

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES
25 JULY 2022

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY – ONE YEAR ON

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet Committee Equalities (CCE) with information on the Socio-economic Duty one year on from its implementation on 31st March 2021.

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. **Smarter use of resources** – ensure 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 to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Socio-economic Duty came into force in Wales on 31 March 2021 as a statutory requirement, with an aim to improve decision making and help those who are socio-economically disadvantaged, tackling inequality at the heart of decision-making, and build on the good work public bodies are already doing.
- 3.2 The introduction of the Socio-economic Duty meant that public bodies now must think about how their strategic decisions, such as setting objectives and developing public services, can improve inequality of outcome for people who suffer socio-economic disadvantage.
- 3.3 Although public authorities in Wales are to comply with several statutory duties, including ones which seek to embed equality consideration throughout, more consideration was needed to eliminate inequality of outcome associated with socio-

economic disadvantage.

- 3.4 The definition of socio-economic disadvantage is described as “living in less favorable social and economic circumstances than others in the same society.”

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 To ensure that the socio-economic duty is fully considered as part of the Council’s governance and strategic decision-making processes, Bridgend Council has adopted the following initiatives:

- Include the Socio-economic Impact within the full corporate Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) and initial screenings, to ensure Managers consider implications to the socio-economic disadvantaged.
- Produce guidance and corporate learning and development training for staff on the implementation of the Socio-economic Duty and Equality Impact assessment.

- 4.2 A total of thirty-three EIA screenings and four full EIA’s have been completed in the 2021/2022 financial year across directorates. Of the thirty-three EIA’s completed, four indicated that there would be a positive impact on the Socio-economic disadvantaged, where the other ten were identified as no impact. No EIA’s displayed a negative impact on the Socio-economic disadvantaged.

- 4.3 Of the four EIA’s that identified a positive impact, these were in relation to the strategic changes made on the following proposals:

4.3.1 The procedure for the appointment of local authority (LA) governors

All school governing bodies have, as a minimum, four compulsory groups of governors. One of these groups is local authority (LA) governors and LA governors have to be appointed by the LA. This proposal was to set out how the LA will undertake LA governor appointments, as the need for school governing bodies is set out in law and their roles, responsibilities and constitution are also defined in law. This was indicated as having a positive impact on the Socio-economic disadvantaged because schools and governing bodies play a pivotal role in the community and contributing to community cohesion, not only through education provision but also through a focus on relationship between pupils and the school, their community and wider society. They provide opportunities for people to interact, work together, develop positive relationships, and contribute to their community. Further, they emphasise the importance of a common vision, shared values based on democracy, equality, diversity, tolerance, fairness, and justice and creating a sense of belonging.

Local authority governors are a key stakeholder group on school governing bodies. School governing bodies take a strategic role in running schools ensuring that all pupils are supported to learn and achieve, so that they can access opportunities for further learning and employment, know how to maintain their wellbeing, play active roles in their communities, and contribute positively to society.

4.3.2 The new Transitional Foster Care Policy

The overall aim of the Transitional Foster Care scheme was to move children who are looked after into a successful, long-term placement that aligns with their needs and enables them to reach their full potential, with the possibility of moving into a long-term fostering placement, returning to birth family or a supported independent living environment.

Many of the children and young people who are cared for by Transitional Foster Cares would have come from families and communities that have faced socio-economic impact and dis-advantage and they would be considered to have experienced Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Transitional Foster Carers forms part of a multi-agency approach to support these children to achieve a sense of permanence, which in turn will have a positive impact on a young person's self-esteem, educational outcomes and well-being.

4.3.3 *The relocation and refurbishment of Maple Tree House*

A Remodeling of Children's Residential Services took place in 2017/18 as part of the Remodeling Children's Services Programme. The remit of the project was to review current residential provision to include residential homes and out-of-county placements and to develop a new residential and accommodation model which could provide the right quality of assessment, accommodation, care and support within Bridgend County Borough.

In February 2020, a report was presented to Cabinet/Corporate Management Board (CCMB), to provide an update in relation to the service remodeling proposals, which included a proposed new site for the Children's Residential Placement Hub at the Brynmenyn Primary School site.

The proposed new development on the former Brynmenyn School site aims to provide specially designed and purpose-built Placement Hub, from which the newly implemented service model can be effectively delivered. The new provision allows for more teams to be located within the Hub (including Bridgend Fostering services), which will enable more seamless working and better outcomes for children and young people which cannot currently be delivered to maximum capabilities from the existing site. The new site is also in a much more favorable setting, being close to amenities, without built-up areas and more space and facilities available which will in turn support the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

4.3.4 *The provision of a Regulated Home Care Service Framework*

This proposal related to the remodeling of Bridgend Council's existing Regulated Domiciliary Care Service and to amalgamate it with the existing Short Breaks Service, with the intention to then enter into a tender exercise to procure a new and improved service

The Regulated Domiciliary Care Service, which ended on 31 December 2021, provided personal care and support to people in Bridgend with an assessed and eligible need, enabling them to continue to live as independently as possible in their own homes and communities.

Bridgend County Borough Council's Short Breaks Service, which ended on 20 July 2021 had a much more flexible service and received very positive feedback from the Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), who were welcoming of that approach being adopted more widely across the board.

It is anticipated that the newly remodeled and combined service will afford individuals and carers greater choice and control, as those using the new service will be able to agree directly with their provider to 'change up' or 'change down' their care calls to suit (up to their assessed weekly hours) if this is what they want to do and to 'bank' any time accrued to use later within a four-week period. Alternatively, people may prefer to opt for regular call lengths and times each day instead.

5. Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

- 5.1 The report has no direct effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules but it enables us to effectively implement the Council's statutory duties in relation to equalities and human rights in relation to the Socio-economic Duty.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

- 6.1 The report provides the committee with information that positively assists in the delivery of the authority's equality duties. This is an information report; therefore an EIA is not required.

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 in the short-term and in the long term.

Prevention - The ongoing work aims to identify issues that are relevant in our community and set objectives to prevent Socio-economic disadvantage.

Integration - The work conducted across all services aims to support all the well-being objectives and ensures integration for all people with Socio-economic disadvantages.

Collaboration - The monitoring work on Socio-economic Duty is done in collaboration with all services across the county borough and relevant council services.

Involvement - Publication of the report ensures that the public and stakeholders can review the work that has been undertaken to combat Socio-economic disadvantages.

8. Financial implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Committee Equalities receives and considers this information.

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Background papers: None