

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES

27 JULY 2021

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**STRATEGIC EQUALITY PLAN ACTION PLAN REPORT (UPDATE ON WORK
UNDERTAKEN BY DIRECTORATES IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS)**

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To provide Cabinet Committee Equalities with an update on progress made in delivering the Strategic Equality Plan (SEP) 2020 - 2024 during 2020 to 2021. This is the first review for this plan.

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

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

1. **Supporting a successful 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 focused on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions of 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. **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

2.2 The 2020-2024 SEP is a statutory plan that impacts on the whole of the council. It outlines six overarching equality objectives:

- **Education:** Everyone who accesses education should be free from discrimination, bullying and abuse in educational settings.
- **Work:** Promote a more inclusive workforce and improve the participation, wellbeing and opportunities for development for those with protected characteristics.

- **Living standards:** Tackle poverty and support independent living by considering the impact of any policy changes or decisions under the socio-economic duty
- **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.
- **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.
- **Participation:** Encourage people and communities to participate and engage in issues that are important to them, and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

3. Background

- 3.1 Following public consultation the council's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 was approved by Cabinet on 10 March 2020.
- 3.2 The outcome focused actions were developed to reflect the views of residents and stakeholders from across the county borough. The action plan is a live document that contains 21 outcomes and 58 actions.
- 3.3. Cabinet Committee Equalities will receive annual updates on the progress of the Strategic Equality Plan action plan.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 Progress for 2020 to 2021 is documented in appendix one.

Key points to note are:

Education

The current form for reporting racist incidents is under review, alongside a guidance document. This will be available for the 2021/2022 academic year. Information will be shared with all head teachers in advance of the new academic year. Reports will continue to be shared with Cabinet Committee Equalities on incidents within schools annually. This will help to inform a revised anti-bullying strategy.

From April 2020 onwards learners have been offered individual digital support in order for them to access online learning provision. In addition to this, all learners are asked to complete individual learning plans which will help to identify any learning needs and determine additional support that can be offered directly by the tutor in addition to any support that can be offered by the wider service. Where learners disclose learning needs these are recorded on a support plan. All courses offered are differentiated to suit a range of learning needs and abilities.

From April 2020 additional resources have been offered to learners to enable them to access online learning opportunities. Learners have access to devices such as

laptops, tablets etc. as well as access to connectivity options. A number of learners have accessed devices in order to take part in courses.

Work

Awareness campaigns have focussed on hidden disabilities, hate crime awareness, zero tolerance to hate crime and LGBTQ+/Pride history month. Information is shared internally via Bridgenders weekly messages with all staff. Wellbeing information for staff focussed on resilience and mental health are also promoted via Bridgenders.

The gender pay gap as at March 2020 and 2021 has been reported which shows a marginal improvement each year. An action plan will be developed in 2021/22.

BCBC provided apprenticeship opportunities to 34 people in the year 2020/2021. Further opportunities have been explored for graduates and apprenticeships and these will be in place within the next financial year.

Work is ongoing to promote Disability Confident scheme – Disability Confident Employer badge now visible on Jobs Pages & Equal Opportunities page of BCBC website. The Disability Confident Action Plan has been updated and the Disability Confident self-assessment has been undertaken and completed. The Disability Confident Employer badge has been received, which is valid up to 28/11/2023.

During 2020-21, 2 LGBT courses were delivered with 17 delegates attending. These workshops were delivered by Stonewall.

Living standards

The EIA process has been reviewed. New paperwork has been created and training and guidance documents have been produced. The EIA e-learning has been reviewed to reflect the changes to the process and the implementation of the socio-economic duty.

New guidance is available on the intranet, webinars have been delivered to ensure officers have access to information about the socio-economic duty. The EIA e-learning module has been reviewed to include socio-economic duty and the new EIA process.

The Real Living wage was implemented with effect from 1 April 2021, for council employees, which positively impacted on 1,038 employees, of whom 88% were female.

The provision of food parcels as the local authority's strategy to support pupils eligible for free school meals (eFSM) is ongoing as it has been since Spring 2020. Welsh Government funding continues to financially support the provision of support for eFSM pupils until March 2022.

The School, Holiday Enrichment Programme is planned to be delivered in the summer holiday period in July/August 2021. Recruitment for appropriate staffing has begun for the 2021 SHEP project. Two cohorts have been identified and the programme will deliver from Cynffig Comprehensive and Coleg Cymunedol y Dderwen in July /August 2021.

