

# Strategic Equality Objectives Consultation Findings Report

**Date of issue: April 2024**

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## 1. Overview

Bridgend County Borough Council has proposed six draft equality objectives to drive how we will promote equal opportunities for all and make a real difference to the lives of those living and working in Bridgend County Borough. Feedback of the proposed six objectives will be used to shape the Strategic Equality Action Plan.

To ensure our objectives reflect citizens' priorities, a public consultation was undertaken over an 8-week period, between 4 January 2024 to 29 February 2024.

In total, there were **400 responses**, including online completions, paper completions and ideas submitted to our online ideas board.

## 2. Consultation Process

The consultation consisted of a public survey that was available to complete online through a link on the consultation page of the council's website. Paper copies of the consultation were also available, which could be sent directly to residents upon request. The consultation was sent out to our Citizen Panel, and shared with Town and Community Councils, and the Youth Council. In-person public engagement events were also held throughout the consultation period.

The data collection methods, which include the online survey and a paper survey were developed using plain English to maximise understanding. An easy-read version of the survey was also available to download from the consultation project page. These response methods were designed to give a consistency to the survey across multiple platforms. Respondents could choose to answer all or some questions. All survey responses offered the option of anonymity.

## 3. Marketing and engagement methods

This section details methods used to raise the profile of the consultation and encourage participation.

### 3.1. Social media

The public consultation was posted bilingually to the council's corporate Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn channels throughout the consultation period, to raise awareness of the consultation and to encourage citizens to share their views on the strategy.

The council currently has over 20K Facebook followers and 14.7K followers on its English X (Twitter) account, and 369 on its Welsh X (Twitter) account.

The below table shows engagement rates with social media posts promoting the strategic equality objectives throughout the consultation period.

	<b>Impressions</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Shares</b>	<b>Link clicks</b>
<b>English</b>	11216	8	15	62
<b>Welsh</b>	176	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,392</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>62</b>

### 3.2. Engagement HQ

Engagement HQ is a digital engagement platform that supports the council's online consultation and engagement activities. The platform is available in both English and Welsh Language.

The online survey was published using Engagement HQ, with the link available on the consultation page of the council's website.

The following graph provides an overview of visitors to the strategic equality objectives project page on Engagement HQ.

# Visitors Summary

Be involved, Bridgend from 04 Jan'24 to 29 Feb'24



The table below highlights visits to the Engagement HQ project page for the strategic equality objectives consultation.

<b>Aware visitors</b>	1,075
<b>Informed visitors</b>	529
<b>Engaged visitors</b>	372
<b>Visits referred from social media</b>	50
<b>Visits referred from council's website</b>	239
<b>Visitors from search engine</b>	5
<b>Direct</b>	381

**Aware visitors:** A visitor that has made at least one single visit to the site or project page, and is therefore 'aware' of the project, but has not clicked anything or participated in the survey.

**Informed visitors:** An informed visitor has taken the 'next step' from being aware and clicked on something, for example, viewed key dates, a document, or clicked on the survey.

**Engaged visitors:** These are visitors that have engaged with the project by submitting a response to the Strategic equality objectives survey.

### 3.3. GovDelivery

GovDelivery is a digital communications tool that is used by the council, to send messages directly to residents' and staff email inboxes in the language of their choice.

#### 3.3.1. Weekly Residents bulletin:

There are currently 35,143 English language subscribers and 283 Welsh language subscribers from Bridgend County Borough to the weekly Residents' Bulletin.

Throughout the consultation period details of the consultation on the strategic equality objectives were included in GovDelivery resident bulletins which contains 10 weekly news stories and updates. Residents then have the opportunity to click through to the online survey to become an engaged visitor.

Three resident bulletins were sent out about the consultation on the strategic equality objectives, which included links to the strategy and online survey.

The weekly news roundup generated a total of 125 link clicks to the strategic equality objective survey (124 English, 1 Welsh).

#### 3.3.2. Staff Bulletin

There are currently 5,233 staff signed up to our staff bulletin.

Details of the Strategic equality objectives survey was shared in our weekly staff bulletin five times throughout the period of the consultation, which included links to the survey and strategy.

The staff bulletin generated a total of 51 link clicks to the strategic equality objective survey.

#### 3.3.3. Citizen Panel

At the beginning of the consultation period, members of the Citizen panel were sent the strategic equality objective survey. Members received emails via GovDelivery, and those who chose to receive paper copies received them through the post.

