

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES

23 NOVEMBER 2022

**REPORT OF THE 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 (NPT) 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 June 2021 closely aligned with the Brexit deadline towards the European Union (EU) settlement scheme.
- 3.5 In April 2021 Welsh Government extended the funding for the Community Cohesion Officer until March 2022. The funding has been extended further until March 2023
- 3.6 The role of the community cohesion officer (the officer) up until March 2022 was:
 - **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. Current situation/proposal

4.1 In February 2022 Welsh Government amended the themes for the Community Cohesion project for April 2022 to April 2023. 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 and the wider community. 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.
- **Tension Monitoring and Mitigation:** Understand ongoing and emerging community tensions and put in place processes and procedures to address them as required. Ensure Welsh Government and other key agencies are well informed and aware of tensions as they arise in order to assist with mitigation, as required.
- **Inclusive Policy & 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
- **Prevention of Hate, Exploitation and Extremism:** Have an understanding of the likelihood and prevalence of hate, exploitation and extremism in the community and take action to ensure that vulnerable communities are aware of it, are supported and avoid it escalating.
- **Bespoke Priorities:** To support Ukraine refugees, the UK Government's and WG's Sponsorship Schemes, and coordinate with public, private, and third sectors to share relevant information and support.

4.2 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/>.

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

4.4 The last 2 years or so have seen unprecedented changes locally, nationally and internationally due to the impacts of the Covid pandemic.

4.5 This makes it difficult to understand the underlying causes of community tensions. The data below has been provided by Victim Support. In England and Wales, cases have seen an overall 26% increase. Below is a breakdown of hate crime figures on

a more local level from July 2022 – August 2022. As mentioned, it is difficult to determine a singular underlying cause for this, given the recent unprecedented global events. Factors could include post-covid behaviours, the cost of living crisis, Brexit, an increase in divisive narratives shared by prominent political figures and the global crisis. An increase in awareness raising around hate crime and incidents could also affect figures. Race related incidents have been the most frequently reported form of hate crime/incident nationally.

Hate Crime - Local Authority Breakdown - Quarterly Breakdown of Hate Crime Type by LA

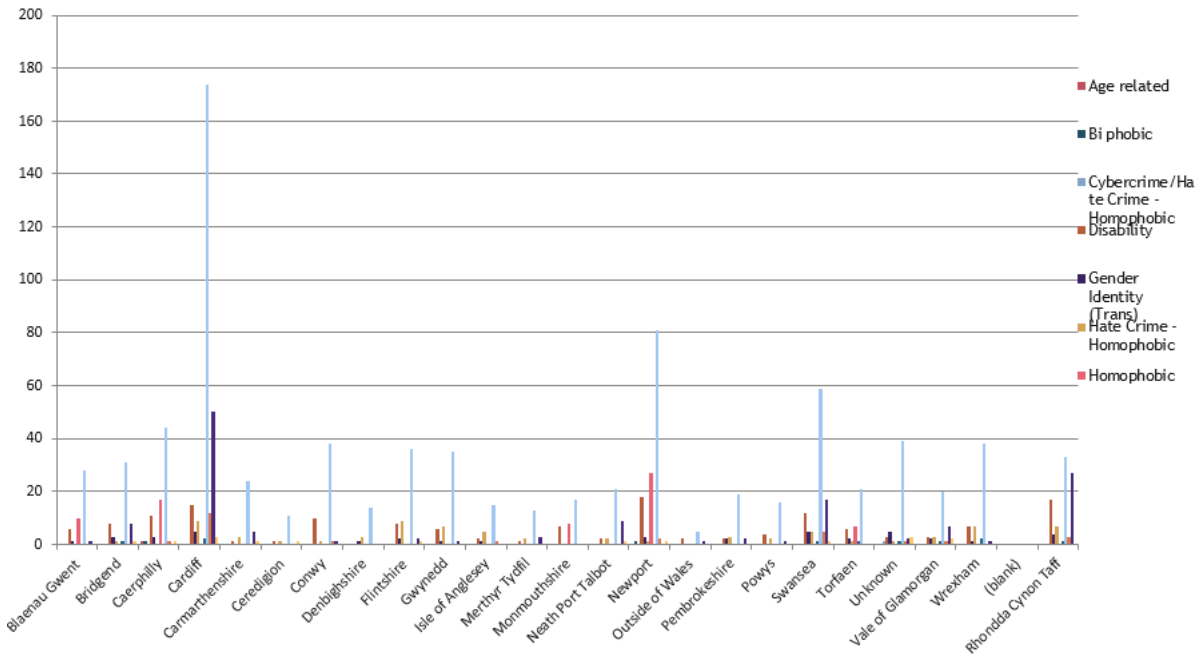
Local Authority	Disability	Gender Identity (Trans)	Other	Race	Religion	Unknown
Blaenau Gwent	6	1		28		
Bridgend	8		3	1	31	1
Caerphilly	11		3		44	1
Cardiff	15		5	2	174	12
Cardiff	1				24	1
Carmarthenshire	1				11	1
Ceredigion	1					
Conwy	10				38	1
Denbighshire			1		14	
Flintshire	8		2		36	1
Gwynedd	6		1		35	
Isle of Anglesey	2		1		15	1
Merthyr Tydfil	1				13	
Monmouthshire	7				17	
Neath Port Talbot	2				21	1
Newport	18		3		81	2
Outside of Wales	2				5	
Pembrokeshire	2		2		19	
Powys	4				16	
Swansea	12		5	1	59	5
Torfaen	6		2	1	21	
Unknown	3		5	1	39	1
Vale of Glamorgan	3		2	1	20	1
Wrexham	7		1	2	38	
(blank)						
Rhondda Cynon Taff	17		4	1	33	3

