

APPENDIX 2

Bridgend County Borough Council Strategic Equality Action Plan 2024-2028

Introduction

Since our last Strategic Equality Plan 2020-24, the Welsh Government has introduced further commitments including the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan, the LGBTQ+ Action Plan, the Action on Disability Plan and the Advancing Gender Equality Plan. This plan contributes to delivering on these important ambitions.

A significant update in this regard is that Bridgend County Borough Council has proudly agreed to further strengthen the rights of children and young people who have been supported by the care system. As a council we recognise how care-experienced people face significant barriers which can affect their entire lives. We will therefore regard this as a protected characteristic in the same way as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

It is vital that we value and make the most of the abilities and contributions of everyone in our communities. The objectives and the actions outlined in this plan are the things that we are committed to delivering over the next four years to ensure that everyone in our county is able to achieve their full potential.

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.

Why this matters

The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty require local authorities to advance equality of opportunity and eliminate discrimination. Ensuring access to services is a fundamental part of meeting these legal obligations. Improving access to services helps ensure that all members of the community, regardless of their protected characteristics (such as age, disability, race, or gender), can participate fully in society and benefit from public resources. Also, some groups may face barriers in accessing services due to various factors like language, physical accessibility, or cultural differences. By focusing on access, local authorities can identify and address these disparities.

Outcome		
Ensure our engagement with residents is continuous and inclusive and further develops relationships with diverse and underrepresented groups.		
Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Ensure all council communications and public-facing materials are inclusive and representative of LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority communities	Communication, Marketing & Engagement Team	November 2026
To engage in genuine and meaningful communication with residents, this includes the implementation of the residents survey	Engagement Team	April 2025
Enhance accessibility of services by ensuring communication to residents is in accessible versions such as BSL, Easy Read and non-digital formats	Communication, Marketing & Engagement Team	March 2025
Review the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to include care experience as a protected characteristic	Equalities Team	November 2024
Hold community events, promote positive community cohesion and celebrate diversity	Community Safety Partnership Team	April 2025

Objective 2 – 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.

Why this matters

Local authorities have a duty of care to protect those who are most at risk in society. This is not only a moral imperative but also a legal requirement under various Welsh and UK laws, including the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Equality Act 2010.

<u>Outcome</u>		
Ensure that the most vulnerable people within our communities have access to services that support them, to live without fear of violence or abuse, and to be treated with respect.		
Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Work collaboratively to support Pride events through the brand 'Proud Councils'. To demonstrate our commitment to the LGBTQ+ community and our workforce through the development of Proud Councils policies and practice across all local authorities who are involved with Proud Councils	Equalities Manager	April 2025
Improve awareness and outcomes of hate crimes by developing targeted activities to ensure victims and potential victims of hate crime are aware of reporting mechanisms, and have awareness of the support services available to them in.	Community Safety Partnership Team	April 2025
Continue collaborative- working with South Wales Police and Victim Support	Community Safety Partnership Team	December 2025
Work with partners to arrange events and activities to promote Hate Crime Awareness week (October)	Community Safety Partnership Team	December 2025

Promote the StreetSnap app Share any relevant training opportunities with partners	Community Safety Partnership Team	December 2025
Work with schools to resolve tensions and signpost to support where necessary.	Community Safety Partnership Team	December 2025
Develop a whole education approach to Violence against women domestic abuse and sexual violence	VAWDASV Team	December 2025
Work with schools to ensure the effective implementation of the nine elements of the whole school approach across all schools in <u>Bridgend</u>	VAWDASV Team	December 2025
To improve awareness of how to report VAWDASV and the support available	VAWDASV Team	December 2025
Identify three annual campaigns and plan and deliver appropriate actions to maximise their impact to include: Older persons, Learning disability and Male victims, LGBTQ+	VAWDASV Team	December 2025

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 the impact of homelessness, cost of living and adverse effects on individuals.

Why this matters

Ensuring adequate living standards helps meet fundamental human needs like housing, nutrition, and healthcare. By focusing on living standards directly it addresses poverty and its wide-ranging impacts on individuals and communities.

Evidence shows that there is a strong correlation between better living standards and improved physical and mental health.

<u>Outcome</u>		
Tackle poverty and support independent living by considering the impact of any policy changes or decisions under the socio-economic duty		
Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Continue to support and report on the progress on the number of socially excluded people accessing support	Employability Bridgend	April 2025
Continue to support and report on the number of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment	Employability Bridgend	April 2025
Continue to support and report on the effective work between keyworkers and additional services	Employability Bridgend	April 2025
Continue to support and report on the number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision	Employability Bridgend	April 2025

Produce guidance and support for staff on the addition of care experience to the protected groups.	Equalities Manager	March 2025
Progress implementation of the Real Living wage to all council employees benefitting those on the lowest pay grades.	Human Resources	April 2025
Promote the health and wellbeing of employees through partnerships with Halo, the Cycle to Work scheme	Human Resources	March 2025
Report on the total number of households eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need presented to the authority on an annual basis.	Housing Solutions Team	November 2025
Report on the total number of homeless households temporarily accommodated by your authority at the end of the year.	Housing Solutions Team	November 2025
Total number of Free School Meal applications awarded annually.	Benefits Team	November 2025
Total number of Distinctive Uniform Grant applications awarded annually.	Benefits Team	November 2025
Deliver the national School Food and Fun Programme, subject to funding in agreed local areas.	Early Years and Childcare Team	Annually – November 2025

Objective 4 – Participation and 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.

