sharing posts from other partner organisations.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council received media attention in August 2022 following a refusal to cancel hugely popular Drag Queen Story Hour events at libraries across the county. A small number of protestors objected to the events. The Council released a statement saying “we are proud to offer experiences that reflect the diversity of our residents. Drag Queen Story Hour is an opportunity to inspire a love of reading, while teaching deeper lessons about diversity, self-love and an appreciation of others. There are also important messages around acceptance and inclusivity”.

Strategic Equality Objective 8

Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.

SMART houses

Three residents have moved into the newly developed Transition SMART house in Castle Avenue, Penarth. The scheme aims to improve outcomes for our citizens by supporting independent living and enhancing well-being. A further SMART house in Carys Close was completed in November 2022.

Older Peoples Housing Strategy 2022 – 2036

The Strategy sets out how the Council will work in partnership with residents and stakeholders to meeting the housing requirements for older people and maximising opportunities to improve the quality of life for older residents of the Vale of Glamorgan. The Strategy sets out the long-term vision for Older Persons housing in the Vale of Glamorgan, helping to ensure that we have appropriate housing available to meet the needs of an aging population. It provides a high-level vision and framework, highlighting the key issues in the context of the Council’s “strong communities with a bright future” vision.

During 2022, we consulted with staff across the Council, partner organisations, older people, and also used analysis of local demographics. The Draft Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2023, considering references from the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny committee.

Affordable housing

In Quarter 2, 89% of the 36 dwellings approved through planning were designated as affordable housing. We continue to apply robust affordable housing policies and negotiate with developers to secure 30-40% of affordable housing.

Refugees

We are developing around 90 units of temporary accommodation on the site of the former Eagleswell Primary School in Llantwit Major to provide high-quality short-term housing for refugees from the war in Ukraine. We are committed to the Welsh Government's declaration that Wales is a 'Nation of Sanctuary' and continue to make a significant effort to helping those in need. The units are not permanent structures so can be moved to another location in the future if needed. Large numbers of Ukrainian refugees have been provided short-term Welcome Centre and hotel accommodation, as well as many Vale residents opening their homes. We are looking at working with the Ministry of Defence with a view to leasing around ten properties to help accommodate Afghan refugees via the ARAP scheme.

Supporting people

The Supporting People programme is responsible for engaging hard to reach vulnerable clients and providing them with support to maintain their tenancies. Supporting People services are open to everyone, and referrals are based on individual need. There are no barriers to receiving our services. We are confident that our Supporting People services are being delivered to people from a diverse background including people with protected characteristics.

A total of 3392 people received support during 2022 - 2023. Due to the large number of alarm services that we fund, the over 60s are by far the largest demographic of service users on support. There are more females than male receiving support, with 61% of service users

identifying as female. Ethnicity wise, the majority of those receiving support identify as white British at 57%.

We carry out equality monitoring on all service users and tenants to ensure that all service users and tenants with protected characteristics are not adversely affected by policies or services in any way. We've commissioned a new violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) service. The team has had equal opportunities training and LGBTQ+ training.

Housing Solutions

Homelessness prevention continues to be a priority for the Council. The Housing Solutions Team delivers the statutory homelessness function, manages temporary accommodation, and provides housing advice. We work with schools and Llamau on the Youth Homelessness Project as a preventative measure to support young people and learners at risk of homelessness.

The Team is responsible for the Homes4U housing allocations system on behalf of social landlords in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The overall number of Homes4U applications decreased in 2022/23, but the number of male applicants slightly increased. This is expected because of changes in legislation due to the pandemic. We had guidance from the Welsh Government to remove priority need investigations, which has historically been important in managing demand. We have seen the increase particularly in single males presenting and applying for housing since the remove of this test.

The Housing Solutions Team continues to work with households to minimise barriers to accessing accommodation. The increased prevention funding provides opportunities to save existing tenants and provide bonds or rent in advance for new tenancies in the private rented

sector. In terms of accessing social rented accommodation, we allow former tenants with outstanding debts to re-join the housing waiting list provided repayment agreements are in place and 25% of the debt has been cleared.

We have worked to influence the Rapid Rehousing Strategy. We will use the plan to review social housing development and the Homes4U scheme. We have appointed a Rapid Rehousing Officer to progress actions within the Rapid Rehousing Strategy. The Rapid Rehousing Plan sets out how the Council will reduce the reliance on use of bed and breakfast and other forms of temporary accommodation. We aim to reduce the costs of temporary accommodation by building more social housing, working with private landlords to make more private rentals available, and considering the scope to remove the restrictions that affect homeless peoples' ability to bid for certain properties such as age designated homes and properties subject to local lettings criteria.

The Older Persons Housing Strategy has been adopted in principle. The strategy reflects best practice and emerging trends, incorporating feedback from a range of partners, including colleagues from Adult Services, Health, Vale 50+ Forum, and registered social landlords.

We will continue to assess the allocation process for households with accessible housing needs to ensure that applicants with disabilities are considered for a greater number of homes considering all reasonable and appropriate adaptations.

Benefits

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction help many people across the Vale of Glamorgan with their housing costs. It is key to the Council's work with regards to socio-economic disadvantage and cost of living. Awards and decisions are driven by legislation. Whilst we help many people with protected characteristics, the law specifically dictates how entitlement for these people is assessed. For example, disability can impact the rate of entitlement and there are different regulations for people of pension age.

We ask questions via our online claim form to accurately calculate entitlement. Some questions are mandatory but other questions about race, ethnicity and national identity are optional. The answer does not impact the rate of entitlement but helps to ensure we are reaching people across the Vale. Many people leave the questions about race, ethnic group, and national identity blank. However, of 5479 responses, 5016 declared their ethnic identity as White British. The next highest groups were White Other (162) and White and Black Caribbean (48).

