



Bridgend County Borough Council
Strategic Equality Plan
2020 - 2024



Introduction and background

Welcome to Bridgend County Borough Council's third Strategic Equality Plan covering the period 2020 – 2024.

Like its predecessors, it ensures that equality and fairness remain firmly at the heart of how the council plans, provides and delivers important services to the people of Bridgend County Borough.

Building on our previous equalities work, the plan details how Bridgend County Borough Council intends to deliver on its equalities commitments while continuing to be an inclusive and effective organisation.

Our Strategic Equality Plan demonstrates not only the council's responsibility towards meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, but sets out our vision to promote equal opportunities as we set about making a real difference to the lives of the people we serve. We want to ensure that Bridgend is a place where no one experiences disadvantage or discrimination because of their background or identity, ensuring that every resident has access to a range of high quality services that meet their individual needs.

During 2016-2020, some of the key achievements in terms of delivering our equality objectives included:

- Running regular Hate Crime awareness sessions across the county borough with South Wales Police;
- Offering monthly health check to employees, including cholesterol monitoring and bodimetrics measurements;
- Working with Stonewall and Show Racism the Red Card to support the prevention of LGBTQ and racist bullying in schools;
- Delivering a successful programme of dementia supportive activities with partners BAVO, Halo and Awen;
- Developing a Vulnerable Groups Team by Education and Family Support that provides integrated support for a range of pupils identified by Estyn as vulnerable or potentially vulnerable;
- Developing an LGBTQ school network with the inclusion and school and vulnerable groups team;

- Supporting more than 30 Syrian refugees to resettle in the county borough, with good access to local services and schools;
- Establishing Learning Resource Centres for children with additional needs across the county borough in some of our English medium and Welsh medium mainstream schools.

This new plan seeks to build upon these achievements. We want to be fully representative of our community, and effectively demonstrate that we will not tolerate discrimination of any kind, irrespective of whether it concerns race, sex, disability, age, religion or belief, transgender status, pregnancy and maternity, marriage or civil partnership, or sexual orientation.

As a responsible employer, our commitment towards equality includes our staff, and we recognise and welcome the duty set upon us by Government and the Equality and Human Rights Commission to ensure that our equality objectives include our internal functions as much as our external ones.

As such, our policies, practices, procedures and training activities are all designed to eliminate institutional discrimination, reflecting our core values at all times while ensuring that equality remains a guiding principle in all that we do.

We hope that you will find the Strategic Equality Plan interesting and informative. It reflects our belief that discrimination and prejudice have no place in Bridgend County Borough, and that people should be respected and treated equally at all times.



**Cllr Huw David –
Leader of the Council**



**Mark Shephard –
Chief Executive**

About us

Bridgend County Borough is a diverse and vibrant area with **144,876** residents and over three million annual visitors. As one of the county borough's largest employers and service providers we recognise our unique role and influential position within the area and the contribution we can make to the development of inclusive and confident communities.

We are committed to the principles of equality and diversity and we work to ensure that this is demonstrated in our service delivery and in our employment practices.

We have three well-being objectives/corporate priorities:

Priority one: Supporting a successful sustainable economy

Within priority one our key aims are:

- To support local people develop skills and take advantage of opportunities to succeed
- To create conditions for growth and enterprise
- To create town centres and communities that improve the quality of life for citizens

Priority two: Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient

Within priority two our key aims are:

- To give people more choice and control over what support they receive by providing early access to advice and information
- To reduce demand through targeted early help and intervention programmes
- To develop more active, healthy and resilient communities by working in partnership with the third sector, town and community councils and community groups

Priority three: Smarter use of resources

Within priority three our key aims are:

- To ensure that the council is financially sustainable over the longer term
- To improve the efficiency of, and access to, services by redesigning our systems and processes
- To work collaboratively to make the most of natural and physical assets
- To develop the culture and skills required to meet the needs of a changing organisation

We provide a wide range of services in a variety of ways. Some are provided centrally from our main civic offices whilst others are provided from the front-line in our communities, e.g. highway maintenance and care/support at home. Others, such as refuse collection, leisure, libraries and cultural activities are provided by outside agencies or by contractors.

