

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**  
**REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES**

**3 DECEMBER 2020**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR CHIEF OFFICER FINANCE,  
PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE**

**ANNUAL REPORT ON COMMUNITY COHESION**

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an annual report on the work of the Welsh Government Funded Community Cohesion Officer and the community cohesion work of Bridgend Community Safety Partnership

**2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives / other corporate priorities**

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:-**

1. **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** –. taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
2. **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.

**3. Background**

- 3.1 In December 2018 Welsh Government issued their 'intention to fund' email to all Regional Community Cohesion Co-coordinators in Wales. Welsh Government indicated that each region would be allocated £140,000 to:

- Identify and mitigate community tensions (hate crime, extremism, anxiety, anti-social behaviour) relating to Brexit;
- Improve community cohesion communications;
- Organise events/activities to promote social inclusion; and
- Deliver non Brexit activities as outlined in the National Community Cohesion Plan (2019).

- 3.2 At that time Bridgend County Borough Council, (BCBC), Swansea Council and Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council made up the Western Bay Community Cohesion Region, led by a Regional Community Cohesion Co-coordinator based in Swansea Council.

- 3.3 To ensure BCBC could access the funding an application for £140,000 for the Western Bay Community Cohesion Region was submitted and accepted.
- 3.4 BCBC appointed a Community Cohesion Officer in September 2019. The post is funded until 31 March 2021

#### **4. Current situation/proposal**

- 4.1 The role of the Community Cohesion Officer (the officer) in Bridgend County is to:
- support the delivery of the Western Bay Community Cohesion Delivery Plan by working with the Regional Community Cohesion Coordinator to identify and mitigate community tensions;
  - work with local partners including South Wales Police to monitor community tensions and hot spots, and co-ordinate a multi-agency response to reduce tensions and / or undertake preventative work;
  - continue the community mapping exercise to better understand the impacts of Brexit on communities, through direct engagement with local residents and communities;
  - Undertake regular engagement with groups vulnerable to community tensions in relation to Brexit (European Union (EU) citizens, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, and other protected characteristic groups), collating intelligence on tensions as they emerge; and
  - work with community based groups to support them in building their capacity through social integration initiatives and identification of grant funding opportunities.
- 4.1.1 The Community Cohesion Officer is based within the Bridgend Community Safety Partnership (CSP). Bridgend CSP is a sub board of Bridgend Public Services Board. The CSP brings together public, private and voluntary agencies to reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime. They do this by tackling the needs of both individuals and communities. More information on Bridgend CSP can be found <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/community-safety-partnership/about-the-bridgend-community-safety-partnership/>
- 4.1.2 The Community Cohesion Officer works closely with Bridgend CSP partners to avoid duplication and ensure collaboration across all aspects of community safety and cohesion.
- 4.1.3 Events locally, nationally and globally have had a significant effect on community cohesion work in Bridgend County.
- 4.1.4 Although still low in numbers there has been a spike in reports of hate crime in Bridgend County during recent months. This increase has been reflected in most local authorities across Wales. Some of these additional incidents may be due to increased reporting following campaigns and the work done during hate crime weeks.
- 4.1.5 Chart 1 below illustrates hate crime figures for the period April to September 2020 with a comparison to the previous 2 years.

