

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

**8 NOVEMBER 2021**

**REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE**

**COMMUNITY COHESION ANNUAL REPORT**

**1. Purpose of report**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an annual report to Cabinet Committee Equalities 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**:

- **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.
- **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-ordinator 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 was originally funded until 31 March 2021 and subsequently until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 closely aligned with the Brexit deadline towards the European Union (EU) settlement scheme.

3.5 However, in April 2021 Welsh Government extended the funding for the Community Cohesion Officer until March 2022.

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

4.1 The role of the community cohesion officer (the officer) up until June 2021 was 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 (SWP) 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.

4.2 In June 2021 Welsh Government amended the themes for the Community Cohesion project for 2021 to 2022. The revised themes are:

- **Engagement and Awareness Raising:** engagement with minority communities, involving them in developing initiatives to promote community cohesion based on the needs of that community, the wider community, and mitigate tensions. Fostering good relations by developing events to bring people from across different communities together, whether virtually or in person.
- **Training and capacity building:** support public bodies and others in the region to build their awareness and capacity to effectively implement the Public Sector Equality Duty. Support wider Welsh Government training programmes and policy development (as required), bringing in community engagement expertise. Build capacity within groups supporting minority communities to improve engagement, understanding of cohesion issues and routes to support.
- **Tension Monitoring and mitigation:** understand ongoing and emerging community tensions and put in place processes and procedures to address them as required. Engagement with relevant networks including the Police to address tensions / hot

spots. This may involve a multi-agency response to reduce tensions and/or undertake preventative work.

- Inclusive policy and decision-making: ensure community cohesion issues are considered in the development of Well-being Plans, Strategic Equality Plans, Equality Impact Assessments, Community Safety planning. Ensure Public Bodies are reaching out to and hearing from minority groups when developing policies or taking decisions which are likely to affect them.
- Research and Evidence: take an evidence based approach to community cohesion using research and evidence to develop provision to meet the changing demographics, challenges, risks and needs of communities.
- Prevention of hate, exploitation and extremism: have an understanding of the likelihood and prevalence of exploitation and extremism in the community and take action to ensure that vulnerable communities are aware of it, are supported and avoid it escalating.

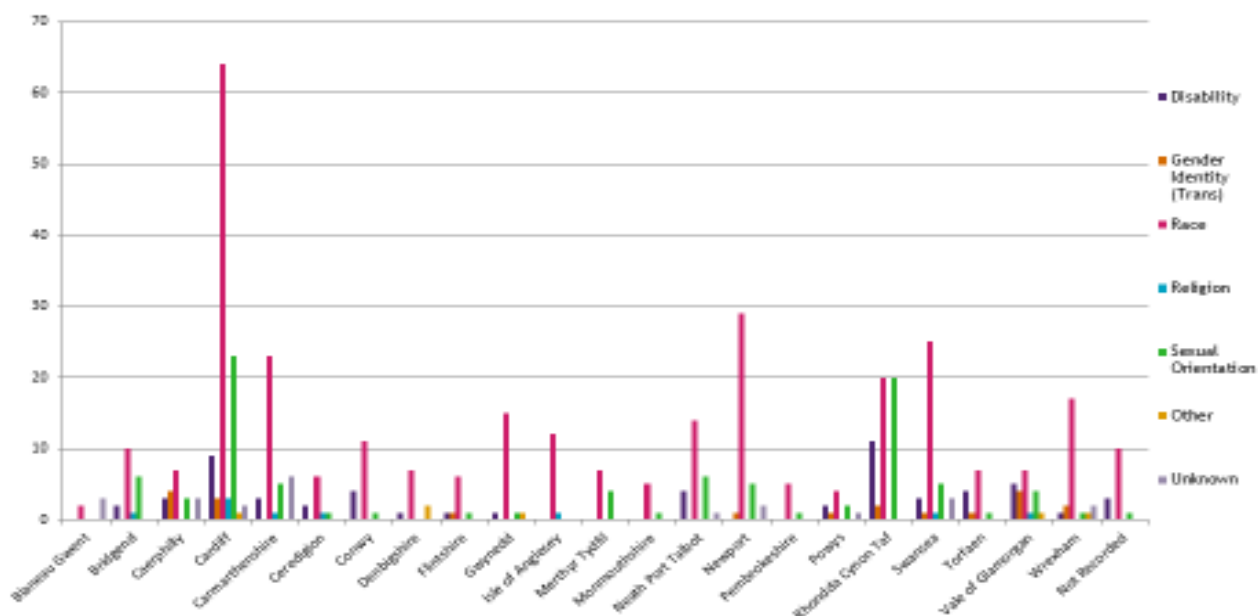
4.3 The Community Cohesion Officer is based within the Bridgend Community Safety Partnership (CSP). Bridgend CSP is a sub board of Bridgend Public Services Board. The CSP brings together public, private and voluntary agencies to reduce crime, disorder and fear of crime. They do this by tackling the needs of both individuals and communities. More information on Bridgend CSP can be found at <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/my-council/community-safety-partnership/>.