Why this matters

This objective ensures diverse voices and perspectives are heard in decision-making processes. Engagement allows residents to have a say in shaping their local areas and services. Input from diverse groups leads to more effective and relevant policies and services, therefore active engagement fosters trust between the community and local government.

<u>Outcome</u>		
Encourage people and communities to participate and engage in issues that are important to them and influence the decisions that affect their lives.		
Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Review online and social media content to improve visibility and encourage accessibility.	Comms, Engagement Team/Equalities Manager	April 2024
Streamline the consultation process by implementing an online Planning form, making the equality impact assessment a mandatory submission as part of the initial process.	Equalities Manager	January 2025

<p>Improve community engagement by promoting equality of opportunity, eliminating barriers, and delivering accessible and inclusive outreach and engagement events. Celebrate diversity and support marginalised communities.</p>	<p>Regional Community Cohesion</p>	<p>March 2025</p>
<p>Build resilient communities by monitoring community tensions and promote community cohesion-based projects.</p>	<p>Regional Community Cohesion</p>	<p>April 2025</p>
<p>Embrace Black History Month (October) by working closely with partner, to highlight the reality of the negative impact of racial inequality and celebrate the contribution made by ethnic communities to our local and national life. Co-working with partner organisations such as Awen Cultural Trust to promote and raise awareness.</p>	<p>Equalities Manager</p>	<p>November 2025</p>

Objective 5 – 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.

Why this matters

Learning opportunities can help break cycles of disadvantage and promote upward social mobility and at the same time encourages lifelong learning, helping communities adapt to changing economic and social landscapes.

It also promotes understanding and respect for diverse cultures within the community and targeted learning initiatives can help address educational disparities among different groups. Overall evidence suggests that education is linked to better health awareness and outcomes.

<u>Outcome</u>		
Everyone who accesses education should be free from discrimination, bullying and abuse in educational settings.		
Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Provide regular reports of discrimination-related incidents gathered from schools and share with the education teams.	Education & Equalities Manager	November 2025
Identify trends and review anti-bullying/ hate-crime strategies so that there are effective solutions in place	Education & Equalities Manager	December 2024
Establishing an EYYP Equalities Group to analyse data around reported discriminatory incidents within schools.	Education	April 2028
<p>In line with the ARWAP we aim to improve the experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Learners by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring consistent reporting by schools. • Sharing good practice between schools through a variety of forums. • Listening to learners experiences. 	Education	April 2028

Objective 6 – Employment

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

Why this matters

This objective recognizes that employment is not just about economic gain, but also about dignity, purpose, and social cohesion. It's a key factor in creating a more equal and prosperous society.

Outcome		
To improve diversity in our workforce		
Action	Responsibility	Timescale
Develop staff networks to provide support and inclusion opportunities that include representatives from the protected groups.	Equalities Manager	December 2025
Update the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy statement. Promoting diversity and inclusion in employment and the workplace.	Human Resources & Equalities Manager	March 2025
Develop knowledge of our workforce by collating and encouraging the completion of sensitive personal information, via appropriate means.	Human Resources	March 2025
Use data, quantitative and qualitative (inc lived experience) to monitor and improve recruitment, retention and exit experience.	Human Resources	April 2028
Together with Equalities team, promote awareness campaigns linked to protected characteristics	Human Resources and Equalities Manager	Annually-April 2025
To continue to pay the Real Living Wage (subject to Pay Award) to all council employees benefitting those on the lowest pay grades.	Human Resources	Annually-April 2025
To report on gender, ethnic minority and disability pay gaps.	Human Resources	Annually-April 2025
To review existing e-learning provision to ensure appropriate and relevant equality and diversity training is available, including the section on equality legislation of the mandatory corporate induction module.	Human Resources	April 2025

To encourage increased participation in equality and diversity training and Corporate Induction	Human Resources	April 2025
To review recruitment practices to ascertain whether removal of personal identifications where reasonable.	Human Resources	April 2026
To establish the new protected characteristic – Care Experienced within HR documents and recruitment process.	Human Resources	April 2025
To offer Q&A workshop sessions to young people from care experience to assist them in applying for roles.	Human Resources	April 2025
To promote and monitor employment opportunities to ethnic groups to improve representation within the workforce	Human Resources	April 2028
To continue with being a disability confident employer and increase the council's status to 'disability leader'.	Human Resources	April 2026
Review the menopause protocol in line with the Welsh Government Period Poverty initiative and supporting menstruation.	Human Resources	April 2025
Promote the health and wellbeing of all employees ensuring support and resources are current and up to date.	Human Resources	April 2028
Provide equalities training that includes the needs of LGBTQ+ people to all.	Human Resources	April 2028
Provide equality and unconscious bias training to councillors to encourage increased participation in training	Democratic Services	Annually - April 2028