Insight

This table shows the breakdown of Hate Crime Type for last quarter across each Local Authority.

A visual representation can be located on the following slide

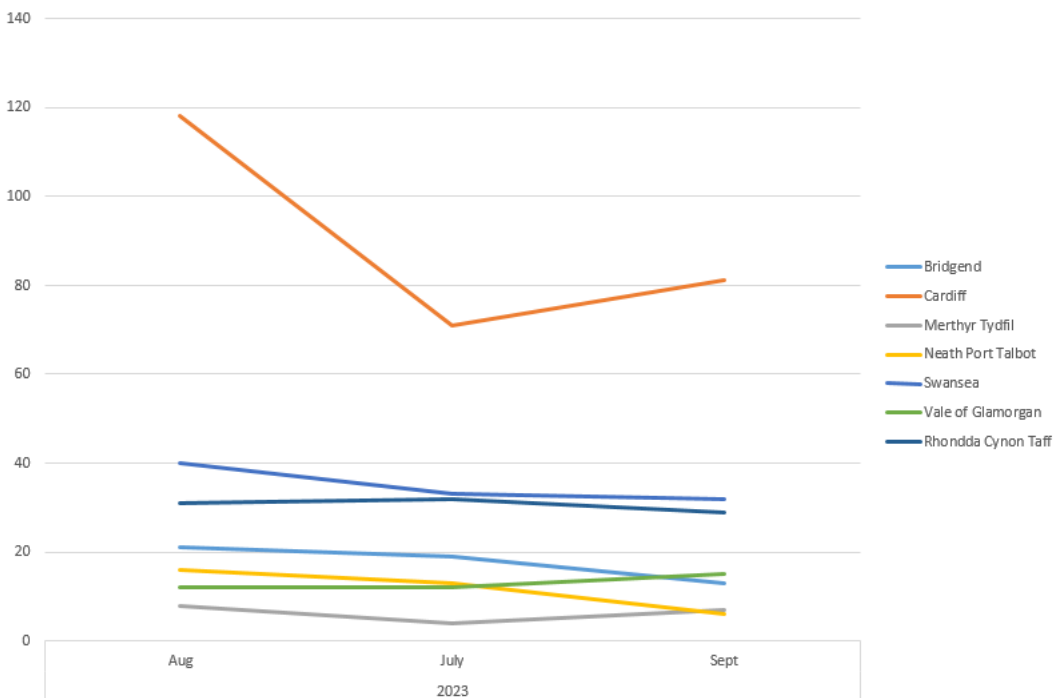
Hate Crime - Local Authority Breakdown - Quarterly Breakdown of Hate Crime Type by LA