4.4 The Officer works closely with Bridgend CSP partners to avoid duplication and ensure collaboration across all aspects of community safety and cohesion.

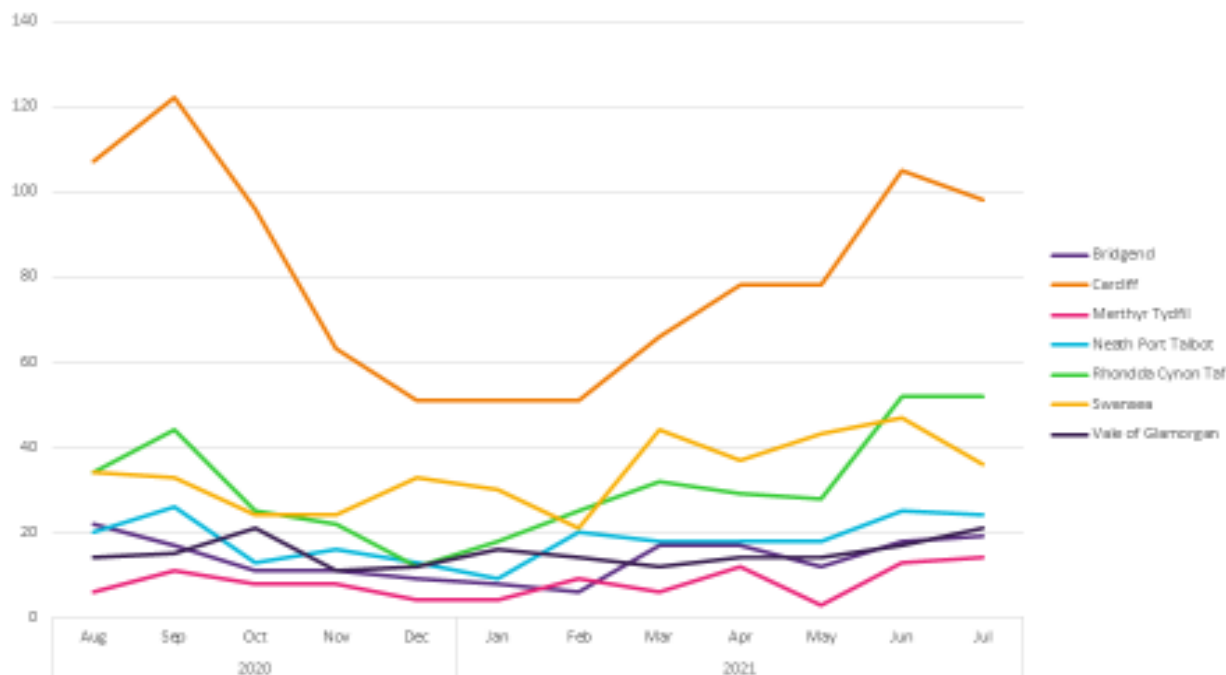
4.5 The last 18 months or so have seen unprecedented changes locally, nationally and internationally.