There has been a decrease in Housing Benefit caseload in working age claims which is expected due to Universal Credit rolling out. By March 2023, there were 1,987 working age Housing Benefit claimants. We have also seen a decrease in Council Tax Reduction claims for those on passported benefit from 3,027 last year to 2,085. The number of working age passported claims receiving both Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction has reduced from 2,658 to 1,838. These reductions reflect more working age people moving onto Universal Credit. We did not however expect to see a reduction in pension age claims from 1,309 to 1,217, so we will continue to monitor caseloads and consider targeted work to ensure that pensioners continue to apply for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction.

This information allows us to plan for the impact of other welfare reforms which may impact on the Discretionary Housing payments Budget. We extract data throughout the year to monitor caseload and trends. This assists with budgetary planning for Council Tax Reduction. We expect to see a reduction in Working Age Housing Benefit as Universal Credit is replacing Housing Benefit for working age claims and this allows us to try and future-plan. It also helps us to plan for staffing levels.

Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

We published our Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment in June 2022 which provides a robust and credible assessment of current and future need for Gypsy and Traveller accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan. This has contributed to the new Local Development Plan (LDP) period to 2036. The study has estimated additional pitch provision for the LDP period of eleven pitches across the county and that there may be a need for more transit provision to fully support nomadic families.

Strategic Equality Objective 9

Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

Work began in January 2023 on the new transport interchange at the Dock Offices and Barry Docks station. This will be a meeting point for different modes of transport, connecting trains, buses, cycle, and taxi services, creating a hub of sustainable travel. This is being delivered in partnership with the Cardiff Capital Region and Welsh Government.

We are planning bus stop improvements in Rhose using funding from Welsh Government to enhance the Active Travel scheme and provide an improved facility for Cardiff Airport Rail Link Service. Further bus stop upgrades are planned for other Vale towns to include solar-powered displays and improve accessibility.

We continue to operate the Greenlinks adapted service for residents with mobility issues, ensuring drivers are fully trained to transport disabled passengers. We work collaboratively with the Vale 50+ Forum, youth cabinet, and public transport buses to meet the Public Services Vehicle Accessibility regulations.

Transport is a major concern to visitors to Barry Island, as shown by the Tourism service's annual survey. 94% of respondents said car parking, road access and public transport were very poor, average or good. 61% of respondents travelled by car, and 76% classed themselves as 'local'. 50% of respondents rate Barry Island 'good' as a destination and 78% would definitely return. Many comments cite transport or parking as key areas to improve.

Strategic Equality Objective 10

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

We have improved accessibility at Barry Island. There is now provision for beach wheelchairs at Whitmore Bay in Barry Island, as well as new Changing Places facilities located at the Western Shelter.

We launched a new Community Development Team in Autumn 2022. The Team has been established to assist communities with projects and accessing funding, building on the good work of the Vale's Creative Rural Communities program which ended in 2022.

We invited community groups to apply for the Mayor's Foundation Grant Fund and Strong Communities Grant Fund in Summer 2022.

We offered local groups the opportunity to access funding via the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund. We held a series of 'hack' days aimed at third sector organisations and local businesses to work together to develop new ideas to tackle the effects of the cost-of-living crisis and other social challenges.

We held a second PhotoBARRYthon in August 2022 over three separate free events, giving participants the opportunity to capture different aspects of Barry.

We worked with partners and residents to transform a derelict site in Barry into a flourishing garden space for the community to enjoy.

Equality objectives – what we will do

We identified a number of objectives and actions to take during the period between 2020 and 2024. They are long term objectives, and following review and engagement with key stakeholders, we will continue to work on them in 2024/25 with the addition of some new actions.

We will take the opportunity during this time to develop a new set of equality objectives alongside the development of our new corporate wellbeing objectives for 2025 – 2030. This will also allow us to consider, amongst other data and research, the analysis of our recent ‘Let’s Talk Life in the Vale’ public opinion survey, the Equality and Human Rights Commission’s ‘How Fair is Wales? 2023’ and the Welsh Government’s equality objectives. The resulting Strategic Equality Plan 2025 – 2029 will then align better with our business and the equality objectives will have more impact.

We believe that many of these equality objectives benefit all protected groups and cut across protected characteristics. As we work towards them, we make progress in meeting the general duty. We will continue to improve our understanding of what we need to do to meet the needs of protected groups. As we have increasingly limited resources, we will focus on those areas where research, data, and experience tell us that there is most need.

This section provides more information about each of our equality objectives, why we have chosen them, what we are seeking to achieve and the activities we will take to deliver them.

We show how our equality objectives link with the corporate well-being objectives. This aligns the Council’s work in these areas and mainstreams our work on tackling areas where there is most pressing disadvantage.

Our first Corporate Well-being Objective is **to work with and for our communities**.

Our Strategic Equality Plan links with this by identifying the communities who are most disadvantaged as identified in ‘Is Wales Fairer 2018’ and through local engagement.

The following equality objectives link to this well-being objective.

- **Strategic Equality Objective One**

Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.

- **Strategic Equality Objective Two**

Reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2021, and report on both annually.

- **Strategic Equality Objective Three**

Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2024.

- **Strategic Equality Objective Four**

Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2024.

- **Strategic Equality Objective Five**

Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

Our second Corporate Well-being Objective is **to support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth**.

Our Strategic Equality Plan aims to support learning and employment for protected groups, focusing on those who are most disadvantaged.

The following equality objective links to this well-being objective.

- **Strategic Equality Objective Six**

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

Our third Corporate Well-being Objective is **to support people at home and in their community.**

The Strategic Equality Plan supports the safety and well-being of people at home and in their community, with particular regard to protected groups identified as disadvantaged in 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' and our own local information and data.

The following equality objectives link to this well-being objective.

- **Strategic Equality Objective Seven**

Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

- **Strategic Equality Objective Eight**

Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.