During the first lockdown the Youth Development Service had to ensure that young people in need of free-to-access menstrual products could do so even if they were self-isolating and/or shielding. Linking with colleagues in the Corporate Communications team, a social media campaign was started to promote the availability of products to school aged young people. Within the first couple of months the post had reached over 42,000 people resulting in 700 young people receiving home deliveries of products. The campaign continued throughout the second lockdown (December 2020 onwards) and supplies will continued to be offered through the coming summer holidays.

Health and wellbeing

Covid-19 risk assessments have been made available for employees to complete in order to assess their risk. Discussions with managers are encouraged in situations where risks are identified, so that supportive actions can be identified, implemented and reviewed.

The Health and Wellbeing protocol has been developed, and was launched in October 2020, following consultation with trade union representatives. Staff can access this via the intranet and the range of other wellbeing resources available. A part time Health and Wellbeing Officer has been appointed who will take the wellbeing agenda forward and ensure all staff are aware of the wellbeing resources and support available.

In 2020-21, the following courses were delivered in conjunction with Valley Steps and WULF (Multi-Unions):

- Mindfulness – 4 courses delivered / 37 delegates attended
- Resilience – 4 courses delivered / 45 delegates attended
- Confidence in the Workplace – 4 courses delivered / 38 delegates attended
- Communication in the workplace – 5 courses delivered / 50 delegates attended

New approaches were developed with key partners. Super Agers supported people at home and in communities when permitted and chosen as a Bevan Exemplar. Free swimming opportunities have been reviewed in regard to young people with disabilities and also socio economic disadvantage. Some programmes commenced when venues permitted to open. Additional support for unpaid carers of vulnerable groups created within Halo Leisure. Halo at home digital activities developed including inclusive opportunities. Awen increased availability of digital library resources and home delivery of books etc via the books at home service. Feel good for life programme has supported people living with dementia and cognitive impairment including the development of digital skills and knowledge.

New approaches have been developed to remotely support young people with additional needs and families including digital opportunities. The Bridgend Inclusive Network Group (BING) has been supported to bring community groups together to develop collaborative approaches. Work differs to previous years but has expanded the opportunities for many going forward. Partnership working has continued regionally with Disability Sport Wales.

Play sufficiency action plan delivered and reported to Welsh Government. Work has included developing a summer play programme for looked after young people and those who are a safeguarding concern. Family Active Zone programme has supplied home activity resources linked to partners identifying socio economic disadvantage of household needs. Digital opportunities developed for young people and households linked to disabled children's team and also support provided for third sector groups of parent carers to develop their own opportunities and resources. Active young people services have supported schools and community partners with resources to support activity development and wellbeing of young people.

The council has raised awareness and promoted campaigns such as autism awareness, the hidden disability lanyard scheme, and mental health awareness. Promotional activities will continue through a calendar of events and awareness days in 2020 to 2022.

Safety and respect

Work with SWP and local groups continues to ensure any trends and hotspots are monitored and dealt with appropriately. Regular engagement with affected groups and weekly reports discussed with local hate crime officer.

BCBC continue to work with community and equality groups within the Bridgend Community Cohesion Forum (BCCEF), representatives from across the community representing a wide range of organisations meet quarterly to share practice, receive joint briefings and training and share. All members are invited to share information about BCCEF with other organisations with the aim to increase membership and representation.

BCBC marked Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 with virtual event, the Grand Pavilion and the Civic Offices were lit up purple. The theme for the 2020 event, which is provided by the Holocaust Memorial Trust was 'Be the light in the darkness'. This theme asks everyone to consider different kinds of 'darkness', for example, identity-based persecution, misinformation, denial of justice; and different ways of 'being the light', for example, resistance, acts of solidarity, rescue and illuminating mistruths. World Mental Health Day was promoted by lighting the main Civic Offices green, and have worked in collaboration with Halo to light up the Grand Pavilion to remember the sacrifices made and those we have lost on the anniversary of the first coronavirus lockdown. The council has worked with partner organisations within Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum to share information on Hate Crime, Dangos launch, BAVO's Black and Minority Ethnic outreach work, barriers that people with sight loss face and the impact of Covid-19, and BCBC's Strategic Equality Plan.

BCBC worked with seven other local authorities to promote LGBTQ+ history month by producing and promoting a calendar of events, information, webinars and Q&A sessions. The calendar was promoted on Proud Councils social media accounts and BCBC corporate social media accounts. The Proud Councils - Proud Insights Event was shared with all staff during LGBTQ+ history month. The event saw panel members from Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf Councils coming together to discuss a range of issues, including the importance of LGBTQ+ staff networks in organisations and how these can be developed. There was also the opportunity to take part in a Q&A with panel members to discuss the things that mattered to them.