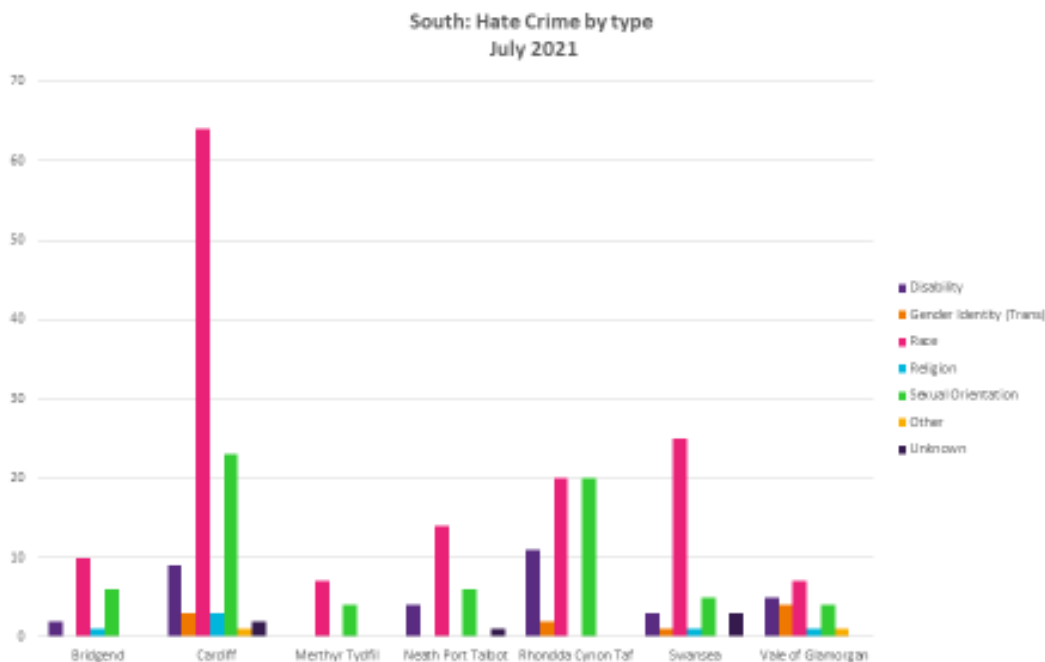
4.6 This makes it difficult to understand the underlying causes of community tensions. The tables below illustrate that hate during this calendar year has been reported at a similar level to last year, with race related incidents being the most common





**Rolling Month South**





#### 4.7 Progress to date

4.7.1 the focus of the community cohesion officer has included work on the effects of Brexit, as well as the broader community cohesion agenda.

4.7.2 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**.

#### 4.8 Community Tensions

- Alongside community and stakeholder engagement, work continues on tension monitoring within local communities.
- Tensions identified by partners are reported via the tension monitoring system to the Safer Bridgend Inbox.
- Weekly virtual 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.
- Fortnightly updates sent to Welsh Government on community tensions and hate crimes/incidents.
- Recent engagement with SWP Hate Crime Officer and Taff Housing to address any issues among Refugee and Asylum Seeker families.

#### 4.9 Training

- EUSS session delivered via Teams by TGP Cymru and Newfields Law. 40 members of staff and key partners in attendance.
- EU Settlement Scheme and EU Citizens Rights training to staff and key partners, delivered by Citizens Advice on 7<sup>th</sup> April (25 in attendance).
- 3 Ask & Act training sessions delivered to BCBC staff from various departments. The training focused on domestic violence, including topics such as culturally specific issues (i.e. honour based violence, Female Genital Mutilation) and barriers to disclosure for women from minority communities (31 in attendance).
- Two Far-Right Extremism Awareness sessions delivered by Small Steps organisation to staff and key partners in February and March. A total of 69 in attendance. A further session was delivered on 30 April with 30 in attendance.
- 3 online Census workshops for BCBC staff, elected members, key partners and community groups/leaders.
- Far-Right symbols/stickers training currently being developed in partnership with Swansea University for Channel Panel members and frontline staff.
- Training delivered by Displaced People in Action to staff and key partners during Refugee Week on 18<sup>th</sup> June (21 in attendance).