© Victim Support 2022



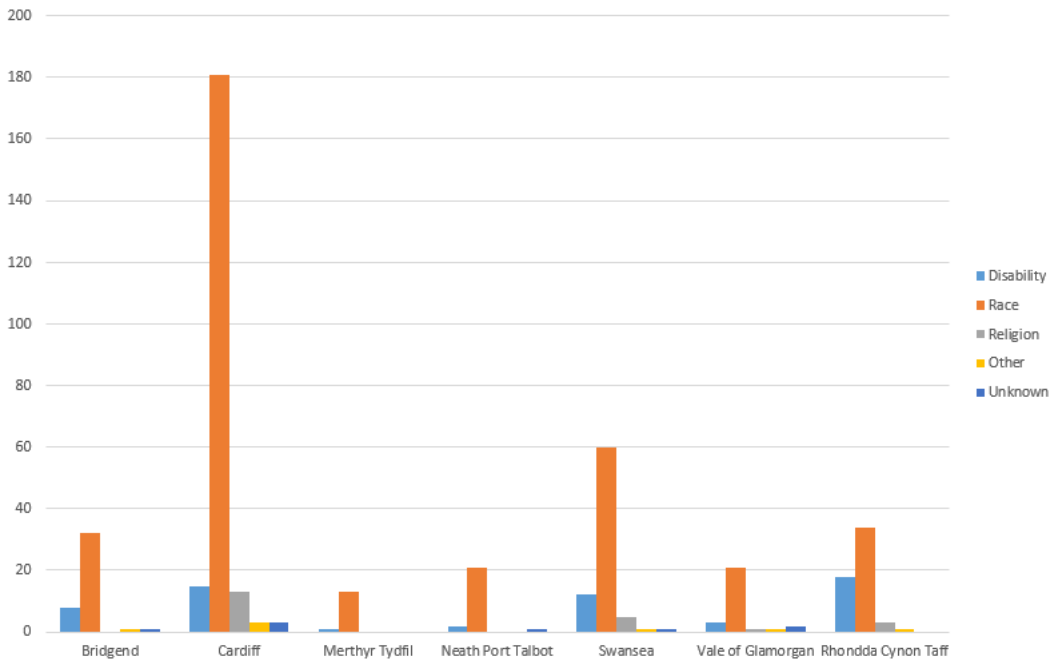
Rolling Month South



© Victim Support 2022



South: Hate Crime by type
Q2 2022 / 2023



© Victim Support 2022



4.6 Progress to date

4.6.1 The focus of the Community Cohesion Officer has been based on the objectives of the National Community Cohesion Plan (April 2022 – 2023).

Engagement

- Ongoing support for the Afghan Resettlement Scheme and families reaching the end of the Syrian Resettlement Scheme.
- An active member of the regional Vaccine Equity Group and focus group for our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.
- Hate Crime Awareness Week 21/22: Social media campaign took place throughout the week and training and engagement tables held locally. A film afternoon was held for Bridgend College students 'Cinema Club' – Screening of the film 'Pride'.
- Black History Month 21/22: Social media campaign and promotion of local and national events.
- Interfaith Week 21/22: A photo competition took place based on the theme of 'A place where you feel most connected to your faith'.
- Refugee Week 2022: A social media campaign took place for Refugee Week on this year's theme of 'Healing', in partnership with Bridgend College, helping to promote the English as a Second Language Department (ESOL)
- Diwali '21: Free Dancercise workshops delivered online for residents (6 sessions, average of 17 attendees for each session).
- Volunteer Awards 2022: Worked with BAVO to coordinate and deliver Community Volunteer Awards, bringing together communities and thanking those who

committed to volunteering during Covid19 and various lockdowns with 140 in attendance.

- Community Rail – Heart of Wales Line Project to be delivered this quarter. A day out on the Heart of Wales Line for Refugee and Asylum Seeker families from across the region, supporting communities to create independent support networks.
- Sub-chair of the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller (GRT) Heritage working group, creating engagement opportunities for the GRT community in learning and promoting their heritage.
- Support the Welsh Government Anti-Hate social media campaign.
- International Café: The Officer supported the establishment of ‘International Café’, run by The Bridge Mentoring Scheme. The initiative took place between July-September 2022 and provided an opportunity for Asylum Seekers and Refugees to establish a support network and create shared experiences. This initiative was initially presented to the Officer as a Café for refugees from Ukraine. In order to be inclusive of all communities, the project went ahead as an ‘International Café’, ensuring all nationalities and communities were welcome. Since the establishment of the café, the centre has seen an increase in the general use of their services by the international community.