The citizen panel email generated a total of 193 link clicks to the strategic equality objective survey.

A total of 237 letters were sent to Citizen panel members by post. 29 completed paper copies of the survey were before the consultation closing date.

### 3.4. Media and Publicity

The consultation was promoted to the media as part of the Bridgend County Borough news round-up on:

- 12 January
- 16 February
- 23 February

Media included: Wales Online, Glamorgan Gazette newspaper, Glamorgan Star Newspaper, Sky News, Channel 4 news, ITV Wales, BBC Wales, Bridge FM, Heart Radio, Swansea Bay News and S4C.

The release was also shared promoted by the Leader of the council (Cllr Huw David) in his regular updates to members and key community contacts.

### 3.5. Engagement Events

Throughout the consultation period six in-person engagement events were held around the county, including public drop-in sessions, to encourage residents and members to share their views on the draft objectives.

Details of the events were shared via the council's social media.

The public consultation events took place in the following venues:

- Town and Community Council Forum
- Corporate overview and scrutiny committee
- Pyle Life Centre
- Ogmore Life Centre
- Garw Life Centre
- Brynteg Comprehensive School

## 4. Response Rate

There were **400** responses in total to the survey, 371 responses were submitted through the online survey, and **29** responses were submitted as paper copies.

Engagement events were used to inform citizens and raise awareness of the consultation. The sessions provided an opportunity for individuals to gain further information regarding the objectives and consultation, and also receive additional support to complete the survey. Citizens were given the option to fill out a paper copy of the survey or through the link. These responses are included in the overall figure.

## 5. Questions and analysis - consultation Survey

Feedback received from the consultation will be used to inform the development of the objectives within the Strategic Equality Plan.

### 5.1. Language used to complete the survey.

Respondents to the consultation survey were initially asked in which language they would like to complete the survey. Overall, 99.5% of respondents selected English with 0.5% selecting Welsh.

Language	#	%
English	<b>398</b>	<b>99.5%</b>
Welsh	2	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## 6. Survey Questions and Analysis:

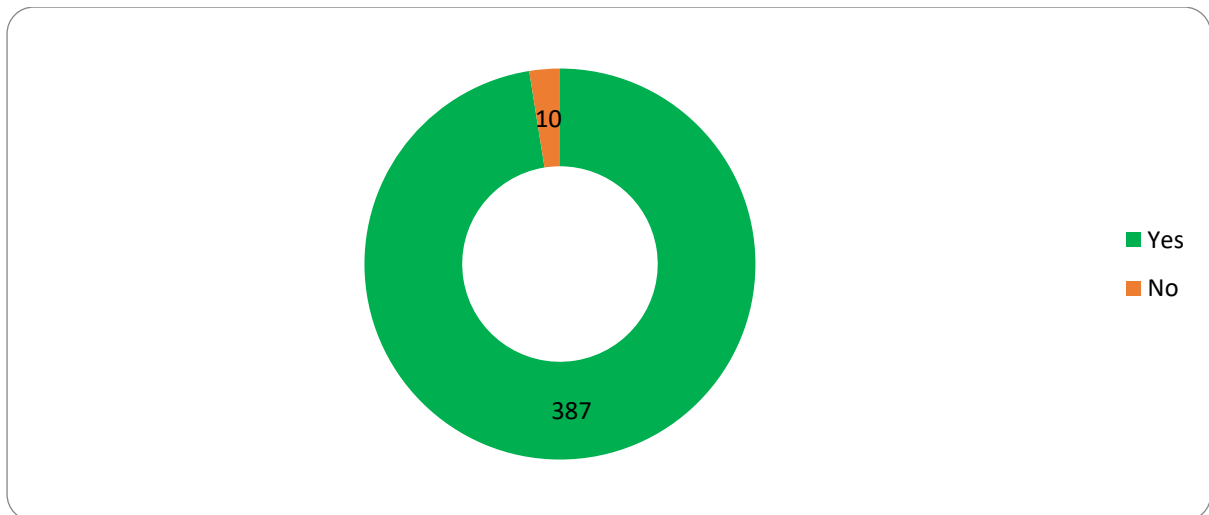
This section outlines and analyses the questions asked in the survey. All questions were optional, so participants could choose to answer all or some questions.