#### **4.10 Engagement**

- Regular engagement meetings are held with the Well-being & Safeguarding Officer at Bridgend College, to share intelligence and concerns from students, BAME residents and refugees, and provide regular engagement with local Faith group leaders via email and phone.
- Promotion of social media content for Refugee Week (Film by Carmarthen County Borough Council shared by Bridgend).
- Worked with Refuge council for Wales to curate a communications package to challenge misconceptions of Refugees and Asylum Seekers during Refugee Week.
- Supported the Race Council for Wales event for Windrush elders in our community.
- Promoted Jewish History Association of South Wales (JHASW) online talks. Ongoing discussion of how BCBC and JHASW can create an online exhibition of Jewish History in Bridgend.
- Worked in partnership with Bridgend Inclusive Network Group to promote disability friendly sports groups during Learning Disability Awareness Week.
- Workshops attended to gain understanding of new challenges faced by minority groups since Covid, i.e. improving access to higher education and employment for forced migrants, fair work in hospitality, retail and social care and Covid.
- Supported the Census Engagement Manager for Bridgend and Vale of Glamorgan to identify 'Hard to Reach' groups to encourage the completion of Census 2021 forms.
- Extensive communication to promote Census material with local community groups, faith groups and local third sector organisations. Worked with BCBC Communications to ensure Census material is available in various languages and to debunk myths over Census and personal data.
- Continued work with the Department of Work and Pensions to extend support and signposting to EU citizens after 30 June 2021.
- Regular engagement with BAME Outreach Worker (BAVO) to promote vaccination among BAME community and supporting undocumented residents in accessing vaccine.

#### **4.11 Prevention of Hate, Exploitation and Extremism**

4.11.1 The Welsh Local Government Association WLGA have commissioned Show Racism the Red Card to support teachers to deliver hate crime prevention sessions in schools. To date, 4 schools in Bridgend County have received sessions from Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) via face-to-face delivery or webinars.

4.11.2 Participant numbers and year groups that are targeted are detailed below:

School	Number of pupils participated	Year Groups
Bryntirion Comprehensive	100	8 & 9
CCYD	250	7
Maesteg	571	7, 8 & 9
Pencoed Comprehensive	140	7
Brynteg	Delivery yet to be agreed, but due for completion by March 2022	
Porthcawl		
Llangynwyd		

4.11.3 Agreement has now been made to offer the teacher training to all schools. This would mean that potentially all schools will access the project as opposed to 3 teachers from each of the above attending. It is hoped that this will provide a more sustainable approach to dealing with the issues of Hate Crime in our schools.

4.11.4 The Community Cohesion Officer continues to provide 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 radicalization.

4.11.5 we have also supported the Welsh Government consultation and response to the Race Equality Action Plan (REAP).

#### **4.12 Future Arrangements**

4.12.1 The Community Cohesion Programme is funded by Welsh Government until 31 March 2022. Welsh Government have not yet made a decision on whether the Programme will be funded in future years.

4.12.2 A rapid review of the Community Cohesion programme is due soon which will shape the future delivery of the programme from April 2022 onwards.

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

5.1 This report has no direct effect upon policy framework and 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. This is an information report, therefore it is not necessary to carry out an Equality Impact assessment 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 Community Cohesion project demonstrates the sustainable development principle by ensuring that by meeting the needs of the present we 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 and other aspects of community cohesion.
- 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 well-being goals: an equal Wales, a healthier Wales and Wales of Cohesive communities and to the Well-being 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 wider regional partnerships.
- 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**

9.1 That Cabinet Committee Equalities note the content of this report and **Appendix 1**.

**GILL LEWIS**

**INTERIM CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE**

**November 2021**

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**Background documents:**

None