- **Strategic Equality Objective Nine**

Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

Our fourth Corporate Well-being Objective is **to respect, enhance and enjoy our environment.**

The Strategic Equality Plan seeks to ensure our local environment can be enjoyed by a diverse range of people, including disabled people.

- **Strategic Equality Objective Ten**

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

These equality objectives support our work to achieve the five ways of working and contribute to our well-being objectives as required by the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The Strategic Equality Plan has been developed in accordance with the five ways of working and they are also reflected in the content of the plan. There is strong emphasis on collaboration as the council recognises the need to work with partners to deliver services and improve local well-being. The plan reflects the importance of prevention and this has been a strong theme in much of the engagement to date. This is a four year plan but we recognise that many of the issues are even longer term.

The following section sets out our equality objectives in the context of our corporate well-being objectives.

For each objective, we comment on the protected characteristics to which it relates, the expected outcomes, actions, and how we will know how we are doing.

In the information on protected characteristics, we have used information from the Equality and Human Rights Commission's research report 'Is Wales Fairer 2018'. The findings of this report is set out in sections or domains so we have included in brackets the section from which we have taken this information.

Our first Corporate Well-being Objective is **to work with and for our communities**.

Our Strategic Equality Plan links with this by identifying the communities who are most disadvantaged as identified in 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' and through local engagement.

Strategic Equality Objective One

- Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups, but we will focus on disabled, people from ethnic minorities, women and those who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

These are the groups identified as being most disadvantaged in 'Is Wales Fairer 2018'.
(Work)

Expected outcomes

Identified improvements in place.

Stakeholders have information about the improvements and the opportunity for input to support progress.

Actions

1. Identify how the Council currently involves, engages, and communicates with protected groups.
2. Provide advice and training to Services on data analysis.
3. Put in place action plans for improvement.
4. Put in place a communication plan to engage with and update stakeholders on progress.

5. Review how the Equalities Consultative Forum operates and its interface with relevant Council Champions.
6. Continue to implement the Participation Strategy, including using consultation feedback such as 'Let's Talk Life in the Vale', to inform the development of corporate wellbeing and equality objectives.
7. Implement actions that will lead to the Vale of Glamorgan becoming a County of Sanctuary.

How we will know how we are doing

1. Range of organisations we engage with is representative of the needs of protected groups.
2. Information and data on how engagement has been used to improve outcomes for protected groups and socio-economic disadvantaged groups.
3. Information and data on the number of front-line staff who have received equality, race, and disability training.
4. Information and data on the results of staff and service user satisfaction surveys by protected characteristic, including how feedback has been used to improve outcomes for protected groups and socio-economically disadvantaged groups.
5. Corporate wellbeing and strategic equality objectives informed by lived experience.
6. County of Sanctuary status.

Strategic Equality Objective Two

Reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2025, and report on both annually.

Protected characteristics

This benefits women and ethnic minorities, groups which 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' identifies as experiencing pay gaps. (Work)

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that a gender pay gap persists in Wales, despite a small narrowing of the gap. Median hourly earnings were higher for men in Wales (£11.36) than women (£9.80) in 2016/17, representing a 13.7% gender pay gap.

The Council has achieved a significant reduction in the gender pay gap which in early 2020 is under 5%.

The Council is starting to establish systems so that it can report on the ethnic minority pay gap and to identify appropriate actions.

Expected outcomes

Gender pay gap reduces.

The Council identifies if there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities and takes appropriate action if this is the case.

The Council identifies if there is a pay gap for monitor pay gap for people with disabilities and takes appropriate action if this is the case.

Actions

1. Continue to monitor gender pay gap every month.
2. Establish process to monitor pay gap for ethnic minorities to identify pay gap.
3. Monitor pay gap for ethnic minorities every month.
4. Progress actions as part of the Council's People Strategy to address where possible issues relating to gender and ethnic minorities pay gaps.
5. Establish process to monitor pay gap for people with disabilities to identify pay gap.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on pay gaps, particularly for gender, race and disability.

Strategic Equality Objective Three

Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2025.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups but the Council will look at how it can remove barriers to employment, apprenticeships, and work experience for disabled people and young people.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' identifies disabled people as falling further behind in employment. They are under-represented in apprenticeships, and their employment rate is less than half that of non-disabled people. (Work)

Local engagement confirmed that disabled people would like barriers removed to take up flexible employment opportunities.

The Council has identified that there is an under-representation of young people in its workforce.

Expected outcomes

Increase in rates of employment for disabled people and young people across jobs, apprenticeships, and work experience.

Stronger links with the disabled community so that they are aware of the work opportunities available in a timely way.

Continued links with young people's groups such as the Vale Youth Cabinet.

Actions

1. Work with local groups to identify barriers to taking up work opportunities by March 2021.
2. Take action to address barriers and create more opportunity for employment by October 2021.
3. Engage regularly with local disabled and young people's groups to discuss progress.
4. Establish whether there is a difference in the employment opportunities for people who have physical and mental disabilities, including those who are neurodivergent.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on the diversity of our staff, including internal progression, explaining how improvements have been achieved.

Strategic Equality Objective Four

Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2025.

Protected characteristics

This will benefit all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that the number of women gaining employment in higher paid roles has increased and the gender pay gap has narrowed. However, evidence shows high levels of bullying, harassment and negative experiences in the workplace, including sexual harassment and discrimination as a result of pregnancy or maternity. (Work)

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people are more likely to experience discrimination in the workplace (Stonewall's 'LGBT in Britain – Work Report (2018)'). The Council continues to be a member of Stonewall's Workplace Diversity Programme.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that disabled people's employment rate in Wales is less than half that for non-disabled people. (Work)

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that apprenticeships remain strongly gender segregated. Ethnic minorities and disabled people are under-represented in apprenticeships. (Work)

Expected outcomes

Improved score in Stonewall's Workplace Equality Index.

'Pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace: Recommendations for change' report is considered and acted on as appropriate.

Increased staff awareness of sexual harassment policy and completion of training.

Improved staff engagement through engagement and innovation groups and the Learning Café.

Recruitment processes in place that challenge gender stereotypes.

Progress made in the Trailblazer process.

Actions

1. Improve lesbian, gay, bi, and trans inclusion in the workplace and measure progress through the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index every year.
2. Progress the six areas of action to address pregnancy and maternity discrimination as set out in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace: Recommendations for change' report by March 2024.
3. Promote the Council's sexual harassment policy and e-learning training opportunities by March 2021, monitoring and reporting on training completion rates.
4. Hold regular meetings of the Corporate Engagement and Innovation Forum with staff to encourage wellbeing and good working practices, innovation, and improved communication.
5. Hold regular meetings of Local Engagement and Innovation Groups to increase the ability of staff to influence the direction of the Council.
6. Hold regular meetings of the Learning Café - the Council's network for sharing ideas, promoting best practice, equipping staff with the skills and knowledge to cope with workplace challenges, and supporting career progression.

7. Promote employment opportunities in a way that challenges gender stereotypes.
8. Continue to review how the workplace can be made more inclusive for disabled people.
9. Continue to work towards greater inclusivity for global majority and ethnic minority staff, measuring progress through Race Equality Matters Trailblazer process.
10. Continue to provide support and develop collaborative relationships with existing and emerging staff networks, including GLAM, Diverse and Abl.

How we will know how we are doing

Staff satisfaction surveys.

Action plans from staff Engagement and Innovation groups.

Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

Workforce data.

Race Equality Matters Trailblazer feedback.

Feedback from staff networks - GLAM, Diverse and Abl.

Strategic Equality Objective Five

Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that women remain under-represented and there is limited data on other groups such as disabled people and ethnic minorities. (Participation)

Expected outcomes

Councillors have up to date knowledge of equality issues to inform decision making.

Equality and LGBT Champions supporting priority equality issues such as improvement in inclusivity of workplace.

Elected member Champions are able to play a part in promoting equality.

Actions

1. Provide all Councillors with equality training by July 2022.
2. Engage with elected member Equality and LGBT Champions to identify how and where they can confidently support equality issues.
3. Explore how relevant elected member Champions can play a more significant role in promoting equality.

How we will know how we are doing

Number of elected members who have completed equality training.

Range of equality issues supported by elected member Equality and LGBT Champions and other relevant Champions.

Our second Corporate Well-being Objective is **to support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth.**

Our Strategic Equality Plan aims to support learning and employment for protected groups, focusing on those who are most disadvantaged.

We want residents to have a fair opportunity to become well-educated, skilled, and to achieve their potential as they develop and learn. We are committed to encouraging people's ambitions and to ensuring that individuals and communities can prosper and achieve their best.

Strategic Equality Objective Six

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that attainment gaps persist for pupils in receipt of free school meals and children with additional learning needs. (Education)

Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that young women and girls, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and children with additional learning needs are more likely to be at risk of experiencing identity-based bullying. (Education)

Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that poorer children, children with additional learning needs, White children and children of mixed ethnicity have higher than average exclusion rates. (Education)

Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that subject choices remain highly gendered, with girls being much less likely to continue studying science and mathematics after school. (Education)

Expected outcomes

Reduction in attainment gaps.

Programmes in place to tackle identity-based bullying.

Reduced exclusion rates for children with certain protected characteristics, including disabled children and mixed ethnicity children.

Schools have current Strategic Equality Plans in place.

Actions

1. Deliver and evaluate programmes and interventions aimed at addressing attainment gaps to make sure they have a positive impact on socio-economic disadvantage, disability, sex, race, other protected characteristics and young carers.
2. Seek to minimise exclusion rates for children with certain protected characteristics, including socio-economic disadvantage, ethnicity and disability.
3. Analyse bullying data gathered by schools, including racist bullying, to identify trends and review anti-bullying strategies so that there are effective solutions in place.
4. Work with partners to deliver programmes which support people to prepare for employment.
5. Support schools to review and update their Strategic Equality Plans.

How we will know how we are doing

1. Information and data on how programmes and interventions have affected attainment gaps on children and young people with protected characteristics and who are socio-economically disadvantaged.
2. Information and data on number of children excluded by protected characteristic and socio-economic disadvantage.
3. Analysis of school bullying data showing trends and review of anti-bullying strategies to address findings.
4. Information and data on outcomes of programmes supporting people to prepare for employment.
5. Schools will have current Strategic Equality Plans in place.

Our third Corporate Well-being Objective is **to support people at home and in their community.**

The Strategic Equality Plan supports the safety and well-being of people at home and in their community, with particular regard to protected groups identified as disadvantaged in 'Is Wales Fairer 2018' and our own local information and data.

We work in partnership to make sure people are safe at home and in the community and can make choices that support their overall well-being. We give people the necessary advice, care and support when they need it.

Strategic Equality Objective Seven

Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that the number of recorded hate crimes has increased across all protected characteristics in Wales, with evidence to suggest a spike in race and religion hate crimes following trigger events. (Justice and personal security)

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that there has been a sharp increase in the number of sexual and domestic violence offences reported to and recorded by the police since 2015. (Justice and personal security)

Expected outcomes

Processes in place to tackle hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Improved awareness amongst people in the community of the advice and support available to them.

Actions

1. Work with partners to deliver preventative measures and provide advice and support to people who experience abuse, harassment, hate crime or bullying, including women from ethnic minorities, disabled women, women with complex needs, men, young people and children.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on preventative processes, including outcomes for protected groups.

Information and data on relevant advice and support provided to people experiencing abuse, harassment, hate crime or bullying, focusing on groups identified as in most need.