### Objective 1: Access to Services

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

**Do you agree with objective 1?**





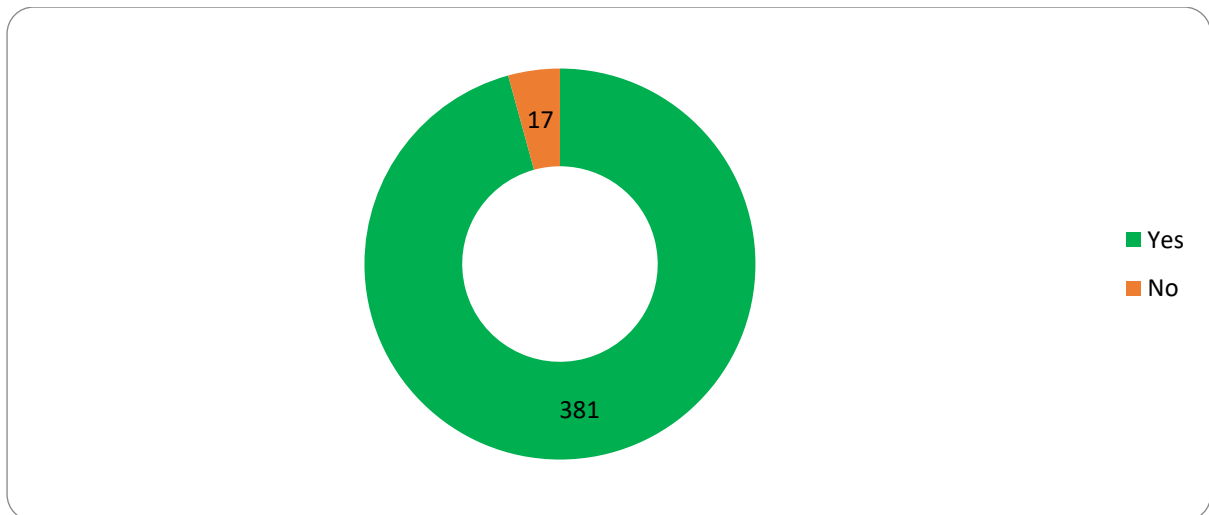
As shown above, 97.5% of respondents (387) agree with objective 1. Whereas 2.5% respondents (10) disagree with the objective.

Those who disagreed with the objective questioned the affordability of the objective in practice and the financial implications of implementing the objective. Some expressed concern that specific council services do not comply with the objective e.g., no access to disabled toilets in Bridgend town centre. Others suggested changes to the wording of the objective to 'Equality' rather than 'Equity.'

### **Objective 2: Protecting the most vulnerable.**

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.

**Do you agree with objective 2?**



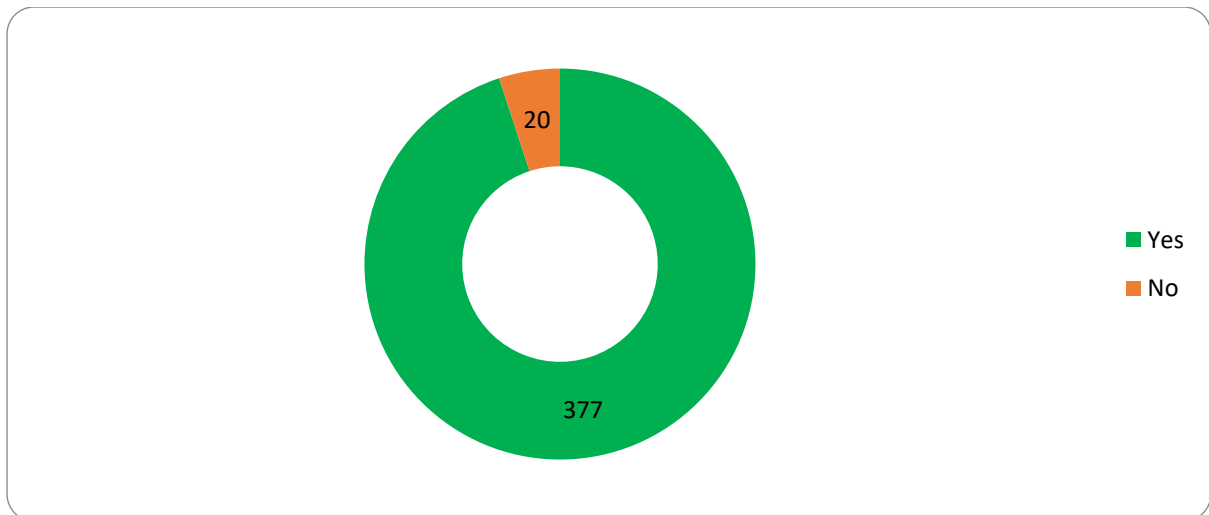
As shown above, 95.7% of respondents (381) agree with objective 2. However, 4.3% of respondents (17) disagree with the objective.