4.7 Training & Capacity Building

- Officer coordinated Displaced People in Action delivery of Refugees and Asylum Seekers Training to staff and key partners during Refugee Week with 35 in attendance.
- 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.
- Attendance at Nation of Sanctuary training with Ethnic Youth Support Team.
- Attendance at The Points Based Immigration System and the Status of EU Citizens workshop.
- Attendance at Diversity in Democracy workshop.
- Attendance at ‘Reaching the Hard to Reach’ workshop.
- Far-Right Visuals and Propaganda Training delivered by Swansea University. Two sessions delivered to staff and councillors with 39 in attendance.
- Far-Right Extremism Awareness Training, delivered by Small Steps with 6 sessions delivered between Feb-March 2022 and 117 staff and partners in attendance.
- Unconscious Bias and Cultural Competence training delivered by Imperial College London to 30 members of staff and key partners.
- Challenges and Barriers faced by the Gypsy, Roma & Traveller Community delivered to staff and partners with 32 in attendance.
- Officer has coordinated the delivery of Safe Online Spaces Training, to be delivered by Victim Support, to help residents create safe spaces online and identify and report hateful language. This is due to be delivered in November 2022.

4.8 Inclusive Policy & Decision Making

- The Officer has supported the Welsh Government consultation and response to the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan.

- The Cohesion Officer is a member of the Bridgend Community Cohesion and Equalities Forum.
- Supporting Public Service Boards Wellbeing Plan by directly working with our diverse communities, ensuring the views of all communities are considered in the development of the plan.
- Supporting the Prevent research team in establishing the new Prevent e-learning module.
- The Officer has supported the communications team in promoting support for qualifying citizens to register to vote.
- The Officer is a member of the Wales Community Volunteer Association Grant Panel, ensuring inclusive decision making throughout the grant allocation process.
- The Officer is a member of the Comic Relief Organisational Growth Panel, ensuring cohesion priorities are considered in the decision-making process.
- The Officer has worked with the regional voluntary sector and cohesion officers in establishing a Small Grant Fund. Purpose of the fund is to engage with grass-root community groups that face barriers to funding, in their development.

4.9 Tension Monitoring & Mitigation

- 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 – Bridgend, Swansea and NPT meetings on a weekly basis.
- Fortnightly updates sent to Welsh Government on community tensions and hate crimes/incidents.
- The Community Cohesion Officer has provided 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. The Cohesion Officer provides the cohesion update for the Regional Contest Board and Prevent Board.
- The Officer has supported Swansea University's 'Smart Partnership' application for the establishment of a Graffiti Reporting App, to help tackle and identify extremist related graffiti. Awaiting further information on the progress of the application.
- The Officer is currently working with Community Safety Partnership colleagues in creating a 'Positive Messages Campaign'. The campaign will be focused on 'graffiti hotspots' in the area, replacing hateful graffiti with counter narratives through community murals. These positive messages will be specific to Bridgend.
- The Officer is a member of the National Prevention Extremism Forum.
- The Officer took part in this years' Anti-Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Conference with University Wales Trinity St. David
- The Officer is a member of the Forum for Anti-Asylum Hate & Crime

4.10 The Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) commissioned Show Racism the Red Card to support teachers to deliver hate crime prevention sessions in schools. Feedback from the sessions:

- Quality of delivery of training - All rated good or very good 75-100%.
- Raised awareness of Hate Crime - All rated good - 80-100%.
- Would you know what to do? - Indications are that most pupils felt that if a future incident arose, they knew what actions they should take.

4.10.1 The WGLA commissioned the Society for the Advancement of Philosophical Enquiry and Reflection in Education to offer Hate Crime teacher training to all schools. It is hoped that this will provide a more sustainable approach to dealing with the issues of Hate Crime in our schools.

4.11 Bespoke Priorities: Ukraine

- The Officer has been a member of the Refugee and Asylum Seeker working group while based in Bridgend. The Officer co-designed a welcome pack for those arriving under the Homes for Ukraine Scheme (HFUS) and Afghan Resettlement Scheme in partnership with the Housing Department.
- The Officer has worked with the Homes for Ukraine Point of Contact for Bridgend. Continue to seek and promote accurate information on the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and support for Ukrainians who are seeking to enter Wales via family reunification.
- The Officer is a member of the support group, coordinated by BAVO and consisting of third sector partners and local authority staff supporting families under the HFUS, ensuring the group is inclusive and sharing intelligence/identifying gaps in support at the earliest stage possible.

4.12 Future Arrangements

4.12.1 The Community Cohesion Programme is funded by Welsh Government until 31 March 2023. Welsh Government has 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 was published in September 2022 which will shape the future delivery of the programme from April 2023 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, Socioeconomic 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 its diverse communities, as a result of ongoing changes to the social and political climate.
- **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

Carys Lord - CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, PERFORMANCE AND CHANGE
November 2022

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Background documents:

None