The event which was open to all council employees to attend took place on Friday 26 February 2021.

Between December 2020 and April 2021, Small Steps delivered Far Right Extremism Awareness & Counter Narrative Training to 176 members of staff, key partners and community groups.

BCBC promoted Black History month on the council's corporate social media channels. Promoting the Black History Wales Youth Awards, Black Brilliance in Healthcare and the Black History Wales Artists Gallery. BCBC's Youth Mayor made a Black Lives Matter (BLM) video and we co-ordinated a Hate Crime Awareness Wales (HCAW) webinar with Race Council Cymru on Saturday 10 October, which was attended by the Leader of BCBC who gave a short presentation.

To extend the reach of communications across Wales, the council worked closely with regional Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence (VAWDASV) coordinators to fund community communication activities. These activities were aimed at raising awareness of VAWDASV, local services as well as both local and national Live Fear Free campaigns. White Ribbon - Activities were led by survivors of abuse in partnership with specialist services. Events were primarily focused around the 16 Days of Activism and International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls in November and included:

- A survivor-led podcast
- Conferences in South West Wales for victims and professionals
- Development of resources for working with survivors of VAWDASV with additional learning needs
- A community event for young advocates
- Awareness raising and additional training for 'Healthy Relationship Ambassadors' in secondary schools.

Participation

Work continues with services to produce easy read and youth versions of consultations where appropriate. During the pandemic corporate social media accounts have been heavily relied on to share information with communities. Explainer videos have also been produced and traditional press releases and radio advertising has been used to share information about key consultations.

A review of the Citizens Panel has taken place to review demographics and representation across wards within the county borough. An action plan to improve ward representation and increase representation of younger people and people with protected characteristics will be developed for 2021/2022 with an aim to improve the diversity of the panel over the next three years.

Guidance and training has been developed on producing accessible documents. The guidance is available on the intranet for all staff to access when producing documents for the public. Over the next three years guidance will be developed on producing easy read documents and availability of formal training.

BCBC have carried out face to face engagement (online meetings) with Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equality Forum on the BCBC Strategic Equality Plan and

Fit for the Future consultation. Details of the Bridgend Town Centre Masterplan consultation were shared with all members of BCCEF via email, and members were asked to share details of the consultation within their own networks.

BCBC have promoted campaigns via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and the BCBC website, including:

- Foster care fortnight 2020
- Social care jobs – wecarewales
- Day of reflection
- Woman of wales event
- LGBT fostering – throughout year
- Youth support
- Hate hurts wales – hate crime
- Childcare offer
- Give blood
- Community testing
- World autism week
- EU settlement
- ARC mental health – throughout year
- Senedd election
- Register to vote – foreign and 16s citizens
- Early help launch of new website
- Chinese New Year – year of the ox
- International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
- Welsh in the workplace
- Youth justice launch of new website
- Volunteer week
- International Women’s Day
- Armed Forces day
- Shwmae Sumae day
- World Environment Day
- St Dwynwens Day
- Welsh Language Rights day
- Digital pride
- Hate Crime awareness week 2020,
- Domestic abuse launch of assia
- LGBTQ+ Adoption and Fostering Week
- World Social worker day
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Young Carers Action Day
- Live fear free from abuse
- Apprenticeship week
- LGBTQ History Month
- National wind rush day
- Show Racism the Red Card workshops (Equalities training for schools)
- World Mental Health Day – Civic offices turn green
- Remembrance day
- Black history month

- Hanukkah
- Diwali
- Iaith gwaith
- International Men's day
- Carers rights day
- Safeguarding week

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

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

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions.

Following the consultation in 2020, a full EIA was undertaken which highlighted that the SEP and associated action plan will have a positive impact people with protected characteristics.

This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an EIA in the production of this report. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

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

7.1 The well-being goals identified in the Act were considered in the preparation of this report. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been used to formulate the recommendations within this report:

Long-term -The consideration and approval of this report will assist in supporting equalities objectives the short-term and in the long term.

Prevention - The Strategic Equality Plan aims to identify issues that are relevant in our community and workforce and set objectives to prevent problems from occurring.

Integration - The Strategic Equality plan supports all the wellbeing objectives and ensures integration for all people with protected characteristics.

Collaboration - The creation of and the monitoring of the Strategic Equality Plan is done in collaboration with all council services and the community.

Involvement - Publication of the report ensures that the public and stakeholders can review the work that has been undertaken.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 Any financial implications described within the SEP action plan will be met from within existing directorate budgets.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That Cabinet Equalities Committee receives and considers this report and appendix.

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27 July 2021

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Background papers:

None