Some respondents disagreed because they felt everyone in the county required support and protection, not only the most vulnerable people. Others disagreed with the objective because they felt that existing policies provided protections but were not sufficiently implemented and should be reviewed. Some expressed the concern that the objective could result in people becoming too dependent on council services. One comment expressed they agree with this objective provided it is implemented in line with the Equality Act 2010, which grants women and girls the right to carers who are of the same sex.

### **Objective 3: 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 crisis and the adverse effects on individuals.

**Do you agree with objective 3?**



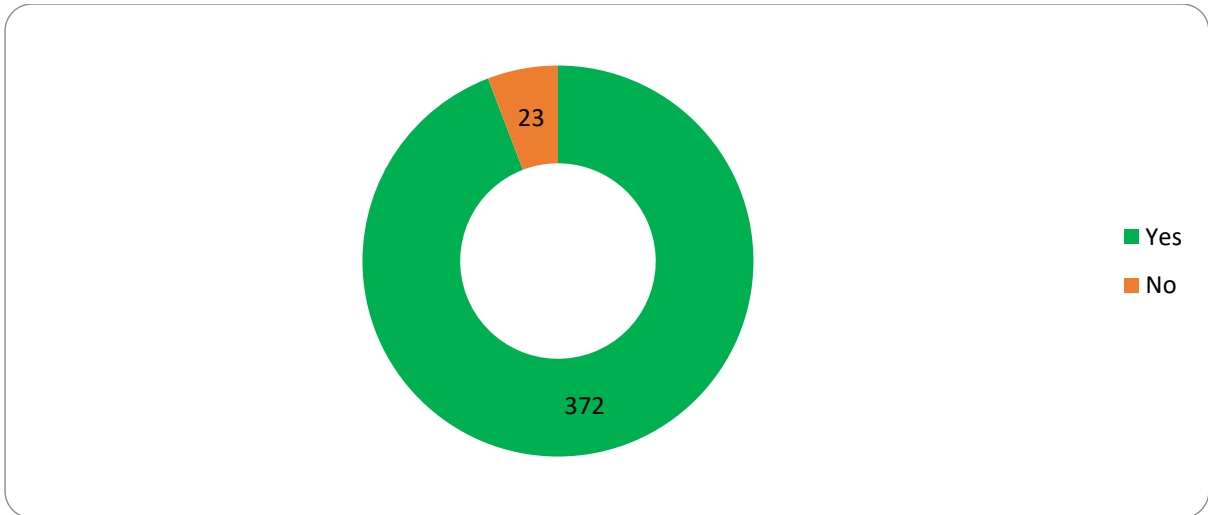
As shown above, 95% of respondents agree with Objective 3, and 5% of respondents (20) disagree with the objective.

Of those who disagreed, there are various concerns about the financial viability of measures to support the objective. Others expressed that independent living is not suitable for all, as every individual's situation is unique. There is a view that the objective should emphasise meaningful action rather than limiting it to 'considering the impact of...' as this does not give the impression that this objective will actively address the changes necessary to tackle poverty and support independent living. One of the comments expressed the concern there is failure to accommodate for disabled people.

#### **Objective 4: Participation and Engagement**

Encourage people and communities to take part 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.