Information and data on number of people accessing advice and support.

Information and data on progress with Regional Strategy for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence 2018 - 2023.

Strategic Equality Objective Eight

Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that disabled people face a shortage of accessible and adaptable homes and long delays in making existing homes accessible. (Living standards)

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that rough sleeping in Wales has increased and there are high levels of homelessness. (Living standards)

A report commissioned by Ending Youth Homelessness Cymru was published in August 2019 - 'Out on the Streets. LGBTQ+ & Youth Homelessness in Wales'. This report identifies that the LGBTQ+ community is disproportionately affected by youth homelessness and young people are more likely to be made homeless as a result of family breakdown than their non-LGBT peers.

Expected outcomes

More adapted and accessible affordable housing properties available that are suitable for disabled and/or elderly people.

Existing homes made accessible in a reasonable time scale where adaptations are needed.

Improvement in percentage of homeless cases prevented.

Actions

1. Consider evidence and feedback on barriers to accommodation and take action as appropriate.
2. Develop and implement an Older Persons Housing Strategy to meet the needs of the Vale's ageing population.
3. Implement an action plan to ensure our services are more accessible to the young LGBTQ communities.
4. Provide our staff with specialist training to enable them to provide appropriate service that meets the needs the young LGBTQ communities
5. Implement the Older Persons Housing Strategy 2022 – 2036 to secure the best quality of life for older people to live as independently as possible in later life.

How we will know how we are doing

Additional number of adapted/accessible affordable housing properties delivered each year.

Information and data on preventative programmes, including outcomes for protected groups.

Information and data on number of people accessing advice and support.

Information and data on housing needs by protected characteristic.

Information and data on homelessness in Vale of Glamorgan.

Strategic Equality Objective Nine

Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

Protected characteristics

This benefits all protected groups and in particular, older and disabled people.

'Is Wales Fairer 2018' reports that poor transport and digital infrastructure in rural areas is affecting people's ability to participate in all aspects of life, particularly households without cars, older people in rural areas, and disabled people. (Participation)

Expected outcomes

Improved accessibility of local transport.

Actions

1. Engage with people to identify transport access issues.
2. Develop a plan to address transport access issues as appropriate.
3. Provide training to Council staff on how to help meet the needs of disabled passengers.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on preventative programmes, including outcomes for protected groups.

Information and data on number of people accessing advice and support.

Information and data on measures taken to improve transport accessibility.

Information and data on service user satisfaction.

Information and data on how Council staff have been trained to have the knowledge and skills to help meet the needs of disabled passengers.

Our fourth Corporate Well-being Objective is **to respect, enhance and enjoy our environment.**

The Strategic Equality Plan seeks to ensure our local environment can be enjoyed by a diverse range of people, including disabled people.

We understand how our environment contributes to individual and community well-being. We are committed to respecting and enhancing our environment to ensure we all have access to our local area, know about it, and can enjoy it.

Strategic Equality Objective Ten

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

Protected characteristics

This will benefit all protected groups, particularly disabled people for whom there are more barriers.

Expected outcomes

Residents and visitors will be able to access information on the natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including how accessible these are and what facilities are available so they can plan their visits.

Actions

1. Consider the needs of people with protected characteristics when working with community groups and other partners to provide and sustain local facilities.
2. Promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage so that where possible, they are accessible and known to all protected groups.

How we will know how we are doing

Information and data on promotion strategies.

Information and data on community groups and other partners we have engaged with to promote environment and heritage.

Information and data on toilets and Changing Places.

Monitoring Progress & Publishing Results

We will continue to check on progress towards meeting our equality objectives and report on this each year to the Council's Senior Leadership Team, Equality Consultative Forum, and Cabinet in the annual equality monitoring report. We publish the annual equality monitoring report on our website.

For More Information

Visit our website

www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Social Media

Keep up to date with all the latest news, events and information from the Vale of Glamorgan Council.

Follow @VOGCouncil on Twitter or like Vale of Glamorgan Council on Facebook.

If you have a query about Council services, please contact us:

- Email c1v@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk;
- or call 01446 700111

Equality Impact Assessment

Please click on headings to find [general guidance](#) or section guidance with an example. You will find supporting information in appendices at the end of the guidance.

When you start to assess your proposal, arrange to meet Tim Greaves, Equality Co-ordinator, for specific guidance. Send the completed form to him for a final check and so that he can publish it on our Vale of Glamorgan equality web pages.

Please also contact Tim Greaves if you need this equality impact assessment form in a different format.

1. [What are you assessing?](#)

The Council's draft Strategic Equality Plan 2024 - 2025

2. [Who is responsible?](#)

Name	Rob Jones	Job Title	Operational Manager - Corporate Communications, Participation, Equalities and Directorate Development
Team	Corporate Communications, Participation, Equalities and Directorate Development	Directorate	Corporate Resources

3. [When is the assessment being carried out?](#)

Date of start of assessment	December 2023
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4. [Describe the proposal?](#)

What is the purpose of the proposal?

Equality Impact Assessment

To review the Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 equality objectives and agree a plan for 2024 – 2025. It deals with how we will meet those objectives and shows how the Council will work with its partners for a fairer future.

Why do you need to put it in place?

The current Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 and equality objectives were effective from April 2020. Under the specific equality duties for Wales, we must review them no less frequently than every four years.

Do we need to commit significant resources to it (such as money or staff time)

The Plan sets out the Council's equality priorities and high-level supporting actions. The development of the Plan requires engagement across the Council and with external stakeholders.

The Council's Strategic Equality Plan reflects the Council's priorities for the next year . This informs the way we allocate resources and takes into account the availability of resources to deliver it. The outcome of the Council's budget consultation and revenue settlement from the Welsh Government will inform the content and extent of delivery of the Plan in coming years.

