

Meeting of:	CABINET COMMITTEE EQUALITIES
Date of Meeting:	16 JULY 2024
Report Title:	EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS - ANNUAL REVIEW 2023/24
Report Owner / Corporate Director:	CHIEF OFFICER - FINANCE, HOUSING AND CHANGE
Responsible Officer:	ZOE EDWARDS, CONSULTATION, ENGAGEMENT AND EQUALITIES MANAGER
Policy Framework and Procedure Rules:	There is no impact on the policy framework or procedure rules
Executive Summary:	Annual update on the Council's requirement to undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), an overview of the Council's approach to EIAs and an outline of EIAs undertaken in Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) service areas 2023/2024.

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Committee members with an annual update on the Council's requirement to undertake Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs), an overview of the Council's approach to EIAs and an outline of EIAs undertaken in Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) service areas in 2023/2024.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Equality Act 2010 sets out both general and specific duties for local authorities in Wales - one of which relates to assessing the impact of policies and practices.

The Equality Act 2010 also sets out a general duty that as a public body in Wales, BCBC is required to have due regard in its decision-making processes (including financial decisions) to three factors:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- To advance equality of opportunity; and

- To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2.2 Reports on assessments must set out in particular:

- the purpose of the policy or practice that is being assessed;
- a summary of the steps taken to carry out the assessment, including consultation and engagement;
- a summary of the information used in the assessment; and
- results, and any decisions taken in relation to those results.

2.3 In addition, when assessing the impact on protected characteristic groups, listed authorities must:

- comply with the engagement provisions, and
- have due regard to any relevant information held.

3. Current situation/proposal

3.1 EIAs – an overview

3.1.1 The EIA is a tool to assess whether new (or changes to existing) policies/services/functions, or the removal of services, could impact on different sectors of society in different ways. EIAs should be carried out when making strategic decisions.

EIAs help the Council make better decisions, identify how services can be more accessible or improved and consider the nine protected characteristics as well as the impact on the Welsh language.

3.1.2 Assessing the impact of proposed changes to policies and strategies is not just something the law requires. It is an opportunity to ensure decisions are based on robust evidence and that they:

- include a consideration of actions that would help to avoid or mitigate any impact on individuals or groups;
- are based on evidence;
- are transparent;
- record the equality considerations that have been taken into account.

3.1.3 The Welsh Language Standards requires the following considerations:

- whether a policy-related decision could have a positive or negative impact on opportunities for people to use Welsh;
- treating Welsh and English equally;
- ways to demonstrate how positive effects could be increased; and
- how any identified adverse effects could be mitigated.

Questions related to this were added into the EIA toolkit in 2016 as an existing assessment tool rather than creating an additional impact assessment.

- 3.1.4 It is important to recognise that the duty to eliminate discrimination is a continuing one. It cannot be exercised once and for all, but must be continually revisited and borne in mind, therefore the EIA should be revisited as policies change and are reviewed.
- 3.1.5 The lead person drafting or reviewing a policy or strategy within the service area is responsible for conducting the EIA. EIA screenings should be retained by the service area, referenced, and summarised in the Equality Act 2010 implications section of the relevant Cabinet report. Where a full EIA is needed this should be included as an appendix to the report.
- 3.1.6 The EIA toolkit was revised in readiness for the implementation of the socio-economic duty in March 2022, to include guidance for officers on the socio-economic duty and when this needs to be considered. Workshops for members and officers have been taking place since April 2021.
- 3.1.7 The administration of the EIA process has been reviewed and consideration continues to be given to an online assessment process to assist in the collation and publication of data.
- 3.1.8 Currently full EIAs are linked to Cabinet reports and as such become public documents. All EIA screenings are retained by the service area.

3.2 EIA training

- 3.2.1 An e-learning module continues to be available to employees which provides an overview of EIAs, their role in improving services and a guide to conducting them. At the end of the module, staff have an opportunity to complete an EIA and compare this against an already completed version to assess how the module has assisted in terms of knowledge and understanding.
- 3.2.2 During the period April 2023 to March 2024, 26 Council employees have completed EIA training (via e-learning) as shown in the following table:

Directorate	Completions
Social Services and Wellbeing	10
Communities	5
Education and Family Support	4
Chief Executive	7
Total	26

- 3.2.3 During the period April 2023 to March 2024, 11 Council employees have completed EIA training (via workshops) as shown in the following table:

Directorate	Completions
Social Services and Wellbeing	2
Communities	0
Education and Family Support	0
Chief Executive	9
Total	11

Overall, 327 Council employees have completed the EIA e-learning module to date.

Whilst there have been no Socio-Economic Duty webinars delivered since April 2022, the webinar from 2021 is still relevant and is available for staff to view at any time on the Learning and Development website.

3.3 EIAs undertaken in 2023/2024

3.3.1 Between April 2023 and March 2024, six full EIAs were undertaken and accompanied Cabinet reports and these are listed in **Appendix One**.

3.3.2 68 EIA screenings were undertaken during this period and these are listed in **Appendix Two**. These screenings were referenced in the relevant Cabinet reports and indicated that the policies being assessed could either be “screened out” or would require a full EIA to be undertaken.

3.3.3 Where full EIAs are needed the following timeframes apply:

- Within six months or before approval of policy (high impact)
- Within one year of screening (medium impact)
- Within three years of screening (low impact)

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

4.1 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.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

5.1 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 support equalities objectives in both the short term and long term. This will ensure that the Council’s services are fully accessible to all and that any full consideration is given to any policy changes to minimise the impact for all key stakeholders.

Prevention – Equality Impact Assessments aim to identify issues that are relevant in our community or workforce and set objectives to prevent problems disproportionate impact to any protected characteristic groups, on socio-economic disadvantage or on the Welsh Language.

Integration – Equality Impact Assessments support all the well-being objections and ensures integration for all people with protected characteristics.

Collaboration – Monitoring Equality Impact Assessments is done in collaboration with all Council services.

Involvement - Publication of the report ensures that the public and stakeholders can review the work that has been undertaken.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There is a commitment to engage effectively with local communities and EIAs help the Council make better decisions, identify how services can be more accessible or improved and consider the nine protected characteristics as well as the impact on the Welsh language.

In turn this helps protect and sustain the environment over the long term and in line with our climate change ambitions.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 Where there is a safeguarding concern, all communication will be managed under Bridgend County Borough Council’s Safeguarding Policy. This will safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children, young people and adults at risk of abuse or neglect and to ensure that effective practices are in place throughout the Council and its commissioned services.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That the Cabinet Committee Equalities notes the progress made in the Council during 2023/24 in the completion of Equality Impact Assessments and the progress made with training.

Background documents None