**Do you agree with objective 4?**



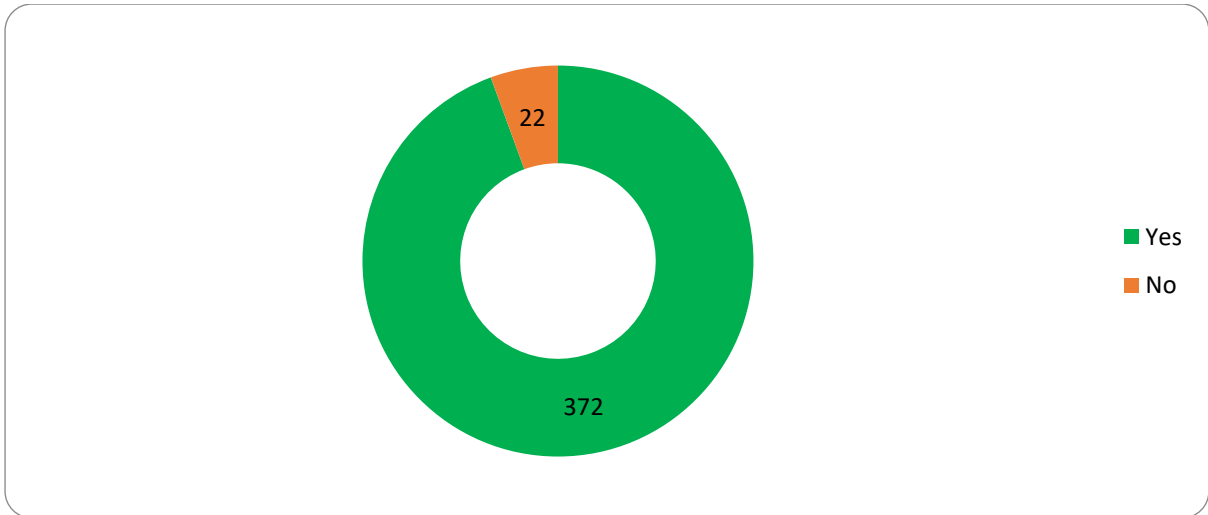
As shown above, 94.2% of respondents (372) agree with objective 4, whereas 5.8% of respondents (23) disagree with the objective.

Respondents who disagreed were divided in their opinions; some believed the council was disingenuous in its approach to participation and involvement with the public and that complaints are not taken seriously, or action is not taken to resolve them. There is also a view that the objective is very vague and needs further clarification. Whereas other respondents felt this objective is not the council's responsibility and individuals ought to take ownership of their actions and cease relying on council services so much.

### **Objective 5: Learning**

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

**Do you agree with objective 5?**



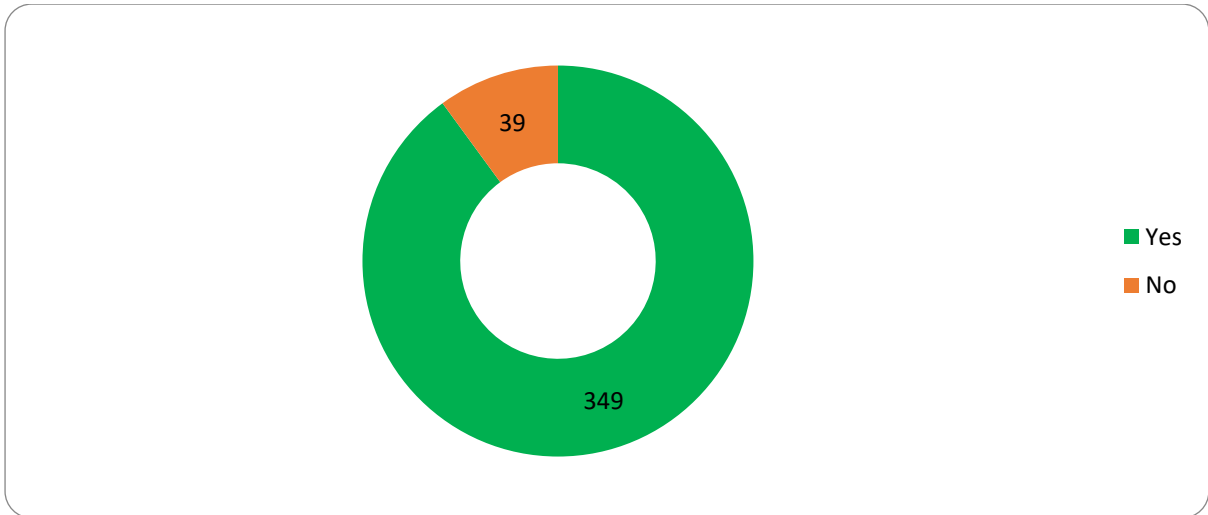
As shown above, 94.4% of respondents (372) agree with objective 5, whereas 5.6% of respondents (22) disagree with the objective.

Of the respondents that disagree, some feel that focusing on diversity, equity and inclusion often creates a sense of inequality and exclusion. There is a view that the objective should focus more on improving learning to make it better suited to the demands of current and future generations. It is suggested that the wording of 'equitable access' is preferable to 'equal access' since no two people start with the same opportunities and this should therefore offer a means of effectively addressing those disparities. There are shared concerns that Welsh medium education receives more support and budget than English medium education.