What are the intended outcomes of the proposal?

The Plan provides a set of equality priorities for the Council for the period 2024 – 2025. The Plan provides a framework for how the Council will work with its partners for a fairer future.

Who does the proposal affect?

Note: If the proposal affects lesbian, gay, homosexual, or transgender people, ensure you explicitly include same-sex couples and use gender neutral language.

Equality Impact Assessment

The plan affects Vale residents and those who visit and work in the Vale. The Plan is a high-level strategic document encompassing all Council services. We will include more detailed actions in Service Plans. Changes to services and policies across Council Directorates will be the subject of more detailed equality impact assessments which will need to explore the potential impact.

Will the proposal affect how other organisations work?

We will deliver many of the activities in the Strategic Equality Plan in partnership. We will work closely with other organisations to deliver parts of this plan.

Will the proposal affect how you deliver services?

The Strategic Equality Plan sets out the Council's equality priorities for the year which will influence and shape service delivery across the Council.

Will the proposal impact on other policies or practices?

The Strategic Equality Plan sets out the Council's equality priorities for the next year which will in turn influence policies and practices across the Council.

Can you change the proposal so that it further promotes equality of opportunity and fosters good relations?

The purpose of the Plan is to promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

As part of the engagement and consultation process, we have asked for people's views on maintaining the equality objectives agreed for the 2020- 2024 plan for another year.

The objectives focus and highlight areas of concern for particular groups such as disabled people, younger people, older people, and ethnic minority people:

To work with and for our communities

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.
2. Continue to reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2021, and report on both annually.
3. Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2024.
4. Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2024.
5. Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth

6. Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

To support people at home and in their community

7. Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.
8. Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.
9. Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

Equality Impact Assessment

10. Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

How will you achieve the proposed changes?

Council Services will deliver the Plan by working together and with the local community and other partners to ensure we deliver services that best meet the diverse needs of the community.

Who will deliver the proposal?

Council Services will deliver the Strategic Equality Plan.

How will you know whether you have achieved the proposal's purpose?

We will monitor the Strategic Equality Plan through the Annual Equality Monitoring Report and the Council's Performance Management arrangements. We will report progress to our Equalities Consultative Forum, Senior Leadership Team, Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet.

5. [What evidence are you using?](#)

Engagement (with internal and external stakeholders)

When we originally set the objectives, we attended and hosted engagement meetings in the Vale between May 2019 and January 2020 to help us develop the draft Strategic Equality Plan. This included meetings of our Equalities Consultative Forum, attendance at a Youth Cabinet Meeting, and meetings with local disability groups.

Engagement work started in May 2019 with our Equalities Consultative Forum where key stakeholders representing the interests of protected groups helped us to consider which areas of the 2016 – 2020 Plan were still important and needed to be included in the next

Equality Impact Assessment

plan. This helped us to draft a plan for consultation with four broad equality objectives (as described) above with supporting actions.

We recognised that consultation through an on-line survey and social media campaign may not be accessible to everyone, so we also met with groups through the consultation period. This included the Equalities Consultative Forum, the Vale Youth Cabinet, New Horizons, and Vale People First.

The feedback and information gathered across our engagement activities was reflected in the final version of the Corporate Plan 2020-2025.

More recently, we have engaged with key stakeholders between December 2023 and February 2024 to propose that we keep the equality objectives for another year to allow us the opportunity to develop new ones alongside the development of our new corporate wellbeing objectives, taking into account newly available information such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023' and our own analysis of the 'Let's Talk Life in the Vale' public opinion survey. Key stakeholders included our Equalities Consultative Forum, service users at Hen Goleg and our Insight Board.

There was general support for maintaining the equality objectives with some suggestions for actions to be added to the plan (which we have done).

Consultation (with internal and external stakeholders)

Originally, we used an online survey to consult people about these equality objectives between December 2019 and January 2020. We promoted this on the Council's website and through our social media channels.

During this consultation period, we sent the Plan to a number of stakeholders for their comment and to send to their stakeholders.

Within the Council, we promoted the on-line survey on our intranet, and consulted with our senior management team, officers responsible for implementing key areas of the plan, trade unions, and elected members.

Equality Impact Assessment

National data and research

The key piece of national research that we used was the Equality and Human Rights Commission's report 'Is Wales Fairer? 2018'. This report brings together evidence to assess levels of inequality in Wales and what progress was made to improve outcomes for protected groups since the Commission's previous report in 2015.

The report looks at outcomes for people for education, health, living standards, justice and security, work, and participation in politics and public life. It makes recommendations for action, including for the public sector. We took these into account in developing our equality objectives.

Moving forward, we will be using Equality and Human Rights Commission's report 'Is Wales Fairer? 2023'.

Local data and research

The Strategic Equality Plan included data from the Census, population estimates and population projections for the Vale of Glamorgan. This helped us to identify, for example, that we have an ageing population and that the number of young people we employ is not representative of the local population. This, in turn, is reflected in the focus of relevant equality objectives.

Working in partnership with the Vale of Glamorgan Public Services Board an [online Evidence Base](#) has been developed which enables the review of demographic, economic, social and environmental data sets specific to the Vale of Glamorgan. Key indicator sets are monitored through the Evidence Base to enable the appropriate response to data trends.

The majority of data relevant to protected characteristics is drawn from the national Census. The Plan has been updated with information from the most recent Census undertaken in 2021.

Equality Impact Assessment

6. How robust is the evidence?

Does it show what the impact will be (positive and negative)?

The aim of the Council's work is to have a positive impact on residents, visitors and workers in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Strategic Equality Plan sets out the priorities of the Council in working towards more positive outcomes for people with protected characteristics and / or who are socio-economically disadvantaged.

For each of the equality objectives, the Plan outlines the positive outcomes expected from achieving the equality objectives.