The council is governed by **54** elected Members with **39** wards and operates a Cabinet system. It has a Senior Management Team headed by the Chief Executive, and employs over **6,000** employees in a variety of service areas and roles based within the following directorates:

- Chief Executives
- Education and Family Support
- Social Services and Wellbeing
- Communities



The Purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan

The Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 has been developed to demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, which came into force on 6 April 2011.

Building on our previous equalities work the Plan will explain to residents, our workforce, elected members and stakeholders how Bridgend County Borough Council will deliver its equalities commitments whilst continuing to be an inclusive and effective organisation that is representative of our community and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind. We will deliver high quality services to our residents, taking into account their different needs while ensuring that no one experiences disadvantage or discrimination due to their background or identity.

Within the Equality Act 2010, public bodies have an additional responsibility to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. These are outlined below:

Public Sector Equality Duty

The General Duty

When making decisions and delivering services we must have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (protected characteristics are explained later in this report).
- Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

When thinking about how to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who don't, we also need to:

- Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and are connected to that characteristic.
- Meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.
- Encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.
- We also have to particularly think about how it will tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

The Specific Duties

The Equality Act provides a power to make regulations imposing duties on public bodies to support better performance of the general duty; these are known as the Specific Public Sector Equality Duties and are different in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Specific Duties underpin the General Duty and have been developed around four main principles:

1. **Use of evidence**
2. **Consultation and Involvement**
3. **Transparency**
4. **Leadership**

The Welsh Government published regulations that introduced the Specific Duties for Wales in March 2011, these set out the actions the Council must take in order to comply and include the following areas:

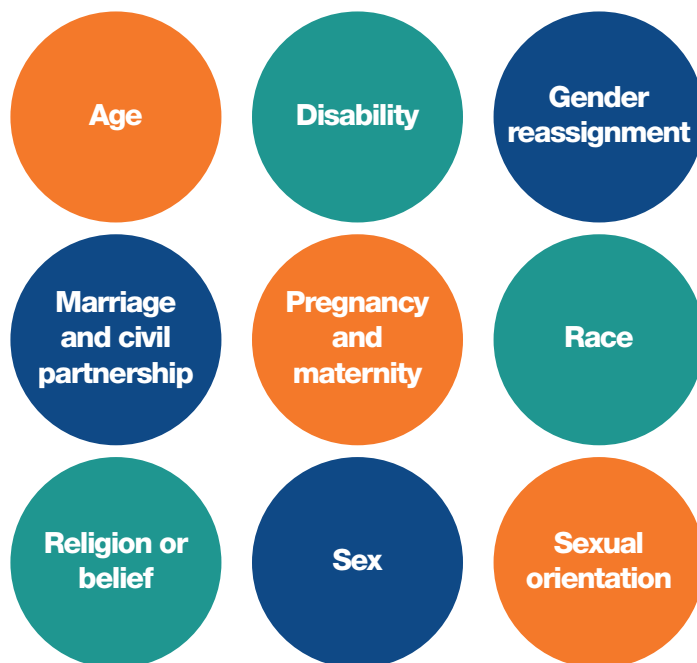
- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan
- Ensuring it engages with people who have an interest in how the Council's decisions affect them
- Collecting and publishing information relevant to compliance with the General Duty
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and publishing the results if there is a substantial impact on the Council's identified
- Publish employment monitoring information annually
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the General Duty amongst its employees and use its performance assessment procedures to identify and address the training needs of its employees in relation to the General Duties
- Set a gender pay equality objective where a gender pay difference is identified
- Think about including conditions relevant to the General Duty in its procurement processes.

Who is protected under the Equality Act 2010?

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their protected characteristic.

This is the term used in the Equality Act 2010 to identify the types of things that affect how people are treated and can mean people may experience discrimination.