### **Objective 6: Employment**

Promote a more inclusive workforce and improve the participation, well-being, and opportunities for development for those with protected characteristics.

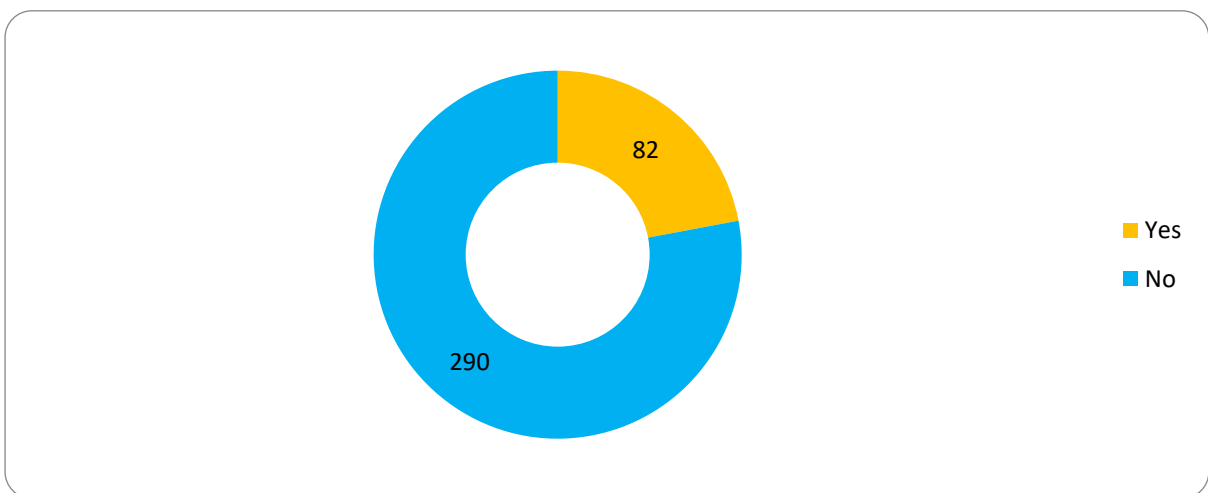
**Do you agree with objective 6?**



As shown above, 89.9% of respondents agree with objective 6, whereas 10.1% of respondents disagree with the objective.

Of the respondents that disagreed, most commented they felt it should always be the best person for the job, and people should not be appointed on the basis of protected characteristics. Whereas some shared the concern there are fewer employment opportunities for people with protected characteristics. Another comment proposes that the objective should be to promote participation, wellbeing, and opportunities for everyone.

**Are there any objectives you think should be added?**



As shown above, 78% of respondents (290) believe there are no other objectives to be added. 22% of respondents (82) think there should be other objectives added.

Those respondents that felt additional objectives should be added suggested the following subjects:

- Tackle bullying, hate and discrimination.
- Promoting active and healthy lifestyles.
- An objective to address violence against women and domestic violence victims.
- Recognise local differences in health and standard of living while addressing the negative impacts on underprivileged people and communities.
- Addressing isolation and loneliness.
- Training for school staff to support children with special needs, and signposts for special need assessments.
- Promote neurodiversity, raise awareness of challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals.
- Provide support to LGBTQ+ students.

### **Do you have any further comments regarding proposed Equality Objectives for 2024-2028.**

89 respondents left a comment saying no further comment or nothing. Of the others who left a response there are worries that proposed service reductions would conflict with these intended objectives, and it is suggested that SMART objectives should be created alongside each objective for credibility. It is suggested that community members should have access to more accessible and in-person services, with information written in a simpler and easy to read manner.

## 7. Conclusion

Bridgend County Borough Council consulted on six proposed equality objectives to demonstrate how we will promote equal opportunities for all and make a real difference to the lives of those living and working in Bridgend County Borough.

During the eight-week consultation period, the engagement team consulted with multiple community groups, to receive collective responses. The face-to-face events provided opportunity to interact with hard-to-reach groups.

Overall, the majority of respondents provided positive feedback on the proposed objectives. Comments and suggestions made throughout the consultation will be considered when developing our strategic equality action plan. Further to this, comments will also be considered when developing our strategic equality action plan.

### 7.1. Equality Impact Assessment

An initial Equality Impact Screening assessment was completed to identify any negative impacts of the strategic equality objectives and was presented to cabinet alongside the strategy.

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.