The equality objectives align with the Council's well-being objectives to be achieved over the next five years:

- Objective One: To work with and for our communities
- Objective Two: To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth
- Objective Three: To support people at home and in their community
- Objective Four: To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment

The Council is confident that, in working in a more integrated approach towards these 4 objectives and its ten equality objectives, it can continue to influence a wide range of activities and services across the Vale. The Council will be working towards making a positive difference to the well-being of residents and visitors. Working to achieve the equality objectives will also help maximise our contribution to delivering the national well-being goals.

What are the gaps?

The Strategic Equality Plan contains 35 high level actions that outline how we will work to achieve the ten equality objectives. More detail on how the 35 actions will be achieved will be contained in an Annual Delivery Plan which is published each Spring. The Annual Development Plan actions will be translated into actions detailed in Service and Team

Equality Impact Assessment

plans across the Council. The performance against actions in Service Plans are monitored, reported and scrutinised on a quarterly basis.

What will you do about this?

We meet with officers in relevant services to identify gaps in data or information and to agree what needs to be done to deliver the supporting actions for each equality objective. Each year, we gather information on progress in our Annual Equality Monitoring Report.

We will also use the Annual Delivery Plan to outline the specific work that Council Services will be doing for each year of the four year Strategic Equality Plan to achieve the high level actions and objectives. The Annual Delivery Plan is an annual document so areas of focus will be identified in part through the Service Planning process with Directors, Heads of Service and Operational Managers.

What monitoring data will you collect?

The monitoring data we collect varies for each Council Service. Examples of this can be found in our [Annual Equality Monitoring Reports](#). These reports include a detailed employment report with information about the recruitment, pay and employment of our staff analysed by protected characteristics.

Progress against the Annual Delivery Plan will be reported each year, including data on progress towards the equality objectives.

How often will you analyse and report on this?

We will analyse data annually for the Annual Equality Monitoring Report and the Annual Delivery Plan. We will publish this information on our website.

During the year, each Council Service will have its own timetable for analysing the information it collects.

Equality Impact Assessment

Where will you publish monitoring data and reports?

We publish our reports on the Council's website.

We will also discuss progress with our Equalities Consultative Forum.

7. [Impact](#)

Is there an impact?

The purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan is to 'work together for a fairer future' and to have a positive impact on protected groups and those who are socio-economically disadvantaged within the Council and the Vale of Glamorgan. The Plan covers all Council Services and aims to improve outcomes for these groups.

If there is no impact, what is the justification for thinking this? Provide evidence.

If there is likely to be an impact, what is it?

Age –The Plan aims to have a positive impact on people of different ages, for example, through:

- improving employment opportunities for young people;
- reducing attainment gaps for young people;
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- reducing exclusion rates for children and young people;
- supporting young people to prepare for employment;
- providing more accessible housing services for young LGBT people;
- meeting the housing needs of older people;
- looking at barriers to accommodation for older people;
- addressing issues relating to transport accessibility.

Equality Impact Assessment

Disability – The Plan aims to have a positive impact on people with disabilities, for example, through:

- improving engagement and communication with disabled groups;
- improving employment opportunities;
- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;
- reducing attainment and exclusion rates for children with Additional Learning Needs and disabilities;
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- addressing issues relating to transport accessibility.

Gender reassignment, including gender identity – The Plan aims to have a positive impact on gender identity, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;
- continuing our work to make progress against the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index;
- developing more accessible housing services for young LGBT people;
- improving engagement and communication with all protected groups;
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions.

Marriage and civil partnership (discrimination only) – The Plan aims to have a positive impact on marriage and civil partnership, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council.

Pregnancy and Maternity – The Plan aims to have a positive impact on pregnancy and maternity, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;

Equality Impact Assessment

- progressing the recommendations in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace: Recommendations for change'.

Race – The Plan aims to have a positive impact on race, for example, through:

- progressing actions to address an ethnic minority pay gap;
- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- reducing exclusion rates for children and young people from ethnic minorities;
- developing processes to address hate crime;
- progressing our work using Race Equality Matters' Trailblazer process;
- progressing work to become a County of Sanctuary.

Religion and belief – The Plan aims to have a positive impact on religion and belief, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- developing processes to address hate crime.

Sex – The Plan aims to have a positive impact on sex, for example, through:

- continuing to address the gender pay gap;
- progressing the recommendations in the Equality and Human Rights Commission's 'Pregnancy and maternity discrimination in the workplace: Recommendations for change'.
- Promoting employment opportunities in a way that challenges gender stereotypes;

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- developing processes to address hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Sexual orientation - The Plan aims to have a positive impact on sexual orientation, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;
- continuing our work to make progress against the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index;
- developing more accessible housing services for young LGBT people;
- improving engagement and communication with all protected groups;
- developing effective anti-bullying solutions;
- developing processes to address hate crime, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Welsh language – The Plan aims to have a positive impact on the Welsh language, for example, through:

- developing a more inclusive work environment within the Council;
- promoting the cultural heritage of the Vale of Glamorgan;
- considering people who use the Welsh language as part of an intersectional approach.

Human rights – The Plan aims to have a positive impact on human rights by considering the needs of protected groups and those who are socio-economically disadvantaged and seeking to better meet these through achieving its equality objectives.

How do you know?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

Equality Impact Assessment

As stated earlier in this document, we have developed our equality objectives using national and local evidence to identify pressing areas of inequality. We have explained above how we think there will be a positive benefit to protected groups.

Within the Plan, we have outline expected outcomes and how we will know how we are doing. We will use these to assess our progress together with data and information from the Annual Equality Monitoring Report and the Annual Development Plan.