The law is designed to protect them, they are:

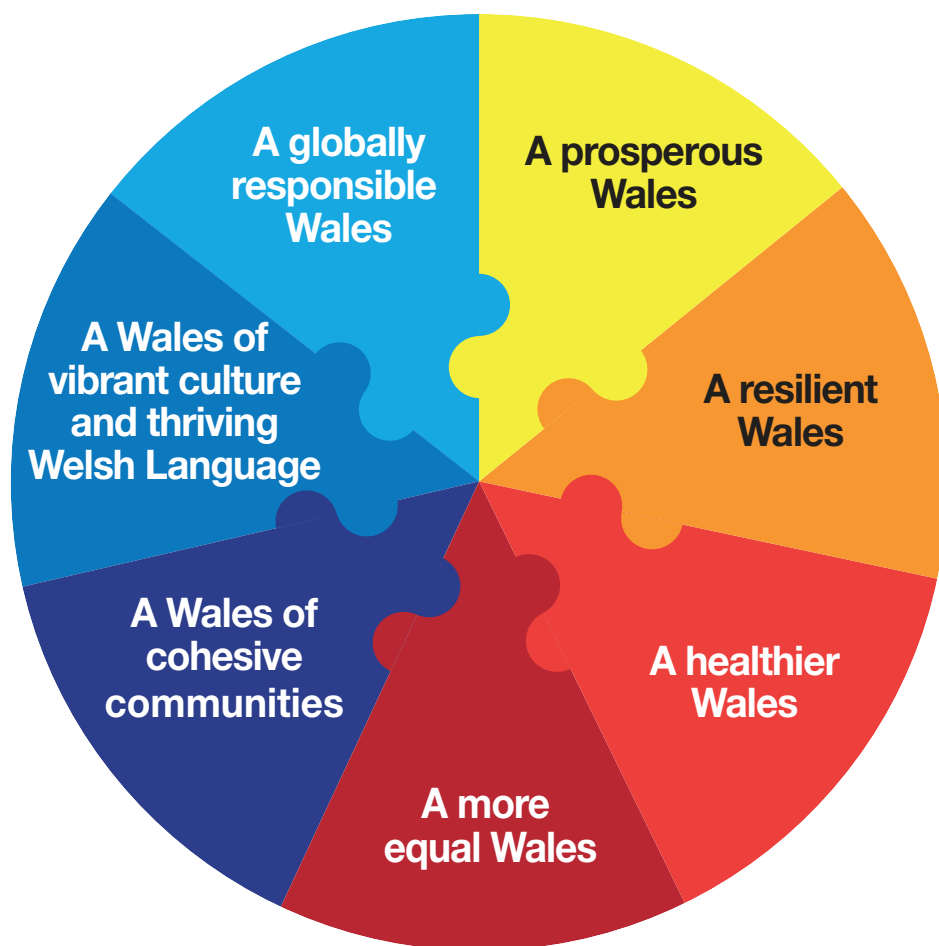


The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Council is committed to embedding the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 into all its service delivery and activities making sure that when we make decisions we take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future. The act aims to create a more equal Wales, where everyone has the opportunity to participate, reach their full potential and is able to contribute fully to the economy, will enable Wales to be more prosperous and innovative. The Act has been put in place to make sure that public bodies are doing all they can to contribute to the improvement of the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

The Act puts in place a sustainable development principle which means that we must ‘act in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.

The Act introduces seven long-term well-being goals, puts in place a sustainable development principle. The Act puts in place a duty on the Council as a public body to maximise its contribution to the seven national wellbeing goals a shown below:



The wellbeing of Future Generations Act asks individual public bodies to apply five ways of working:



Long term

The importance of balancing short term needs with the need to safeguard the ability to also meet long term needs.

Prevention

How acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives.



Integration

Considering how the public body's wellbeing objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their other objectives and on the objectives of other public bodies.

Collaboration

Acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives.



Involvement

The importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the areas in which the body serves.

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



The information we used to develop our Equality objectives

As well as listening to our residents, communities and our staff we have also used a range of equality information to support us in identifying equality objectives.

We have looked at regional priorities for Bridgend, Council Priorities, Service Delivery plans and their Self Assessments and have reviewed the progress that the Council's services have already made in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duties.

We have also reviewed national and external sources such as reports by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Welsh Government policy and priorities, research reports and other relevant statistics.

Whilst a number of external reports and EHRC inquiries have contributed to the development of the Equality Objectives, outlined below is the key report that assisted in shaping the objectives:

Is Wales Fairer? 2018 – Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

This report addresses seven key challenges that need to be addressed in Wales. The EHRC states there are major, entrenched inequalities and human rights abuses that will require substantial efforts of public, private and third sector organisations and of individuals to reduce them.