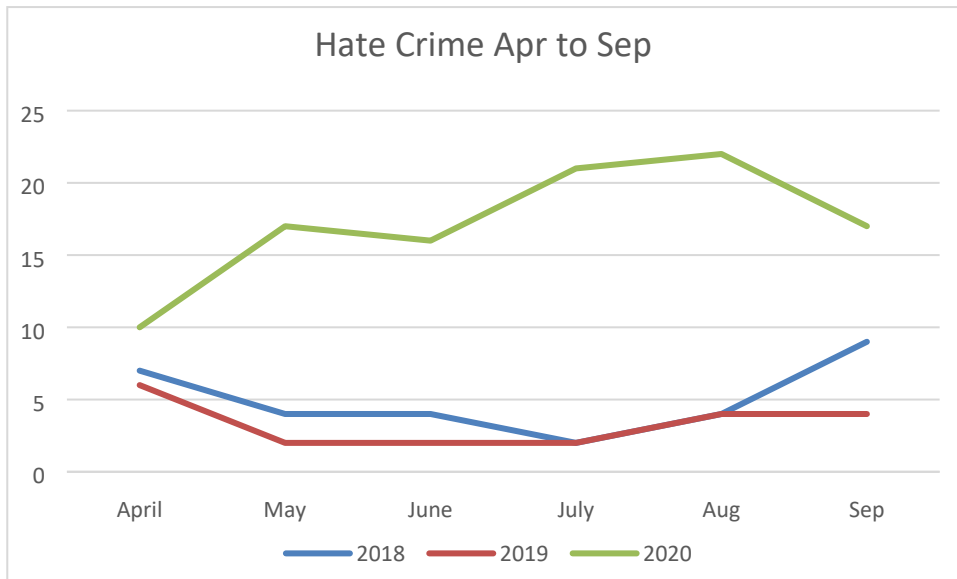


Chart 1 Victim Support Hate Crime Bridgend data

4.1.6 Chart 2 below gives a monthly break down per local authority area.

### Hate Crime – Local Authority Breakdown

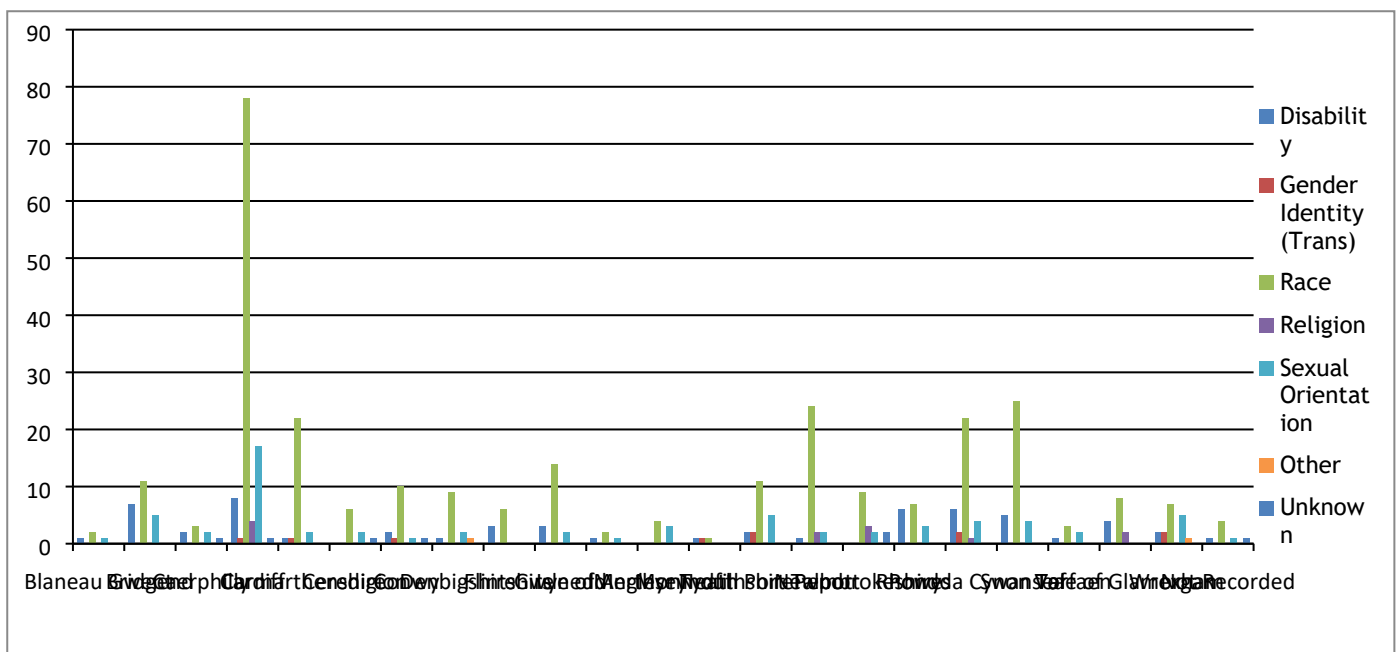


Chart 2 Victim Support Hate Crime Breakdown

- 4.1.7 As well as Brexit other issues have contributed to community tensions. The restrictions associated with COVID-19 have presented problems, including disputes with neighbours and complaints over 'gatherings' and re-housing some homeless individuals.
- 4.1.8 The closure of facilities for children and young people has led to an increase in anti-social behavior in some areas, which in turn causes community tension.

