

# Draft Strategic Equality Plan Objectives 2024-2028

# Strategic Equality Plan Draft objectives consultation

## Overview

This consultation is to invite views on Bridgend County Borough Council's Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

This consultation aims to seek the views of residents, our workforce, elected members and stakeholders on the proposed Equality Objectives for 2024-2028.

The Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 is being developed to demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, which came into force on 6 April 2011.

The equality objectives will demonstrate how the council will go about promoting equal opportunities for all and making a real difference to the lives of those living and working in Bridgend County Borough.

The Strategic Equality Plan will ensure that we have clear objectives and a set of actions to demonstrate how we will deliver our equalities commitments whilst continuing to be an inclusive and effective organisation that is representative of our community and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

The results from this consultation will be used to inform our final Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028, which will be implemented in April 2024.

## How to respond

This consultation period will begin on the **xxx December 2023** and close on the **xx February 2024**. You can respond or ask further questions in the following ways:

**Tel:** (01656) 643 664

**Email:** [Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk](mailto:Consultation@bridgend.gov.uk)

**Online:** [www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation](http://www.bridgend.gov.uk/consultation)

**Post:** Communications, Marketing and Engagement, Bridgend County Borough local authority, Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend, CF31 4WB. Alternative formats are also available upon request.

## Data protection

Information provided by you on this form will be used to inform the Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028.

The Council will take all reasonable precautions to ensure confidentiality and to comply with data protection legislation. Your information may be shared with relevant service areas for the purposes of future policy development. Your information will be retained in accordance with the Council's Data Retention Policy.

You have a number of rights under data protection legislation. You may also withdraw your consent and ask us to delete your personal information at any time by contacting us. Further information about this is available on our website or you may contact the Data Protection Officer.

If you are dissatisfied with the manner in which we process your personal data then you have the option to make a complaint to the Data Protection Officer and the Information Commissioner's Office.

## **Related documents**

<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/wales-fairer-2018>

## **The Purpose of the Strategic Equality Plan**

This Strategic Equality Plan 2024-2028 is being developed to demonstrate the Council's commitment to meeting the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011, which came into force on 6 April 2011.

Building on our previous equalities work the Plan will explain to residents, our workforce, elected members and stakeholders how Bridgend County Borough Council will to deliver its equalities commitments whilst continuing to be an inclusive and effective organisation that is representative of our community and does not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

Within the Equality Act 2010, public bodies have an additional responsibility to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty. These are outlined below:

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

#### **The General Duty**

When making decisions and delivering services we must have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (protected characteristics are explained later in this report).
- Fostering good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

#### **The Specific Duties**

The Equality Act provides a power to make regulations imposing duties on public bodies to support better performance of the general duty; these are known as the Specific Public Sector Equality Duties and are different in England, Scotland and Wales.

The Welsh Government published regulations that introduced the Specific Duties for Wales in March 2011, these set out the actions the Council must take in order to comply and include the following areas:

- Setting Equality Objectives and publishing a Strategic Equality Plan;
- Ensuring it engages with people who have an interest in how the Council's decisions affect them;
- Collecting and publishing information relevant to compliance with the General Duty;
- Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments and publishing the results if there is a substantial impact on the Council's identified;
- Publish employment monitoring information annually;
- Promote knowledge and understanding of the General Duty amongst its employees and use its performance assessment procedures to identify and address the training needs of its employees in relation to the General Duties;
- Set a gender pay equality objective where a gender pay difference is identified;
- Think about including conditions relevant to the General Duty in its procurement processes.

### **Who is protected under the Equality Act 2010?**

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of their protected characteristic.

The law is designed to protect them, the protected characteristics are:

- |                           |                                  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Age                     | • Disability                     |
| • Gender Reassignment     | • Marriage and civil partnership |
| • Pregnancy and maternity | • Race                           |
| • Religion or belief      | • Sex                            |
| • Sexual orientation      |                                  |

### **The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

The Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015 has been put in place to make sure that public bodies are doing all they can to contribute to the improvement of the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.

The Act introduces seven long-term well-being goals, puts in place a sustainable development principle, and defines 5 ways of working that public bodies will need to think about to show they have applied the sustainable development principle. The diagram below shows how the seven national goals, the sustainable development and the five ways of working work together.



The Council is committed to the well-being goals and the sustainable development principle, making sure that when we make decisions we take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future.

### Relevant information we will use

As well as listening to our residents, communities and our staff we will also use a range of equality information to support us in identifying equality objectives.

We will look at regional priorities for Bridgend, Council Priorities, Service Delivery plans and their Self Assessments and will review the progress that the Council's services have already made in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duties.