The 7 challenges are:

- Close attainment gaps in education
- Encourage fair recruitment, development and reward in employment
- Improve living conditions in cohesive communities
- Increase access to justice and encourage democratic participation
- Improve access to mental health services and support people experiencing poor mental health
- Prevent abuse, neglect and ill treatment in care and detention
- Eliminate violence, abuse and harassment in the community

This report has acted as a key driver for the development of the Council's Equality Objectives.

Our Equality objectives

To develop the equality objectives we have engaged with our residents, stakeholders and our workforce and used relevant information, including EHRC reports, Welsh Government reports and internal strategies.

In addition to this we have:

- Reviewed our Strategic Equality Plan 2016 – 2020 and our action plan for this period and considered our achievements to date;
- Used the council's corporate objectives of supporting a successful sustainable economy; helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient and smarter use of resources to help provide a structure and approach to reviewing our objectives, e.g. we have developed a consultation toolkit to support a more consistent and effective approach to consulting and engaging with our communities;
- Given further consideration to each of the nine protected characteristics covered by the three main aims of the general duty and the requirement to eliminate discrimination, harassment and other actions prohibited in the Equality Act 2010;
- Considered national and local issues such as immigration;
- Assessed what we have learnt from regional networks and partnerships such as regional approaches to meeting the needs of Gypsy and Traveller families, domestic abuse, violence against women, and sexual violence and hate crime;
- Looked at a number of the council's existing plans and strategies as well as the consultations which took place to inform their development, e.g. we have recently consulted on proposals to review our public toilets, subsidised buses and the council's budget (Shaping Bridgend's Future);
- Used feedback that we regularly get from local equality and diversity groups and via the Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum such as how accessible our services are and how we can help support, promote and raise awareness of issues such as hate crime and LGBTQ History Month;
- Carried out a consultation and engagement exercise with the public, partners and equality and diversity groups. We asked them for their views on the draft objectives for 2020-2024 and asked them to make comments to help us develop our action plan. Throughout the consultation we engaged with 647 people who shared their views with us and we have used these views to help shape our final equalities objectives.



We have set our objectives in line with the findings of the EHRC Is Wales Fairer report and the public consultation. The following overarching objectives have been developed following the consultation to reflect the views of residents and stakeholders from across the county borough:



Education

Everyone who accesses education should be free from discrimination, bullying and abuse in educational settings.

95% of those who responded to the consultation agreed that this should be an equality objective for the Council. Respondents told us that they thought we should educate people about the impact of bullying, promote the services that are available and should include staff as well as learners.



Work

Promote a more inclusive workforce and improve the participation, wellbeing and opportunities for development for those with protected characteristics.

83% of those who responded to the consultation agreed that this should be an equality objective for the Council. Respondents told us that there should be equal pay for equal work and more needed to be done with managers and businesses to understand pay gaps.



Living standards

Tackle poverty and support independent living by considering the impact of any policy changes or decisions under the socio-economic duty.

87% of those who responded to the consultation agreed that this should be an equality objective for the Council. Respondents told us that while they thought this objective could be difficult to achieve, they agreed that we should promote and provide access to services and promote resources for independent living.



Health and wellbeing

Support and promote good mental and physical health within our communities and our workforce and provide opportunities to participate in leisure and cultural activities.

92% of those who responded to the consultation agreed that this should be an equality objective for the Council. Respondents told us that we should support mental health awareness and services. That more facilities were needed for older people and we should improve access to services as well as promotion of services.



Safety and respect

Ensure that people within our communities have access to services that support them to live without fear of violence or abuse, and to be treated with respect.

94% of those who responded to the consultation agreed that this should be an equality objective for the Council. Respondents told us that we should work to promote safety and respect in schools and the council should look at funding for youth and community projects as well as intergenerational projects.



Participation

Encourage people and communities to participate and engage in issues that are important to them, and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

91% of those who responded to the consultation agreed that this should be an equality objective for the Council. Respondents told us that we should provide more opportunities for face to face engagement and act on opinions from the public not just listen to them. Respondents told us that participation should be a two way process as only communities know what is important to them.