What can be done to promote a positive impact?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

We believe that achieving the work outlined in the Strategic Equality Plan and equality objectives will result in better outcomes for protected groups. One of our equality objectives is to improve how we involve, engage and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions. As part of this process, we will be able to promote the work we are doing to achieve our equality objectives and maintain an ongoing dialogue with protected groups to inform our continuing work throughout the lifespan of this Plan.

What can be done to lessen the risk of a negative impact?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

There is no evidence to suggest that there would be negative impacts arising from our work on our equality objectives. However, regular monitoring through gathering information and data, and ongoing engagement should alert us to any issues so that we can address these as they arise.

Is there a need for more favourable treatment to achieve equal outcomes? (Disability only)

We have tried to be inclusive in the way that we have developed the Strategic Equality Plan and the Plan is intended to have positive outcomes for all protected groups as

Equality Impact Assessment

outlined above. However, the evidence we have gathered through research, engagement, and consultation identified that some issues affect some protected groups more than others. Where this is the case, we have explained this within the Plan and have identified appropriate actions to address this.

Will the impact be positive, negative or neutral?

Explain this for each of the relevant protected characteristics as identified above.

In delivering its Strategic Equality Plan, the Council will seek to improve outcomes for protected groups. There should be no negative impact as a result of the implementing this Plan.

As has been set out in the previous sections of this equality impact assessment, the Council has sought to ensure that a diverse range of people has been given the opportunity to feed into, shape and influence the both the Strategic Equality Plan and its equality objectives. How the Plan is intended to impact upon these different groups has been outlined in the previous sections.

In implementing the Plan, the Council will seek to continue the conversations started with those who have been involved through engagement and consultation.

8. Monitoring ongoing impact

Date you will monitor progress

We will monitor progress at least every year through the Annual Equality Monitoring Report and Annual Delivery Plan as described above.

Equality Impact Assessment

Measures that you will monitor

We will use the information and data described in the Plan.

Date you will review implemented proposal and its impact

Work to achieve the equality objectives and actions set out in the Strategic Equality Plan will be ongoing until March 2025. We will undertake a review in the coming year to agree new equality objectives in line with the new corporate wellbeing objectives.

9. Further action as a result of this equality impact assessment

Possible Outcomes	Say which applies
No major change	No major change
Adjust the policy	
Continue the policy	
Stop and remove the policy	

10. Outcomes and Actions

Recommend actions to senior management team

The content of the Strategic Equality Plan will be relevant to all Services across the Council. Staff should be made aware of the new Plan, any actions they will contribute towards, and the responsibility to report on progress at least annually.

Equality Impact Assessment

Outcome following formal consideration of proposal by senior management team

The Strategic Equality Plan will be put into practice. Staff will be made aware of the new Plan, any actions they contribute towards, and the responsibility to report on progress at least annually.

11. Important Note

Where you have identified impacts, you must detail this in your Cabinet report when seeking approval for your proposal.

12. Publication

Where will you publish your approved proposal and equality impact assessment?

The current Equality webpage will be updated on the Vale of Glamorgan Council's website: https://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/en/our_council/equalities/equalities.aspx

In addition to being available online, copies of the Strategic Equality Plan can be made available in Council offices and public libraries in the Vale.

13. Authorisation

Approved by (name)	Rob Jones
Job Title (senior manager)	Operational Manager - Corporate Communications, Participation, Equalities and Directorate Development
Date of approval	28 February 2024 (Updated)
Date of review	March 2025

Strategic Equality Objectives and New Actions for 2024/25

Strategic Equality Objective 1

Improve how we involve, engage, and communicate with protected groups about our work and decisions.

New Actions

- Continue to implement the Participation Strategy, including using consultation feedback such as 'Let's Talk Life in the Vale', to inform the development of corporate wellbeing and equality objectives.
- Implement actions that will lead to the Vale of Glamorgan becoming a County of Sanctuary.

Strategic Equality Objective 2

Continue to reduce the gender pay gap in the Council, identify whether there is a pay gap for ethnic minorities in the Council by March 2021, and report on both annually.

New Action

- Establish process to monitor pay gap for people with disabilities to identify pay gap.

Strategic Equality Objective 3

Improve employment opportunities in the Council for protected groups, particularly disabled and young people, to more closely reflect the diversity of the local population by March 2025.

New Action

- Establish whether there is a difference in the employment opportunities for people who have physical and mental disabilities, including those who are neurodivergent.

Strategic Equality Objective 4

Continue to work on developing a more inclusive work environment that supports staff from all backgrounds to reach their potential through implementing a range of actions by March 2025.

New Actions

- Continue to review how the workplace can be made more inclusive for disabled people.
- Continue to work towards greater inclusivity for global majority and ethnic minority staff, measuring progress through Race Equality Matters Trailblazer process.
- Continue to provide support and develop collaborative relationships with existing and emerging staff networks, including GLAM, Diverse and Abl.

Strategic Equality Objective 5

Provide support and development to elected members on equality issues.

New Action

- Explore how relevant elected member Champions can play a more significant role in promoting equality.

Strategic Equality Objective 6

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to address attainment gaps for children and young people and provide support to overcome barriers to them reaching their full potential.

New Action

- Support schools to review and update their Strategic Equality Plans.

Strategic Equality Objective 7

Develop and implement processes throughout the life of this plan to address hate crimes, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

New Action

- No new action.

Strategic Equality Objective 8

Consider the housing needs of people with protected characteristics and how our work impacts on them, taking action to address any disproportionate impacts on these groups.

New Action

- Implement the Older Persons Housing Strategy 2022 – 2036 to secure the best quality of life for older people to live as independently as possible in later life.

Strategic Equality Objective 9

Work in partnership to consider issues relating to transport accessibility, particularly for disabled people and older people.

New Action

- No new action.

Strategic Equality Objective 10

Develop and implement plans throughout the life of this plan to promote our natural and built environment and cultural heritage, including accessibility, to protected groups.

New Action

- No new action.