We will review national and external sources such as reports by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Welsh Government policy and priorities, research reports and other relevant statistics.

Whilst a number of external reports and EHRC inquiries have contributed to the development of the Equality Objectives, outlined below is the key report that assisted in shaping the objectives:

### Is Wales Fairer? 2018 – Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)

This report addresses seven key challenges that need to be addressed in Wales. The EHRC states there are major, entrenched inequalities and human rights abuses that will require substantial efforts of public, private and third sector organisations and of individuals to reduce them.

The 7 challenges are:

- Close attainment gaps in education;
- Encourage fair recruitment, development and reward in employment;
- Improve living conditions in cohesive communities;

- Increase access to justice and encourage democratic participation;
- Improve access to mental health services and support people experiencing poor mental health;
- Prevent abuse, neglect and ill treatment in care and detention;
- Eliminate violence, abuse and harassment in the community.

This report has acted as a key driver for the development of the Council's Equality Objectives.

## How we developed our Equality Objectives

In order to develop our equalities objectives we have:

- Reviewed our Strategic Equality Plan 2020 – 2024 and our action plan for this period.
- Used the council's new corporate objectives of:
  - better and more targeted use of resources,
  - One council, working well together and with partners
  - Improving communication, engagement and responsiveness
  - Supporting and empowering communities
  - protecting the services that matter to you the most
- We have developed a consultation toolkit to support a more consistent and effective approach to consulting and engaging with our communities.
- Given further consideration to each of the nine protected characteristics covered by the three main aims of the general duty and the requirement to eliminate discrimination, harassment and other actions prohibited in the Equality Act 2010.
- Considered national and local issues.
- Assessed what we have learnt from regional networks and partnerships such as regional approaches to meeting the needs of domestic abuse affected families, domestic violence, sexual violence and hate crime
- Looked at a number of the council's existing plans and strategies as well as the consultations which took place to inform their development,
- Used feedback that we regularly get from local equality and diversity groups and via the Internal Corporate Equalities Forum such as how accessible our services are and how we can help support, promote and raise awareness of issues such as an Anti-racist Wales action plan.

## Our Equality objectives

To develop the equality objectives, we will engage with residents, staff, elected members and stakeholders and use relevant information, including EHRC reports, Welsh Government reports, internal strategies and the results of staff engagement exercises as well as community groups' engagement exercises.

We have set our overarching objectives in line with the findings of the EHRC Is Wales Fairer report, as detailed below:

### **Access to services**

Improve the experience and outcomes for our citizens, ensuring that every resident has equity of access to the services that they need.

### **Protecting our most vulnerable**

To establish comprehensive policies and procedures that effectively safeguard and support the rights and well-being of our most vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, people with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness or poverty and those that access care and support from Social Services.

### **Living Standards**

Tackle poverty and support independent living by considering the impact of any policy changes or decisions under the socio-economic duty. Consideration to vital services such as Housing and homelessness, cost of living and the effect adverse effects on individuals.

### **Participation & Engagement**

Encourage people and communities to participate and engage in issues that are important to them and influence the decisions that affect their lives. Building and increasing quality relationships with communities to ensure a focus on what matters to them.

### **Learning**

To promote equal access to quality learning for all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, abilities, age or ethnic background. Support diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout.

### **Employment**

Promote a more inclusive workplace that values diversity. Improve the participation, wellbeing, and opportunities for development for those with protected characteristics

## **Process**

The purpose of this consultation document is to outline the overarching objectives which will then enable us to develop an action plan to support our objectives. This document has been prepared to provide information about the objectives in order to allow residents, our workforce, stakeholders and elected members the opportunity to have their say.

Following the conclusion of the consultation period all comments received will be presented to the local authority's Cabinet and all views expressed will be taken into account in the compilation of the Strategic Equality Plan for 2024-2028.

The table below sets out the timetable for the consultation:

<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
Consultation begins	<b>Xx December 2023</b>
Consultation ends	<b>Xx February 2024</b>
Publication of Strategic Equality Plan	<b>1 April 2024</b>

## Who is being consulted

This consultation aims to seek the views of residents, staff, elected members and stakeholders on the proposed Equality Objectives for 2024-2028. The Consultation and Engagement Team will visit Equality Groups within the County Borough to ensure that the views of members of equality groups are fully considered.

## Community Engagement Workshops

Venue	Time	Date
Maesteg Library	4pm-6pm	January 2024
Pencoed Library	11am-1pm	January 2024
Bridgend Life Centre	6pm-8pm	January 2024
Porthcawl Library	9.30am-1pm	February 2024