## **4.2 Progress to date**

- 4.2.1 The focus of the community cohesion officer has included work on the effects of Brexit, as well as the broader community cohesion agenda.
- 4.2.2 A key element of the Brexit work has included engaging with individuals and communities to ensure maximum uptake of the European Union Settlement Scheme (EUSS) including some of the examples below. More information on the EUSS can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2.3 A social media campaign promoting the EUSS and BCBC's Brexit page has been developed. This included sharing 43 Social media posts to promote the EUSS. The campaign generated 690 clicks through to the BCBC Brexit page. Residents can access a range of advice and support in various languages for their EUSS applications from a range of organisations
- 4.2.4 Over 90 frontline staff from a range of partner organisations have attended EUSS information and awareness raising sessions coordinated by the Community Cohesion officer.
- 4.2.5 Drop in sessions with Citizens Advice Bureau, Newfields Law and Settled have been held and EU nationals from Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Greece, Romania, France and Italy have received one to one support with their EUSS applications.
- 4.2.6 Translated information on Covid-19 and social distancing along with community support from BAVO has been shared via Bridgend Health & Wellbeing social media and BCBC social media platforms.
- 4.2.7 Information on how to celebrate Ramadan and Eid, during lock down, including how to access local and national support has been provided via BCBC social media, website and BCBC Health & Wellbeing pages.
- 4.2.8 An Additional Language Skills survey of BCBC staff was undertaken during the summer of 2020. The survey identified 14 different languages spoken by BCBC employees. These are:
- French 4
  - Italian 3
  - German 3
  - Russian 2
  - Polish 2
  - Spanish 2
  - Japanese 1

- Mandarin 1
- Sinhala 1
- Creole 1
- Slovak 1
- Cantonese 1
- Czech 1
- Ukrainian 1

4.2.9 Of the respondents to the survey 59% agreed they would volunteer to support residents with specific language needs.

4.2.10 The community cohesion officer has worked with the Citizens Advice Bureau and Bridgend College to deliver an online Webinar focused around EUSS support during lockdown. At the end of the Webinar there was an opportunity for students to ask general questions

4.2.11 The officer has supported the development of a script for the EUSS animated video, which has been promoted via social media.

4.2.12 The officer also worked alongside South Wales Police and other partners to promote the peaceful Black Lives Matters demonstrations in Bridgend and Porthcawl.

### **4.3 Community Tensions**

4.3.1 Alongside community and stakeholder engagement, work continues on tension monitoring within local communities.

4.3.2 Tensions identified by partners are reported via the tension monitoring system to the Safer Bridgend Inbox.

4.3.4 Weekly meetings are held between the Community Cohesion Officer and South Wales Police Hate Crime Officer to identify areas of tension and identify additional interventions or actions.

4.3.5 The community cohesion officer provides the secretariat for the Prevent Channel Panel. This role includes coordinating requests to partners (partnership scanning) for information from the Welsh Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU) on individuals who are at risk of being drawn into extremism and radicalisation.

4.3.6 Regular engagement meetings are held with the Well-being & Safeguarding Officer at Bridgend College, to share intelligence and concerns from our students, BAME residents and refugees, and provide regular engagement with our local Faith group leaders via email and phone.

4.3.7 Although still very low, the majority of referrals to the Prevent Channel Panel identify individuals who are at risk of radicalisation by extreme far right wing groups. To ensure internal and external partners are able to identify these risks far right extremism and counter narrative training has been provided by an external

specialist provider. An online version of this training has now been developed and will be piloted on 10 December 2020.

#### **4.4 Future Arrangements**

4.4.1 The Community Cohesion Programme is funded by Welsh Government through the European Union transition fund until March 2021. Welsh Government have not yet made a decision on whether the Programme will be funded in future years.

#### **5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules**

5.1 The report has no direct effect upon policy framework and procedure rules.

#### **6. Equality Impact Assessment**

6.1 This is an information report so no additional equality impacts. The Community Cohesion project aims to support those with protected characteristics and other vulnerable groups

#### **7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications**

7.1 The Community Cohesion project demonstrates the sustainable development principle by ensuring that by meeting the needs of the present they do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs this is evidenced through the 5 ways of working:

- Long term – the project seeks to understand and mitigate the long term implications on Bridgend residents and communities of the decision for the UK to leave the EU
- Prevention – working with partners to map and understand community tensions will help prevent serious problems occurring and mitigate existing tensions
- Integration – the project contributes to the wellbeing goals: an equal Wales, a healthier Wales and Wales of Cohesive communities and to the Wellbeing objectives Supporting communities in Bridgend to be Safe and Cohesive, and Reducing Social and Economic Inequalities
- Collaboration – the success of the role of the Co-ordinator will rely on collaboration with partners across Bridgend County and the Western Bay region.
- Involvement – a significant element of the project is based on engaging and involving residents and community groups

#### **8. Financial Implications**

8.1 There are no financial implications resulting from this information report.

#### **9. Recommendation(s)**

9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Equalities note and accept the contents of this report.

**GILL LEWIS  
INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE  
DECEMBER 2020**

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**Background documents:** None