We will develop an outcome focussed **Strategic Equality Plan Action Plan** to support this plan which will outline:

- The actions we are seeking to progress under each of our objectives which will make a positive difference to residents and employees' lives;
- When we expect to achieve these actions;
- Who is responsible for taking the actions forward; and
- How we will measure our success.

Building on the work we have carried out in our previous Strategic Equality Plan, in 2020-2024 we will:

- Continue to work with our partners to provide a range of services for people within our communities;
- Work with the police to identify and tackle hate crime within our communities;
- Strengthen collection and analysis of data for bullying incidents in schools;
- Undertake workplace equality monitoring;
- Ensure our residents can participate in consultations through a variety of formats, including face to face interactions;
- Develop the work of the Citizens' Panel;
- Review our Equality Impact Assessment processes to include the socio-economic duty.

We will use information that has come from the consultation to support the development of our actions. The action plan will be finalised in the summer of 2020 and added to this plan as appendix one.

How we will deliver and monitor the Strategic Equality Plan

Successful delivery of our objectives requires strong leadership which is driven primarily by the Future Generations and Well-being Cabinet Member, our Chief Executive and council Leader.

Responsibility for operational delivery rests with all service areas and teams within the authority. Each Corporate Director and Head of Service ensures their employees have the appropriate skills and knowledge of equality that are required. Our Cabinet Equalities Committee monitors delivery against the objectives and scrutinises information available to ensure we identify and implement new strategies and objectives appropriately.

Reports summarising progress against each of the objectives will also be presented to the Cabinet Equalities Committee for consideration.

Our main area of focus in monitoring progress is to undertake further, regular consultation and engagement with all protected characteristic groups. We are mindful that our most reliable measure of success of our equality objectives is via our residents, service users and employees as they use our services and be able to tell us where we have made progress and where we need to continue to improve.

To demonstrate our commitment to meeting our equalities objectives we will:

Collect and publish relevant equality information

We are committed to collecting data where it is useful and to use that data in an effective manner to identify where some protected characteristic groups may be experiencing a disproportionate impact or where there may be opportunities to deliver services in a different way. We will collect data on customers and residents via our consultation and engagement activities and on our employees via our own internal systems.

We will collect and use the following equality data:

- Employment profile data in respect of all protected characteristics;
- Service user data so that we understand the characteristics of the people who use our services;
- Job applicants in respect of all protected characteristics.

This data will be published annually as part of our Strategic Equality Plan annual reporting process. In addition we will publish annually:

- The Full Equality Impact Assessments undertaken;
- The Strategic Equality Plan action plan review;
- The Strategic Equality Plan annual report.



Assess the impact or potential impact on protected groups?

We are committed to assessing the impact of new and existing policies, practices and procedures on all equality groups by conducting appropriate equality impact assessments. Our Equality Impact Assessment page is available here on the council's website. When conducting equality impact assessments we will:

- collect and analyse relevant data;
- engage appropriately, through involvement and consultation, with people who are likely to be affected by policies and programmes from the start of the development and planning processes;
- provide our staff with training and support to ensure they carry out robust and meaningful equality impact assessments with confidence and knowledge.

We have also produced an Equality Impact Assessment toolkit which is a practical guide for service managers to use to assess the likely impact of their functions, policies and procedures on different groups of people. In addition to publishing our Equality Impact Assessments we have also published this guide on our website.

Promote knowledge and understanding of the general and specific duties amongst employees?

Our objectives will include the commitment to continue developing and implementing a comprehensive training and awareness programme for staff in respect of the general and specific duties. We will develop a rolling training programme for the period of this plan.

Continue to engage throughout the lifetime of this plan

Equality is diverse and we need to include people and their representative groups in our planning and decision making processes to help them unlock their potential. We also need to engage appropriately with people to help us meet our duties in the Public Sector Equality Duty in order to:

- Set future equality objectives;
- Review our Strategic Equality Plan;
- Identify how our work and activities may contribute to meeting the general duty;
- Assess the likely impact on protected groups of our policies and practices being proposed or reviewed.

We recognise that we need specific processes in place to ensure that the needs of people are taken into account. We will continue to use a range of approaches to engage with people, from formal consultation and engagement activities to informal meetings with local groups and individuals.